



A Process for Reflection: World Day of the Poor

Consider

Every day, Catholic health care ministries share the healing presence of God with the world, particularly in ministry to the vulnerable and neglected who without our services might lack access to quality care. In our clinics, long-term care facilities, hospitals and community services, we experience moments of encounter with Jesus as we encounter those he treasured most highly—the poor.

In his message for the first World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis calls us to engage with people who are poor. He challenges us to do more than meet material needs, calling us to reach out and create moments of encounter, friendship, solidarity and concrete assistance:

We may think of the poor simply as the beneficiaries of our occasional volunteer work, or of impromptu acts of generosity that appease our conscience. However good and useful such acts may be for making us sensitive to people's needs and the injustices that are often their cause, they ought to lead to a true encounter with the poor and a sharing that becomes a way of life. ... If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor.

As we open ourselves to encounter those in need as the person of Jesus, we are changed. What might have been a one-way transaction now becomes a two-way relationship of mutuality and community.

Reflect

- What is your experience of poverty?
- Consider a time you have set out to serve someone and you received more than you gave. What does this experience teach you about God and the power of relationship?
- To what extent do we make space for what Pope Francis calls “true encounters” with the poor?
- Consider the quote from the book *Food for the Journey*, *Theological Foundations of the Catholic Healthcare Ministry*: “The healthcare facility can never be isolated from the community of people in which it exists, since that community is a major reason for its existence.” How can we strengthen our connections to the communities we serve, particularly those members who are vulnerable or voiceless.

Pray

God of Justice, open our eyes to see you in the face of the poor who come to us in search of healing and wholeness. Open our mouths to advocate for health care as a human right, not a privilege of the economically secure. Open our hands to embrace the poor and help them with no “ifs” or “buts” or “maybes,” asking nothing in exchange, save the privilege of doing your work in the world. Remind us that what we do to the least ones, we do to you. Amen.