**World day for the Poor 2020 follow-up – local action for those in need**

Following last week’s World Day of the Poor, the **Archdiocesan Caritas, Justice & Peace Commission** decided that this was not the year for yet another special collection, drawing resources from the parishes. We want to encourage Catholics to act by getting involved in practical acts of Charity, locally, particularly as we approach Christmas, which can be a difficult and stressful time for parents in need.

Please find below some practical steps as we aim to follow the call to ‘*Stretch forth your hand to the poor’* (Sir. 7:32).

***Fr Basil Clark, Vicar Episcopal for Caritas, Justice & Peace***

**Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP)**

*The Society of St Vincent de Paul* has excellent local knowledge across the Archdiocese of areas of need. If you have a conference in your parish you may wish to do one of the following:

* Ask a member to speak after Mass to remind people how their donations to the SSVP box helps local people in need.
* Encourage people to join the SSVP (and to continue donating) and find out what initiatives they have for Christmas.

**Foodbanks**

It is likely you will have a foodbank in your area. They often collect food in trolleys at local supermarkets, usually Asda. Please encourage parishioners to donate.

**Schools**

Local schools often have a keen awareness of poverty in your local area. Ask your headteacher or school contact what charity initiatives they may be running that you can share with parishioners.

**Your parish**

Please consider running a Christmas hamper appeal (ideally in conjunction with the SSVP conference, if you have one). Items can be donated to a local foodbank.

**Homily (below)**

I’ve shared below excerpts of Pope Francis’ homily for World Day for the Poor. You may wish to use it as a theme for a Sunday homily

**Pray (below)**

Please also find below a prayer you may wish to share with parishioners.

**Pope Francis Homily for last week’s World Day of the Poor**

Celebrating Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica last Sunday to mark the occasion, Pope Francis reflected on the day’s Gospel (Mt 25:14-30), in which Jesus recounts a parable about a master who entrusts his servants with talents distributed according to their ability. The Pope said the parable sheds light on the beginning, centre and end of our own lives.

**Beginning: Entrusted with talents**

“Everything begins with a *great good*.” Our lives, said the Pope, began with the grace of God, at which moment we were each entrusted with different talents. “We possess a great wealth that depends not on what we possess but on what we are: the life we have received, the good within us, the indelible beauty God has given us by making us in His image.”

**Lives of service**

The Holy Father went on to reflect on the centre of the parable, and our lives: “The work of servants, which is *service*.” He said service is what makes our talents bear fruit and gives meaning to our lives. “Those who do not live to serve, serve for little in this life.” The Pope said the Gospel makes clear that faithful servants should take risks. By not clinging to what they possess, good servants put their talents to good use and are not fearful or overcautious. “For if goodness is not invested, it is lost, and the grandeur of our lives is not measured by how much we save but by the fruit we bear.” He said a life centred on accumulating possessions rather than doing good is empty. “The reason we *have* gifts is so that we can *be* gifts.”

**Poor bankers**

“How then do we serve, as God would have us serve?” asked Pope Francis. According to Jesus’ parable, the master tells the faithless servant who buried his talent that he should have invested his money with the “bankers” in order to earn interest. Those bankers, said the Pope, are the poor. “The poor guarantee us an eternal income,” he said. “Even now they help us become rich in love. For the worst kind of poverty needing to be combatted is our poverty of love.” The Holy Father added that Christians can multiply our talents by simply holding out our hand to the poor, rather than demanding what we lack.

**Success versus love**

Pope Francis then reflected on what Jesus’ parable tells us about the end of our own lives. When our lives are over and the truth is revealed, he said, “the pretence of this world will fade, with its notion that success, power and money give life meaning, whereas love – the love we have given – will be revealed as true riches.”  “If we do not want to live life poorly,” he said, “let us ask for the grace to see Jesus in the poor, to serve Jesus in the poor.”

**Prayer for the 2020 World Day of the Poor**

Almighty, ever-living God, your beloved Son came to us in poverty

to win for us the riches of eternal life. During His time on earth He taught us by word and deed.
From His death we learned of the immensity of His love; from His resurrection we learned how to believe and to trust that our lives have purpose from beginning to end.

Help us never to forget that every person has value and is loved by You.
Remind us that, as Your people grow older, they do not cease to be people

worthy of respect, understanding and appreciation.
Though the eyes of the elderly may grow dim,
we pray that their vision of everlasting life with You may grow ever stronger;
though their bodies may become frail,
we pray that their faith may empower them; though their minds may falter,
we pray that their memories may bring them comfort and peace.

Lord God, may we never forget your Golden Rule to treat others as we would wish to be treated
and remember to apply that Rule most especially during the golden years of age.
Save us from falling into the trap of seeing the elderly as a burden.

We ask you, Lord God, to help us set aside material wealth
so as to recognise the spiritual riches of patience, compassion and love for all your people.
As we journey through this life side by side, may we learn to support one another with the combined wealth of youth, strength, wisdom and experience until we are called to the place you have prepared
for all those who are poor in spirit and rich in love.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.