**Reflection on the Sunday Readings**

**World Day of the Poor**

**November 18, 2018**

**Introduction:**

* When we hear the word “poverty,” we can think of many things: poverty of spirit, lack of love, isolation, etc. On World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis invites us to focus on material poverty in which individuals, families, and communities lack access to the basic things they need to live and thrive: nutritious food, adequate housing, safe neighborhoods, good education, healthcare, and decent jobs with fair pay, for example.
* Our diocese has some of the highest levels of poverty in the state of MN. The poverty rate in Minnesota is 10%. In St. Louis County, that number is 14%. An estimated 43 million people live in poverty in the United States.
  + Take a moment to think about one person or one family you know, who has been affected by poverty or related issues such as unemployment, debt, lack of quality health insurance, etc.
  + Or, you might call to mind the faces of an individual or family that our parish serves through [mention a ministry of the parish that serves those in need]. What daily challenges do they face?
  + We may be tempted to be frustrated by their decisions, but we all make blunders.
* Today is the second World Day of the Poor, a day established by Pope Francis on which he asks us to hear the cries of the poor among us with open ears and hearts and to respond in faith as we work for justice.
* This Sunday’s readings remind us of God’s promise of fulfillment to a people in waiting.
* In the first reading, Daniel predicts the fulfillment of the promises of God. Written near the end of the reign of a strongly disliked ruler of Judea, Daniel’s depiction of the “end times” conveys a fulfillment of God’s promises to the people of Israel.
  + All who have been faithful will be relieved of their suffering and receive the Kingdom as was promised to God’s chosen people. Verse 3 clarifies that it is those who have been steadfast in their faith, the “wise” who “shall shine brightly.” Remaining faithful to God demands more than simply following the law; it also demands bringing ourselves and our neighbors to righteousness: “those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever” (v. 3).
* The Psalmist also speaks of God’s promise to those who are faithful; it is the Lord who shows us “the path to life” (v. 11). In the second reading, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews encourages readers to live in confidence of the promise of Christ, who is “at the right hand of God” (v. 12) and to strive to imitate him (v. 14).
* In today’s Gospel, Mark recounts Jesus’ parable of the fig tree to speak of signs of hope. Despite all the problems and sufferings of life, grace will triumph (v. 26-27). Until that time, the faithful are to remain committed to the promises of Christ (v. 32).
* Taken together, the readings urge Christ’s followers to live each day as faithful disciples, ready for his coming. But how can we, as disciples, be ready and prepared?
* First, we can call to mind what Jesus called the two greatest commandments: love for God and love for our neighbors. We can take to heart Pope Francis’ challenge on this 2nd World Day of the Poor to “make a serious examination of conscience, to see if we are truly capable of hearing the cry of the poor” (Message for 2nd World Day of the Poor, no. 2).
* Do we hear the “cry of the poor?” Inspired by Psalm 34:6, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,” Pope Francis challenges us to combat our indifference to the poor and vulnerable in our midst. We say that we want to serve the needs of our brothers and sisters, but as Pope Francis warns, “If we speak too much ourselves, we will be unable to hear them” (no. 2). If we remain steadfast in our faith and live our lives as righteous followers of Christ, we will know that “God’s salvation is a hand held out to the poor, a hand that welcomes, protects, and enables them to experience the friendship they need” (no. 4).
* On this 2nd World Day of the Poor, we are asked to embody God’s promise of justice and liberation, to act in ways that ensure that the cries of the poor among us are heard: “We Christians are inspired by faith and by the imperative of charity, but we can also acknowledge other forms of assistance and solidarity that aim . . . to lead everyone to God and to holiness” (no. 7).
* How are we called to apply these lessons? Think back to [insert earlier example from introduction] that we called to mind earlier. How can we respond to Pope Francis’ call, and hear the cries of the poor in our parish, our neighborhood, and our communities on this World Day of the Poor?

**General Intercessions**

**For World Day of the Poor and the weeks leading up to it**

For our Holy Father, Pope Francis, our bishop, Paul Sirba, and all church leaders, that they will continue to proclaim Christ’s love and compassion for the poor as they educate the Church about the need to work for justice in our world, we pray to the Lord. R/

That we, the people of God, will open our hearts and souls to justice so that we will speak and act in ways that will eliminate poverty and injustice in this country and throughout the world, we pray to the Lord. R/.

For the 43 million people in our country who experience the pain and suffering of poverty every day, may we join with them to share their burden and at the same time work to create more just communities, we pray to the Lord. R/.

We pray in a special way, on this World Day of the Poor, for all those who experience poverty and injustice around the world, that they will be able to have all they need to live a good life and care for their families, we pray to the Lord. R/.

For the Church gathered here, that each of us will do all we can to show Christ’s mercy to others, especially to poor and vulnerable people around the world who suffer most, we pray to the Lord. R/.