

Go, you are sent... to the peripheries of society

“...blessed the one who is kind to the poor”

PROVERBS 14:21

Pope Francis constantly stresses the need for the Church to go out to those on the edges of society, the poor, the marginalized, the homeless, those who struggle. He himself visits prisoners, refugees, and the poorest parts of the cities he travels to. Through the Papal Almoner Archbishop Krajewski he constantly reaches out to people living on the streets of Rome.

In the last few years pastoral areas, parish amalgamation and earthquake issues have absorbed a lot of time and resources in the Archdiocese. By their nature these processes have been inward-looking, and in many places they are still being worked through. Our buildings are not perfect, our liturgy and sacramental programmes will always need attention, and the downstream effects of parish amalgamations will continue for some time. But the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, refugees, and those who struggle are here now, in our cities and small towns, in the areas covered by our parishes. Their need is a silent summons to us to let go of our inward focus and take up the challenge of better serving the marginalised in our communities. We will ourselves be evangelised in the process, because we will encounter Jesus.

There is a temptation to say that because we have various Catholic organizations which serve those in need we have fulfilled our duty. It is not enough. “Go, you are sent” is both a personal challenge and a challenge to our parishes to serve the disadvantaged in new ways and with greater commitment and intensity.

1. Who are the poor, the marginalised, the struggling, the homeless, in our local areas?
2. What do the words of Pope Francis (see quotes) mean in the context of our parishes, schools and communities?
3. As a parish/school/community, what can we do to serve those in need better, both in terms of their needs and in advocating for them?



“I urge you to serve Jesus crucified in every person who is marginalised, for whatever reason; to see the Lord in every excluded person who is hungry, thirsty, naked; to see the Lord present even in those who have lost their faith, or turned away from the practice of their faith, or say that they are atheists; to see the Lord who is imprisoned, sick, unemployed, persecuted; to see the Lord in the leper – whether in body or soul – who encounters discrimination!... The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, those essentially on the “outskirts” of life.”

POPE FRANCIS, MASS WITH NEW CARDINALS FEB 2015 (NOTE FROM CARDINAL JOHN: THIS WAS A PERSONAL CHALLENGE TO ME AS ONE OF THOSE CARDINALS, AND THEREFORE TO THE ARCHDIOCESE)

“Often we need only walk the streets of a city to see the contrast between people living on the street and the brilliant lights of the store windows. We have become so accustomed to these things that they no longer unsettle us. Our world suffers from many forms of exclusion, marginalization and poverty, to say nothing of conflicts born of a combination of economic, political, ideological, and, sadly, even religious motives.”

POPE FRANCIS, WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY MESSAGE 2014

“We have at our disposal so much information and so many statistics on poverty and human tribulations. There is a risk of being highly informed bystanders and disembodied from these realities, or to have nice discussions that end up in verbal solutions and disengagement from the real problems. Too many words, too many words, too many words and nothing is done! This is a risk.”

POPE FRANCIS, JUNE 2014

“So let us ask ourselves this evening, in adoring Christ who is really present in the Eucharist: do I let myself be transformed by him? Do I let the Lord who gives himself to me, guide me to going out ever more from my little enclosure, in order to give, to share, to love him and others?”

POPE FRANCIS, CORPUS CHRISTI 2013