

A HELPING HAND
FOURTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR
33rd Sunday in Ordinary time ~ 15 November 2020



The Creation of Adam by Michelangelo - edited | public domain

Pope Francis has declared this Sunday, the [Fourth World Day of the Poor](#).

ENTRUSTED WITH GIFTEDNESS & TALENTS

God entrusts each of us with the wonderful treasure of life.
Each of us is entrusted with love, faith and hope.
Through the guidance of the gift of the Holy Spirit,
our giftedness, our talents and love can grow.

St Paul in his letter to the Galatians spoke of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

*'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.'* (Gal 5:22-23)

God entrusts us to grow such fruit in our lives.

When we read today's parable,
we understand that the gifts that we each receive from God,
these gifts are to grow and to be shared,
They are not to be buried.

In Luke's Gospel, the parable of the [Good Samaritan](#),
reminds us that all people are our neighbour,
and that we are to offer a helping hand to our neighbour in need.

Let us reflect on the parable in today's Gospel
and then turn to the words of Pope Francis
this Sunday about an outstretched hand.

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 25:14-30

A person going on a journey entrusts three servants with enormous wealth.
One person receives five talents,
another person receives two talents,
and a third person receives one talent.
All are caretakers, stewards of that treasure.
None of them own the treasure.

The first two servants grow the treasure –
they don't let it be dormant or rest in paralysis.
About the third servant, we are told:

*“But the one who had received the one talent went off
and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.”*

We are not to hide God's graciousness and love.
We are to grow in our faith and love.

The first two servants on the master's return are praised:

*“Well done, good and trustworthy slave;
you have been trustworthy in a few things,
I will put you in charge of many things;
enter into the joy of your master.”*

God entrusts responsibility to us in life.
And invites us to enter into God's joy.

A PARABLE TO BE RETOLD MANY TIMES

The parable is one that would have kept the people's attention as Jesus told it.
Such a story of great wealth would be told and retold by hearers.
And the harshness of the master and the laziness and fear
of the 3rd servant would be remembered in the retelling.
The 3rd servant hadn't even invested the amount.
Hearers would have shared their opinions on that.
And the ending would shock them.
A drama told to be retold over the ages to come.

THE MERCY OF GOD

Matthew's Gospel repeatedly reveals the mercy of God.
The master in the parable doesn't parallel our image of God.
Jesus relates through the words of the third servant

*“Master, I knew that you were a harsh man,
reaping where you did not sow,
and gathering where you did not scatter seed”*

The master in the parable is not Jesus.
It is the love of Jesus that shows us his mercy.
In the last chapters of Matthew's Gospel,
we witness the incredible depth of God's love for us,

as we hear of the suffering and death of Jesus, for each of us.
So deep is the love and mercy of Jesus,
that he gives his life for us.
So deep are the gifts of faith and hope,
that we celebrate Jesus Christ, our Savior.
We are invited to enter into the joy of God's love eternally.
Jesus told this parable that could be told over and over again.

Let us pause for a moment now,
and imagine ourselves holding out a genuine hand of friendship
to someone in despair,
to someone grieving,
to someone in poverty,
to someone being discriminated against,
to someone lost and afraid.

POPE FRANCIS

In his [2020 World Day of the Poor Message](#).

Pope Francis quotes "*Stretch forth your hand to the poor*" (Sir 7:32)

He says

*'Today these words remain as timely as ever.
They help us fix our gaze on what is essential and overcome the barriers of
indifference.
Poverty always appears in a variety of guises,
and calls for attention to each particular situation.
In all of these, we have an opportunity to encounter the Lord Jesus,
who has revealed himself as present in the least of his brothers and sisters
(cf. Mt 25:40).'*

*'...Indeed, the word of God transcends space and time, religions and cultures.
Generosity that supports the weak, consoles the afflicted, relieves suffering
and restores dignity to those stripped of it, is a condition for a fully human life.
The decision to care for the poor, for their many different needs,
cannot be conditioned by the time available or by private interests,
or by impersonal pastoral or social projects.
The power of God's grace cannot be restrained
by the selfish tendency to put ourselves always first.
We cannot feel "alright" when any member of the human family
is left behind and in the shadows.
The silent cry of so many poor men, women and children
should find the people of God at the forefront, always and everywhere,
in efforts to give them a voice, to protect and support them
in the face of hypocrisy and so many unfulfilled promises,
and to invite them to share in the life of the community.'*

Pope Francis gives examples of a helping hand
to our neighbour during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

*'A hand held out is a sign;
a sign that immediately speaks of closeness, solidarity and love.
In these months, when the whole world was prey to a virus
that brought pain and death, despair and bewilderment,
how many outstretched hands have we seen!*

*The outstretched hands of physicians
who cared about each patient and tried to find the right cure.
The outstretched hands of nurses
who worked overtime, for hours on end, to look after the sick.*

*The outstretched hands of administrators
who procured the means to save as many lives as possible.
The outstretched hands of pharmacists
who at personal risk responded to people's pressing needs.*

*The outstretched hands of priests
whose hearts broke as they offered a blessing.
The outstretched hands of volunteers
who helped people living on the streets
and those with a home yet nothing to eat.
The outstretched hands of men and women
who worked to provide essential services and security.*

*We could continue to speak of so many other outstretched hands,
all of which make up a great litany of good works.
Those hands defied contagion and fear
in order to offer support and consolation.
This pandemic arrived suddenly and caught us unprepared,
sparking a powerful sense of bewilderment and helplessness.
Yet hands never stopped reaching out to the poor.
This has made us all the more aware of the presence of the poor
in our midst and their need for help.
Structures of charity, works of mercy, cannot be improvised.
Constant organization and training is needed,
based on the realization of our own need for an outstretched hand.*

Pope Francis reminds us to reach out in love.

An outreached hand enriched by a humble smile.

*'...The word of God allows for no complacency;
it constantly impels us to acts of love.'*

*'And this means that our lives are a project and a process.
The "end" of all our actions can only be love.
This is the ultimate goal of our journey, and nothing should distract us from it.
This love is one of sharing, dedication and service,
born of the realization that we were first loved and awakened to love.*

*We see this in the way children greet their mother's smile
and feel loved simply by virtue of being alive.
Even a smile that we can share with the poor is a source of love and a way of
spreading love.
An outstretched hand, then, can always be enriched by the smile of those
who quietly and unassumingly offer to help,
inspired only by the joy of living as one of Christ's disciples.'*

Let us not bury our hands in our pockets.
Let us not bury the gift of love
like the 3rd person in the parable today.

With a helping hand,
with an outstretched hand,
we reach out and share the gift of love.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/111520.cfm>

