



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Cry of the Poor

October 2022

Introduction

In this time of history, we SSNDs have heard the cry of the poor very deep in our hearts. This cry has always been present in our responses and actions, but much more so now with our Public Commitment as a *Laudato Si'* Congregation. It is present in the heart of this encyclical, as well as in the heart of *You Are Sent*: "Alert to rapidly evolving conditions in a changing society, we discern which world conditions we are called to address. We try to recognize who the poor are..." (YAS, GD 37). This cry of the poor thus becomes one of the cries of Creation (Cf. [Message of Pope Francis for the Season of Creation 2022](#)) and the second of the seven *Laudato Si'* goals, which proposes to defend life on Earth giving special attention to vulnerable groups. We are called to respond to the cry of the poor and defend life in all its forms.

Call to Prayer

As a community, open, available, always ready to serve the needs of the neighborhood, of the Church, of those who approach us, our first response is prayer. "O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes... We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace." (Excerpt from the Prayer for our Earth, *Laudato Si'* 246)

Experience

The love that we embrace as a commandment of God and as followers of Jesus calls all Christians to change their lifestyles, welcome the vulnerable and protect our common home, live simple lives, be aware of the needs of others and show love for the planet and for those who live on it.

As a community of the SSND in the Chapel of Our Lady of Peace, which is inserted in a peripheral neighborhood, in Adrogué, Argentina, we seek to accompany the poorest, with special attention to vulnerable groups of immigrants (Bolivians, Peruvians, Paraguayans and those from the interior of our country) who sometimes run the risk of modern slavery, and of families in their suffering, especially in this post-pandemic time. We think, for example, of Lucy and her granddaughter who always welcome us with a smile and thank us for the visit and the help they receive. They have been left without work, without "chances" (jobs for only one day or a few hours) to survive day to day, with the pain of many deaths of relatives and friends to whom they have not been able to say goodbye due to the Covid-19 isolation protocols. Our help is a monthly delivery of food through networking with other communities, but above all, supporting them with the pastoral care of listening and mutual support.

We were also very close to Dolores, when her humble house caught fire and she lost everything. With the help of families and benefactors, we were able to help her to rebuild her home and get chairs, tables, and a wardrobe. We also prepared the baby clothes for her baby, Benjamin, who arrived two months later to a warm environment that many of us managed to prepare. Today she is still very grateful because her husband is a carpenter's assistant in a nearby place.

Responding to these realities together with others and helping us grow makes a big difference and is a sign of HOPE in our journey. We also receive, because the families tell us that they feel very good with us.

Reflection

Oppression against the poor has always been a hard reality over the centuries and their human dignity has been at stake. They are doubly impoverished in times of climate disaster and conflict. Pope Francis has urged us to **care for the poor**. In the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, he tells us that the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor are the same cry. Literally, a cry is a metaphor pregnant with meanings. It can mean the feeling of pain and suffering, the experience of sadness and loss, calling out for solidarity, compassion, and the search for more justice and dignity.

What are the cries of the poor, nowadays, that I hear?

The pains and hopes of the poor are also the pains and hopes of the Church. The Christian Church, as the bearer of the 'memory and prophetic voice of Jesus', is also the bearer of the 'memory and prophetic voice of the poor.' Read YAS Const 17

How am I /we called to respond to the cries of the poor where I live and minister?

Action

Constant and attentive listening to the cry of the poor and the cry of creation leads us to effective care for the earth, and for our brothers and sisters in need. Our action decisions, based on the Gospel, seek the common good and opt for those whom almost nobody chooses. We suggest some action ideas, which can be triggers to respond in each place where we SSNDs live and minister.

1. Networking: forming networks to generate resources, goods, but also to provide talent such as listening, support. *Caritas*, *Pax Christi International*, the religious conferences of each place, etc.
2. Commit ourselves to the personal and community study of the Church's documents, in order to know the causes of unjust structures and to be able to act. We suggest for this month chapter III of *Laudato Si'*, "Human roots of the ecological crisis" and chapter III of *Fratelli Tutti*, "Thinking and creating an open world", as well as the 2022 Message of the Pope Francis for the VI World Day of the Poor "Jesus Christ became poor for you." (2 Corinthians, 8, 9)
3. Think as a community/school/parish of a concrete gesture that responds to the cry of the poor around you.

Closing Prayer

A prayer by Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga who laid down his whole life for the poorest of the Amazon, becoming poor with them and for them. A tireless defender of human rights despite constant persecution and death threats.

United Hands

May we be, Lord, hands joined
in prayer and in the gift.
United to your Hands in those of the Father,
united to the fruitful wings of the Spirit,
attached to the hands of the poor.
Gospel Hands, sowers of life,
lamps of hope, Peace flights.
United to your supportive Hands,
breaking everyone's Bread.
United to your pierced hands
at the crossroads of the world.
United to your already glorious Easter Hands.

Open hands, without borders,
As long as there are hands.
Capable of embracing the entire world,
being faithful to the Kingdom.
Tense in the passion for Justice,
tender in love
Hands that give what they receive,
in multiplied gratuitousness,
always more hands,
always more united.
(Pedro Casaldaliga "Hands united")