

Hope, lung of the Earth

WORLD DAY OF THE POOR 2025: 'YOU ARE MY HOPE'

The fact that the Church has been proposing a specific date for nine years to commemorate World Day of the Poor should not make us forget that **the poorest people** are, at all times, the privileged recipients of God's love and his merciful gaze as a central element of the Christian message and as a **guide** for the attitude **of the whole people of God**.

This message is constantly present in the voice of the Old Testament prophets and in the teaching of the Church Fathers, but above all in the person of **Jesus** himself, not only in his most well-known proclamations (the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus, the praise of the poor widow's mite over that of the proud and rich Pharisees), but in all his **gestures throughout his public life**: touching the eyes of the blind, the flesh wounded by leprosy, the lifeless body of the son of the poor mother...

Significantly, this year's commemoration of the Day coincided, within a few weeks, with the publication of Pope Leo XIV's first Apostolic Exhortation, **Dilexi Te**, dedicated precisely to this issue, which marks a clear priority among his concerns, along with that of *disarmed peace*; and I also think it appropriate to point out two other coincidences. The first is an event that anticipated this common thread, although it is further back in time and perhaps little known: the 60th anniversary of the so-called **Pact of the Catacombs**, which took place in Rome on 16 November 1965, in which, on the eve of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, some forty bishops from around the world, but mostly from Latin America and other countries of the then-called Third World, they came together in their commitment to devote themselves to a *poor Church for the poorest people, called to be an advocate for justice and the defence of this group, far removed from power and wealth*. It is no

coincidence that this same option was adopted and developed, in nearly identical terms, by Pope Francis in his first Apostolic Exhortation, *"Evangelii Gaudium"* (sections 197 and 198 of the chapter entitled "The privileged place of the poor in the People of God") and which constituted his prompt response to the words whispered in his ear by Brazilian Cardinal Hummes immediately after his election: *"Remember the poor"*.

And secondly, last week's publication of the **FOESSA 2025 Report**. This call for attention, from Caritas, challenges us and forces us to look in the mirror every year at the reality of our society and its suffering. These are indisputable facts and figures that prevent us from looking the other way and should compel us to answer the question of how it is possible that in a theoretically rich country maintains such pockets of poverty.

Certainly, the option for the poor, beyond a declaration and a statement of facts, must be a demand and a cry that springs from the heart of Jesus, who cries out to the Father and addresses the whole of society, asking for justice in a world riddled with selfishness and lust for power.

And the fact is, as the Bishop of Solsona reminded us in his weekly address, we cannot resign ourselves to poverty as an inevitable evil suffered by so many of our brothers and sisters, who know from experience that *"they cannot place their hope in the powers of this world, since only hope in God is firm and lasting... but without ceasing to support those policies and actions committed to transforming the world, combating the structural causes of poverty"*.

Thus, along these lines, the Pope reminds us that *caring for the poor is not only a social problem, but above all a family issue that must be addressed and resolved by a humanity that feels brotherly love for all people*.

The Message reminds us that, like the psalmist who inspired the theme of the Day, *"the poor can be witnesses to a strong and steadfast hope, precisely because they embody it in the midst of uncertainty, poverty, instability and marginalization"*.

And, therefore, he points to new real signs of hope that bear **witness** to Christian charity, as did many saints throughout the ages, and lists examples and proposals, such as family homes, communities for the reception of minors, listening and reception centres, soup kitchens for the poor, shelters, and popular schools. All this effort is justified because *"the poor are not recipients of our pastoral care, but creative subjects who challenge us to find novel ways of living out the Gospel today"*... adding our contribution to God's creative gesture, which gives everyone the fruits of the earth.

The Pope concludes this Message by recalling **the rights** whose absence most afflicts the poor, placing his *"hope that this Jubilee Year may promote the development of policies to combat old and new forms of poverty, as well as new initiatives to support and assist the poorest of the poor... Work, housing, education and health are the conditions for a security that will never be achieved with weapons"*.

Hope also shines through in his parting words, expressing his joy at the commitment that a large number of men and women of good will take on every day.

Hopefully the memory of this Day and the more extensive reflections offered to us by *Dilexi Te* help us to place the poorest people at the heart of the Church, since, as was said on the occasion of the recent Jubilee of the Poor in Rome, *"these days the least among us have taught us once again to pray with a confidence that only those who have the least understand"*.

EUDALD VENDRELL
Vicepresident, GC Justice&Peace

WE HAVE REASONS FOR HOPE

V World Meeting of Popular Movements

"I am with you!" were the words of Pope Leo XIV to the Popular Movements at the Fifth Gathering held in Rome from October 21 to 26. In a world marked by wars, a false peace deal regarding Gaza, international passivity and impunity, this meeting—promoted by Pope Francis—again brought together those who fight for Land, Housing and Work.

Taking part felt like witnessing the vision in Revelation: a multitude of peoples and tongues united by the desire for a more just world. No great intellectual figures were present, but ordinary people, often pushed aside, who embody Paul's words: God chooses those the world considers weak to challenge those who believe themselves strong.

The venue, Spin Time, symbolized this spirit: a public building set to be demolished and reclaimed to provide shelter for excluded families. Today it hosts more than a hundred households and social projects that practice a solidarity-based economy, recalling the first Christian communities: "No one was in need because they shared their goods."

Among the most moving testimonies was that of Lucas, captain of a rescue ship in the Mediterranean. He spoke of the pain of so often arriving too late and how, in the anguished faces of those struggling to survive, he recognizes the face of God.

He could not attend the beginning of the Gathering because he was being tried for rescuing migrants. On returning he affirmed: "If they persecute us, it is because we are doing the right thing." He also said that Pope Francis always encouraged him and told him: *"If they imprison you, I will come to see you."*

That is the world we long for: one that challenges unjust laws and knows that, although bombs make more noise, gestures of care and tenderness are more numerous and stronger.

The audience with Pope Leo XIV

was especially profound. His words, clear and prophetic, fell like balm: **"Listen carefully: I am with you!"** Like Jesus, he placed himself beside those who suffer oppression, exclusion or invisibility: those who recycle waste, endure persecution, hunger, violence, poverty, abuse and war. To all of them he said: **"I am with you!"**

If the meeting could be summed up in a single word, it would be **HOPE**: a hope that moves us, lifts us after every fall, knows that a small light defeats darkness, a single note breaks the silence, and a gentle touch dispels loneliness. A hope that assures us that goodness, though discreet, always has the final word.

MILAGROSA FERNÁNDEZ
GCJP Councillor, Justice & Peace Cádiz

WITHOUT EQUITY THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY

As 2024 comes to an end: the richest 1% has appropriated 41% of the wealth created since 2000, while the poorest 50% has received only 1%. According to Joseph Stiglitz, **countries with high inequality are seven times more likely to experience democratic decline than those that are more equitable.** Those who control the "war eco-

«Hope that does not leave you waiting impassively for the end, but lifts you up every time you fall, because you are certain that victory is assured. Because we know that a small flame of light conquers all darkness, that a vibration of sound prevails over the most resounding silence, and that a single caress dispels loneliness».

nomy" also control the media, including social networks, which "undermine the public sphere," as Zygmunt Bauman warns. While inequality tended to decrease from 1900 to 1970, from then on the super-rich began accumulating unprecedented power and wealth. "We cannot prioritize celebration over the dignity of people who continue dying in our streets," our colleague Mila Fernández denounced after the death of a homeless woman in San Fernando (Cádiz).

The latest FOESSA report also raises the alarm: growing inequality has fueled rising distrust in institutions and is cau-



sing a **"social tear"**, contributing, among other things, to an alarming and increasingly chronic rate of child poverty. This failure is so severe that it is scandalous that we have not reacted as a society and as a Church.

Adela Cortina warns: **"A true democracy cannot be built by despising those in the worst situations"**. The idea that poor people are to blame for their own poverty is no longer tenable. As the philosopher states, it is **"a true immorality that we have not already ended poverty."**

Hunger has become a weapon of war (Pope Leo). The military industry does not create jobs (Centre Delàs). There is no justification for continuing to increase militarization and the business of the "merchants of death," as Pope Francis has called them.

Everything is connected (LS 91).

"Green capitalism" cannot hide **climate plunder**, and the peoples of the Global South rightly demand payment of the ecological debt. A recent report shows that since 1990, the richest 0.1% produce more carbon pollution in a single day than someone from the poorest 50% produces in an entire year.

Far from justifying ourselves through catastrophism, we want to highlight the resurgence of social mobilization awakened by the genocide in Gaza, as well as the hope ignited by popular movements that build solidarity day by day. The path of encounter that the Church has opened with them has no return.

MÓNICA PRIETO
Technical Secretariat CGJP

Eudald Vendrell, Vice President of Justice and Peace Spain, and the undersigned took part in the General Assembly and the International Seminar of Justice and Peace Europe, held in Vilnius (Lithuania) from October 3 to 6, 2025. The gathering, under the theme **"Hope for Peace in Europe,"** took place in a Baltic country shaped by its membership in the EU and NATO and by the memory of its past in the former USSR. In a context of growing tensions between Europe and Russia, the Lithuanian population perceives a future war as almost inevitable.

Nineteen national Justice and Peace Commissions participated, together with representatives from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the CCEE, COMECE, Caritas Europe and the Council of Europe. Throughout the working days, there was dialogue with political, ecclesial and academic authori-

ties, and lectures were given by professors from the University of Vilnius on the country's history and its complex current relationship with the EU under the shadow of tensions with Putin's Russia.

Two main conclusions emerged from the meeting:

1. **Message to Europe:** move toward a coherent European Peace Strategy, with adequate defense but also with stronger diplomatic and humanitarian tools that foster dialogue.
2. **Message to the Church:** clearly embody the Gospel values of justice and peace, and build bridges through reconciliation and forgiveness. In this regard, Vilnius will host a **World Congress on Mercy** in June 2026.

The Assembly bid farewell to **Stefan Lunte**, Secretary General

of Justice and Peace Europe in recent years, thanking him for his service. His successor, **Marek Miśak** (Slovakia), expressed gratitude for the trust placed in him and his desire to foster collaboration with national Commissions and Church entities, as well as to promote the Church's social teaching. The undersigned was elected to a new three-year term on the Executive **Committee of Justice and Peace Europe (ExCo)**.

Finally, several key dates were announced: ExCo meeting in Rome, **December 9–11, 2025**; meeting of the general secretariats in Turin, **February 13–15, 2026**, with the 2026 Concerted Action as the central theme; and the next General Assembly and International Seminar of Justice and Peace Europe in Glasgow, **September 18–21, 2026**.

TON BROEKMAN
JP Palencia&ExCo JP Europe

PararLaGuerra, stop the wars

It has been **two years** since the initial manifesto of the movement that emerged in October 2023 to PararLaGuerra in Gaza, which Justice and Peace joined from the start. We have maintained our constant support for the calls and actions demanding an end to the occupation that the Israeli government has been imposing on the Palestinian people for decades, and continues to show extreme levels of violence both in Gaza as well as in the West Bank, where the cases of occupation, attacks on civilians and the destruction of homes and crops are rising.

On 10 October 2025, **the ceasefire in Gaza** came into effect, but a fair, stable and lasting peace plan has yet to show up. The truce has reduced immediate suffering, although the Gazan population remains without freedom of movement and faces severe restrictions on access to basic goods such as food, medicine, fuel, clothing and tents, with many families living outdoors as winter approaches.

UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese denounces that there is talk of a ceasefire while attacks continue: "They call it a ceasefire while Palestinians continue to die under Israeli fire". It has been recorded that 280 Palestinians have been killed, 672 wounded and more than 272 violations of the agreement on this month, 90.4% of which have been attributed to the Israeli army. For this reason, on 18 October in more than 200 Spanish cities and on 19 October in Madrid, we mobilised once again, demanding the Palestinian people's right to their culture, their economy, their territory and their life in peace.

We believe necessary redirect our support, reinforce the denounce and promote new mobilisations, also in provinces and cities. On 10 December, the concert 'Voices for Palestine' will be held in Valencia with more than ten artists, because even though the media has stopped covering this reality, our voices cannot be silenced.

At the same time, we join the clamour for peace in Sudan, Congo and more than fifty other active conflicts that are being ignored. Since 29 October 2023, PararLaGuerra has maintained a firm denunciation of the genocide in Palestine. Today, we are 135 organisations united under a common slogan: **No to Genocide. For a Just Peace. Free Palestine. Definitive Ceasefire. Neither Terrorism nor Genocide.**

With this message, we took to the streets of Madrid on 19 October, marching from Puerta del Sol to the Reina Sofía Museum, determined to unite diverse forces with a shared goal: to stop the genocide that Netanyahu, with Trump's support, is perpetrating against the Palestinian people.

FIDEL GARCÍA
Secretary-General, GC Justice and Peace

COP30 closed with the **"Belém Package"**, 29 decisions reached by consensus among 195 Parties. With especial highlight on climate justice and the creation of a Just Transition Mechanism to support workers, indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities. **In terms of financing**, it was agreed to triple funds by 2035 and to define 59 voluntary indicators to measure progress. The Technology Implementation Programme (TIP) was launched to accelerate green solutions in developing countries, as well as a two-year dialogue on trade and climate. **On energy transition**, there was no compromise to eliminate fossil fuels: the text avoids terms such as oil, gas or coal, despite requests from more than 80 countries. **Brazil** presented two roadmaps on energy and deforestation by their own. Another milestone was the **Tropical Forests Forever Facility** to support the conservation of tropical forests. Gender action and the role of local communities were also reinforced. A **Global Implementation Accelerator** was created to push for rapid action (for example, methane reduction and nature-based solutions). **Balance**: progress on adaptation and justice, but a lack of ambition when eliminating fossil fuels, which represents not a very transformative step.

COP30 in Brazil, 10–21 November

Every year on 18th October, European Anti-Trafficking Day is celebrated. This year, Justicia y Paz has participated with Confer, Cáritas and the Episcopal Conference in an event on 21 October at the Pablo VI Foundation. The event was divided into 2 panels. The **first panel**, focused internationally, addressed human trafficking in Europe and featured Adina Balan regional representative for Europe in Thalita Kum (the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons), Begoña Iñarra, from RENATE and María Rosa Venturelli, from the Italian USMI REYE ANTI-TRATA. The **second panel**, formed by board entities from the Spanish Church, featured the foundations Cruz Blanca, Cáritas Española Oblatas del Santísimo Redentor and Adoratrices. **The conclusions** highlighted that trafficking is a growing phenomenon that affects not only girls and women but also men. Trafficking is perpetrated for labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and organ trafficking. Recruitment does not only take place in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe, it also occurs in Spain via the Internet.

EU Anti-Trafficking Day

Church for Decent Work

As every year, Iglesia por el Trabajo Decente (Church for Decent Work) has joined the International Day for Decent Work on 7 October.

From this day, whose slogan was 'Decent work, a right not a privilege', we highlight the manifesto that reminded us that we must continue to demand fundamental decent working conditions. In addition, as Decent Work Day coincided with the Jubilee of Migrants on 5 October, the focus was on the working conditions of these workers, as well as on recognising the importance of their contribution to our country's GDP, because *'according to the European Central Bank, migrant workers have been responsible for 80% of Spain's economic growth over the last five years,'* a fact that seems to be forgotten when considering the importance of Spanish macroeconomic growth.

On the other hand, this year's symbol was based on an image that was printed on a sticker and distributed on all the events held in the different dioceses: hands stained with paint, signifying that we must all 'get our hands dirty', that is, commit ourselves to the demand for work. Decent, as stated in the manifesto: **'We demand justice. We demand humanity. We demand decent work: a right, not a privilege.'**

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Spain

The **report** of the 49th session, published in October, includes recommendations from the Human Rights Council. It urges the **ratification of international agreements** such as the Convention on Migrant Workers, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide, and the TPNW. It also calls for harmonizing legislation with international standards against torture, adopting comprehensive laws against discrimination and hate speech, and eliminating racial profiling by security forces. The **recommendations** cover protection against gender-based violence —judicial training, action against trafficking, online violence, and the recognition of femicide—; childhood, with measures against poverty and attention to migrant minors; and migration and asylum, ensuring rights and avoiding forced deportations. Improvements are highlighted for vulnerable groups such as the Roma people, persons with disabilities, the LGBTI+ community and ethnic minorities. The report also calls for progress on equality and on processes of truth, justice and reparation for victims of the Civil War and the dictatorship. In **economic and social rights**, it stresses the need to expand social housing, implement actions against poverty and exclusion, strengthen social security, and improve free, inclusive and quality education.

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