

REFLECTIONS ON POPE BENEDICT XVI'S MONTHLY INTENTIONS

August 2010

Editor's Note: Apostleship of Prayer receives monthly prayer intentions from Pope Benedict XVI and urges Christians throughout the world to unite in prayer for those intentions. The reflections below seek to illuminate the Holy Father's concerns.

General Intention

The Unemployed and the Homeless. *That those who are unemployed, homeless, or in any serious need may find welcome, understanding, and help in overcoming their difficulties.*



We are praying this month for people in serious need, but especially for the unemployed and the homeless. Certainly Pope Benedict chose this prayer intention with the recent economic crisis in mind. Stock markets may be up somewhat, but the world economy is still fragile. An economic problem in one country affects other countries. Suddenly people find themselves in serious need of help.

The U.S. unemployment rate for the last 12 months exceeds 9.5 percent, which means over 15 million Americans don't have jobs. On any given night, there are somewhere between 700,000 and 2 million homeless people in the U.S. Conservatively estimated, there are at least 100 million homeless people worldwide.

How are we to respond to these people in serious need? First and last, we pray for them. Beyond that, Pope Benedict asks us to welcome,

understand, and help them.

To welcome someone is to spend time with a person, recognizing that he or she is important to God and therefore to us. Let's remember that in welcoming anyone we are actually welcoming Jesus, for he identified himself with people in serious need. Only by spending time with someone can we begin to understand his or her situation. When we open ourselves to see each person with the Heart of Christ, we find loving and beautiful ways to respond. If we love, any action we do cannot be in vain.

Too often we think that helping the poor is simply a matter of giving money. This month the Holy Father is asking us to be more creative, to get personally involved. In doing so, we have a special opportunity to respect the worth and dignity of those in serious need. We are children of the same Father, so let us treat those in serious need as we would the members of our own family.



Reflection:

How will you become personally involved with someone in serious need? In what ways will you welcome, understand, and help others overcome their difficulties?

Reading:

Luke 9:58 Jesus said to them, "The foxes have lairs, the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Mission Intention

Victims of Discrimination, Hunger, and Forced Emigration. *That the Church may be a home for all people in need, opening its doors to any who suffer from racial or religious discrimination, hunger, or wars forcing their emigration.*

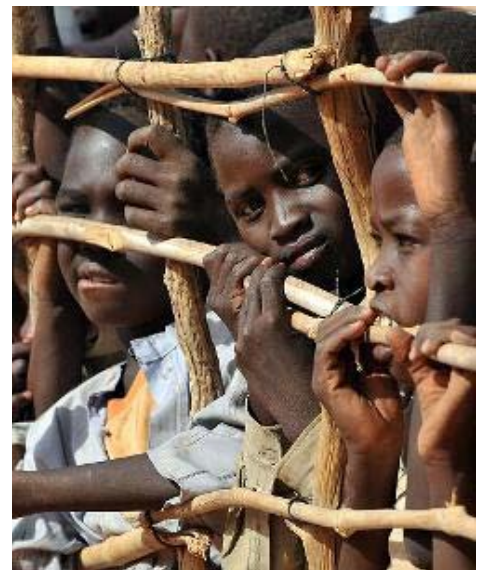


Migration is the history of the human race. It is also the history of God's people. The Jews migrated to Egypt in time of famine, then centuries later followed Moses back to their homeland. After Jesus was born, the Holy Family too fled to Egypt to escape the murderous intent of King Herod. Jesus began his life as a political refugee.

People have always migrated to escape drought, hardship, war, religious persecution, and discrimination, and they do so still. Each year many millions leave their own countries to find food, shelter, and safety in another country. In many cases families are split as one parent leaves to find work elsewhere and to send back support. We have seen such migration to the United States since the beginning, and we see it most recently in the many Latin American immigrants who have left their homes because of severe hardship.

This month Pope Benedict asks us to pray for those who have been forced to emigrate. Jesus said that people will be judged based on whether they welcomed the stranger (Matthew 25:35). In his third encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth), Pope Benedict called for policies among nations for "safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries."

Challenged by these and other Scriptures, the Holy Father asks us to pray with him that the Church may be a home for all people in need. He said: "Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance." As members of the Body of Christ, our hearts should go out to those in need just as Jesus' Heart does.



Reflection:

Immigration is a difficult and controversial issue. How are my own views challenged by what the Pope says? Do I see ways in which welcoming the immigrant relates to the sanctity of life?

Reading:

Leviticus 19: 33-34 When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt.

Prayer of the Month

St. Maximilian Kolbe, amidst the hate and lonely misery of Auschwitz, you brought love into the lives of fellow captives and sowed the seeds of hope amidst despair. You bore witness to the world by word and deed that "Love alone creates." Help me to become more like you. With the Church and Mary and you, may I proclaim that "Love alone creates." To the hungry and oppressed, the naked and homeless, the scorned and hated, the lonely and despairing, may I proclaim the power of Christ's love, which endures forever and ever. Amen.

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