

Reflections on

Pope Leo XIV

Dilexi Te

Apostolic Exhortation
on Love for the Poor

To Deepen Your Missionary Heart



English version of *Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi Te* of the
Holy Father Leo XIV to all Christians on Love for the
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Scripture passages taken from the revised standard
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Foreword

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When a scholar of the law asked Jesus which commandment was greatest, the answer was simple and total: love God with everything you have and love your neighbor as yourself. "On these two commandments, hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt 22:37). The second is not less than the first; it is the first made visible. To love our neighbors is to love our God in whose image they are made.

These reflections on Pope Leo XIV's apostolic exhortation *Dilexi Te* take this commandment seriously, particularly as it is lived out among the poor. These children of God are not a problem to be solved but a presence to be encountered and a roadmap to true transformation. In them, Christ makes himself available to us in a singular way, as he revealed: "You did it for me" (Mt 25:40). What we do for the least of these, we do for him.

These pages invite us into the heart of Christ. I invite you to read slowly, to sit with what is uncomfortable, and to return to the world with a heart that has grown wider and is more freely given.

In Christ's love,

Most Rev. Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS
Bishop of Charleston

Introduction

The heart of Jesus is the reason why we love the poor. The “poor” are those in want of something, whether that be in the spiritual or material sense. We are called to love with the heart of Jesus, but first we must know the heart of Jesus. *For how can one share His love with others, if one does not first know His love personally?*

Our desire to serve God must be rooted in love of God and a deep understanding of the love with which He first loved us.

The mission of Jesus is love. He was sent by the Father to communicate the Love of God to the world by His total gift of self on the cross. Often, we desire to give of ourselves, but we don’t fully understand the gift that Jesus has already given us in His cross. (Will we ever fully understand that mystery?) This reflection booklet was created to draw you deeper into the heart of God by first recognizing your own poverty and need for God. Then, and only then, can you come to love Jesus in the poor you encounter. The love of Jesus springs the disciple into mission and service of the poor.

This book should be used alongside Pope Leo XIV’s Apostolic Exhortation on Love for the Poor, *Dilexi Te: I have Loved You*. I encourage you to be open to the poor parts of your heart being exposed as we go through this study. And, I invite you to let Jesus come and heal you and love you in these parts of your heart. *Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto thine!*

Reflection Topics

This study includes most, but not all, of *Dilexi Te*. We encourage you to read the document in its entirety and follow the outline of this reflection booklet as you do.

1. Introduction: Love for the Poor
2. St. Francis and the Cry of the Poor
3. Ideological Prejudices
4. Jesus the Poor Messiah
5. Mercy Towards the Poor in the Bible
6. Freeing Prisoners
7. The Education of the Poor
8. Accompanying Migrants
9. At the Side of the Least Among Us
10. Structures of Sin that Create Poverty and
Extreme Inequality
11. The Good Samaritan Once Again
12. Almsgiving

Reflection Topics

To deepen your reflection, this study includes the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as how we live out meeting the material and spiritual needs of our neighbor.

Corporal Works of Mercy

1. Feed the Hungry
2. Give Drink to the Thirsty
3. Clothe the Naked
4. Shelter the Homeless
5. Visit the Sick
6. Visit the Imprisoned
7. Bury the Dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. Counseling the Doubtful
2. Instructing the Ignorant
3. Admonish the Sinner
4. Comforting the Sorrowful
5. Forgiving Injuries
6. Bearing Wrongs Patiently
7. Praying for the Living and the Dead

Scope and Sequence

How to Use this Reflection Journal

This reflection journal takes excerpts from each topic in *Dilexi Te*, highlighting a ***phrase or word*** to help the reader focus on one part of Pope Leo XIV's exhortation.

The two-part reflection questions are designed, first, to ask the reader to reflect on Matthew 22 alongside this specific *Dilexi Te* word or phrase, and to explore how one might put faith into action by loving God and neighbor as a missionary disciple.

The second reflection question encourages the reader to continue reflecting on their own experience, to pay attention to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and to engage their missionary heart through the graces of their sacramental baptism and confirmation.

Love for the Poor

Reflection 1: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 1-3

Phrase: “ In this call to recognize him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices, which every saint seeks to imitate.”

Word: Heart of Christ

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. In order to love the poor, we must first know the very heart of Christ ourselves. How do you understand the heart of God? In what ways do you desire to know His heart more?

Love for the Poor

Reflection 1: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 1-3

Continued

How are you being called to imitate the heart of Christ in your love for others? What part of your heart have you not fully surrendered to Christ?

The Cry of the Poor

Reflection 2: *Dilexi Tē*, Paragraphs 4-9

Phrase: In hearing the cry of the poor, we are asked to enter into the heart of God, who is always concerned for the needs of his children, especially those in greatest need.

Word: Heart of God

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. We must love with the heart of God. How has contact with the poor shown you the heart of God?

We must know the love of Christ before we attempt to share it with others. In what ways does Christ love *me* in my poverty?

Ideological Prejudices

Reflection 3: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 10-15

Phrase: “‘The poor’ shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life...”

Word: Exclude

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. This love has no room for prejudice or judgment. What judgments in my heart keep me from loving people around me daily? Think of specific people you are being called to love as God loves.

We love others as we believe we are loved by God. What parts of your heart need healing so that you can love the poor freely and not exclude your love for those you serve?

Jesus, the Poor Messiah

Reflection 4: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 16-23

Phrase: “By his Incarnation, he “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Phil 2:7), and in that form he brought us salvation. His was a radical poverty, grounded in his mission to reveal fully God’s love for us.”

Word: Emptied Himself

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. Jesus sets the first example of love for us in His total gift of self to us on the cross. How are you being called to give of yourself presently to your family, friends, coworkers, and strangers in a way that you are not already? What is one concrete way that God may be calling you to love the poor within your circle of influence?

Jesus, the Poor Messiah

Reflection 4: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 16-23

Continued

What is the mission to which God has called you? Jesus accepted willingly his mission taking the form of a slave, how might your life take on a servant's heart for others in your family and parish community?

Mercy Towards the Poor in the Bible

Reflection 5: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 24-34

Phrase: The Lord's appeal to show mercy to the poor culminates in the great parable of the last judgment (cf. Mt 25:31-46), which can serve as a vivid illustration of the Beatitude of the merciful. In that parable, the Lord offers us the key to our fulfillment in life; indeed, "if we seek the holiness pleasing to God's eyes, this text offers us one clear criterion on which we will be judged."

Word: Beatitude of the merciful

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to "Love God and Neighbor". Pope Leo reminds us that this love for God and neighbor is how we will be judged at the end of time. How are you living out these two greatest commandments daily?

Mercy Towards the Poor in the Bible

Reflection 5: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 24-34

Continued

Reflect

In this same parable, Jesus exhorts his followers, “truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” The “least” of our brethren are often our closest family and friends. Who is someone in your own life that the Lord is calling you to surrender to His care and make a concrete action of love toward?

Freeing Prisoners

Reflection 6: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 59-62

Phrase: “Prison is a place of great humanity... Humanity that is tried, sometimes worn down by difficulties, guilt, judgments, misunderstandings, suffering, but at the same time full of strength, desire for forgiveness, and a desire for redemption.” - Pope Francis

Word: Redemption

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. One of the greatest ways we can love another is share with them the redemption found in Jesus Christ. We must know this redemption first. How has Christ set you free?

Freeing Prisoners

Reflection 6: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 59-62

Continued

In your life, who is someone in bondage who could benefit from you sharing with them about the freedom found in Jesus?

The Education of the Poor

Reflection 7: *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 68-72

Phrase: “Yours is a mission full of obstacles as well as joys...
A mission of love, because you cannot teach without loving.”
-Pope Francis

Word: Teach

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39, Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. This love for neighbor includes teaching those around us about the love of God for them. In your state in life, how do you teach others about the love of Christ and the mission of the Church?

How do you think God is calling you to actively teach about Him and His love to those around you daily?

Accompanying Migrants

Reflection 8 : *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 73-75

Phrase: Christ himself, who “came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him” (Jn 1:11), lived among us as a stranger.

Word: Stranger

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. This love for neighbor includes all those we come in contact with on a daily basis-- even the stranger. How do you welcome the stranger in your life daily?

What habits or attitudes do you feel the Lord is asking you to root up in your life, so that you can have room for *His love* to take root in your heart?

The Least Among Us

Reflection 9 : *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 76-81

Phrase: “We are wanting to proclaim the good news to the poor that God loves them, that we love them, that they are somebody to us, that they too have been created by the same loving hand of God, to love and to be loved. Our poor people are great people, are very lovable people, they do not need our pity and sympathy, they need our understanding love. They need our respect; they need that we treat them with dignity.” - Saint Mother Teresa

Word: God loves them

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. Our neighbor is closer than we think. He is our closest family member or friend. Who are the poor in your own life? How do you love these poorest of the poor?

The Least Among Us

Reflection 9 : *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 76-81

Continued

Who are the people in your life that you may not have recognized as “poor” before- those who are struggling, suffering, and in need of God’s love? We often put off loving those closest to us. What is a concrete way that you can love one of these people in your life *today*?

Structures of Sin

Reflection 10 : *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 90-98

Phrase: Charity has the power to change reality; it is a genuine force for change in history.

Word: Charity

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. Answering this call of Jesus to charity will change the world. How do you see your charity changing the reality of the poor in your community?

Are there situations in your life that God is calling you to charity, and yet, you have delayed answering the call? How could you be more charitable with your family, parish, community? (Time, talent, treasure)

The Good Samaritan

Reflection 11 : *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 103-114

Phrase: Love for the poor — whatever the form their poverty may take — is the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God. Indeed, one of the priorities of every movement of renewal within the Church has always been a preferential concern for the poor.

Word: Hallmark

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. How can you make love for the poor a hallmark of your daily life by loving the stranger in your midst?

What insecurities keep you from going out of your comfort zone to love the stranger? (Ask God for healing from these things.)

Almsgiving

Reflection 12 : *Dilexi Te*, Paragraphs 114-121

Phrase: Lack of work means far more than simply not having a steady source of income. Work is also this, but it is much, much more. By working we become a fuller person, our humanity flourishes, young people become adults only by working.

Word: Work

Reflect

In Matthew 22:36-39. Jesus teaches us to “Love God and Neighbor”. How do you live this out in the workplace?

What is your primary vocation, your most important work, and how do you live out the call of your vocation daily? How, perhaps, have you grown lukewarm in living in the grace of your calling daily?

The Corporal Works of Mercy

I. Feed the Hungry

How might you live out feeding the hungry in your daily life?

[illegible]

The Corporal Works of Mercy

2. Give Drink to the Thirsty

How might you live out giving drink to the thirsty in your daily life?

[illegible]

The Corporal Works of Mercy

3. Clothe the Naked

How might you live out clothing the naked in your daily life?

[illegible]

The Corporal Works of Mercy

4. Shelter the Homeless

How might you live out sheltering the homeless in your daily life?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

The Corporal Works of Mercy

5. Visit the Sick

How might you live out visiting the sick in your daily life?

[illegible]

The Corporal Works of Mercy

6. Visit the Imprisoned

How might you live out visiting the imprisoned in your daily life?

The Corporal Works of Mercy

7. Bury the Dead

How might you live out burying the dead in your daily life?

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

I. Counseling the Doubtful

How might you live out counseling the doubtful in your daily life?

[illegible]

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

2. Instructing the Ignorant

How might you live out instructing the ignorant in your daily life?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

3. Admonish the Sinner

How might you live out admonishing the sinner in your daily life?

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

4. Comforting the Sorrowful

How might you live out comforting the sorrowful in your daily life?

[illegible]

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

5. Forgiving Injuries

How might you live out forgiving injuries in your daily life?

[illegible]

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

6. Bearing Wrongs Patiently

How might you live out bearing wrongs patiently in your daily life?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

7. Praying for the Living and the Dead

How might you live out praying for the living and the dead in your daily life?

[illegible]

Prayer to Love God & Neighbor

Matthew 22:36-39

Dear Jesus,

Help me see Your face in everyone
I encounter.

Give me the grace and humility to
love God with all my heart and to
love my neighbor as myself.

Increase my faith, hope, and love
that I may live out Your will every
day in word and deed.

Amen.

Our Mission Statement:

Strengthened by Jesus Christ, Catholic Charities of South Carolina answers the call to “Love God and neighbor” (Matthew 22), by serving the material and spiritual needs of all people for the salvation of souls.

