

DILEXI TE (I HAVE LOVED YOU)

Reflecting with Pope Leo XIV



As a continuation of Pope Francis' reflections in Dilexit Nos (He Loved Us), on the human and divine love of the heart of Christ, Pope Leo XIV offers Dilexi Te (I Have Loved You), on Christ's love for the poor. This prayer reflection on Dilexi Te is fourth in a series, following three earlier reflections on Dilexit Nos. As you pray through these words of Pope Leo, consider how you might share this reflection and your story of faith with others in your community.

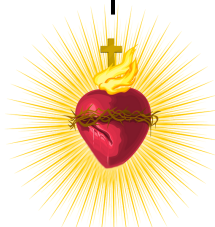
Dilexi Te is an invitation to contemplate Christ's love. Pope Leo recalls Pope Francis's encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, where his predecessor noted that contemplating Christ's love, seen in his self-offering on the cross for all people, leads us to become more attentive to the suffering and needs of others. We are invited by virtue of our faith and our baptism to be instruments of liberation that flows from

Christ's love (no. 2). Contemplating Christ's love always brings us to contemplate his particular love for the poor and lowly. Pope Leo issued *Dilexi Te* to help people "to appreciate the close connection between Christ's love and his summons to care for the poor" (no. 3).

This prayer resource is an opportunity to carve out a quiet space in our hearts where we can deeply contemplate Pope Leo's invitation in *Dilexi Te*, that we might better understand how Christ's love is necessarily connected to love for the poor. This guide for prayer, reflection, and study can be used by individuals, or in a group setting; it is best used after reading the full text of *Dilexi Te*.

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In *Dilexi Te*, Pope Leo describes "**Jesus, the Poor Messiah,**" who became poor and was close to the poor. Pope Leo writes, "Wanting to inaugurate a kingdom of justice, fraternity and solidarity, God has a special place in his heart for those who are discriminated against and oppressed, and he asks us, his Church, to make a decisive and radical choice in favor of the weakest" (no. 16).



This is followed by a section on mercy towards the poor in the Bible and how our tradition has responded to those who lack material goods, are excluded or discriminated against. Begin this time of reflection by carefully and prayerfully re-reading the second chapter of *Dilexi Te*. (You may also find it helpful to spend time in prayer with this meditation on the gaze of Christ, which was inspired by *Dilexit Nos*, the encyclical which came before *Dilexi Te*).

Then, reflect on the following questions:

- How does Jesus' identity as one who became poor himself challenge us to see the modern-day poor differently?
- How does Pope Leo encourage us to think about the many facets of poverty today?

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Dilexi Te also invites us to **open our eyes to the cry of the poor** among us today. Pope Leo writes: "I am convinced that the preferential choice for the poor is a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society, if we can only set ourselves free of our self-centeredness and open our ears to their cry" (no. 7). Reflect on the following:

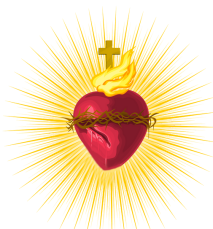
- How does self-centeredness make our ears closed to the cry of the poor?
- How can we turn our hearts towards others, unblocking our ears so that we may hear?

As we begin to move away from self-centeredness in the model of the Good Samaritan, we become better able to see and hear those around us. Pope Leo recognizes many forms of poverty that afflict people and society today: "the poverty of those who lack material means of subsistence, the poverty of those who are socially marginalized and lack the means to give voice to their dignity and abilities, moral and spiritual poverty, cultural poverty, the poverty of those who find themselves in a condition of personal or social weakness or fragility, the poverty of those who have no rights, no space, no freedom" (no. 9).

- Who are the poor in your midst? Who is wounded; lacking in material means; socially marginalized; morally, spiritually or culturally poor; fragile; or without rights?
- In what ways is it true that our throw-away culture "discards others without even realizing it and tolerates with indifference" the poverty which affects so many (no. 11)?

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Pope Leo urges that "care and attention for the poor be **more clearly present in the Church**" (no. 35). In each of our roles as members of the global Church, what are practical ways in which we can respond to this challenge? Pope Leo mentions the following areas of activity as signs of hope. Christ's love for us



strengthens us to love our brothers and sisters, even when it might be uncomfortable or inconvenient. How might you engage in the examples Pope Leo gives below? In what ways might Christ be calling you to engage?

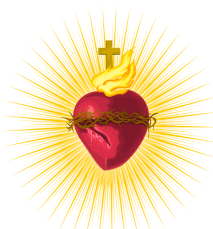
- “Since apostolic times, the Church has seen the **liberation of the oppressed** as a sign of the Kingdom of God” (no. 59). In what ways are we called to accompany people in prisons and detention centers (no. 62)?
- How can the “witnesses of **evangelical poverty**” (no. 62) inspire us to practices in solidarity with the poor?
- “**Knowledge** liberates, gives dignity, and brings us closer to the truth” and teaching the poor is “an act of justice and faith” (no. 68). In addition, Pope Leo writes, we must “consider marginalized communities as *subjects* capable of creating their own culture, rather than as *objects* of charity on the part of others” (no. 100). How can you contribute to knowledge that promotes human dignity, and support the efforts of those most impacted by poverty?
- We are called to accompany migrants, for “In every rejected migrant, it is Christ himself who knocks at the door of the community” (no. 75). Similarly, we must accompany those who are “least” and the community

organizations (popular movements) that seek changes to benefit the poor. How can the Church better accompany these communities?

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Pope Leo urges that we must address “**Structures of sin** that create poverty and extreme inequality” (no. 90). He says that we must resolve structural causes of poverty and inequality, and that our charitable works, while essential to responding to our neighbors in need, must be considered “merely provisional” (no. 94).

- How do you see social sin reflected in the reality of poverty in the world? How does your community work to address the root causes of poverty? In the U.S., the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) is a sign of hope in many communities. Read more about their work and the work happening near you at povertyusa.org.
- [This infographic](#) from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development depicts the cycle of poverty and inequality that is fostered by the culture of accumulation, unjust systems, exclusion, and social indifference. What role might you play in the conversion of hearts and structures that is necessary for addressing poverty together?



Addressing these challenges, Pope Leo says, is essential to the Church's evangelizing mission: "As the Body of Christ, the Church experiences the lives of the poor as her very 'flesh,' for theirs is a privileged place within the pilgrim people of God. Consequently, 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" (no. 103).

- What does it mean for love for the poor to be "the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God" (no. 103).

As you close your time of reflection, reflect on the challenges and consolations you heard in the word of Pope Leo. Where do you feel strengthened in your faith and where might Christ be asking you to do more?



You may wish to end this time of prayer with the prayer below inspired by Pope Leo's image of Christ Jesus, the poor Messiah.

"Jesus, the Poor Messiah"

Prayer Inspired by Pope Leo XIV's
Dilexi Te (I Have Loved You)

**Christ Jesus, the poor Messiah,
you were born in a stable,
unwelcome at the inn,
raised in a family that laid
no claim to land,
who worked with their hands
and gleaned from the fields.**

**Messiah of and for the poor,
you were a traveling preacher
with no place to lay your head,
and found welcome on the margins.**

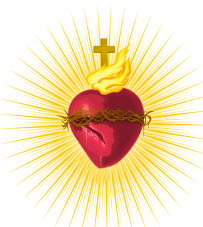
**Christ our salvation,
you brought liberty to the
oppressed and poor,
you touched the leper and
healed the sick,
inviting all to know the
primacy of the love of God.**

**Lord Jesus Christ,
you call us to holiness
that is rooted in mercy.
May we contemplate your love,
that we may become attentive to the
suffering and needs of others,
and share in your work of liberation.
Amen.**



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