

Walking with the excluded

Walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice

The second **Universal Apostolic Preference** which we are considering this week, again, involves all of us, individually and as a community.

It is very easy to look at the world we live in, and we are all aware of what is happening in places like Afghanistan and other areas, torn apart by war and conflict.

We are reminded:

“It is He, the incarnate, crucified, and risen Lord, who shows us his wounds and invites us to join with him in the quest for justice.”

It is easy to see his wounds in those affected by the situation in Afghanistan. It is easy to see the ‘Outcasts of the world’ and those ‘whose dignity has been violated’ in those who are trying to cross the Channel to reach the United Kingdom. Who would not want justice for these people?

“He impels us toward new frontiers, accompanying those whom society has discarded, announcing the Good News to one and all, so that they might be transformed by the love of our God.”

Perhaps we have been moved to support and help the Afghan community based in Feltham - a very practical way to share with others, the love of our God.

However, when considering this **Universal Apostolic Preference**, we need to look a little closer to home.

Do we, first and foremost, desire a conversion in our own hearts, that makes us alive and sensitive to the suffering Christ in our midst?

Does our community really desire to be more hospitable and open, learning how to live more deeply in the Spirit of Jesus, a Spirit that welcomes all?

This Universal Apostolic Preference is an opening to grace, like the others. We need to remember that, yes, we co-operate. But the real agent is God.

“Sent as companions in a mission of reconciliation and justice, we resolve to walk with individuals and communities that are vulnerable, excluded, marginalized, and humanly impoverished”



Universal Apostolic Preferences: Our United Mission

We don't need to go to Afghanistan or even the English Channel to find the vulnerable, excluded, or marginalised. Such people are sitting here, with us, in the church, now. Perhaps the experience of the last year and a half has left us feeling any one, or all these things. Am I in danger of losing my job? Have I lost it? What am I struggling with? What has been the experience of the person beside me or the person in the bench in front or behind me? Have I taken the trouble to ask?

We began a 'new tradition' just before the pandemic, which was to greet each other at the beginning of a service. Perhaps it is something we can do again. We cannot, of course, shake hands, but we can genuinely inquire how the person is, and how they are coping with all the changes that we have experienced recently.

Over time, our community will learn how to be more open and hospitable and learn how to live more deeply in the Spirit of Jesus, a Spirit that welcomes all. We will truly desire a conversion in our own hearts, that makes us alive and sensitive to the suffering Christ in our midst.

We will learn to 'see' the victims of abuse of power, abuse of conscience, and sexual abuse; the outcasts of this world; all those whom the biblical tradition knows as the poor of the earth, to whose cry the Lord responds with his liberating incarnation. They are here beside us.

What has been my experience of being close to the poor and marginalized and what have I gained from it?

How can I make this closeness more effective and fruitful?

How do I respond to Christ's call to a mission of justice and reconciliation?

Again, as we did last week, we can share our answers to these questions, anonymously, using the post-it notes in the porch on the way out.