



International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

October 17

“Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.”

— Fr. Joseph Wresinski, French priest and humanitarian activist

These words are etched in a commemorative stone at the Human Rights Plaza in Paris which was dedicated in the presence of over 100,000 people in 1987. Just a few years later, on the anniversary of the unveiling, observation of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty began in 1993. The United Nations General Assembly designated the day to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries. It calls us both to greater awareness of the plague of poverty in our world and to concrete actions its relief.

The commemoration of Oct. 17 also reflects the willingness of people living in poverty to use their expertise to contribute to the eradication of poverty. Participation of the poor themselves has been at the center of the Day's celebration since its very beginning. This sentiment is a valuable tenet of liberation theology: that we recognize the poor as experts of their own experience. Liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez, explains: “If there is no friendship with [the poor] and no sharing of the life of the poor, then there is no authentic commitment to liberation, because love exists only among equals.”¹

As you pray with the following excerpt from the Gospel of John consider how you might honor the expertise of those living in poverty, sharing life and love with them. How can you demonstrate authentic commitment to liberation?

[Jesus said] ‘My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me, and as I told the Jews, ‘Where I go you cannot come,’ so now I say it to you. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’²

For more information about the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, visit: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-for-eradicating-poverty/background>

¹ A Theology of Liberation, (1972)

² John 3: 33-35