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Acts of kindness become a sign of hope

Stirred by Pope Leo XIV's call to love the poor, a family reaches out to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, persuaded that in every act of compassion, we meet Christ and share the hope of the Gospel.

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The poor are not a distraction for the Church, but rather our beloved brothers and sisters. Through their

lives, their words, and their wisdom, they reveal to us the truth of the Gospel. With these words, Pope Leo XIV sets the tone of the 9th World Day of the Poor. The jubilee of the Poor is to be celebrated on November 16. His message is clear the poor are at the heart of the Gospel and of the Church's mission. Through their lives, their voices, their faces and stories, they lead us closer to Christ.

Those words of Leo XIV's, stirred our hearts deeply. My husband and I wanted not only to help those in need but to awaken compassion in our children and friends. We turned our gaze once more to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside—the most impoverished neighborhood in Canada. There, countless people struggle with addiction, homelessness, and loneliness.

We invited family and friends and together make bagged lunches for

Downtown Eastside residents. The response was immediate and full of love. Parents, teens, and young adults gathered spreading bread, packing fruit and cookies, slipping a small note of hope into each bag. As we worked, we prayed—for the hands that would receive each meal and for hearts burdened by hardship.

When we arrived at the park, we set up two simple tables, one held the lunches; the other held gently used clothes. The food disappeared within minutes. “God bless you!” echoed over and over from those who came forward. Some lingered to talk. We listened to stories of loss, family, faith, and unexpected turns in life. One woman had once attended our daughter’s Catholic high school. Another had been a business man before falling on hard times. Their gratitude was palpable -not just for the meal, but for being seen and

heard, their dignity and humanity recognised.

In past years, our family has also served through the St. Vincent de Paul Society, joining parish councils across Vancouver that offer aid to struggling families, refugees, and new immigrants. Our children grew up helping to put together Christmas hampers brimming with groceries, gifts and gifts cards for teens. We've also volunteered at *The Door is Open*, drop-in centre, run by the Vancouver Archdiocese across from Oppenheimer Park that offers meals, clothing a welcoming refuge for those in need.

Pope Leo's message ends with a challenge and a promise: that this Jubilee Year might inspire new efforts to overcome poverty in every form.

Through your work, he says in *Dilexite* (n. 121), *your efforts to change*

unjust social structures or your simple, heartfelt gesture of closeness and support, the poor will come to realize that Jesus' words are addressed personally to each of them: "I have loved you" (Rev 3:9).

We may not be all able to carry out grand projects to help the poor, but in serving them, we meet Christ Himself. In their eyes, we glimpse mercy that transforms hearts. Every act of kindness—every smile, prayer, and shared meal—becomes a sign of hope.

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