



Week 4:

A Culture of Encounter

One of Pope Francis' favorite catch-phrases is "culture of encounter," especially when applied to those in material poverty or who live on the margins of society. It's difficult to understand the reality of poverty from statistics, much less help effectively.

But, as Christians, we are called to love our neighbor, not just help them from afar. How do we treat those in need as fellow children of God with human dignity without meeting them in-person?

Reaching Out

As part of a video message to Argentina, Pope Francis spoke of connecting with those in poverty:

What's important is that we don't just look at them from afar or help from afar. No, no! We must reach out to them. This is being Christian! This is what Jesus taught us: to reach out to the needy. Like Jesus who always reached out to the people. He went to meet them. Reaching out to those most in need.

Sometimes, I ask people, "Do you give alms." They say, "Yes, father." "And when you give alms, do you look into the eyes of people you are giving alms to?" "Ah, I do not know, I don't really think about it." "Then you have not reached out to those people. You just tossed them some charity and went away. When you give alms, do you



touch their hands or just toss them the coins?" "No, I toss them the coins." "Then you have not touched them. And if you have not touched them, you have not reached out to them." What Jesus teaches us, first of all, is to reach out to each other, and in reaching out, helping one another.

We must be able to reach out to each other. We must build, create, construct a culture of encounter.... With those who are going through a bad time, far worse than what I'm going through.

There is always someone who is having [it] worse, eh? Always! There is always someone....

When you meet those most in need, your heart will begin to grow bigger, bigger and bigger! Because reaching out multiplies our capacity to love. An encounter with others makes our heart bigger.

Learn More on the Website

Short Videos – "Anderson Cooper: How I See Homeless People Now," "Have the Homeless Become Invisible."

Two Interesting Articles – "Statue of Homeless Jesus Startles a Wealthy Community," "Get to Know a Person in Poverty."

Visit:

<http://gospel.link/helping4>