



Inter-Faith  
Outreach

WITNESSES OF HOPE  
AND JUSTICE



World Day  
*of the* Poor



# World Day of the Poor

## WELCOME

It's my singular honour and pleasure to welcome distinguished clerics of all faiths to this panel on World Day of the Poor 2021, aired on Trinity TV and organized by the Catholic Commission for Social Justice and its visionary chair, Leela Ramdeen. We may take the relationship between faith communities for granted here, but we don't realize how our small Islands serve as a shining light to the world on religious and ethnic tolerance and respect.

Until we see events like these which I, daresay, are a small miracle in the world today. It is said that a truly civilized society is measured by the manner in which it treats its most vulnerable. World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization reports that some 700 million people live in poverty globally. Covid 19 has driven 97 million people to extreme poverty. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, the Human Development Report 2020 reveals that over 51,000 of our citizens are vulnerable to poverty. Religious leaders from all faiths gathering together with a single purpose to help those in need gives us great hope in these grim times.

Thank you all for being here. We have an hour. Each cleric will speak for four minutes on what their faith says about meeting the needs of the poor. The order is strictly alphabetical except for Archbishop Jason Gordon, as it's a Catholic venture, and it's my pleasure now to invite Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon to start the proceedings.

**IRA MATHUR**

President of the Media  
Association of Trinidad  
and Tobago





Roman Catholic



"Link salvation to the Corporal works of mercy."



World Day  
*of the* Poor



Speaker

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## ARCHBISHOP, CHARLES JASON GORDON

Thank you very much, and thanks to everyone who has come. And thanks to you who are viewing us today. Pope Francis has started this World Day of The Poor in 2015 as a way of really focusing the minds of people of goodwill all over the world to ask the question, what are we doing to alleviate poverty?

How are we treating our brothers and sisters who are on the fringe? What are we doing as individuals, as people of faith, as a national community, in looking at working for and alleviating those on the fringe? In the Christian tradition, and in the Catholic tradition, we have a particular way of understanding poverty.





The Scripture says that Christ is the icon of the invisible God, and Jesus says in Matthew 25, “I was naked, I was hungry, I was sick, I was in prison, and you either fed me, clothed me, visited me, or you did not.”

Link Salvation to the Corporal works of mercy, which is the work of alleviating the plight of the poor, of consoling and of giving what is necessary for food, shelter and clothing. That already says something; that the image of God is tied up with the image of the poor.

In the reading, we see our theme for today, “the poor you will have with you always,” and that has been seen by many as a dismissal of the needs of dealing with the poor or taking the poor seriously.



Pope Francis, in his reflection on World Day of The Poor 2021, reflecting on the theme, says, “no, Jesus actually says something much more profound. That wherever you meet the poor, there you will meet God also, and God will always be with you. And therefore to see the poor is to see God. And so the plight of the poor is the conscience of God.

Many tried to downplay the poor, but Jesus did not. The little widow who put in her two coins put in far more than all the others who put in a lot of money. James in his epistle 2:17 says, “you say you have faith, I have good works. In the same way, you show me your faith, I can show you my good works.” James is saying that there is no true faith without helping the poor. He goes on to say, “and if a poor person comes to you and says, “I'm hungry, I'm starving and I'm in need”, and you say, “God bless you, I will pray for you, go your way, then you're not living true faith.” That's not true faith.



In a moment of great prosecution, the Church was under siege and the Roman Emperor had already martyred or killed Pope Sixtus. The Deacon, Lawrence was called to the viceroy and he was told, “bring all the treasures of the Church.” And what Deacon Lawrence did, was he took all they had and handed it out to the poor, and then he brought all the poor to the viceroy, and said that he wanted the treasures of the Church? “Here are the true treasures of the Church.” And he had a parade of the poor, of the indigent, of those who were in this long line of squalor. That's the true treasure. Why? Because that's where we see the face of God. That's where we can encounter God. And that's not sentimental, as if we are supposed to go there and feel nice about [ourselves]. No, it is like Simon of Serene, who is asked to take the burden light or Veronica, who is asked to bring comfort to Christ in his crucifixion. And so encountering God and the poor is not simply about sentimentality. It is to do something with the weight of the burden [of the poor] by easing [poverty and suffering] and by touching them.



In our tradition, John Chrysostom says that “don't think that your generosity; you should ask the poor to account for their conduct or to improve their condition as a way of justifying whether or not you will do anything with them.” John Chrysostom says, “the poor have only one plea, their poverty and the condition and the need in which they find themselves. Do not ask them anything else. But even if they are the most wicked persons in the world, if they lack the necessary nourishment, let us free them from hunger.

The merciful are like a harbour of those in need. The harbour welcomes and frees from danger all those who are shipwrecked. Whether they are evildoers, good persons or whatever they may be, the harbour shelters them within its inlet. You too, therefore, when you see on land, a man or a woman who has suffered the shipwreck of poverty, do not judge. Do not ask for an account of their conduct, but deliver them from their misfortune.” That's in John Chrysostom.

Roman Catholic  
DOCTRINE

That gives a capsule of our tradition and how we understand the care for the poor. It's not whether they're nice, good or bad people. The fact that someone is poor, demands of us, a response of love, compassion and care.

Thank you.



# Presbyterian



"[T]he Church is called to be in solidarity with the poor..."



World Day  
*of the* Poor



# Speaker

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## RIGHT REVEREND JOY MOHAN

My dear ecumenical and interfaith siblings, I deem it an honour to be part of this webinar on the fifth World Day of The Poor observance 2021. The theme for this international observance, “the poor you will always have with you,” taken from the Gospel according to Mark is a timely one, especially as we continue to grapple with a global pandemic. The Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT) as a reformed Christian community, teaches that the only way we can give visible, tangible, and concrete expression of our faith, in and love for Christ, is by loving our neighbour with a preferential option for the poor and marginalized. The Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago believes that the Church is called to be in solidarity with the poor and is anointed to preach good news to the poor through active missional outreach and using its resources to eradicate poverty of all kinds.





# Presbyterian DOCTRINE

The PCTT also believes that poverty has a direct correlation to injustice, inequality, and oppression. The Presbyterian Church does not accept poverty as good but that the Church has a moral and spiritual responsibility to consciously attempt to restructure social, political, and economic conditions to alleviate, and ideally to eradicate poverty. And finally, the Presbyterian Church embraces the theology of liberation which reinforces the conclusion that poverty is a scandalous condition, inimical to human dignity and therefore contrary to the will of God.

Islam

"Care for the poor is ranked very high as a form of worship in Islam."



World Day  
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# Speaker

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## BROTHER SHAFIUDEEN ALI

Thank you very much Madam Chair. Fellow speakers, all protocol observed, good morning. As-salamu alaikum, may the peace and blessings of Almighty God be with you all. I begin in the name of Allah, most beneficent and most merciful. I send praise and thanks to the Lord Almighty for the gift of life and for His sustenance. It's through His mercy and compassion we are present here today in the spirit of brotherhood and unity of purpose. In today's short talk I will touch on the guiding principles which are followed in Islam, very prescriptive with respect to interfaith meetings and charity, then conclude with a summary of the Muslims' contribution towards alleviating the plight of the poor in our land. Please know that God Almighty, Lord Almighty, and Allah are names which, I use interchangeably here as they all refer to the One and Only God.



# Islam

## DOCTRINE

The Quran tells us, “verily, oh mankind, we created you from a single pair of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may get to know one another. Surely, the noblest of you in the sight of God, is he who is most righteous.” That is the mantra by which believing Muslims live. In Islam, there are five pillars of faith by which Muslims serve God almighty. One must have faith in the oneness of God and believe that the Prophet Muhammad upon whom He pieces His last messenger, they may engage in prayer five times a day, give of charity referred to sometimes as Zakat, observing the fast during the month of Ramadan, and performing pilgrimage to the Hajj once they can afford it.



# Islam

## DOCTRINE

Care for the poor is ranked very high as a form of worship in Islam. It is mentioned some 80 times in the Holy Quran. Such is the importance God Almighty places on this subject. It seems like our salvation may lie in part with the way we treat with the poor. Many of you may have heard the term “zakat,” which is a mandatory form of charity. Zakat requires us to spend out of what God has given. Almighty God has ordained a minimum of two and a half per cent of one's wealth to be calculated annually and spent on the poor and the needy. There are strict guidelines with respect to the use of zakat funds. They are to be used for feeding the poor, sheltering the homeless, assisting the needy with their rents and loan payments etc., helping those living with unmanageable debt, and of course, helping stranded and struggling travellers. Muslims are not permitted to use the zakat funds for payments to their spouses, children, parents, or grandparents. That's their obligation.

# Islam

## DOCTRINE

So how do we do this? Most Muslim organisations have set up zakat administration committees to assist the Muslims with their zakat distribution. These committees follow strict guidelines evaluating the needs of applicants, and dispersing funds accordingly. Individuals are free to manage their own zakat if they choose. Muslims view the payment of zakat in the following ways: it cleanses one's wealth, it fulfils the basic principle of Islam, and it's an act which pleases God Almighty, so as to gain His blessings and rewards in the life hereafter. Furthermore, care of the poor does not end with zakat in the life of a Muslim.

The greater portion of a Muslim's charity comes from voluntary giving. Voluntary charity or "sadaqah," in Arabic, is highly encouraged in Islam, as I said, it's spoken of over 80 times in the Quran. It's an act of righteousness or kindness made with the intention of helping others with no expectation of receiving anything in return. There is no limit to this kindness spending. I'm probably near to the end of my 4 minutes, let me close by saying, in Islam, Zakat and Sadaqah constitute the main forms of charity made by Muslims to address the plight of the poor. I thank you.



Anglican



"Care for the poor is ranked very high as a form of worship in Islam."



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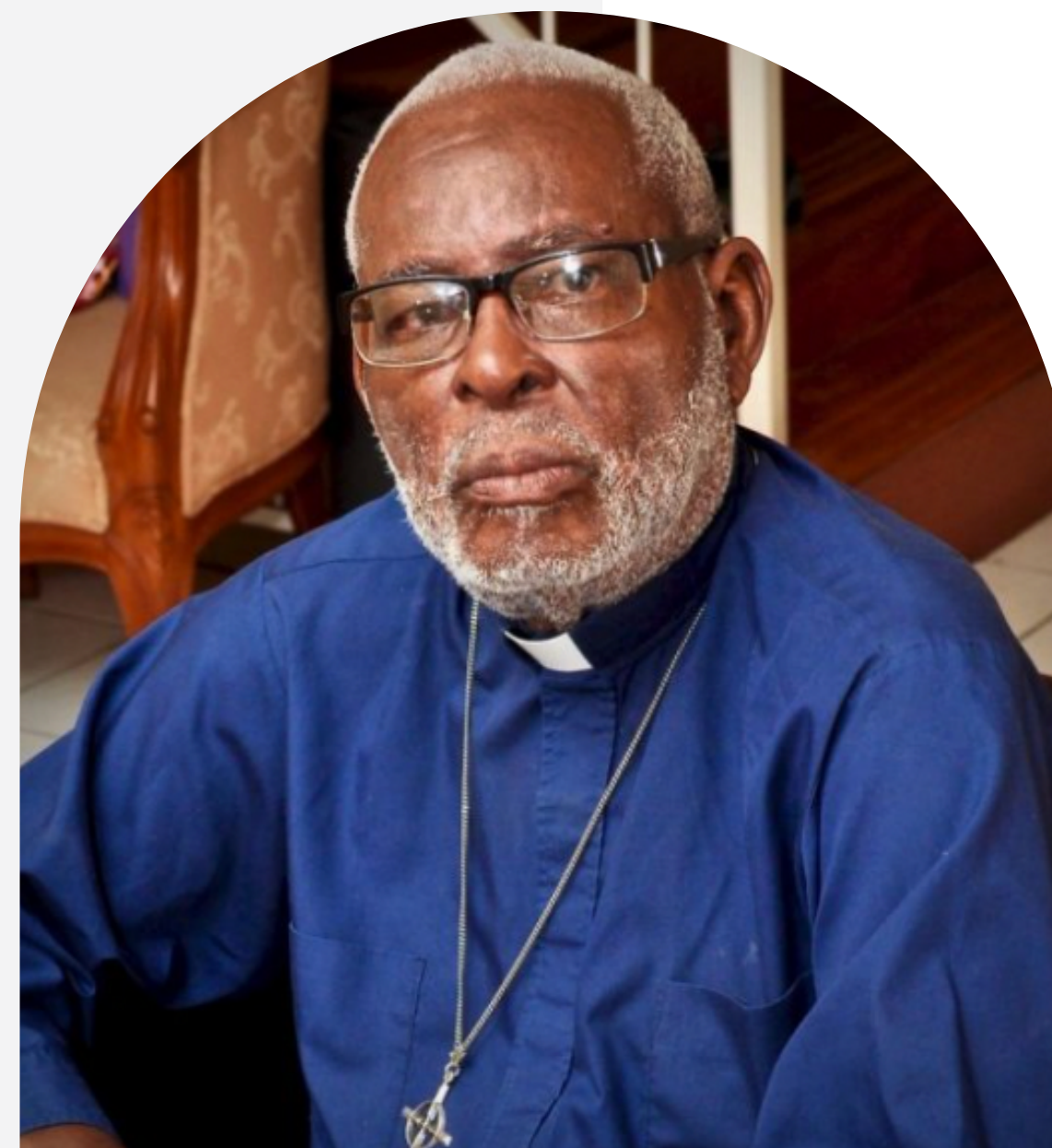


# Speaker

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## REVEREND KNOLLY CLARKE

Thank you very much indeed. I'm really very happy to participate in this wonderful experience. Now the Anglican church is a community that takes seriously its mission to God's people everywhere and in all aspects of life. As such, the Anglican Church organizes programs such as for people in the communities to share their resources. We send things to fishermen as far as Moruga. We have a parish priest down there, and he appeals to, let's say, the parish that I've just come from Church, Christ Church, in Cascade, and we have a relationship with that parish. It's called Grace Church, New Grant but it extends from New Grant way down to Moruga, and we share opportunities and things there with them.





# Islam

## DOCTRINE

In other words, we have a partnership, and the thing is to share and to partner with different communities. What we may call the more fortunate parishes, twinning with other parishes that are not as [fortunate], and that's how we do it.

Further, the resources are not only limited to Anglicans. Our resources are for the communities. One of the important things of the Anglican Church is that it sees itself as a parish that shares with its wider community. For example, Christ Church has a school for people who are in [difficult] situations called the Wharton Patrick School, and we have adopted that school because the children are both in emotional and physical need. We have reached out to them and we have shared resources with them. Every Christmas, we have a special service for [the needy] as well as we do it all through the year. This is how the Anglican Church reaches out to many places that are in need. We share laptops, opportunities for food and the best of things. Thank you very much indeed.



# Seventh Day Adventist

“The process of empowerment is from one person transferring power and resources and capacities and competencies from one person to another person or one person to a group.”



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# Speaker

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## PASTOR CLIVE DOTTIN

It is my phenomenal pleasure to participate in this year's World Day of The Poor. I understand from the email I received from my dearest friend, Leela Ramdeen, that this is the fifth World Day of The Poor. I saw the very beautiful message by Pope Francis and I see a number of my friends here - Brother Ali, Dr Burris, I know him very well too, Pundit Sirjoo, Baba Neal Ryan Rawlins, Rev. Joy Abdul Mohan, Rev. Dr. Knolly Clarke, and of course my dear friend, Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon. I also want to compliment, and I've done programs with Sister Leela before, the Catholic Commission for Social Justice, and to my mind, you are literally following that beautiful chapter in Amos that "let's justice flow like water and righteousness like a mighty stream." I compliment you and the Ministry for Migrants and Refugees.



# Seventh Day Adventist DOCTRINE

So, well on behalf of The Seventh Day Adventist Church, there are two key texts that I would like to focus on at this time and the first one is Luke, Chapter Four. It says, from verse 16 to 18, “and He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up and as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood there for the reading, and it was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah, and when he had opened the book, He found a place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because it anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that approves.”

And of course, we know the excitement, the dynamism that took place, after Christ had left the Earth and He promised the Holy Spirit will come to every part of the world. It's amazing what we see in our Acts, Chapter 2 after people ask what they should do to be saved. Peter was on fire, if you please, literal fire. They converted Peter. And thousands gave their hearts to Christ. Let me read what happened.



# Seventh Day Adventist DOCTRINE

You would expect among those thousands, that we have people of different classes, different races and that they would have a different socioeconomic status. So how did this respond to the needs? That must have been an earth-shaking addition to the Church, so he tells them. We read in Acts, Chapter 2, you know, it's a beautiful chapter, "and all I believe were together and had all things common, and sold their possessions, and goods and imparted unto all men, as every man had need."

Now, this is talking about the Church internally. Looking at the needs of individuals, people liquidated their assets like Barnabas. There was an internal excitement in terms of incarnating unconditional love. And in Greek, we talk about the economy, the warmth of the fellowship, the generosity, the altruistic spirit, the authentic Christianity. Following the model of the Good Samaritan who risked his life to save a guy who was wounded and left for dead.

# Seventh Day Adventist DOCTRINE

We believe this is our foundation, these are our foundational pillars, their lifestyle and example of Christ. That is what we must do, we must look out for others because as was very well said in the letter email I received, “we will have the poor with us always, and we should not denigrate the poor, we should love the poor, we should satisfy the needs of the poor, we should empower the poor because Boswick says, “the process of empowerment is from one person transferring power and resources and capacities and competencies from one person to another person or one person to a group.” So we believe the process of empowerment is very important.



# Evangelical Council

"Poverty is a direct result of that disconnection from God."



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# Speaker

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## REVEREND WINSTON MANSINGH

Good day ladies and gentlemen and greeting in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ our Lord. I am Rev. Winston Mansingh, representing the Evangelical Community and the Faith-Based Network of Trinidad and Tobago. It is my pleasure to contribute a few thoughts today to this topic of poverty eradication, the faith community addressing poverty in our nation and, in our world. The scripture in Mark Chapter 14, verse seven, refers specifically to that very well-known statement of Jesus Christ when he said, “the poor you will always have with you.” The context here ladies and gentlemen is that Jesus is at Simon's house and this woman comes in with an alabaster box of very expensive ointment, and the scripture says “a year’s wage,” she breaks it in appreciation and affection and in Thanksgiving and anoints Jesus.





Some people are concerned about it because he receives this. Their complaint is this could have been sold and the money used to feed the poor, and this evokes that response from Jesus Christ and where He says, “the poor you will always have with you.”

What was Jesus saying and what did He really mean? Was it that he was insensitive to the needs of the poor? Was He selfish? I suggest not. Jesus Christ, He loves us so much that He gave even His very life. What Jesus really meant dear friends is that there's a reality of poverty in the world that was caused by humanity being separated from God. God, in His love for humanity, and His divine care, placed humanity in the Garden of Eden with total provision, all that we needed. But there was a situation that brought about the separation when man disobeyed God. And so ladies and gentlemen I want to suggest to you, from the scriptures, that poverty is a direct result of that disconnection from God.

# Evangelical Council

## DOCTRINE

I know that various faith leaders would put various positions forward. I want to suggest to us today that we need to reconnect with God, all of us. Everyone, everywhere. If we're to really treat this issue of poverty, it must come from the heart of God. It must go beyond the giving of the physical and material requirements that so many persons do need, and I acknowledge that, but it must come to the place where we as an individual and as a group and as a community, point people back to God almighty. And that's what we do, that's what Jesus wanted them to understand. That there is a reality of poverty in the world but through relationship and appreciation for God, helps to eradicate poverty.

Poverty dear friends, is not only the lack of the physical things that we need for our sustenance, but it is that psychological, that social, that spiritual separation, removal from God that causes us to become vulnerable to the plans of a real devil that exists. Our world is broken. Our world is bleeding. Our world is in pain. Why? Because we have turned our backs on God. We have neglected God.



# Evangelical Council

## DOCTRINE

You may say, “Pastor, Reverend Mansingh, are you being insensitive to us at a time like this when we're talking about poverty?” No, in fact, I want to draw us back to God, the source of all eternal blessing. Dear friends, I know that there are thoughts that are being presented by many of us on this day as we recognize, and we stir people back to getting to a place of being socially responsible. Receive my thoughts with consideration as we continue this discussion. I thank you.



Hindu

"One should make every effort to attend to the needs of the hungry and service the less fortunate as this reinforces the concept that God resides in every being."



World Day  
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# Speaker

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## PUNDIT NAVIN OMA-DATH MAHARAJ

Jai Sitaram. In Sanatan Dharma, or under its notable connotation, Hinduism. The foremost of the literary works, The Vedas revealed that the onset of creation and the ultimate guidance to this Dharma, outlines the equal treatment of all of mankind and living entities. This has been evident through the verses, “ya ādhrāya cakamānāya pitvo annavān sanraphitāyopajaghmuṣe, sthiraṃ manaḥ kṛṇute sevate purotocit sa marḍitāraṃ na vindate.” “Bounteous is he who gives unto the beggar who comes to him in want of food and feeble. Success attends him in the shout of battle, he makes a friend of him in future troubles.”



# Hindu DOCTRINE

“Sa id bhojo yo ghṛhave dadātyannakāmāya carate kṛśāya, aramasmai bhavati yāmahūtā utāparīṣu kṛṇute sakhāyam.” “The man with food in store for when the needy comes in the miserable case begging for bread to eat, hardens his heart against him, even when of the old, he did him service, finds not one to comfort him,” (The Rig Veda, Book 10, Hymn 117).

The treatment of the condition of the poor, dharitra, has always been driven by the inherent quality of daya or compassion, one of the four established principles of dharma. The others are austerity (dhan), cleanliness (shaucham), truthfulness (satya). Mankind has always been guided by these principles. The cultivation of which leads to the highest good. The scriptures mention countless wonderful gestures of devotion and kindness demonstrated to the deprived. Bhagavan or the supreme Lord has even demonstrated such when He performed these inspired acts by His own will. Bhagavatam, 10th canto, mentions Krishna’s acceptance of the emotionally and physically pained, hunchbacked woman, Kubja, who lived a solitary life.



# Hindu DOCTRINE

“Koṭirudra-Saṃhitā of Shiva Purana mentions Lord Shiv’s guidance to a blind, broken, homeless, and deprived devotee who attains her place next to him on the great night of Shiv. Even the recounts of great acharyas or world teachers evokes such compassion. Adi Shankaracharya and his devotion to the poor and downtrodden, moved by the plight of a feeble and helpless elderly woman, took an amla gooseberry fruit and invoked the blessings of Goddess Lakshmi, thereby securing prosperity for her.

Perhaps foremost amongst examples is Sage Narad’s altruistic quality ultimately demonstrated through the endearing trait of puropata, the principle of philanthropy which [provokes] worry about the poor. Arising out of this divine act is the concept of Sewa. Selfless service to all living entities, foremost amongst them, human beings. Moneshayagya, sacrifice to mankind, is one of the cornerstones of every Hindu. One should make every effort to attend to the needs of the hungry and service the less fortunate as this reinforces the concept that God resides in every being.

# Hindu DOCTRINE

In the Gita, Shri Krishna mentions the act of nishkam karma, selfless service bounded by duty without expectation or want quantified by the inner measure of sacrifice. It is our duty to help others who are less fortunate, and this is ordained in our scriptures whenever I carry out moneshayagya or in seeking to accomplish the goal of living a life that is righteous. Here, therefore lies the relation between dharma and moksha because it is true our actions in this instance, our willingness to assist the less fortunate, which will to an extent determine if as Sanatan Hindus, we're able to eventually attain moksha. In Mahabharata, the Great Bhishma says, "whatever wishes one entertains with respect to oneself, one should certainly cherish with respect to another.

With this surplus wealth, one may happen to own, one should relieve the wants of the needy and the poor. Therefore, the very foundation of Sanatan Dharma, the tenets of it as evident in our scriptures outlined as far, places great emphasis on this service to others on showing empathy and on having compassion for those who are less fortunate. Jai Sitaram.

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Prisha

"One of the problems is that [social services] don't reach down to ground zero".



World Day  
of the Poor

# Speaker

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## BABA NEAL RYAN RAWLINS

Greetings and a pleasant good morning to each and every one. When I'm speaking on behalf of the Orisha community and the members of the council for Orisha Elders, [it is important to note] that in Trinidad and Tobago there are different variations of the same religion I would say. We have Ifá and traditional Orisha. I am part of the traditional Orisha community in Trinidad and Tobago, and [in that] tradition, we follow a traditional way of life and a traditional way of worship. So that when we look at the problems of today, we look at it from an old perspective. Part of the process is that when we do our worship, we do our worship as a combination of what the ancestors would have done, with the entire masking process - the masking system of Orisha worship.





# Orisha

## DOCTRINE

So there, it is broken into two sections. We start by paying homage to the ancestors through the Christian perspective where they would have Mass. There's an opening that starts at a particular time, that we pay homage with prayer, Christian prayer, and then we break off and we start going to the Orisha concept of worship. That is the old way. What is happening today in the Ifá concept is that they go strictly into Yoruba, so there's no connection with the ancestors as we do but we, in following that old process, see this whole aspect of community as important. We see the aspect of sharing as important because in days of old, which still happens today, this whole concept of poverty and people not having food and shelter, which always existed, yes, but in our communities, the shrines or the Palais was a home to house persons who were always in need. So that if there's a problem, you go to an elder, and that elder in the community would assist in every way. [They would help in] find[ing] a job, you can stay within the home, or the Palais, you will be fed, but you work. There must be work, you must assist in some way to help build yourself.

# Orisha

## DOCTRINE

Over the years, even today, and with all that is going on with the COVID pandemic, persons are in need globally, and Trinidad and Tobago is no exception. And what the elders in the communities have been doing for quite a while is continuing to assist the needy in the community. So you have the elder shrines which are generally 90% female, mostly in their late seventies and eighties. They among themselves, among their membership, have been helping the needy in the community, feeding them on a monthly [and] weekly basis. [They are] supplying breakfast, dinner, and that sort of thing, cooking, sharing, and that is what has been happening.

The Covid has brought [about] a situation where the State has given some of the religious organizations and most I presume, some sort of grant to assist. They have used that tremendously, in helping the communities with respect to the poor. The whole aspect of poverty is something from the old tradition that says that the community never goes poor because one of our main [ways] of not allowing it to happen, is us planting the land.



# Orisha

## DOCTRINE

The people of old used to plant, they were farmers, especially the women. The mothers in the community used to plant the land so there was always food. And in some of the old communities in Trinidad and Tobago, you'll find that the neighbourhood would organize a system of cultivating the land so that what is in "season" would be shared throughout the community, so that [food] never runs out. Basic foods, provision, ground provision, those were the foods that our community used, even today. So now that we're in this new dimension of things, and the type of food we eat, has created some negative systems in what we eat and what we produce. Ground provisions are a staple food among the African people, staple food. So that is what the food was. There was always a provision for food, so you find that people didn't have that tendency to really go hungry. Meat was optional. It would only be done on a weekend, [or] events, and when we have our Ebo, which is a seven-day feast. The community is fed daily for that period of time. As part of our tradition, we look at poverty. We don't have a Bible or a guide but we have the Urdu and we rely heavily on the instructions from the energies when they manifest and give particular instructions.

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# Orisha

## DOCTRINE

It's only now in recent times, we relate it to a particular Odu, and Odu is a guide to how we function. It is the guiding principle from Orunmila. Olodumare looks at a particular situation, analyzes the situation and tells and guides us where to go, what to do, how things must be done. [It tells us] what processes need to take place in making things happen. But our lifestyle is a community lifestyle where, that old ethos that we have been hearing, “the community raises the child,” is true. The community raises and supports the family and the elders in the community. [I]n the community of old, [the elders] were the ones who more or less organized how things had to be done. Poverty is something that yes when you look at it today, you’re seeing. We do see a lot of situations globally and even in Africa and the motherland, and some of those other areas. But in the olden days, it was not something that is as difficult as we see today because of that whole aspect of us planting, cultivating the land, rearing the food, providing for the communities, and I believe that we need to go back to the land if there's any form of averting what is about to happen coming out of this Covid-19 pandemic because we are already seeing in some areas the extent of [poverty due to the] of shortage of food for the community.

Thank you very much.



# Hindu

"Compassion in Hinduism is an active emotion where one recognizes a dilemma and one moves speedily and rapidly to give support for the removal of whatever the situation or condition may be."



World Day  
of the Poor



# Speaker

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## PUNDIT BHADASE SEETAHAL-MARAJ

Sitaram, and of course it's a privilege to be part of this program that speaks to World Day of the Poor. And of course, as we all know, poverty has very many facets and dimensions but the overarching aspect and element of poverty is the fact that there is the inability to live life at a decent human, basic, standard, and level. Anytime we are unable to achieve that, life becomes very, very difficult and so all the scriptures that speak to such kinds of conditions and situations, and how we remedy and alleviate such situations because the clinical and other physical factors are different multi-pronged. And so multi-pronged strategies are required to lift the poor out of that state of inability to live a life with self-respect, and to live a life of dignity.





If we cannot live a life with self-respect and dignity, our own self-esteem diminishes considerably, not only in our eyes but generally by the view and perspective of outsiders which is why Sanatan Dharma or Hinduism speaks as a major goal or aim or principle of life as *Artha*. Artha means the acquisition of wealth that is done in an honest manner. It is incumbent of all of us who are workers in society because the workers uplift and form the bulwark, the pivot on which society exists, and spins but having earned wealth in a righteous, and an honest manner, it is imperative for us to share that wealth and to distribute that wealth, and you know, The Rigveda, the oldest scriptures of humanity makes a very important point. Without quoting the Sanskrit for this brief period, The Rigveda makes the point that if one may amass wealth with hundreds of hands but one must distribute wealth with thousands of hands, and if a person accumulates wealth without sharing that wealth then that hoarded wealth eventually becomes the ruin of that person.

# Hindu DOCTRINE

A very profound and insightful and inspiring quote from The Rigveda, that “this is the way of life, to assist others” because you know there is another very important and fundamental concept in Sanatan Dharma or Hinduism, which is called *daya* or compassion but compassion is not a passive emotion. Compassion in Hinduism is an active emotion where one recognizes a dilemma and one moves speedily and rapidly to give support for the removal of whatever the situation or condition may be. So that in order to help the poor, we must first have that compassionate nature. If we don't have that compassionate nature, then we will not be moved to help others in society. It is through the grace and blessings of the Supreme that divine emotion arises in our hearts that we feel compassion. We feel that need, we have that desire to help others in society and so Sanatan Dharma tells us and teaches us that it is very important for us to help all of humanity. We go that route and we'll be able to help all those who are in distress and to lift the standards of all.

Sitaram.



Roman Catholic

Thank  
you!

"Interreligious dialogue will help us to build justice and peace, it will help us to build the right relationship with God, our neighbour, our own selves, and the environment."



World Day  
*of the* Poor



# Speaker

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## MS. LEELA RAMDEEN

Thank you all so much. On behalf of Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon, the Catholic Commission for Social Justice, and the Archdiocese Ministry for Migrants and Refugees, both of which I'm the chairperson, I would like to thank you all for contributing. Thank you, express my sincere thanks to all of you for participating in today's webinar on World Day of the Poor. Our constitution is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, and faith in fundamental human rights and freedom, the dignity of the person, the human person, and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family that have been endowed with these rights by our Creator.





# Roman Catholic DOCTRINE

[O]ur constitution also provides for freedom of conscience and religion, religious beliefs and observance including worship. [A]s well as having this right in our constitution for all of us to be able to follow our religious beliefs, [let us] remember as Pope Francis has said that “we are companions on the same journey,” and I believe interfaith dialogue and interfaith relations is the glue that holds us together as a society as we coexist in harmony. Our aim must be to follow the tenets of our own respective faiths, and by doing so, to build the common good, and the common good in the Catholic Church means creating conditions so that each person can flourish.

An interreligious dialogue will help us to build justice and peace, it will help us to build the right relationship with God, our neighbour, our own selves, and the environment. So let us see our diversity as an asset that can strengthen our democracy. The inherence of each religious group brings to the table of life innate God-given talents upon which we must build in the important task of nation-building. Every small gesture, such as this webinar on World Day of the Poor, must be celebrated. Humanity is one. As St. Theresa of Calcutta said, “if there is no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

# Roman Catholic DOCTRINE

So, while the Church, our Christian scriptures in mark 14:7 says that “the poor will always be with us, we'll always have with us,” we know that this does not mean that we must be indifferent to their needs. As Pope Francis says, it's an opportunity, we must take this opportunity to do good, to lift. [A]s Martin Luther King said, [to lift] “our bruised and battered brothers and sisters to a higher, more noble place.” So let us stand in solidarity with the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized, so that each person can live in dignity, sharing in the many gifts that God has given to us. It is time to do as Pope Francis said, “and build bridges and tear down any walls that divide us, and foster a culture of encounter.” Interfaith dialogue really can unlock the power of our various religious traditions as we seek to build a better T&T. You know, since 1964 the Catholic Church had established a Pontifical Council for interreligious dialogue, and it aims to foster respect and collaboration between different faiths and religion. As the Catholic Church says, “dialogue is a two-way communication as we witness our respective faiths, let us be open and listen and speak to each other respectfully for initial growth and mutual growth and enrichment.”

Thank you all, May God bless us All in all our endeavours and may our efforts really bear much fruit in Trinidad and Tobago, but remember while we act locally, we have to think globally of the 700,000 persons who live in poverty.



# World Day of the Poor

## CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

We envision a transformed national/world community where Justice, Peace and Love prevail, as divinely ordained by God, and which, ensures human rights, duties and human dignity; celebrates diversity and promotes equality; promotes the common good, respect for human life and ecology justice.



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