AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

BISHOPS COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, MISSION AND SERVICE

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Leave your comfort zone on World Day of the Poor

World Day of the Poor on November 15 is an opportunity for all Christians to draw closer to Christ by encountering those who live in poverty in the community, said Bishop Tim Harris, chair of the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service.

Bishop Harris made his remarks after reflecting on Pope Leo's 2026 Message for the World Day of the Poor, "The Lord is the Refuge of the Poor".

"The Pope's message calls for a change in our attitude to the poor," Bishop Harris said.

"We who encounter Christ in the Eucharist cannot be indifferent to the plight of those who are poor; we must seek to become a refuge for the poor.

"We become a refuge for the poor when we leave our comfort zones and spend time with the poor, listen to their experiences and their feelings and become their companions.

"We are called to be signs of God's love in the community.

"That means much more than offering a gift of money or goods and walking on by.

"It means walking side-by-side with the poor and challenging the injustices in society which cause their poverty."

Bishop Harris pointed to a recent report on increasing hunger in Australia as an indication that the cost-of-living crisis in Australia continues.

Foodbank Australia's Hunger Report 2026 says that the number of Australians going without food has increased by 100,000 in the last year. Over three million Australians including many children face food insecurity, according to the report.

"People living on low incomes such as those living on government income support and those in low-paid jobs are getting deeper and deeper into poverty as the cost of food, fuel, utilities and rent continue to rise," Bishop Harris said.

Media Contact: Paul Osborne • Australian Catholic Bishops Conference • media@catholic.org.au

“I encourage all Christians to get to know those who live in poverty in their local community and to join with others to advocate for change which can offer hope to those who face a constant struggle to live with any dignity.”

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Media Contact: Paul Osborne • Australian Catholic Bishops Conference • media@catholic.org.au