



Option for the Poor – In Solidarity with Homeless People



EXPLORE

Facts and Figures

The numbers in emergency accommodation have increased. The most up to date figures available for the number of people in emergency accommodation nationally are from December 2015.

In December 2015 there were 5,241 people in emergency homeless accommodation; 2,564 adults with no dependents and 775 families made up of 1,061 adults with 1,616 children.

In 2015 the number of people in emergency accommodation increased by 40% when compared to 2014. The number of families increase by 90% and the number of children increased by 84%.

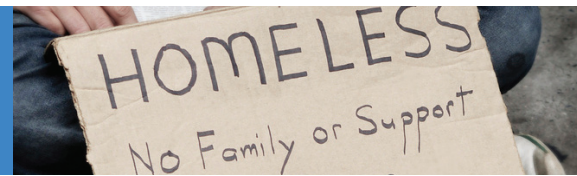
Figures have not been released from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government for 2016 to date.

- People are still sleeping rough.
- Dublin is the only area where an official rough sleeper count takes place, making it difficult to get a countrywide rough sleeping picture.
- In November 2015, the Dublin official rough sleeper count found there were 152 people without a bed to sleep in. This included 91 people sleeping rough and 61 people sheltering at the night café.
- Figures from Cork Simon Community indicate that rough sleeping in Cork City increased nine-fold in four years (2011-2015) from 38 people sleeping rough in 2011 to 345 people sleeping rough in 2015.
- Rent continues to rise.



*You only
love God
as much
as you
love the
person
you love
least*

**Dorothy
Day**



REFLECTION

POPE FRANCIS – CULTURE OF WASTE TREATS PERSONS AS IF THEY WERE RUBBISH

"Benedict XVI recalled many times that this task entrusted to us by God the Creator requires that we understand the rhythm and logic of creation. Instead, we are often guided by the arrogance of dominating, possessing, manipulating, and exploiting. We are losing the attitude of wonder, of contemplation, of listening to gift of life. Thus we are no longer able to read in it what Benedict XVI called 'the rhythm of the story of God's love for humanity'. Why is this happening? Because are we thinking and living 'horizontally'; we are drawing away from God."

"But cultivating and caring for doesn't just refer to our relationship with the surroundings – It also concerns human relationships. ... We are living a moment of crisis. We see it in the environment but above all we see it in humanity. The human person is in danger. ... This is the urgency of human ecology! The danger is serious because the root of the problem is profound, not superficial. It isn't just a question of economics but of ethics ... The dynamics of an economy and finance that lack ethics are dominating."

Speaking off the cuff, the Pontiff added: "What is in charge today isn't the human person but money. Money is in command. And God our Father has given us the task of caring for the earth not for the money, but for us: for men and women. This is our charge. Instead, men and women are sacrificed to the idols of profit and consumption. It is a 'culture of waste'."

"If, for example, on a winter's night," he continued, "a person dies here in [nearby] Via Ottaviano, that's not news. If in so many parts of the world there are children who have nothing to eat, that's not news. It seems normal. It must not be this way! And yet these things come to be normal ... On the other hand, a drop of ten points on the stock exchange constitutes a tragedy. If someone dies that isn't news but a ten point drop in the markets is a tragedy! Thus people are discarded, as if they were rubbish."

"Human life, the person, is no longer felt to be the primary value to respect and care for ... This culture of waste has also made us insensitive to a squandering and wastefulness of food ...

Consumerism has caused us to get used to the daily excess and waste of food, which we are no longer capable of seeing for its true worth, which goes well beyond mere economic parameters. Remember, however, that the food that is thrown away is as if we had stolen it from the table of the poor, from those who are hungry!"

"I invite you all to reflect on the problem of the loss ... Let us all make the serious commitment to respect and care for creation, to be attentive to every person, to oppose the culture of wastefulness and waste, and to promote a culture of solidarity and encounter."

Discussion questions

- *How do you react to these quotes? Agree or disagree?*
- *What do you think culture of waste might mean in relation to the homelessness issue?*
- *How is caring for people who are homeless a faith commitment?*





BIBLICAL REFLECTION

And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on." (Matthew 12:41-44)

- What is Jesus saying in this story about 'value'?
- What is the Gospel challenge in this scripture passage?
- What can we do to live out this challenge?

Prayer for Homelessness

God of compassion,
your love for humanity was revealed in Jesus,
whose earthly life began in the poverty of a stable
and ended in the pain and isolation of the cross:
we hold before you those who are homeless and cold
especially in bitter weather.
Draw near and comfort them in spirit.
Bless those who work to provide them
with shelter, food and friendship.
May we as your followers always show kindness to those most in need
We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.



Deciding our Action

Reflect – our own experience within the group.

Voicing our opinions –

Sharing information and advocating for a better humanity.

Solidarity – Call for others to join with you in action.



Things we (I) can do...	When we (I) have seen others do this...	How could we (or I) do this for ourselves (myself)...
 See for ourselves (myself)– <i>Gain experience of the life of homeless people</i> <i>e.g. Internet research / Request Agencies for information / What's happening in your school, neighbourhood ...</i>		
 Ask why? – <i>Analyse the causes of homelessness and what keeps people homeless through group discussion and informed input.</i>		
 Go against the tide... <i>Distancing yourself from ill-informed judgement on people and research the causes of homelessness</i>		
 Ask why not? – Show solidarity. <i>Propose alternatives to dealing with homelessness and commit to advocating for those solutions.</i> <i>Solidarity "is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people.... On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good</i> Pope John Paul II		