



This Winter,
extend your hands and open your hearts
...to help those in need who **reach out to us**

Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth



Dear (insert name)

"Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18)

As I prepare my annual Winter Appeal message, I find myself reflecting on recent media coverage on the plight of the homeless, who increasingly have a much more visible presence on our streets both here in Perth and nationally. Another news story suggested that one in five children in Australia are going hungry one day each week, as families struggle to provide for life's basic needs. Yet another story promoted the neglect and ill treatment of the elderly in poorly run nursing homes.

How do we react to such news? Do we express our dismay or voice our indignation that this 'need' can possibly exist in our communities? Or do we instead find it so distressing or confronting that we quickly change the channel or turn the page of our paper? When we see a homeless person on the street, do we stop to speak to them or do we quickly look away and pretend not to have noticed?

For people who, through our faith, are called to walk in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, who also reveals himself in the story of the Good Samaritan, these are important and challenging questions.

It is the life and teachings of Jesus which make clear for us just how important it is that we demonstrate and express compassion, understanding and love for our brothers and sisters in need: that we lift our eyes, extend our hands, open our hearts and walk with those in need.

When Pope Francis launched the 'Day of the Poor' last year, he said:



*"Blessed are the open hands that embrace the poor and help them:
they are hands that bring hope,*

*Blessed are the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality,
and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity,*

*Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no 'ifs' or 'buts' or 'maybes.'
they are hands that call down God's blessing upon their brothers and sisters".*

Pope Francis went on to say *"We are called to draw near to the poor, to encounter them, to meet their gaze, to embrace them and to let them feel the warmth of love that breaks through their solitude. Their outstretched hand is also an invitation to step out of our certainties and comforts, and to acknowledge the value of poverty in itself.*

The poor are not a problem, they are a resource from which to draw as we strive to accept and practise in our lives the essence of the Gospel. Where the poor are concerned too many people are often guilty of a sin of omission or indifference. Thinking it is "society's problem" to solve, looking the other way when passing a beggar or changing the channel when the news shows something disturbing are not Christian responses.

God will not ask us if we felt righteous indignation," he said, "but whether we did some good."



