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Pope Leo XIV Shares Lunch With 1,300 Poor People at Vatican for World Day of the Poor

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Today, we are all one family."

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Pope Leo XIV shared lunch with about 1,300 people experiencing poverty at the Vatican on Sunday 22 November 2026, telling his guests: "Today, we are all one family." The gathering took place in the Paul VI Audience Hall after the Pope's Sunday Angelus address in St Peter's Square, marking the 10th World Day of the Poor - an annual Vatican tradition since 2017 that had been postponed by one week because of the Pope's trip to Latin America. Guests came from more than 20 charitable organisations in Rome as well as local parishes and associations, and included families, children, religious men and women and the volunteers who care for the most vulnerable every day.

Imagine the Paul VI Audience Hall, a room built for thousands, filled not with tourists or officials but with long tables, white cloths, and 1,300 people who know what it means to go without. Children laughing, families sharing bread, volunteers moving between the tables, and at the centre of it all, the Pope himself, sitting down to eat with them. Not blessing the meal from a distance. Eating it with them, as family.

The World Day of the Poor has been a Vatican tradition since 2017, and this year marked its tenth edition. The date had slipped by a week because Pope Leo had been travelling in Latin America, but the delay did not dull the day. If anything, it made the homecoming sweeter: a Pope returning from the poorest corners of another continent to sit down with the poorest people of his own city. The guests came from more than 20 charitable organisations in Rome, along with local parishes and associations, and they brought their children, their stories, and their hunger - for food, yes, but also for being seen.

The Pope thanked Archbishop Luis Marín de San Martín, his Almoner, who heads the Dicastery for the Service of Charity and organised the lunch. The Almoner's job is one of the oldest and quietest in the Vatican: to be the Pope's hands among the poor. Behind every plate on those long tables was the work of his dicastery and the volunteers who care for the most vulnerable every day - the people who show up, week after week, long after the cameras have gone.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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