



Steyler Missionare
SVD-Partner



World Day of the Poor 2023

Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor





Impluse Texts



Mrs Kruse's Think-About-It-Jars

Stories for the World Day of the Poor 2023

This year's World Day of the Poor will be celebrated on Sunday, 19 November, and the theme is „Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor". We invite you to join us this year in commemorating the 7th World Day of the Poor with the stories about "Mrs Kruse's Think-about-it-jars". How you read the stories is, of course, up to you. However, we would like to make the following suggestion:

Make it a novena, that is a nine-day time of prayer. Take some time each day, light a candle and read one story. Close with the prayer for the World Day of the Poor or a personal prayer.

Begin on the eve of the novena, Thursday 9 November, with the introductory story. Then follow with a total of nine "jar stories" from Friday 10 November to Saturday 18 November.

On Sunday, 19 November, World Day of the Poor, join us and many people worldwide in praying with and for the poor!

On behalf of SVD-Partner

Maria Wego



Mrs Kruse's think-after-glasses

Benno waved at his parents from the window until the car had turned the corner of the street. On the kitchen table was the box his father had given him. "From Mrs Kruse," he had said. "You remember her, don't you? She's moved into a home for elderly now. She asked me to give you this. She thought you could do something with it." They had talked briefly about the old neighbour, but then everything had turned to Benno's sister's upcoming wedding. So the box had remained unnoticed on the kitchen table. But now Benno opened it.

Inside the box were an exercise book and nine preserving jars. He took one of them in his hand and remembered that he had seen the jars at Mrs Kruse's many years ago. He had been twelve or thirteen years old and had helped her with something from time to time. He had also seen the jars, each containing an object: a coin or a key. He had wondered and then asked what kind of jars they were.

"Each jar is my personal think-about-it jar," she had explained. "The glasses remind me that there are people who have a hard life and that I must not lose sight of them."

Why they had not talked about it further at the time, Benno no longer knew. After all, it had been more than ten years. He put the glass back and opened the notebook. In sweeping script, the first page read "The story about the jar". Then followed nine entries, each headed with the object in the jar. Benno took the jars out of the box and placed them in the order in which the stories were written down at the end of his kitchen table.

"Tomorrow," he murmured wearily. "Tomorrow I will read the stories, dear Mrs Kruse. I promise!"





Key

A few days ago I went for a walk and took a break at the playground near the church. At some point, a young woman sat down next to me on the bench. She was thin and had a pale grey face. Her hair was dull and her clothes washed out. In short - you could see that life had not been kind to her so far and lack of money was her constant companion. She had two children, about three and five years old. They gave her a chip packet and then ran to the sandbox.

"Usually they don't get chips," she said to me and put the packet in a plastic bag.

I didn't know what to answer, but she didn't seem to expect an answer either. She took a Coke bottle out of the bag and drank a big gulp.

"Real Coke," she said with satisfaction. "It's too expensive, actually. But today is a celebration day."

"Birthday?" asked I.

"Better!" she replied, beaming at me. "See over there? The windows at the top? That's my new flat! We moved in today!" All of a sudden, a pretty young woman sat next to me.

"When I had the little one," she went on, "I was kicked out of the flat. No more coal. At first I stayed with this or that person. But with two small children - that's not possible. Then the social welfare office gave me a room. It was a kind of assisted living. I really wanted to leave. And now! Now I have my own flat for me and the kids!"

I congratulated her.

"Thank you! Wish me good luck," she begged and stood up. "I might be able to work a few hours at the kiosk over there."

I wished her well from the bottom of my heart.

A flat of my own - that had always been a matter of course for me. I sat there for a while, lost in thought, and then gratefully went home.





Cash Receipt

Today I was in the little bar on the market square, enjoying the first warm spring day. Two women were sitting at the next table. The tables are very close, so I could hear what they were saying, even if I didn't want to. Their names were Susanne and Alex, and they were chatting about family, work and summer holidays.

After the waiter had taken their order, Susanne said, "He sure looks tired."

Alex looked at her in irritation. "Who?"

"It's just too much," Susanne said, "working in the kiosk during the day and then here in the evening."

"Who are you talking about?" Alex had no idea.

"Well, the waiter," her friend replied. "Didn't you see that he has rings under his eyes?"

Alex shook her head. "I don't know. I don't even know what colour his hair is or if he wore glasses."

They were silent for a moment and then went back to talking about this and that.

From that moment on I sat very quietly next to them. When they had left and the waiter came to clear the table, I asked him for the bill. The young man had short dark hair, didn't wear glasses and looked really very tired. I paid, silently wished him a better-paid job and aloud a good evening.





Devil

This story comes from my brother. He lives with his family in northern Germany. We don't see each other often, but we often talk on the phone. Today he told me that he had been out with his grandson Tobias to buy a birthday present for grandma.

Suddenly Tobias said to him, "Grandpa, now you're going to hell!"

He was so surprised that he stopped in the middle of the road and just looked at him.

"You didn't give anything to that beggar there," Tobias said.

My brother wanted to know why he would go to hell for that. Tobias explained to him that they had just heard a story in religion class about a rich man and poor Lazarus. The rich man had never given anything to the poor man and had ended up in hell for it. "I don't want you to go there," he said.

My brother had tears in his eyes when he told me this. I could hear it in his voice.

He gave Tobias an Euro and sent him to the beggar. Then he promised him to be more careful next time and never to pass a beggar again. "These little ones," he said to me in conclusion, "they always teach a lesson to such an old man as me."

He is very proud of his Tobias, and he can be!





Seed Bag

Near the supermarket there is a tree right on the pavement. A few years ago, flowers were planted all around it. A real treasure. But then everything went overgrown and finally dried up in summer. My neighbour told me that a family had taken care of it, but they had moved. Now there are flowers again, and I asked the cashier at the supermarket who was doing it.

"Do you know Toni? The homeless guy?" she asked me, and I wondered what that had to do with the flowers.

"Well, when Toni gets enough money," she continued, "he comes in and buys food and beer too. But do you know what else he buys? You'll never guess." She paused for a moment and then said, "Seed bags!"

"What does he do with them?" I asked, realising immediately that it was a stupid question.

"Well, he dug up the soil under the tree with something and then poured the sachets out there. Looks pretty, doesn't it?" She pressed a button on the till and told me what I had to pay.

I wanted to know how he watered the flowers, but she didn't know. "Oh, Toni," she said, "when he wants something, he manages it. Somehow."

A few days later, I saw him coming from the playground, heavy with plastic bottles. He went to the tree with them and watered the flowers. So he had filled empty water bottles at the hydrant with water! But it wasn't only me who saw this, but also the baker who has his shop on the other side of the street. Toni now gets water for the flowers and the tree from him.

Homeless people only drink and don't care about anything. Quick judgement - wrong judgement, that's what Toni taught me.





Matchbox

It's been a long time since I read about a matchbox of tea in a novel. I don't know why, but today it came back to me as I was filling a packet of tea into the pretty box. Of course, I don't know if I remember correctly, but I can't look it up again. I gave the book on as a gift many years ago. In my memory the story goes like this:

In some town in Africa a street boy is living on a roof and getting by more poorly than he can. A man takes care of him a little. He works in the bakery on whose roof the boy sleeps. One day, the boy falls seriously ill. He is freezing. So the man goes to get a blanket. He cannot buy one, because he has no money. So he borrows one for a few days. The rental fee for the blanket is a matchbox of tea.

One matchbox of tea - that should be enough for two office cups. Two cups of tea for a borrowed blanket. What would it cost to buy a blanket? Or what would it cost to visit a doctor? Both certainly unaffordable for the man and many others!

That's what went through my mind at the time.

Now I have taken an empty matchbox and filled it with tea.

What a treasure!





Paper Cup

My neighbour walked up the stairs in front of me, lugging two six-packs of small water bottles.

"A lift wouldn't be bad," she said, wiping the sweat from her forehead. "But it keeps you fit, doesn't it?"

"You're right about that, but the older I get, the more I'd like one. Especially when the shopping is heavy," I countered, pointing to the bottles.

"Oh, whatever," she said and continued walking. "It is what it is, and in this hot weather you have to drink a lot."

I muttered a "True" and wondered why she had bought water bottles. Hadn't she once told me that piped water was quite enough? I didn't want to ask. I was tired, and really it was none of my business.

A few days later - it was still hot - I met a courier at the front door. He was lugging a heavy package and groaning under the load.

"Never lift when need," he grumbled. "But woman second floor good."

"Do you often have to visit my neighbour?" I asked, following him up the stairs.

He didn't answer and concentrated entirely on the steps. Arriving on the second floor, my neighbour was already waiting for the courier. I greeted her and unlocked my flat door.

"Welcome to Gartenstraße 4 parcel station," she said with a laugh. "If I took a storage fee, I'd be rich."

The courier placed the parcel in her hallway and she acknowledged receipt. Before the man hurried down the stairs, she gave him one of the small water bottles. The man stumbled and murmured, "Thank you, Madame."

"My mother used to do that," she said, looking at me almost shamefacedly. "It's so hot today."

I would have liked to say something appropriate, but as so often, I couldn't think of anything. So I just nodded, smiled and wished her a good day. I should have said a good word to her. What is so difficult about that?





Coin

It's strange. Whenever I'm asked about my trip to Rome, this experience is the first thing that comes into mind, but I don't tell about it.

My friend and I had left early in the morning to be able to look at the Forum Romanum in a leisurely way and to escape the heat. On the way, we passed a small green area. Between the bushes and the path sat a homeless man who called out a friendly „Good morning“ to us.

"Good marketing strategy," my friend said and grinned.

We stopped, both took a few lire out of our pockets and gave him the money.

"Mille grazie! Thank you! Danke! Merci!" he rattled off and laughed.

We now saw that there was a man lying behind him, asleep. I was about to move on, but my friend took a step towards the bushes and put some lire on a plastic bag lying next to the sleeping man.

Astonished, the man looked at her and began to shake his buddy awake. He spoke to him, and although I don't understand Italian, it was clear to me what he wanted: to thank my friend. But he didn't wake up and just grumbled angrily.

"It's okay," my friend said, "Ciao."

We continued on our way. The man called after us some more what sounded like good wishes in several languages.

"I bet," my friend said, "he won't steal his buddy's money."

I agreed with her. "A real buddy, that's what he is."





Thermometer

The bus was late, as it often is, which particularly annoyed me the day before yesterday because it was very cold. It was still early and there was fog all over the station square. There was hoarfrost on the trees. I was freezing. Somewhere a man was talking very loudly, but still I only understood one word: No. I looked around and spotted him a few metres away on another bus platform. He was standing there with a woman and gesticulating. Both looked unkempt and I wasn't sure if they weren't drunk too. The woman wanted to leave, he held her back. I looked and listened more closely.

"What do we care," the woman said. "He's an adult." She tore herself away from him.

"But it's cold," the man said. "We have to do something."

Now I saw that they were standing by a man who was stretched out long on his back. His clothes were worn and dirty.

"He's drunk," the woman said.

"Never mind," the man said and crouched down beside him. He shook his shoulder. "Get up," he called, "you can't lie here. It's too cold."

The woman walked on, grumbling, while the man remained crouching helplessly on the floor, trying to get the man awake.

An elderly gentleman walked up to the two. "I've called an ambulance," he said in a calm voice. "They'll be here in a minute."

The man stood up, nodded and walked after the woman. The elderly gentleman, however, stopped by the man lying on the ground and waited. Shortly afterwards, the siren was heard.





Song Sheet

There were only a few people on the shopping street. Yet they were hurriedly running from shop to shop, or maybe just because of that. On such an empty street, I didn't feel comfortable either and walked with quick steps towards the mall. On the way there, I saw a woman sitting on the floor, looking around quietly. Then she sat up straight, brushed her hair out of her face and sang. She had a beautiful and full voice. It were happy songs I didn't know, but I liked them.

It took me a while to do my shopping. When I left the mall, she was still sitting on the street and singing. I stood near the entrance for a while and listened. Then I went to her, put some coins on the paper plate and thanked her. She didn't interrupt her song, but nodded at me with a smile.

I made my way home, and her singing accompanied me. Suddenly it broke off. I turned around and saw two men from the Office for Public Order talking to her. She stood in front of them and talked at them, but they always just shook their heads.

I went back.

"Go now," I heard one of them say as I approached. Grumbling, the woman went on her way. The men turned and walked in my direction. A moment later I was with them and I addressed them.

"Did you send the woman away?"

"Yes. People were complaining," they said.

"She was just singing. Who can that bother?"

The two shrugged their shoulders. "She's always bothering. We know her. She's in a lot of places downtown and gets pushy," they explained.

"But now she was just sitting in the street singing," I objected.

"But still," both said.

"I want you to know that she didn't bother all the people. Me, for example. I liked her songs."

"Well, then. Have a nice day," they replied and left me standing.

And I wondered if songs only bother people when the singer wears a bright dress and a colourful headscarf.





Prayer



Prayer

When I meet a poor I say: I can't give something to everyone,
then you, God, say: I'm not talking about that either.

When I say: I don't have time now,
You say: I have given you plenty of it.

When I say: I have no money left,
You say: Give him a good word and a smile.

When I say: I don't know what he needs,
you say: Ask him.

When I say: He can make an effort,
you say: You don't even know him.

When I say: He just gets drunk,
you say: I'll remind you at the next party.

When I say: He could at least have said thank you,
you say: If you would have looked at him, you would have seen it in his eyes.

God, I want to listen to you,
not in the next few days
or tomorrow,
but now.
Now I want to give to the poor
what he needs and
what I can
to my brother, to my sister
as a sister, as a brother.

Amen



World Day of the Poor

The seventh World Day of the Poor on Sunday, 19th November 2023 was placed by Pope Francis under the motto:

Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor

SVD-Partner cordially invite you again to participate in the worldwide Prayer Bridge to pray with and for the poor together with people all over the world on this day.

Registrations are now possible under www.svd-partner.eu

All registrations received by **18th November 2023** 6 pm local time will be added to the world map on the website.

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