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Beyond the Material

Dimensions of Poverty from a Roman Catholic Perspective

Introduction

"*The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me (Mt 26:11)"*

Poverty seems to be a perpetual human problem. Our personal experiences suggest that we will always encounter poor people and that there will always be those who suffer from unmet material needs. Even in certain parts of the world where poverty is decreasing, it will remain a global problem.

This statement should not paralyse us but should encourage action. To take appropriate action, an accurate understanding of the problem's nature is necessary. We agree with the general consensus that material poverty is a serious problem, in fact, one of the most significant, that needs to be addressed (urgently). Nevertheless, in line with the Catholic social teaching, we also argue that poverty has several dimensions, many of which are beyond material concerns. After providing a brief overview of two authoritative indicators, one on poverty (*Global Multidimensional Poverty Index*) and one on complex human well-being (*The Flourishing Measure)*, we will examine the Roman Catholic Church's current position on poverty – especially based on the Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te.*[1] Here, we will focus on giving a comprehensive understanding of poverty by investigating its dimensions, including material, cultural, moral and spiritual poverty and social marginalisation. This paper might serve as a preliminary theoretical step toward developing measurable empirical indicators for fostering integral human development.[2]

Measuring poverty

Instinctively, measuring poverty seems objective: no feelings, just disciplined sociology based on quantitative empirical data. Often – not only instinctively – that is the case. Sociologists, economists, political scientists, and others have devoted serious effort over the centuries to measuring poverty using scientific methods and, as much as possible, objectively. It is also clear that, even though well-being (as well as ill-being) and human development are far broader concepts than poverty, they are closely related. No measurements are perfect (i.e., able to capture the exact complexity of individual and social reality), but several authoritative indices are available, such as the World Bank Group's measuring of poverty,[3] the Human Development Index[4] of the United Nations Development Program, the Gross National Happiness Index, which originated in Bhutan and was further developed,[5], and the Global Flourishing Study.[6] The High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP within the framework of the United Nations also deserves attention.[7] First, we will provide a short outline of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and then take a look at the Flourishing Measure.

Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

One of the simplest ways to determine who is poor is to check income. Income-based poverty measurement can capture a few significant welfare indicators, most importantly, access to water and food. Furthermore, there is often a correlation between higher income and access to quality education, healthcare, and related services. So income matters, but it does not provide a comprehensive picture of poverty.[8] Income-based measurements cannot reveal, for example, how often and in what quality the same goods and services are available to individuals with similar income levels. Partly because of that, policymakers and researchers "construct aggregate indicators to combine various dimensions of well-being into a single, comprehensive measure"[9], such as the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), developed in 2010 by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme.

The Alkire-Foster method – used in this index – aims to measure both the percentage of people in poverty and the intensity of poverty. In terms of dimensions, it covers health, education, and living standards, which are further subdivided into indicators such as nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, electricity, housing, etc. MPI "involves setting poverty thresholds and then counting the number of households that fall below these thresholds."[10] The relationship between income poverty and multidimensional poverty is that the MPI can, in addition to income, capture other aspects that may correlate with low income, such as "social exclusion, expressed as a lack of access to education, health, and housing due to social predicament."[11] As the last global report on 2025 concludes, "of 6.3 billion people in 109 countries, 1.1 billion (18.3 percent) live in acute multidimensional poverty.[12] It also maintains that multidimensional poverty is present in the case of children (27,8%) more than twice as often as in the case of adults (13,5%). In short, MPI is an extremely useful tool for measuring poverty across multiple dimensions (including material ones), but it does not specifically address moral and spiritual questions.

The Flourishing Measure

The Flourishing Measure developed by The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science is based on five central domains: happiness and life satisfaction, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtues, and close social relationships.[13] It is clear that this measure combines purely empirical measures, such as the MPI, with a metaphysical approach, such as moral or cultural poverty, which are discussed below.

Question-based measurement ensures that subjectivity is not lost during the research process, allowing people to reflect on their own lives and answer questions as accurately as possible,

regardless of whether they are aware of the different approaches to the concept. The questionnaire published by Harvard University itself includes questions about overall life satisfaction, mental and physical health, the consistency of our relationships, and existential concerns.[14] The questions, thus, ask about the harmony between material and mental goods. The latter concerns moral poverty, in a sense, as it relates to the lack of meaning or depth in life. This is an important element, and it also means that the Flourishing Measure can be applied to several categories related to the dimensions of poverty raised by the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the aforementioned *Dilexi te*. Still, beyond the fact that understanding can vary from person to person, it is not the same as the Catholic understanding, which obviously includes God.

A Roman Catholic perspective

Currently, one of the top priorities for the Roman Catholic Church's social questions is *poverty*. Obviously, the Church has a long tradition of social concern. Even the very first social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*[15], issued by Pope Leo XIII, can be understood as an "encyclical on the poor and on the terrible conditions to which the new and often violent process of industrialization had reduced great multitudes of people," as John Paul II argues in *Centesimus Annus.*[16] Subsequently, it is right to argue that the Church, with its constant and ever new[17] social teaching, puts an incessant focus on the question of poverty. In other words, the Church is aware that poverty is, unfortunately, *deadly serious* and it feels herself responsible for addressing the problem.

It seems that the past decades are no exception, and we can witness serious progress in the discussion of poverty. In fact, even the names of the last two Popes (Francis and Leo) refer to predecessors also known for their openness to the poor. The significance is succinctly exemplified by the Holy Father's Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* to All Christians on the Love for the Poor, published on 4th October 2024.[18] Just as the first encyclical of Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei,*[19] was mostly written under Benedict XVI, most of Dilexi te, in continuation of the Encyclical *Dilexit nos,*[20] was written by Francis and only finished by Leo XIV's reflection. Even if the references are considered, several lead to Francis' documents, for instance, Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*[21] and Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium.*[22]

In several aspects, Dilexi te, follows the Church's approach to social questions: (1) its teachings flow from both the Bible and the tradition, (2) it aims to describe the social situation, its negative consequences, and the currently improper solutions, and (3) it offers its predominantly moral guidance[23], which may lead to positive outcomes. What is more relevant in our case (i.e., the questions of dimensions of poverty) is the distinction that Dilexi te makes in terms of the forms of poverty:

> "The condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church. On the wounded faces of the poor, we see the suffering of the innocent and, therefore, the suffering of Christ himself. At the same time, we should perhaps speak more correctly of the many faces of the poor and of poverty, since it is a multifaceted phenomenon. In fact, there are many forms of poverty: the poverty of those who lack material means of subsistence, the poverty of those who are socially marginalized and lack the means to give voice to their dignity and abilities, moral and spiritual poverty, cultural poverty, the poverty of those who find themselves in a condition of personal or social weakness or fragility, the poverty of those who have no rights, no space, no freedom."[24]

First, it is clear that the papal guidance that reaches far beyond the matter and the exclusively material aspects of poverty; in fact, it enlists several dimensions of poverty. Earlier social encyclicals have addressed the different aspects, or "faces," of poverty. For instance, Pope Paul VI distinguishes material poverty from moral poverty in *Populorum Progressio.*[25] Meanwhile, Pope Benedict XVI, in *Caritas in Veritate*, beyond the question of hunger and thirst, refers to the necessity of broadening the concept of poverty with the question of respect for life.[26]

Still, the list in Dilexi te is rather comprehensive. Our aim is to understand the exact meaning of those dimensions. We, in light of the fact that papal manifestations are often pastoral and rhetorical, argue that these can be categorised into four dimensions: (1) material means of subsistence, (2) social marginalisation (which includes more elements from the Pope's understanding), (3) moral and spiritual poverty, and (4) cultural poverty. While understanding these categories, we also strive to connect them with a few secular sources (and outline similarities and differences). The analysis of these multiple dimensions aims to explore the depth of the poverty-related problem holistically (integratively), thereby enabling the simultaneous application of more effective, multifaceted solutions.

Material means of subsistence (Material poverty)

Nowadays, people hold extremely strong materialistic beliefs, especially in developed countries worldwide. Not only people but also the current world order are highly dependent on material objects (for example, food, water, further natural resources, residential and public buildings, factories, etc.). In the strictest sense, essential supplies for modern humans are inevitably material. Certain material deficiencies not only cause discomfort but, according to certain constitutional law decisions, a certain extent of material well-being constitutes the minimum standard of living required for the preservation and fulfilment of *human dignity*.

Material means of subsistence in today's world are a fundamental part of existence. Though in the Apostolic Exhortation, only two paragraphs (no. 9, 12) out of 121 address material poverty specifically, it does not mean that it is not a question of not being treated as essential (it would not be in line with the tradition as well); rather, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its underlying causes is sought. As we deepen our understanding of each category, we will see how they necessarily arise and exist in a dialectical relation to one another, although they may also develop and have an independent existence (for a visual representation, see Appendix I).

Primarily, there is an inherent causal link between material poverty and immorality, which is also related to moral poverty. In its social encyclicals, the Roman Catholic Church has consistently emphasized the necessity of moral renewal and attributed negative social tendencies to moral deficiencies. To have a positive impact at a societal level, a presumption of a society that consists of morally good human beings. Morality, it becomes clear, is not only related to the question of individual options between good and bad but also to a general approach, or mentality, when the pope argues "a concrete commitment to the poor must also be accompanied by a change in mentality that can have an impact at the cultural level."[27] Here, cultural level means societal level, but as it will be seen in the related subchapter, moral and cultural poverty are not only mentioned several times[28] but are also interconnected.

Regarding empirical measurements, one aim is to define the concept of material poverty, including its "hidden faces." Although researchers seem not to reach an agreement on how to define who can be identified as poor, there are a few *differentia specifica* that intend to capture it: basic expense hardship, food insecurity, housing hardship, and medical hardship.[29] As Anika Altaf argues several researcher try to uncover causes and consequences by determining differences through an examination that takes into account the different levels of poverty: "Destitute, poorest of the poor, core poor, chronic poor, highly dependent poor, ultra-poor and extreme poor; these are a some of the terms used to indicate those that are struggling most to make ends meet and survive."[30] She also recalls the approach of Micheal Lipton – a forerunner of the research on extreme poverty – who considered extreme poor people "who spent at least 80% of their income on food but fail to meet 80% of the Food and Agricultural Organization/World Health Organization weight-adjusted energy requirements."[31] In sum, empirical science significantly and sophistically deals with the question of material poverty, not only as a lack of financial resources but also the related elements.

Social marginalisation

Based on the papal statement, social marginalization is a phenomenon that is related to those "who lack the means to give voice to their dignity and abilities."[32] Therefore, it does not only mean a

kind of "objectively capturable" fact related to material condition but rather a spoliated space of the society in which certain – fundamentally human – options are not available. As we could see, Dilexi te mentioned not four but six aspects of poverty. In our understanding, the last two, which are lists in themselves, namely "the poverty of those who find themselves in a condition of personal or social weakness or fragility, the poverty of those who have no rights, no space, no freedom"[33] belong to the question of social marginalisation. Though the significance of *Populorum Progressio* has been emphasized previously, in another encyclical letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*, Pope Paul VI writes about new poor, such as „the handicapped and the maladjusted, the old, different groups of those on the fringe of society."[34] These examples would probably fit those of the socially marginalized.

Obviously, material poverty and social marginalisation are related; often, there is an overlap between the two, but not necessarily. The apostolic exhortation mentions them together when it argues "God looks upon the sick, the poor and sinners who, because of their condition, were marginalized by society and even people of faith."[35] Every era has its marginalised groups, and the Church was often able to serve them in the forms of mendicant orders in the medieval ages (Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and Carmelites), through the social doctrine of the Church (from *Rerum novarum* to *Fratelli tutti*), or with modern saints (e.g., Guiseppina Vannini, Mariam Thresia Chimarel Mankidiyan, Dulce Lopes Pontes) who worked on peripheries.[36] In the case of the latter, the development of the theology of peripheries was further accelerated by Pope Francis. Though even in developed countries there is a distinction between centres and peripheries, the term is often associated with underdeveloped countries and their most marginalised groups. It is crucial that, in this concept, the relationship is not one-way; the Church's service is in parallel with the spiritual gifts received through its relationship with the marginalized. In this way, Christian spirituality develops through the service of the poor.

Last but not least, the question of (in)equality is a crucial concept related to marginalisation as it is also a relational feature. Extreme inequality is in itself immoral, but a further problem is caused by the fact that if the power relations are not balanced, it will lead to further injustices, including poverty and social marginalisation.

Social marginalisation is also a crucial concept in sociology. A review article that included 1121 papers in the 50 years of research concluded that "social marginalisation as a multifaceted concept that refers to a context-dependent social process of 'othering' – where certain individuals or groups are systematically excluded based on societal norms and values – and the resulting experience of disadvantage."[37] This disadvantage can be in a form or is often conceptualised as a social exclusion and as well as social segregation.

Similar to material poverty, social exclusion is multifaceted. Babken Babajanian and Jessice Hagen-Zanker distinguish the exclusion from income, services, and participation,[38] while Seema Khan, Emilie Combaz, and Erika McAslan Fraser write about political, economic, social, and cultural exclusion.[39] Psychosocial impacts of social exclusion also appear to be a driving force for negative or positive change. Amanda Lenhardt – based on the previous research of Fiona Samuels and Maria Stavropoulou – argues that "people's experiences of poverty include frustration, shame, hopelessness, humiliation, and a lack of dignity and confidence."[40]

Another contesting concept is social segregation, which most often arises when the state is unable to provide security that serves the interests of society as a whole, regardless of social status. Due to the unequal distribution of state power, the neglected part of society begins to organise itself independently, guided by certain principles. However, strengthening ties within individual social groups can aggravate existing cleavages and further marginalise those already excluded from these groups.[41]

Although there is a widespread scientific interest in social segregation, it paradoxically obscures the definition of marginalisation, making it difficult to distinguish it from, for instance, cultural poverty. This can lead to "operationalisation problems, ambiguous findings and incomparable results".[42] However, while certain views – such as the poverty and human rights correlation[43] – refer primarily to the legal sense of the term, social marginalisation is most often examined in research in terms of health, socio-demographic characteristics, institutions, and political attitudes.[44]

The correlation between socially accepted norms and poverty is complex and often contested. Social norms in an ideal world provide order and predictability to society and also reflect power structures, often reinforcing them.[45] In relation to the specific differences in poverty, defining "social norms" is also problematic. Drawing on related legal documents,[46] the following categories, in all cases, constitute aspects of social segregation: ethnicity, race, caste, religion, citizenship status, disabilities, and sexual and gender identities.

Difficult to scientifically prove – due to lack of resources – but widely known that "impoverishment is greatest when an individual or a household experiences multiple forms of discrimination or exclusion due to harmful social norms."[47] Especially if it is affecting a particular group or a less developed region. In this scenario, it tends to be deeply embedded in social structure, therefore difficult to change in the short term.[48]

Moral and spiritual poverty

Though there may be an intention to distinguish between the concepts of moral and spiritual poverty, in Dilexi te, they are mentioned together. According to the Apostolic Exhortation, these forms of poverty involve a lack of perception of and integration with God.[49] As emphasized previously, while both material poverty and social marginalisation are of crucial significance for the Church, moral poverty is of central importance. As Pope Leo argued in his first message of the World Day of the Poor in 2025 (introduced by Pope Francis in 2017), "the gravest form of poverty is not to know God."[50]

Obviously, moral changes (and moral poverty) can be understood as a broader concept that involves moral development and moral decline. One of the common and unjustified assumptions of modern times is that, in both material and moral terms, we are on a line of progress.[51] Still Pope Leo XIV wisely points out that the "current world, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favor an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak, or the less talented to find opportunities in life."[52] It is clear that Dilexi te combines moral solutions (e.g., spiritual conversion, commitment to the poor, small acts of solidarity) and social and political ones (e.g., eliminate the structural causes of poverty) that also flow from moral ones. "Unjust structures need to be recognized and eradicated by the force of good, by changing mindsets."[53] Ultimately, what is crucial is that even if other forms of good actions are not available, spiritual care is necessary; Dilexi te recalls Evangelii gaudium's argument that "the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care."[54]

"Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease. It attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away one's dignity and drives one into total despair," argued Deepa Narayan in her book titled *Listening to the Voices of the Poor.*[55] Moral and spiritual issues, including moral and spiritual poverty in a secular sense, belong primarily to the field of psychology. Numerous studies attempt to grasp the roots of the problem, but little attention is paid to the consequences of abandoning the transcendent foundation of human beings. Because – as Pope Benedict emphasised – "a humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism. Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life – structure, institutions, culture, and *ethos* – without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment."[56]

Morality is something that refers to people's treatment of each other, whether in small circles of community (family) or higher, within the framework of state institutions.

As we indicated above, global poverty rates are high, which raises the question of why we should perceive the moral decline as illusory. According to Mastroianni and Gilbert's research, people perceive moral decline when there is a negative 'personal change' between two different times or when there is an 'interpersonal replacement', which usually appears when the morality of a certain population declines over a longer period of time.[57]

We cannot go further into the debate of the illusion of moral decline, but it is indeed a crucial aspect of the argumentation. We believe that, even if the declining phenomenon of the moral crisis cannot be stated with complete certainty, we can say with greater certainty that today's man's freedom is indeed more likely to be illusory. The main question is what happens to human freedom and autonomy in the age of technology. If humanity is less receptive to transcendence and lives its daily life without God, then the ultimate basis of morality becomes more unstable. It is a deficiency that does not take into account the very essence of human nature, its religious yearning. Jacques Ellul argues that "as long as man does not learn to use technical objects in the right way, he must remain their slave. (…) if the individual cannot attain personal liberty with respect to technical objects, there is no chance that he will be able to respond to the general problem of Technique."[58]

But the desire for freedom is rooted in internal autonomy, rooted in the transcendent that cannot be permanently eradicated from human beings, no matter how total the conditioning of our lives has become. For this, we must liberate ourselves from objects and structures that enslave us. Dilexi te, referring to the Trinitarians and Mercedarians, notes that because "the original spirituality of these orders was deeply rooted in contemplation of the cross. (…) religious did not see redemption as a political or economic action, but as a quasi-liturgical act, the sacramental offering of themselves. (…) the tradition of these orders (…) on the contrary, inspired new forms of action in the face of modern forms of slavery."[59]

Consequently, moral and spiritual poverty not only represents the illusion of our own freedom but also serves as the initial impetus for transforming social structures. A society based on false freedom of individuals will prioritize economic productivity over moral rightness, thereby gradually normalizing marginalization, exclusion, and segregation. Thus, the ineffective help for those in poverty is not just a lack of empathy or effective policies, but rather, supposedly, a sign of abandoning the transcendent essence of human beings. In this sense, our work is not to come up with more and diverse policies, but a "conversion of heart"[60], a return to a morally good and right freedom, which is primarily the ability to choose what is inherently good.

Cultural poverty[61]

Not only the term "cultural poverty, but the "culture" alone creates intensive debates among scholars. Some define it as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society."[62] Others define it as something that gives rise to different civilizations.[63]

Culture, thus, seems dynamic. But societies function most smoothly when cultural processes feel stable, and the stability of our culture comes from "the unity of natura, the fixity of its laws"[64]. These laws can be examined through scientific methods, but, more importantly, their basis, from a Christian – especially in Thomistic – perspective, lies in the "first law" or "eternal law". And since "all laws proceed from the eternal law ontologically, the eternal law is the measure of all other laws, and this they find their derivation from the eternal law."[65] If, as proceeding further in time, humanity develops laws and norms that start not from this eternal law, then through this loss of depth, it will unconsciously – or consciously given the 21th century – generate a kind of "poverty".

Thus, cultural poverty entails spiritual and moral poverty, since culture reflects the society of a given era. Consequently, it carries connotations of the fragmentation of a unity (society) or of the normative system. But can it mean poverty in the strict sense of the word? By wealth, apart from the monetary sense, we generally mean something that connects with fulfilment and satisfaction, and, in a way, has meaning and depth.

Nowadays, culture often falls within the realm of arbitrariness and personal freedom; it has no sustaining forces or common points of reference. Acting without a solid foundation will not create this sense of depth and wealth. As Pope Francis pointed out, "the problem is not always an excess of activity, but rather activity undertaken badly, without adequate motivation, without spirituality which would permeate it and make it pleasurable."[66] Thus, leaving behind the transcendent horizon can lead to cultural poverty, as "poverty is often produced by a rejection of God's love (…) man is alienated when he is alone, when he is detached from reality, when he stops thinking and believing in a foundation."[67]

Outside Catholic understanding, the term "cultural poverty" gained its recognition in the past few decades by social scientists who have produced theoretical and empirical research "that has yielded a subtle, heterogeneous, and sophisticated picture of how cultural factors shape and are shaped by poverty and inequality."[68]

Given the dynamic nature of culture, which also embodies its own stability, and taking into account the transcendent element (eternal law), we must conclude that cultural poverty lacks transcendental

stability. Instability also encompasses the difficulty of exercising free will.[69] It comes from the correlation of the poverty categories with each other. It all comes down to an understanding when Pope Leo XIV states in Dilexi te that "voluntary poverty was a form of freedom and prophecy"[70] and that 'intellectual charity' (teaching) formed consciences.[71] Education of the poor, thus, is a "duty, a fundamental requirement for the recognition of human dignity. Teaching them affirms their value and gives them the tools to transform their reality. Knowledge a gift from and a community responsibility. By combining faith and culture, they sow the seed of the future, honour the image of God and build a better society."[72]

Values are symbolic expressions of intrinsically desirable principles or qualities. They tend to conserve a society's dominant ideas about morality and social issues. Thus, values can change when opposing views coexist within a community. In a pluralist world, thus, there are several values, but the most desired one, as Pope Leo XIV points out, is economic, which results in an imbalance of "ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. A new tyranny is being born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules."[73] Nevertheless, it is undeniable that in today's world, the lack of certain material goods generates serious disadvantages, as discussed above and as the MPI[74] research also points out.

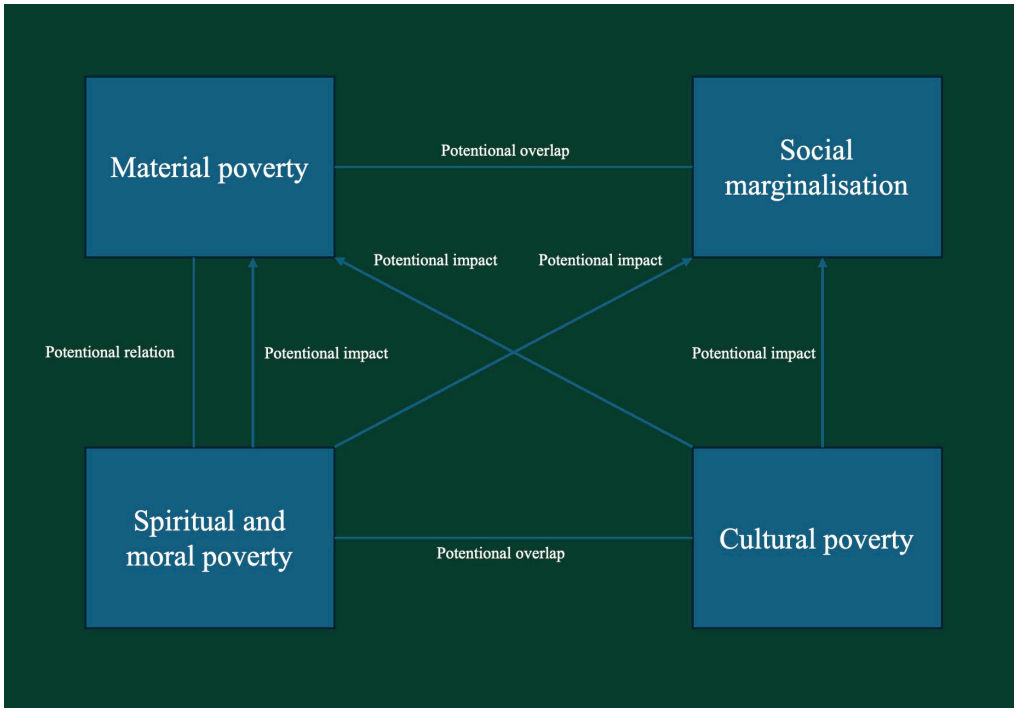
Conclusion

In theory, poverty may be solved, as it only requires providing what a given person or social group lacks. This lack is most often considered material. Even this kind of poverty can have infinitely complex causes, and thus cannot be eliminated in practice. Then, what might one begin with, in the question of poverty, that is beyond the material?

Our current intention with this paper is to understand the dimensions of poverty, including material means of subsistence (or material poverty), social marginalization, moral and spiritual poverty, and cultural poverty. Our starting point from a Roman Catholic perspective was the Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi te, in which we can simultaneously find the separation of the different dimensions of poverty and, in fact, their ultimate unity at their points of connection. Based on this, it can be argued that poverty often flows from an inordinate morality that determines the values and the cultural mindset of a given era. Moral values ought to be guides in human societies, creating socially acceptable norms, that "provide rules describing what a behaviour should be like, and values provide criteria by which the behaviour is judged as *good* or *bad*."[75] If norms are based on distorted values – or rather Godless worldviews – they will inevitably reinforce values that lead to social marginalisation, exclusion, and segregation. In these situations, individuals experience several

deficiencies that often correlate with one another, but material poverty constitutes a significant problem in the overall picture. How can it be addressed? Obviously, several proposals are formulated, from economic prosperity and spiritual and moral renewal, through the elimination of structural injustices (or structures of sin), to education. Our modest contribution is intended to interpret the dimensions of poverty to have the opportunity to address them simultaneously.

Appendix I.



Notes

[1] Pope Leo XIV. (2025). Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi Te. *Vatican Website.* https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html

[2] The concept of integral human development was included in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, written by Pope Benedict XVI, but it has been a part of the social teaching of the Church from Pope John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* and originated with *Populorum Progressio*, issued by Pope Paul VI.

[3] Measuring Poverty. *World Bank Group Website.* https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/topic/poverty/measuring-poverty. The international poverty line, which indicates extreme poverty in low-income economies, is set at $3.00 per person per day in 2025.

[4] Human Development Index (HDI). *United Nations Development Programme Website.* https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI

[5] Gross National Happiness. *Oxford Poverty & Development Initiative.* https://ophi.org.uk/gross-national-happiness

[6] https://globalflourishingstudy.com/about-the-study/

[7]High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP. *United Nations Website.* https://www.un.org/en/beyondGDP/documents

[8] We write about „comprehensive" instead of complete or perfect because – as most empirical scholars argue – there is no perfect measurement for poverty or well-being.

[9] Joe Hasell – Pablo Arriagada – Bertha Rohenkohl: Beyond income: understanding poverty through the Multidimensional Poverty Index. December 16, 2024. https://ourworldindata.org/multidimensional-poverty-index

[10] Ibid.

[11] Xiaolin Wang – Hexia Feng – Qingjie Xia – Sabina Alkire: On the Relationship between Income Poverty and Multidimensional Poverty in China. *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.* 2016. 3 p. https://ophi.org.uk/sites/default/files/OPHIWP101_1.pdf

[12] Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative – United Nations Development Programme: *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2025. Overlapping Hardships: Poverty and Climate Hazards.* 3.

[13] Our Flourishing Measure. *The Human Flourishing Program Website.* https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/measuring-flourishing

[14] Flourishing Measure. *Human Flourishing Program.* https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/sites/g/files/omnuum8886/files/pik/files/flourishing_measure_pdf.pdf

[15] Pope Leo XIII. (1891). Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labor. *Vatican Website. https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html*

[16] Pope John Paul II. 1991. Centesimus Annus. *Vatican Website. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.* 11.

[17] Pope John Paul II. (1987). Sollicitudo Rei Socialilis. *Vatican Website. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html*

[18] *Dilexi te.*

[19] Pope Francis. (2013a). Encyclical Letter Lumen Fidei. *Vatican Website.* https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html

[20] Pope Francis. (2024). Encyclical Letter Dilexit Nos. *Vatican Website.* https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html

[21] Francis. (2020) Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti. *The Vatican Website.* https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

[22] Pope Francis (2013b) Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium. *Vatican Website.* https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

[23] For instance, it is argued God "shows his concern for the needs of the poor" and "[i]n hearing the cry of the poor, we are asked to enter into the heart of God, who is always concerned for the needs of his children, especially those in greatest need." *Dilexi te* 8.

[24] *Dilexi te 9.*

[25] Pope Paul VI. (1967). Populorum Progressio. *Vatican Website.* https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html

[26] Pope Benedict XIV. (2009). Caritas in Veritate. *Vatican Website. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html#_ednref66*, 28.

[27] *Dilexi te* 11.

[28] *Dilexi te* on moral poverty: 9, 11, 46, 53, 93-95; on cultural poverty: 9, 11, 55-57, 61-68, 72, 90, 92, 94, 98.

[29] Anika Schenck-Fontaine – Rebecca M Ryan: Poverty, Material Hardship, and Children's Outcomes: A Nuanced Understanding of Material Hardship in Childhood. *Pubmed Central.* https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9319381/
[30] Altaf A.: *The many hidden faces of extreme poverty. Inclusion and exlusion of extreme poor people in development interventions in Bangladesh, Benin and Ethiopia. Thesis.* University of Amsterdam, 2019. 80.
[31] Altaf A.: Ibid. 81.
[32] *Dilexi te* 9.
[33] *Dilexi te* 9.
[34] Pope Paul VI. (1981). Octogesima Adveniens. *Vatican Website.* https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html, 15.
[35] *Dilexi te* 21.
[36] *Dilexi te* 63, 78, 82-89.
[37] Sam Sluit – Laura Cortés-García – Tilmann von Soest. (2024). Social marginalization: A scoping review of 50 years of research. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications.* 2024: 11.
[38] Hagen-Zanker, Jessica – Babajanian Babken. (2012). Social protection and social exclusion: an analytical framework to assess the links. Figure II. *Overseas Development Institute.* October 2012.
[39] Seema Khan – Emilie Combaz – Erika McAslan Fraser. 2015. Causes and forms of social exclusion. *Governance and Social Development Centre.* August 2015. https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/social-exclusion/causes/causes-and-forms-of-social-exclusion/
[40] Amanda Lenhardt. 2023. The role of social norms in ending extreme poverty. *Deep Thematic Paper 1.* Data and Evidence to End Extreme Poverty Research Programme, Oxford. https://povertyevidence.org/resources/the-role-of-social-norms-in-ending-extreme-poverty-thematic-paper/
[41] Deepa Narayan. *ibid.* 2.
[42] Sluit – Cortés-García – von Soest. Ibid.
[43] About extreme poverty and human rights. *United Nations Human Rights.* https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-poverty/about-extreme-poverty-and-human-rights
[44] Ibid.
[45] Lenhardt: ibid.
[46] Directive 2024/1499 amends Directives 2000/43/EC on equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and 2004/113/EC on the equal treatment of men and women outside the employment market. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/standards-for-equality-bodies-in-the-field-of-equal-treatment-and-equal-opportunities.hotml
[47] Lenhardt: Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] In *Populorum Progressio,* (21) moral poverty is broader as it is related to „those who are crushed under the weight of their own self-love; oppressive political structures resulting from the abuse of ownership or the improper exercise of power, from the exploitation of the worker or unjust transactions."
[50] Pope Leo XIV. Message of the Holy Father for the 9th World Day of the Poor. *Vatican Website. 16 November 2025.* https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/poor/documents/20250613-messaggio-giornata-poveri.html
[51] Obviously, different approaches exist; see, for instance, Madeleine A. Fugére: Is the World Really in Moral Decline? 2023. The biased expouse effect, and how to get past. *Psychology Today.* June 29, 2023. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/dating-and-mating/202306/is-global-society-in-rapid-moral-decline or Adam M. Mastroianni – Daniel T Gilbert. 2023. The illusion of moral decline. *Nature.* Vol 618, 22 June 2023. pp. 782–789. DOI: 10.1038/s41586-023-06137-x.
[52] *Dilexi te* 95.
[53] *Dilexi te* 97.
[54] *Evangelii gaudium* 200.
[55] Narayan 2000: 219.p.
[56] Pope Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI.* Vatican Website. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html, 78. Pope Benedict (27) also argued that "If man were merely the fruit of either chance or necessity, or if he had to lower his aspirations to the limited horizon of the world in which he lives, if all reality were merely history and culture, and man did not possess a nature destined to transcend itself in a supernatural life, then one could speak of growth, or evolution, but not development."
[57] Mastroiani – Gilbert. ibid. 785.
[58] Jacques Ellul: Ideas of Technology. 1962. The Technological Order. *Technology and Culture.* Proceedings of the Encyclopedia Britannica Conference on the Technological Order 3, no. 4. 1962, autumn. 411.
[59] *Dilexi te* 61.
[60] Pope Leo XIV on Ash Wednesday: Ask the Lord for the gift of true conversion this Lent. *Catholic Review.* 18 February 2026. https://catholicreview.org/pope-leo-xiv-on-ash-wednesday-ask-the-lord-for-the-gift-of-true-conversion-this-lent/

[61] „Man is understood in a more complete way when he is situated within the sphere of culture through his language, history, and the position he takes towards the fundamental events of life, such as birth, love, work and death. At the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God." Pope John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus.* 24.
[62] Edward B. Tylor: *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom.* Vol 1. London, 1871. 1.
[63] Theorists such as Herder, Spengler, Huntington.
[64] Tylor. ibid. 2.
[65] Brett Kunkle: What Can We Learn from a Catholic Thinker? Aquinas and Natural Law. *Stand to Reason.* 20. January, 2015. https://www.str.org/w/what-can-we-learn-from-a-catholic-thinker-aquinas-and-natural-law
[66] Pope Francis: *Evangelii Gaudium.* 82.
[67] Pope Benedict XVI. *Caritas in Veritate.* 53.
[68] Michéle Lamont – Mario Luis Small. 2008. How Culture Matters: Enriching Our Understanding of Poverty. In Ann Chin Lin – David R. Harris (eds.): *The Colors of Poverty: Why Racial and Ethnic Disparities Persist. National Poverty Center Series on Poverty and Public Policy.* Russel Sage Foundation, New York, 76.
[69] Without diving further into the discussions and debates of free will, we must stress that the difficulty that appears concerning free will is only articulated accurately in this sense and context: cultural poverty and the interconnectedness between these categories. If we conclude that social marginalization and segregation are related to cultural poverty, then cultural poverty is also related to them. Not only do they stand alone, but they are also somehow dependent on each other.
[70] *Dilexi te* 65.
[71] *Dilexi te* 72.
[72] *Dilexi te* 72.
[73] *Dilexi te* 92.
[74] Beyond income: understanding poverty through the Multidimensional Poverty Index. *Our World in Data.* 16. December 2024. https://ourworldindata.org/multidimensional-poverty-index
[75] Kateryna Maltseva. 2018. Values, norms, and social cognition. *NaUKMA Research Papers Sociology*. 2018:1. 4.