One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. (*Laudato Si*, 29)

*Today, I learned that not all my students have access to clean water through their faucets. We were learning in Social Studies about different groups of aboriginal people and the struggles they faced in their civilizations. One of the main issues the kids talked about was access to water. Then, one of my students turned to me and said that it is like when they run out of bottled water at home and my mom has to boil all the stuff out of the water. Having clean water is something so basic to me. The fact that these kids live in the same city as I do, but the pipes in their building are so bad that they cannot drink the water shocked me.*

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We have “a sort of ‘superdevelopment’ of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation” (*Laudato Si*, 109)

*On Sundays, our organization receives fruit from a local grocery store. Anything deemed unsuitable for public consumption makes its way over to our house—enough produce to barely fit in the bed of a truck. This was the first shipment I’d ever seen, and I was immediately disappointed. The fruits and vegetables weren’t just ugly, but rotten. The bananas were black, flies buzzed around an open melon, and some of the food reeked. In my eyes, none of this was good enough to eat. I prepared to throw a black banana into the trash, and a resident of the house stopped me: “No, está bien.” I proceeded to watch the women cut rotten spots off of tomatoes, squeeze bananas to see if they were still firm, and sort through the fruit, rarely throwing anything into the trash. I couldn’t judge them because I saw that under the black peels, the bananas still tasted sweet, and the peaches weren’t rotten just because of one rotten spot. Today reminded me of how much food I waste, and made me appreciate how wise the women at the house are.*

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This is the culture which is hoped for, one which fosters trust in the human potential of the poor, and consequently in their ability to improve their condition through work or to make a positive contribution to economic prosperity. But to accomplish this, the poor — be they individuals or nations — need to be provided with realistic opportunities. Creating such conditions calls for a *concerted worldwide effort to promote development,* an effort which also involves sacrificing the positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed economies … This may mean making important changes in established life-styles, in order to limit the waste of environmental and human resources, thus enabling every individual and all the peoples of the earth to have a sufficient share of those resources. (*Centesimus* *Annus*, 51)

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Individual initiative alone and the interplay of competition will not ensure satisfactory development. (*Populorum Progressio*, 33)

*I told my boss at the NGO about the pressure perpetrated at elite universities that all students in the College of Science should strive for medical school, and to not strive for medical school is to fail to maximize one’s full potential … To this, my boss gave me the best response. I will paraphrase: There is a HUGE problem with the bigger and better mindset so ingrained in young people these days… Yes, you may be a star student, you may be the top of your high school, college, or med school class, and you may ace the boards and attain the best residency and become the most prestigious type of doctor that exists. But, at one point or another you will be approached by a patient in need of a prescription, a treatment, or a surgery, and you will need to look at that person and ask yourself, “Is this a human who needs my help, or is this just another test that I need to pass?” This final question hit me like a ton of bricks*.

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One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation (Caritas in Veritate, 53)

*Today I went to serve lunch at one of the Project sites. I left my wallet in the office where I normally leave it in my car when I don’t need it and when I got to the site I found that I needed coins to pay for metered street parking. Luckily I had some coins in my car and while I was putting them in the meter I was approached by a homeless man. This man told me that he has made some mistakes in his life but is coming to terms with them and with God and is on his journey to making positive changes in his life. When he was done telling me his story he asked me if I would buy him a coffee/something to eat from Dunkin Donuts. I told him that I was very happy for him that he is going to make changes in his life but that I was sorry but I didn’t have my wallet with me. I then said that I was going to serve lunch at the house once I was done finding enough coins to put in the meter and if he waited a few minutes he could come with me and have lunch with the residents. He said okay. After a few minutes of me scrambling for more dimes to put in the machine this man decided he no longer wanted to wait and he thanked me for the offer and said that he would be on his way. I told him that I was almost ready and he replied that he wasn’t comfortable being around too many people because he was dirty and he smelled bad and he was ashamed.*

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Man’s personal dignity requires … that he enjoy freedom and be able to make up his own mind when he acts (*Pacem in Terris*, 34)

*I was on the soupline today and before serving them [the homeless clients] we ask, “would you like potatoes, green beans, or whatever it may be”. After a couple people said no to her bread, the women standing next to leaned over and said, “these homeless people are picky!” Although an seemingly insignificant comment and moment, it bothered. I thought to myself that the simply because a person is experiencing homelessness, it doesn't mean that that person no longer has preferences, things they like or dislike, etc. This is a small way that we ignore the dignity of some of our guests.*

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It is still an obstacle to collaboration among disadvantaged nations and a cause of division and hatred within countries whenever individuals and families see the inviolable rights of the human person held in scorn, as they themselves are unjustly subjected to a regime of discrimination because of their race or their color. (*Populorum Progressio* 63)

*There is a family who lives on the fourth floor of the Catholic Worker House, including a mother and a father with their 3 year old daughter, Amy. I had a conversation with Amy's mom, Colleen, the other day that was  surprisingly applicable to the theme of vulnerability. Colleen told me that, being the mother of a child with an African American mother and a white father, she fears that Amy will have trouble finding her place. She said that while she and her husband could scratch together some money to be able to move out of the Catholic Worker House, she preferred to live there in a safe environment where people of all races are welcome and live together in peace before she puts Amy in an environment that's not as peaceful or welcoming of everyone. This struck me because I've never thought about the decisions that parents face when they look at the environment in which they will raise their child*

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There must be made available to all men everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing, and shelter (*Gaudium et Spes*, 26)

*About a week ago, I had a conversation with a woman who came in named Emily who told me about the difficulties of the shelter system- she compared it to being treated like an animal. I had no idea that even if you can get a referral to a long-term shelter, there are rules and restrictions that make it nearly impossible to be able to hold a job and look for more opportunities while still being a resident of the shelter. She talked about how long you would have to wait in line to see a counselor to ask for permission to arrive after curfew because of her waitressing job and how careful she had to be about not letting on to her employer that she was homeless and undocumented.*

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The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. (*Evangelii* *Gaudium*, 59)

*The boy I was helping told me the only reason he would not join a gang was because he was afraid of getting arrested. He said, however, if they offered him enough money, he would drive the car*

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Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other “in a certain sense as one with ourselves” … This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 199)

*I interviewed a case support specialist working with unaccompanied refugee minors, who said that the best part of her job was being able to provide help for the family she served and being able to be the person with which they could* desahogar*— in English this means to vent, but in Spanish, the term carries a deeper definition. She meant to say that she could be the person they rely on in times of trouble and be the person of consistent support in lives of nearly consistent hardship. She mentioned that her job wasn’t easy, especially with the weight of the problems that get vented to her daily. But, by wanting to be the open ear, the good radiates from her abilities: people are able to move forward take the good into their advantage.*

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