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Pope Francis delivers his prayer message for the month of September dedicated to "people living on the margins" in a video released Aug. 29, 2023. (CNS screengrab/Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network)



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Society has slipped into a culture of indifference so pervasive that "our necks are going to get stiff" from constantly turning away from the suffering of marginalized people, Pope Francis said.

The pope's prayer intention for the month of September is dedicated to "people living on the margins," and in his video message, he lamented the "throwaway culture" of today's world which prioritizes economic growth over the wellbeing of people.

"How is it that we allow throwaway culture -- in which millions of men and women are worth nothing compared to economic goods -- how is it that we allow this culture to dominate our lives, our cities, our way of life?" the pope asked.

"Our necks are going to get stiff from looking the other way so we don't have to see this situation," he said.

The video released with the pope's prayer message showed various realities of marginalized people, including scenes of poverty-stricken slums alongside bustling cities, persons with disabilities, the elderly and homeless.

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"A homeless person who dies on the street will never appear among the top stories of search engines or newscasts," Francis said in his message. "How could we have reached this level of indifference?"

The pope urged people to "stop making invisible those who are on the margins of society, whether it's due to poverty, addictions, mental illness or disability." Instead, he asked to "focus on accepting them, on welcoming all the people who need it."

To counter the throwaway culture, Francis proposed developing a "culture of welcoming" which provides hospitality, shelter, love and human warmth to those in need.

The pope ended his message by soliciting prayers for those "on the margins of society in subhuman living conditions, that they may not be neglected by institutions and never be cast out."