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[Back to previous page](#)



Pope Francis: Wasting food is like stealing from the poor

By Alessandro Speciale Religion News Service, Published: June 5

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis on Wednesday (June 5) denounced consumerism and what he called the “culture of waste” of modern economies, especially when it comes to food.

“Throwing away food is like stealing from the table of those who are poor and hungry,” he said during his weekly audience in St. Peter’s Square.

His words came on the day the United Nations launched an anti-food waste campaign to mark World Environment Day.

According to data provided by the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization, approximately 1.3 billion tons of food — one third of the world’s total food production — are lost or wasted every year. In the United States, 30 percent of all food is thrown away each year.

“Consumerism has made us accustomed to wasting food daily and we are unable to see its real value,” Francis said, comparing this attitude to the frugality of “our grandparents” who “used to make a point of not throwing away leftover food.”

In his speech, the pope also warned that a “culture of waste” and consumerism have dulled the moral sense of humanity to the point that when “some homeless people die of cold on the streets, it is not news. In contrast, a 10-point drop on the stock markets of some cities, is a tragedy.”

The Argentine pope has been a vocal advocate for the poor since his election to the papacy in March, and has personally practiced austerity at the Vatican, living in a guesthouse rather than in the papal apartments and cutting down on elaborate vestments and liturgies.

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