

**DAY 2**



**HOW DID  
WE GET  
HERE?**

# FROM PRISONER TO SAINT

## SCRIPTURE FOCUS: DEUTERONOMY 10:17-19

Hundreds of years ago, a soldier named Jerome lay in a prison cell after being captured at an outpost town near Venice, Italy. He was not a religious man, and his life was a mess. While the chains of that dark dungeon restrained his body, Jerome felt freedom in his soul as God began teaching him how to pray.

He eventually escaped prison and returned to Venice. There, following the plague and famine that swept northern Italy, Jerome dedicated his life to serving the Lord by loving those who were most vulnerable. Jerome saw rampant poverty and hunger, and he began to care for people directly through his own personal resources. As he worked to care for others, his eyes were opened to the many children in his city who had been orphaned due to these societal factors.

Jerome resolved to devote his life to children who had been orphaned. He built a hospital and three orphanages and founded a congregation of clergy dedicated to the care of orphans.

Jerome's entry into caring for the needs of others came in an unexpected way to him but not to God. His life was dedicated to this work, and today, we know him as Saint Jerome Emiliani, patron saint of orphans.

## WHY IS THERE A PROBLEM?

The causes of children being orphaned are as varied as they are complex, with each child holding his or her own unique story. Though this list is not exhaustive, here are three significant factors that can contribute to children becoming orphaned:

- 1. Global Pandemics:** It is estimated that millions of children have lost one or both parents due to global epidemics like HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, leaving pandemics as one of the largest contributing factors to the number of children who have been orphaned.
- 2. Poverty:** Nearly half the world's population struggles to provide for their children's basic needs, like nutrition and shelter. Poverty can also create a fragility in social structures, often leading to the breakdown of family units—not due to a lack of love and commitment but rather a sheer lack of resources to meet the most basic human needs.
- 3. Civil Unrest:** Wars and violence lead to civil unrest, causing many children to lose one or both parents. Not only are parents lost, but child welfare systems are often compromised, leading to unregulated adoptions, abduction, and/or trafficking of children.

To read more about this global issue, visit [showhope.org/the-need](https://showhope.org/the-need).

## PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

What about Saint Jerome's story stood out to you? One thing that inspired us was Jerome's openness to God's presence and love. When he felt the Lord calling him while in prison, Jerome responded by having an open heart to see and help meet the needs of those around him.

- ✦ Just as Jerome's heart needed to be transformed in order to serve others, what parts of your heart need to be transformed in order to love others well? Use the space below to write your own prayer asking God to work in those parts of your heart.

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- ✦ *God, show me my need for you, and transform my heart to be more like yours. Show me the needs of others and the ways you have gifted me to serve those needs through your Spirit. Just as you care for me, help me care for others. Thank you for your love. Help me give it freely, just as you have given it freely to me.*

## ACTIVE REFLECTION

Jerome's life serves as an example of how a need can be an invitation from God. As we learn more about some of the causes that can lead children to be orphaned, we have an incredible opportunity to step into those very same spaces to make a difference. Write down some of the needs you see around you, and consider ways you can meet the needs of others.

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