In Naples, Pandemic 'Solidarity Baskets' Help Feed The Homeless



7 April, 2020

Italy has been hard-hit by the coronavirus **epidemic**, with a **death toll** of more than 16,000. Its economy is in near-shutdown.

Although Italy's south has seen fewer deaths from COVID-19 infection than the north, its poverty and jobless **rates** are high. In lockdown since March 10, Naples, a normally bustling city of more than 2 million, is now a ghost town. Acts of **charity**, long a **hallmark** of this city, have become more important than ever as a means of sustenance.

Pina Andelora and her partner Angelo Picone are street musicians who often perform traditional Neapolitan songs in Spaccanapoli, the heart of Naples. Along with other residents, they're staying at home. But the two performers — who are also community activists — realized that with their city's **soup kitchens** closed, they could still be useful. They would prepare **meals** for the homeless.

"We realized there's the **issue** of safety and social distance," Picone says. "So we relied on an old Neapolitan **custom** — lowering food baskets from our balcony."

It has been done for centuries. From their windows, housewives — busy looking after children — have lowered ropes attached to baskets with money inside. On the street, in exchange, the baker, fishmonger or butcher places goods in the basket. Then it's **hoisted** back up.

The couple had another idea, inspired by the example of Giuseppe Moscati, a doctor who lived and worked in the city a century ago. Moscati **cared for** the poor for free, and was declared a saint in 1987.

They put a card on their baskets with Moscati's slogan: *Chi può metta, chi non può prenda.* "Those who can, put something in, those who can't, help yourself."
The message has triggered an explosion of solidarity, Picone says.

"People out shopping for **groceries** now stop by our baskets and leave something inside," he says. "Pasta, sugar, coffee and cans of tuna."

Source: https://www.npr.org/2020/04/07/828021259/in-naples-pandemic-solidarity-baskets-help-feed-the-homeless?fbclid=IwAR1RgZ_mOnHaQGdYTrwGmmpMe_cBywKV7niTYWxZyxsP3gt3LvD-lK7kpmE&t=1586970683855

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Now, he adds, "We put together food packages for our **homeless** friends."

The practice is in keeping with Naples' **matter-of-fact displays** of generosity, such as the tradition of "suspended coffee," in which customers pay in advance for cups of coffee for others who **can't afford** it. No gratitude is expected.
Photographs and videos of homeless people retrieving packages from the "solidarity baskets" appeared last week in the Italian media. They evoked a painting by the 17th century master Caravaggio, "The Seven Acts of Mercy" — which just happens to hang in the Pio Monte della Misericordia church, a 10-minute walk from their home.
The baskets have also prompted help from far away. A cheese producer in Emilia Romagna contacted Picone and Andelora and promised them a shipment of Parmesan cheese.

Picone hopes the solidarity baskets will inspire further acts of charity.

"This crisis will be long," he says. "Artists like us have to pay rent and bills, and many people depend on our assistance. We're street performers who **lived on** tourism."

He wonders when the city streets will be bustling and he and Andelora will once again entertain tourists and residents with the songs of Naples. Until that time, they're **committed to helping** look after those less fortunate.

Reading comprehension

1. Read the text and say if the following statements are True or False

1.	As of 7 April, more than 15,000 people have died in Italy because of Coronavirus	T	F
2.	The death rates in Italy are equally spread across regions	T	F
3.	Pina Andelora and Angelo Picone have recently opened some soup kitchens in Naples	T	F
4.	Solidarity baskets are a century-old tradition in Naples	T	F
5.	Solidarity baskets have been an immediate success	T	F
6.	Andelora and Picone were inspired by a painting by Caravaggio	T	F
7.	Solidarity baskets have become common in Emilia Romagna, too	T	F
8.	Street performers are suffering because of the Co-vid crisis	T	F

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Vocabulary

2. Look at the highlighted words in the text and match them to their meaning

death toll	Percentages
rates	Person living in the streets
soup kitchen	Tradition
issue	To bring back up; to lift
custom	Manifestation
to hoist	To protect someone and provide what they need, especially s.o. who is young, old, or ill:
to care for	To have (or not have) the necessary financial means to buy something
groceries	Place where food is served free of charge to people in need
homeless	To do something for a living
matter-of-fact	Number of people who die because of something
display	Problem
can(not) afford (to do) something	Food shopping
to live on something	Willing to give your time and energy to something you believe in
to be committed to (doing) something	Practical

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