

# Waste-picker from city attends international convention, meets Pope Francis

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*"HUMapna haq mangte, nahi kisi se bheek mangte (We ask for our right, not charity),"* said Rebecca Kedari Thomas, a waste-picker from Pune, at the World Meeting of Popular Movements held in the Vatican City, Rome, from October 27 to 29. The meeting organised by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Pontifical Academy of Social

Sciences with the support of Pope Francis, was structured to view and discuss ways of social inclusion by reflecting on organisational experiences of popular movements of the most disadvantaged and excluded across the world.

City's trade union of wastepickers — Kagad Kach Patra Kashtkari Panchayat — represented by Rebecca, was one amongst the 150 participating organisations across the globe.

Sharing her struggle, Rebecca spoke of how she has transformed from a waste-picker to a service provider. She talked about the challenges in the formation of the trade union and the discrimination she faced at every level. She added that despite 25 years of existence of the trade union, Pune's waste-pickers were still struggling for recognition by PMC and fighting for their basic human rights like inclusion in social security

schemes and education for their children.

The Pope said, "Our commitment to seeking justice and peace cannot remain indifferent to the current situation of global social exclusion, we can't neglect the growing degradation of the workers and working conditions, their housing and food, because it affects millions of people worldwide." The convention saw leaders from grassroot organisations and movements.