

Setting A Place at the Table: Living Our Missionary Call

Preferential Option for the Poor

Quick Summary: Our Catholic Social teaching explicitly states that we must respond to the needs of "the least among us." Preferential Option for the Poor is acknowledging the common good of all people. God sees the needs of the world and people that are weak, vulnerable and poor have higher needs. The poor are not outside of society- they are among us. Preferential does not mean that God loves the poor more but it means that our primary focus is addressing their needs and then acknowledging additional needs. Option for the poor includes all people in our nation and beyond.



Key Terms

Poverty: The state or condition of having little or no money, good, or means of support; condition of being poor.

Distribution of wealth: is a comparison of the wealth of various members or groups of a society.

Vulnerable: capable of being physically or emotionally wounded.

Fast Facts

- At least 80% of humanity lives on less than \$10/day.
- Some 1.1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water and 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation.
- 1 out of 2 children in the world live in poverty.

- In 2005, the wealthiest 20% of the world accounted for 76.6% of total private consumption and the poorest 20% of people accounted for just 1.5% of consumption.
- 1.6 billion people- a quarter of humanity- live without electricity.
(above facts from www.globalissues.org)
- In 2010, the poverty rate in the U.S. was 15.1% and the number of families living in poverty was 9.2 million. (USCCB, Facts About Poverty in America)

Quick and Easy Lesson Plan #1

There are two activities below that will help your students understand the meaning behind Preferential Option for the Poor. You can do both of them or select one. Discussion Questions follow. This is appropriate for elementary level students.

Activity #1

Imagine you are going on a class trip to the zoo and one student is in a wheel chair and another student is severely allergic to peanuts- What accommodations need to be made?

Create different limitations for students write them on note cards (2 examples are the above) Some students will have no limitations- How does the class come together to support the students that are limited by things beyond their control (food allergies, disabilities, etc)

Activity #2

Create a 'Track meet' outside or in your school gym. There are 10 different starting points but the same finish for everyone. All of the students will begin at the same time (the students that finish first should be the ones closest to the line for this to work effectively)

The students will notice that not everyone started at the same point and that this created an advantage for some students more than others. Therefore, discussion can be generated from this. In life, not everyone starts at the same point- how can we make up for this/ help with this as a society?

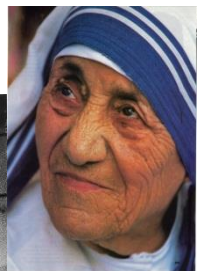
The needs of the poor are different and we need to fill them first. We need to pay attention to the largest and most vulnerable needs.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Who are the poor in our community?
- 2) Who are the poor in our world?
- 3) What is solidarity?
- 4) How can we create solidarity with the poor?
- 5) How do we treat the poor?
- 6) How do we treat people that are terminally ill?
- 7) How can we create more global awareness on people that are poor?
- 8) How do we treat people with disabilities
- 9) How do we treat the unborn?
- 10) How do we treat the elderly?
- 11) How do we treat victims of injustice?

Quick and Easy Lesson Plan #2

Have students brainstorm 5 people in their life that they know or have heard of that work for the dignity of all people. The church has also recognized many people that are saints in our church because of the work they have done on behalf of the poor and vulnerable. What 'saints' of social justice are in our world today? How do they work for the poor?



Activity

Have them do a book report on this person or research them online and write a short essay on their life. As students to present in front of the class or draw a poster with symbols representing this person's life and what they have advocated for. As students to include how they will try to be more like this person in their own lives.

Preferential Option for the poor means that advocating for people that are voiceless and powerless must be a priority. Any person that is deprived of basic needs deserves additional attention in our society.

We must have systems in place that not only address charity but also address justice in our society. When people are able to flourish where they are, they are able to more fully participate in the common good. Helping individuals that are powerless and weak is a respect for human dignity in the context of community needs.

Additional Resources

Visit Catholic Relief Services *CRS Rice Bowl*/Educators Page for Lesson Plans and Activity Sheets divided by grade level.

<http://www.crsricebowl.org/schools>

Hear what St. Augustine says about the Option for the Poor.

<http://midwestaugustinians.org/preferential-option-for-the-poor>

Descriptions of What our Church has said on the Option for the Poor over the years (USCCB)

<http://www.usccb.org/about/domestic-social-development/resources/upload/poverty-common-good-CST.pdf>

School Wide Initiatives

- Participate in Operation Rice Bowl through Catholic Relief Services during Lent!
<http://www.crsricebowl.org/>
- For High Schools, encourage your students to participate in [Reach Out Reach In](#), a summer service week program of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee that offers teens the opportunity for service in our community along with simple living, prayer, and justice education



- Create a campaign in your school that focuses on poverty awareness for a week or a month. Have different grades design posters to be hung in the hall with different statistics about the poor and vulnerable around the world. At the same time, have them create posters with quotes from Scripture or from Church documents that highlight our responsibility for a preferential option for the poor. (Suggestions for these resources can be found below). Create a flyer for students to take home to talk about these statistics and to discuss as a family, how being Catholic calls us to respond. Ask students to brainstorm ideas of what they can do about this both at school and at home.

Scriptural Foundations

Matthew 25: 31-46 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/25:31>

Exodus 22: 20-26 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/exodus/22:20>

Leviticus 19: 9-10 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/leviticus/19:9>

Job 34: 20-28 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/job/34:20>

Proverbs 31: 8-9 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/proverbs/31:8>

Sirach 4: 1-10 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/sirach/4:1>

Isaiah 25: 4-5 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/25:4>

Isaiah 58: 5-7 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/58:5>

Luke 4: 16-21 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/4:16>

Luke 6: 20-23 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/6:20>

1 John 3: 17-18 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/1john/3:17>

Papal Encyclicals and Church Documents

Caritas in Veritate, #6, #7, #25, #63 (Charity in Truth)—Pope Benedict XVI, 2009

The Compendium for the Social Doctrine of the Church, #182 -Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2005

Economic Justice For All, #86, #88, #94—USCCB, 1981

Centesimus Annus, #58 (On the One Hundredth Year)- Pope John Paul II, 1991

Octogesima Adveniens, #23 (A Call to Action)—Pope Paul VI, 1971

Populorum Progressio, #23 (On the Development of Peoples)- Pope Paul VI, 1967

Setting a Place at the Table, USCCB, 2002

Sources for Pope Francis Quotes on the subject of Poverty and Care for the Poor

www.crs.org/stories/pope-francis-care-poor

www.povertyusa.org/our-mission/pope-francis-on-poverty/