

Catholic Social Teachings

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR



8th Principle of Catholic Social Teaching

“A basic moral test for our society is how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.”

USCCB

Scriptural Reference

“When you give, give generously and not with a stingy heart; for that, the LORD, your God, will bless you in all your works and undertakings. The land will never lack for needy persons; that is why I command you: “Open your hand freely to your poor and to your needy kin in your land”
DT 15:10-11.

Homily Hints

“How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable, in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: ‘As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me’” (Mt25:45)? *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

“The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of society, but because society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it, and which can only lead to new crises.... Inequality is the root of social ills.”
Pope Francis

“Love for others, and in the first place, love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice.”
St. John Paul II

“*The preferential option for the poor* should be reaffirmed in all its force. ‘This is an option, or a *special form* of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our *social responsibilities* and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods.’” *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*



Prayer Intentions

For those who dedicate their lives to ministry to the poor—

Let us pray to the Lord...

You raise up the poor: deepen your Church's preferential option for the poor—

Let us pray to the Lord...

You bless those who serve the poor: deepen your Church's love and action for the homeless, unemployed, and poverty-stricken—

Let us pray to the Lord...

That the poor and the marginalized find welcome in our Church—

Let us pray to the Lord...

Work of Mercy

[Live the Corporal Works of Mercy](#)

"The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Learn

Watch [CST 101: A Preferential Option for the Poor](#), a collaborative 7-part video series presented by the USCCB and Catholic Relief Services.

Donate

25% of all money given to CRS Rice Bowl is granted to projects within the Archdiocese of Portland that address hunger and poverty. See [who received grants](#) and consider donating to them.

Accompany

Hospitality in itself isn't enough. Giving a sandwich to someone who is hungry should open the door to a moment of encounter. Volunteer at a food pantry or at a soup kitchen if it offers you the opportunity to encounter those you serve and a chance to talk with them.

Bulletin Reflection

The Principle of the Preferential Option for the Poor is one of the four defining principles of the Church's social doctrine: "Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Prayer

God of Justice
open our eyes
to see you in the face of the poor.
Open our ears
to hear you in the cries of the exploited.
Open our mouths
to defend you in the public squares
as well as in private deeds.
Remind us that what we do
to the least ones,
we do to you.

Amen.

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The Principle of Participation