

# Catholic Social Teaching: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

## About Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching is an essential element of our faith. It's rooted in the Hebrew prophets who announced God's special love for the poor and called God's people to a covenant of love and justice. It is a teaching founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, who came "to bring glad tidings to the poor ... liberty to captives ... recovery of sight to the blind" (Lk 4:18-19) and who identified himself with "the least of these," the hungry and the stranger (Mt 25:45).

## Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how the most vulnerable members of society are faring. In a world marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, Catholic tradition instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable *first*. "As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). The way we treat others has a transcendent dimension: "The measure you give will be the measure you get" (Mt 7:2). It corresponds to the mercy which God has shown us: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you ... For the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (Lk 6:36-38).

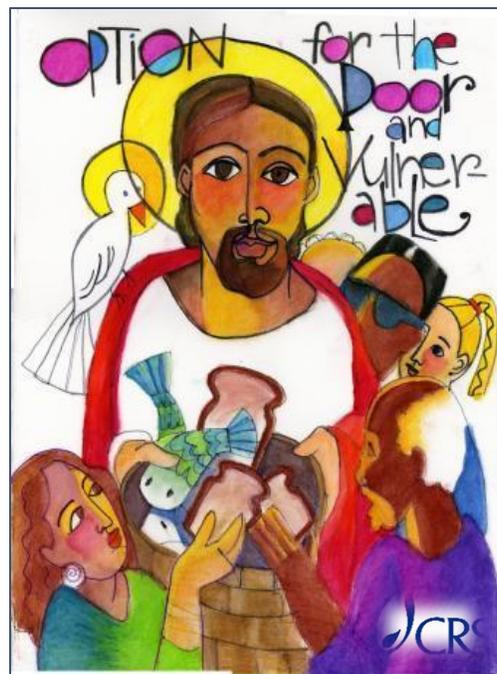
What these passages make clear is the absolute priority of "going forth from ourselves toward our brothers and sisters" as one of the two great commandments which ground every moral norm and as the clearest sign for discerning spiritual growth in response to God's completely free gift. (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*.)

- From USCCB.org

## Put Your Faith into Action

- **Pray.** Give thanks for your blessings and pray daily for our brothers and sisters living in poverty.
- **Get Involved.** St. Matthew has ministries that address homelessness, hunger, refugees, children, the elderly and more. Find your fit at [stmatthewcatholic.org/ministries](http://stmatthewcatholic.org/ministries).
- **Write to Congress.** Write your elected officials about poverty issues. Learn more at [votervoices.net/USCCB/home](http://votervoices.net/USCCB/home).
- **Shop for Good.** Support a co-op or a local or family-owned business. Shop fair trade and support fair wages, safe working conditions, and environmental protections. Visit [serrv.org](http://serrv.org).
- **Donate.** Money to your charity of choice. Food to the St. Matthew pantry (first Sunday). Gently used clothing, home goods and furniture on the second Saturday, 8 am to noon.
- **Watch Your Words.** Using derogatory terms or making generalizations about people living in poverty undermines their dignity and works against those trying to get back on their feet. Instead, talk with people who are struggling and listen to their stories.

- From [povertyusa.org](http://povertyusa.org)



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*The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation.*

*U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops,  
Economic Justice for All*

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