

Week 3: OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

iVoteCatholic: During this third week, we focus on Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you...” (Matt 25:31). Scripture reminds us that some people’s needs are so urgent and so great that their needs come first. Therefore, while everyone



iVoteCatholic

Option for the Poor & Vulnerable

is important, those whose voice in our society is ignored, those whose human rights are violated, those whose dignity is not recognized, must take our first priority. The prime purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. When we enter into the lives and the struggles of the poor and vulnerable, we experience Jesus’ presence in a real and powerful way. A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. The Church does not pit one social group against another but instead follows the example of Jesus, who identified with the poor and vulnerable. We need to remember in this principle persons who are elderly, disabled, marginalized, vulnerable, formerly incarcerated or otherwise discriminated against or disadvantaged. Under this principle fall issues such as addiction, mental health, healthcare, and systems that perpetuate poverty. .

Find out more about this focus of OPTION FOR THE POOR and VULNERABLE by checking out these sections.



FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP quotes on THE POOR AND VULNERABLE



CHURCH TEACHING QUOTES:



SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS:



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RELATED SOCIAL ISSUES:



CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



RESOURCES FROM CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES AND USCCB

Giving priority concern to the poor and vulnerable strengthens the health of the whole society. The human life and dignity of the poor are most at risk.



To read the full text of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, go to <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf>

excerpts on **OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE**

73. Economic decisions and institutions should be assessed according to whether they protect or undermine the dignity of the human person. Social and economic policies should foster the creation of jobs for all who can work with decent working conditions and just wages. Barriers to equal pay and employment for women and those facing unjust discrimination must be overcome. Catholic social teaching supports the right of workers to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal. It also affirms economic freedom, initiative, and the right to private property. Workers, owners, employers, and unions have a corresponding responsibility to work together to create decent jobs, build a more just economy, and advance the common good. We also note with growing concern the increase in “excessive social and economic inequalities,” as the Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to it, and the shrinking middle class.

74. We support legislation that protects consumers from the excessive and exploitative rates of interest charged by many payday lenders. “Although the quest for equitable profits is acceptable in economic and financial activity, recourse to usury is to be morally condemned” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 341).

75. Welfare policy should reduce poverty and dependency, strengthen family life, and help families leave poverty through work, training, and assistance with child care, health care, housing, and transportation. Given the link between family stability and economic success, welfare policies should address both the economic and cultural factors that contribute to family breakdown. It should also provide a safety net for those who cannot work



CHURCH TEACHING QUOTES:

“The Church’s love of the poor...is part of her constant tradition. 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 by many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense and liberation.” -**Catechism of the Catholic Church**, 2444, 2448, quoting Pope St. John Paul II, **Centisimus Annus**, 57.

“The prime purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good,. . .it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons.” -USCCB, **Economic Justice for All**, 88.

Within the community of believers there can never be room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life. **Deus Caritas Est (“God is Love”), Pope Benedict XVI, 2005, #20.**

Therefore everyone has the right to possess a sufficient amount of the earth’s goods for themselves and their family. This has been the opinion of the Fathers and Doctors of the church, who taught that people are bound to come to the aid of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. Persons in extreme necessity are entitled to take what they need from the riches of others.

Faced with a world today where so many people are suffering from want, the council asks individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: “Feed the people dying of hunger, because if you do not feed them you are killing them,” and it urges them according to their ability to share and dispose of their goods to help others, above all by giving them aid which will enable them to help and develop themselves. **Gaudium et Spes (“The Church in the Modern World”), Vatican II, 1965, #69.**

“If someone who has the riches of this world sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 Jn 3:17). It is well known how strong were the words used by the Fathers of the Church to describe the proper attitude of persons who possess anything towards persons in need. To quote Saint Ambrose: “You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, and not only to the rich.” **Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967, #23.**

. . . the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations. The rule which up to now held good for the benefit of those nearest to us, must today be applied to all the needy of this world. Besides, the rich will be the first to benefit as a result. Otherwise their continued greed will certainly call down upon them the judgment of God and the wrath of the poor, with consequences no one can foretell. **Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967, #49.**

Let each one examine his conscience, a conscience that conveys a new message for our times. Is he prepared to support out of his own pocket works and undertaking organized in favor of the most destitute? Is he ready to pay higher taxes so that the public authorities can intensify their efforts in favor of development? Is he ready to pay a higher price for imported goods so that the producer may be more justly rewarded? **Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967, #48.**

It will be necessary above all to abandon a mentality in which the poor – as individuals and as peoples – are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced... The advancement of the poor constitutes a great opportunity for the moral, cultural

and even economic growth of all humanity. Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967, #28.

In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others. Octogesima Adveniens (“A Call to Action”), Pope Paul VI, 1971, #23.

At the same time as it proclaims the Gospel of the Lord, its Redeemer and Savior, the Church calls on all, especially the poor, the oppressed and the afflicted, to cooperate with God to bring about liberation from every sin and to build a world which will reach the fullness of creation only when it becomes the work of people for people. **Justicia in Mundo (“Justice in the World”), World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971, #77.**

Listening to the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, and hearing the appeal of a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of its Creator, we have shared our awareness of the Church’s vocation to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted. **Justicia in Mundo (“Justice in the World”), World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971, #5.**

As individuals and as a nation, therefore, we are called to make a fundamental “option for the poor”. The obligation to evaluate social and economic activity from the viewpoint of the poor and the powerless arises from the radical command to love one’s neighbor as one’s self. Those who are marginalized and whose rights are denied have privileged claims if society is to provide justice for all. This obligation is deeply rooted in Christian belief. **Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #87.**

They were strongly affirmed as implications of Catholic social teaching by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Canada in 1984: “The needs of the poor take priority over the desires of the rich; the rights of workers over the maximization of profits; the preservation of the environment over uncontrolled industrial expansion; the production to meet social needs over production for military purposes.” **Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #94.**

The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation. **Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #86.**

The prime purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. The “option for the poor,” therefore, is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons. These wounds will be healed only by greater solidarity with the poor and among the poor themselves. **Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #88.**

The quality of the national discussion about our economic future will affect the poor most of all, in this country and throughout the world. The life and dignity of millions of men, women and children hang in the balance. Decisions must be judged in light of what they do for the poor,

what they do to the poor, and what they enable the poor to do for themselves. The fundamental moral criterion for all economic decisions, policies, and institutions is this: They must be at the service of all people, especially the poor. Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #24.

As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental “option for the poor” — to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. This “option for the poor” does not mean pitting one group against another, but rather, strengthening the whole community by assisting those who are the most vulnerable. As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response. **Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #16.**

The way society responds to the needs of the poor through its public policies is the litmus test of its justice or injustice. Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, #123. Those who are more influential because they have greater share of goods and common services should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess... (the church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of the good of groups in the context of the common good.) **Solicitudo Rei Socialis (“On Social Concern,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1987, #39.**

A consistent theme of Catholic social teaching is the option or love of preference for the poor. Today, this preference has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions, embracing the immense numbers of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care, and those without hope. **Solicitudo Rei Socialis (“On Social Concern,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1987, #42.**

Others welcome the teaching on the “option for the poor,” the duties of government to protect the weak, the warnings against unbridled capitalism, but seem to ignore the centrality of family, the emphasis on economic initiative, and the warnings against the bureaucratic excesses of a “social assistance” state. Our social tradition is a moral framework, not a partisan platform or ideological tool. It challenges both right and left, labor and management to focus on the dignity of the human person and the common good rather than their own political or economic interests. A Decade After “Economic Justice for All:” Continuing Principles, Changing Context, New Challenges, **National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995.**

The pursuit of economic justice is not an option or add-on for Catholics; it is part of who we are and what we believe. ...The search for economic justice is also carried forward in the public square. In this election year, while others are campaigning for office, let us campaign for the poor and vulnerable and for greater economic justice. Let us ask those who seek to lead and represent us how they will govern and vote on key issues of human life, human dignity and economic justice. And let us as citizens and believers continue to advocate for people who are poor and vulnerable in our communities, nation and world. ...In our work and citizenship, our economic, political and personal choices we must reach out to “the least of these” and seek the common good. We may differ on specifics and priorities, but let us come together — across economic, ideological and ethnic lines — to work for a society and economy offering more

justice and opportunity, especially for the poor. A Decade After “Economic Justice for All:” Continuing Principles, Changing Context, New Challenges, **National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995.**

Working for the common good requires us to promote the flourishing of all human life and all of God’s creation. In a special way, the common good requires solidarity with the poor who are often without the resources to face many problems, including the potential impacts of climate change. Our obligations to the one human family stretch across space and time. They tie us to the poor in our midst and across the globe, as well as to future generations. The commandment to love our neighbor invites us to consider the poor and marginalized of other nations as true brothers and sisters who share with us the one table of life intended by God for the enjoyment of all. **Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2001, #25.**

Pope John Paul II insists that the unequivocal words of the Gospel remind us that there is a special presence of Christ in the poor. This presence requires the Church to make a preferential option for those who are poor and vulnerable. 26 The principle of solidarity reminds us that as members of one human family, we see every “other” as our neighbor, who must share in the “banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God.” 27 Solidarity calls us to care for our neighbors in need who are nearby and for those who are far away and to see all those who suffer as sisters and brothers. 28 Catholic teaching affirms that all persons, even those on the margins of society, have basic human rights: the right to life and to those things that are necessary to the proper development of life, including faith and family, work and education, housing and health care. **A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God’s Children, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2002, Section V.**

Within the community of believers there can never be room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life. **Deus Caritas Est (“God is Love”), Pope Benedict XVI, 2005, #20.**

Today the subject of development is also closely related to the duties arising from our relationship to the natural environment. The environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. **Caritas in Veritate (“Charity in Truth”), Pope Benedict XVI, 2009, #48.**

Nor does the light of faith make us forget the sufferings of this world. **Lumen Fidei (“Light of Faith”), Pope Francis, 2013, #57.**

Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too. **Evangelium Vitae (“The Gospel of Life,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1995, #2.**

When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (Lk 14:14). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and

authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and always, “the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel”, and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them. **Evangelium Vitae (“The Gospel of Life,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1995, #48.**

Ponder the words of one of the sages of antiquity: “Not to share one’s wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs” (quoting from Saint John Chrysostom in the 4th Century.) **Evangelium Vitae (“The Gospel of Life,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1995, #57.**

For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor “his first mercy”. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have “this mind... which was in Jesus Christ” (Phil 2:5). Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a “special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness”. This option – as Benedict XVI has taught – “is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty.” This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. **Evangelium Vitae (“The Gospel of Life,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1995, #198.**

Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other “in a certain sense as one with ourselves.” This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances: “The love by which we find the other pleasing leads us to offer him something freely.” The poor person, when loved, “is esteemed as of great value,” and this is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one’s own personal or political interest. Only on the basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation. Only this will ensure that “in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom?” Without the preferential option for the poor, “the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today’s society of mass communications.” **Evangelium Vitae (“The Gospel of Life,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1995, #199.**

I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He

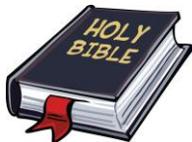
shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace. *Laudato Si' ("Praise Be")*, Pope Francis, 2015, #10.

Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor... *Laudato Si' ("Praise Be")*, Pope Francis, 2015, Chapter 1, #30.

In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: "Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest". For example, the depletion of fishing reserves especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources; water pollution particularly affects the poor who cannot buy bottled water; and rises in the sea level mainly affect impoverished coastal populations who have nowhere else to go. The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor, in conflicts sparked by the shortage of resources, and in any number of other problems which are insufficiently represented on global agendas. *Laudato Si' ("Praise Be")*, Pope Francis, 2015, Chapter 1, #48.

As the United States bishops have said (in *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2001), greater attention must be given to "the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests". *Laudato Si' ("Praise Be")*, Pope Francis, 2015, Chapter 1, #52.

In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods, but, as I mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, [123] it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good. *Laudato Si' ("Praise Be")*, Pope Francis, 2015, Chapter 4, #158.



SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS:

- Leviticus 19: 33-34 Laws protecting aliens, widows and orphans
- Deuteronomy 24:17-18 Laws protecting aliens, widows and orphans
- Matthew 25:31-46 Judgment of nations/Jesus identifies with poor
- Luke 4: 16-21 Jesus mission to poor and outcast
- Luke 14:12-14 Reach out to the poor and vulnerable



CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- Who are Jesus' "least" brothers and sisters in your community and around the world today?
- How does Jesus' own poverty, and the witness of his encounter with the "other," challenge you?
- When have you felt inspired by the work of people living in poverty to transform the causes of injustice? How can you join or support their efforts?



FAMILY ACTIVITY:

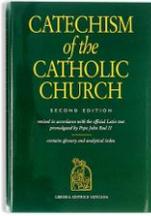
- Use this document as a guide: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/whatwe-believe/catholic-social-teaching/upload/cst-101-option-for-poor-vulnerablediscussion-guide.pdf>
- Watch this video for guidance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=NtRoJcOp_8U&feature=emb_logo.
- Go through your possessions, give away things that you do not use or that may not be essential to your everyday living. Donate items to St. Vincent de Paul, Goodwill or other organizations that are involved in the wellness of your community.
- Educate yourself on a social issue that is prevalent in your community. Find a way to get involved with that social change, whether it is by advocacy, volunteering, donating, praying for or with people, etc.

Activities for Children: • <https://www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/wp-content/uploads/SkittlesGame.pdf> • <http://playspent.org/html/> • After participating in virtual poverty simulations, ask your child (or yourself) what it felt like to be in those situations? • How does that situation compare to your life at home? • What knowledge will you take moving forward from that activity?



RELATED SOCIAL ISSUES:

- addiction
- food access
- mental health
- systems that perpetuate poverty
- healthcare



CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH EXCERPTS:

These paragraphs are direct quotations from Part Three: "Life in Christ" of the Catechism of the Catholic Church which address humanity's vocation to form conscience in shaping our dignity of the human person. Footnote citations have been removed in this listing.

To read the entire Catechism... text, refer to
<http://archeparchy.ca/wcm-docs/docs/catechism-of-the-catholic-church.pdf>

1776 "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment.... For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God.... His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths."

1777 Moral conscience, present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil. It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.

1778 Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law: Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise.... [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.

1779 It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of interiority is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection: Return to your conscience, question it.... Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do, see God as your witness.

1780 The dignity of the human person implies and requires uprightness of moral conscience. Conscience includes the perception of the principles of morality (synderesis); their application in the given circumstances by practical discernment of reasons and goods; and finally judgment about concrete acts yet to be performed or already performed. the truth about the moral good,

stated in the law of reason, is recognized practically and concretely by the prudent judgment of conscience. We call that man prudent who chooses in conformity with this judgment.

1781 Conscience enables one to assume responsibility for the acts performed. If man commits evil, the just judgment of conscience can remain within him as the witness to the universal truth of the good, at the same time as the evil of his particular choice. the verdict of the judgment of conscience remains a pledge of hope and mercy. In attesting to the fault committed, it calls to mind the forgiveness that must be asked, the good that must still be practiced, and the virtue that must be constantly cultivated with the grace of God: We shall . . . reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

1782 Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. "He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters."

1783 Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. the education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings.

1784 The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. the education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

1785 In the formation of conscience the Word of God is the light for our path, we must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience before the Lord's Cross. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church.

1786 Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.

1787 Man is sometimes confronted by situations that make moral judgments less assured and decision difficult. But he must always seriously seek what is right and good and discern the will of God expressed in divine law.

1788 To this purpose, man strives to interpret the data of experience and the signs of the times assisted by the virtue of prudence, by the advice of competent people, and by the help of the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

1789 Some rules apply in every case: - One may never do evil so that good may result from it; - the Golden Rule: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." - charity always proceeds by way of respect for one's neighbor and his conscience: "Thus sinning against

your brethren and wounding their conscience . . . you sin against Christ." Therefore "it is right not to . . . do anything that makes your brother stumble."

1790 A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself. Yet it can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed.

1791 This ignorance can often be imputed to personal responsibility. This is the case when a man "takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin." In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits.

1792 Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one's passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and of charity: these can be at the source of errors of judgment in moral conduct.

1793 If - on the contrary - the ignorance is invincible, or the moral subject is not responsible for his erroneous judgment, the evil committed by the person cannot be imputed to him. It remains no less an evil, a privation, a disorder. One must therefore work to correct the errors of moral conscience.

1794 A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for charity proceeds at the same time "from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith." The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective standards of moral conduct.

1795 "Conscience is man's most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths".

1796 Conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act.

1797 For the man who has committed evil, the verdict of his conscience remains a pledge of conversion and of hope.

1798 A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. Everyone must avail himself of the means to form his conscience.

1799 Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.

1800 A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience.

1801 Conscience can remain in ignorance or make erroneous judgments. Such ignorance and errors are not always free of guilt.

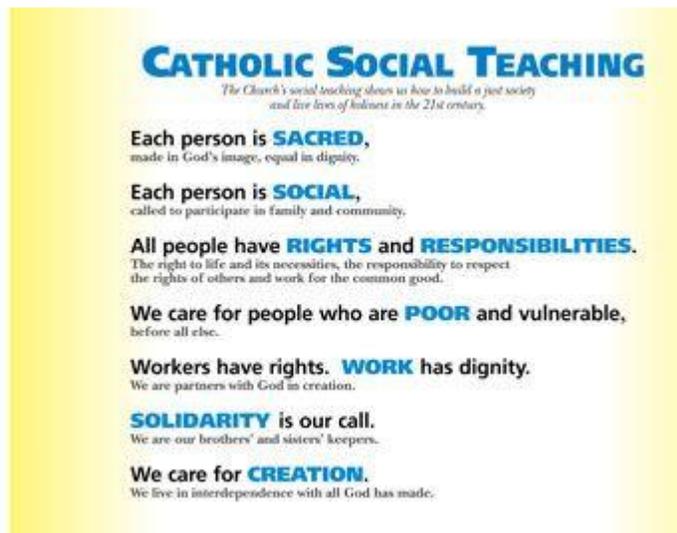
1802 The Word of God is a light for our path. We must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. This is how moral conscience is formed.

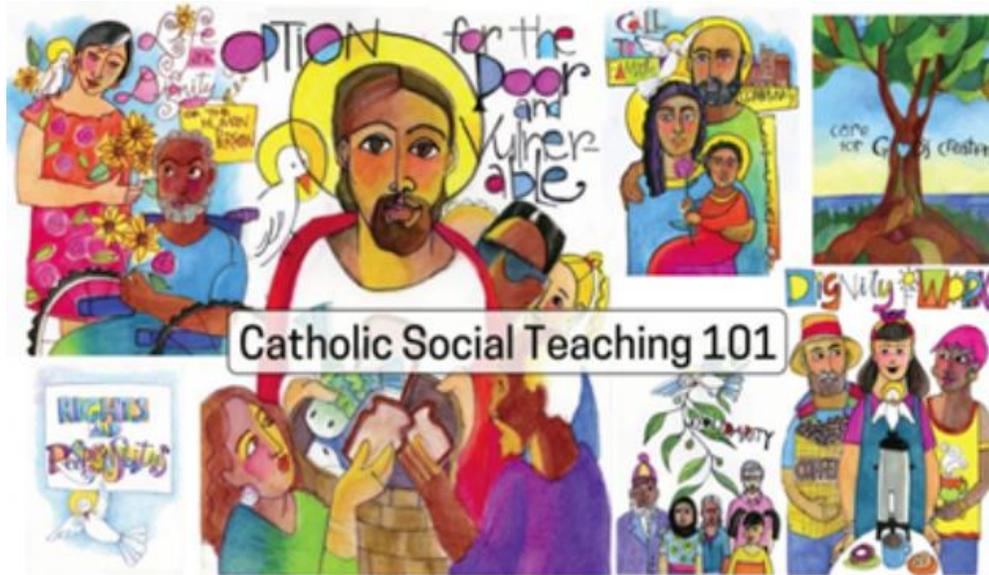


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RESOURCES FROM CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES AND USCCB

- View 4:26 minute you tube on this week's theme OPTIONS FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE <https://youtu.be/c3gxBjtOzNM>
- print one of these handouts to display in a prominent place in your home





the seven themes of
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING for children



1 God made each person, so every life is important and should be protected.



5 Work is important in God's plan for adults and their families, so jobs and pay should be fair.



2 God made us to be part of communities, families and countries, so all people can share and help each other.



6 God made everyone, so we are all brothers and sisters in God's family wherever we live.



3 God wants us to help make sure everyone is safe and healthy and can have a good life.



7 The world was made by God, so we take care of all creation.



4 God wants us to help people who are poor, who don't have enough food, a safe place to live, or a community.



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- View video resources

USCCB Catholic Social Teaching

<http://usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/index.cfm>

USCCB Catholic Social Teaching resources

<https://wearesaltandlight.org/>

USCCB Catholic Social Teaching prayers

<https://wearesaltandlight.org/pray-together/prayers-dignity-and-life>

Connecting Catholic Social Teaching & the Ten Commandments

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/human-dignity/teaching-aid-colecchi.cfm>

CRS on Catholic Social Teaching

<https://www.crs.org/resource-center/CST-101>