Catholic Theme: Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
Scriptural Story

The Judgement of the Nations
Then the king will say to those at his right hand: Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25:34-40
Description & Related Topics

Description:
The God of Jesus Christ is above all a God who cares for the poor and marginalized. A distinctly Catholic perspective on the world maintains that we can measure the quality of any society by the way its most poor and vulnerable are treated.

Anchor Concepts: Globalism, Interdependence, Justice, Solidarity

Related Concepts:
- SOCIAL JUSTICE
- GLOBAL COMMUNITY
- HUMAN DIGNITY
- QUALITY OF LIFE
- HUMAN RIGHTS
- SOLIDARITY
- WORLD ORDER
- LEADERSHIP
- EMPOWERMENT / LIBERATION
- TRADE
- EXPLOITATION
- TRANSNATIONAL ENTERPRISE
- PROFIT MOTIVE
- SUBSIDIARITY
- HUMAN FAMILY
- LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR
- INCLUSIVITY
- FRIENDSHIP / UNDERSTANDING
- SHARING/SOCIAL CHARITY
- PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR
- UNITY IN DIVERSITY
- ANTI-SEXISM
- ANTI-RACISM
- INTERDEPENDENCE
- COOPERATION / COLLABORATION
- COMPROMISE
- SERVICE
- MUTUALITY
- AUTONOMY
- RELATIONSHIP
- EXPLOITATION
- AUTONOMY / SELF-SUFFICIENCY
- COEXISTENCE
- PRODUCTIVITY
- PEACE
- RIGHTEOUSNESS
- COMMON GOOD
- CONFLICT RESOLUTION
- EQUITY
- MARGINALIZATION
- SOCIAL SIN
- NON-VIOLENCE
- DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE
- DIGNITY OF WORK AND SERVICE
Scriptural References

Warning to Rich Oppressors
Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Listen! The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.

James 5: 1-6

The Rich Young Man
Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ When the rich young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Matthew 19: 20-22

Jesus Proclaims the Fulfillment of God’s Word
Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

Luke 4: 16-20

Proclamation of the Jubilee Year
The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the LORD. For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath—you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound labourers who live with you; for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food. You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces. In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property. When you make a sale to your neighbour or buy from your neighbour, you shall not cheat one another. When you buy from your neighbour, you shall pay only for the number of years since the jubilee; the seller shall charge you only for the remaining crop-years. If the years are more, you shall increase the price, and if the years are fewer, you shall diminish the price; for it is a certain number of harvests that are being sold to you. You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the Lord your God. You shall observe my statutes and faithfully keep my ordinances, so that you may live on the land securely. The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely. Should you ask, ‘What
shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?” I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will yield a crop for three years. When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating from the old crop; until the ninth year, when its produce comes in, you shall eat the old. The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land. If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next-of-kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold. If the person has no one to redeem it, but then prospers and finds sufficient means to do so, the years since its sale shall be computed and the difference shall be refunded to the person to whom it was sold, and the property shall be returned. But if there are not sufficient means to recover it, what was sold shall remain with the purchaser until the year of jubilee; in the jubilee it shall be released, and the property shall be returned. If anyone sells a dwelling-house in a walled city, it may be redeemed until a year has elapsed since its sale; the right of redemption shall be for one year. If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, a house that is in a walled city shall pass in perpetuity to the purchaser, throughout the generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. But houses in villages that have no walls around them shall be classed as open country; they may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee. As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites shall for ever have the right of redemption of the houses in the cities belonging to them. Such property as may be redeemed from the Levites—houses sold in a city belonging to them—shall be released in the jubilee; because the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel. But the open land around their cities may not be sold; for that is their possession for all time. If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens. Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. You shall not lend them your money at interest taken in advance, or provide them food at a profit. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God. If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves. They shall remain with you as hired or bound labourers. They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold. You shall not rule over them with harshness, but shall fear your God. As for the male and female slaves whom you may have, it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves. You may also acquire them from among the aliens residing with you, and from their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property. You may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property. These you may treat as slaves, but as for your fellow Israelites, no one shall rule over the other with harshness. If resident aliens among you prosper, and if any of your kin fall into difficulty with one of them and sell themselves to an alien, or to a branch of the alien’s family, after they have sold themselves they shall have the right of redemption; one of their brothers may redeem them, or their uncle or their uncle’s son may redeem them, or anyone of their family who is of their own flesh may redeem them; or if they prosper they may redeem themselves. They shall compute with the purchaser the total from the year when they sold themselves to the alien until the jubilee year; the price of the sale shall be applied to the number of years: the time they were with the owner shall be rated as the time of a hired labourer. If many years remain, they shall pay for their redemption in proportion to the purchase price; and if few years remain until the jubilee year, they shall compute thus: according to the years involved they shall make payment for their redemption. As a labourer hired by the year they shall be under the alien’s authority, who shall not, however, rule with harshness over them in your sight. And if they have not been redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children with them shall go free in the jubilee year. For to me the people of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 25

The Parable of the Rich Fool
Jesus said to them: “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

Luke 12:15
The Basket of Fruit
Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, “When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the Sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”

Amos 8: 4-6

Cheating and Violence to be Punished
Can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights? Your wealthy are full of violence; your inhabitants speak lies, with tongues of deceit in their mouths. Therefore I have begun to strike you down, making you desolate because of your sins. You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be gnawing hunger within you; you shall put away, but not save, and what you save, I will hand over to the sword. You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but anoint yourself with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine.

Micah 6: 11-15

Cease to do Evil
When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation— I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 1: 12-17

The Judgement of the Lord
The Lord rises to argue his case; he stands to judge the peoples. The Lord enters into judgement with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts.

Isaiah 3: 13-15

God’s Anger
Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey! What will you do on the day of punishment, in the calamity that will come from far away? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth, so as not to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain? For all this, his anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still.

Isaiah 10: 1-4

Come to the Water
Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Isaiah 55: 1-2

The Rich Man and Lazarus
There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus covered with sores who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He
called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house – for I have five brothers – that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them’. He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent’. He said to him, ‘If you do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead’.

Luke 16: 19-31

The Beatitudes
Then he looked up at his disciples and said:
“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.
Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.
Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.”

Luke 6: 20-26

The Lost Sheep
Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he told them this parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who have no repentance.

Luke 15: 1-7

Widow’s Offering
He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put two small copper coins. He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them, for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”
The Rich Man
As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother’.” He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me. When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”

Mark 10: 17-23
Church Teachings

Documents of Vatican II

1 The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.

_Gaudium et Spes, (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)_

4 Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the worlds citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. Never before has man had so keen an understanding of freedom, yet at the same time new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance. Although the world of today has a very vivid awareness of its unity and of how one man depends on another in needful solidarity, it is most grievously turn into opposing camps by conflicting forces. For political, social, economic, racial and ideological disputes still continue bitterly, and with them the peril of a war which would reduce everything to ashes. True, there is a growing exchange of ideas, but the very words by which key concepts are expressed take on quite different meanings in diverse ideological systems. Finally, man painstakingly searches for a better world, without a corresponding spiritual advancement.

_Gaudium et Spes, (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)_

9 Meanwhile the conviction grows not only that humanity can and should increasingly consolidate its control over creation, but even more, that it devolves on humanity to establish a political, social and economic order which will growingly serve man and help individuals as well as groups to affirm and develop the dignity proper to them.

As a result many persons are quite aggressively demanding those benefits of which with vivid awareness they judge themselves to be deprived either through injustice or unequal distribution. Nations on the road to progress, like those recently made independent, desire to participate in the goods of modern civilization, not only in the political field but also economically, and to play their part freely on the world scene. Still they continually fall behind while very often their economic and other dependence on wealthier nations advances more rapidly.

People hounded by hunger call upon those better off. Where they have not yet won it, women claim for themselves an equity with men before the law and in fact. Labourers and farmers seek not only to provide for the necessities of life, but to develop the gifts of their personality by their labours and indeed to take part in regulating economic, social, political and cultural life. Now, for the first time in human history all people are convinced that the benefits of culture ought to be and actually can be extended to everyone.

_Gaudium et Spes, (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)_

27 Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbour without exception as another self, taking into account first of all His life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus.

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbour of every person without exception. and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign labourer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40).

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or wilful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human
dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonour to the Creator.

_Gaudium et Spes, (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)_

63 Reasons for anxiety, however, are not lacking. Many people, especially in economically advanced areas, seem, as it were, to be ruled by economics, so that almost their entire personal and social life is permeated with a certain economic way of thinking. Such is true both of nations that favour a collective economy and of others. At the very time when the development of economic life could mitigate social inequalities (provided that it be guided and coordinated in a reasonable and human way), it is often made to embitter them; or, in some places, it even results in a decline of the social status of the underprivileged and in contempt for the poor. While an immense number of people still lack the absolute necessities of life, some, even in less advanced areas, live in luxury or squander wealth. Extravagance and wretchedness exist side by side. While a few enjoy very great power of choice, the majority are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and often subsist in living and working conditions unworthy of the human person.

_Gaudium et Spes, (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)_

66 If the demands of justice and equity are to be satisfied, vigorous efforts must be made, without violence to the rights of persons or to the natural characteristics of each country, to remove as quickly as possible the immense economic inequalities which now exist. In many cases, these are worsening and are connected with individual and group discrimination.

_Gaudium et Spes, (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)_

69 God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner.(8) Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others. On the other hand, the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this opinion, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If one is in extreme necessity, he has the right to procure for himself what he needs out of the riches of others. Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him," and really to share and employ their earthly goods, according to the ability of each, especially by supporting individuals or peoples with the aid by which they may be able to help and develop themselves.

_Gaudium et Spes, (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)_

For the complete text go to
Catechism of the Catholic Church

VI. LOVE FOR THE POOR

2443 God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay." It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence.

2444 "The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need." It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty.

2445 Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you.

2446 St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity."

When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.

2447 The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbour in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. 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:

He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise. But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?

2448 "In its various forms - material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness and death - human misery is the obvious sign of the inherited condition of frailty and need for salvation in which man finds himself as a consequence of original sin. This misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Saviour, who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, 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, defence, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere."

2449 Beginning with the Old Testament, all kinds of juridical measures (the jubilee year of forgiveness of debts, prohibition of loans at interest and the keeping of collateral, the obligation to tithe, the daily payment of the day-labourer, the right to glean vines and fields) answer the exhortation of Deuteronomy:
"For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in the land.'" Jesus makes these words his own: "The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." In so doing he does not soften the vehemence of former oracles against "buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals . . .," but invites us to recognize his own presence in the poor who are his brethren:

When her mother reproached her for caring for the poor and the sick at home, St. Rose of Lima said to her: "When we serve the poor and the sick, we serve Jesus. We must not fail to help our neighbours, because in them we serve Jesus.

III. POVERTY OF HEART

Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel. Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on. The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

All Christ's faithful are to "direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty."

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." The Beatitudes reveal an order of happiness and grace, of beauty and peace. Jesus celebrates the joy of the poor, to whom the Kingdom already belongs:

The Word speaks of voluntary humility as "poverty in spirit"; the Apostle gives an example of God's poverty when he says: "For your sakes he became poor."

The Lord grieves over the rich, because they find their consolation in the abundance of goods. "Let the proud seek and love earthly kingdoms, but blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." Abandonment to the providence of the Father in heaven frees us from anxiety about tomorrow. Trust in God is a preparation for the blessedness of the poor. They shall see God.
Other Church Documents

182 The principle of the universal destination for goods requires that the poor, the marginalized and in all case those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth should be the focus of particular concern. To this end, 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... Today, furthermore, given the worldwide dimension which the social question has assumed, this love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without health care and, above all, those without hope for a better future.


184 The Church’s love for the poor is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, by the poverty of Jesus and by his attention to the poor. This love concerns material poverty and also the numerous forms of cultural and religious poverty.


B From this point of view, if we recall that Jesus came to "preach the good news to the poor" (Mt.11:5; Lk 7:22), how can we fail to lay greater emphasis on the Church's preferential option for the poor and the outcast? Indeed, it has to be said that a commitment to justice and peace in a world like ours, marked by so many conflicts and intolerable social and economic inequalities, is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee. Thus, in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12), Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor of the world, proposing the Jubilee as an appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations. The Jubilee can also offer an opportunity for reflecting on other challenges of our time, such as the difficulties of dialogue between different cultures and the problems connected with respect for women's rights and the promotion of the family and marriage.


58 Love for others, and especially for the poor, is made concrete by promoting justice.

*Centesimus Annus (The Hundredth Year)*, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, 1991

94 The needs of the poor take priority over the desires of the rich; the rights of workers over the maximization of profits...

*Economic Justice for All*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986

42 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.


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*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986
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), Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI, 1971

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, United States
Catholic Bishops, 2001

The struggle against destitution, though urgent and necessary, is not enough. It is a question, rather,
of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion or nationality, can live a fully
human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not
sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit
down at the same table with the rich man.

Populorum Progresio, (On the Development of Peoples), Paul VI, 1967

"If a brother or a sister be naked", says Saint James; "if they lack their daily nourishment, and one of
you says to them: 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled', without giving them what is necessary for the
body, what good does it do?" Today no one can be ignorant any longer of the fact that in whole continents
countless men and women are ravished by hunger, countless numbers of children are undernourished,
so that many of them die in infancy, while the physical growth and mental development of many others
are retarded and as a result whole regions are condemned to the most depressing despondency.

Stake everything on charity

Beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity of its nature opens out into a service that is
universal; it inspires in us a commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being. This too is
an aspect which must clearly mark the Christian life, the Church's whole activity and her pastoral
planning. The century and the millennium now beginning will need to see, and hopefully with still greater
clarity, to what length of dedication the Christian community can go in charity towards the poorest. If we
have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the
faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was
thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I
was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Mt 25:35-37). This Gospel text is not a
simple invitation to charity: it is a page of Christology which sheds a ray of light on the mystery of Christ.
By these words, no less than by the orthodoxy of her doctrine, the Church measures her fidelity as the
Bride of Christ.

Certainly we need to remember that no one can be excluded from our love, since "through his Incarnation
the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person". Yet, as the unequivocal words of
the Gospel remind us, there is a special presence of Christ in the poor, and this requires the Church to
make a preferential option for them. This option is a testimony to the nature of God's love, to his
providence and mercy; and in some way history is still filled with the seeds of the Kingdom of God which
Jesus himself sowed during his earthly life whenever he responded to those who came to him with their
spiritual and material needs.
Canadian/Ontario Documents

Principles to be Observed by all Governments
What follows are several principles which apply to any government, at any time and under any circumstances. The people of Ontario must expect of any government they elect that its policies and actions respect these principles…
Governments must protect those who are marginalized in society. Through our governments we must provide economic security and an acceptable quality of life for those who are unemployed, displaced, impoverished or afflicted by a mental or physical disability. The complexity of modern society has created a situation in which voluntary efforts, though still needed, cannot begin to cope with the problems of the marginalized. Only government can do this adequately. The gospel clearly indicates that our final option must always be for the poor.


For complete text go to http://www.occb.on.ca/english/choosing.html

We write to you to share our joy in your commitment to the gospel of justice and peace; to thank you for your generosity of spirit; and to affirm you in the struggle you are engaged in, locally and globally, to build a more just and peaceful world.

We write, too, to share with every Catholic high school student in Ontario - from Kenora to Cornwall and from Timmins to Windsor - the good news that is found in so many of our Catholic high school communities.

Finally, we write to encourage you in your commitment to the poor and to challenge you to continue to serve as disciples of Jesus, who today can be found in a special way with those who are hurting and find themselves on the margins of our social and economic life.


For complete text go to http://www.occb.on.ca/english/celebrating.html

An education for justice and peace is an education about just relations and structures here in Canada - in Ontario - as well as in the Third World.

There is an African proverb that, in a way, describes the current mood and some of the attitudes in our society. It says: As the water hole shrinks, the animals get meaner! We are living in a society with shrinking wealth for the majority of people and a world in which the gap between the rich and poor increases each day. With shrinking wealth and decreasing job opportunities, a new meanness sets in. Those who have become more possessive and protective of what they have.


For complete text go to http://www.occb.on.ca/english/celebrating.html

On 24 November of 1989, the House of Commons resolved to seek "to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000." This resolution passed by a unanimous vote of all parties.

Without minimizing the complexity of the social, economic and many other aspects of the problem, I am sure you will agree with me that the desire of the House has not yet been fulfilled. Many people have worked tirelessly and much has been done. Nonetheless, as we stand on the threshold of the new millennium there are many thousands of children in this country who do not have the resources and the supports they need to fulfill their potential as persons, as citizens and as members of the human family. Around the world that number could be multiplied many times.

Letter to Jean Chretien, on Child Poverty, Cardinal Ambrozin, Nov. 1999
Quotations

The most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved.  

Mother Teresa

Poverty does not produce unhappiness: it produces degradation.  

George Bernard Shaw

I believe that, as long as there is plenty, poverty is evil.  

Robert F Kennedy

Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime.  

Aristotle

Poverty is the worst form of violence.  

Ghandi

It is a poverty to decide that a child must die so that you may live as you wish.  

Mother Teresa

Real poverty is lack of books.  

Sidonie Gabrielle

Poverty is like punishment for a crime you didn't commit.  

Eli Khamarov

Poverty of goods is easily cured; poverty of soul impossible.  

Michel Montaigne

Modern poverty is not the poverty that was blest in the Sermon on the Mount.  

George Bernard Shaw

True benevolence, or compassion, extends itself through the whole of existence and sympathizes with the distress of every creature capable of sensation.  

Joseph Addison

Compassion is not religious business, it is human business, it is not luxury, it is essential for our own peace and mental stability, it is essential for human survival.  

Dalai Lama

Teach this triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity.  

Buddha
Web Resources

The Vatican: Catechism of the Catholic Church
http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/ccc_toc.htm
In Part III, Life in Christ, Chapter Two focuses on The Human Community. The Church’s teaching on Social Justice is detailed, including sections on the respect for the human person, equality and differences among men (people) and solidarity. Section two deals with the Ten Commandments and the Fourth Commandment, “You Shall Love your Neighbour as Yourself” and the Fifth, “Thou Shall Not Kill” concentrate on themes central to social justice. The Seventh, “You Shall Not Steal” also addresses economic activity such as labour, solidarity among nations, and love for the poor. While the Catechism has no links and is difficult to read at times, it provides a useful resource to the underpinnings of Church teachings on social justice.

Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops.
This provides a direct link to the document Celebrating Education for Justice and Peace. Addressed to high school students, it captures both an affirmation and challenge to respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable.

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
http://www.cccb.ca/
The site of Canada’s Catholic Bishops under ‘Commissions and Organizations’ has a deep section under the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs. Included is a list of letters of both praise and concern written by the Conference to prominent politicians and members of the business and international community. The ‘Public Statements’ section includes major policy statements on current issues like aboriginal land claims, religious rights and the dignity of life. The CCCB is a valuable resource for those seeking to see where the Canadian Catholic stands on social justice.

Walking Together- Justice and Charity
http://www.alcdsb.on.ca/social_justice/
This web site of the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board offers a variety of downloadable resources for teachers as well as materials related to justice and charity activities in Catholic schools, school guidelines for ethical fundraising, and a rich variety of links to justice sites particularly orientated to the classroom.

United Way of Canada
http://www.unitedway.ca/english/
Central site of the 125 local United Ways across the country that provide financial support for over 4300 organizations and an additional 10,000 through direct donor giving. Like the United Way itself, the site is administrative, although the links to important partners like Scouts Canada, the Victorian Order of Nurses, the John Howard Society, YMCA Canada and the Canadian Aids Society makes it a great springboard.

Canadian International Development Agency
http://w3.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INDEX-E.HTM
The federal government’s CIDA website outlines its programmes, and has links (under construction unfortunately) to over 150 countries around the world where they are active. The youth zone is more useful, with interesting sections on global issues, including tools and resources that are valuable for further research into the topic. The virtual library has extensive links, although the topics are awkwardly organized under headings and subheadings.

Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace
http://www.devp.org/
This Canadian Catholic organization, founded by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, works to have “helped improve living and working conditions in 70 countries around the globe, providing $375 million for human rights, community development and humanitarian aid” around the world, provide relief in
disaster situations and whose projects seek to improve education and job opportunities, the environment, women's rights, agrarian reform, housing and co-operative movements. Publications section has issues of the Global Village Voice and the organizations annual reports. Specific information about Development and Peace projects around the world is comprehensive. Archive of policy statements, many on current political issues, provides interesting insights into many D & P causes that are outside its traditional work in developing countries. Like many social justice websites, many of the documents are in .PDF format, making Adobe Acrobat reader indispensable for information gathering.

KAIROS
http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/index.asp
KAIROS unites churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to the call to “do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). We deliberate on issues of common concern, advocate for social change and join with people of faith and goodwill in action for social transformation.

Scarboro Foreign Missions
http://www.scarboromissions.ca/
This Canadian based mission society offers a variety of educational resources for Catholic schools as well as opportunities for students to experience first hand the developing world.

Catholic Relief Services
http://www.catholicrelief.org/
Founded by the American Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services provides international assistance and development programs worldwide. The site is anchored by an interactive map of the nations where CRS operates, outlining why the country is in need, how they are helping, as well as providing an overview for the nation as a whole. CRS also details what they do through their programmes: starting by identifying an issue (such as AIDS), why there is a need (through potent statistics), which social values are important to fight the problem, and then details how they are helping with the problem. Usefully, they cite, with links, current nations in the world where there programmes are in place and personal feedback from people involved in the country projects. A topical relief and development site that is logical and easy to navigate.

Special Education, Government of Ontario
In our schools, the most visible and vulnerable people are students with special physical, intellectual and emotional needs. The following two links will bring you to resources on students with autism and with mild intellectual handicaps.

Special Education Monographs
No. 4: Students With Autism
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/monog4.html
Special Education and Provincial Schools Branch, April 1990

Special Education Monographs
No. 3: Exceptional Pupils with Mild Intellectual Handicaps in Secondary Schools
Special Education Branch, August 1986

A very extensive handbook outlining information on a variety of learning exceptionalities including behaviour, autism, learning and developmental disabilities.

Causes of World Poverty
http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Poverty.asp
This site provides compelling information related to the perpetuation of global poverty through unjust social and economic structures.
Elderly and Child Abuse: National Clearinghouse on Family Violence
http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/age_e.html#top
The elderly and children in our society are very vulnerable to many forms of abuse. This Government of Canada website provides extensive documentation for downloading, study and use including educational resources. http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/nfntsnegl_e.html will bring you to resources on child abuse.

Papal and Episcopal Documents Relating to Catholic Social Justice Teaching
http://www.justpeace.org/docu.htm
This web site offers an easily accessible collection of the Church’s statements on justice from the Vatican to a variety of national bishops’ conferences.

The Office For Social Justice of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis
http://www.osjspm.org/
This archdiocesan site offers an extensive collection of materials and links, including a collection of resources created for use by Catholic educators.

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
This site offers a variety of Catholic resources from the point of view of the Australian Catholic Church.

Education for Justice
http://www.coc.org/ej/
This site is run by the Jesuit Centre for Concern in Washington, D.C. and offers an extensive collection of resources, discussion groups, news and views from a Catholic perspective.

Make Poverty History
http://www.makepovertyhistory.org
Every single day, 30,000 children are dying as a result of extreme poverty. We finally have the resources, knowledge and opportunity to end this shameful situation. This website is part of a campaign to end global poverty. With rich online resources and television promotions, this is a very effective educational site.
Links to Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectation

A Discerning Believer Formed in the Catholic Faith Community:
CGE1d Develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good
CGE1f Seeks intimacy with God and celebrates communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship
CGE1g Understands that one’s purpose or call in life comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life’s journey
CGE1h Respects the faith traditions, world religions and the life-journeys of all people of good will
CGE1i Integrates faith with life
CGE1j Recognizes that "sin, human weakness, conflict and forgiveness are part of the human journey" and that the cross, the ultimate sign of forgiveness is at the heart of redemption (Witnesses to Faith)

An Effective Communicator:
CGE2a Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values
CGE2c Presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others

A Reflective and Creative Thinker:
CGE3a Recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges
CGE3b Creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good
CGE3c Thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems
CGE3d Makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience
CGE3f Examines, evaluates and applies knowledge of interdependent systems (physical, political, ethical, socio-economic and ecological) for the development of a just and compassionate society

A Self-Directed, Responsible, Life-Long Learner:
CGE4a Demonstrates a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others

A Collaborative Contributor:
CGE5a Works effectively as an interdependent team member
CGE5b Thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of work
CGE5c Develops one’s God-given potential and makes a meaningful contribution to society
CGE5d Finds meaning, dignity, fulfillment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good
CGE5e Respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others
CGE5f Exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals

A Caring Family Member:
CGE6e Ministers to the family, school, parish and wider community through service

A Responsible Citizen:
CGE7a Acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions
Reflection Questions

Personal and Group Reflections

Personal Reflection:
1. Defining poverty in its various dimensions, economic, relational, emotional, intellectual, physical: who are the most poor and vulnerable in my school community?

2. What challenges do their needs present?

Small Group Reflection:
1. In what ways should Catholic education give special priority to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable in our schools; in Canada; and in the world?

2. How is our school responding to these needs?

Strategies:
1. How should our school community give practical attention to the needs of the poor and vulnerable in our midst?