

Catholic Diocese of Raleigh

OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE



While the common good embraces all, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need deserve preferential concern. A basic moral test for our society is how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst. In a society marred by deepening disparities between rich and poor, Scripture gives us the story of the Last Judgment (see Mt 25:31-46) and reminds us that we will be judged by our response to the “least among us.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains:

Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of *a preferential love* on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere. (No. 2448)

Pope Benedict XVI has taught that “love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to [the Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel” (*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 22). This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable includes all who are marginalized in our nation and beyond – unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, and victims of injustice and oppression.

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“Each person is a part of society and part of humankind, and this human solidarity imposes a duty for mutual concern for the development of others. All people are called to work for a “new humanism,” a more human condition which may be found embracing the higher values of love and friendship, prayer and contemplation. Such humanism will help overcome oppressive social structures and foster an increased esteem for the dignity of others.”

Populorum Progressio, Nos. 14, 15, 17, 20, 21 Pope Paul VI, quoted from *A Concise Guide to Catholic Social Teaching*, Kevin E. McKenna

For Reflection:

“If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and truth.”

1 John 3: 17

Faithful Citizenship Prayer:

God our Father, may your Holy Spirit guide me in all my decisions and actions. Hear my prayers, and increase in me the will to follow your Son Jesus. Help me to draw on the resources of my faith as I use the opportunities of our democracy to shape a society more respectful of the life, dignity, and rights of the human person, especially the poor and vulnerable. I ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.