

>>> **Catholic Social Teaching for Youth Ministry** <<<
CST: Option for the Poor & Vulnerable
Catechesis for the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh

Faced with the grave social problems which, with different characteristics, are present throughout America, Catholics know that they can find in the Church's social doctrine an answer which serves as a starting point in the search for practical solutions. Spreading this doctrine in an authentic pastoral priority. In this regard, special care must be taken to train lay persons capable of working, on the basis of the faith in Christ to transform earthly realities. *Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II, 1999

Life and Dignity of Person >>> Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person >>> Call to Family, Community, Participation >>>

Solidarity >>> Care of Creation >>> Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers >>> Option for the Poor and Vulnerable >>>

Scripture

Gather as much bread that the Lord has given you to eat, as each of you needs, an omer to a person...The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some gathering less. But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage...

Exodus 16:16-18

You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Exodus 23:9

Happy are those who consider the poor; the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble. The Lord protects them and keeps them alive; they are called happy in the land. Blessed be the Lord...

Psalm 41:1, 2, 13

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

Psalm 145

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free...Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house...Then your light shall break forth like the dawn and your healing shall spring up quickly...

Isaiah 58:6-14

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5-7, Luke 6:20-49

The Magnificat

Luke 1:46-55

Jesus 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...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 favor.*

Luke 4:18

The Sinful Woman Forgiveness

Luke 7:36-50

The Rich man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

All who believed were together and had all things in common.

Acts 2:44

Papal Encyclicals & Bishops' Statements

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. Poor and vulnerable people have a special place in Catholic social teaching. The option for the poor, is not a 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. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgement (Matt. 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, USCCB, 1999

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, Paul VI, 1967

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, USCCB, 1986

Extravagance and wretchedness exist side by side. ...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. ... 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. ... 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*, Second Vatican Council, 1965

Learn More

Office of Peace & Justice, Catholic Diocese of Raleigh

www.dioceseofraleigh.org

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Now Available: *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*

USCCB. To order: 1-800-235-8722 (Order #5-692)

www.usccb.org/publishing/compendium.shtml

U.S. Catholic Bishops statements: www.nccbuscc.org/statements.htm

Welcoming the Stranger Among Us

A Place at the Table

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Objectives: To learn the themes of Catholic social teaching, its gift, its roots in the life of Christ and the Gospel, papal encyclicals and bishops' statements, its challenge to today's Catholics and its essential role in Catholic faith and identity.
To journey more deeply in our life of faith; to respond in our world today as salt and light, and to rejoice in the Good News.
To experience the option for the poor and vulnerable in Christ, locally and globally.

Overview

Read the Catholic Teaching on the reverse page.
~Reflect on this teaching :
In your own life, your community, country and world.
In connection with the other themes of CST listed on the border.
In Jesus' life as the Son of Man.
In terms of the reign of God.
~Expand your familiarity with Church teachings by reading at least one of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' statements listed on page 1.

Preparation

Produce a play for the group.
Manna from Heaven (Exodus 16)
Invite a cast to develop a play using the text of Exodus 16. Be creative.
Copies of page one of this snip-it as handouts.
Newsprint

Or

Plan a Food Fast through Catholic Relief Services. Visit www.crs.org and click on *food-fast* found in *other crs sites*. All the material is there to provide a tremendous experience for youth ministry.

Curriculum

Play:
This could be a "dinner theater production" or an "audience participation impromptu" or a standard play performance. There is lots of opportunity for using God's gift of imagination.

Discussion after the presentation
Explain that the Exodus experience just presented has a message of life for all generations.

Break into small groups to answer the questions (written and posted on newsprint):
What are God's gifts to us in this experience?
What does God require of his people?
How can this experience be practiced today?

Come together and share responses.

Some responses we can help glean from the play:
Food is gift of God
Food is for all so that some have more, some have less, but everyone has enough.
There is to be no hoarding, no need if we trust in God to provide.
There is a great gift in Sabbath Rest established by God as necessary and good.
We are all connected and share in work, the fruit of work and can celebrate as community when everyone has enough.

Distribute handout of snip-it teaching on option for the poor & vulnerable.
Explain that this part of Catholic social teaching expresses what the Israelites experienced in the dessert crossing. Briefly review the hand-out, with volunteers reading parts of the teaching.

Reflect on this teaching as good news for all people.

Is there a project you can begin? For example, collecting personal care items for the local food bank for teens and their families in need. Check out Catholic Relief Services for other ways to get involved in sharing the manna.

...everyone must consider every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all their 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 (Luke 16:18-31). ...Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, ...whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, ...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 to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. *Gaudium et Spes*