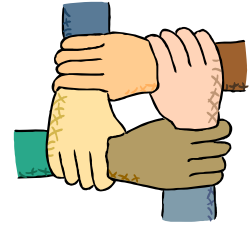


Session F

Theme: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Scripture Reading & Discussion Questions



A Reading from Matthew 25:31-46:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who 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 drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous 16 will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Are there times you can think of when "Jesus" was hungry and you fed him? Or thirsty and you gave him a drink? Can you think of times when you failed to do these things?
- 2) What is it about the life and ministry of Jesus that suggests his followers in the Church should make a special place for the poor and vulnerable in their agenda for action in the world?
- 3) What implications do you see in this parable of Jesus for the formulation of social policy in our country? What responsibility do you personally feel for helping to shape the social policies that most impact those mentioned in the parable?

Faithful Citizenship Reading & Discussion Questions:

A reading from *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*:

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 (no. 50-51).

Discussion Questions:

- 1) If a basic moral test of a society is “how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst,” how would you say our own country measures up at the present time?
- 2) How would you evaluate your parish community's response to “the least among us”?
- 3) Do you see any symptoms of “deepening disparities between rich and poor” in your community, or an adversarial mentality between the have's and the have-not's?
- 4) How does the "option for the poor and vulnerable" relate to your role as a citizen?