



## PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR



“ The early Church fathers made clear that giving to the poor is just giving back to them what is theirs, for God intended the goods of the earth for all, without excluding anyone.”

Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream*



The Church holds that we should all have a special focus on supporting, walking alongside, and sharing with people who are living in poverty. It's a way we live out caritas, love in action. Although it includes the charitable support of the Church, both the institution and individual members, for those living in poverty locally and globally, it is also wider than this.

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Pope Francis, *World Youth Day 2013*

This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.”



John had never really had to worry about things like food. He could usually take his family on at least one holiday a year, and they always put something in the collection plate on a Sunday. Then the recession happened. His job wasn't affected at first. But then more and more people were made redundant. It's not that he hasn't been looking for work, but there's so little out there for his experience. At first, they made do. Friends and family have been so generous. Then all of a sudden, with such a long wait to receive benefits, they realised that there just wasn't enough money to buy food for the family to live healthily on.

There was a notice in the parish newsletter. They'd started a food bank for people in the local community. At first it was just a few cans of food people brought on a Sunday. Overwhelmed by the generous response, they knew they needed to get more organised. A group came together to work out what sorts of food were needed, and appeals put in the newsletter. They sorted it into boxes ready for families like John's.

John's not found it easy to accept the food package, he's grateful for it. It's made life that much easier when times have been particularly tough.

“ 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.

Luke 6:20 - 22

Spend time with the passage of Scripture, imagining you're sat on the grass, listening to Jesus.

- ▶ **How would you feel hearing the words?**
- ▶ **Would you identify with any of the people called “blessed”?**
- ▶ **Who are “the poor”, “the hungry”, those “who weep”?**

Ask God to open your eyes to them, and to ways you can be with them.

## REFLECTION



Using the model from Cardinal Cardijn, reflect on where people living in poverty are being ignored locally and globally, what our faith calls us to do about it, and what actions we may be able to take to enable all people to flourish.

People living in poverty are all around us. Either in the news or locally, who springs to mind?

SEE

Why are people forced to live like this? What is stopping you from doing something?

JUDGE

How will you embrace our sisters and brothers living in poverty, and learn from them?

ACT

“ We are called to find Christ in (people living in poverty), to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.

Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel, 198



The principle of the preferential option for the poor ensures we all put people living in poverty at the forefront of our choices and actions. We cannot ignore their plight. It cannot merely be words. And through being alongside the poor, we learn so much from them.

People living in poverty are all around us. Pope Francis challenges us to walk alongside them, to learn from one another.

Could you volunteer time at a local soup kitchen or shelter for the homeless?

Could you not just buy a copy of the Big Issue, but also talk with the person selling it, sharing something of ourselves, as well as putting cash in the collection box?



ACTION

## GET INVOLVED!

Set up or get involved with a local food bank. If you don't have one in your own parish, you could either set one up, or donate to a local scheme.

Housing Justice is a national homelessness charity, supporting nightshelters, drop ins, and practical projects. They provide advice and training for any parish to work with homeless people [housingjustice.org.uk](http://housingjustice.org.uk)

Society of St Vincent de Paul undertakes a wide range of works of charity, including supporting people living in poverty locally [svp.org.uk](http://svp.org.uk)

To support people living in poverty around the world, see [cafod.org.uk](http://cafod.org.uk), [missio.org.uk](http://missio.org.uk) and [marysmeals.org.uk](http://marysmeals.org.uk)

Check if your Diocese has a development worker supporting new social action projects

## PARISH PLAN

Think about gathering a few times to look together at how we can respond to the needs of our local community in the light of what we're learning in Love in Action.

Resources and ideas are available to help identify the needs of the community and plan how to respond.

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