



PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR



“ Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society’s most neglected members.”

Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel, 176



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. It involves charity and justice.



SEE

“ We tend to create a distance between ourselves and the poor, without realising that in this way we are distancing ourselves from the Lord Jesus, who does not reject them, but calls them to himself and comforts them.”

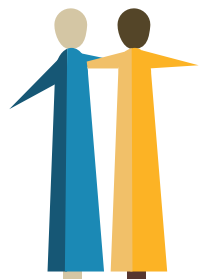
Pope Francis, Second World Day of the Poor 2018



- What images come to mind when you think of “the poor”?
- Are these people whom we desire to be friends with?
- What might challenge us, or make us uncomfortable, about listening to them, and “embracing” the wisdom they have to share?

In Newcastle station, there is a piano placed next to the entrance, inviting the public to stop and play a tune. One man who regularly plays has been known to inspire commuters so much that they miss their train whilst being mesmerised by his music. Hearing him play, most would have no comprehension that this is a gentleman who has no home and sleeps rough each night. Many are surprised and puzzled as to how such a talented man could be sleeping on the streets.

- Do we ever make assumptions about people who live in poverty? How?
- Are we aware of people living in poverty in our parish community (within and outside our Church walls)? How do we interact with them?



JUDGE



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

- Would you identify with any of the people called “blessed”?
- Who are “the poor”, “the hungry”, those “who weep”?



They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stood still and said, ‘Call him here.’ And they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take heart; get up, he is calling you.’ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man said to him, ‘My teacher, let me see again.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Mark 10:46-52

Jesus talks with Bartimaeus, a blind poor beggar, asking about him, asking what he wants. He doesn’t assume he knows; he doesn’t just give him money; he doesn’t quickly heal him and move on. He listens, respecting the dignity of Bartimaeus. Jesus then heals Bartimaeus, helping him as he could. We then hear that Bartimaeus joins the group walking along – he has been reintegrated to society and made welcome.

- How do we truly listen to those who are living in poverty? How do we learn from them?

ACT



If anyone is well off in worldly possessions and sees his brother in need but closes his heart to him, how can the love of God be remaining in him? Children, our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine.

1 John 3.17-18

The message is clear: We must put our love into action. Caritas, love in action, is charity and justice together. With the preferential option for the poor, it is more than charity alone. It is seeking justice at all levels of society. It involves tackling those structures which keep people living in poverty, what St John Paul II termed “structures of sin”. It is about enabling people to be part of the decision making processes which affect their lives. It is enabling all people to play a full and active part in society.

- How could you put love into action through charity (or ‘good works’)?
- How could you help challenge the ‘structures of sin’?
- How could you support people living in poverty to have their voice heard and to participate in the decisions which impact on their lives?
- Will you commit to the Love in Action process in the parish when invited to contribute to the Parish Action Plan, helping to discern how to respond to the challenges in your community?

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