



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

CST: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

The seventh in a seven part series on Catholic Social Teaching

Modern Catholic social teaching is the body of social principles and moral teaching that is articulated in the papal, conciliar, and other official documents issued since the late nineteenth century and dealing with the economic, political, and social order. This teaching is rooted in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures as well as in traditional philosophical and theological teachings of the Church.

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.* 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.

Scriptural Foundations

All members of society and society as a whole have a special obligation to poor and vulnerable persons. God's covenant includes a special concern for these persons.

Laws protecting aliens, widows and orphans

Exodus 22:20-22
Leviticus 19:33-34
Deuteronomy 24:17-18

Laws protecting debtors

Exodus 22:24-26
Leviticus 25:23-28
Deuteronomy 15:1-11
Deuteronomy 23:20
Deuteronomy 24:6 and 10-13

Laws providing for the poor

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

Deuteronomy 26:12-13
Matthew 25:31-46 (judgment of nations)
Luke 4:16-21 (Jesus mission to the poor/outcast)
Luke 14:12-14 (reach out to the poor/vulnerable)

Quotes from Official Church Documents

"In protecting the rights of private individuals...special consideration must be given to the weak and the poor. For the nation, as it were, of the rich, is guarded by its own defenses and is in less need of governmental protection..." -Pope Leo XIII, *On the Condition of Workers (Rerum Novarum)*, no 54

"The prime purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable *all* persons to share in and contribute to the common good. The 'option for the poor,' therefore, is not an 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. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons. These wounds will be healed only by greater solidarity with the poor and among the poor themselves," -National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Economic

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References from the Catechism

2444 - "The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need." It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty.

2446 - St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs. The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity":
When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.



The Feast of All Saints

On Saturday, November 1, we will celebrate the Feast of All Saints

The earliest certain observance of a feast in honor of all the saints is an early fourth-century commemoration of "all the martyrs." In the early seventh century, after successive waves of invaders plundered the catacombs, Pope Boniface IV gathered up some 28 wagonloads of bones and reinterred them beneath the Pantheon, a Roman temple dedicated to all the gods. The pope rededicated the shrine as a Christian church. According to Venerable Bede, the pope intended "that the memory of all the saints might in the future be honored in the place which had formerly been dedicated to the worship not of gods but of demons" (*On the Calculation of Time*).

But the rededication of the Pantheon,

like the earlier commemoration of all the martyrs, occurred in May. Many Eastern Churches still honor all the saints in the spring, either during the Easter season or immediately after Pentecost.

How the Western Church came to celebrate this feast in November is a puzzle to historians. The Anglo-Saxon theologian Alcuin observed the feast on November 1 in 800, as did his friend Arno, Bishop of Salzburg. Rome finally adopted that date in the ninth century.

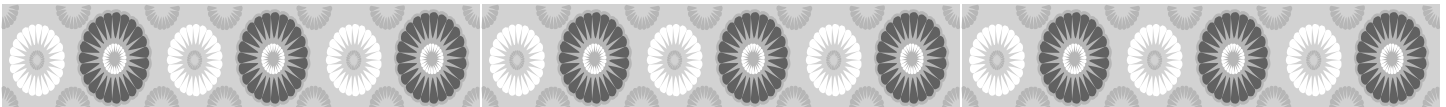
Comment:

This feast first honored martyrs. Later, when Christians were free to worship according to their conscience, the Church acknowledged other paths to sanctity. In the early centuries the only criterion was popular acclaim, even when the bishop's approval became the final step in placing

a commemoration on the calendar. The first papal canonization occurred in 993; the lengthy process now required to prove extraordinary sanctity took form in the last 500 years. Today's feast honors the obscure as well as the famous—the saints each of us have known.

Quote:

"After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.... [One of the elders] said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"" (Revelation 7:9,14).. www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay



Want to know more about CST Option for the Poor & Vulnerable?

A Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty:

Action Steps for Individuals and Families

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/revise%20action%20steps%20individuals%20families.pdf>

CCHD Break/Brake the Cycle of Poverty – Take Action

Pledge

http://www.usccb.org/cchd/brakethecycle/pov_usa_spotlight/pledge.html

...to end Poverty in America

<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/involved.shtml>

CRS & USCCB Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty

Home Page

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/>

The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform

<http://www.justiceformigrants.org/>

Seeking Justice, Ending Hunger – Bread for the World

www.bread.org

Catholic Relief Services - Fair Trade

<http://www.crsfairtrade.org/index.cfm>

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.