

## *Catholic Social Teaching ~ Option for the Poor and Vulnerable*

### Objectives for our Gatherings

1. Be aware of the reality of poverty as experienced by people around the world.
2. Understand what the scriptures say and what the church teaches about the poor.

**“The Bible says it, the Church teaches it. We need to do it !”**

3. Accept the responsibility to make a difference in the lives of the poor.

*We are in the Dining Room of our house !*



We know from reading the bible that God has a special concern for the poor. In Matthew's gospel [Matthew 25: 40 - 45] we find that Jesus identified himself with 'the least of these,' and let us know that he came to bring 'good news to the poor... and to set the downtrodden free.' [Luke 4: 18 - 19]

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 # 22]

**“THE POOR PERSON IS SOMEONE WHO IS TREATED AS A NON-PERSON, someone who is considered insignificant... The poor count as statistics: THEY ARE NAMELESS. But even though the poor remain insignificant within society, THEY ARE NEVER INSIGNIFICANT BEFORE GOD.**

# 1. Exploration      Understanding Poverty

## Why are people poor ?

Needed: A set of Poverty Cards, a glue stick, pencil and a large sheet of paper.

### STEP 1

- Cut out and read each of the poverty cards.
- Paste the “poverty” card at the top of your paper.
- Arrange (but do not glue) all of the remaining cards clockwise starting from “poverty” to form a circle.
- Your arrangement should show how each condition is created or caused by the one that precedes it.
- When you are satisfied with the arrangement, glue the cards in place and draw arrows from the first card around until the circle is complete.

### STEP 2

- IMAGINE you have the power to change the situation of those who live in poverty – especially children.
- DEVELOP specific ideas for breaking the cycle of poverty. Decide which ideas will work for your chart and write the idea next to the step to which it corresponds.

### STEP 3

Respond to these questions:

- Why does poverty continue?
- What would it be like if one of your ideas was actually implemented? What impact would it make on people’s lives?

## 2. Reflection

**Why should Catholics be concerned about poverty ?**

**“The Bible says it, the Church teaches it. We need to do it !”**

**Our nation needs it ! Too many Americans, especially children, are growing poor in the richest nation on earth.**

**Our world requires it. More than 30,000 children die every day from hunger, deprivation and their consequences. Disease and debt, corruption and conflict are threatening the lives and dignity of millions in our increasingly globalized world.**

### STEP 1

**Watch these video clips:**

**Hunger and Poverty in America**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=cR3jQOgs9gc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=cR3jQOgs9gc)

**Documentary : Chicken a la Carte on Culture Unplugged**

<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/1081>

### STEP 2

**Write a brief reflection/reaction to each of the videos. Please include your responses to these questions:**

- **If Jesus were telling these stories, what would be his message ?**
- **What would he want us to do ?**

### 3. Gain Insights from what Scripture Says

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16: 19 – 31

Directions:

- Read the Gospel story about the Rich Man and Lazarus.
- “Step into the story and become part of it.”
- Reread the story stopping frequently to ask the questions:
  - What is Jesus’ message to me ?
  - What is Jesus asking me to do ?

Write down your responses.

### 4. What the Church Teaches

STEP 1

Read the summary of Fr. Steve’s talk:

What does the Church teach about option for the Poor ?

STEP 2

Write a brief reflection/reaction to the “talk” and include your response to this question:

What did you learn that you didn’t know before ?

## 5. Experience ~ Action

### Accepting Our Responsibilities and Moving into Action

The bible and the teachings of the Church tell us we must put our love into action. This means we must do something to help the poor. Lent is the time to put our 'feet' in motion.

As a family/household...

What is one action you can take towards ending poverty ?



Each household...

1. ... receives "Two Feet" to take home.
2. ... chooses one concrete practice/action for each "foot."
3. ... decides what they can do as a family to respond to people in need and to address the root causes of social problems.
4. ... brings the "feet" back to the March session.

Suggestions and resources are available at [www.stjoseph-nj.org](http://www.stjoseph-nj.org).

Click on "Faith Connections" and look at Network of Faith

- Households
  - Action Projects and Resources