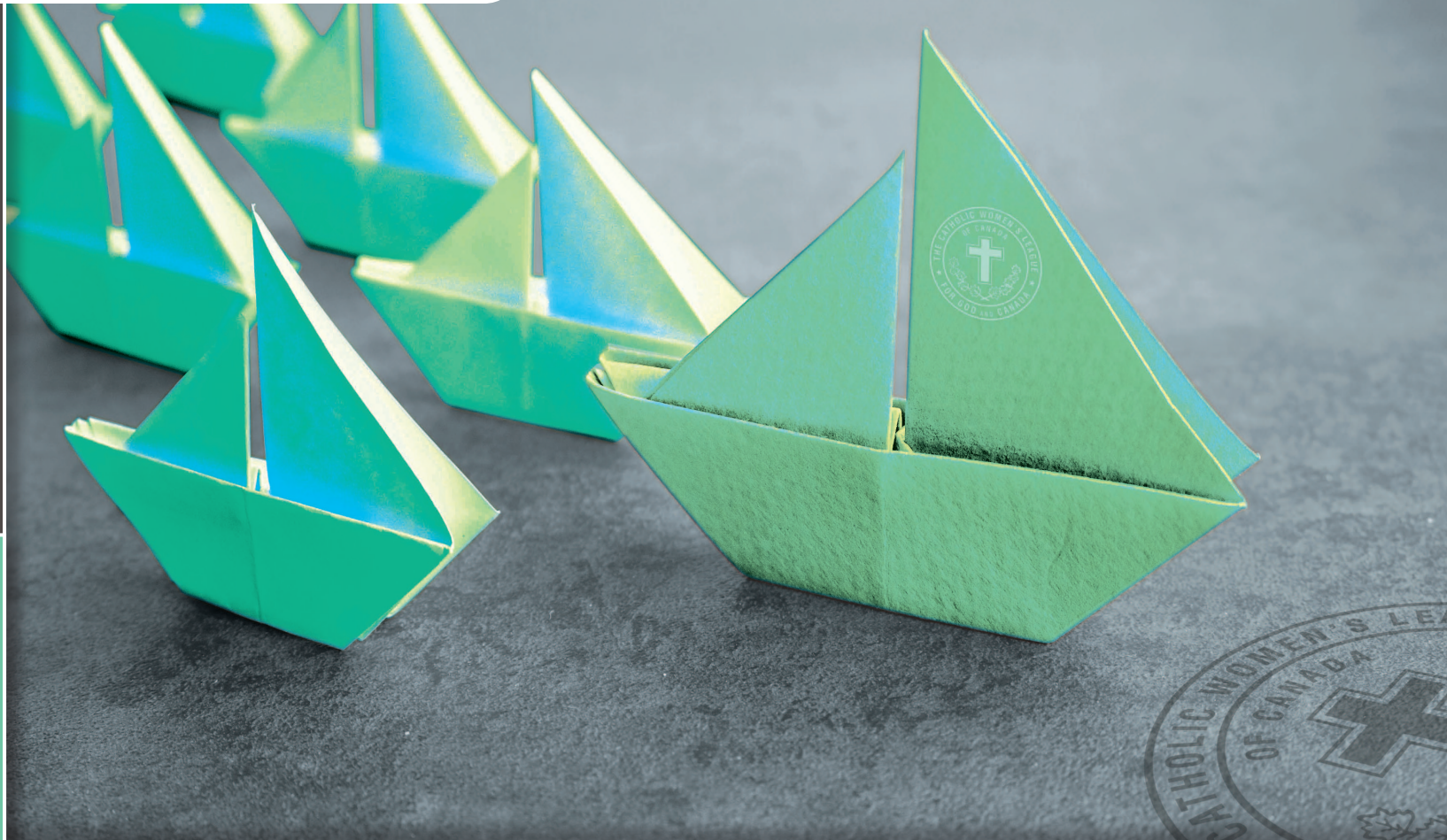


# Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

## Catholic Social Teaching Working Group



**GOAL:** The Catholic Women's League of Canada addresses and supports Catholic social teaching through advocacy.



**STRATEGY:** Empower members by providing educational opportunities to learn more about Catholic social teaching.





# Introduction

“When I understand Jesus’ words in Aramaic, I translate like this: ‘Get up, go ahead, do something, move, you who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for you shall be satisfied. Get up, go ahead, do something, move, you peacemakers, for you shall be called children of God’” (Elias Chacour).

As baptized followers of Jesus, this key principle of Catholic social teaching encourages members to imitate Christ’s love for the poor and live their lives making daily choices that create a society where the needs of the poor and vulnerable are always considered first. Every member can quickly call to mind specific examples of Jesus reaching out and touching those on the peripheries of the society in which He lived: women, orphans, the sick, prisoners, political, religious and climate refugees, the poor, unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, and victims of injustice and oppression—all these are the people to whom Jesus ministered.

This “preferential option for the poor” is a constant theme in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. This theme continually returns to calling believers to care for the well-being of the poor and powerless. Catholics find this focus reflected in the teachings and commands of God and hear it shouted through the prophets in both the Old and New Testaments. “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Mt 25: 45-46).

This “option for the poor” was a focus of the World Synod of Catholic Bishops in 1971. In the bishops’ synodal letter, they declared, “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

Catholic canon law states the Christian faithful “are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources” (*Code of Canon Law*, no. 222 §2).

“The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. [Catholics] are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor” (Office for Social Justice, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis).

“But the principle behind the phrase was articulated earlier by the Catholic Bishops at the Second Vatican Council, when in their Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* they spoke of the poor from the very first line, repeating the word nine times and concluding: ‘The council, considering the immensity of the hardships which still afflict the greater part of mankind today, regards it as most opportune that an organism of the universal Church be set up in order that both the justice and love of Christ toward the poor might be developed everywhere.’”(Wikipedia).

“*The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, published by the Roman Curia in 2004, summarizes the principle: ‘This love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without health care and, above all, those without hope of a better future’” (Wikipedia).

Through members’ words, prayers and actions, they show solidarity with the poor and speak on their behalf to bring about change that will bring them a fuller life. In recent years, Catholics have expanded this vision to include not only humans but all of God’s creation. What a noble task to which members have been called! What riches will be reaped by all those to whom members minister! Let us begin today!

# Organizations

| Name   | Website  | Description   |
|--|--|---|
| Canadian Jesuits International                         | <a href="http://canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/">canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/</a>   | The organization's website contains various resources including prayer, advocacy, education, webinars and videos.   |
| Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand                           | <a href="http://caritas.org.nz/">caritas.org.nz/</a>   | Having a preferential option for the poor requires that people consider those most vulnerable. The organization offers resources to help people become educated on this important priority of the Catholic church.  |
| Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis         | <a href="http://cctwincities.org/education-advocacy/catholic-social-teaching/notable-quotations/option-for-the-poor/">cctwincities.org/education-advocacy/catholic-social-teaching/notable-quotations/option-for-the-poor/</a> | This organization offers a wonderful collection of brief statements from various sources on the preferential option for the poor. Each quote could easily be used as a discussion starter or piece of information to learn more about the principle.  |
| Catholic Missions In Canada                            | <a href="http://cmic.info/">cmic.info/</a>   | Catholic Missions In Canada supports the faith of those in remote and isolated places in Canada.  |
| Catholic Relief Services                               | <a href="http://crs.org/resource-center/CST-101?tab=option-for-the-poor-and-vulnerable">crs.org/resource-center/CST-101?tab=option-for-the-poor-and-vulnerable</a>   | Catholic Relief Services offers various resources specific to this principle, including a video and printable resources with excellent visuals in English and Spanish.  |
| Center for Social Concerns<br>University of Notre Dame | <a href="http://socialconcerns.nd.edu/">socialconcerns.nd.edu/</a>   | With God's love at the core, the center strives to touch hearts and minds by enacting Catholic social tradition through research at the community level, teaching and learning for justice and the common good.   |
| Citizens for Public Justice                            | <a href="http://cpj.ca/">cpj.ca/</a>   | Founded 50 years ago, Citizens for Public Justice's mission is to promote public justice in Canada through research, advocacy and public dialogue. The organization works to see that God's call for love, justice and creation are reflected in government policies and practices. Its website offers many Canadian-focused resources for raising awareness and taking action. |

| Name                                   | Website  | Description   |
|--|--|---|
| Development and Peace – Caritas Canada | <a href="http://devp.org/en/resource/catholic-social-teaching/preferential-option-for-the-poor/">devp.org/en/resource/catholic-social-teaching/preferential-option-for-the-poor/</a> | This organization provides a collection of quotes and examples of this principle on its website.  |
| Mission chez nous                      | <a href="http://missioncheznous.com/">missioncheznous.com/</a>   | Mission chez nous helps people from Indigenous and northern communities by raising awareness, bridging the gap between cultures and searching for funding to support communities with their immediate needs. Through countering prejudices and promoting dialogue, the organization works toward justice. |
| Society of Saint Vincent de Paul       | <a href="http://ssvp.ca/">ssvp.ca/</a>   | Society of Saint Vincent de Paul's mission is to serve Christ through the ministry of love and respect and help make society a more just place.   |

## Websites

| Name                           | Website  | Description   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Social Justice Resource Centre | <a href="http://socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/films/catholic-social-teaching/">socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/films/catholic-social-teaching/</a> | This website is an outstanding “go-to” source for a broad diversity of Catholic social teaching resources. The direct link highlights videos from many organizations.   |
| Social Spirituality            | <a href="http://social-spirituality.net/preferential-option-poor/">social-spirituality.net/preferential-option-poor/</a>                             | This website provides a brief introduction from Dr. Sandie Cornish to the preferential option for the poor. Her leadership in this field includes leading the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace. She is also a member of the papal Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. |

## Books

| Title, Author  | Publisher, Date, Link      | Synopsis   |
|--|----------------------------|--|
| <i>A Nun on the Bus: How All of Us Can Create Hope, Change, and Community</i><br>Sr. Simone Campbell.    | HarperOne, 2014.           | This book is about a group of Roman Catholic nuns who toured around trying to stop cuts to programs aimed at helping those less fortunate and vulnerable. The book is also available in DVD format.  |
| <i>Christ in the Margins</i><br>Robert Lentz, Edwina Gateley   | Orbis Books, 2009.         | <i>Christ in the Margins</i> is a lovely collection of icons, biographies and reflections on women and men throughout the ages who have followed Christ in caring for the poor and vulnerable. The selection is broad in scope, with very pointed and practical reflections for personal prayer and action. Images and icons are filled with rich symbolism to be meditated on and explored. |
| <i>Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching</i><br>Donal Dorr                     | Orbis Books, 1992.         | This book is an excellent introduction to understanding the connection between Catholic social teaching, and specifically, the option for the poor—so critical in the church’s understanding of itself from the time of Catholics’ Jewish ancestors.   |
| <i>Preferential Option for the Poor</i><br>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)          | USCCB Publishing, 1996.    | This is the fourth book in the <i>Faith Sharing</i> series. Readers are invited to gather in small groups and reflect on the theme of the preferential options for and with the poor.  |
| <i>Hunger for Hope: Prophetic Communities, Contemplation, and the Common Good</i><br>Sr. Simone Campbell | Orbis Books, 2020.         | This book is about spiritual practices in the pursuit of reaching out to those who are poor and vulnerable and treated with indifference. It is a journey towards justice that works for all.  |
| <i>The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day</i><br>Dorothy Day                              | Harper and Brothers, 1952. | This autobiographical book is about Dorothy Day, a woman involved in socialist groups who later converted to Catholicism and started <i>The Catholic Worker</i> newspaper.   |

| Title, Author  | Publisher, Date, Link  | Synopsis  |
|--|--|---|
| <i>The Preferential Option for the Poor beyond Theology</i><br>Daniel G. Groody, Gustavo Gutiérrez, editors. | University of Notre Dame Press, 2013.<br><a href="https://www.amazon.ca/Preferential-Option-Poor-beyond-Theology/dp/0268029865">amazon.ca/Preferential-Option-Poor-beyond-Theology/dp/0268029865</a> | <i>The Preferential Option for the Poor beyond Theology</i> draws on a diverse group of contributors to explore how disciplines as varied as law, economics, politics, the environment, science, liberal arts, film and education can help people understand putting a commitment to the option for the poor into practice. |
| <i>The Preferential Option for the Poor: Essays</i><br>Richard John Neuhaus                                  | William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.  |   |

## Films

| Title, Year, Director, Length  | Producer, Link  | Description  |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Queen of Katwe</i> . 2016.<br>Mira Nair, Director<br>02:04:00     | ESPN Films and Walt Disney Pictures<br>Available on Netflix and Prime Video   | <i>Queen of Katwe</i> depicts a young girl who discovers her extraordinary talent for chess. Through her love for chess, doors open for her to better her life and get out of the slums where she lives. |
| <i>Romero</i> . 1989.<br>John Duigan, Director<br>01:42:00           | Paulist Pictures<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEAUxgkb7Ac">youtube.com/watch?v=zEAUxgkb7Ac</a>   | "The life and work of Archbishop Oscar Romero who opposed, at great personal risk, the tyrannical repression in El Salvador."  |
| <i>Shoplifters</i> . 2018.<br>Hirokazu Koreeda, Director<br>02:01:00 | AOI Promotion, Fuji Television Network and GAGA<br><a href="https://www.netflix.ca">netflix.ca</a><br><a href="https://www.amazonprime.ca">amazonprime.ca</a> | <i>Shoplifters</i> is a story about a Japanese family forced into a life of theft to survive.  |

| Title, Year, Director, Length   | Producer, Link  | Description  |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Molokai: The Story of Father Damien</i> , 1999.<br>Paul Cox, Director<br>01:53:00    | Era Films, Jos Stelling Filmprodukties BV,<br>Kinopolis Film Productions<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFyLGtksONg">youtube.com/watch?v=QFyLGtksONg</a> | This film tells the story of “the nineteenth century priest who volunteered to go to the island of Molokai, to console and care for” people with leprosy.                                  |
| <i>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</i> . 2019.<br>Chiwetel Ejiofor, Director<br>01:53:00 | BBC Films, BFI Film Fund and Blue Sky Films<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCZt9QpDXuU">youtube.com/watch?v=fCZt9QpDXuU</a>                              | <i>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</i> is the true story of a boy who saved his town from starvation by making a windmill to supply water and electricity.<br><br>Also available as a book. |
| <i>The Saint of Fort Washington</i> . 1993.<br>Tim Hunter, Director<br>01:43:00.        | Carrie Productions Inc., David V. Picker Productions and Nessa Hyams<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4S2oLyy9Mg">youtube.com/watch?v=r4S2oLyy9Mg</a>     | This film tells the story of a veteran who becomes an unhoused person. He meets a man with mental challenges who is also unhoused, and together they navigate life on the street.          |

## Videos

| Title, Length   | Producer, Link   | Description  |
|---|--|--|
| <i>CST 101: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable</i> . 2016.<br>00:04:26                | United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3gxBjtOzNM">youtube.com/watch?v=c3gxBjtOzNM</a> | This short video highlights the centrality of option for the poor and vulnerable, a key principle of Catholic social teaching. |
| <i>Catholic Social Teaching: Preferential Option for the Poor</i> . 2013.<br>00:03:24 | Room3.com.au for Caritas Australia<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcL2iUfef9c&amp;t=16s">youtube.com/watch?v=EcL2iUfef9c&amp;t=16s</a>                    | This brief video provides an introduction to the concept of the preferential option for the poor..                             |



| Title, Length   | Producer, Link  | Description   |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Be Not Afraid: The Preferential Option for the Poor and Christian Faith.</i> 2018.<br>01:19:17 | The Aquinas Center<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDlXfSzWrk">youtube.com/watch?v=mDlXfSzWrk</a>                             | An 80-minute lecture presented by Dr. Roberto Goizueta, professor emeritus at Boston College. |
| <i>Option for the Poor.</i> 2016.   | The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKT5iLOU4ek">youtube.com/watch?v=OKT5iLOU4ek</a> | This one-minute video illustrates a young person's understanding of option for the poor.      |

## Prayers and Prayer Services

| Resource  | Link  | Description  |
|---|---|--|
| A Liturgy for The National Indigenous Day of Prayer | <a href="https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/nidp-liturgy.pdf">anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/nidp-liturgy.pdf</a>   | Councils can easily use this seven-page liturgical resource throughout the year, focusing on Indigenous peoples, the poor and vulnerable or reconciliation. The uses are many and varied.                              |
| A Voice for the Voiceless                           | <a href="https://chausa.org/docs/default-source/health-progress/prayer-service---a-voice-for-the-voiceless-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=o">chausa.org/docs/default-source/health-progress/prayer-service---a-voice-for-the-voiceless-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=o</a> | A one-page prayer service that focuses on praying for those who have no voice (the poor of God).   |
| Becoming the Voice of the Voiceless                 | <a href="https://canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Prayer-with-Stan-Swamy.pdf">canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Prayer-with-Stan-Swamy.pdf</a>   | This three-page prayer service can easily be used as-is or adapted for prayer at any council level to focus on praying for those who need members to be their voice.   |
| CHA Prayer Library                                  | <a href="https://chausa.org/prayers/cha-prayer-library">chausa.org/prayers/cha-prayer-library</a>   | Various prayers from the Canadian Health Association of the United States (CHA) that focus on health care for patients, families and providers. The CHA also offers webinars on emerging topics in health care ethics. |

| Resource  | Link  | Description  |
|---|---|--|
| Poverty Prayers   | <a href="https://socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/prayers/poverty/">socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/prayers/poverty/</a>   |  |
| Prayer for Vulnerable People  | <a href="https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2018/04/prayer-for-vulnerable-people.html">re-worship.blogspot.com/2018/04/prayer-for-vulnerable-people.html</a>   | A prayer from the Presbyterian Church in Canada.   |
| Prayers and Worship Resources for Refugee Sunday  | <a href="https://toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Prayers-and-Worship-Resources-for-Refugee-Sunday.pdf">toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Prayers-and-Worship-Resources-for-Refugee-Sunday.pdf</a> | This nine-page document has a wide variety of prayers for refugees submitted by various Christian denominations.   |
| <i>Prayers and Ceremony Resource at Vigils for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls</i>          | <a href="https://anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/MMIW-October-4-Vigil-Resource1.pdf">anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/MMIW-October-4-Vigil-Resource1.pdf</a>   | This 13-page resource from the Anglican Church of Canada offers options for praying with and for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. These prayers can be used in many ways, from selecting one prayer to a lengthy prayer service. |
| Prayer Service for Victims of Clergy Sexual Assault   | <a href="https://route2ocatholic.org/parishes/st-marys-church/sarp/prayer-service-for-victims/">route2ocatholic.org/parishes/st-marys-church/sarp/prayer-service-for-victims/</a>   | A prayer service offered by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse sexual assault response and prevention team for survivors of clergy sexual assault.   |
| Prayers for Immigrants and Refugees   | <a href="https://lirs.org/prayers-immigrants-refugees">lirs.org/prayers-immigrants-refugees</a>   | Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service offers various prayers honouring the journeys of migrants and refugees.   |
| Prayers for Indigenous People and Communities   | <a href="https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/d1264261/files/uploaded/Prayers_for_Indigenous.pdf">irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/d1264261/files/uploaded/Prayers_for_Indigenous.pdf</a>   | This six-page resource includes short prayers for Indigenous people and communities, youth, Indigenous neighbours, those who protect and serve the public, and for healing and reconciliation.   |
| Worship Resources for Domestic Violence Awareness Sunday  | <a href="https://covchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2014/06/AVA-DV-Sunday-Liturgies-Prayers-and-Readings.pdf">covchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2014/06/AVA-DV-Sunday-Liturgies-Prayers-and-Readings.pdf</a>   | A seven-page prayer service that focuses on violence within the home and prays for healing to allow victims to move forward.   |
| Worship Resources to help prepare a service to recognize family violence prevention in your faith community | <a href="https://gov.pe.ca/pac_on_fvp/images/worshipresourcesENG.pdf">gov.pe.ca/pac_on_fvp/images/worshipresourcesENG.pdf</a>   | This eight-page collection of prayers from various countries includes relevant scripture passages and prayers for hope, peace, the rights of people and remembering women.   |

## Papal Documents

| Title, Author, Year Published                                       | Paragraph, Link   | Description  |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Deus Caritas Est.</i><br>Pope Benedict XVI, 2005.                | Paragraph 20<br><a href="http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html">www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html</a>                        | “God is Love.” Paragraph 20 speaks of the responsibility of everyone to love God and love their neighbours.  |
| <i>Evangelium Vitae.</i><br>Pope John Paul II, 1995.                | Paragraphs 48 and 57<br><a href="http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html">www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html</a>                    | “The Gospel of Life.” Verse 48 and 57 of this encyclical refers to the commandment “Thou shall not kill” and the dignity and justice Catholics learn by listening to the word of God.  |
| <i>Gaudium &amp; Spes.</i><br>Vatican II, 1965.                     | Paragraph 69<br><a href="http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html">www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html</a>              | “The Church in the Modern World.” Paragraph 69 refers to Catholics’ responsibility to the poor and having a share of everything the earth provides.  |
| <i>Iustitia in Mundo.</i><br>World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971. | Paragraph 5   | “Justice in the World.” The synodal letter speaks about listening to the cries of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by an unjust system.   |
| <i>Laudato Si’.</i><br>Pope Francis, 2015.                          | Paragraphs 10, 30, 48, 52 and 158<br><a href="http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html">www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html</a> | “Praise Be.” In verse 10 of this encyclical, readers learn about St. Francis and the care for the vulnerable. He was also concerned for the poor and the outcast. Verse 30 is about the basic right of all people to safe drinking water. The crises the poor experience is also more pronounced by the global inequality, as seen in verse 48. Verse 52 shows how developing countries can be controlled by those that have more money. Verse 158 talks about fundamental human rights and the common good being essential. |

| Title, Author, Year Published                              | Paragraph, Link  | Description  |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Lumen Fidei</i> . Pope Francis, 2013.                   | Paragraph 57<br><a href="http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html">www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html</a> | “Light of Faith.” Pope Francis reminds Catholics of the sufferings in the world. By working with those less fortunate, Catholics may be able to help ease some of their pain.  |
| <i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> . Pope Paul VI, 1971.          | Paragraph 23<br><a href="http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html">www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html</a>         | “A Call to Action.” In this apostolic letter, Pope Paul VI speaks of ethics, cultural and religious discrimination, and the disregard for human rights.  |
| <i>Populorum Progressio</i> . Pope Paul VI, 1967.          | Paragraphs 23, 28, 48 and 49<br><a href="http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html">www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html</a>                   | “On the Development of Peoples.” Verse 23 of this encyclical is about ensuring all people have what they need. Verse 49 talks about the wealthy nations’ responsibility to the poorer nations. Readers learn about the dignity of the worker in verse 28. Human solidarity is the topic of verse 48. |
| <i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> . Pope John Paul II, 1987. | Paragraphs 39 and 42   | “On Special Concern.” The solidarity of recognizing everyone as persons is the theme of this verse in the 1987 encyclical.   |

## Catechism of the Catholic Church

| Catechism Verse | Quote   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1780            | “The dignity of the human person implies and requires <i>uprightness of moral conscience</i> . Conscience includes the perception of the principles of morality (synderesis); their application in the given circumstances by practical discernment of reasons and goods; and finally, judgment about concrete acts yet to be performed or already performed. The truth about the moral good, stated in the law of reason, is recognized practically and concretely by the <i>prudent judgment</i> of conscience. We call that man prudent who chooses in conformity with this judgment.”   |
| 1789            | “Some rules apply in every case:... – charity always proceeds by way of respect for one’s neighbour and his conscience: ‘Thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience... you sin against Christ.’ Therefore ‘it is right not to... do anything that makes your brother stumble.’”   |
| 2443            | “God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: ‘Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you’; ‘you received without pay, give without pay.’ It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones.”  |
| 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.”  |
| 2445            | <p>“Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use:</p> <p>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you.”</p> |
| 2446            | <p>“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’:</p> <p>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.”</p>  |



| Catechism Verse | Quote  |
|-----------------|--|
| 2447            | <p>“The <i>works of mercy</i> are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbour in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God... .”</p>  |
| 2448            | <p>“In its various forms – material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness and death – <i>human misery</i> is the obvious sign of the inherited condition of frailty and need for salvation in which man finds himself as a consequence of original sin. This misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Savior, who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a <i>preferential love</i> 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.”</p>  |
| 2449            | <p>“Beginning with the Old Testament, all kinds of juridical measures (the jubilee year of forgiveness of debts, prohibition of loans at interest and the keeping of collateral, the obligation to tithe, the daily payment of the day-labourer, the right to glean vines and fields) answer the exhortation of Deuteronomy: ‘For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, “You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in the land.”’ Jesus makes these words his own: ‘The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.’ In so doing he does not soften the vehemence of former oracles against ‘buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals...,’ but invites us to recognize his own presence in the poor who are his brethren:</p> <p>When her mother reproached her for caring for the poor and the sick at home, St. Rose of Lima said to her: ‘When we serve the poor and the sick, we serve Jesus. We must not fail to help our neighbours, because in them we serve Jesus.’”</p> |
| 2452            | <p>“The goods of creation are destined for the entire human race. The right to private property does not abolish the universal destination of goods.”</p>  |
| 2455            | <p>“The moral law forbids acts which, for commercial or totalitarian purposes, lead to the enslavement of human beings, or to their being bought, sold or exchanged like merchandise.”</p>   |
| 2459            | <p>“Man is himself the author, centre and goal of all economic and social life. The decisive point of the social question is that goods created by God for everyone should in fact reach everyone in accordance with justice and with the help of charity.”</p>  |
| 2463            | <p>“How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable (cf. Lk 17:19-31), in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: ‘As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me’ (Mt 25:45)?”</p>  |

## Resources from Conferences of Catholic Bishops

| Title, Date  | Link  | Description  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>“CCCB Pastoral Letter on the Elimination of Poverty.” 1996.</p> <p>Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.</p>                   | <a href="https://cccb.ca/media-release/cccb-pastoral-letter-on-the-elimination-of-poverty/">cccb.ca/media-release/cccb-pastoral-letter-on-the-elimination-of-poverty/</a>   | <p>In this pastoral letter, the bishops discussed how to reduce the debt of developing countries and more just commercial policies.</p>  |
| <p><i>Poverty in Canada: Ensuring Safe, Secure and Affordable Housing.</i> 2019.</p> <p>Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.</p> | <a href="https://cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Poverty_and_Affordable_Housing_EN.pdf">cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Poverty_and_Affordable_Housing_EN.pdf</a>   | <p>The Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace published this ten-page document that presents a brief overview of poverty in Canada. The paper focuses on the housing crisis and lists some Catholic organizations working to alleviate poverty in the country.</p> |
| <p>“The Struggle Against Poverty: A Sign of Hope in our World.” 1996.</p> <p>Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.</p>            | <a href="https://cccb.ca/letter/struggle-poverty-sign-hope-world/">cccb.ca/letter/struggle-poverty-sign-hope-world/</a>   | <p>This pastoral letter talks about the urgency of highlighting poverty, who it affects and ways to eradicate structural injustice.</p>  |
| <p>Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.</p>   | <a href="https://usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/option-for-the-poor-and-vulnerable">usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/option-for-the-poor-and-vulnerable</a> | <p>The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers wonderful scripture texts to help Catholics pray with this key principle. Some excellent background on this sacred tradition is also available.</p>   |

## Scripture Quotes

| Scripture Source  | Message   |
|---|---|
| Exodus 22:20-26   | You shall not oppress the poor or vulnerable. God will hear their cry.  |
| Leviticus 19:9-10   | A portion of the harvest is set aside for the poor and the stranger.  |
| Job 34:20-28  | The Lord hears the cry of the poor.   |
| Proverbs 31:8-9   | Speak out in defense of the poor.   |
| Sirach 4:1-10   | Do not delay in giving to those in need.  |
| Isaiah 25:4-5   | God is a refuge for the poor  |
| Isaiah 58:5-7   | True worship is to work for justice and care for the opposed and oppressed.   |
| Matthew 25:34-40  | What you do for the least among you, you do for Jesus.  |
| Luke 4:16-21  | Jesus proclaims His mission, to bring good news to the opposed and oppressed.   |
| Luke 6:20-30  | Blessed are the poor, theirs is the Kingdom of God.   |
| John 3:17-18  | How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's good and sees one in need and refuses to help?  |
| 95 Bible Verses about Preferential Option For The Poor And Vulnerable | <a href="https://openbible.info/topics/preferential_option_for_the_poor_and_vulnerable">openbible.info/topics/preferential_option_for_the_poor_and_vulnerable</a> |

## Educational Resources

| Title, Year, Author   | Link  | Description   |
|---|---|---|
| Caritas Australia   | <a href="https://caritas.org.au/learn/cst-toolkit/preferential-option-for-the-poor/">caritas.org.au/learn/cst-toolkit/preferential-option-for-the-poor/</a>   | Caritas Australia offers outstanding educational resources for children in kindergarten through secondary school.   |
| <p>“Catholic Social Teaching—Chapter 3—Mary and the Preferential Option for the Poor.”</p> <p>Fellowship of Catholic University Students</p>    | <a href="https://focusequip.org/catholic-social-teaching-chapter-3-mary-and-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor/">focusequip.org/catholic-social-teaching-chapter-3-mary-and-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor/</a> | This resource includes a 19-minute video, discussion guide and other print material.  |
| <p>“Deacon-structing the Preferential Option for the Poor – Part 1   Scripture.” 2019.</p> <p>Deacon Pedro</p> <p>Salt + Light Media</p>        | <a href="https://slmedia.org/blog/deacon-structing-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor-part-1-scripture">slmedia.org/blog/deacon-structing-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor-part-1-scripture</a>                   | In part one of a three-part “homiletic” series from Deacon Pedro, three prongs of Catholicism are used to address scripture and the Catholic social teaching principle of preferential option for the poor. |
| <p>“Deacon-structing the Preferential Option for the Poor – Part 2   Church Documents.” 2019.</p> <p>Deacon Pedro</p> <p>Salt + Light Media</p> | <a href="https://slmedia.org/blog/deacon-structing-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor-part-2-church-documents">slmedia.org/blog/deacon-structing-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor-part-2-church-documents</a>     | Part two of Deacon Pedro’s three-part series uses the three prongs of Catholicism to discuss church documents and address the preferential option for the poor.   |
| <p>“Deacon-structing the Preferential Option for the Poor – Part 3   Ethics.” 2019.</p> <p>Deacon Pedro</p> <p>Salt + Light Media</p>           | <a href="https://slmedia.org/blog/deacon-structing-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor-part-3-ethics">slmedia.org/blog/deacon-structing-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor-part-3-ethics</a>                         | In part three of Deacon Pedro’s series, the three prongs of Catholicism are used to discuss ethical implications and the preferential option for the poor.  |

| Title, Year, Author   | Link  | Description  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>“Five Things to Know About Preferential Option for the Poor: Principles of Catholic Social Teaching”</p> <p>St. John Institute</p> | <a href="https://saintjohninstitute.org/five-things-to-know-about-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor/">saintjohninstitute.org/five-things-to-know-about-the-preferential-option-for-the-poor/</a>                         | <p>This article highlights five key points of understanding associated with this principle: truth demands service, service needs truth, help needs to be complete, poverty is broader than material, and avoid dualistic thinking.</p> |
| <p><i>Option for the Poor and Vulnerable—Country Spotlight: The Philippines</i></p>   | <a href="https://crs.org/sites/default/files/usops-resources/option-for-poor-and-vulnerable_-_philippines-final.pdf">crs.org/sites/default/files/usops-resources/option-for-poor-and-vulnerable_-_philippines-final.pdf</a> | <p>This 10-page document of lesson plans for Grades 1-8 focuses on the key principle of preferential option for the poor.</p>  |



## Prophets Among Us

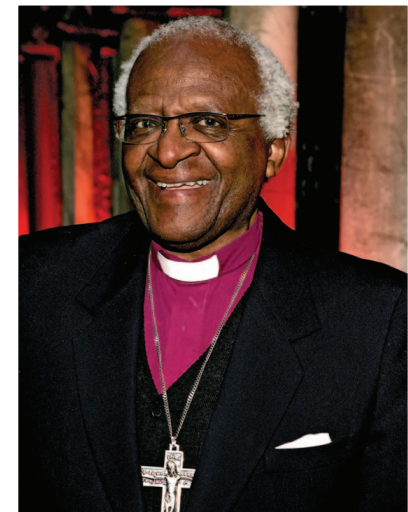


### St. Damien of Molokai

Birth: July 10, 1880

Fr. Damien De Veuster (St. Damien of Molokai) was a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. His ministry was to the people of Molokai, Hawaii., who had leprosy and lived in medical quarantine. He was the pastor and the doctor for the colony and helped better the conditions for the people living there. He helped establish leaders to build houses, schools, roads, hospitals and churches. He also improved the water and food supply and founded two orphanages and a reservoir, made coffins, dug graves and provided emotional support for the people he served.

After 11 years of serving the emotional needs of the people in the colony, Fr. Damien De Veuster contracted leprosy. He worked with those in the colony until his death in 1889.



### Most Rev. Desmond Tutu

Most Rev. Desmond Tutu (Cape Town) was an Anglican archbishop and theologian from South Africa, known for his work as an anti-apartheid and human rights activist. He was one of the most prominent opponents of South Africa's apartheid system of racial segregation. Witnessing the anger at apartheid, he warned the National Party government of the racial violence that would break out. Desmond Tutu stressed non-violent protests and was in support of foreign economic pressure to bring about the universal right of voting for all.



### **Dorothy Day, Servant of God**

“The mystery of the poor is this: That they are Jesus, and what you do for them you do for Him”  
(Dorothy Day).

Dorothy Day was not originally a Catholic. She was a person who thought the social order was unjust but did not identify with any political party. In November 1917, she went to prison for attending a protest about excluding women from the electorate. The women were not treated well in prison, and a hunger strike began, resulting in an order by the president to free the women.

With no affiliation with the Catholic church, the Catholic spiritual discipline fascinated Dorothy Day. While rooming with three young women who went to mass, she concluded, “worship, adoration, thanksgiving, supplication... were the noblest acts... in this life.”

Dorothy Day later met Peter Maurin, a former French Christian brother, who would change her life. Because of his suggestion, she started a newspaper to teach Catholic social teaching. She wanted to promote a peaceful transformation in society, and he thought Christians should care for everyone, not just their friends. He felt that every house should have a room called a “Christ Room,” and every parish should have a place to receive “ambassadors of God.” They rented an apartment and housed the downtrodden, fed them, and embraced them as members of the family who could stay as long as they wanted. The staff was not paid a salary but received food, board and occasionally pocket money. This was the start of the Catholic Worker Movement.

Dorothy Day believed very seriously the command of Jesus to Saint Peter: “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Mt 26:52). She wrote about poor people’s struggles with working conditions and the labour movement. She was hoping to get volunteers, clergy and even bishops involved, and she did. Some workers went to other cities to open their own worker houses. They would help people by offering hospitality houses and through works of mercy and feeding the workers on strike for better working wages.

To learn more about the legacy of Dorothy Day, visit [catholicworker.org/dorothyday/](https://catholicworker.org/dorothyday/).



## St. Francis of Assisi

Francis of Assisi was born to a wealthy family. During his capture and imprisonment in the war between Assisi and Perugia, he began to receive visions from God. When freed from prison, he heard the voice of Christ tell him to repair the Christian church and to live in poverty. He gave up his life of luxury and devoted his life to his faith and poverty.

The day Francis of Assisi met a person with leprosy, he saw it as a symbol of moral conscience and kissed him. He then spent time nursing patients, praying and looking for answers.

The church during this time was tremendously rich and his Christ-like poverty was a radical move. Francis of Assisi was not the only one who thought the spiritual ideals of the church were eroded. He wanted to restore the original values of Jesus Christ and had so many followers who listened to his sermons that they became known as the Franciscan Friars.

Clare of Assisi was a young woman who heard him preach and was drawn to the life of the Franciscans. Deeply influenced by Francis of Assisi, she started the Order of the Poor Clares.

On November 29, 1223, Pope Honorius III granted the Franciscans official approval. The rules stated that the friars would “observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of their own and in chastity. It also had rules about discipline, preaching and entering the order. Following this, Francis of Assisi withdrew from external affairs.

## St. Katherine Drexel

Katherine Drexel learned about caring for the poor at a young age and would distribute medicine, clothing, blankets and other necessities with her family. Later in life, she learned about the mistreatment and poverty of Indigenous peoples. Although wealthy, Katherine Drexel used her inheritance to create schools and churches for Black Americans and Indigenous peoples. In 1887, she met with Pope Leo XIII, and from this meeting, she became a nun with the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh. She then established the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and dedicated herself to supporting Indigenous peoples and Black Americans.

With the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Katherine Drexel established 49 elementary and 12 high schools. They also founded the first Catholic university in the United States for Black Americans.

St. Katherine Drexel is the patron saint of racial justice.





### **Sr. Marion Garneau**

Sr. Marion Garneau had a call to religious life when she was 16 years old. She moved from Edmonton, Alberta, to New Brunswick and joined the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception. She continued her education, earning degrees in science and education and worked as a teacher for 13 years in Saint John.

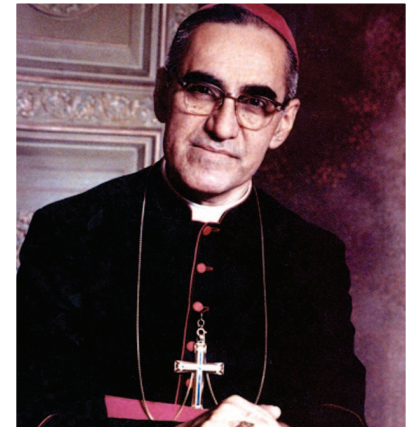
In 1972, Sr. Marion Garneau moved to Lima, Peru, when she was assigned to her community's mission there. She worked with those in extreme poverty seeking social justice and new ways to live the gospel. It was there that she learned the importance of lay leadership. Sr. Marion Garneau returned to Canada and, after nine years working in congregational leadership, went home to Edmonton to work in the inner city. A pastoral associate in the inner city, she made her life living among those she served. She worked in drop-in centres, shelters, prisons and on the street. Sr. Marion Garneau had close relationships with women on the margins who were often homeless, involved in the sex trade, survivors of sexual abuse or leaving prison.

### **St. Óscar Romero**

Most Rev. Óscar Romero (San Salvador) spoke out about social injustice and violence and the escalating conflict between the military government and left-wing rebels in El Salvador that ultimately led to the Salvadoran Civil War.

Shot while celebrating mass in 1980, the title “Servant of God” was given to Most Rev. Óscar Romero by Pope John Paul II in 1997. He was declared a martyr by Pope Francis in 2015 and then beatified. Pope Francis bestowed his beatification, stating the “ministry was distinguished by his attention to the most poor and marginalized.”

Óscar Romero was canonized on the October 14, 2018.







### Oskar Schindler, Righteous Gentile

Oskar Schindler was a German businessman and member of the Nazi Party. During the German occupation of Poland, he owned an enamelware factory whose workers were from a nearby Jewish ghetto. When they sent Jews to death camps, Oskar Schindler persuaded Nazi officials to send his Jewish workers to the Plaszów labour camp.

In 1944, while Jews at Plaszów were being sent to Auschwitz, Oskar Schindler bribed the officials to let him keep his workers and set up a factory in Czechoslovakia. By doing this, he saved 1,200 Jewish people, leaving him penniless.

Yad Vashem, who worked for Israel's official agency, declared Oskar Schindler a "Righteous Gentile" for remembering the Holocaust. He was laid to rest in Jerusalem at the Catholic cemetery on Mount Zion.

### St. Peter Claver

It is estimated that during Peter Claver's 40 years of ministry, he baptized 300,000 people. In addition, it is believed that in caring for the needs of people held in slavery, he heard the confessions of more than 5,000 enslaved people each year.

What Peter Claver displayed went beyond the practices and actions of Christian duty and demonstrated a love for the rights of all humans. Because of this, the Congress of the Republic of Colombia declared September 9<sup>th</sup> as the Human Rights National Day.

Peter Claver was canonized in 1888 by Pope Leo XIII and is the patron saint of slaves and interracial justice.







### **Raoul Wallenberg, Righteous Gentile**

In 1944 a group of prominent Swedish Jews suggested Raoul Wallenberg as a person who could travel to Budapest to set up a significant rescue action during the Holocaust. He had all the qualities needed to make this mission succeed, was familiar with Hungary and spoke many languages.

Using bribes and threats of extortion to get what he needed, diplomats saw how successful Raoul Wallenberg was and rallied behind him. He created a pass to help protect Jewish people that included the Swedish Crown coat of arms and the official stamps and signatures of Swedish officials.

Raoul Wallenberg created houses that flew the Swedish flag and were therefore designated Swedish territory. It was here that Jewish people found protection. It is estimated at least 15,000 Jews were saved from near-certain death.

---

### **Ruth Pfau, Medical Missionary**

Ruth Pfau, a nun and physician, was known as the “Mother Theresa of Pakistan.”

When Ruth Pfau first arrived in Pakistan from Germany, she could not believe the living conditions of the people there. What she saw made her make a life-changing decision.

Leprosy is a stigmatizing disease that can disfigure people and is also known as Hansen’s disease. However, it can be prevented and even cured now if it is caught early enough in the diagnosis.

Ruth Pfau first saw the infectious disease when a young Pathan came crawling on hands and feet into the dispensary. She devoted the rest of her life to ridding Pakistan of leprosy.





### **St. Teresa of Calcutta**

Teresa Bojaxhiu (Mother Teresa) joined the Blessed Virgin Mary Institute when she was 18 years of age. Her first assignment was to the Loreto Entally Community of Calcutta.

She longed to dispel Jesus' thirst for love and for souls and it became the focus of Teresa Bojaxhiu's life. From this focus, she would visit the poor, wash the sores of children, care for people lying sick in the street and nurse those dying of hunger and tuberculosis. Armed with her rosary, she looked for those who were unwanted, unloved and uncared for.

St. Teresa of Calcutta was canonized in 2016 by Pope Francis.

*For the poor, the vulnerable, and all those imperiled;  
for the contexts in which creatures flourish, and for the greater wholes of which they are a part;  
for the order in creatures, by which they glorify the Creator;  
for the good that creatures provide to other creatures;  
for the good of the order of creatures, by which the cosmos is sustained;  
for the emergent universe and the communion of subjects;  
for the solidarity that binds us to all creatures;  
for the promotion of justice for all creatures;  
for the sacred that lies in the innermost being in all creatures;  
for greater nonviolence and peace;  
for the interdependence that shines like a jewel within all creatures;  
for all of our relations above, below, and around us;  
and for the land and this plot of Earth by which creatures come to discover  
the cosmos at home.*

*(Daniel P. Scheid, *The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics* (Oxford University Press: 2016), 181–182.)*

---

Disclaimer: All links contained within this document are current as of June 2022.





## **The Catholic Women's League of Canada**

C-702 Scotland Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3M 1X5

Tel: (204) 927-2310  
Website: [cwl.ca](http://cwl.ca)  
E-mail: [info@cwl.ca](mailto:info@cwl.ca)

Inv. #633