

CST 101 OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

A discussion guide from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services

OPENING PRAYER: Together, pray, “Call Us Forth.”

WATCH: “CST 101: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable” on YouTube.

PRAY WITH SCRIPTURE:

Read this Scripture passage twice.

Invite participants to reflect silently after it is read the first time.

“Then the king will say[,] . . . ‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”
(Matthew 25:34-40)

SHARE:

Who are Jesus’ “least” brothers and sisters in your community and around the world today?

REFLECT ON TRADITION:

Read these passages aloud.

“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. . . . ‘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.’”

—[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), nos. 2444 and 2448, quoting *The Hundredth Year (Centisimus Annus)*, no. 57, and *Freedom of Conscience (Libertatis Conscientia)*, no. 68

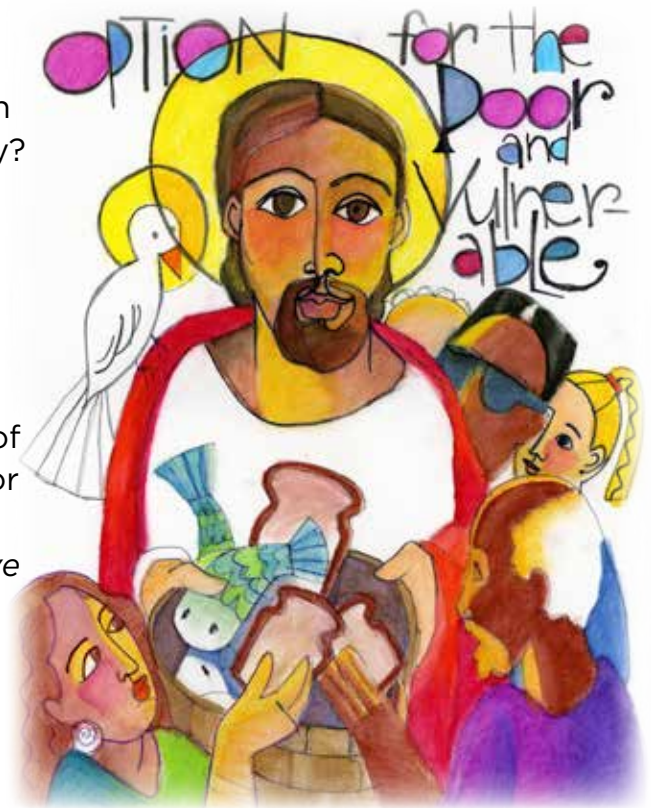


Photo courtesy of Brother Mickey McGrath, OSFS

“The poor not only suffer injustice, they also struggle against it! . . . [Solidarity] means that the lives of all take priority over the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means fighting against the structural causes of poverty and inequality; of the lack of work, land and housing; and of the denial of social and labor rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced dislocation, painful emigration, human trafficking, drugs, war, violence and all those realities that many of you suffer and that we are all called upon to transform . . . Love for the poor is at the center of the Gospel.”

—Pope Francis, [Address to the First World Meeting of Popular Movements](#)

DISCUSS:

- How does Jesus’ own poverty, and the witness of his encounter with the “other,” challenge you?
- When have you felt inspired by the work of people living in poverty to transform the causes of injustice? How can you join or support their efforts?

ACT:

Read the stories of Syrian refugees who have fled to Europe in search of a better life and learn about Catholic Relief Services’ response with the support of Catholics in the United States. How are you called to stand with those who are vulnerable?

SEND:

We ask for the intercession of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, that we might never fail to recognize and encounter Jesus in what she called his “most distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor.” Amen

Visit crs.org/CST-101 or wearesaltandlight.org/CST101 for all CST 101 resources, including the prayers, stories and videos linked to in these discussion guides.



This text may be reproduced in whole or in part without alteration for nonprofit educational use, provided such reprints are not sold and include this notice.

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Pope Francis, Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements © 2014, *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, Vatican City.

Excerpt from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition, © 2000, Libreria Editrice Vaticana—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved.