



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

29 September 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Preferential Option for the Poor 'pre-fə-'ren(t)-shəl 'äp-shən 'fôr 'thə 'pôr\

A phrase reminding us that justice and concern for the poor are urgently mandated throughout the Bible, in Israelite law and ancient prophecy as well as in the teachings of Jesus. The term was first used in the writings of the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) in 1979 and is embraced in papal pronouncements since.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-Preferential-Option>

CONTEXT

In teaching us charity, the gospel instructs us in the **preferential** respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society. —Pope Paul VI

Dialogue must not only favor the **preferential option** on behalf of the poor, the marginalized, and the excluded, but also respect them as having a leading role to play. —Pope Francis

WHY IT MATTERS

The church's love for the poor is inspired by the gospel Beatitudes, by the poverty of Jesus, and by his concern for the disadvantaged and oppressed. It's also mandated in the final judgment parable, when the only agenda item is: "What you did for the least of these, you did for me." Jesus is fundamentally seen in the faces of the poor and to ignore them is to risk missing him entirely.

From *Economic Justice for All* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops): The "**option for the poor**" 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 (88).

RELATED WORDS

Charity | Social Justice | Beatitudes

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What are the corporal works of mercy?

Listing the seven works is easy. Appreciating their breadth takes time. Six appear in the final judgment parable in Matthew: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, shelter the homeless, visit the sick. The seventh—bury the dead—is grounded in traditional Hebrew respect for the body. Feeding the hungry goes beyond the soup kitchen to economic reform. Satisfying thirst includes the politics of water rights and preserving seas and rivers. Clothing the naked involves respecting the dignity of the poor. Visiting the imprisoned recognizes many kinds of captivity: domestic violence, sexism, racism, educational impoverishment. Sheltering the homeless includes welcoming strangers and lobbying for affordable housing. Visiting the sick expands to creating access for the disabled and inviting the infirm into the greater community. Burying the dead can include pardoning those who have injured us. Mercy is the meeting ground of love and justice.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-Corporal-Works>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES (SEPTEMBER 29)

Bring them home

Where do migrants and refugees belong? It's a political question with a biblical answer: right here with the rest of us. Since 1914 the church has observed a day to assist the "family in migration and the challenges it faces," as Pope John Paul II phrased it. And he urged us to commit to overcoming "all racism, xenophobia, and exaggerated nationalism" that affects our relationship to displaced persons.

READINGS: Numbers 11:25-29; James 5:1-6; Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48 (137 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092924.cfm>). "Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, ... will surely not lose his reward."

FAITH IN ACTION

With respect for their religious beliefs and concern for the special burdens of women and children, offer a warm welcome to new neighbors far from home.