

Catholic Social Teaching Series for Lent 2019

For Week 3, the Catholic Social Teaching principle this is:

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

From our US Conference of Catholic Bishops website: “A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.”

More about Joe and Kayla:

As Joe continued in high school, he began to notice and wonder why people stood on the side of the road at intersections holding signs and asking for money. When he asked adults about this, he was given many different ways of looking at his question. Later as a college student, he befriended another student who helped out occasionally at a food pantry. Seeing people with unmet needs for survival inspired him, so he began to help out at the food pantry too. Doing so allowed him to experience needs of others which in turn helped him to better understand why many people struggle to make ends meet. He soon further discovered other local places where people could get a meal or clothes as well as a health care clinic specially set up to serve the poor and vulnerable. Seeing people in need on a more regular basis pushed him to learn more about why he did not have the same basic struggles to survive that many other people had.



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Kayla regularly saw people doing just about whatever they could to pay the rent, the utility bill and put food on the table. Some people and families had to make stressfully difficult choices about what bills to pay when all bills could not be paid on time. Single parents with little to no college education or technical trade skill seemed to struggle the most. Some of Kayla's friends, often those with little to no family support, were tempted and later started to sell drugs to pay the bills. What would Kayla do to avoid the same stresses and difficult choices as she grows into adulthood?

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Reflection about Joe and Kayla: How are Joe's and Kayla's situations similar, and how are they different? What would you do if you were Joe or Kayla? What would Jesus do?? What systems are in place that leave people to be poor and vulnerable?

Scripture passage:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.” (Luke 6:20)

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)

Reflection about the Scripture passage: Who are the hungry thirsty, strangers, and prisoners in Central NY in 2019?

Social Reflection: Do I as an individual and does my family and our parish and larger community give special attention to the needs of the poor and vulnerable ? Have we given food or drink? Have we offered some of our resources to those who do not have sufficient resources to live a respectable life? Have we visited people most in need and/or worked for changes to our ways that would respect the poor and vulnerable more fully? If not, we can start to do so.

And how is our socio-economic-political system doing to provide basic human needs to all who are known in Christian scripture and by our Church as children of God?

Church Tradition: “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.

Prayer: Lord, help us to show respect for the poor and vulnerable for they indeed are children of God just like we are! Help us also to hear the poor and vulnerable in our communities and to show them through our actions how much God loves them. Amen !

NEXT WEEK: The Catholic Social Teaching Principle we will discuss next week is called, Rights and Responsibilities. We will also continue to relate to the lives of Joe and Kayla as they grow into adults.

Each week this Lent, we are discussing here one of the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ website (usccb.org) says that Catholic Social Teaching is a “central and essential element of our faith. It’s roots are in the Hebrew prophets (like Isaiah and Jeremiah). Catholic Social Teaching is founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ.

If you have any questions or comments about any part of this series or if you wish to discuss any of these principles, please feel free to contact Debbie Krisher at the Parish Office or Dave Babcock (dave.babcock21@gmail.com). Scripture citations are from the New American translation of the bible.