

Respect Life Week: Youth Night Resources

Night Four: Preferential Option for the Poor

Opening Prayer: Open with [this prayer](#) from the USCCB.

Introduction:

Introduce the topic as well as the Church's stance on it. Pope Francis has called us to go out with the joy of the Gospel, to encounter people where they are. Like Mother Teresa, we are called to serve the poor by looking people in the eye, respecting their dignity, and engaging in works of mercy. Students will explore poverty. They will look at both extreme poverty, such as exists in developing parts of the world and practical poverty, as we have in the US in which even working families struggle to make ends meet and fall further and further behind. Finally, students will be introduced to the concept of development as a process improving not only a person's socio-economic situation, but also improving their emotional, intellectual, and spiritual opportunities as well.

Opening Discussion:

- Read [Matt 25:31-45](#). How is Jesus calling us to encounter the poor?
- What is poverty? Can you give an example?
- Why do we care so much about the poor? How is this tied to our faith? Ask students if they can name any other places in the bible where Christ calls us to serve those in need.
 - Examples: Parable of the Great Banquet, the Beatitudes, healing beggars, parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, etc.
- Whose job is it to end poverty? Whose job is it to help poor or hungry people?

Suggested Videos, Resources, and Discussion Questions:

- Watch [Catholic Social Teaching 101: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable](#), which introduces this tenant of CST.
 - How does Catholic Social Teaching ask us to treat the poor? What does that look like?
- Tour [Poverty USA](#) in this video.
 - What are some factors that can cause poverty?
 - What are some things that you consider essential for living? Were any of those things missing from what the family living on the poverty line was able to afford?
 - In what ways do poverty and hunger affect children—their ability to play, work, learn? In what ways do poverty and hunger affect families?
- Watch [Living on One](#) Project Episode 3: Hunger and Tortillas
 - Do you think you could live off of \$1 a day? What is the difference between extreme poverty (developing world) and practical poverty (in the US)?
- Watch Mary's Meals: [Fatima's Story](#)
 - What would it be like to have to care for your family like Fatima has had to care for hers?
 - How does poverty and hunger affect the way children grow up?
 - What is our personal and cultural responsibility toward the poor and poverty?

Activity:

- Have students try budgeting at the poverty line with [Interactive Poverty Experience](#), either on individual computers or iPads or as a group.
 - Before playing, ask them to discuss what they think will be challenging about the game. What will be easy?
 - If playing as a group, encourage students to discuss what decisions they ought to make. How will they decide what to buy?
 - Lead a conversation afterwards about how they struggled or succeeded.
 - What did they notice? Did you make it through the month?
 - What were the most important choices you had to make in the game? Why did you choose that?
 - What surprised you about this game?

Discussion:

- How can we serve the poor? Why do we?
- Why is it important to recognize and uphold the dignity of the poor?
- Who are some saints who have done this? Ask students if anyone in their lives is an example of service to the poor.

Further Action:

- Use the [Poverty USA Program](#) resources to challenge your class to do something about poverty and hunger in your community. Find other service opportunities on the Respect Life Office [website](#)!

Closing Prayer:

- Consider reflecting with a song like [“Brother”](#) or [“Lord I Need You”](#)
- Close in prayer:

Make us worthy, Lord,
to serve those people throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger.
Give them through our hands, this day, their daily bread,
and by our understanding love, give them peace and Joy.
Amen