

MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT OF YOUR PEACE

Option for the poor and vulnerable

By Kelly Donnelly
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How are the most vulnerable members of society faring?

This question, though simple in concept, begins to illuminate the complex reality of the poor and vulnerable, as well as the reality of what we, as Catholics, are called to do.

It is easy, especially from a place of comfort, to compare ourselves to those who have more, to convince ourselves that we give and do "enough" for the needy in our community and in our world. Am I willing to truly open my eyes to the

poverty that so many face? It is easier to avert my eyes from the poverty, and to instead focus on my own desires. Yet, we know that we are called to love the poor and vulnerable as Christ.

In The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis writes, "God's word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us: 'As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me' (Mt 25:40). The way we treat others has a transcendent dimension: 'The measure you give will be the measure you get' (Mt 7:2). It corresponds to the mercy which God has shown us: 'Be merciful, just

Lord,
make me an instrument
of your peace;
where there is hatred,
let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness,
joy.
- St. Francis of Assisi

as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you . . . For the measure you give will be the measure you get back' (Lk 6:36-38). What these passages make clear is the absolute priority of 'going forth from ourselves toward our brothers and sisters' as one of the two great commandments which ground every moral norm and as the clearest sign for discerning spiritual growth in response to God's completely free gift."

In the Church's rich history, we have countless examples of individuals who lived out this call to serve

the least among us. Among these, one of the most stirring contemporary examples is Saint Mother Teresa. Her sacrifices and devotion to the poorest of the poor serve as a powerful testament.

After being approached by a woman who wanted to join Mother Teresa in her ministry in Calcutta, St. Mother Teresa famously said, "Find your own Calcutta." This short phrase is a reminder for each one of us that we have simple opportunities every day to serve the poor and vulnerable. Who are the poor? The poor in my workplace, neighborhood, community, state, country, world?

This concern for the poor must be approached in a multi-faceted manner. So often we think of caring for the poor and vulnerable in terms of donating money and material goods to organizations serving those in need. This is a necessary and important component of caring for the poor and vulnerable of our society, yet it is incomplete in and of itself.

If we are truly creating an "option" for the poor and vulnerable, we have a duty to look at more than alleviating the immediate suffering. How do my economic choices, my voting habits,

and my interpersonal relationships impact the poor and vulnerable?

This Lent, let us embrace the many opportunities we are given each day to grow in our own humanity by caring for the poor and vulnerable, recognizing and affirming their dignity

This season of Lent is an opportune time to truly assess how my life impacts the lives of the poorest, most vulnerable members of society.

"The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation." (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Economic Justice for All, no. 86) If the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of our nation, then we need to begin by being more mindful of the poor and vulnerable. Rather than glorifying materialism, celebrities, or our own comforts, we are called to focus on the forgotten.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of the Philippines said, "I grow in my own humanity when I encounter the person of the poor."

This Lent, let us be embrace the many opportunities we are given each day to grow in our own humanity by caring for the poor and vulnerable, recognizing and affirming their dignity.

GO GREEN!

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Interested candidates should send their letter of interest along with a Curriculum Vitae to:

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