



In Catholic social teaching, this instinct is reflected in a principle called “the preferential option for the poor”. This means that, although all people are created equal in dignity and have an equal claim on our care and attention, we are called to give particular care and attention to those who are weakest or suffering the most. If we have the choice between serving those who are relatively well off, or serving those who badly need our help, then we should prefer serving those who need our help the most. The principle is rooted in Jesus’ own choices: he came to save everyone, but he chose to spend most of his time with people who were sick, outcast and poor.

CHILDREN OF THE SAME FATHER

Last summer, protests erupted in the United States over the death of an unarmed black man, George Floyd. The Black Lives Matter movement continues to draw attention to the death and discrimination faced by black people, indigenous people and people of colour in the United States, as well as the racism faced by people in the UK. The response of some Catholics has been to point out the dignity of all people as created in God’s image, and to say that “All Lives Matter”. In one sense this is right: everyone is created with equal and inalienable dignity. But the principle of the “preferential option for the poor” demands that we give our particular attention and efforts to those whose dignity is most denied and assaulted. Catholics are called to recognise that racism is “a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father” (*Brothers and Sisters To Us*, US Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979). We are called to give special attention and care to people who experience racism, and our effort and energy to ending it.

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**Your merciful love, O God,
we have received in the midst of your temple.
Your praise, O God, like your name,
reaches the ends of the earth;
your right hand is filled with saving justice.**

FIRST READING Ezekiel 2:2-5

PSALM Psalm 122

**RESPONSE Our eyes are on the Lord
till he show us his mercy.**

1. To you have I lifted up my eyes,
you who dwell in the heavens:
my eyes, like the eyes of slaves
on the hand of their lords. **R.**
2. Like the eyes of a servant
on the hand of his mistress,
so our eyes are on the Lord our God
till he show us his mercy. **R.**

3. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.
We are filled with contempt.
Indeed all too full is our soul
with the scorn of the rich,
with the proud man’s disdain. **R.**

SECOND READING 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!
The Lord has sent me to bring the good news
to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives.
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Mark 6:1-6

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Come to me, all who labour and are burdened,
and I will refresh you, says the Lord.**

Next Sunday’s Readings:

Amos 7:12-15
Ephesians 1:3-14
Mark 6:7-13

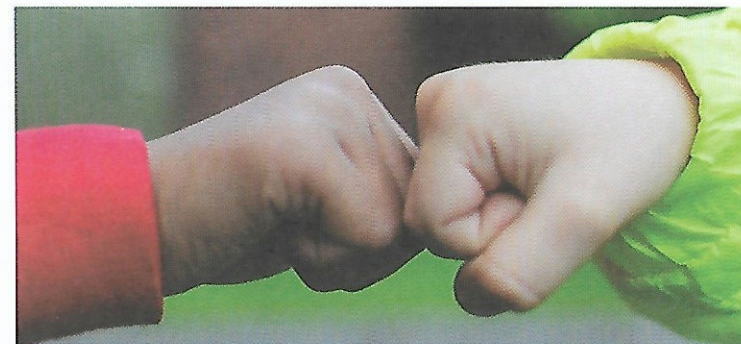


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SUNDAY BULLETIN

THINKING FAITH

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR



Today’s second reading includes a fascinating detail. In the verses leading up to today’s passage, St Paul is writing to the Corinthians about an experience of being “caught up... into the third heaven”. Scholars aren’t sure what he means by this, or by the next detail, that God gave him a “thorn in the flesh”, to stop him getting too proud about receiving these revelations. Many think that this was some kind of sickness or physical weakness, and we see that Paul asks God three times to cure him. But rather than curing Paul, God chooses to leave him with this mysterious “thorn in the flesh” to remind him that, even though Paul is weak, God’s grace is enough. The God whose victory is revealed in Jesus’ humiliation and death on the cross is also revealed in our weakness. Elsewhere, St Paul writes that “God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

Perhaps it’s not surprising, then, that Christians throughout history have sometimes been regarded as foolish themselves, for having a view of the world that has seemed upside down to their contemporaries. In the Roman world, the weak were at the bottom of the social pile: slaves, children and women did not have rights or a voice. Very early on, it was obvious Christians were different: rather than just leaving unwanted babies to die, as the Romans did, early Christian writers forbade abortion and infanticide. Often, of course, Christians have not been different enough from the societies in which they have lived, and they have sided with the forces of wealth and power, imitating and even shaping a less loving set of beliefs about whose lives are valuable and whose are not. But the instinct that God particularly speaks to us through people who are weak, poor and rejected remains, even if it is only the prophets of each age who remind us of it.

Building a civilisation of love



Dr Theodora Hawksley, a theologian working at the London Jesuit Centre, reflects on one of the fundamental principles of the Church’s social teaching.

4 JULY 2021

14TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II