

# The CIRCLE of LIFE JOURNEY

Session 3  
Respect for the Poor  
& "the Least  
Among Us"

As we continue our  
CIRCLE OF LIFE JOURNEY . . .



We now open our hearts to



We now open our hearts to

"the Least Among Us"



and ask . . .

## How Should We Think About the Poor?



The POOR  
in our midst

The POOR  
in our nation



The POOR  
of our GLOBE

. . . And in our hearts  
we find the answer:

"Each one of them  
is Jesus  
in disguise."

- Mother Teresa



*For the king will say  
to those on his right:*

"Come, you who are  
blessed by my Father.

Inherit the kingdom  
prepared for you  
from the foundation  
of the world. . ."

Matthew 25



"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."



"Amen,  
I say to you,  
whatever you did  
for one of  
these least,  
you did for me."

Matthew 25



The Poor in  
our Midst



As followers of Christ,  
we are challenged to make  
a fundamental  
"option for the poor"

*Economic Justice for All*

to speak for the voiceless,  
to defend the defenseless,  
to assess life styles, policies,  
and social institutions . . .

in terms of their  
impact on the poor.

*How should we think  
about the poor  
in our midst?*



1. Always start with  
the "poor" poor  
– the ones who rarely if ever  
are first on the agenda.



*How should we think about the poor?*

2. The poor are often invisible . . .  
It takes initiative and creativity to reach the poor.



*How should we think about the poor?*

3. If you start to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor, you are finished. . .

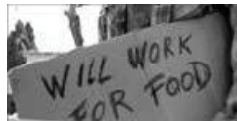


If you're going to err, err on the side of largess.

*How should we think about the poor?*

4. If you are going to be generous to the poor, you are sometimes going to get taken.

Learn to write off your losses.



*How should we think about the poor?*

5. Helping the poor is not always a pleasant experience.

When you help the poor, you always receive more than you give



-but it may not seem that way at the time.

*How should we think about the poor?*

6. Direct assistance is good.



Tackling the causes is better.

*How should we think about the poor?*

7. Put yourself in the shoes of the poor whose lives are stressed.



Don't judge their "laziness" too quickly.

How should we think about the poor?

8. The poor also help each other every day in poor communities,



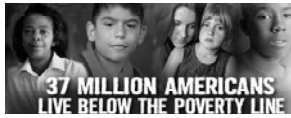
– which is one of the reasons why God loves the poor.

If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one.

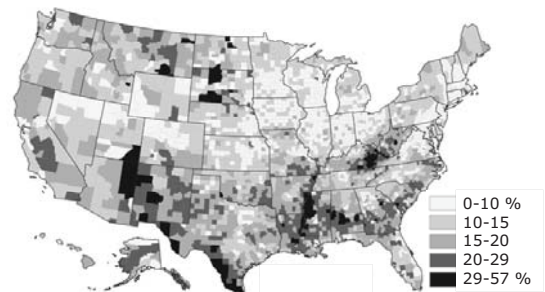
- Mother Teresa



## The Poor in our Nation



## UNITED STATES POVERTY



% individuals below poverty level by county (in 2000)

If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them,

“Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well ” . . . .



. . . but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?

Faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2:14-17

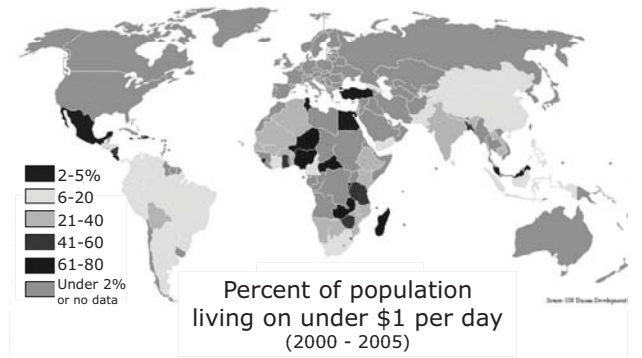




# The Poor of our Globe



# GLOBAL POVERTY



“You and I, we are the Church, no?  
We have to share  
with our people . . .”



This, rather,  
is the fasting  
that I wish . . .

Isaiah 59:6-7

Sharing your bread  
with the hungry,



Sheltering  
the oppressed  
and the homeless;



Clothing the naked  
when you see them,



and not  
turning your  
back on  
your own.



“The Least Among Us”. . .



also includes those suffering  
from devastating diseases  
worldwide.



Hence we are called to  
a caring response to  
one of the greatest  
global challenges of  
our time:



the growing crisis of  
HIV/AIDS . . .



HIV/AIDS has  
“a preferential option  
for  
the Poor.”

Wherever HIV enters  
a population,  
it always moves  
to those peoples  
who are already  
experiencing



poverty, oppression,  
disease and  
marginalization . . . .

"Ours is a highly unequal and unjust world and nowhere is this more evident than in relation to HIV/AIDS."

*Ethics and AIDS*



6,300 people in sub-Saharan Africa die from AIDS each day

As we face this threat to our world, the CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE

provides both a solid foundation and a powerful challenge



to live as faithful disciples and involved citizens.

If one among us is living with HIV/AIDS, we are all living with HIV/AIDS . . .

As the Church, the People of God, we are called to give witness to Christ



through reaching out to our brothers and sisters who are living with HIV/AIDS . . .

. . . whether in our own communities



or on the other side of the world.



In the "Least Among Us" we see God . . .

"Jesus made it very clear. Whatever you do to the least of my brethren,

you do it to me . . . ."



" . . . Give a  
glass of water,  
you give it  
to me.

Receive  
a little child,  
you receive  
me."

- Mother Teresa



"I see God  
in every human being.



When I wash  
the leper's wounds,  
I feel I am nursing  
the Lord himself.

Is it not a beautiful  
experience?"

- Mother Teresa

"Only in heaven  
will we see how much  
we owe to the poor  
for helping us  
to love God better  
because of them."



- Mother Teresa

A Prayer of Thanksgiving  
for the  
"Least Among Us"

O God, you love the poor  
and the dispossessed.

When you sent your  
beloved Son among us . . .

. . . Jesus came not  
into the world  
of the powerful,  
but into the  
impoverished streets  
and hearts  
of his time . . .

This day your Spirit  
moves among us  
once again.

We feel the power  
of Christ in  
our midst.

We hear his call to us  
to feed the poor,  
to clothe the naked,  
to love the unloved.

And our selfishness  
and sin  
humbles us . . . .

This day we offer you  
our repentant  
prayer of thanks,  
Knowing that  
the light of Christ  
in our midst is leading us  
to a new day of  
Gospel compassion . . .

. . . wherein our heart  
can be made  
to overflow in love  
for those  
who hunger  
for bread,  
love,  
and for dignity.

*Amen*

Stained glass windows  
from the Cathedral Church  
of St. James  
Diocese of Toronto,  
Anglican Church of Canada

<http://www.stjamescathedral.on.ca/stainedglass.asp>

*For more information:*

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Campaign for Human Development Poverty USA  
<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/>

Catholic Relief Services  
<http://www.crs.org/>

Community Food Bank Tucson  
<http://www.communityfoodbank.com/>

National Catholic AIDS Network  
<http://www.ncan.org/>

UNAIDS  
<http://www.unaids.org/en/>

Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network  
<http://www.tihan.org/>

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