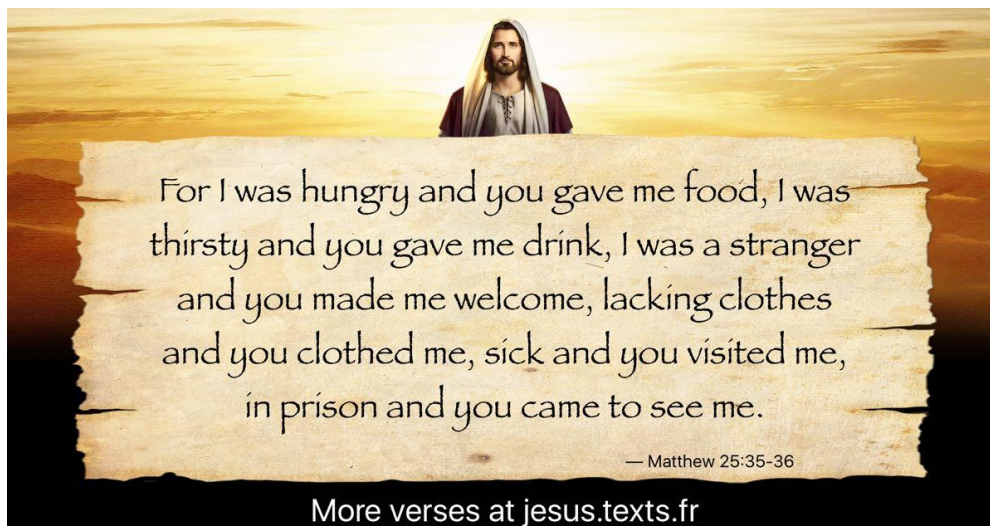


**“WHATEVER YOU DID FOR THE LEAST OF MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, YOU DID FOR ME”**

## **PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE**



### **WHAT DOES ‘PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE’ MEAN?**

While the term ‘preferential option for the poor’ is a modern turn of phrase, the idea of a **special form of charity** that focuses on the poor, the outcasts of society, widows and orphans can be found in various books of the Old Testament. Its fulfillment, however, is to be found in the New Testament, namely, in the public ministry of Jesus.

In St. Luke’s Gospel [Luke 4: 14 – 19] we read that at the beginning of his ministry Jesus went to the synagogue on the sabbath day. Given a scroll, Jesus read a passage from the prophet Isaiah, verses 18 and 19:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has appointed me”  
to bring glad tidings to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

More than two thousand years later, the Church clarified in its Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church [SDC 2004] what ‘preferential option for the poor and vulnerable means:

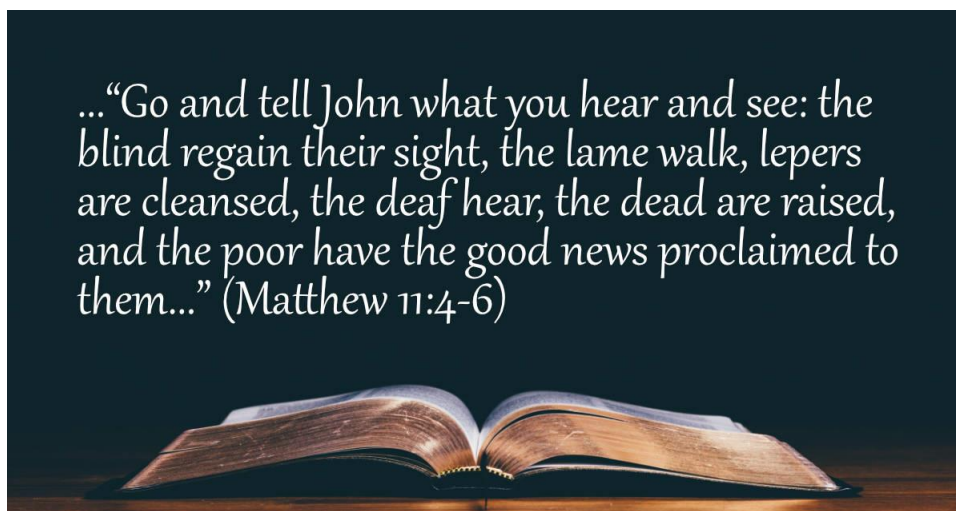
“The Church’s love for the poor is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, by the poverty of Jesus and by his attention to the poor. This love concerns material poverty and also numerous forms of cultural and religious poverty. [#184]

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US IN RESPECT OF OUR DAILY LIVES AND OUR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES?

The teaching of the Church in the SDC is very clear: **we must strive to imitate the life of Christ by working towards a society that is characterised by structures of social justice.** That is, like Jesus, we must turn our attention towards the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without healthcare or decent education, towards the plight of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers **‘and, above all, those without hope for a better future’.**

## WHAT WAS SPECIAL ABOUT JESUS’S ATTENTION TOWARDS THE POOR AND THE NEEDY?

From the Gospels we know that not only did Jesus go beyond alleviating material poverty, but that he paid attention to the socio-economic and spiritual needs of the poor at the same time. Most importantly, however, whatever miracle of healing and raising from the dead that he worked, **Jesus proclaimed the Good News of our salvation in every such act of healing!**



Hence, Jesus’s special attention towards the poor was part and parcel of God’s plan of salvation for us.

Hence, our imitation of the life of Christ and special attention towards the poor and vulnerable must come from a place of love of God and neighbour and in service of the poor.

Hence, when we vote our focus should be on the rights of children and the aged, on how vulnerable migrants and refugees are treated; on the protection and promotion of the human rights of physically or mentally challenged fellow citizens; on issues of decent wages for persons employed as domestic workers or grounds men, to mention some issues that affect the vulnerable the most.

Follow the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWuoECvwjUA> to learn more about preferential option for the poor and vulnerable.