



# Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

He Whakaaro Nui mō te  
Hunga Rawakore



PARISH RESOURCE



Easy as CST: Unlocking the Church's Potential  
Māmā noa, pēnei i te CST: Te Tuku i ngā Pūmanawa o te Hāhi kia Whai Hua





## Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

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## Protecting Those in Need

Giving preferential option for the poor means we should feel the need to think first of the needs of those who are most vulnerable.

The poor and vulnerable have a special place in the kingdom of God. Putting into practice the preferential option for the poor means considering the impact of our own decision and of public policy on the most vulnerable members of society.

Christ taught that when we feed the hungry, offer hospitality to the stranger, clothe the naked, look after the sick and visit those imprisoned, we are looking after Him.

### Searching the Scriptures...

Social Justice teaching is founded on firm scriptural foundations.

- 'Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.' **Isaiah 1:16-17**
- 'Then the righteous will answer him 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' Then the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these members of my family, you did it to me.'" **Matthew 25:37-40**
- 'You shall love the outcast as yourself, for you were once outcasts in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.' **Leviticus 19:34**

...and in light of Catholic Social Teaching.



"Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

**Pope Francis, July 26, 2013**







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“Poor and vulnerable people have a special place in Catholic social teaching... Our tradition calls us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our sisters and brothers, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response.”

*Cardinal Thomas Williams, We are Our Brother's Keeper, 1991*

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“As St. Ambrose put it: “You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich.”

*Populorum Progressio, #23, 1967*

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## Great Examples - The Benefit Impact

New Zealand has a complex social welfare system, and beneficiaries who receive government assistance often feel stigmatised and excluded.

With the economic fallout following COVID-19, there are more families falling into poverty and people losing their jobs because of the pandemic. In the face of a global crisis, the New Zealand Government were quick to think first of the needs of the most vulnerable. The challenge now is whether the needs of the most vulnerable will continue to be addressed.

Community groups and beneficiaries report that many people need advocacy to ensure they receive all the support and they need from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) when applying for benefits or hardship assistance.

Benefit Impact events provide beneficiaries with a safe and welcoming atmosphere in which to talk about their benefit entitlements and receive assistance from trained volunteer advocates.



### 2014 - Mangere, Auckland

In August 2014, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand (CANZ) staff members were among a number of representatives of Catholic and other community organisations supporting beneficiaries at the Mangere Benefit Impact. More than 500 people were supported with their benefits at this event. The Mangere Benefit Impact was organised by Auckland Action Against Poverty.



### 2016 - Upper Hutt

In May 2016, CANZ partnered with the Archdiocese of Wellington, Catholic Social Services and Hutt Valley BEST (Benefit Education Service Trust) to run the first Archdiocesan Benefit Impact in Wellington. Held at St Joseph's Parish in Upper Hutt, people from a wide range of backgrounds were welcomed. One third of those who attended were unable to meet the basic living expenses because of costs related to their illness or disability, and were assisted to obtain disability allowance.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/416688/current-benefits-not-sufficient-to-survive-on-social-welfare-groups-say>



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### 2017 – Naenae, Lower Hutt

The second Wellington Archdiocesan Benefit Impact was hosted at St Bernadette’s Church in Naenae, Lower Hutt, part of the parish of Te Awakairangi. As in the previous year, the largest issue requiring assistance was support with disability allowance, with the second largest number of cases involving requests for support in applying for a housing assessment or transfer due to poor living conditions. As a result of assistance, some beneficiaries had increases of between \$10 and \$170 a week, making a substantial difference to their incomes. The Naenae Benefit impact was held in the week leading up to Pope Francis’ first World Day of the Poor, when he invited us all to acts of encounter and solidarity with people in need.



### 2019 – Waikanae, Kapiti Coast

Last year the Our Lady of Kāpiti Parish, Wellington Catholic Social Services and Hutt Valley BEST teamed up to host another Archdiocesan Benefit Impact at Our Lady of Fatima church in Waikanae. Members of the parish social justice group had been wanting to host this after their experience as advocates at previous Benefit Impacts. The Kāpiti Coast has a high population of retirees and the parish recognised that there was a need for a Benefit Impact to happen in their area. Since this event happened, this church building is no longer in use and the parish community have now moved to their newly built church. The Our Lady of Fatima church building had served as a gathering place for the parish for many years, and one of its last events before its closure was serving the wider community.





## Living out CST - Ideas for putting faith into action

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

- How do the advocates in the case studies respect the dignity of those in need?
- Who are the groups or individuals in our community who demonstrate a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable? How do they do this?
- Why do you think 'poor and vulnerable people have a special place in Catholic social teaching'?
- What can each of us do to ensure that 'those with the greatest needs' receive our greatest response?

Individual	Family	Community
Read the case study and reflect on the questions above.	Listen to the picture book story <i>Those Shoes</i> and talk together about how Jeremy puts the needs of Antonio before his own.	Hold a food drive in your community or parish and offer non-perishable items to the local food bank to help a family get the food they need.
Pray for those around the world who don't have access to all their basic needs.	Watch this great CRS <a href="#">video</a> as a family.	Choose a prayer from the SJW2020 resources and use it in your parish liturgy – during Prayer of the Faithful or at the end of Communion.
Instead of buying lunch, pack yourself a meal and offer another meal to someone in need.	Allow younger members of your family to offer their opinions or ideas for things like deciding what to have for dinner.	Watch the 2014 Caritas case study demonstrating the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable called <a href="#">Protecting Those in Need</a> .
Search online for great examples or causes where the poorest and most vulnerable are being supported. Find ways to support these to make a difference in our world.	Reflect on Isaiah 1:17 and think on how you can act practically to help those who are in the most need in your area.	Consider hosting a Benefit Impact in your own parish!





## Closing Prayers

E te Atua atawhai rawa - Gracious God, we thank you for the human whānau filled with all peoples here on the earth. We pray that you will continue to enrich our lives so that we can help work for those who are in need, those who are poor and those who are vulnerable.

**Leader: E te Ariki... All: whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou.**

E te Atua atawhai rawa - Gracious God, we work in your name to be reminded to hear one another's burdens and act as advocates for those whose voices are not heard.

**Leader: E te Ariki... All: whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou.**

E te Atua atawhai rawa - Gracious God, continue to bless and strengthen each effort we make as individuals when we seek to be better as we understand how we can love our neighbours without prejudice.

**Leader: E te Ariki... All: whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou.**

Open our ears  
to hear you in the cries of those who are exploited,  
those considered to be nothing,  
those abandoned and dismissed.  
Open our mouths to defend you in all places:  
in public places, at our work,  
in our schools and universities,  
in our workplaces and our streets,  
as well as in our private deeds.  
Remind us that what we do to the least ones,  
we do to you.

Amen.

*Claude Mostowik msc, Australia*