



THE POOR AND I

This Resource focuses on Justice and Service – Te Tika me te Whakapa Tangata

HOLY CROSS
SEMINARY



Song: "The Servant Song"

Brother, sister let me serve you.
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.
We are pilgrims on a journey.
We are brothers on the road.
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.
I will weep when you are weeping.
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through.

Prayer

We ask forgiveness for the widening gulf between rich and poor.
For the use of money as a measure of all things,
for the continuing disparities between those that have so much
and those who have so little.
And for the suffering of those people who are excluded
from the table of abundance.
Fill us with a living faith that we may continually grow
in your way of love,
Instruments of personal and social reconciliation.
And that those in poverty are welcomed to the table where
compassion and justice meet.

Scripture – James 2:14-20

Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat hearty," and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all--it is dead and useless. But someone may well argue, "You say the way to God is by faith alone, plus nothing; well, I say that good works are important too, for without good works you can't prove whether you have faith or not; but anyone can see that I have faith by the way I act. Are there still some among you who hold that "only believing" is enough? Believing in one God? Well, remember that the demons believe this too--so strongly that they tremble in terror! Fool! When will you ever learn that "believing" is useless without doing what God wants you to? Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith.

Games

Curly, Moe, and Larry

Groups of 20-30 sit or stand in a circle. One person is in the middle and points to someone in the circle and says either “Curly,” “Mo,” or “Larry”. The person pointed to must respond with a name before the person in the middle can count out loud to ten. The name the person shouts depends on the name the person in the middle says:

“Curly”: say the name of the person on your right.

“Moe”: say your own name.

“Larry”: say the name of the person on your left.

If they succeed, the person in the middle stays and repeats the process with someone else in the circle. If they fail, they change places with the person in the middle.

After a while, you may want to add a second person to the middle. After five minutes, rotate half of each group to another group, or combine two groups and put a second person in the middle.

Purpose: Remembering names of people in the group.

Another option is Communication Challenge

Give everyone a number. Participant have to arrange themselves in numerical order by communicating with each other without speaking or holding up fingers. They make up their own sub-language or sign-language which can be pretty amusing. For Round Two, have participant arrange themselves in order of birth or in calendar months (It’s your choice whether or not to allow the participant to speak. We generally don’t as this makes it harder and more fun!)

As our topic today is about the poor, we are going to play a game which is related to poor people. To play this game, arrange participants into groups of five or six. Everyone in the same group will sit in a circle and each person will be given a piece of paper and a pen each. On the paper, there is a question: **“What do you think poor people need from us?”**



People will try to answer this question themselves within one minute. After one minute, they are asked to stop writing. People may have different ideas, yet their pieces of paper may be like the one above.

Now is time for everyone in the group to work together. People will put their papers on the floor, where they have been sitting and playing, and they will compare their ideas with other people in their group. Each group is given another piece of paper and now they will write down all the common ideas of all the members in the group. If everyone in the group has the word “love” in their pieces of paper, then “love” is written down in the new paper which they have just been given. The word cannot be listed if one person in the group does not have it in his or her piece of paper. After each group has made a list of the common words of all the members in their own group, they will compare their list with other groups. The group which has the longest list is the winner of the game.

The purpose of this game is to help young people to think about poor people. It encourages them to think of what they can do to help those who are not as lucky as themselves and those who are in need. By playing this game, young people may realise that helping the poor is not the duty of a certain person but everyone, including themselves, can and shall do something to help them, no matter whether the things they do are great or little.

Activity

The leader will share a touching story of a boy and his Father with everyone.

One day, two beggars go into a small restaurant for lunch. The boy is about 11 and his Father is over 50 and blind. Their clothes are in tatters and they seem very hungry. Looking at their appearances, anyone can easily recognise that they have not had anything to eat for a few days.

They sit at a table in the corner of the restaurant and when the waiter comes, the boy speaks loudly: "Can we have two 10 dollar bowls of noodles please?" After the waiter has gone to the kitchen, the boy follows him and speaks in a low voice: "Sorry, can I have one 10 dollar bowl and one four dollar which is without meat please? I don't feel like eating meat today, I just want noodles." The waiter feels uncomfortable but he still says yes to the boy.

When the noodles arrive, the father and his son say grace and give thanks to the Lord for the food they are about to eat. The Father says to the boy: "I'm not very hungry, you should eat more," while he picks up the meat in his bowl by the chopsticks and puts it into the son's bowl. The son says nothing while he puts the meat back to his father's bowl without his father's awareness and they start to enjoy their noodles. The father notices one thing special which is there is so much meat in his bowl. He says to the boy: "Son! The people in this restaurant are so kind; they give us a lot of meat."

Sitting at a nearby table, the restaurateur has followed their story since they came into the restaurant and her heart is touched by the beautiful sentiment and great love the father and the son give each other. Tears start to brim in her eyes. She asks the waiter to bring out some nice meat and put on their table for them. When the son sees the waiter put the meat on the table, he immediately raises his voice: "Sorry, but we did not order this." However, the waiter says to him: "Today, from one to two o'clock, the meat in our restaurant is given to customers without being charged." Hearing that, the boy says thank you to the waiter with a grateful glint and he shares the meat with his father and they continue to eat the food. After the meal, they say grace once again, giving thanks to God for the food they had and they go to the restaurateur and the waiter and show their deep grateful attitude to them. The restaurateur is moved and from that very moment she starts to have a great love for the poor. She recognises how blessed she is and she promises herself to do a lot more to help poor people.

Everyone is asked to be in silence for one minute and think about what touches them most from the story. They then will be asked these questions:

- Why did the boy speak loudly to the waiter when he came to the table?
- Why did he not want to have meat?
- What would you do if you were the restaurateur?
- Would you do the same as the boy if you were him?
- If you were the father, would you do the same as what he does to the son?

They are then asked to be in groups of five and share a short story for about two minutes with other people in their group. The story is about their experience or encounter with poor people. It could be the most touching story about poor people that they have had. It could be an encounter between them and the poor and it could be about some beggars who they see on the street.

Reflection

People will be asked to talk a bit more about poor people in general: their appearance, their words, acts, attitudes towards others, and so on.

They will answer this question to themselves. **If I was one of the beggars on the street, what would I expect people to do for me?**

Another question will be asked. **Do the beggars want to be beggars or do they want to have a job, a house, a family but there is no choice for them?**

Everyone should be able to recognise that they are luckier than many other people in life. As they are luckier than others, they should do something they can to help them. The easiest but very important and necessary thing every one of us can do for the poor is to pray for them. Everyone will be given a piece of paper to write a prayer for the poor, the needy and those who are suffering. The prayers are then collected by the leaders and they will be put into a box which will be put under the altar of the parish church the following day by one of the leaders. One of the leaders will lead the concluding prayer, praying for a great love for the poor and praying for the poor to have a better life. They then will finish the meeting by singing the hymn *Christ be our light* together.

Reflection

Everyone will be given a list of questions to take home with them and to reflect on life of the poor, on their attitude towards them and on what they should do to help poor people.

1. Where can I find poor people? Are there any poor people around my home, my neighbourhood and my street?
2. What is my attitude towards poor people? Do I feel sympathy to them? Do I think about their feelings when they have to walk on the street and ask for help?
3. Have I always respected poor people and felt sorry for them or do I disregard them sometimes?
4. Do I ever think about their needs when I see them? Do I ever notice that they are hungry and thirsty and they need something to eat and drink?
5. Have I ever thought that I should help poor people and have I tried to do something to help them such as giving them some food and drink?
6. Have I ever come and talked to the beggars? Do I feel comfortable or uncomfortable to see them and to talk to them?
7. What would I do if a beggar with dirty and ragged clothes comes to me asking for help while I am having a coffee with my friends in a coffee shop? Will I give them something or will I ask them to go away? If I give them some money, do I do it with a sincere heart or do I do it because I just want them to go away from me?
8. Who do I think can help poor people? Is helping poor people someone else's responsibility and duty and not mine?
9. Do I hate or love poor people? Why there are poor people and why they are poor and needy?
10. What should I do to help them?

How to help the poor

- Pray, first of all, for God to show you any attitudes about the poor that need adjusting.
- Volunteer to clean house for someone. You can volunteer with kids, families, the elderly, the disabled, the homeless, women, and the mentally ill; in shelters, soup kitchens, community centre, after school programs, and employment centres.
- If you see a person in poverty, help them. Buy him/her a meal; Give him/her a ride to a shelter, Listen to the people.



- Donate coats, gloves, lice shampoo and other needs to your local school.
- Start or contribute to a fund raiser for the poor. Get involved with a community centre.
- Join a Campaign: get involved in the work of St Vincent De Paul.



This resource was written by Thanh Tam and Do Nguyen on behalf of Auckland Catholic Youth Ministry enabling young people to reflect on how they respond to poor people.