



Evangelized by the poor

the saving power of those who  
live in poverty



“The New Evangelization is an initiative to help us recognize the salvific force those living in poverty have in Christ, and to put them at the center of the Church. We discover Christ in the poor; we give voice to their causes; we are their servants; we listen to them; and they call us to ponder the mysterious wisdom of God, often revealed to us by their very lives.”

- G. Gregory Gay, C.M., Superior General, *letter to Members of the Vincentian Family announcing the Vincentian Year of New Evangelization*, 18 July 2014

Let us examine these concepts one by one.

“The New Evangelization is an initiative to help us recognize the salvific force those living in poverty have in Christ, and to put them at the center of the Church. We discover Christ in the poor; we give voice to their causes; we are their servants; we listen to them; and they call us to ponder the mysterious wisdom of God, often revealed to us by their very lives.”

“The New Evangelization is an initiative to help us recognize the salvific force those living in poverty have in Christ, and to put them at the center of the Church. We discover Christ in the poor; we give voice to their causes; we are their servants; we listen to them; and they call us to ponder the mysterious wisdom of God, often revealed to us by their very lives.”

How are those living in poverty a salvific (saving) force to us?

Ponder the following quote:

“...the poor and the humble can rejoice in a special way as our teachers and masters. They possess the wisdom of God; they believe and hope in God as their Savior; they do not trust in this world and its power but rather in the Word of God, which will be fulfilled in them to the letter of the law—for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.”

[Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M. & Antonino Orcajo, C.M. The Way of St. Vincent Is Our Way; 39. Evangelized by the Poor](#)

“The poor ask us to be men and women of God.”

[Father P. José Luis Azevedo Fernández, C.M., vice-province of Mozambique, Evangelization of the poor](#)

Think about this in the context of your vocation, wherever you encounter those living in poverty-- whether as a missionary, during a home visit, at a food pantry, at a thrift store, in a childcare center, etc.

Pope Paul VI went so far as to say:

“The real presence of Christ, which is hidden in the bread and wine, is visibly manifested in his social presence in the poor who are the sign and image of His ongoing passion in the world. It is to be strongly held that there is a relationship between the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and His social presence in the poor; **the poor are the sacrament of Christ.**”

Paul VI, *Insegnamenti*, VI, 377; P.J. Rosato, *Cena del Signore e amore sociale*, 83.

The poor are a “sacrament of Christ”? Yes:

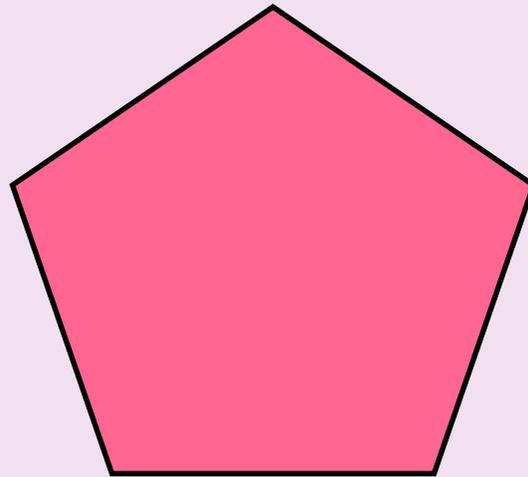
*From the Catholic Encyclopedia:*

Taking the word "sacrament" in its broadest sense, as the sign of something sacred and hidden (the Greek word is "mystery"), we can say that [...] material things are unto men the signs of things spiritual and sacred, even of the Divinity. "The invisible things of him [God], from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity" (Romans 1:20).

“The New Evangelization is an initiative to help us recognize the salvific force those living in poverty have in Christ, and to put them at the center of the Church. We discover Christ in the poor; we give voice to their causes; we are their servants; we listen to them; and they call us to ponder the mysterious wisdom of God, often revealed to us by their very lives.”

How are those living in poverty placed at the center of the Church?

Let us examine the great importance of ‘the poor’  
in our faith, and in our world: from 5 perspectives

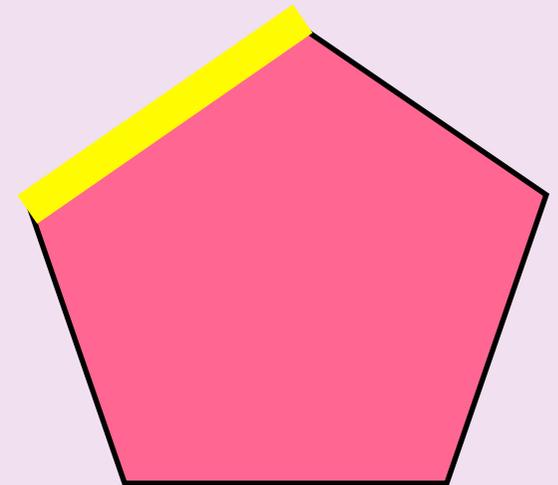


from Julio Lois, 1988 *Teología de la liberación: Opción por los pobres*

Let us examine the great importance of ‘the poor’ in our faith, and in our world: from 5 perspectives

## **Sociological perspective**

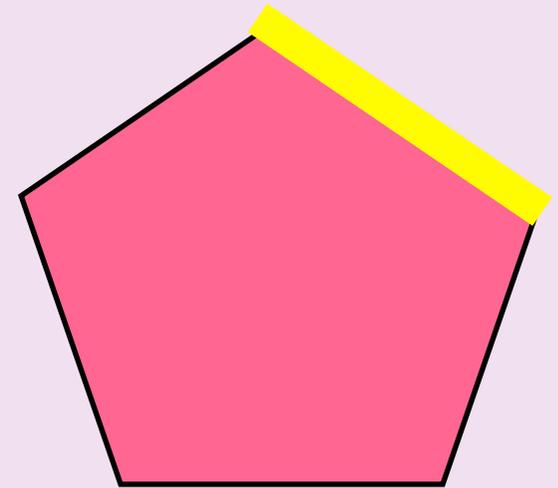
‘The poor’ is a socio-economic concept that refers to two-thirds of humanity, the so-called Developing Countries. The poor are a historical reality; their existence is not so much due to natural as historical causes.



Let us examine the great importance of ‘the poor’ in our faith, and in our world: from 5 perspectives

## **Theological perspective**

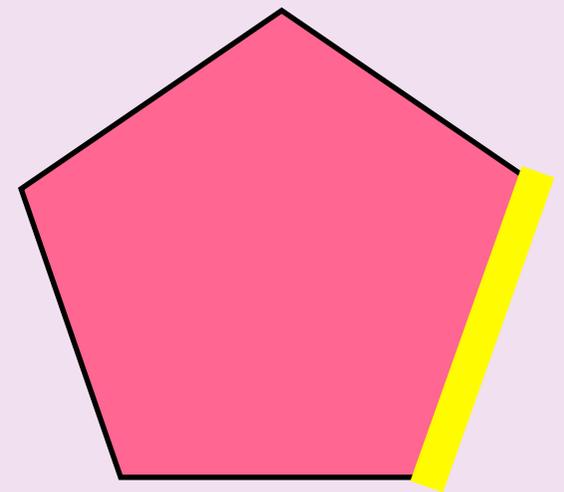
The mystery of God as the God of the poor: The poor are the place, the sacrament and the presence of a crucified and suffering God that is hidden and absent. At the same time, the poor are also the presence of a liberating God, since through them He intervenes actively and salvifically in history. Both the ‘not yet’ and the ‘already’ of the Kingdom of God are concretely present in the poor.



Let us examine the great importance of ‘the poor’ in our faith, and in our world: from 5 perspectives

## **Christological perspective**

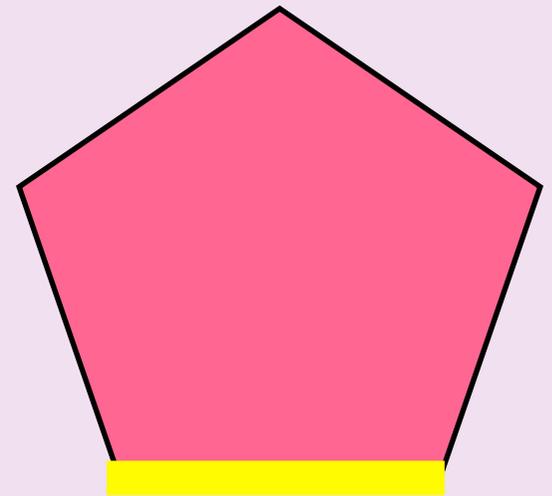
Not only was Jesus Himself poor, but He also put His life into the service of the poor. Jesus announced the Kingdom of God from the poor and for the poor, and he shared their destiny to its ultimate consequences by dying on the cross at the hands of the powerful of his time.



Let us examine the great importance of ‘the poor’ in our faith, and in our world: from 5 perspectives

## **Salvation perspective**

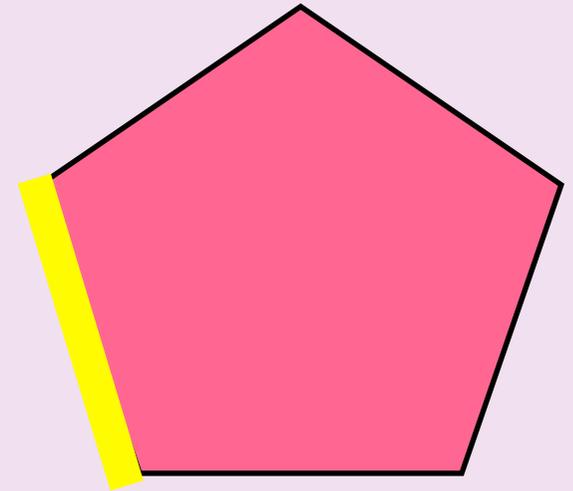
It is for the poor that the Good News is announced. The poor are also the carriers of the Good News and have a special evangelizing ability by having been elected by God. The poor are a privileged instrument of God’s salvific power in history.



Let us examine the great importance of ‘the poor’ in our faith, and in our world: from 5 perspectives

## **Ecclesiological perspective**

The option for the poor is one of the marks of the true Church, a Church that is poor and of the poor. In this Church, the poor are active subjects.



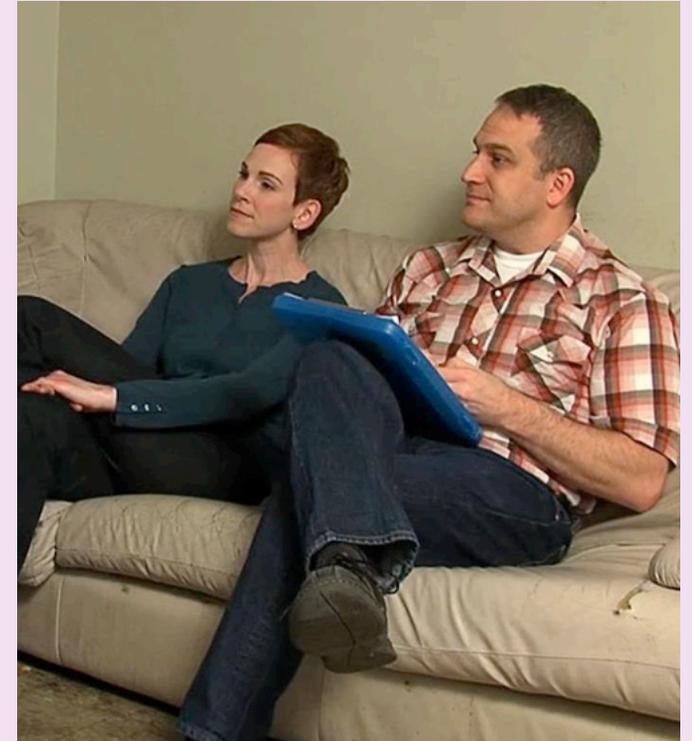
“The New Evangelization is an initiative to help us recognize the salvific force those living in poverty have in Christ, and to put them at the center of the Church. We discover Christ in the poor; we give voice to their causes; we are their servants; we listen to them; and they call us to ponder the mysterious wisdom of God, often revealed to us by their very lives.”

How do we discover Christ in the poor?  
Why must we serve those living in poverty?

An encounter with a poor person is like an encounter with Christ. The reason for this lies in Jesus' self-identification with the poor.

“All you have done to one of the least of these, you have done to me.”

*(Matthew 25:31-46)*



Home visit



“Listen, my brothers and sisters: it was those who are poor according to the world that God chose, to be rich in faith and to be heirs to the Kingdom which he promised to those who love him.”

James 2:5-6

“The New Evangelization is an initiative to help us recognize the salvific force those living in poverty have in Christ, and to put them at the center of the Church. We discover Christ in the poor; we give voice to their causes; we are their servants; we listen to them; and they call us to ponder the mysterious wisdom of God, often revealed to us by their very lives.”

What is revealed to us by the lives of persons living in poverty?

One of the richest truths that Saint Vincent learned from the poor is this: the poor and the humble live a life marked by profound faith. He wrote:

“It is among them, it is among those poor people, that true religion and a living faith are preserved. They live simply; they don't examine everything minutely; they submit to order and in their extreme misery suffer patiently;



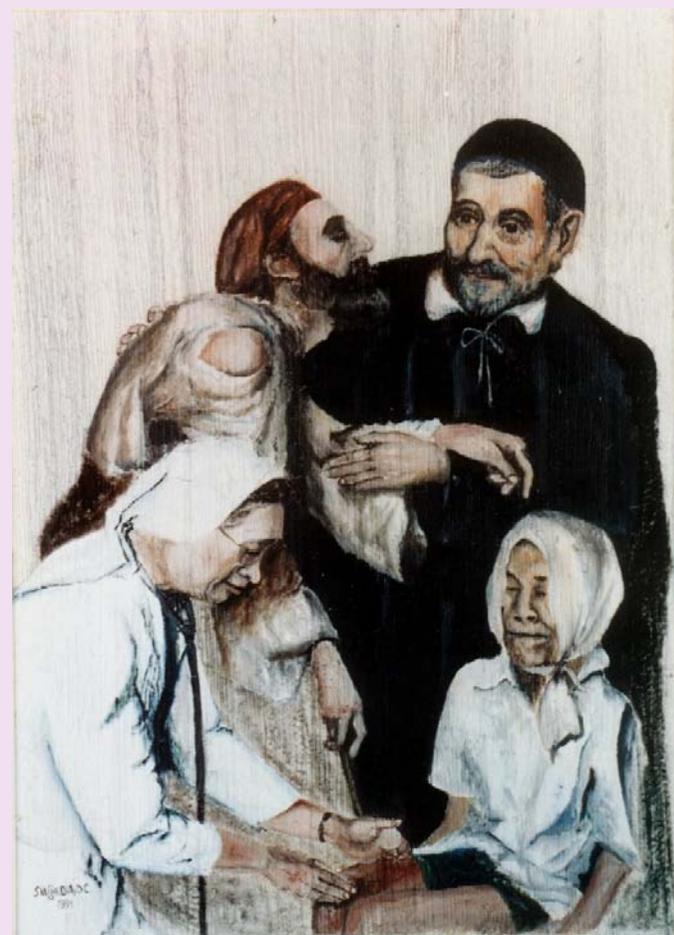


...some suffer from the wars, others from working hard all day long in the heat of the sun; poor vine-dressers who labor for us, who expect us to pray for them while they themselves are working to feed us... We are living on the patrimony of Jesus Christ, on the sweat of the poor.”

Saint Vincent went on to say:

“The poor feed us; let us pray to God for them, and let us not allow a single day to go by without offering them to our Lord, asking Him to give the poor the grace to make good use of their sufferings.”

*(Repetition of Prayer, July 24, 1655, O.C., xi, 120-121.)*



[Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M. & Antonino Orcajo, C.M. \*The Way of St. Vincent Is Our Way\*; 39. \*Evangelized by the Poor\*](#)

# Reflect

- How does the cry of the poor aid me in ongoing conversion?
- Do I allow the poor to evangelize me?



**Image credits:**  
**[pixabay.com](http://pixabay.com)**  
**Depaul Image Archive**