

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOCUS: OPTION FOR THE POOR

Jesus tells us to care for those who are most in need in the world. He reminds us of our Christian duty to give a voice to those who go unheard and to help those who are most vulnerable.

MARIA'S STORY

Fighting between armed forces made life in Cumbitara, Colombia, dangerous for Maria and her family—so dangerous that 8 years ago they were forced to relocate. They left their home one morning with nothing but a suitcase of clothes.

It wasn't easy making a new life in Nariño, a region of Colombia known for its coffee. People made fun of Maria and her family because they were outsiders. It was also hard to find work, and Maria's father left home for months at a time to do dangerous work in a mine.

All that changed when the family bought a little piece of land through the CRS Borderlands project. On it, they grow gourmet coffee that is sold in the United States. And Maria, now 18 years old, is passionate about coffee too. She was chosen for a special program and is earning a degree in farming.

The program, run by the local university and CRS' Borderlands project staff, trains young people to become leaders in the coffee industry. During her first semester, she learned from staff as they traveled to farms, teaching growers new ways to plant and harvest.

Coffee, which Maria knew nothing about before starting the program, is now her favorite subject. She's even traveled to Seattle, Washington, to attend a conference on specialty coffee.

"It is in my blood," she says. "Coffee is so much a part of everyday life—not just for me and my family, but globally. It's not just a plant or something you drink, it brings people together."

Now she has a new career goal: to help neighboring coffee farmers make a living growing the best coffee possible.



Photo by Oscar Lewis/Silverlight for CRS

FACTS TO CONSIDER

- Colombia has the world's largest number of internally displaced people: 4.7 million men, women and children have been forced to flee their homes because of armed conflict.
- The Borderlands Coffee project helps 3,200 small-scale farmers in conflict-affected communities along the Colombia-Ecuador border increase their incomes and gain access to new jobs. The project promotes environmentally sensitive agriculture techniques to increase crop yields, which helps communities overcome hunger while protecting God's creation.

Visit coffeelands.crs.org to learn more.

For downloadable photos, visit crsricebowl.org/photos

PURPOSE

To help young people understand the Catholic social teaching, or CST, principle Option for the Poor through the story of Maria and the CRS Borderlands project; to encourage young people to integrate an option for the poor into their lifestyle.

CST PRINCIPLE: OPTION FOR THE POOR

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MATERIALS NEEDED

- Opening and Closing Prayers
 - *Call Us Forth*
 - *If I Must Refrain*
- Copies of *Autograph Bingo* handout, 1 per participant
- Pens or pencils for participants
- *Biased Thinking* for the facilitator
- *Cross Out Six Letters* handout for each small group
- One copy of *Story of Hope: Colombia* for each small group
- *Top 10 List* handout
- 1 piece of blank paper per small group
- 1 piece of poster board per small group
- Assorted markers, to be divided up among the groups
- Masking or painter's tape to hang posters

OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Call Us Forth

GAME (10 MINUTES)

Autograph Bingo

OPENING ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

- *Biased Thinking*
- Use this activity as an introduction to the Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor.

STORY OF HOPE: COLOMBIA

(10-15 MINUTES)

Divide the class into small groups of 4 to 6 participants and distribute copies of Maria's story for each group.

DISCUSSION (25 MINUTES)

- As a group, identify the difficulties Maria and her family faced, and the ways the family solved those problems and had their needs met.
- What are the ways the CRS Borderlands project shows us we need to care for those who are poor and vulnerable?
- *Top 10 List*
- If time permits, have each group present their poster.

SUMMARY (1 MINUTE)

- Maria's story, in connection with the CRS Borderlands project, demonstrates the importance of having concern for the most vulnerable in our communities, near and far, and creating opportunities for all in our world.
- This Lent, take time to examine your lifestyle and what you can do to connect with the most marginalized in our society and live more justly.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

If I Must Refrain

FAMILY ACTIVITY

- If your family members are coffee drinkers, purchase fair trade coffee—available from SERRV—and/or patronize coffee houses that serve fair trade coffee.
- Check out crsfairtrade.org

Good Shepherd,

*You who rests not until each
of your sheep is counted,
You have willed us to do in
your name what you have done
for us.*

*But we are reluctant, we are afraid,
and we long to hear your voice.
And so we pray...*

Call us forth.

*Lord, who stands amid the violence
and deprivation of war...*

Call us forth.

*Lord, who stands amid the rising
waters of floods...*

Call us forth.

*Lord, who walks upon the parched
land of droughts...*

Call us forth.

*Lord, who stands with the victim of
every type of disaster, remaining
through every dark night, beside
them till morning...*

Call us forth.

*Lord, who walks the long walk
with the refugee, calling the crude
shelter in a strange land "home"...*

Call us forth.

*Lord, who remains with the sick,
reaches out to the crippled,
comforts the dying...*

Call us forth.

*Lord, who calls himself brother
to the persecuted, the enslaved,
the scourged and the marginalized...*

Call us forth.

*As you called Peter forth from the
safety of the boat, and bid him to
forsake his fear and hold fast to his
faith; as you called Paul forth from
the allure of worldly power, and bid
him to forsake his sin and hold fast
to your truth, call us forth to bless.
Call us forth to heal.*

*Call us forth to speak your Word,
To feed your sheep, into encounter,
into solidarity, into love.*

*Call us forth from our comfort, from
our indulgence, from our doubt,
from our fearful blindness, our
willful deafness.*

*For the sake of our sisters and
brothers, for the sake of our world,
for the sake of Your Kingdom,
we pray...*

Call us forth.

Amen

Instructions: Race to find someone who fits the requirements within each square and have the person initial inside the square. When you have Bingo, bring your sheet to the leader.

B	I	N	G	O
Someone whose name starts with the same letter as yours	Someone who was born in a different state than the state you're in now	Someone who was born in the month of March	Someone who plays an instrument	Someone who can wiggle their ears
Someone who has the same hair color as you do	Someone who can curl their tongue	Someone who is the same age as you	Someone who has heard of the Option for the Poor	Someone who can name all 5 CRS Rice Bowl countries
Someone who participates in an activity that you do	Someone who has the same number of siblings as you	 FREE	Someone with the same color shoes as you	Someone who was born in the same month as you
Someone who saw a movie over the weekend	Someone who has a pet	Someone who plays a sport	Someone who participates in service	Someone who has been out of the U.S.
Someone who can speak a language besides English	Someone who has read a book in the past month	Someone who had a sandwich for lunch	Someone whose first name begins with the letter "M"	Someone who is wearing a collared shirt

MATERIALS

- Copies of the *Cross Out Six Letters* handout for each small group
- 1 pencil for each small group
- 1 piece of blank paper for each small group

INSTRUCTIONS

Step One:

- Distribute one copy of the attached handout to each small group.
- Instruct them to cross out six letters to discover a common word.
- Tell them they will have 5 minutes to do this.
- At the end of 5 minutes, call a stop. It is unlikely anyone will have solved the puzzle, unless they have done this before.
- Point to the title of the handout and tell them to cross out six letters: the letters S, I, X, L, E, T, T, E, R, S. When they do this, they will arrive at the word “banana.”
- Point out that they were unable to solve the puzzle because they were operating under biased thinking—what they thought they heard or what they thought you meant.

Step Two:

- Give each small group a blank piece of paper.
- Ask the group to title the paper “Things We Can Do to Help the Poor” and to brainstorm a list.
- Call a stop after 5 minutes and ask the group to count the number of items on their list. Some may even congratulate themselves that their list is longer than others.
- Ask them to turn over the piece of paper and number it with the same number of items on the front—if they came up with 10 items for the original list, they should number 1 to 10 on the back.
- Now tell them to title this side of the paper “Things the Poor Can Do to Help Others.” Tell them they must brainstorm as many items as they had for the first list.
- Go around the room and help them with possible answers. Help them by suggesting things like teaching others resilience, perseverance, trust, flexibility, simplicity, etc.

PROCESSING

- Have the small groups report on their second list.
- Ask the large group what they learned from this activity.

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Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

MATERIALS

- 1 blank piece of paper per small group
- 1 poster board/paper per small group
- Markers and pens

INSTRUCTIONS

- Give each small group a piece of scrap paper, a pen, a poster board and some markers. Challenge them to write a top 10 list of reasons the Option for the Poor is important within Catholic social teaching.
- Suggest that they write down ideas on a piece of scrap paper, putting them in order. Remind them that the #10 reason, while good, is the least important of the 10 and should be listed last.
- Move around the room helping with ideas. Possible suggestions include: because God loves us; because God said so; because we can learn about joy in simplicity or trust in adversity; because we are all better people when we care for all those in our community, etc.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

- After all the posters are complete, have the groups present their posters to the class.
- Allow for any comments or discussion.

Lord of the Fast,

*I have wandered far from you
And now I seek to return.
Show me the path.*

*If I must refrain from food to remind
myself of my hunger for the bread
of life, then help me do so with
grace.*

*Let it too remind me of the hungry
Christ that is present each day in
his people.*

*If I must refrain from companionship
to remind myself of my longing for
my father's embrace, then help me
do so with grace.*

*Let it too remind me of the lonely
Christ that is present each day in
his people.*

*If I must refrain from the gifts of this
world to remind myself of the giver
of the great gift that is our salvation,
Then help me do so with grace.*

*Let it too remind me of the
homeless Christ that is present
each day in his people.*

*Help me look beyond the comforts of
my table, my society and my
possessions for without your grace
and mercy, I indeed have nothing
and all is little more than dust.*

*I thank you, Lord, for as far as I have
wandered, here in the wilderness a
path home is revealed in the faces
of the least of your people.*

Amen



Photo by Oscar Lewy/Silverlight for CRS