

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- in the Light of the Social Teaching of the Church -

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Introduction

The Phenomenon of ubiquitous and pervasive globalization is the Euro-American imperialistic restoration of capitalism - a new form of the protean neo-liberalism. The market and media are at the service of this global economy and politics. The market considers only what is saleable is valuable. The poor, who have no means to buy in the market, are relegated as non – entities by the market. It would love to see the poor totally disappear so that the rich and the haves may solely enjoy the diminishing natural resources for much longer. This is the treacherous culture of death spread by the egoistic consumerism and all-out profit oriented global economy.

Scientific and information technologies are creating technocratic minds and consumeristic hearts. In this context paradoxically, the present-day communication, which ought to bind people, has become a new form of exclusion. Science and technology have failed to ensure a society/ world of equity. This inequality is propelled by sheer greed, blatant violation of human dignity, market driven economic policies and political practices that exclude the poor and the vulnerable.¹ The social awareness and the concern for

social justice that prevailed in the 1980s have vanished into thin air. As a result, there is amnesia of the poor in general, and of the Dalits, Tribals, women, children, refugees and transgenders in particular.

Added to this injustice, India is plagued with a myriad of social evils such as caste discrimination resulting in discriminatory violence, cruel bloodshed; wide spread appalling poverty with starvation deaths, especially of children; paralyzing corruption, growing fundamentalism, escalating violence and terrorism, sexual abuse, human trafficking, etc. The most affected victims of these social evils and problems are the poor. Against this backdrop, this article attempts to spell out the meaning and implications of the *Option for the Poor and Vulnerable in the light of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church*.

Option for the Poor – A Brief Historical Note

As we all know, the Second Vatican Council was a land mark in the history of the Catholic Church. Latin America took very seriously the spirit of Vatican II and especially that of its '*Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*' along with that of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967). Some Church leaders as well as many committed presbyters and lay Christians there applied it to their own concrete socio-economic and political situation. *Church in the Modern world* exhorts Christians to be involved in the building up of the earthly city in order not to jeopardize their own eternal salvation (GS.43). It clearly points out to the common purpose of earthly goods which is more basic than private property which has also a social dimension(GS.69). This leads to revolutionary consequences in areas of land reforms, if taken seriously. The encyclical *Populorum Progressio* stressed in strong terms the universal purpose of created things. Besides, the temptation to violence on the part of the suffering

masses sounded a warning to the affluent and the powerful. War against hunger, the need for redistribution of superfluous wealth and equity in trade relations are strongly brought out in this encyclical.

Influenced by the Council and the encyclical, the Latin American Bishops at Medellin, Colombia (1968), took the decisive step of '**Option for the Poor**'. This became almost for all the charter for a radical renewal of the Church in Latin America. The Vatican itself was deeply impacted by Medellin. The apostolic letter, *Octogesima Adveniens* of Pope Paul VI (1971), and the synodal document on *Justice in the World* (1971) are partly a reaction/response to Medellin.²

The Medellin document speaks of four main themes. They are:

1. Structural injustice
2. A poor Church
3. Conscientization
4. Struggle for liberation

Medellin document speaks of the Latin American situation marked by unjust structures which create and perpetuate dependency and poverty. This injustice is in fact institutionalized violence perpetrated on the poor and the marginalized. Poverty is not just something that happens; it is manufactured and maintained largely by human action and economic policy which deprive the great majority of people of their rightful share of the wealth of the society and consign them to a condition of dehumanizing poverty.

The Church leaders sensing the plight of the victims of these unjust structures wanted to give an effective preference to the poorest and most needy sections of the population. *This preference has come to be called the 'option for the poor'*. This option, to be genuine, called for first and

foremost solidarity with the poor. Such a solidarity with the poor concretely meant that they make the problems and struggles of the poor for liberation as their own, the inevitable other side of which is the criticism of injustice and oppression

Medellin document says further that justice and peace can only prevail through the means of *dynamic action of awakening (conscientization) and mobilization of the affected people* who can pressurize public officials to implement social projects. This is stimulating action for justice from the grassroots. The Church will undertake the task of conscientization of the illiterate and marginalized people without counting the cause.

The bishops of Latin America prefer *liberation to development*. For, liberation suggests shaking off any oppression imposed by a minority on the majority of the people. Here liberation has a very positive meaning as it is closely linked to humanization or attaining fullness of human life. Quoting number 31 of *Populorum Progressio*, the bishops also seem to approve, of course in exceptional and extreme situations, revolutionary movements using violent means to overthrow unjust structures and oppressive reigns. The Medellin document says that revolutionary insurrection can sometimes be legitimate but it generally gives rise also to new injustices. Thus the Latin American bishops sharpen the concept of social justice and option for the poor.³

Option for the poor is the application of the spirit of Vatican II, the encyclical *Populorum progressio* and the principles of Liberation theology to Latin American situations towards ensuring and establishing *Justice and Peace* (the title of the document) not only in Latin America but also in the rest of the world.⁴

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable – Biblical Basis

The phrase or expression, *option for the poor and vulnerable*, as such is not found in the bible. But this phrase sums up the central theme of the biblical revelation. The Exodus, the foundational event of the first testament, is the paradigmatic act of Yahweh and His foundational revelation. This experience molded the consciousness of the people of Israel. It became an interpretive framework for understanding of all God's liberating /saving activities.

Yahweh saw the oppressed Israelites, heard their cries (Ex.3:710;Ps.34:7) knew their sufferings and sided with them in order to liberate them from their oppressions. He took up the cause of the oppressed poor and not of the oppressors, unlike the Egyptian gods siding with the oppressors. That is why the Egyptians cried out "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord (Yahweh) is fighting for them against Egypt" (Ex.14:25, 14). The oppressed poor and the vulnerable are represented in the Old Testament as strangers (aliens), widows and orphans. And Yahweh defends them almost violently (Dt. 24: 17-18; Ex. 22: 21 – 24; Is.1:17). The psalmist says: Yahweh, who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed' (J.B. translation). His justice includes concern for and mercy towards the wounded, hurt, the weak and the oppressed (Mal. 3:5).

The Option for the Poor in Prophets

The jubilee year was introduced to set right what had gone wrong in the foregoing fifty years (Lev. 25: 8-55). Yahweh wanted to build a community of equality where "there will be no poor among them" (Mt.15:4). The covenantal ideal of the egalitarian society of the twelve tribes which Moses attempted to establish with land equally shared by all the families and a law common to all, could be undermined by human greed as well as lack of

responsibility. The jubilee was envisioned by Moses to be structural remedy in order to restore every fiftieth year the original egalitarian social organization. However, this legally provided for measure and means for the socio-economic restoration of egalitarianism in society seems to have remained as nothing more than a cultic and festive Jubilee celebration

Once monarchy was established and especially during the reigns of Solomon and his successors, people were again cruelly exploited and oppressed. A yoke in many ways similar to the slavery of Egypt from which Yahweh had once liberated them came to be re-imposed during the rule of kings. Prophets arose around eighth century B.C., the period coinciding with that of the kings. They proclaimed the cause of justice for the poor as Yahweh's cause. In other words, they took an option for the oppressed poor against the oppressor kings and the rich landlords. The prophets say that to know God of justice is to do justice (Jer. 22:16; cf also Hosea 4:1-2). Without commitment to justice there is no knowledge of God. Justice and righteousness is the same as taking up the cause of the poor and oppressed (Jer. 22:13-16). God calls the people through the prophets to join in the struggle for justice and be his agents of liberation (Ex. 3: 19 ft, 7-10).⁵

The prophets severely criticize merely external worship (Is. 1: 10-17; 58: 6-7) that often coexisted with social injustice (Is. 1: 17; Amos 8: 4-6). For the prophets, inter-human justice is the core and essence of any authentic worship of God (Jer. 7: 4-11) and without it any cult is nothing but idolatry. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Micah know only one decisive theme - justice is the way not only *of* but also *to* Yahweh. But prophets failed due to the obduracy and the hard heartedness of the oppressors as well as the apathy and resignation of the oppressed poor themselves to take up the option for their own liberation. The result was the destruction of Israel and the deportation to Babylon (Jer. 29:1-2). The left behind poor people disappeared into the surrounding nations.⁶

During and after the exile, there was no attempt to struggle for liberation except perhaps that of the Maccabees and later of the Zealots. Israel opted for a kind of religious independence and spiritual poverty. Poverty came to be thought of as a moral category rather than a material and social category, namely to be humble, meek, contrite, patient and reliant on God. (Mt. 6:8; Is. 57:15; Ps. 51:18). Instead of taking an option for the poor, the Israelites took an option to be poor in spirit in the midst of oppression in Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.⁷

Option for the Poor in the New Testament

Jesus focused on not only external socio-economic-political and cultural structures of oppression but primarily on internal structures wherein lay its roots. That is why he not only begins his ministry with a call to 'repentance and belief in the good news' (Mk.1:15) but constantly reiterates the need for all to free themselves from greed, pride and revengefulness and instead foster the attitude of fellowship with all, compassion towards the weak, forgiveness of the sinners.

However, his ministry did not stop with a call to mere interior conversion. It had an essential component of the transformation of interpersonal relationships based on fellowship and the creation of a new radically egalitarian society built on local counter-cultural communities of love, sharing, compassion and freedom. For, in his time the religious leaders, the rich and the powerful were oppressors and the poor were the oppressed. Jesus took sides with the oppressed poor by bringing good news to them. God's kingdom, he said, belonged to them (Lk. 6:20- 23). He urged the poor to take an option for their own cause. Jesus' preaching gave dignity and confidence to the poor. It gave them also hope for the future.

The poor of Jesus' reference were not morally and spiritually poor. For, it included sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors, diseased, beggars on the streets, etc. It was the suffering of these people which moved Jesus' compassion and solidarity with them. In other words Jesus made the suffering of the poor as his own which moved him to respond to them. Their suffering was interiorized by Jesus in such a way that it became part of his own. His total identification with the poor made him to say: 'whatever you do to the least of these (poor ones) you do to me', (Mt. 25: 40, 45). This became an interior principle for Jesus' action and life.⁸

The concept of spiritual poverty is not totally absent in the New Testament. But it is different from the exilic and post exilic poverty. Jesus presents a simple option to sell the surplus possessions and share it with the poor and needy (Mt. 6: 19- 21, 24; Lk. 12: 33-34). He visualized a community in which no one would be in need (Act. 2: 42-46; 4: 32-36). The members of such community would be poor in spirit (Mt. 5:3) and they would hunger and thirst for God's justice as inter-human justice. (Mt. 5:6). Jesus presents a new spirituality of loving enemies (Lk. 6:27) forgiving transgressors (Mt. 18:21 – 22), and struggling against all forms of oppression without any revenge (Mt. 4:38-39) but with love (Mt. 5:43). *This is the new option for God's reign here and yet to come in its fullness of Jesus against suffering.*⁹

Yahweh's righteousness and justice is epitomized in the person of Jesus who presents himself as the liberator of the oppressed poor in his manifesto (Lk. 4: 17- 21). Against the backdrop of unjust and oppressive structures he proclaims God's reign of justice, a new world order. The love that he proclaims is by its nature a subversive force in an unjust society. All his parables and miracles are also subversive. His justice is also love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, sharing, human concern etc.

The acceptable year of the Lord (jubilee year) proclaimed by Jesus is a programme of radical social change as a continuation of Leviticus (25). As a socio-cultural revolutionary, he wants restructuring of relationships among people. It is liberation from socio-political-economic and cultural bondages - debts waived off, slavery abolished and capital and lands are distributed (Lk. 4: 18-19; Zec. 25: 8-55). This holy justice is the greatest gift of the kingdom of God and pre-requisite for entrance into it (Mt 5: 6; 6: 33; 5:20). Following the prophetic tradition, Jesus affirms true worship of God as doing justice and acts of mercy (Mt. 5: 23-24; Lk.10:25-37). For Jesus, justice and mercy are both weightier matters of law (Mt. 23:23; Lk. 11:42; 19:1-10). Jesus' justice demands the inclusion of those who are excluded from the community for one reason or another. If there is one person who faithfully reflects Jesus' justice to the poor, it is Mary. Mary's hymn of revolt is a hymn of justice (Lk. 1:52-53).¹⁰

Option for the Poor and the Social Teaching of the Church

The Social Teaching of the Church is only an extension of the Gospel interpreted historically, scrutinizing the signs of the times in the concrete socio-economic, political and cultural context.¹¹ According to Pope John Paul II "to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is as essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ".¹² As mentioned earlier, only in 1968, the Latin American bishops' conference at Medellin introduced this phrase, *option for the poor*. The meaning of option for the poor is rendered in the social teaching of the Church as social justice, demolishing unjust structures, creating just structures, working for the common good etc. With this perspective, let us scan through the social teaching of the Church.¹³

Rerum Novarum (1891) of Pope Leo XIII

The Church's magisterial concern for social justice to the exploited workers began with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, against the background of industrial revolution. Employers are asked to give a living - family wage. The workers have the right to organize and form union to demand their rights and their participation in decision making. The State should take care of the common good. Thus, this encyclical lays a firm foundation for a society based on social justice. Hence *Rerum Novarum* is described as the 'Magna Carta' of social reconstruction.

Quadragesimo Anno (1931) of Pope Pious XI

Reconstruction of structures should avoid the arbitrary injustice of capitalism and the regimented injustice of socialism. It speaks of the 'Principle of Subsidiarity'. "It is an injustice....to assign a greater organization what lesser and subordinate can do" (No. 79). The violation of justice under the veil of charity is condemned. The social character of private property is highlighted (No. 49). The distribution of created goods must be brought into conformity with the demands of the common good and social justice (No. 57). Here social justice is indicated in terms of common good. Economics must be based on ethical values of justice and love.

Mater et Magistra (1961) and Pacem in Terris (1963) of Pope John XXIII

Mater et Magistra affirms that the Church is a servant at the service of the world. Utmost vigilance is needed for social inequalities to be reduced to a minimum. For the first time this encyclical addresses itself to the depressed sector of agriculture. Economic aid by rich nations should be without hooks and should respect the autonomy of the less developed countries.

In *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII addresses himself to 'all men of good will'. There is an emphasis on rights, not only on duties. It affirms a list of human rights at all levels-socio- economic, political, cultural and legal. It says that more attention should be given to the rights of the poor. It calls for disarmament and advocates non- violence to resolve problems between nations.

Gaudium et Spes (II Vatican, 1965)

The Constitution of the Church in the Modern World stresses that the source, the center and purpose of all socio-economic life is the human person (Nos. 19, 25). Excessive economic and social disparity between people is a scandal and militates against social justice, equity, and human dignity (No. 29). The universal destination and equitable distribution of earthly good is more basic (Gs. 69) than the right to private property and therefore would lead to land reforms. Relationships among nations should be based on justice and love. It affirms the Church's mission to work for social justice, especially for the victims of injustice.

Populorum Progressio (1967) and Octogesima Adveniens (1971) of Pope Paul VI

Populorum progressio starts with humans' aspirations for freedom from every form of exploitation and oppression. It says that the good of every man and of the whole man should be taken into consideration. Liberal capitalism is strongly condemned. Temptation to violence comes as a warning to the rich. Though violent revolution is acknowledged in an exceptional situation, that it brings about new injustice is also pointed out (No.36). Finally it calls for a war against hunger and redistribution of superfluous wealth.

Octogesaima Adveniens speaks of rapid urbanization and industrialization breeding miserable living conditions, wherein workers are

particularly the victims of exploitation. It urges the need for greater justice in the sharing of goods in the spirit of cooperation free from any sort of domination. This calls for a change of attitudes and structures starting from inner liberation.

Justice in the World(1971) – Synod of Bishops

The Synod of Bishops makes a very significant statement on justice: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of human race and / or its liberation from every oppressive situation” (No. 6). The document recognizes that the aspiration for justice will not be satisfied if it ignores the objective obstacle that social structures place in the way of communion of hearts, or even of the realization of the ideal of charity (No. 5a).

Gospel demands justice for all as an essential expression of Christian love. Love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely, recognition of the dignity and rights of one’s neighbor (No. 34). There is a need for an education to justice and an uncovering of the social dimension of sin especially through the sacrament of reconciliation.

It may not be out of place here to recall to mind what the Indian Bishops of India had said about the Synodal document on ‘Justice in the world.’ ***“The formation of social justice as a constitutive dimension of the Church’s Evangelizing Mission has been clearly stated by the Synod of Bishops. In countries like India, it needs to be viewed as a privileged expression of mission and an apostolic priority”***.¹⁴ In the words of John Desrochers, **“this statement is a path-breaking thrust about the paramount importance of social justice”**.¹⁵

***Laborem Exercens* (1981) and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) of John Paul II**

Laborem Exercens states that work as a human issue is at the very centre of the social question (No.3). The primacy of the subjective meaning of work is stressed over the objective. The value of work is determined by the worker who is doing it. It further brings out the primacy of labour over capital which itself is the fruit of labour. Just wages are a criterion of justice of economic system.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis emphasizes the prophetic call to seek justice in an unjust world and takes an option for the poor. The encyclical says that social injustice is caused by the “structures of sin” or social sin (No.36). This must be overcome by taking a solidarity stand with the poor and real conversion of heart.

***Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) and *Laudato Si* (2015) of Pope Francis**

Evangelii Gaudium laments that humans are used as consumer goods and then discarded. A ‘throw away’ culture is rapidly spreading. A feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures are sought by the blunted conscience. These are newer forms of exploitation and oppression of the poor. The Pope advocates a definite ‘No’ to an economy of exclusion, ‘No’ to a financial system which rules rather than serves and ‘No’ to the inequality which spawns violence (Nos.53-54, 57-60). Until exclusion and inequality are reversed, it will be highly impossible to eliminate violence. Recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve violence. It will only create new and more serious conflicts.

***Laudato Si* (2015)**

Pope Francis says: “Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach, it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the*

cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (No.49). “The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny which cannot exclude those who come after us. — Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us” (No. 159).

To Sum up the Social Teaching of the Church (STC)

The STC does not often use the phrase, ‘option for the poor’. But it uses the equivalent expressions, justice or social justice to the poor. The STC is an attempt by the Church to create a just society / world through personal and structural conversion.¹⁶ If so, the Church has to organize and mobilize the oppressed poor for struggles towards justice. It should make a definite option for the poor. But the highly institutionalized Church seems to be held back and is incapacitated to raise her prophetic voice and opt for the poor and be in active solidarity with them for social justice.¹⁷ Besides, the root causes of inequalities and injustices inbuilt into the socio-economic and political structures and the conflicts they create are not scientifically and sufficiently analyzed in the STC except perhaps in *Octogesima Adveniens* and *Justice in the World* in order to undertake suitable and effective orthopraxis to bring out just social order.¹⁸

The STC does not give a concrete social model other than capitalism and socialism both of which it criticizes. It proposes (SRS. 41) “a re-Christianized version of the First World as the safest social model”.¹⁹ The Third World social problems like bonded and child labour, incomplete or misdirected land reforms, discriminations such as social hierarchies, gender disparity, feudalism, fatalism, their ideology of liberation from the ill-effects

of colonialism and neo-colonialism are not seriously taken into consideration in the STC. “The Church must — adopt a basic socialist option — with her basic socialist orientation, the Church should moreover carry on an honest dialogue with Socialism and Marxism”, with people of other faiths and ideologies. Is the Church willing to die in order to rise again not only as the Church **for** the poor, but also the Church **of** the poor and **with** the poor?²⁰

Here David Hollenbach’s three strategic moral priorities will be significantly relevant in bringing about social justice to the poor. They are: 1. The needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich. 2. The freedom of the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful and 3. The participation of the marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of the order that excludes them”.²¹

Option for the Poor – Some Clarification

There seems to be more than one understanding about the option for the poor. Hence here below follows an attempt towards some classification about the same.

- By option for the poor, some understand loving the poor more than the rich or preferring the poor to the rich. But Jesus demands us to love everyone – poor and rich, sinner or saint - unconditionally as he himself loves everyone of us. (Jn.13:34). There is no preference here for the poor. But because the poor suffer deprivation and destitution, they elicit in us feelings of compassion. “To be compassionate is to be moved by the pain and suffering of others”.²² This is more compassion (cum + passio = to suffer with the suffering) towards the victims of suffering than universal love (agape) for all. This is not meant by option for the poor.

- Some others say that option for the poor is the commitment that the non-poor persons have to take to the cause of the oppressed poor. They

point out to Moses, who though himself not oppressed, took sides with the oppressed Israelites for their liberation.

- The third group says that the poor themselves must take an option for their own liberation. The non-poor like Moses can identify themselves with the oppressed poor to take up their own cause for liberation. This is what faith in Yahweh meant for them in practice.

Option for the Poor – An Obligation and Commitment

- Some theologians like Donald Dorr, Albert Nolan, George Therukaatill say that option for the poor is an option for the cause of the poor which is a cause related to the unjust economic, political and social structures and systems. The cause of the poor as victims of oppression and injustice is right. “Structurally, the cause of the poor is always right and just, no matter what individual poor people may be like in their personal and private lives. And the cause of the rich is always unjust, no matter how sincere and unaware they may be as individuals”.²³

- As we have already seen in the biblical base, God always stands with by oppressed poor, the victims of exploitation. Faith in biblical God means that the poor as well as the non-poor take an option – which is a Christian obligation - against all forms of oppression and injustice towards creating a world of justice, love, freedom, equality and peace for all. Both the poor and the non-poor are challenged to take this option in order to create just structures or structures for common good. What is good for all, is also good for the rich and powerful. What these people have to sacrifice is their egoistic self-centredness, which is not good for them anyway.²⁴

- People need to be conscientized about various unjust structures and systems and their operations in a given society. This will lead them to take an option for the cause of the poor towards liberation including their own.

This requires conversion of heart and conversion (change) of structures. “Personal conversion from sin and selfishness will not lead to structural change, even if large numbers of people are involved, unless they become aware of the role of structures in perpetuation of evil.— On the other hand, a change from structures of sin to structures of grace (alternate just structures) cannot happen fully and sustainably without personal conversion from sin and selfishness”²⁵

- As a matter of fact, all poor people may not take up their own cause of liberation for some reason or other even after sufficient conscientization. Some of them are too broken or weak, others may like to move upward into the ranks of the oppressor group. For, they house-in the image of the oppressor as their model for imitation. Equally, many rich and powerful people may not take this option. They will find what they assume to be a downward mobility rather hard, given their life style. This is no justification for them. Yet a few of them will opt for it.

- Taking an option for the poor is a continuous spiritual challenge and struggle. It may at times deteriorate into paternalism. At every stage of the option, one has to be radically open to learn from the concrete situation and critically discern the way of the Spirit. To make the poor to take an option for their own cause is not that easy since all the poor are not of one category or of the same mindset. Committed persons opting for the cause of the poor as the cause of God have to go through several stages of spirituality – personal crisis, dark nights, challenges, material detachment, criticism, etc. Their only assurance is that God is with them and His Spirit is working in and through them as with the prophets and disciples (Mk. 16:20; Mt. 28:18.20).

To conclude

Pope Francis has sent a message for the 'First World Day Of the poor'. In this message the Pope says: "We may think of the poor simply as the beneficiaries of...impromptu acts of generosity that appease our conscience. However good and useful such acts may be for making us sensitive to people's needs and the injustices that are often their cause, they ought to lead to a true encounter with the poor and a sharing that becomes a way of life...we need to hear the cry of the poor and commit ourselves to ending their marginalization...What a bitter and endless list we would have to compile were we to add the poverty born of social injustice, moral degeneration, the greed of a chosen few, and generalized indifference!...To all these forms of poverty we must respond with a new vision of life and society²⁷. All the poor- as Blessed Paul VI loved to say-belong to the Church by "evangelical right", and require of us a fundamental option on their behalf".²⁸

It may be fitting to conclude with a quote from Julius Nierere "Unless the Church, its members and its organizations express God's love by involvement and leadership in constructive protest against the present conditions of men, then it will become identified with injustice and persecution. If this happens, it will die – and humanly speaking deserves to die – because it will then serve no purpose comprehensive to modern man".²⁹ This spirituality of option for the poor, rooted in the God of justice, is urgently needed in our faith response to the God as justice. In a way justice can be said to be the new dimension of charity in today's unjust world (Rom.13:8. If we have a duty to love the poor, then the poor have a right to be loved. Right and duty is the language of justice today).

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Endnotes

1. cf. Dr.Felix Wilfred, Preface to Compassionate Love – Ethics by George Therukaattil, MCBS, Kochi, Karunikan Books, 2015, PP. 4-6.
2. cf. Donal Dorr, Option for the Poor - A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching - Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1992 (revised and expanded edition), PP. 205 - 211, 226 – 227.
3. cf. Donal Dorr. art. cit. pp. 206 - 211.
4. Edward P.DeBerri & Others, Catholic Social Teaching - Our Best kept Secret-, New York, Orbis Books, 2004 (Fourth revised and expanded edition), pp. 168 – 171.
5. cf. Albert Nolan, Hope in the Age of Despair, Mumbai, St.Paul's, 2012, pp. 55.
6. B.W. Anderson, The Living World of the Old Testament, (3rd edition.), U.K, Longman, 1978, pp. 399-400, 404.
7. Albert Nolan, op. cit. pp. 56 - 57.
8. cf. Jon Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified people from the Cross, New York, Orbis Books, 1994, p.9.
9. Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1973, pp. 299 - 302.
10. cf. George Therukaattill, Compassionate Love-Ethics, pp. 43 – 50.
11. Vat II, G.S., No 4: Octogesima Adveniens; Pope Paul VI, 1971, No. 4.
12. Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991, No. 5.
13. For the 'Social Teaching of the Church'. I rely on Edward DeBerri and others, Catholic Social Teaching; Donal Dorr, Option for the Poor; John Desrochers, The Social Teaching of the Church, Bangalore, CSA 1982; and E.H.Megrath, Catholic Social Teaching, An Overview, New Delhi, 1991.
14. The CBCI General Body Meeting, Nagpur, 1984, No 88.
15. John Desrochers, The Social Teaching of the Church in India, Bangalore, NBCLC/ CSA, 2006, pp 57.
16. George Therukaattill, Compassionate Love – Ethics, p. 80.
17. John Desrochers, *ibid*, p. 682.
18. George Therukaattill, *ibid*, p.84.
19. Aloysius Pieris, "Three Inadequacies in the Social Encyclicals" in Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection, February, 1993, p.80.
20. John Dersochers, *ibid*, pp.691-692.
21. David Hollenbach, Claims in Conflict, New York, Paulist Press, 1979, pp. 204.
22. Albert Nolan, Jesus before Christianity, (25th anniversary edition), New York, Orbis Books, 2001, pp. 34-36.

23. George Therukaattill, MCBS, *Gripped by God's Mercy*, Kochi, Karunikan Books, 2015, pp. 13-14, 133; cf. also Donald Dorr, *ibid*, pp. 2-3.
24. *Ibid*, pp 134-137; cf. also, Albert Nolan, *Jesus Today-A spirituality of Radical Freedom*, Mumbai, St.Paul's 2007, pp. 201, 225-227. Nolan thinks that common good is God's will and God's mission.
25. Albert Nolan, *Hope in the Age of Despair*, p. 167.
26. *Ibid*, p.46.
27. Cf. From Vatican provided text, 13th June, 2017. Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the First World Day Of The Poor to be observed on 19th November, 2017, the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary time before the solemnity of Christ the King.
28. Cf. *Ibid* Address at the opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Council, 29 September, 1963
29. As quoted by Paul Gueriviere, in *the Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, (ed) by D.S.Amalorpavadoss, Bangalore, 1981, p.733.