

option for the poor and vulnerable

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: THE PHILIPPINES

LESSON PLANS GRADES 1-8



Photo by Jim Sipe/CRS

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background information for session leaders

OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

In the Gospel of Matthew (25:31–46), Jesus describes the last judgment, saying that we will be judged based on how we treat the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. Throughout the Scriptures, Jesus spends time with the sick and outcast, revealing a special love for those most in need. The Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) encourages us to imitate Christ’s love for the poor by working to create a society where the needs of the poor are always considered first. The Church teaches that “those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2448) We are invited to be a part of a long tradition that continues to live out a love for the poor through works of mercy.



The poor are the most vulnerable to natural disaster. This photo shows the destruction to homes after a typhoon in the Philippines.
Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. We are motivated by the example of Jesus Christ to assist poor and suffering people in more than 100 countries on the basis of need, without regard to race, religion or nationality. Founded in 1943, CRS reaches 85 million of the world’s poorest people each year with innovative solutions to poverty, hunger, drought, disease and emergencies. CRS works in close partnership with the Catholic Church around the world, and with local, national and international organizations that share our commitment to finding ways to meet immediate needs while empowering communities for the long term.

OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE, AND CRS

CRS carries out the commitment of the Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. We live out the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable through our work around the world. In the case of natural disaster, for example, CRS responds to the community’s immediate needs. Then we work with poor and vulnerable people in the affected area to rebuild their community.



Annaliza and Danilo Leban live in the town of Baganga in the Philippines. In December 2012 they were in a hospital several hours away from home, waiting for Annaliza to give birth to triplets. And then a major typhoon struck Baganga. The Lebanes were relieved to hear that their five older children made it safely though the storm. But when they returned, they found their home and the whole town destroyed. Danilo built a shelter from what was left of their home, but it could not protect the family from the heat, rain and mosquitos. The newborn babies grew sick.

Then Catholic Relief Services arrived to help them build new homes. The townspeople held a meeting to plan how they would rebuild their town—and to vote on which family should receive the first new house. All of the homes in Baganga had been destroyed, but every person in the meeting voted that Annaliza and Danilo should receive the first new house.



Top: CRS helped the Leban family, desperately poor and with newborn triplets, build a new home after a terrible typhoon. Above left: The Philippines are made up of a more than 7,000 islands in the Pacific Ocean. They are prone to natural disaster, especially typhoons. Above right: A child poses in a shelter built by CRS after Typhoon Bopha struck the Philippines.

Map credit: OCHA. Top photo by Jim Stipe/CRS. Above right photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS.

“This is a good house,” says Annaliza, “and a community full of good people who waited for their own homes because they believed our family needed a dry place the most.”

Danilo and other community members were hired to build the new houses. Danilo was proud to help his neighbors, who had been so generous to his family.

OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

Jesus always spends time with those who are most in need, including the sick or those who are considered outcasts. We are invited to follow Jesus’ example and show a special care for people, especially the poor, who are most in need.

option for the poor and vulnerable

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: THE PHILIPPINES

LESSON PLAN GRADES 1-3

45 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of the Leban family, who live in the Philippines.

MATERIALS

- Coloring supplies
- **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Activity Sheets, Grades 1-3**, printed double-sided
- Pens or pencils
- **The Leban's Story**
- World map

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Explain that the class will reflect on the Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable by learning about the story of the Leban family in the Philippines.
2. Explain that the principle of the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable means that God invites us to care in a special way for those who need the most help. Share that in the Scriptures, Jesus is always spending time with the sick and those who are cared for the least.
3. Locate the Philippines on the map. Read **the Leban's Story**.

4. Emphasize Annaliza's quote: "This is a community full of good people who waited for their own homes because they believed our family needed a dry place the most." Share that other families practiced the principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable by choosing to give the Leban the first house, since they were in the most need.
5. Discuss with students: Have you ever given up something you needed or really wanted to help someone else? Was it hard to give this up? How did it feel?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Invite each student to think about how they can live out the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable in their own lives as they design a Generosity Booklet.
2. Hand out the **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Activity Sheets, Grades 1-3**, and coloring supplies to each student. Invite them to use pictures and words in their booklets.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Invite students to share prayer intentions for someone they have helped or who has helped them.

Gracious God, you show yourself in the faces of the people we meet each day. Help us to remember that each time we help someone, we show our love for you.

TAKING IT HOME

Encourage students to share their Generosity Booklet with their families and to go out of their way to help someone in need this week.



my generosity booklet

BY: _____

HOW DOES IT FEEL
TO HELP OTHERS?



HOW DOES IT FEEL
TO BE HELPED?

*Loving God,
We thank you for the many gifts
you have given us.
Bless our prayers and sacrifices.
May we share our gifts with others,
especially with the poor.
Amen.*





DRAW A PICTURE OF A TIME YOU HELPED ANOTHER PERSON.



DRAW A PICTURE OF A TIME SOMEONE HELPED YOU.

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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: THE PHILIPPINES

LESSON PLAN GRADES 4-6

45 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of the Leban family, who live in the Philippines.

MATERIALS

- Bible
- **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Activity Sheets, Grades 4-6**
- Pens or pencils
- **The Leban's Story**
- World map

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Explain that the class will reflect on the Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable by learning about the story of the Leban family in the Philippines.
2. Explain that the principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable means that God invites us to care in a special way for those who are most in need. Share that Jesus models this for us by spending time with the sick and those who are rejected by society.
3. Locate the Philippines on the map. Read **the Leban's Story**.
4. Ask students to put themselves in the place of the other families in Baganga who experienced the typhoon. Would they be able to choose to have another family's home rebuilt first? Ask how the families in the story lived out the principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.

ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

1. Share that students will make a graphic representation of the story of the Leban family in 10 individual story frames. Distribute the **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Activity Sheets, Grades 4-6**, to each student and allow them time to complete them.
2. Read Mark 2:1-5. Ask students to compare the friends of the paralyzed man to the families in Baganga who put the Leban family's needs ahead of their own.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Invite a student to read Mark 2:6-12. Then, pray.

Gracious God, may we always be willing to see your work in our midst. We thank you for generous friends, neighbors and family who remind us to put the needs of others before our own wants and desires. Amen

TAKING IT HOME

Invite students to copy Annaliza's quote: "A community full of good people waited for their own homes because they believed our family needed a dry place the most" into a journal or on a piece of paper that they can keep near their bed at home. Encourage them to keep track of other examples of generosity they witness over the next week and to write these down each night.

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ACTIVITY SHEET GRADES 4-6

Illustrate the Leban's story.

1. Annaliza and Danilo Leban await the birth of their triplets, hours away from their home in the town of Baganga in the Philippines.

2. A powerful typhoon strikes the Philippines.

3. Annaliza and Danilo's five older children survive the typhoon.

4. Annaliza and Danilo return to discover that their home and all the homes in their town have been destroyed.

5. Danilo builds a temporary shelter, but it can't protect the family from rain, heat and mosquitos.

6. Catholic Relief Services arrives to help rebuild homes.

7. A town meeting is held to plan how to rebuild—and to vote on who should get the first new house.

8. All the families vote that the Leban's should have the first house.

9. Danilo and other community members build the new houses.

10. Annaliza and Danilo are proud and grateful.

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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: THE PHILIPPINES

LESSON PLAN GRADES 7-8

45 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of the Leban family, who live in the Philippines.

MATERIALS

- Bible
- **The Leban's Story**
- Pens or pencils
- **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Activity Sheets, Grades 7-8**
- Whiteboard and markers
- World map

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Explain that the class will reflect on the Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable by learning about the story of the Leban family in the Philippines.
2. Locate the Philippines on the map. Read **the Leban's Story**.
3. Ask students what motivated the families of Baganga to put others' needs before their own. Invite students to cite examples of similar generosity from their own lives, experiences or reading.
4. Explain that the families of Baganga lived out the principle of the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. Share that this principle invites us to care in a special way for those who are most in need. Share that Jesus models this for us by spending time with the sick and those who are rejected by society.

ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

1. Distribute the **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Activity Sheets, Grades 7-8**, and give students time to complete them. *Note: The scrambled word is "compassion."*
2. Facilitate a conversation comparing Blessed Teresa of Calcutta's story with **the Leban's Story**. Ask: Were you surprised at the generosity displayed by people who were in such great need themselves? Why or why not? How can you show compassion for the poor and vulnerable?

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Read Matthew 25:31-40. Then, pray.

Gracious God, you challenge us to see your face in those who are suffering. May we, like the families of Baganga, be willing to put the needs of others before our own. Help us to live out the virtue of compassion through our actions. Amen

TAKING IT HOME

Invite students to talk with their families about ways they can show compassion for poor and vulnerable people in their own communities and around the world.

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ACTIVITY SHEET GRADES 7-8

MISSING WORDS:

Answered
Circumstances
In
Mother
Neighbors
One
Others
Portion
Same
Situation

ANSWER: _____

Using the box below, complete Mother Teresa's story. Once you've completed the missing words, take the first letter of each word and unscramble it to discover what the woman in Mother Teresa's story and the families of Baganga have in common.

"_____ night, a man came to our house to tell me that a Hindu family, a family of eight children, had not eaten anything for days. They had nothing to eat. I took enough rice for a meal and went to their house. I could see the hungry faces, the children with their bulging eyes. The sight could not have been more dramatic! The mother took the rice from my hands, divided it in half and went out. When she came back a little later, I asked her: 'Where did you go? What did you do?' She _____, 'They also are hungry.' 'They' were the people next door, a Muslim family with the _____ number of children to feed and who did not have any food either. That _____ was aware of the _____. She had the courage and the love to share her meager _____ of rice with _____. In spite of her _____, I think she felt very happy to share with her _____ the little I had taken her. _____ order not to take away her happiness, I did not take her anymore rice that night. I took her some more the following day."

— From Mother Teresa: *In My Own Words*, by José Luis Gonzalez-Balado

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Were you surprised by the generosity displayed by people who were in such great need themselves? Why or why not?

How can you show _____ for the poor and vulnerable?