



In Catholic social teaching, this instinct is reflected in a principle called “the preferential option for the poor”. This means that, although all people are created equal in dignity and have an equal claim on our care and attention, we are called to give particular care and attention to those who are weakest or suffering the most. If we have the choice between serving those who are relatively well off, or serving those who badly need our help, then we should prefer serving those who need our help the most. The principle is rooted in Jesus’ own choices: he came to save everyone, but he chose to spend most of his time with people who were sick, outcast and poor.

### CHILDREN OF THE SAME FATHER

Last summer, protests erupted in the United States over the death of an unarmed black man, George Floyd. The Black Lives Matter movement continues to draw attention to the death and discrimination faced by black people, indigenous people and people of colour in the United States, as well as the racism faced by people in the UK. The response of some Catholics has been to point out the dignity of all people as created in God’s image, and to say that “All Lives Matter”. In one sense this is right: everyone is created with equal and inalienable dignity. But the principle of the “preferential option for the poor” demands that we give our particular attention and efforts to those whose dignity is most denied and assaulted. Catholics are called to recognise that racism is “a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father” (*Brothers and Sisters To Us*, US Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979). We are called to give special attention and care to people who experience racism, and our effort and energy to ending it.

### Mass text

#### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**Your merciful love, O God, we have received in the midst of your temple. Your praise, O God, like your name, reaches the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with saving justice.**

#### FIRST READING Ezekiel 2:2-5

#### PSALM Psalm 122

**RESPONSE Our eyes are on the Lord till he show us his mercy.**

1. To you have I lifted up my eyes, you who dwell in the heavens: my eyes, like the eyes of slaves on the hand of their lords. **R.**
2. Like the eyes of a servant on the hand of his mistress, so our eyes are on the Lord our God till he show us his mercy. **R.**

3. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy. We are filled with contempt. Indeed all too full is our soul with the scorn of the rich, with the proud man’s disdain. **R.**

#### SECOND READING 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia! The Lord has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives. Alleluia!**

#### GOSPEL Mark 6:1-6

#### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Come to me, all who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you, says the Lord.**

#### Next Sunday’s Readings:

Amos 7:12-15  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
Mark 6:7-13

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## PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR



Today’s second reading includes a fascinating detail. In the verses leading up to today’s passage, St Paul is writing to the Corinthians about an experience of being “caught up... into the third heaven”. Scholars aren’t sure what he means by this, or by the next detail, that God gave him a “thorn in the flesh”, to stop him getting too proud about receiving these revelations. Many think that this was some kind of sickness or physical weakness, and we see that Paul asks God three times to cure him. But rather than curing Paul, God chooses to leave him with this mysterious “thorn in the flesh” to remind him that, even though Paul is weak, God’s grace is enough. The God whose victory is revealed in Jesus’ humiliation and death on the cross is also revealed in our weakness. Elsewhere, St Paul writes that “God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

Perhaps it’s not surprising, then, that Christians throughout history have sometimes been regarded as foolish themselves, for having a view of the world that has seemed upside down to their contemporaries. In the Roman world, the weak were at the bottom of the social pile: slaves, children and women did not have rights or a voice. Very early on, it was obvious Christians were different: rather than just leaving unwanted babies to die, as the Romans did, early Christian writers forbade abortion and infanticide. Often, of course, Christians have not been different enough from the societies in which they have lived, and they have sided with the forces of wealth and power, imitating and even shaping a less loving set of beliefs about whose lives are valuable and whose are not. But the instinct that God particularly speaks to us through people who are weak, poor and rejected remains, even if it is only the prophets of each age who remind us of it.

## Building a civilisation of love



Dr Theodora Hawksley, a theologian working at the London Jesuit Centre, reflects on one of the fundamental principles of the Church’s social teaching.

4 JULY 2021

14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II

Although *Fratelli tutti* has some strong words about our tendency to form opposing groups, Pope

Francis also says that difference and conflict are not bad things. Without difference, there would only be stifling uniformity. Our particular identities, national, cultural, ethnic and religious, are important: "Just as there can be no dialogue with 'others' without a sense of our own identity, so there can be no openness between peoples except on the basis of love for one's own land, one's own people, one's own cultural roots... I can welcome others who are different, and value the unique contribution they have to make, only if I am firmly rooted in my own people and culture" (*Fratelli tutti* 143). Conflict and opposition are not just inevitable, but sometimes necessary: we can come into conflict with others when we demand justice or oppose oppression, when we defend our rights or insist on our dignity. Opposition can sometimes be a way of pursuing the truth and holding people – including governments – to account.



## CHILDREN OF THE SAME FATHER

The important thing is that, like the disciples, we encounter conflict and opposition because we are genuinely seeking the kingdom of God and the good of others, and not because we are defending the little kingdom of our own interests and attacking others as we go. Like the disciples, we too are invited to go out to encounter others, to bring them good news and healing, and we are not to be afraid of opposition.

## Mass text

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**As for me, in justice I shall behold your face; I shall be filled with the vision of your glory.**

FIRST READING Amos 7:12-15

PSALM Psalm 84

RESPONSE **Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help.**

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say, a voice that speaks of peace, peace for his people. His help is near for those who fear him and his glory will dwell in our land. **R.**
2. Mercy and faithfulness have met; justice and peace have embraced. Faithfulness shall spring from the earth and justice look down from heaven. **R.**
3. The Lord will make us prosper and our earth shall yield its fruit. Justice shall march before him and peace shall follow his steps. **R.**

SECOND READING Ephesians 1:3-14

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us.  
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Mark 6:7-13

### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.**

### Next Sunday's Readings:

Jeremiah 23:1-6  
Ephesians 2:13-18  
Mark 6:30-34

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## OPPOSITION

This Sunday's readings are about encountering opposition. The prophet Amos is told that he is not welcome in Bethel, and that he should go back home and prophesy there. Jesus, instructing his disciples as he sends them out on mission, warns that people may refuse to welcome them or to listen to what they have to say.

How do we react when we encounter opposition? Faced with people who disagree strongly with us, or attack our worldview or ideas, we can withdraw. This is only natural: most people do not enjoy engaging in controversy and argument, and we prefer to spend time with people who are like us, and sympathetic to our ideals and way of life. Many social media platforms are geared to show us what we like and what we agree with, and connect us with "people like us". But while this can be a source of enjoyment and support, Pope Francis warns that it can also be problematic: "Persons or situations we find unpleasant or disagreeable are simply deleted... a virtual circle is then created, isolating us from the real world in which we are living" (*Fratelli tutti* 47). At their worst, these bubbles can end up "favouring encounter between persons who think alike, shielding them from debate. These closed circuits facilitate the spread of fake news and false information, fomenting prejudice and hate" (*Fratelli tutti* 45). Although we are more and more connected online, we are also more and more isolated from one another, and not genuinely knowing other people makes it easier to attack them. This online "tribalism" can feed into and reinforce offline prejudice too, and the growth of antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, and attacks on migrants and LGBT persons.

What does today's Gospel have to offer us in this situation? In one sense, the problem Pope Francis describes in *Fratelli tutti* is the result of too little opposition, rather than too much. If we fear encountering opposition, we will remain shut up in our bubbles, agreeing with one another and lashing out at others. But if we overcome our fear of others who are different from us and who may criticise or challenge us, then we can take a step forward, to encounter them and to begin a conversation. We may end up still disagreeing with them, but we have established something: a genuine human connection, and a sense of being different in a shared world.

## Building a civilisation of love



Dr Theodora Hawksley, a theologian working at the London Jesuit Centre, concludes this series on Catholic social teaching, by considering how we face conflict and opposition.



11 JULY 2021

15TH SUNDAY IN  
ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK III

He had returned to Poland by the time the Nazis invaded his homeland. Because of his father's ancestry, he was offered German citizenship, but he turned it down. Sending his fellow brothers away from Niepokalanów, he remained, producing anti-Nazi publications and sheltering refugees, including an estimated fifteen hundred Jews. In February 1941, it was closed down and he was arrested, arriving in Auschwitz-Birkenau three months later.



In 1971 St Paul VI beatified Kolbe as a martyr of charity. When, in October 1982, Kolbe's fellow Pole, St John Paul II, canonised him, he ruled that St Maximilian Kolbe had been killed out of the Nazis' hatred for the faith, the *odium fidei* of the traditional definition of martyrdom. The fellow prisoner whose life he saved, Franciszek Gajowniczek, a Catholic, witnessed both events. "I want to express my thanks for the gift of life," he said in Rome in 1971, remembering how he had felt that day in 1941 about "the immensity of it: I, the condemned, am to live and someone else willingly and voluntarily offers his life for me – a stranger?" That unconditional love of the stranger is Kolbe's legacy – as a patron saint of both prisoners and the pro-life movement.

Peter Stanford is a Catholic writer and broadcaster ([peterstanford.org](http://peterstanford.org)). His latest book, *Pilgrimage*, is published by Thames & Hudson.

ST MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

It was July 1941 and the third "selection" ordeal Ted Wojtkowski had endured at Auschwitz-Birkenau. "Selection" was an inhuman form of official revenge when a prisoner had escaped from the Nazi concentration camp. The first time, the whole block had been forced to stand to attention for two days without food or water; the second, ten men were selected and gunned down. This time, another ten were to be locked in a bunker to starve to death.

"One of the men selected started to cry out, 'oh, my children, my wife,'" Wojtkowski wrote many years later. "At the same moment Father Kolbe stepped out in front of the commandant and expressed his wish to be substituted for the father of the children. 'You must be some kind of crazy priest,' said the commandant in wonder. Then he called out loudly, 'exchange!' And the two prisoners changed places. I looked at Father Kolbe's face – so peaceful, so serene. His altruistic act inspired me for the rest of my life." It has inspired many others since. Another prisoner reported that Maximilian Kolbe tried to sustain the nine other men in the bunker by leading them in prayer as one by one they died. He was the last one left. The guards wanted it over, so they approached him to give him a lethal injection of carbolic acid. He held out his arm, accepting his fate without struggle.

Raymond Kolbe, as he was baptised, was born in 1894 in Poland, into a devoutly Catholic home. At twelve, he saw a vision of the Virgin Mary, who held out to him two crowns, one white for purity and one red for martyrdom. She asked him if he was willing to accept either. He replied, "both". That was the pattern of his life. At seventeen, he entered the noviciate of the Conventual Franciscans and took the name Maximilian. As a young man, studying in Rome, he was one of the founders of the Army of the Immaculate One, set up to defend the Church, through the intercession of Mary, from those who attacked it. Ordained in 1918, he was first a seminary teacher, and then in 1927 established a new monastery near Warsaw, named Niepokalanów, or the City of the Immaculate. It was his base in publishing Catholic books and newspapers, and later for a radio station. In these years, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis, for which in the age before antibiotics there was no cure. Ill-health did not stop him heading for China, India and Japan, where he established a new monastery at Nagasaki. If he did not survive the Second World War, it did, its sheltered position on a hillside protecting it from the blast of the atomic bomb dropped there in 1945.

Martyrs of our times



Today Peter Stanford begins a new series looking at some of the people of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries who have given their lives for the faith.



18 JULY 2021

16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK IV

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**See, I have God for my help. The Lord sustains my soul. I will sacrifice to you with willing heart, and praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.**

FIRST READING Jeremiah 23:1-6

PSALM Psalm 22

RESPONSE **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

1. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose. Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit. **R.**
2. He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name. If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil would I fear. You are there with your crook and your staff; with these you give me comfort. **R.**
3. You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing. **R.**

4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever. **R.**

SECOND READING Ephesians 2:13-18

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia! The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice, says the Lord, I know them and they follow me. Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Mark 6:30-34

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Behold, I stand at the door and knock, says the Lord. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door to me, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.**

**Next Sunday's Readings:**  
2 Kings 4:42-44  
Ephesians 4:1-6  
John 6:1-15

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could be so staunch as to favour the reasonable thing in the sea of their tears and loneliness.”

The then US Ambassador to El Salvador, Robert White, was there when the four women’s bodies were unearthed. He had met and got on well with Donovan a few days earlier, and did everything in his power to get his government to hold to account the security forces in El Salvador – whom they were supporting with financial and military assistance. Yet the killings had coincided with the election of a new American president, Ronald Reagan. He refused to waver in his commitment to keep the region as “America’s backyard” and sacked White. His United Nations ambassador, Jean Kirkpatrick, disgracefully described the dead women as political activists, “not nuns as we know nuns”.



**GOSPEL IMPERATIVE**

Kirkpatrick was wrong. The three sisters were following, not a political manifesto, but Gospel imperatives to side with people who were poor, hungry and marginalised. That, too, was what inspired Donovan in her work as she kept extending her stay in El Salvador. There have been films, documentaries and plays that have explored their martyrdom and kept their witness alive for subsequent generations, but as yet no official cause before the Vatican. Maura Clarke and Ita Ford are, though, buried, following the practice of their order, where they served and died. Their graves in Chalatenango are still well-tended by locals.

Peter Stanford is a Catholic writer and broadcaster ([peterstanford.org](http://peterstanford.org)). His latest book, *Pilgrimage*, is published by Thames & Hudson.

**Mass text**

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

**God is in his holy place,  
God who unites those who dwell in his house;  
he himself gives might and strength to his people.**

**FIRST READING** 2 Kings 4:42-44

**PSALM** Psalm 144

**RESPONSE** **You open wide your hand, O Lord,  
and grant our desires.**

1. All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord, and your friends shall repeat their blessing. They shall speak of the glory of your reign and declare your might, O God. **R.**
2. The eyes of all creatures look to you and you give them their food in due time. You open wide your hand, grant the desires of all who live. **R.**

3. The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds. He is close to all who call him, who call on him from their hearts. **R.**

**SECOND READING** Ephesians 4:1-6

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
A great prophet has appeared among us;  
God has visited his people.  
Alleluia!**

**GOSPEL** John 6:1-15

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.  
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.**

**Next Sunday’s Readings:**

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15  
Ephesians 4:17, 20-24  
John 6:24-35



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SUNDAY BULLETIN

**MAURA CLARKE, JEAN DONOVAN,  
ITA FORD AND DOROTHY KAZEL**

“We always thought they were safe,” Father Paul Schindler told me when I met him in 2019, as he remembered his friends and co-workers, the three American religious sisters and one lay worker whose kidnap, rape and murder in December 1980 in El Salvador caused international outrage. “They [the Salvadoran National Guard] had attacked priests but they’d never attacked nuns. We felt somewhat invincible.” A priest of Cleveland diocese, he had been working in El Salvador between 1972 and 1982 and retired there later to continue his work.

On the first day of that fateful December, Dorothy Kazel, a forty-one-year-old Ursuline sister, and lay missionary Jean Donovan, twenty-seven, who were both working with Father Schindler in the 65,000-strong parish of La Libertad, drove to the airport in San Salvador to pick up Ita Ford, forty, and forty-nine-year-old Maura Clarke, who had been attending a gathering of their Maryknoll order in Nicaragua. The plan was to give them a lift back to the town of Chalatenango, near La Libertad, but the plane was late. As the four were about to set off after dark, the National Guard pounced in a premeditated attack. Their bodies were found in a shallow grave on a rural road the next morning. A simple memorial outside a small modern church marks the spot today.

The four knew they were running risks. El Salvador was deep in a civil war, and eight months beforehand the country’s Catholic leader, Archbishop Óscar Romero, who had challenged the activities of the army and its death squads, had been gunned down at the altar. Whether they knew they were facing the same fate is unclear. Ita Ford, Father Schindler recalled, was a “tough nun”, unafraid to go “toe-to-toe” with army colonels in the region when her parishioners or the refugees she cared for, displaced by the war, had been illegally detained or targeted. Her name had appeared on a list of subversives, including church people, posted on the front of the local cathedral in Chalatenango, but she had dismissed it. “I’m too dumb to be afraid,” she had joked, “too dumb to be killed.”

Jean Donovan, who had a fiancé waiting at home for her and a career as an accountant beckoning, had written to a friend shortly before her murder: “I am not up for suicide,” explaining that there had been many times when she had been ready to return home, but it was the children she worked with in the parish that made her stay – “the poor, bruised victims of this insanity... Whose heart

**Martyrs of  
our times**



Peter Stanford tells the story of four Catholic women martyred in El Salvador.



**25 JULY 2021**

17TH SUNDAY IN  
ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I