

Does God Have Favorites? WEEK TWO October 26 2025

Our winter coat drive was a huge success.

We partnered with the school and other parishes in Bowie to assist children and adults living in shelters in our county.

As this was our first time doing this, we were hoping to collect maybe a hundred coats.

SCREEN: Winter coat drive pic

This is a picture I took of the room in the rectory where your donated coats are.

Isn't this amazing?

We're talking hundreds and hundreds of coats!

It took a crew of volunteers two days to sort them all.

So I want to thank you all for helping our vulnerable brothers and sisters.

Though I have to say, I'm not surprised that the coat drive was a success because I see our church's generosity all the time.

Whether it's serving or donating to SOME (a soup kitchen in DC), or the food dropped off for the Sharing Pantry,

the success of our holiday outreach programs,

or those who support our mission trips to Honduras and

to Delaware with Habitat - week after week,

year after year I witness the actions of parishioners who get it,

who understand that living their faith must entail helping others in need.

SCREEN: Does God Have Favorites main screen

This is Week Two of our message series which asks the question,

Does God have favorites?

As I said last week, the scriptures we hear at Mass sure seem to say so.

The question I want to tackle today is this:

Does God love the rich more than the poor?

Does God love the rich more than the poor?

There are lots of preachers out there who'll tell you this is true.

They promise that God will bless you with a big home,

fancy car, and more money than you'll ever need -

so long as you keep sending them your donations.

Unfortunately the reality is that the preacher gets richer while his donors get poorer.

Maybe our first reading from the Book of Sirach can set us straight.

Now Sirach is part of a group of books in the Old Testament

that are called the Wisdom Writings.

One of my seminary professors referred to them as the

original 'how-to' books because they give practical advice for daily life.

Sirach was written about 200 years before Jesus was born.

Today we heard Sirach say this:

SCREEN: The Lord is a God of justice, who knows no favorites.

The Lord is a God of justice, who knows no favorites.

Wow, okay.

Should we end our series there and conclude

that God doesn't have any favorites?

I mean, it's right there in the bible.

But what did we hear in Sirach's next two verses?

**SCREEN: Though not unduly partial toward the weak,
yet he hears the cry of the oppressed.**

**The Lord is not deaf to the wail of the orphan,
nor to the widow when she pours out her complaint.**

Sirach was continuing a tradition that stretched all the way back

to the time of Moses which teaches that people of faith must

take care of their brothers and sisters in need -

the widow, the orphan, the weak and oppressed.

And it's a tradition that stretches all the way to today.

A few weeks ago, our Holy Father Pope Leo released his first document,
titled "I have loved you."

His main message is that love of God

is inseparable from love of the poor - the two go hand in hand.

SCREEN: preferential love

Pope Leo goes so far as to say that God has a preferential love for the poor.

What does it mean to have a preferential love for someone?

The best example that comes to mind is the way my mom loved me and my siblings.

I joked last week that I was my mom's favorite, but I don't mean she loved me more than my brother or sisters, because she didn't. What she did have was an amazing ability to see when any of us were struggling and then shifted her attention and support at just the right moment.

I think all moms do this.

That's what Pope Leo means when he writes that God has a preferential love for the poor - God sees when his children are suffering and then shifts his attention toward those who are most in need.

And God wants us to do the same.

Here's how Pope Leo puts it:

SCREEN: God has a special place in his heart for those who are discriminated against and oppressed, and he asks us, his Church, to make a decisive and radical choice in favor of the weakest.

The document then points out all the places in scripture where we see this, and how it reached its fulfillment in Jesus.

Jesus who became poor for our sake by taking on human flesh and being born in a stable.

Jesus who earned his living as a manual laborer.

And Jesus who throughout his three years of ministry chose to be with the poor, the marginalized, and the outcasts of society.

When a rich man approached Jesus asking what he needed to do to be saved Jesus instructed him to sell what he had and give it to the poor.

And when Jesus taught about the Last Judgment which every one of us will face after we die, he made it absolutely clear that our eternal salvation will be decided

by whether or not we helped the least among us - the hungry, those in need of clothing, the sick, the imprisoned, and the stranger. Jesus told his followers that whatever they do or don't do for these they do to him. The early Christians took this teaching so seriously that they pooled their resources to help the most vulnerable and needy. And for 2,000 years Church leaders and saints have reminded Catholics of the very thing Pope Leo just wrote, that we can't say we love God unless we also love the poor. *We can't say we love God unless we also love the poor.* So it is our sacred duty to build a kingdom here and now that cares for those who are suffering.

SCREEN: blank red background

But if we're certain that God doesn't love the rich more than the poor, what about the other way around?

Does God love the poor more than the rich?

If you think back to the gospel reading we heard a few weeks ago - the story of the rich man and Lazarus - I said that Jesus was not against rich people, but the attitude he found among the rich people of his day.

Their wealth blinded them to the needs of others.

They lived their lives in a bubble which cut them off from people who were outside of their economic class or social circle.

So it's not how much you have, but what you choose to do with what you've been given.

If today's message on loving and caring for the poor and vulnerable is making you at all uncomfortable, stop and ask yourself why.

Could it be revealing a blind spot in your heart?

Or maybe this is a new way of looking at your faith that you never considered?

Try to figure out why you're feeling the way you are.

My struggle is a little different.

I've seen how generous our parish can be when it comes to

collecting coats or food or donations,
but I wonder if there's more we could be doing.

The reason I say this is because I know that
only about a third of our parishioners respond to
any of the opportunities we provide to help others in need.
Only a third.

If you're part of the two-thirds, what might be holding you back?
Are there judgments you've made about those we are trying to help?
Maybe you just feel overwhelmed by multiple requests to give.
It might even be worries and concerns about your own financial situation.
Whatever your feeling, whatever doubts or concerns you have,
take it to the Lord in prayer and ask God to help you move through
it so that you can respond.

And to repeat what I said earlier,
it's not how much you have - whether you consider yourself rich or poor or middle class -
but how generous you are with what you've been given.

And when it comes to our giving,
we shouldn't be giving from our surplus but from our substance.
It should require some sacrifice on our part.

It's how we imitate Christ and show ourselves to be true members of His Church.
Let me share with you one more quote from Pope Leo's document.
He writes this:

SCREEN: By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen.

Love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it.

This is a powerful vision for the Church in the 21st century
and for our mission as disciples.

May the Lord fill us with love that we may respond generously
to our brothers and sisters in need. Amen. +