

St Helen's Covenant with the Poor

Then the King will say to the people on his right: 'Come you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the Kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.' The righteous will then answer him: 'When Lord did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' The King will reply: 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me! (Matt. 25: 34-40)

Towards the end of the 1990s Bishop Thomas encouraged every parish in the diocese to enter into a New Covenant with the Poor (now known as the Covenant with the Poor).

A parish Covenant is a commitment by the people of the parish to give a central place to the poor in the life, work and worship of the parish community. It focuses on three areas:

1. Prayer and Liturgy
2. Campaigning or Advocacy
3. Wealth Sharing

and reflects the concerns and commitments of the parish. It is about affirming and developing all efforts at building the kingdom Christ proclaimed. **It acknowledges that concern for the poor should be central to every Christian's life; bringing good news to the poor and setting the downtrodden free is the call of each and every one of us.**

St Helen's Covenant with the Poor says the following:

- **Recognizing that, although we live in a relatively affluent and caring society, many within it are impoverished or marginalized;**
- Recognizing that the world's wealth is shared unequally between nations and that whole nations are impoverished;
- **Aware that we are privileged to be members of the Body of Christ;** and Mindful of our Savior's injunction to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to care for the sick and to visit the imprisoned

We the people of Our Lady Help of Christians and St Helen, on 29th March 1998, entered into a commitment to serve, through prayer and action, the poor in our own society and in the world at large.

In particular we will:

- Support specific times of prayer for the needy of the world especially during Advent and Lent;
- Renew our commitment to our twin parish of Christ the King in Madadeni, South Africa, to help the poor of the area by prayer and gifts of money in support of particular projects;
- Strengthen our commitment to take part in CAFOD Fast Days and support the promotion and sales of fairly traded goods;
- Donate 3 1/2 % of our ordinary offertory income for the benefit of the poor.

In making this covenant we recognize and support the work already being done in the parish by the Catholic Women's League and the Knights of St Columba in funding poverty relief projects, the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Legion of Mary in ministering to the needy, and the monthly collection of items for the local homeless centre.

(Updated to reflect the work happening in the parish today)

There will be more about our parish Covenant with the Poor over the next few weeks.