JUSTICE, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Reign of the Sacred Heart

POVERTY ISSUE OCTOBER 2024

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are around 700 million people around the world living in poverty. (UN.org)
- Sub-Saharan Africa has both the highest rates of children living in extreme poverty at 40 percent and the largest share of the world's extreme poor children, at 71.1 percent. South Asia has the second highest rate. (endchildpoverty.org)
- Approximately 264 million children and youths around the world are not attending school. (compassion.com)
- More than 785 million people globally do not have access to basic water services, including a well. (compassion.com)

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Faces at the Margins

by Fr. Duy Nguyen, SCJ

Who are the poor? What do the faces of those living at the margins look like? Is it a person sleeping on a train, bus, or encamped in tents pitched on sidewalks or set up in parks? In Milwaukee, the poor are sleeping in their vehicles in city-owned parking lots. Major US cities are filled with those who are struggling in its various forms.

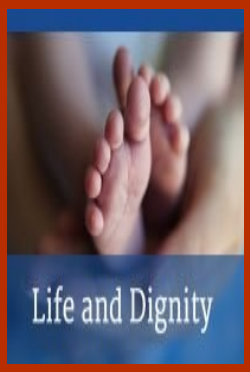
Poverty is not unique to one specific country; it exists in every country. Even the United Arab Emirates, one of the richest countries in the world, have poor people.

Poverty, according to the World Bank, is defined as surviving on less than $2.15 per person per day. In the United States, the poverty line is around $15,000/year for a single person, which is roughly $62/day.

But poverty is not just measured in terms of money. It also includes lack of access to health care, education, water, food, and jobs that are critical to a minimum standard of living.

What Jesus said is true, "The poor you will always have with you" (Mk14:7). But this does not make us indifferent to their circumstances. Jesus also spoke these words, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:35-36). It is evident that He calls us to aid our brother, sister, neighbor, stranger, and anyone who is in need of tangible care and compassion.

Catholic Social Teaching

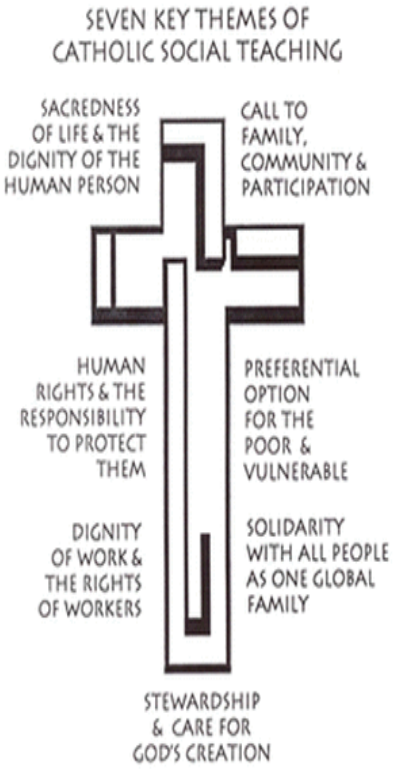


"Jesus' command to his disciples... means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor."

- Pope Francis

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.



Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

USCCB.org

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Catholic Social Teaching continued from pg. 2

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers and sisters keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that if you want peace, work for justice.1 The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

USCCB.org

US Catholic Bishops

"Jesus takes the side of those most in need. As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental 'option for the poor'--to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. " (no. 16).

"...poverty is not merely the lack of adequate financial resources. It entails a more profound kind of deprivation, a denial of full participation in the economic, social, and political life of society and an inability to influence decisions that affect one's life…. Therefore we should seek solutions that enable the poor to help themselves through such means as employment" (no. 188).

"The first line of attack against poverty must be to build and sustain a healthy economy that provides employment opportunities at just wages for all adults who are able to work. Poverty is intimately linked to the issue of employment.... Expanded employment especially in the private sector would promote human dignity, increase social solidarity, and promote self reliance of the poor" (no. 196). (*Economic Justice for All, 1986*)

What Can I Do?

1. LEARN

- Global Poverty
- US poverty Data
- Facts about poverty in the US
- Hunger and Poverty in the US

2. ACT

- Volunteer at a local food pantry, soup kitchen, or social service organization.
- Contact your local congressional leaders about supporting legislation that helps the poor.
- Donate to non-profit organizations that are working for systemic change and directly impacting the poor and vulnerable.

3. PRAY

- Prayer to confront global poverty

SCJ Response

The charism of the Priests of the Sacred Heart is rooted in the faith experience of Fr. Leo Dehon, who, in response to sin and a lack of love in the Church and world, united himself to the Heart of Christ and sought to establish His Reign in individuals and society while forming a greater solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

Following our founder's apostolic orientations, the US Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart continues to build up the reign of justice and Christian charity in the world.

Although the SCJs were not founded for a specific work, we do have ministries, through St. Jospeh's Indian School in South Dakota and Sacred Heart Southern Missions in Mississippi, that offer counseling, advocacy, education, and other social services.

These ministries are our response to address the needs of those who are most vulnerable and living in poverty.

"Can we not make this *Year of the Eucharist* an occasion for diocesan and parish communities to commit themselves in a particular way to responding with fraternal solicitude to one of the many forms of poverty present in our world?

I think for example of the tragedy of hunger which plagues hundreds of millions of human beings, the diseases which afflict developing countries, the loneliness of the elderly, the hardships faced by the unemployed, the struggles of immigrants. These are evils which are present—albeit to a different degree—even in areas of immense wealth.

We cannot delude ourselves: by our mutual love and, in particular, by our concern for those in need we will be recognized as true followers of Christ (cf. *Jn* 13:35; *Mt* 25:31-46). This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged."

- Pope John Paul II

The Priests of the Sacred Heart: Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

JPR Website