



POVERTY AWARENESS MONTH 2018

MONDAY, JANUARY 1:

An annual papal message for the World Day of Peace (Jan. 1) has been released every year since 1968. In the [first papal message for the World Day of Peace](#), by Blessed Paul VI, the Holy Father highlighted these “threats” to peace: selfishness in relations among nations; disrespect for the right to life and human dignity; recourse to “frightful weapons of extermination,” excessive weapons spending which hinders human development; and the belief that controversies cannot be solved by “negotiations founded on law, justice, and equity.”

Challenge: Read Pope Francis' [2018 message](#). Where do you see Paul VI's concerns resurfacing in Pope Francis' message? Use the [accompanying resources](#), including a two-page handout, to reflect on Pope Francis' important invitation to all Catholics and people of good will.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2:

Poverty is not a catch-phrase—it is a serious reality that many are living. Over 40 million people live below the poverty line the United States. Our faith invites us to respond to the needs of those who are in most need. “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” ([Matthew 25:40](#)).

Challenge: Are you familiar with the facts about those living in poverty in the United States? Take the [Poverty Quiz](#), and learn facts about [U.S. Poverty](#). Make two specific commitments to address poverty this month.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3:

Today's readings remind us that we are all children of God. In the first reading, the author invites us to “see what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God” ([1John 3:1](#)). The [Church teaches](#) us to encounter others in their diversity and recognize that we are united as one human family. [Solidarity](#) invites us to remember that we are all children of God who share in one another's joy and suffering. This is a key component of working together to seek justice for all God's children. Being in solidarity with others lifts us from our individualism and gives us the capacity to work together to overcome poverty.

Reflection: Take a moment to think of a particular person you know who is suffering as a result of poverty or economic difficulty: think of the person's name; recall his or her face and situation. Say this [prayer for solidarity](#); ask for the grace to share in the suffering of our brothers and sisters who experience poverty, and for a deeper conviction to work for justice and peace.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4:

The [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) (CCHD) has been working for 48 years to help end poverty by empowering low-income families and communities to participate in decisions that affect their lives and by educating Catholics and people of good will about the root causes of poverty. Watch this [3-minute video](#) that highlights CCHD's work to fight poverty.

Challenge: Read about [Project Hope Spokane](#), a CCHD funded group, which works to break the cycle of poverty through employment and community engagement.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5

Prayerfully reading the Scriptures is a great way to be reminded of the call to root our lives of faith in authentic love of neighbor. Today's first reading challenges us: "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?" (1 John 3:17).

Pope Benedict XVI writes about "the unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbor" ([Deus Caritas Est](#), no. 16). He continues: "One is so closely connected to the other that to say that we love God becomes a lie if we are closed to our neighbor or hate him altogether. Saint John's words should rather be interpreted to mean that love of neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with God, and that closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God."

Attending to the needs of persons in poverty is a grateful response to the unmerited gift of love that God first gives to each person—a gift which we are required to then share with others. Sharing God's love includes offering spiritual care for those in need, providing help to meet immediate needs, and working together to eliminate the causes of poverty.

Challenge: How are you called to respond to God's gift of love and compassion? Take a look at the CCHD [Poverty Map](#) that shows the levels of poverty in the nation and in your specific county. Read how Catholics at a parish in New Orleans are reaching out to their brothers and sisters who are experiencing poverty in Nicaragua and their local community in this [We are Salt and Light success story](#).

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6

Did you know that nearly [1 in 5 children](#) in the U.S. live below the poverty line? One child that is hungry and without economic security is too many. Take a look at the [snapshots of poverty](#) to see what everyday life is like for those living in poverty.

Action: Start a conversation about poverty with your own children, and encourage those who work with children in your parish or local Catholic school to do so as well. Use the [Superhero of Justice](#) activity or the [Two Feet of Love in Action storybooks](#) to spark conversation.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

Today is the first day of [National Migration Week](#). The 2018 theme is "Many Journeys, One Family." There are many [factors](#) that have displaced [65.6 million people](#) throughout the world. That is about 20 people displaced every minute! Some of the causes of this humanitarian crisis include war, violence, and economic insecurity.

Challenge: Visit the USCCB [Justice for Immigrants website](#) to find National Migration Week resources to educate yourself and your community, including a toolkit and more. Learn how [one university](#) is living the call to solidarity with Syrian refugees. See the [faces of migration](#) and read the stories of those who

have come to the U.S. in search of a better life. What can you do to welcome migrant and refugee brothers and sisters in your community?

MONDAY, JANUARY 8

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of Jesus. Through our Baptism we share in Christ's mission of love and service as the people of God. "The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise" ([Lumen Gentium](#), no. 12). This mission and grace we receive through Baptism requires us to follow in Christ's footsteps "to bring glad tidings to the poor...proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free" ([Luke 4:18](#)).

Challenge: Read the short reflection, [Baptism: Incorporated into Christ's Body, Sent on Christ's Mission](#) and reflect on how you can live out your baptismal call to imitate Christ's mission in Luke 4:18. Visit the [We are Salt and Light website](#) to learn about [advocacy](#).

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9

Each year the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) awards the [Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award](#) to a Catholic young adult who works creatively to address the root causes of poverty in his or her community. Last year, [Sr. Tracy Horan](#) was the award recipient for her excellent work with low-income immigrant families through the Indianapolis Congregation Action Network (ICAN), a CCHD-funded organization, and [Justice for Immigrants](#).

Challenge: Can you think of any young adults (ages 18-40) who demonstrate leadership in working to address the root causes of poverty in the U.S.? Nominate a young adult you know for the [Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award](#). Also, share about [CCHD internship](#) opportunities with young adult groups or campus ministries in your parish community for hands-on training and work with and on behalf of persons in poverty in our communities.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10

"It is impossible to talk about poverty, about abstract poverty. That does not exist! Poverty is the flesh of the poor Jesus in this hungry child, in the sick person, in these unjust social structures. Go, look over there at the flesh of Jesus." -[Pope Francis](#)

There are over [40 million people](#) living in poverty in the United States. Pope Francis invites us to consider the various causes of poverty in order to break the cycle of poverty in our families, neighborhoods, country and the world.

Challenge: Watch the [Poverty USA Tour](#) to learn more about living under the poverty line and the factors that can cause poverty to become cyclical. Learn also about how CCHD is responding by reading [Stories of Hope](#) on the [PovertyUSA.org website](#).

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11

The consequences of poverty are devastating in many ways. Today, on National [Human Trafficking Awareness Day](#), we reflect on [forced labor and human trafficking](#). Poverty renders many [children](#), women, and men vulnerable to being [trafficked](#). The reality of forced labor and human trafficking is a symptom of a culture that places economic profit above the dignity of the human person.

[Pope Francis](#) writes: “an economic system that puts profit above man” is the result of “a throw-away culture at work that considers humanity in itself, human beings, as a consumer good, which can be used and then thrown away.”

Challenge: Find out about your [slavery footprint](#) and learn about [CRS Ethical Trade](#). In your family, school or parish, use the [SHEPHERD Program Movie Guide](#) to use film to learn about the systemic problems that create the conditions for forced labor and trafficking.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

The [first reading](#) today invites us to reflect on the role of our civil leaders and their obligation to implement policies that are just and promote the common good. The moral criterion that should guide these policies is how well those who are poor and vulnerable are treated. The [Two Feet of Love in Action](#) remind us that we are called to meet immediate needs and also work for fair and just policies that can address poverty and injustice at their roots.

Challenge: Learn about [the domestic and international policies](#) that affect poverty and the Church's teaching on [poverty and the common good](#). Visit the [USCCB's Action Center](#) to join in advocacy to address causes of poverty. Say a prayer to [confront global poverty](#) and reflect on how God is calling you to share his love in your own community.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

[Work](#) is about much more than simply earning a living; it is a way of using our gifts to participate in God's creation and promote the common good. Unemployment, underemployment, and failure to uphold the [rights of workers](#) affront the dignity we have as human persons. Our faith reminds us that we should never take advantage of others and must always prioritize people over profit. This is why all workers have the right to be treated fairly, receive just wages, and to have a healthy work environment. We must work to ensure that all person's rights are respected.

Challenge: Watch the [CST101 video](#) and read this [reflection on the dignity of work and the rights of workers](#) from Bishop Dewane, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

On this [World Day of Migrants and Refugees](#), we reflect on the Gospel call to encounter our neighbor and to welcome and protect those who are fleeing violence, persecution, or abject poverty. At [ShareJourney.org](#), you can learn the stories of those who migrate, access a toolkit for prayer, education and action in your community, and take action in solidarity with migrants and refugees.

Action: How are you cultivating a [spirit of encounter](#) and [welcoming people of diverse backgrounds](#)? WeAreSaltandLight.org has resources to help. Encourage your parish religious education program or local Catholic school to participate in the 2018 [Creating on the Margins contest](#) themed “Share the Journey of Young Migrants and Refugees” (also [en Español](#)).

MONDAY, JANUARY 15

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought tirelessly to eliminate injustice and segregation from the minds and hearts of the American people. He understood that eliminating poverty is not simply a hand-out; it is restoring the respect that all persons deserve. He stated, “The dignity of the individual will flourish when

the decisions concerning his life are in his own hands, when he has the assurance that his income is stable and certain, and when he knows that he has the means to seek self-improvement." - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Where Do We Go from Here?" (1967)

Challenge: Learn about—and join—[Catholics' work to address the sin of racism](#) and end racial injustice in our communities. Read CCHD's newsletter [Helping People Help Themselves](#) to learn about real examples of communities promoting human dignity through self-determination, including economic development.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16

Our faith calls us to [care for God's creation](#). The adverse effects of [global climate change](#) devastate many poor communities who do not have the resources to protect themselves or adapt. The University of Notre Dame launched a [Global Adaptation Initiative \(ND-GAIN\)](#) that summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience. You can view a [chart](#) which illustrates that the poorer countries are most affected and the least resilient. [Our faith requires us to do our part](#) to protect our brothers and sisters and care for creation.

Challenge: Read this [story](#) about the connection between poverty and climate change in one Ethiopian community. In the U.S., communities are also responding in creative ways—for example, [one parish](#) formed Green Teams, a Ohio [high school](#) introduced new programming, and a diocese held a [Year of Creation](#). What can you do at home and in your parish community to better care for God's creation?

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17

God empowers all, especially those who are vulnerable, to stand up for themselves and protect their dignity. [Subsidiarity](#)—the participation of the people directly affected by a problem in the solution-making process—is a way for us to affirm the dignity of all persons. A key element of breaking the cycle of poverty is empowering low-income and vulnerable communities to learn how to raise their own voices and practice self-determination. In Catholic social teaching, subsidiarity is always paired with [solidarity](#). Higher powers or institutions, such as government, must provide help and resources, so that communities have the resources to address the problems that affect them.

Challenge: Read this post [from ToGoForth.org](#) on subsidiarity, solidarity, and the common good.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18

Today begins the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#), celebrated each year on January 18–25. The 2018 theme is "Your Right Hand O Lord, Glorious in Power" (Exodus 15:6). Writing on this theme, the [Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity](#) and the World Council of Churches reflect on how "personal sin and social structures of sin" as well as "poverty, violence, injustice" and addiction can distort human dignity. For the Caribbean region, whose experience of colonialism inspired this year's theme, "many of the contemporary challenges are themselves the legacy of a colonial past and slave trade." At the same time, "the right hand of God that brought the people out of slavery" continues to give hope and courage as churches working together can serve as witnesses to hope and love as they minister to those who are "most vulnerable and neglected."

Challenge: Reflect on this year's theme using [the materials](#) for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from the USCCB Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. How are you called to be a witness of unity, hope and love? How can your faith community work with others to address the structures of sin that have led to pervasive racism and inequality locally or globally?

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

The problem of poverty is very dynamic, and its solution is multi-faceted. The [Two Feet of Love in Action](#) describe two unique but complementary ways to respond to poverty in our communities. One "foot" is social justice—eliminating the root causes of poverty, and the second "foot" is charitable works—responding to the immediate needs of those who are vulnerable.

[Read about](#) the work of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Metuchen. Where do you see each of the two feet of love in action?

Action: Search for a [local community organization](#) working to end poverty. Learn about the [current policies](#) that affect poverty in our nation, and find out what you can do to help. The [Act Together](#) section of [WeAreSaltAndLight.org](#) offers many ideas.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

There are many ways to bring awareness about poverty in our communities. One creative way is through the CCHD [Creating on the Margins Contest](#). The 2018 contest theme is: "Share the Journey of Young Migrants and Refugees," in support of Pope Francis' [Share the Journey](#) campaign. This is an opportunity for youth to learn about the stories of young migrants and refugees, and use their artistic skills to communicate a message to others about our Catholic response.

Action: How can you get your local schools and parishes involved in the Creating on the Margins Contest? Who can you invite to participate?

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21

In the Eucharistic Liturgy, we are [united with the Body of Christ](#)—on the altar, and in our brothers and sisters in the assembly. Pope Francis reminds us that "if we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, as a response to the sacramental communion bestowed in the Eucharist" ([First World Day of the Poor](#)). Read about [how one parish](#) in Arizona demonstrates this connection in their Sunday worship.

Reflection: Read [Eucharist: Body of Christ, Broken for World](#). How does your participation in the Eucharistic Liturgy open your eyes and heart to contemplate the needs of your brothers and sisters in poverty, and inspire you to respond?

MONDAY, JANUARY 22

Today is the [Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children](#). We must pray and work to protect the life and dignity of all persons, including those whose lives are threatened in the womb.

You can participate in this day through prayer or through special events offered by your diocese to observe the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. At this [page](#), you can find liturgical resources for the Day of Prayer, including intercessions, homily notes, and more.

Challenge: [Read about](#) how the Diocese of Orlando is helping Catholics unite around their common concern for the life and dignity of every human person. How can you help Catholics work together to protect the sacredness of life for the unborn, those on death row, persons in poverty, and our common home?

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23

[Restorative justice](#) can help break the cycle of violence in our communities through a comprehensive response to crime that addresses the needs of victims and the community and those responsible for causing harm through healing, education, rehabilitation and community support. Our faith requires us to go to the peripheries, cross borders and reach out to our brothers and sisters in need—especially those in need of forgiveness and healing to transform their lives.

As the U.S. bishops stated: "A Catholic approach leads us to encourage models of restorative justice that seek to address crime in terms of the harm done to victims and communities, not simply as a violation of law . . . It recognizes that root causes and personal choices can both be factors in crime by understanding the need for responsibility on the part of the offender and an opportunity for their rehabilitation" ([Responsibility, Restoration, and Rehabilitation: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice](#)).

[Learn about](#) how Catholics in Chicago are putting this call to restorative justice into practice.

Reflection: How can you show God's love and mercy to those in need of healing and hope? Consider participating in your parish's or diocese's prison ministry, or join with a community organization working for restorative justice.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24

Throughout history, God journeys with his people. In a very special way [God is close to those who suffer and are marginalized](#). Pope Francis reminds us that "God's heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself 'became poor' (2 Corinthians 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor" ([Evangelii Gaudium, no. 197](#)).

Read about [how one Texas parish](#) is empowering low-income, immigrant women to address poverty in their own community.

Reflection: Watch this [video](#) and reflect on this question: What priority do those who experience poverty have in your heart?

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25

Today's Gospel reminds us that we are called to "go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" ([Mark 16:15](#)). In fact, every single time we go to Mass we are reminded of this call. Following in the footsteps of Christ, we are invited to prioritize those who are forgotten and abandoned, those who are sick and vulnerable.

Read about how [parishes in Baltimore](#) are publicly proclaiming Christ's message of peace and justice.

Reflection: How does the Gospel require us to respond to the needs of persons in poverty? What can you do to proclaim the good news of God's love today?

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

There are many who struggle daily to obtain basic means for survival, such as food, housing, employment, and healthcare. These are struggles that we cannot be indifferent to. Read these real words of people living in poverty in the U.S. "No one seems to really care whether you're eating or not." - Male, 35, Florida, household of four.

Read about how one Maryland parish [joined with the U.S. bishops to call on elected officials](#) to prioritize those in poverty in the federal budget.

Challenge: After reading real words from those in poverty, consider: What can you do today to encounter someone who is struggling with poverty? How can you reject indifference and join local efforts to address the causes of poverty?

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

Our faith calls us to open our heart and arms to those who are suffering and to empower them to "rise and walk" ([Luke 5:23](#)). We are called to cross boundaries and step over obstacles in order to meet the "other." Jesus demonstrated time and again the radical transformation that occurs with this type of personal encounter. Read the story, [Our Border Family: Hope at the Border](#), about how the El Paso and Juarez communities encounter each other, despite borders, featured on the [ToGoForth.org](#) blog.

Reflection: What boundaries do you need to cross in order to have a personal encounter with a brother or sister who is experiencing poverty? How have the two commitments you made at the beginning of this month (see Jan. 2 reflection) helped you in this process?

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

"Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. . . . 'The Church, guided by the Gospel of mercy and by love for mankind, hears the cry for justice and intends to respond to it with all her might' [[Libertatis Nuntius](#)]. In this context we can understand Jesus' command to his disciples: 'You yourselves give them something to eat!' (Mk 6:37): it means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter" ([Evangelii Gaudium, nos. 187-188](#)).

Challenge: How are you opening your heart to hear "the cry for justice"? Use [the Newspaper Prayer](#) to open your heart to hear this cry and discern how you can respond to the needs of those in your community and in the world.

MONDAY, JANUARY 29

[Discrimination](#) is still a reality for many in the United States. Systemic racism hinders many people from breaking out of the cycle of poverty. Learn about the [sin of racism](#) and how Catholics around the country are working to address it.

Challenge: What stereotype do you have that distorts your vision of someone else from a different ethnic background or culture? Read about how parishes [in St. Louis](#) are facilitating encounter and working together to address violence and racism.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30

When someone suffers from poverty, their basic rights to clean water, food, housing, employment, and vital healthcare are violated. Our faith teaches us that we have a responsibility to work together to

safeguard each person's rights. Read about the Church's teaching about our [rights and responsibilities](#), watch [this video](#), and see how [New York parishes](#) advocated for the basic right to child nutrition.

Action: Visit [WeAreSaltAndLight.org's learning activities](#) on poverty to help adults and youth learn about the causes of poverty and our responsibility to address it together.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31

Keep the conversation about poverty going with your family, in your neighborhood and parish by receiving our newsletter [Notes for Neighbors](#) and other communications by the [Department of Justice Peace and Human Development](#).

Reflection: What did you learn or reflect on during Poverty Awareness Month that was most impactful to you? How will you share it with others?



JUSTICE,
PEACE AND
HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT

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