



## POVERTY AWARENESS MONTH 2017

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 1

Today, on the World Day of Peace, Pope Francis calls us to reflect on the theme, “Non-Violence: A Style of Politics for Peace.” In [his message](#), the Holy Father urges us to walk the path of hope by safeguarding the rights and equal dignity of every person through negotiated solutions to conflict. The U.S. Catholic bishops also reflected on the work of peacemaking in the statement, [The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace](#).

**Challenge:** Use the [World Day of Peace handout](#) to reflect on how you can model and teach non-violence in your family, faith community, school, or workplace.

### MONDAY, JANUARY 2

43 million people live in poverty in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The number of people in poverty in the United States is larger than the populations of Texas, New Mexico, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Nevada, and Nebraska... combined. What is your reaction to the number of people in the U.S. in poverty? Will you remain silent? Pope Francis says, “Among our tasks as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor” (6/14/13).

**Reflection:** How can you hear “the cry of the poor”? [PovertyUSA.org](#) and [PobrezaUSA.org](#) have great resources to help you learn and educate others, take action in your community, give of your time and resources, and pray to end poverty. Be sure to share these resources—and this calendar—with others!

### TUESDAY, JANUARY 3

[Fr. Graham Golden](#), a member of a Norbertine Community in Albuquerque, was awarded the [Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award](#) for his leadership in guiding the evolution of grassroots, parish-based anti-poverty initiatives in rural communities—for example, on access to water and community safety. In his work, Graham draws from extensive experience with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, first as a [CCHD intern](#) and later as an alumnus volunteer who implemented training workshops, assisted the grants process, and preached to increase Catholics’ awareness of CCHD’s anti-poverty efforts.

**Challenge:** Can you think of any young adults (ages 18-40) who demonstrate leadership in working against poverty in the U.S.? Nominate a young adult you know for the [Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award](#).

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4

The [Catholic Campaign for Human Development \(CCHD\)](#) lives out the Gospel call to bring good news to those in poverty ([Luke 4:18](#)) by working for long-term solutions to end the root causes of poverty. [Watch this video](#) for 3 minutes on CCHD's work to eliminate the cycle of poverty for families, or [this video](#) to see some real examples of the kinds of work that CCHD funds.

**Challenge:** What do you know about poverty in your community? At [PovertyUSA.org](#), explore poverty rates by state or county with the interactive [Poverty Map](#). On the map, you can also [locate CCHD funded organizations](#) across the nation working for long-term solutions to end poverty in their communities.

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 5

"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 Jn 3:17). Today, reflect on the call to respond with compassion and mercy to those members of the Body of Christ who are most vulnerable. Let us also joyfully recall the inspiring efforts of organizations across the country working for comprehensive immigration reform, worker rights, affordable housing, economic development, racial justice, safety, and community development. In 2016-17, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) is investing over \$10 million in low-income communities around the country. One [grant recipient](#) was the [San Juan Community Home Trust](#), which works to create permanently affordable homes for low-income households on San Juan Island, just off the coast of Washington state.

**Challenge:** Check out the [Helping People Help Themselves Newsletter](#) to learn more about CCHD's work in communities around the United States.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 6

Our Catholic faith calls us all to be salt and light for the world. [WeAreSaltAndLight.org](#) equips Catholics to live out Pope Francis' call to "go forth" on mission. It also seeks to help Catholic communities—especially parishes, dioceses, schools, universities, seminaries, religious communities, and ecclesial movements— carry out the vision of the U.S. bishops' landmark document on parish social ministry, [Communities of Salt & Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish](#).

**Reflection:** What does it mean for us to be salt and light? How are you salt and light for your family? Your friends? Your community? Your church?

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 7

Many of our brothers and sisters are forced to flee their homelands to seek economic security in other lands, but once they arrive, they are often greeted with hostility and prejudice in the workplace. [Gaudium et Spes](#), a document from the Second Vatican Council, states, "When workers come from another country or district and contribute to the economic advancement of a nation or region by their labor, all discrimination as regards wages and working conditions

must be carefully avoided." Other non-immigrant minority populations in the United States, including African Americans and Native Americans, also face employment discrimination.

**Reflection:** Read about [how one faith group is addressing hiring discrimination](#) towards African Americans. Also, consider: what attitudes do you have about workers from other countries or ethnicities? Do these attitudes recognize their dignity as children of God?

## **SUNDAY, JANUARY 8**

The Epiphany of the Lord celebrates how three wise men came to offer their finest gifts to the king of kings. One gift we all possess is the gift of our voices. Like the three wise men, we can offer our own gifts--our voices speaking for justice, peace, and respect for the dignity of all people. The [USCCB Action Center](#) provides opportunities for advocacy on issues of human life and dignity such as poverty, religious liberty, and immigration.

**Reflection:** How do you offer your gifts to help bring forth God's kingdom on earth? How can you use the gift of your voice to speak for human life and dignity?

## **MONDAY, JANUARY 9**

Imagine yourself trapped in an unsafe community. The threat of gang violence is constant and you have a low-paying job that cannot provide for your family's basic needs. Should you stay and keep your family in this threatening environment or leave? Would you go on a perilous journey to seek safety and opportunities for loved ones? Today begins [National Migration Week](#). This week, reflect on the Week's theme, "Creating a Culture of Encounter," and pray about how you are called to personally "encounter" our brothers and sisters who have been forced to leave their homelands.

**Action:** What action can you take to [reach out, encounter and listen](#) to the stories of those in your own community who have fled their homelands? You can also [visit this page](#) for prayer and action materials that you can use throughout the week and beyond.

## **TUESDAY, JANUARY 10**

[Today's readings](#) are about restoration and healing, attesting to God's redeeming love for all. We are called to a Christ-like redeeming love that upholds respect for the life and dignity of all.

The Catholic approach to criminal justice reform and restorative justice begins with the fundamental recognition of the life and dignity of all persons. "Just as God never abandons us, so too we must be in covenant with one another. We are all sinners, and our response to sin and failure should not be abandonment and despair, but rather justice, contrition, reparation, and return or re-integration of all into the community" (U.S. Catholic bishops, [Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice](#)).

Punishment, therefore, must have a corrective and healing purpose oriented towards healing and rebuilding lives. We are called to uphold the dignity of inmates and victims and to overcome poverty, crime, and violence in our communities. To this end, [the U.S. bishops call](#) for a reform of the criminal justice system to promote the common good, restore a sense of

community, and resist the violence that too often engulfs much of our culture. Read the [Criminal Justice - Restorative Justice backgrounder](#) to find out more.

**Action:** [Read this story](#) about a parish in Ohio that took action after reflecting on the Catholic bishops' statement, and then consider what role your faith community might have in working towards a criminal justice system that restores community and resists violence.

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11

24% of the black population and 21% of the Hispanic population live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). [Faith communities around the country](#) in Baltimore, Dallas, Ferguson, Minneapolis, and other cities, are working for racial and economic justice for all God's children. As the diverse but united Body of Christ, let us always remember to celebrate the richness of [Cultural Diversity in the Church](#) and to ensure that the dignity of all our brothers and sisters is respected.

**Challenge:** Watch [this video](#), in which black Catholic leaders discuss the realities of race in society and in the Church.

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 12

[No Boundaries Coalition, a CCHD funded group](#), helps bring faith into conversation with the realities around them and opens doors for conversations about violence, community-police relations, and economic justice.

**Challenge:** Read about the great work of [No Boundaries Coalition](#) and check out other [Stories of Hope](#) about CCHD groups working to end poverty in the United States.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

The call to love God and neighbor has global dimensions. As Pope Francis noted in his 2016 Message for the World Day of Peace, "As creatures endowed with inalienable dignity, we are related to all our brothers and sisters, for whom we are responsible and with whom we act in solidarity. Lacking this relationship, we would be less human."

**Challenge:** [Watch this video](#) on the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, one of [seven themes of Catholic social teaching](#). As you watch, reflect on God's special love for persons who are poor and vulnerable—at home and around the world. Then take action with [Catholics Confront Global Poverty](#).

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 14

The Catholic Church brings a distinct perspective to the discussion of environmental questions, by lifting up the moral dimensions of these issues and the needs of the most vulnerable among us. This unique contribution is rooted in Catholic teaching calling us to care for creation and for "the least of these" (Mt 25:40).

[Care for Our Common Home \(Laudato Si'\)](#) is an appeal from Pope Francis addressed to "every person living on this planet" for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Pope Francis calls the Church and the world to acknowledge the urgency of our

environmental challenges and to join him in embarking on a new path. This encyclical is written with both hope and resolve, looking to our common future with candor and humility.

**Reflection:** Familiarize yourself with resources from the USCCB Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development about how we participate in caring for God's creation. A few of these include:

- [Laudato Si': Caring for Our Common Home Discussion Guide](#) | [en Español](#) - This discussion guide, for use with Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, can help small groups explore and dialogue with this important document.
- [Laudato Si': Caring for Our Common Home Bulletin Insert](#) | [en Español](#) - This one-page document is a brief introduction to the encyclical and details ways you can respond to Pope Francis' call.
- [Prayer to Care for Our Common Home](#) (based on *Laudato Si'*) | [en Español](#)
- Visit the webpage of the U.S. bishops' [Environmental Justice Program](#) and watch this [video](#) highlighting the Church's teaching on how we care for our common home.

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 15

Today is the 2017 World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Pope Francis asks us to reflect on the theme, "[Child Migrants, the Vulnerable and the Voiceless.](#)" In his message, he seeks "to draw attention to the reality of child migrants, especially the ones who are alone." The Holy Father urges all people of good will, faith communities, governments, and institutions to "take care of the young, who in a threefold way are defenseless: they are children, they are foreigners, and they have no means to protect themselves. I ask everyone to help those who, for various reasons, are forced to live far from their homeland and are separated from their families."

**Action:** Visit the USCCB Migration and Refugee Services page on [unaccompanied migrant children](#) and consider how your faith community might be called to respond.

## MONDAY, JANUARY 16

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke prophetically about eliminating injustice for people who live in poverty and who face prejudice and discrimination. He recognized the need to transform the social structures that enable injustice: "We are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring" ("Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," delivered April 4, 1967).

**Challenge:** Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called attention to unjust structures that plagued society such as racism and poverty and was a great voice for social change. Be inspired by his famous [Letter from Birmingham Jail](#) and check out this insightful [Reflection Guide to the Letter from Birmingham Jail](#).

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 17

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) [Multimedia Youth Contest](#) is a tool to engage young people in grades 7-12 in learning about poverty in the U.S., its root causes, and faith-inspired efforts to address those causes. This year's theme is "Being Neighbors in Our Common Home." By encouraging young people to stand in [solidarity](#) with those who live in poverty, we remember that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

**Action:** Encourage your local school or parish to participate in the [Multimedia Youth Contest](#). See past winning entries [here](#).

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18

During this [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#), Christians of many denominations pray together for visible Christian unity, seeking to move towards the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper "that they all may be one" (cf. John 17:21). Also part of our work for unity are ecumenical efforts for justice. Love challenges us to work together—often across faith lines—to combat the injustices that affect members of the Body of Christ. [Economic Justice for All](#), a statement written by the U.S. Catholic Bishops in 1986, states, "No one can claim the name of Christian and be comfortable in the face of hunger, homelessness, insecurity, and injustice found in this country and the world." [Learn more about encountering and working together](#) with our brothers and sisters of other denominations and faiths.

**Reflection:** If I "claim the name of Christian," what does this mean about my relationship to those who are poor? What does it mean in regards to my relationship with other Christian denominations and the responsibility we all have to work together on poverty and other issues?

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

We all have [rights and responsibilities](#). Every person has a fundamental [right to life](#) and a right to things required for [human dignity](#). Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to our larger society. Watch the [Meet Mary video](#) to see an example of how the Catholic Campaign for Human Development helps communities work to preserve basic rights and responsibilities.

**Reflection:** What rights of others are being violated in your local and global community? What kind of responsibilities do you have to uphold the rights of others—particularly of those who are most vulnerable?

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

Through Baptism, we are incorporated into Christ's body and part of the People of God. Christ's disciples "share the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world" (Second Vatican Council, [Lumen Gentium](#)).

The sacraments call us forth to live out our Christian mission by incorporating us into Christ and his Church. This recognition of Christ's presence in our communities should lead to a stronger awareness of being sent on mission to engage in concrete, love-inspired action in the world.

Want to learn more about how the celebration of the sacraments is connected to our social mission as followers of Christ? Read for free online or order print copies of [Sacraments and Social Mission](#). This booklet is very handy for parish catechesis, religious education, and sacramental preparation.

**Reflection:** Reflect as an individual or with your family on [Baptism: Incorporated into Christ's Body, Sent on Christ's Mission](#).

## **SATURDAY, JANUARY 21**

Catholic faith communities around the country are building peace and working for racial justice. Study this USCCB backgrounder on [Racism: Confronting the Poison in Our Common Home](#) and during your prayer time, reflect on one or more of the [statements and reflections from the U.S. Catholic bishops on racism](#). Read about what others are doing and consider how your parish, school or community can get involved.

**Action:** With your family, friends, or other community, pray this [Prayer for Peace in Our Communities](#). Discuss how you are called to confront the sin of racism.

## **SUNDAY, JANUARY 22**

The Mass ends with an invitation to go and announce the Gospel of the Lord. Pope Francis takes this calling seriously, saying "all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel" ([Evangelii Gaudium](#)).

The [Two Feet of Love in Action](#) is a model used by the U.S. Catholic bishops and numerous dioceses around the country to describe two distinct but complementary ways we can put faith in action.

**Challenge:** How do you announce the Gospel of the Lord in your daily life? Which "foot" is it easier for you to put into action? How can you better develop your weaker foot? Read [togoforth.org](#), a blog inspired by Pope Francis' challenge and our baptismal call to love God and neighbor, for ideas about how we can put faith in action.

## **MONDAY, JANUARY 23**

Today is the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. The U.S. bishops noted in [Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics](#), "Both as Americans and as followers of Christ, American Catholics must be committed to the defense of life in all its stages in every condition" Let us pray together for respect for life in our own country.

**Action:** Offer an extra prayer, fast, or sacrifice today as an act of solidarity with those who are not yet born, those who are young and old, those who live in wealth and those who live in poverty, and for all those whose life or dignity is endangered.

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 24

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis writes: "Families should not see themselves as a refuge from society, but instead go forth from their homes in a spirit of solidarity with others. . . A married couple who experience the power of love know that this love is called to bind the wounds of the outcast, to foster a culture of encounter and to fight for justice. God has given the family the job of 'domesticating' the world and helping each person to see fellow human beings as brothers and sisters" (nos. 181, 183).

[Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice](#) is a reflection from the U.S. Catholic bishops about how we can put faith in action in everyday life. We are called to form our children as disciples committed to Christ's mission of love and mercy. [Read this reflection](#) from our blog, ToGoForth.org, for ideas about how families can pray and act for justice for all people.

**Reflection:** How do you foster social justice and concern for people in poverty in your family? What can you do [as a family](#) to pray and act for justice for all people?

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25

In today's Gospel, Jesus says to the Apostles: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel" (Mk 16:15). For Pope Francis, "Bringing the Gospel is bringing God's power to pluck up and break down evil and violence, to destroy and overthrow the barriers of selfishness, intolerance and hatred, so as to build a new world" (7/28/13, Homily for World Youth Day).

[Catholic social teaching](#) emphasizes God's special love and concern for our brothers and sisters whose lives or dignity are threatened. Jesus himself modeled this special attention for people who were hungry, rejected, living in poverty, or experiencing other marginalization.

**Action:** [Learn more about](#) the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. How can you, your family, and your faith community live out this special concern for those who are poor and vulnerable?

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 26

Today is the [National Prayer Vigil for Life](#) at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Saint Pope John Paul II, in the encyclical [Christifideles Laici](#), emphasizes that "the Church has never yielded in the face of all the violations that the right to life of every human being has received...The human being is entitled to such rights *in every phase of development*, from conception until natural death; and in every *condition*, whether healthy or sick, whole or handicapped, rich or poor." Our call to justice for those who live in poverty is inextricably intertwined with respect for life.

**Reflection:** How are work to respect life and work for social justice intertwined? How are both responding to our Gospel call?

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 27

As our country gets older and the baby boomer population ages, we are thankful for programs like Social Security and Medicare. These programs help to keep the majority of the elderly



population out of poverty. According to the Supplemental Poverty Measure of the U.S. Census Bureau, 13.7% of senior citizens are in poverty; however, without Social Security 49.7% of senior citizens would be in poverty (2015).

Check out the PovertyUSA.org [Snapshots of Poverty](#) to get a small glimpse of the life of an elderly woman in poverty.

Government programs like Social Security, Medicare, and SNAP are responsible for large-scale reductions in poverty in the U.S. We must be aware of the limited yet crucial role that government plays in alleviating poverty in the U.S. The U.S. bishops, in the statement [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#), state that our policy goals should “encourage families, community groups, economic structures, and government to work together to overcome poverty, pursue the common good, and care for creation, with full respect for individuals and groups and their right to address social needs in accord with their basic moral and religious convictions.”

**Reflection:** Do I take seriously my responsibility as a citizen and disciple to advocate for policies that respect the life and dignity of the human person?

#### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 28**

There are many myths about poverty in the U.S. that can deceive us about the identity of those living in poverty. Here are some facts:

2.5 million people in the U.S. work full-time, year-round, and are still living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

In every state, for every 100 “extremely low-income” households, there are less than 31 units of available and affordable rental housing ([National Low-Income Housing Coalition](#), 2016).

Women are more likely to be poor and more likely to be in “deep poverty” (with an income less than half of the federal poverty line). 28% of households headed by a single woman are below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

**Challenge:** Take the [Poverty Quiz](#) to find out what you know about poverty.

#### **SUNDAY, JANUARY 29**

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls “blessed” those who are poor, hungry, merciful, and peace-making ([Mt 5:1-12A](#)). The Beatitudes challenge all of us to consider how we, too, can be “blessed.” For inspiration, [read this reflection](#) about the “blessed” work of two religious sisters in Nogales, AZ, near the U.S.-Mexico border.

**Reflection:** How are you, together with others in your family or faith community, called to live out the Beatitudes in your daily life?

## MONDAY, JANUARY 30

Want to stay updated and educated about poverty in the U.S.? Sign up for the [Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development](#) newsletter [Notes for Neighbors](#). Follow the Catholic Campaign for Human Development on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

We have an important role to play in creating a culture and community that cares for the dignity of all of its members. Social media is an incredible tool to spread your passion for social justice, to help connect people to information and resources, and to motivate others to take action to end the injustices in our communities.

**Challenge:** Post about one of the above resources on Facebook or Tweet about a social justice issue in your community. You never know the impact or influence your passion can make!

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 31

In the apostolic exhortation, [The Joy of the Gospel](#), Pope Francis calls for a "church which is poor and for the poor." Pope Francis knows we have much to learn about how to be in solidarity with those who live in poverty. "We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voices to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them." Click here to explore more [Pope Francis Quotes by topic](#) on social justice issues.

As we end Poverty Awareness Month may we never forget this invitation and our Christian commitment to live in solidarity with all our brothers and sisters. Let us build relationships with one another and live out the Gospel call.

**Challenge:** Thank you for your active participation in Poverty Awareness Month. Don't let your work for justice stop here. Please continue to pray, learn, act, and advocate for justice for all.

### **Stay Connected:**

[Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development](#)

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