



FIGHTING POVERTY AND PROMOTING PEACE IN OUR FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND COMMON HOME

In word and deed, Pope Francis lifts up the plight of people living in poverty. He challenges us to go forth and serve those at the margins while fighting for a more just and equitable world that excludes no one.

All people have a right to food, shelter, security, and work, as well as a responsibility to ensuring others' human needs are met as well. Every day in every corner of the world, the Catholic Church--Catholic Charities, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Relief Services, and thousands of schools, hospitals, parishes, and NGOs--does this work to draw a 'Circle of Protection' around the 'least of these.'

The federal budget includes powerful and effective life-saving antipoverty programs that protect vulnerable people and families as well.

INTERNATIONAL	DOMESTIC
<p>The United States Government supports international development and humanitarian programs in many countries in the developing world. The Catholic Church does not support all U.S. international assistance programs, but places a priority on poverty-reduction programs that save lives, reduce crushing poverty, and build peace and security in the world.</p> <p>Contrary to popular perceptions that international assistance is 20% of the federal budget, it is only about one-half percent (0.6%) of the budget.</p> <p>Disaster assistance addresses the plight of refugees fleeing war in Syria and Iraq, treats disease outbreaks like Ebola, and helps victims of natural disasters like typhoons in the Philippines. It has saved thousands of lives. International development assistance protects human dignity by helping people work their way out of poverty. It is an investment in long-term peace and stability that cannot be gained by military action alone. These programs protect health, provide access to water and education, and help farmers produce more food and connect to markets.</p> <p>Other programs promote good governance and democracy, strengthen civil society, build peace, and address the root causes of conflict. In the long run these programs avoid the outbreak of violence and create a more secure world.</p> <p>Congress should continue funding these critical humanitarian and development programs that provide security and opportunity for some of the most vulnerable people in the world.</p>	<p>In the richest and most prosperous country in the world, over 45 million people live in poverty.</p> <p>The younger you are, the more likely you are to live in poverty. One in five children live below the poverty line; and 23% of all children under six do.</p> <p>Over 16 million children live in food-insecure households. Programs such as SNAP (food stamps); Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); School Lunches; and other food assistance are effective and must be protected to fight poverty and hunger.</p> <p>Our country has an affordable housing crisis. Housing is a human right, yet only 1 in 4 households that needs assistance actually gets it. Government programs like homelessness assistance, public housing, housing for the elderly and people with disabilities, and other housing and community development programs help fill this gap and should be supported.</p> <p>Decent work at a just wage is critical for healthy families and communities. The government supports work by funding workforce development, re-entry of the formerly incarcerated, and other initiatives that create decent jobs in communities.</p> <p>The most effective tools to fight child poverty are the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. Taken together, they decrease child poverty by over 6%. Recent expansions that have saved millions more from poverty should be protected.</p>



CATHOLIC TEACHING ON POVERTY AND THE COMMON GOOD

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. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 187)

... Jesus' command to his disciples: "You yourselves give them something to eat!" (*Mk 6:37*)... 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.... (no. 188)

The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of society, but because society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it, and which can only lead to new crises. (no. 202)

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature. (*Laudato Si'*, no. 139)

On the international level, inequality of resources and economic capability is such that it creates a real "gap" between nations. On the one side there are those nations possessing and developing the means of growth and, on the other, those accumulating debts. Various causes of a religious, political, economic, and financial nature today give "the social question a worldwide dimension." There must be solidarity among nations which are already politically interdependent. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2437-38)

Our nation is failing many of our children. Our world is a hostile and dangerous place for millions of children.... We seek to shape a society--and a world--with a clear priority for families and children in need and to contribute to the development of policies that help families protect their children's lives and overcome the moral, social, and economic forces that threaten their future. (*Putting Children and Families First*, from the Introduction)

In the Catholic tradition, concern for the poor is advanced by individual and common action, works of charity, efforts to achieve a more just social order, the practice of virtue, and the pursuit of justice in our own lives. It requires action to confront structures of injustice that leave people poor. (*A Place at the Table*, pg. 14)

The table we seek for all rests on these four institutions, or legs: (1) what families and individuals can do, (2) what community and religious institutions can do, (3) what the private sector can do, and (4) what the government can do to work together to overcome poverty.... The Catholic way is to recognize the essential role and the complementary responsibilities of families, communities, the market, and government to work together to overcome poverty and advance human dignity. (*A Place at the Table*, pg. 18)

The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that larger institutions in society should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions, yet larger institutions have essential responsibilities when the more local institutions cannot adequately protect human dignity, meet human needs, and advance the common good. (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 48)