The New U.S. Poverty Statistics and Our Catholic Response

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Pope Francis

... the times talk to us of so much poverty in the world and this is a scandal. Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons. Poverty today is a cry.

June 7, 2013
Most major stats remained unchanged (and that’s bad news)

- poverty rate 15 percent... 46.5 million people
- child poverty 21.8 percent... 16 million
- 34 percent of the country’s total population lived in or near poverty

Stats hide severe pain...

- Over 20 million people lived in deep poverty--less than $11,500/year.

- For the bulk of people and families living in poverty, their pain is deep and they are far from secure.
Stats hide severe racial and ethnic disparities...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Median Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>$68,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>$57,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>$33,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>$39,005</td>
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</tbody>
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Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012, Figure 1.
Federal Antipoverty Programs

Effect on Poverty of Select Programs

- Social Security: -8.3
- Refundable tax credits: -2.8
- Food Stamps (SNAP): -1.5
- SSI: -1.1
- Unemployment: -1.1
- Housing subsidies: -0.9
- TANF: -0.3
- School lunch: -0.3
- WIC: -0.1
- Medical out of Pocket: 3.4

The Research Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2011
Income and Inequality

“Most people want to live in a more equal society that provides opportunities for growth and development. The current imbalances are not inevitable, but demand boldness in promoting a just economy that reduces inequality by creating jobs that pay a living wage and share with workers some profits of the company.”

-Bishop Stephen Blaire

2013 Labor Day Statement
Household Income of Select Percentiles

“No consideration of the problems associated with development could fail to highlight the direct link between poverty and unemployment. In many cases, poverty results from a violation of the dignity of human work, either because work opportunities are limited (through unemployment or underemployment), or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family.”

-Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, No. 63
work opportunities are limited...

- Real unemployment rate of 13.7%.
- **11 million unemployed, 3.7 million job openings**--over 3 job seekers for every 1 available job.
  - Add in the 8 million part-timers who want full-time work, there’s over 5 job seekers for every 1 available job.

a low value is put on work...

- A married couple with one child and a minimum wage job ($15,080) lives below the poverty line ($18,500).
- **There are 10.4 million “working poor.”** That’s over seven percent of the entire workforce--the largest percentage of the workforce on record.

“The FAST Story”
By
Parisrice Robinson, Member
St. Joseph Catholic Church
St. Petersburg, Florida
September 19, 2013

Faith and Action for Strength Together (FAST)
Problem

- In 2011, we repeatedly heard that people were struggling to get jobs. Especially people who have a criminal record, even if it was only for driving without a license or being caught with drugs when they were a teenager.

- At our October Annual Assembly, 500 of our leaders voted to work on jobs, and in particular, ex-offender jobs.
Unemployment Data

Pinellas: 7.6% or 70,000; and 140,000 Underemployed

2011 Pinellas County Estimated Unemployment Statistics
Solution:

Look for Best Practices Across the Country

- We looked for best practice solutions across the country.

- We found other cities had been successful at using city dollars to put local residents back to work.

- These cities created a local hiring ordinance to require contractors to hire a certain number of unemployed people on city jobs.

- The City of St. Petersburg (Pinellas County) is spending over $90 million of tax payer money in the coming year on a new Pier, Police station, and sewers. This is a historic amount of construction that could be used to put local people to work.

- So, we knew we wanted St. Petersburg to create a hiring ordinance that would require contractors to try and hire ex-offenders and other local unemployed people.
Stay Active and Stay Tuned!

‘None of us can say, ‘I have nothing to do with this, they govern. . . .’ No, no, I am responsible for their governance, and I have to do the best so that they govern well, and I have to do my best by participating in politics according to my ability. Politics, according to the Social Doctrine of the Church, is one of the highest forms of charity, because it serves the common good. I cannot wash my hands, eh? We all have to give something!’”

-Pope Francis, September 16, 2013

- Povertyusa.org updated soon!
- More resources and action alerts from JPHD. Sign up for Notes for Neighbors to stay informed.