



## POVERTY AWARENESS MONTH 2020

### WEDNESDAY, 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 Pope St. 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’ [2020 message](#). How does his message challenge you? End your reflection time with one of the [prayers for peace](#) and consider how you can work to build peace in your community, school or parish.

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 2

The [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) (CCHD) has been working for 50 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 [video](#) to learn more about the complexity of poverty in the United States. Then, visit [PovertyUSA.org](#) to discover more about poverty in your community and how we can work together to upend the cycle of poverty.

**Challenge:** Read about the work of the [United Workers Association](#) and other groups that receive funding from CCHD.

### FRIDAY, 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 might be called the children of God” (1 John 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 offers us the opportunity to work together to address poverty.

Join us in Washington, D.C. for the [Catholic Social Ministry Gathering](#) on Jan. 25-28 to learn more about to how we as a Church are called to dialogue and witness to unity as we work together towards the common good on issues impacting life and human dignity across the spectrum such as the death penalty, human trafficking, restorative justice, maternal and child health, and more.

**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](#) and 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.

#### SATURDAY, JANUARY 4

Today is the feast of [St. Elizabeth Ann Seton](#), the first canonized U.S. citizen. She was born in 1774 to an Episcopal family. She converted to Catholicism in 1805 after living in Italy with her husband. After her husband passed away, she was left a widow with five children at the age of 30, rejected by many family and friends because of her conversion. In 1809, Elizabeth began the first female religious order in the United States, the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph. She opened St. Joseph's Academy, a tuition-free school, to educate children living in poverty. Her work laid the foundation for the [American Catholic school system](#). To this day, her order continues her legacy of charity and education throughout the world.

**Reflection:** Women religious have played a significant role in the social ministry of the Catholic Church in the U.S. How can you follow the example of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in courageously following God's plan in your life and God's call to care for God's children? [Read more about](#) how parishes and communities are working together to address poverty and injustice.

#### SUNDAY, JANUARY 5

The Gospel reminds us that we are called to root our lives of faith in the authentic love of neighbor. "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 reflects on this call when he 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 this [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 and their sister parish in Nicaragua help each other in times of need in this [We are Salt and Light success story](#).

## MONDAY, JANUARY 6

Today is the first day of [National Migration Week](#). The 2020 theme is “Promoting a Church and a World for All.” There are many [factors](#) that have contributed to the displacement of [70.8 million people](#) throughout the world. Nearly one person is forcibly displaced every two seconds somewhere in the world. Some of the causes of this humanitarian crisis include war, violence, economic security, and climate crisis.

**Challenge:** Visit the USCCB’s [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.

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 7

For many migrants, their struggles don’t end when they make it to their new countries. Many face prejudice, hatred, inhumane treatment and much more. Many face extreme poverty for themselves and their communities. Poverty is not a catch-phrase—it is a serious reality that many are living. Over 38 million people live below the poverty line in the United States. Our faith challenges us to respond to the needs of those who are most vulnerable

**Challenge:** Are you familiar with the facts about those living in poverty in the United States? Learn facts about [U.S. Poverty](#) and make two specific commitments to address poverty in your community this month, keeping in mind the life and dignity of the human person.

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8

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. [Ana Chavarin](#) was the 2019 Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award recipient for her leadership at the CCHD funded-group Pima County Interfaith as they mobilized migrant families and faith communities to impact the issues that affect them. How can you get involved in your parish’s efforts to address poverty?

**Challenge:** Can you think of any young adults (aged 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 [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 low-income persons in our communities.

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 9

[The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers](#) is a theme of Catholic Social Teaching that is directly related to the migrant experience, especially here in the US. Groups like the [Don Bosco Workers](#) work to

help migrants know their rights and create a just working environment where their life and dignity is upheld and respected.

[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 persons' 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, former Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 10

The CCHD [Creating on the Margins](#) Art Contest invites young Catholics to reflect on and respond to poverty in their communities. In a recent year, the contest theme focused on Sharing the Journey of migrants and refugees. Watch [these films](#) and learn from [these photos](#) created by very talented youth who are passionate about the well-being of the world's migrants and refugees. Reflect on these pieces of art and think of ways you can welcome the stranger in your community.

**Action:** How can you get your local schools and parishes involved in the [Creating on the Margins Contest](#)? This year, the theme of the contest is ["More than a Roof"](#) and participants are invited to reflect on the national crisis in affordable housing and homelessness and how it affects their community. Who can you invite to participate?

## SATURDAY, 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 itself, human beings, as a consumer good, which can be used and then thrown away."

**Challenge:** Find out about your [slavery footprint](#) and learn more about [how your purchases](#) can empower people experiencing poverty. In your family, school or parish, use the [SHEPHERD Program Movie Guide](#) to learn about the systemic problems that create the conditions for forced labor and trafficking.

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 12

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 aboard 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 the grace we receive through Baptism challenge us to follow in Christ’s footsteps to “*to bring about 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. Learn more about [the Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) and how it seeks to live out this call and break the cycle of poverty.

### MONDAY, JANUARY 13

When someone experiences 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:** Explore [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.

### TUESDAY, JANUARY 14

“Local individuals and groups can make a real difference. We are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land. . . . Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds” (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [[Laudato Si’](#)], nos. 179, 219).

People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens: “responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation.” (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [[Evangelii Gaudium](#) ], no. 220, quoting United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#), no. 13).

[How we organize our society](#) -- in economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The church teaches that every person has a right and a duty to [participate in society](#), seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

**Challenge:** What are you doing in your family and community to encourage others to participate, especially in the work to address the systems and structures that keep people in poverty? Look at the resources for [Faithful Citizenship](#) to learn more about what you can do to make a difference in your community.

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15

Our faith calls us to [care for God's creation](#) and address the adverse effects of [global climate change](#) that 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. The matrix created illustrates that the poorer countries are the most affected and the least resilient. 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 Filipino community. In the U.S., communities are also responding to the creative ways—for example, one parish formed [Green Teams](#), an 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?

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 16

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, especially at home in our communities. 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 about how the Sisters of Mercy of South Central and the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word co-sponsor [ARISE](#), an organization that enables community members in South Texas to accomplish their goals, supporting and maintaining the agency of immigrants.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 17

The problem of poverty is very dynamic and its solution is multi-faceted. [The Two Feet of Love in Action](#) describes 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. [Watch this video](#) to learn more and reflect on the ways you can walk with two feet of love in action.

**Action:** Search for a [local community organization](#) working to end poverty and find out how you can get involved. Learn about the [current policies](#) that affect poverty in our nation.

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 18

Today begins the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#), celebrated each year on January 18-25. The 2020 theme is [“They Showed Us Unusual Kindness” \(Acts 28:2\)](#). Chosen by the Christian community from the churches in Malta and Gozo (Christians Together in Malta), the theme reminds us of the perilous journey

St. Paul experienced as he traveled to Malta as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. It invites Christians to reflect on the stories of migrants who face even more dangerous journeys in search of peace and safety and ask ourselves: are we indifferent to the struggles many migrants face or do we show “unusual kindness” and act as witnesses to God’s loving providence to all people?

**Challenge:** As one [example](#) of Christian unity promoting justice, read this joint report from Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services and the USCCB on reuniting families at the border between the U.S. and Mexico. Who are the fellow Christians in your communities, your work, school, and friendships, and how can you work together?

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 19

Today, 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 the 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.

## MONDAY, JANUARY 20

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 that a hand-out; it is restoring the respect that all persons deserve. Read more from Dr. King’s 1967 speech [“Where Do We Go From Here?”](#)

**Challenge:** Learn about—and join—[Catholics in the work to address the sin of racism](#) and end racial injustice in our communities. [Everyone Belongs](#), a new book from USCCB and Loyola Press tells the story of children who were inspired by their faith to respond to racism in a powerful way. Order it [now](#).

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 21

[Venerable Fr. Augustus Tolton](#) was the first African American to be ordained a priest in the United States. A former slave who was baptized and raised Catholic, Tolton studied formally in Rome and led the development and construction of St. Monica’s Catholic Church as a black “National Parish Church” in the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1893. “Good Father Gus,” as he was called by many, dedicated himself to ministering to his parishioners, many of whom were living in poverty, and empowered them with the Gospel message of peace and justice through adult religious education classes and catechism classes. Fr. Tolton’s simple example of perseverance and faith in a time of adversity and difficulty is an incredible example for us and the lives we are called to live now.

**Challenge:** Learn more about [Fr. Tolton and other inspiring holy men and women](#) who worked courageously to address racism in their communities and say [this prayer](#) to address the sin of racism.

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22

Today is the [Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of the Unborn](#). [Read](#) about the connection between abortion and poverty and how our call to create a culture of life is tied to our call to empower those living in poverty. We must work together to protect the life and dignity of all persons, at every stage of life, promoting rights for all.

Later this week, Catholic leaders from across the country will gather in Washington, D.C. for [the 2020 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering](#) where we will explore how we as Church are called to witness to unity as we work together to promote a consistent ethic of life. [Learn more!](#) There is still time to join us on January 25-28 as we pray, learn, and advocate for life and justice for all.

**Pray:** 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.

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

Throughout our lives, God accompanies us. 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 Philadelphia parish](#) is empowering low-income, immigrant families to address poverty in their own community.

**Reflection:** Watch this [video](#) and reflect: What priority do those who experience poverty have in my heart? How am I promoting their rights?

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

[Poverty disproportionately impacts the elderly](#). Due to rising costs of healthcare, the 2018 supplemental poverty measure determined that 13.6% of people who are over the age of 65 live in poverty. Read about how the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) funded organizations such as the [Massachusetts Senior Action Council](#) have organized around issues such as healthcare, transportation, and voter engagement that are often challenging for the elderly to access, trapping them in a cycle of poverty.

**Challenge:** Take our [Poverty Quiz](#) and see what you have learned about poverty and the systems and structures that impact our communities. Then, discover [a local CCHD funded group](#) in your area and get involved in the work to end the cycle of poverty. Also, take the moment to pray for the protection of all lives, from conception to natural death.



## SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

Many face barriers to breaking the cycle of poverty due to discrimination or racism. Read and reflect on the U.S. bishops' new pastoral letter against racism, [Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love](#). We are called to confront the evil of racism and journey together towards the conversion of hearts, minds, and institutions. How is this letter calling you to conversion? What stereotypes do you have that distort your vision of members of your local and global community?

**Challenge:** Reflect and learn more about how you can address injustice with the [accompanying educational and pastoral resources](#) for the pastoral letter. Resources include a [new study guide](#) for individuals or groups, a bulletin insert, prayer materials, background information on systemic racism and activities for primary, secondary, and higher education classroom settings.

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 26

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus tell us "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Mt. 4:17](#)). In fact, every single time we go to Mass we are reminded that Christ came to fulfill God's promises of peace and justice. 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?

## MONDAY, JANUARY 27

Nearly one in four people in the United States with a disability live in poverty. Read about [Living Hope: A Voice for the Vulnerable](#). CCHD provides funds to help Living Hope empower members of the disability community. They work to not only provide wheelchairs, safety, and community to people experiencing poverty and disability, but they also work to give them a voice and place in society.

**Reflection:** What gives you hope in God's mercy? How can you use this hope to serve others? How can you join local efforts to empower those living in poverty in your community? Learn more about our call to have a preferential [option for the Poor and Vulnerable](#) and reflect on how you can empower the poor and vulnerable in your community.

## TUESDAY, 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.

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29

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, “In service of the poor, there is no room for competition. Rather, we should humbly recognize that the Spirit is the source of our actions that reveal God’s closeness and his answer to our prayers.” 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?

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

[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 healing and forgiveness 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 are putting this call to [restorative justice](#) into practice and opposing [capital punishment](#).

**Reflection:** How can you show God’s love and mercy to those in need of healing and hope? Are there any relationships in your life that need to be healed and restored? Consider participating in your parish’s or diocese’s prison ministry or join with a community organization working for restorative justice.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

As we conclude Poverty Awareness Month, let us pause for a moment and reflect with Bishop David P. Talley of Memphis, former-chair of the CCHD Subcommittee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development:

“As disciples of Christ, we are invited to encounter those in our communities who experience poverty. Poverty in the United States is a reality. We must work together to put faith in action to work towards policies in our local communities, and nationally, that can help address it.”

Keep the conversation about poverty going with your family, in your neighborhood, and your parish by signing up to receive our newsletter [Notes for Neighbors](#) and other communications by the [Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development](#). Continue to learn more about Poverty in the United States and how you can work together with those experiencing poverty in your community by visiting [PovertyUSA.org](#).

**Reflection:** What did you learn or reflect on during Poverty Awareness Month that was most impactful to you? How are you called to work with others to address Poverty?



Copyright © 2019, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

All rights reserved. This text may be reproduced in whole or in part without alteration for nonprofit educational use, provided such reprints are not sold and include this notice.