OPENING PRAYER: Together, pray, “Call Us Forth.”

WATCH: “CST 101: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable” on YouTube.

PRAY WITH SCRIPTURE:
Read this Scripture passage twice. Invite participants to reflect silently after it is read the first time.

“There will be jubilation in the skies, and peace on earth for God’s people. The angel said, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.’ And she said, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy child shall be called the Son of God’” (Luke 1:26-35)

SHARE:
Who are Jesus’ “least” brothers and sisters in your community and around the world today?

REFLECT ON TRADITION:
Read these passages aloud.

“The Church’s love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition. This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. . . . ‘Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense and liberation.’”

—Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 2444 and 2448, quoting The Hundredth Year (Centimus Annus), no. 57, and Freedom of Conscience (Libertatis Conscientia), no. 68
“The poor not only suffer injustice, they also struggle against it! . . . [Solidarity] means that the lives of all take priority over the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means fighting against the structural causes of poverty and inequality; of the lack of work, land and housing; and of the denial of social and labor rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced dislocation, painful emigration, human trafficking, drugs, war, violence and all those realities that many of you suffer and that we are all called upon to transform . . . Love for the poor is at the center of the Gospel.”

—Pope Francis, Address to the First World Meeting of Popular Movements

DISCUSS:

■ How does Jesus’ own poverty, and the witness of his encounter with the “other,” challenge you?

■ When have you felt inspired by the work of people living in poverty to transform the causes of injustice? How can you join or support their efforts?

ACT:

Read the stories of Syrian refugees who have fled to Europe in search of a better life and learn about Catholic Relief Services’ response with the support of Catholics in the United States. How are you called to stand with those who are vulnerable?

SEND:

We ask for the intercession of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, that we might never fail to recognize and encounter Jesus in what she called his “most distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor.” Amen

Visit crs.org/CST-101 or usccb.org/cst for all CST 101 resources, including the prayers, stories and videos linked to in these discussion guides.

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