

Ending Poverty In Community
A Toolkit for Young Advocates

Lesson 5
EPIC Action Project: Identifying Community Needs

Overview

Our Catholic faith compels us to respond to the needs of our neighbor. Yet, as revealed in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, it is sometimes difficult for us to “see” our neighbor in need. In Lesson 5, participants will begin the EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) social action project by seeing their community through the lens of Catholic social teaching and identifying a need they can help to address. Lesson 6 challenges participants to reflect on how they will work together to respond to the community need they identified and guides them in developing an action plan to help make a difference in breaking the cycle of poverty.



Objectives

- Participants will learn about Catholic social teaching as a lens through which to view their communities and community needs.
- Through an interactive group process, participants will identify what they believe to be the most important community needs that they can address.

Materials Checklist

Click [here](#) for a list of materials required for this lesson.

Part I: Opening Prayer/Warm-up

(Estimated Time: 10 minutes)

Before the session begins, place a lit candle, dark sunglasses, and a Bible opened to Luke 16:19-31 (The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus) on a small table in the meeting room.

Ask a volunteer to proclaim the Gospel [Luke 16: 19-31](#). Challenge participants to put themselves in the shoes of one of the people in the Gospel story and to imagine how that person must have felt. After the Gospel is proclaimed, ask participants to consider the following questions for large group discussion or silent reflection:

- *Did you put yourself on the side of Lazarus or the rich man in this story? How did you feel?*
- *For whom is Jesus' message intended in this parable? The poor? The rich? Both?*
- *Why didn't the rich person see Lazarus at the gate?*
- *Was the rich man condemned because of his wealth?*
- *Who is Lazarus in my community?*
- *Why do you think we placed a pair of dark sunglasses on the table? What do they represent?*

Part II: Activity – Identifying Community Needs

(Estimated Times: 30 minutes)

The previous four lessons were designed to help participants understand the scope of poverty as a national issue and how our faith calls on each of us to respond. In the final two lessons of this curriculum, participants are challenged to work with their peers to put their faith into practice through a social action project called EPIC – Ending Poverty In Community.

In this activity, participants consider some of the basic elements of Catholic social teaching and use a set of questions to see their communities through new eyes. They are then encouraged to identify community needs they believe should be addressed – and to select one that they will commit to work on.

Note: This lesson is best used in conjunction with Lesson 6, in which participants go the next step and design an action project that they can implement either individually or as a large group to address the need they identified in this lesson.

Begin by distributing the [Identifying Community Needs](#) handout so every participant receives a copy. Read the first page together. Then facilitate a large group discussion in which students begin to discuss the themes of Catholic social teaching. Allow no more than 10 minutes for this portion of the activity. The facilitator may ask questions for participants to reflect on and share, such as:

- What do you normally think of when you hear the phrase “injustice?”
- Are there injustices that you see in our community?
- What insights do the themes of Catholic social teaching add to our thinking about these community issues?
- Which of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching is the most challenging for you individually? For our community? Why?

Now divide participants into small groups of three or four. Ask each small group to read and discuss each of the questions in Part I (on page 2) of the “Identifying Community Needs” handout and to write their responses in the space provided. After they have completed this process, each group should respond to the Part II: Reflection Questions at the bottom of the handout and identify the greatest need they believe exists in the community. Tell participants that they will be sharing their responses with the large group later in this activity.

Note: This lesson provides a wonderful opportunity to invite a CCHD director from your diocese or a representative from a local CCHD-funded organization to speak to your class/group after the participants complete this activity. If there is a time constraint, you can shorten the activity to give the speaker time to share with the group. The speaker can make a presentation to your group regarding the community needs they have identified and are addressing. In communication with the CCHD diocesan director, encourage the guest speaker to lift up any significant, local needs that may still remain invisible to your class following their brainstorming. Being able to do so would help to illustrate how we all overlook injustice in our communities just as the rich man overlooked Lazarus.

Part III: Reflection

(Estimated Time: 20 minutes with discussion)

Proclaim again the following Gospel passage:

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores.”

This lesson has challenged participants to ask, “Who is Lazarus among us?” Now ask a representative from each small group to present their answers to the “Part II: Reflection Questions” to the large group. The facilitator should record the responses for all to see on a white board or on poster paper. Combine similar responses to avoid repetition. Save participant responses written on this paper for Lesson 6.

Additional Resources

Click here for [additional resources](#) that will support this lesson.

Faith in Action Extension Activities

To most effectively use this lesson, proceed to Lesson 6 to complete the Ending Poverty in Community (EPIC) Social Action Project.