

World Day of Peace

January 1, 2012



Educating Young People in Justice and Peace is the theme of Pope Benedict XVI's 2012 Message for the World Day of Peace, celebrated on January 1 each year. The message affirms the role of young people in working for justice, peace and the common good and urges public policymakers to create institutions, laws, and environments that allow young people to flourish. The full text of the message is posted each year in mid-December at www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/index_en.htm

Educated Youth Do Justice

Across the globe... In Kerala, India, potable drinking water has always been scarce. Elisa had to walk an hour each day for two pots of clean water for her family. But recently, a new program from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) taught Elisa, her brother Thomas, and other children to test local water sources and to collect and filter rainwater. Low cost rain harvesting structures collect rain during the six-month rainy season. The water is cleaned by special filters made of local materials, such as river sand, coconut husks, charcoal and gravel. The children's groups presented what they learned to community leaders and helped implement a program to build rain harvesting structures throughout the community. Now, Elisa and Thomas's family has enough water for their family of six, plus enough to share with others who are in need.

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In our own back yard... U.S. youth also make a difference. At St. Thomas Aquinas Middle School, students participated in a retreat to learn about hunger and homelessness in the U.S., which included a cardboard box-sleep out, speakers on homelessness, and a homelessness-themed candlelight rosary and labyrinth prayer experience. Next, students created a "homelessness walkway" to teach fellow parishioners about homelessness and advocated for policies to end homelessness. These and other activities are featured on the Catholics Confront Global Poverty [Global Solidarity Map](#). Your group can be featured too!



Youth and Poverty

- In the U.S., one out of every five children under 18 live in poverty. For children under six, that number is one in four.
- Almost half the world's high school-age children do not go to school and are vulnerable to trafficking. Around 150 million children age 5 to 14 are engaged in child labor.
- Education can help youth break the cycle of poverty and become agents of transformation in their communities.

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Prayer for Youth

“Let the children come to me.” (Mt. 19:14)

Loving Father, you look with compassion on all your children, especially those who are vulnerable.

May we work to create a world in which every child has access to food, clean water, shelter, education, health care, and all other basic rights.

May we teach youth about their role in working for peace, justice and the common good.

May we act together to ensure that the lives and dignity of children everywhere can be respected.

Amen.

As children of one heavenly Father we pray,
“Our Father...”



Resources to Educate Young People for Justice and Peace

In the “Resources and Tools” section of www.usccb.org/jphd

Sacraments & Social Mission: Help youth who are preparing for the sacraments reflect on our Catholic call to mission in the world.

Two Feet of Love in Action: Help youth learn about two distinct, but complementary, ways that we can put love in action: Social Justice and Charitable Works.

Youth: Use the *Multi-Media Arts Contest* and the *Ending Poverty in Community Toolkit for Young Advocates* to help youth learn about poverty, the Church’s response, and Catholic social teaching.

Faithful Citizenship: Materials to help youth form consciences and bring their faith to public life.

From Catholic Relief Services

CRS Education (<http://education.crs.org>): Lesson plans, prayer services, and other resources to explore global issues through the lens of solidarity and Catholic social teaching.

Food Fast (<http://foodfast.org>): a 24-hour hunger awareness retreat that focuses on global poverty and offers a journey of solidarity.

Fair Trade (<http://crsfairtrade.org>): through our purchasing choices, we can promote economic justice, reduce poverty, and care for creation.

Operation Rice Bowl (<http://orb.crs.org>): helps parishes, schools and families learn about poverty and our Catholic response during Lent.

Photo credits: Sean Sprague for CRS (top right, p. 1); David Snyder for CRS (top left, p. 2)

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