

# JANUARY

POVERTY AWARENESS MONTH

## POVERTY AWARENESS MONTH 2022

### SATURDAY, 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 Saint 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’ 2022 message, [“Education, Work, and Dialogue Between Generations: Tools for Building Lasting Peace.”](#) How does his message challenge you? Use the [accompanying resources](#) to reflect on Pope Francis’ important invitation to all Catholics and people of good will. As you start the new year and make your resolutions, take a moment to think of one way you can address poverty in your community, school, or parish.

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 2

For over 50 years, the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) (CCHD) has been working to empower new mothers, immigrants, the elderly, and families to together address the root causes of poverty in their communities. 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:** The local organizations that CCHD supports are helping communities build resilience and stand in solidarity with their most marginalized members. [Read about the work of CCHD](#) and [discover](#) how you can become join this transformative work.

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### MONDAY, JANUARY 3

[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 from January 29 - February 1 for the 2022 Virtual [Catholic Social Ministry Gathering](#)! This year, we will pray, learn, and advocate together on our Catholic vision for the post-pandemic world and call to bring justice to the margins.

**Reflection:** Take a moment to think of a particular person you know who has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, 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.

### TUESDAY, 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 the call to care for God's children? [Read more about](#) how parishes and communities are working together to address poverty and injustice.

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### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5

The Gospel reminds us that we are called to root our lives of faith in the authentic love of neighbor. 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 your specific county. How can you live out the Gospel call to [advocate](#) for and with persons in poverty locally and globally?

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 6

The relationship between mental health and poverty is complex. Poverty can often intensify the experience of mental illness and may also increase the likelihood of the onset of mental illness. At the same time, experiencing mental illness may also increase the chances of living below the poverty line. [For example](#), adults ages 26 or older who live below the poverty line are more likely to experience a serious mental illness than those living at or above the poverty line. The dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God demands that we support and empower those who are poor and vulnerable, including access to adequate healthcare to promote good physical and mental health.

**Challenge:** How can you respond to the call to care for our brothers and sisters experiencing mental illness? [Read more](#) about the ways mental health and poverty intersect and find out how you can get involved in this work in your community.

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### FRIDAY, JANUARY 7

[Poverty](#) is not a catchphrase—it is a serious reality that many are living. Over 37 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. Due in part to the advocacy of Catholics around the country, in 2020 the supplemental poverty measure – which takes into account programs designed to keep people out of poverty – dropped to 9.1, the lowest rate since 2009. Thanks to stimulus payments, enacted as part of economic relief legislation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, 11.7 million individuals were lifted out of poverty.

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

### SATURDAY, 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. [Ogechi Akalegbere was the recipient of the 2021 Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award for her work to empower low-income parents and her efforts to fight racism in the Archdiocese of Washington.](#) How can you get involved in your parish or community'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 this year's [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.

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 9

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 abroad 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

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*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 has been living out this call for more than 50 years, including [addressing housing discrimination by partnering with organizations that have long been fighting to reform and expand access to affordable housing](#).

### MONDAY, JANUARY 10

[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 U.S. [Groups supported by CCHD](#) seek 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 have a healthy work environment. We must work to ensure that all persons’ rights are respected.

**Challenge:** Watch this [CST101 video](#) and read this [reflection](#) on the dignity of work and the rights of workers from Archbishop Coakley, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

### TUESDAY, 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.

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[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.

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12

The CCHD [Creating on the Margins](#) Contest is a cross-discipline art contest for grades 7-12, educating young people about poverty in the U.S., its root causes, and faith-inspired efforts to address poverty, especially through the local community organizations supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD).

The 2022 contest theme is [“Builders of Peace in Our Communities / Constructores de Paz en Nuestras Comunidades.”](#) which outlines the need to build peace by equipping and assisting low-income persons to create strong and sustainable communities.

**Action:** [Learn more](#) about the situation of poverty in your community. How can you get your local schools and parishes involved in the [Creating on the Margins Contest](#)?

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 13

Pope Francis recently called the church to a new [synodal process](#), one that invites all the People of God to walk together, side by side, along the same road towards renewal in the Spirit and the good of all people. An essential part of this two-year process is the active listening to those who have often been pushed to the margins of society, including those living in poverty and victims of injustice: “We must personally reach out to the peripheries, to those who have left the Church, those who rarely or never practice their faith, those who experience poverty or marginalization, refugees, the excluded, the voiceless, etc.” ([Vademecum no. 4.1](#)).

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**Challenge:** Reflect on how your community can better [reach out and listen at the margins](#) and then learn more about how [CCHD has been walking alongside those experiencing poverty](#) for more than 50 years. How will you participate in the synodal journey to become a listening Church?

### FRIDAY, 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](#), Nov. 2007, 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? Learn more about [Civilize It: A Better Kind of Politics](#) and pledge charity, clarity, and creativity to promote the common good.

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 15

Our faith calls us to [care for God's creation](#) as the adverse effects of [global climate change](#) devastate many poor communities that do not have the resources to protect themselves or adapt. The [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) is a new and groundbreaking faith-driven and ecological initiative from the Vatican to engage the Catholic Church in a seven-year journey to global sustainability and spiritual conversion. To help the U.S. Catholic community engage with the Platform, the Catholic Climate Covenant and its 20+ U.S. Catholic partners have created a national campaign and website “[We're](#)

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[all Part of God's Plan\(et\)](#)". [Our faith requires us](#) to do our part to protect our brothers and sisters and care for creation.

**Challenge:** Read more about how [the adverse effects of climate change impact those experiencing poverty and how CCHD supports groups working for environmental justice](#). What can you do at home and in your parish community to better care for God's creation? Several communities are 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](#).

### SUNDAY, 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 the 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](#), a CCHD-funded organization that enables community members in South Texas to accomplish their goals, supporting and maintaining the agency of immigrants.

### MONDAY, JANUARY 17

Today is Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Dr. King fought tirelessly to eliminate injustice and segregation from the minds and hearts of the American people. He understood that eliminating poverty is not simply 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?"](#)

**Reflection:** Learn about how [Catholics are called to address the sin of racism](#) and find out more about how for more than 50 years [CCHD has worked for racial justice](#) in all aspects of society like criminal justice reform, affordable housing, environmental justice, and more.



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### TUESDAY, JANUARY 18

Today begins the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#), celebrated each year on January 18-25. The 2022 theme is [“We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him,” \(Mt 2:2\)](#). It was chosen by the Middle East Council of Churches. When discerning the 2022 theme, the Middle East Council of Churches wanted to emphasize that more than ever, in these difficult times, we need a light that shines in the darkness, and that light, Christians proclaim, has been manifested in Jesus Christ. They remind Christians worldwide about the importance of praying for the fruits of closer communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ and greater solidarity among all people.

**Challenge:** Read and reflect on this [example](#) of a CCHD-funded group empowering people of faith and good will to build unity and create access to affordable housing. Think of Christians in your communities, your work, schools, friendships, and reflect on how you can promote unity in your life.

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19

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.

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 20

Our faith teaches us that we have a responsibility to work together to safeguard each person’s rights, including working together for greater economic justice in the face of persistent poverty, growing income gaps, and increasing economic issues. More than 35 years ago, the U.S. Bishops published [Economic Justice for All: A Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy](#). In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, this teaching is more important than ever. All of our economic life should recognize the fact that we all are God’s children and members of one human family, called to exercise a clear priority for the poor and vulnerable among us.

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**Reflection:** Read a [Catholic Framework for Economic Life](#) and reflect on what you can do to support economic practices that uphold the dignity of all life. Learn more about [the call for economic justice](#) and how you can support this important work through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 21

[Venerable Fr. Augustus Tolton](#) was the first African American to be ordained a priest for 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, known as the 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.

### SATURDAY, 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.

**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*. Use [this prayer](#) to reflect on how you can work to promote the life and dignity of the human person, including those not yet born and those experiencing poverty and injustice.

### SUNDAY, 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

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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?

### MONDAY, JANUARY 24

[Poverty disproportionately impacts the elderly.](#) Due to rising costs of healthcare, the 2020 supplemental poverty measure determined that 9.5% 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.

### TUESDAY, JANUARY 25

Many face barriers to breaking the cycle of poverty due to discrimination or racism. Read and reflect on the U.S. bishops' 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:** Read about how [one CCHD-funded group is working to address racial divisions in West Baltimore](#). Then, use this [study guide](#) and discern how you can address the racism in your community.

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### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26

Poverty does not strike all demographics equally. Nearly all of the roots of systemic poverty such as lack of access to food, affordable housing, and quality education disproportionately affect communities of color.

[Homelessness and food accessibility have been a problem in many American communities for years, but they're especially prevalent in Los Angeles.](#) In 2020, LA's homelessness report stated that within city limits, over 41,000 people live in streets, cars, and shelters - a 14% increase since 2019. Even more unsettling is that Black people only make up around 8% of LA County's total population, but account for 34% of its homeless population.

**Reflection:** [Read more](#) about how the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) is working to address food inequality and homelessness. What does food insecurity and homelessness look like in your community? Are there ways you can get involved to address this dire problem?

### THURSDAY, 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.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 28

In [Fratelli Tutti](#), Pope Francis invites all people of good will to live out a discipleship built on love that fosters universal fraternity and social friendship. Challenging us to work together to create a society based on solidarity, *Fratelli Tutti* provides a starting point for renewing our commitment to caring for our neighbor and a global society built on justice and the common good: "We have the space we need

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for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes. Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies. Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people's troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment. Like the chance traveler in the parable, we need only have a pure and simple desire to be a people, a community, constant and tireless in the effort to include, integrate and lift up the fallen" ([no. 77](#)).

**Challenge:** Use [this six-part study guide](#) for faith groups, families, and individuals to journey through *Fratelli Tutti* and [read more about how CCHD promotes the culture of encounter Pope Francis calls for in Fratelli Tutti](#). How can you foster a solidarity that continually seeks justice in your community?

### SATURDAY, 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?

### SUNDAY, 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

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rehabilitation” ([Responsibility, Restoration, and Rehabilitation: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice](#)).

**Reflection:** Learn about how Catholics and other people of faith and good will are putting this call to [restorative justice](#) into practice through the support of CCHD. 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 or diocese’s prison ministry or join a community organization working for restorative justice.

### MONDAY, JANUARY 31

As we conclude Poverty Awareness Month, let us [pause for a moment and reflect with](#) Bishop David G. O’Connell, Chairmen of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Subcommittee on the Catholic Campaign for Human Development:

“As Pope Francis tells us, we must listen to and empower those who society has often left out of the conversation, we must not just work for the people who are suffering but work with them, and support their efforts to bring about social change, we must hear the call of the Spirit at work in the world and respond with hearts open to the needs of our neighbors.”

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?



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