Lesson 6
EPIC Action Project: Responding to Community Needs

Overview
Our Catholic faith compels us to respond to the needs of our neighbor. In his Epistle, St. James reminds us that our faith calls us to action. This lesson represents the second part of the EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) project. Continuing the work begun in Lesson 5, participants develop a social action plan as they consider how their faith calls them to respond with others to meet the community need they identified.

Objectives
- Participants will develop a personal response and design an action plan they can implement in working with others to meet a community need.
- Participants will reflect on their own faith journey and consider ways they can put their faith in action.

Materials Checklist

Click here for a list of materials required for this lesson**.**

Part I: Opening Prayer/Warm-up
(Estimated Time: 10-15 minutes)

Before the session, place a lit candle and a Bible opened to James 2:14-24 (Faith and Works) on a small table in the meeting room. Have a stack of Bibles available to distribute to small groups. If Bibles are unavailable, print a copy of the reading for each group.

This Scripture reading challenges us to put our faith into action. In this opening prayer, everyone will participate by proclaiming a portion of the Scripture. Divide participants into small groups of three and distribute one Bible or copy of the reading to each group. Direct each group to read the Scripture aloud; ask each person to proclaim one small section so everyone has a turn reading. Then ask participants to consider the following questions for small group discussion:

- ○ *What actions does my faith call me to take to help people in my community?*
- ○ *Are there ways I need to simplify my life so that I can make more space for prayer and for the needs of others?*

Allow participants about 10 minutes to discuss the question. If time permits, ask volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

Part II: Activity — Responding to Community Needs
(Estimated Time: 35-40 minutes)

NOTE: You may require one additional session to complete this process depending on the size of your group and the complexity of the issues chosen.

In Lesson 5, participants identified local needs. In this activity, participants will work in small groups to design an action plan that addresses this community need.

Divide participants into the same small groups that were used in Lesson 5. Post the list of community needs identified in Lesson 5 for everyone to see. Distribute the Responding to Community Needs handout so each participant receives a copy. Ask each small group to choose one of the community needs and complete the worksheet, which will guide them through completing the EPIC Action Plan. The reflection questions in Part II help to reinforce the fact that both feet of social action need to be engaged or we're solving only part of the problem.

The Additional Resources page provides information on how to identify and contact local CCHD-funded groups. The local telephone book, internet, and community resource guides will also help participants to identify existing groups with whom they may partner to address their community need.

Ask a representative from each group to briefly share his or her small group's action plan with the large group. Time constraints may require you to complete this process in another session. Ask another member of each small group to record the highlights of his or her group's action plan on a white board or poster paper.

This process is intended to foster a sense of empowerment – both for the participants and the people with whom they work. Whether through charitable works or social justice, encourage participants to use their creativity to identify possible actions that they can implement given inevitable resource constraints. Some common and workable examples of actions for social justice include writing a letter to an elected official; visiting an elected official or inviting him/her to visit you; writing an editorial to the local newspaper; or educating a parish or school community about a particular need. You may conclude the process after each small group presents its action plan. Ideally, however, participants will implement the action plan. There are two ways this can occur:
- Each small group can independently implement its action project; or
- After hearing each small group presentation, ask the large group to select one action plan that everyone can implement. Make sure everyone in the large group will play a role. This process may require an additional session to complete.

Part III: Reflection
(Estimated Time: 10 minutes with discussion)

Distribute a blank sheet of paper to each participant. Reread the following Scripture passage:

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give him the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

Give participants a moment to reflect silently on how they personally feel called to "have works." Then invite them to write a personal covenant. Ask participants the following questions:

- What commitment are you willing to make to put your faith into action?
- What are you personally willing to do to implement some aspect of the social action project?
- How is this action rooted in your faith?

http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/youth/ending-poverty-in-community-lesson-six.cfm

Additional Resources

Click here for additional resources that will support this lesson.

If participants have a difficult time choosing between issues, use the *Selecting a Community Issue: Sample Issue Checklist* as a method to select an appropriate choice.