

Pastoral Aid for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

(Poverty Awareness Month – January)

January 19, 2020

<http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/poverty-education/poverty-awareness-month.cfm>

Reflection on the [Sunday Readings](#) and Poverty Awareness Month

- In the opening prayer for this Sunday we ask God: “mercifully hear the pleading of your people.”
- In the Responsorial Psalm today, we hear the confession of the Psalmist: “I have waited, waited for the LORD, and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.”
- Pope Francis reminds us, “Poverty today is a cry.” Furthermore, he points out: “Poverty is the flesh of the poor Jesus in this hungry child, in the sick person, in these unjust social structures” (Pope Francis, [“Meeting with Students of Jesuit Schools”](#)—Q & A, 6/7/13). We are called to recognize the face of Jesus in all who experience poverty today.
- January is Poverty Awareness Month. As we seek to see Christ’s presence in all who experience poverty, let us reflect on the difficult situations of many families across the United States who experience poverty today. (*Additional facts are available at [PovertyUSA.org](#)*)
 - Nearly one in five children in the U.S. live in poverty. That is 15.3 million kids. Children (compared to working-age adults and the elderly) are the age group most vulnerable to poverty in our country.
 - Programs run by the federal government that help provide food assistance, rental subsidies, and Social Security have a major impact on poverty levels; they would be much higher without these programs.
- Do you know any individuals or families who experience poverty? How does your faith call you to respond to the “cry” of persons in poverty?

Links to Resources:

- [Watch \(or show\) this video](#) “Two Feet of Love in Action
- Learn about [the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the domestic anti-poverty program of the U.S. Catholic bishops.](#)
- A [Poverty Awareness Month](#) calendar with daily actions and reflections are available.
- Visit [PovertyUSA.org](#), a website of the Catholic bishops in the United States to learn more about poverty in the U.S.

Quotes

The God that Jesus came to reveal is a Father who is generous, merciful, unfailing in his goodness and grace. He gives hope especially to those who are disillusioned and lacking in hope for the future” (Pope Francis, ([Message for 3rd World Day of the Poor](#), 5).

“We can never elude the urgent appeal that Scripture makes on behalf of the poor. Wherever we look, the word of God points to the poor, those who lack the necessities of life because they depend on others. They are the oppressed, the lowly and the downcast. Yet, faced with countless throngs of the poor, Jesus was not afraid to identify with each of them: ‘Whatever you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did to me’ (Mt 25:40). If we refuse to make this identification, we falsify the Gospel and water down God’s revelation. The God that Jesus came to reveal is a Father who is generous, merciful, unfailing in his goodness and grace. He gives hope especially to those who are disillusioned and lacking in hope for the future” (Pope Francis, ([Message for 3rd World Day of the Poor](#), 5).

"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, 2448, quoting *Centesimus Annus*, no. 57, and *Libertatis Conscientia*, no. 68)

Bulletin announcement

January is [Poverty Awareness Month](#). Over 40 million people experience poverty in the United States. Respond to the call to work for justice and proclaim the good news of the Gospel! Learn more about how poverty affects families and communities and how the Church is responding by visiting [PovertyUSA.org](#), a website of the U.S. Catholic bishops.

Note: If your bulletin contains a “message from the pastor” column, consider focusing on the call to love and care for all members of society, especially those who have been marginalized or oppressed. Consider localizing the examples of marginalized persons to include those affected by issues in your community.

Prayers of the Faithful

Possible Responses:

- Lord, hear our prayer.
- In your mercy, hear us Lord.
- In your compassion, answer us God.

Possible Prayers:

For our Holy Father, Pope Francis, our bishop, N., and all church leaders, that they will continue to proclaim Christ's love and compassion for those in poverty, and that the Church will continue to teach about the need to work for justice in our world. We pray to the Lord.

For our public officials, that they will strive to work for fair education, adequate housing, and equal opportunities for employment for all. We pray to the Lord.

For the men and women who are not able to find stable employment, we pray for their continued perseverance and determination as they continue to seek ways in which to participate in God's creation and work. We pray to the Lord.

For all Christians, that we may be aware of our responsibility to be in relationship with our brothers and sisters in our communities. We pray to the Lord.

Parish Activity Suggestions

- **Play the Poverty Tour video.** Play [this video](#) after mass, in the parish hall, at religious education classes, etc. to help parishioners learn about the reality of poverty.
- **Share educational materials from PovertyUSA.org** with catechists, religious educators, youth ministers, and others who can help share information about the reality of poverty and our Catholic response. Some of these educational materials include:
 - [PovertyUSA Poverty Education Center](#)
 - [Learning activities on poverty from WeAreSaltAndLight.org](#)
 - [Creating on the Margins: a youth art contest to help youth learn about poverty and our Catholic response](#)
 - [Poverty Awareness Month calendar and reflections](#)
- **Host a panel discussion about poverty in your community.** Invite guest speakers from local community organizations who can talk about the causes of poverty, and how we can help.
- **Share one or more of the following at the above events, or as bulletin inserts.**
 - [Primer on Poverty and the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable](#)
 - [Background on Just Wage and the Federal Minimum Wage](#)
 - [Selected Quotes of Pope Francis by Subject](#)



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