



COMMUNITIES  
OF SALT AND LIGHT

# JOURNEY TO JUSTICE DAY GUIDEBOOK

## JOURNEY TO JUSTICE DAY OVERVIEW

This content is excerpted from the Journey to Justice program, a day-long retreat developed by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). Any faith community can use this Journey to Justice day Guidebook to facilitate an experience of encounter with persons living in poverty, grow in understanding of the root causes of poverty, and reflect on how the Gospel challenge us to respond.

Within this Guidebook you will find everything you need to implement the Journey to Justice Day. Your group leader or facilitator will implement the activities of the day and prior to the day, be in contact with a group in your area that receives funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (i.e. a CCHD funded group), as well as your Diocesan Director for CCHD. **You should begin the process for this activity at least two months in advance. Begin first with securing the date with the CCHD funded group.** There are checklists, guides for each segment of the day, background resource materials for presentations, and handouts. Please review these materials carefully.

Like any journey we take in life, as important as the destination is, the process of getting to our destination is perhaps most important. This is true of the Journey to Justice process which was developed as a means to implement the full mandate\* of the *Catholic Campaign for Human Development* (CCHD). For more information on CCHD, visit [www.usccb.org/cchd](http://www.usccb.org/cchd).

In its effort to impress the circumstances that help create poverty upon those who are more economically advantaged, the Journey to Justice process is designed “to effect in them a conversion of heart, a growth in compassion and sensitivity to the needs of their brothers [and sisters] in want.” With these words, the Resolution on the Campaign for Human Development adopted by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in November 1970 set the groundwork for building solidarity between those who are living in poverty and those who are economically advantaged. It is a solidarity that at the end of the journey creates communities that truly reflect the biblical principles of justice.

During this experience, participants are led through prayer, Scripture reflection, and Catholic social teaching, especially as they relate to the Church’s teachings on the preferential option with those who are poor and the building of solidarity across economic lines. A major and key portion of this day is devoted to an immersion experience with a CCHD funded group.

Group leaders or facilitators should work as closely as possible with the local CCHD *Diocesan Director* (DD) [Find your DD by visiting [www.usccb.org/cchd-dd](http://www.usccb.org/cchd-dd)]. Sometimes the DD is the primary coordinator of the logistics and speaker arrangements for this day, which is very helpful. However, this is not always the case.

There are three key outcomes for this day:

- To develop a deepened understanding of the justice dimension of our faith,
- To initiate a relationship of mutuality with an empowered\*\* low-income group funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, and
- To identify new efforts of social action.

\* The *mandate of CCHD* is to address the root causes of poverty in the United States through the promotion and support of community controlled, self-help and economic development projects and through the education of Catholics on principles of economic justice and the importance of building solidarity between those who are living in poverty and those who are not living in poverty.

\*\* The term *empowered* is used with intent by CCHD and means: A process of engagement that increases the ability of individuals, families, organizations and communities to build mutually respectful relationships and bring fundamental, positive change in the conditions affecting their daily lives.

## FINDING HELP, GETTING QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Be in touch with your local DD to have help with planning your Journey to Justice Day. National CCHD staff is not available to provide direct assistance with the Journey to Justice Day. National staff in the Education and Outreach office will be available to help with clarification or questions. Please contact the Poverty Outreach and Education Manager at (202)541-3372.

If there is no DD to help, view these videos (linked below or found on the CCHD website) to help to explain the issues of poverty, addressing the root causes, and how we are called to participate in helping our neighbors.

- a. [3 minutes of CCHD](http://bcove.me/2drt597y) (http://bcove.me/2drt597y)
- b. [Tour Poverty USA](http://bcove.me/lxzsgzjs) (http://bcove.me/lxzsgzjs)
- c. [CCHD: Living our Faith](http://bcove.me/ely5scn4) (http://bcove.me/ely5scn4)
- d. [Winds of Change](http://bcove.me/du6h1jep) (http://bcove.me/du6h1jep)

## PREPARING FOR THE DAY: CRITICAL ELEMENTS FOR THE IMMERSION EXPERIENCE

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Share and discuss this page of information to presenters, CCHD Diocesan Directors and to the CCHD funded project leaders (those with whom you are doing the immersion) in the weeks before the actual Journey to Justice Day. The points listed below will help clarify what the immersion activity is going to accomplish.

**The Journey to Justice Day is an immersion experience that:**

1. Includes interaction between participants and empowered low-income people. The empowered low-income people must be leaders and/or members of the CCHD funded group, not just the staff/organizer of the organization.
2. Takes place at an action site of the CCHD funded group (at the group's office, the building of a member institution or another community building) (for example).
3. Emphasizes empowerment, so that participants are better able to understand the complexities of poverty and how poverty affects all people.
4. Underscores the causes of a problem—i.e., explores why a problem exists—from the perspective of the leaders/members of the CCHD funded group and examines the structure(s) or system(s) that need to be changed to help break the cycle of poverty in the community.
5. Includes interaction that is dialogical\* by focusing on understanding relationships and dynamics rather than solving problems for others.
6. Share with participants that the purpose of the immersion is to move participants out of their familiar environment and offer new voices and the possibility of a new relationship with people who are living in poverty and low-income.
7. Also share with the participants that the goals for the Journey to Justice Day are:
  - To gently and prayerfully assist participants to recognize the struggles - and the activities - of those who are living in poverty/low-income
  - To consider our Christian responsibility to respond to poverty.
  - To help break down myths and stereotypes about poverty and those who are living in poverty.
  - To offer new ways to act compassionately and justly with those who are living in poverty or who are low-income in the community and in the U.S.
8. Provide a brief profile of the project the participants are about to spend time with. (Invite the CCHD Diocesan Director to be present for this session and to provide this introductory profile. If s/he cannot be there at this time, ask the DD for some material or comments that will help you provide a short, introductory profile of the CCHD project.)
9. Provide directions and coordination of transportation, and the schedule for the day
10. Provide the time and space for a shared meal (lunch time). Communicate to all involved if they will need to bring brown bag lunches, or if you will be providing lunch for the group (including the CCHD funded group).

**\*By dialogical we mean:**

- There are a sufficient conversational opportunities. There is some time for people to talk informally over lunch, at a break, before or after the immersions experience, etc. Participants have an opportunity to view the environment where the empowered low-income group is active. There is time for questions and answers. People are directed to actively listen to one another, without judgment.

## CHECKLIST FOR THE FACILITATOR

**Logistics:** Read through this guidebook to be familiar with each person’s/group’s role.

Share the details of the day:

- expectations for their participation and listening
- time commitment
- locations
- directions
- etc.

**Make copies of handouts at least one week ahead of the trip:**

- *Preparing for the Day: Critical Elements for the Immersion Experience* (page 3)  
(HANDOUT at meeting, several weeks before the Journey to Justice Day to ensure that people are able to understand what will be taking place)

Consider handing out to participants at the meeting before the Journey to Justice Day. This will help ensure that people have the time to read and reflect on these understandings of our life in relationship.

- Handout 1: Understanding Social Sin (page 21-23)
- Handout 2: God’s Love—The Demands of Grace (page 24)
- Handout 3: The Reality of Economic Privilege (page 25 & 26)

**Finding the CCHD Funded Group:** Coordinate with your CCHD Diocesan Director (DD), where possible, to help identify CCHD funded groups for presentations. Find a group on the PovertyUSA website, [www.povertyusa.org](http://www.povertyusa.org) (search under Stories of Hope). Share the CCHD Funded Groups Checklist with the group leader. Secure a date and speakers that will be able to highlight the work of the group and show why it is important to support the work of CCHD.

**Facilitators** should consider doing the presentations and prayers; otherwise they could be done by participants, the DD, or other diocesan or parish people.

- Overall facilitation: \_\_\_\_\_
- Introduction, welcome to be done by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Opening prayer to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Scripture perspective to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Sin and Grace to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Common Ground (immersion) to be facilitated by: \_\_\_\_\_

- What We've Seen and Heard to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Opportunities for Action to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Closing prayer to be led by: \_\_\_\_\_

**Supplies and Meals:** If you are having a large group Journey to Justice Day, coordinate with other facilitators and the diocesan director to arrange these items. If you are having the day with your group only, then you, as the facilitator are in charge of gathering supplies and arranging the meal.

- Easels, newsprint, markers, tape
- Items needed by presenters (e.g. laptop, projector, screen)
- Nametags
- Ensure that proper attention has been given to lunch plans (communicate to the group whether lunch will be provided or if they should bring a brown bag lunch).
- Locate several Bibles or make copies of Luke 10:25-37.

## CHECKLIST FOR DIOCESAN DIRECTOR

### Logistics:

- Set the Journey to Justice Day date in coordination with the CCHD funded group months in advance. Identify a CCHD funded group for the immersion experience and arrange for their participation. Give the group leader the Checklist for the CCHD Funded Group. Meet with and prepare the funded group leaders.
- Provide a copy of this Guidebook to the group leaders and review the “Critical Elements for the Immersion Experience.”
- Review the checklist with the CCHD funded group’s leaders who will be leading the immersion experience. Organizers should coordinate their efforts. Please ensure that this is completed at least a week before the event.
- Ensure the group’s leaders understand that the goal is not to hear from the organizers, but rather from the low-income group leaders. The leaders should speak about how they identified a problem, how they addressed it, and how CCHD helped to fund the goals they set.
- Speakers should be made aware in advance of how long they are to be addressing the group.
- If time permits, do a rehearsal discussion with the leaders to make sure each leader is prepared for his/her segment and that the arrangements for the immersion with the CCHD funded group are finalized. **Facilitators may be needed to keep the segment on track!**
- Prepare the “Opportunities for Action” session and handout with input from the CCHD funded group. These opportunities for action should include some level of action with, not for, a CCHD empowered, low-income organization.
- *Locate a facility (parish, school, pastoral center) for the Journey to Justice Day session to use before and after the visit/immersion with the CCHD funded group.*
- *You will want space for all participants to gather, and to have a comfortable setting for closing prayer. Determine if participants will need to bring a brown bag lunch or if lunch will be provided for them and CCHD funded group.*

### Facilitation:

The facilitator or group leader’s responsibilities are listed below.

Identify individuals for presentations. These presenters are often the DD, or other diocesan or parish people.

- Overall facilitation: \_\_\_\_\_

- Introduction, welcome to be done by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Opening prayer to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Scripture perspective to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Sin and Grace session to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- What We've Seen and Heard to be presented by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Opportunities for Action: \_\_\_\_\_
- Closing prayer to be developed and led by: \_\_\_\_\_



## CHECKLIST FOR THE CCHD FUNDED GROUP

- Commit to participating in the Saturday Journey to Justice Day with the participants, arranging for a minimum of five low-income leaders to be present, speak, and participate in the immersion experience.
- Identify a primary contact person from the CCHD funded group for the CCHD Diocesan Director and the facilitator.
- Review the “Critical Elements for the Immersion Experience” with the members/leaders from the CCHD funded group.
- Develop an agenda for the immersion experience that includes activity and action if possible. The goal is to get the participants interacting with the CCHD funded group leaders (*not the organizers*). Please ensure that this is completed at least a week before the event. *Ensure that the group’s leaders understand that the goal is not to hear from the organizers, but rather from the leaders who are low-income. The leaders should speak about how they identified a problem, how they addressed it, and how participating in the CCHD funded group helped them meet the goals they set. All speakers **MUST** be aware of time frame and how long they are to be speaking with the group.*
- During the immersion experience, acknowledge your CCHD grant, what structure(s) or system(s) the organization is trying to change that tend to keep people trapped in poverty, and how the CCHD grant has helped your efforts.
- Prepare a handout to give to participants with suggestions for opportunities to join in the work of the project. Be sure the handout includes contact information for the CCHD funded group.

*(Note: Please do not solicit financial support since this is already being provided through the annual national CCHD collection.)*

## SCHEDULE FOR THE DAY

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**Note to facilitators:** The coordinating facilitator will begin and end the day and **keep the group on schedule** using the following pages as a guide. The facilitator will also introduce all the presenters and provide transitions from one segment of the day to the next. Each session builds upon the preceding session. Therefore, it is important that presenters include the key points highlighted in bold in the background materials that are provided in the following pages.

We recommend that you have a diocesan Journey to Justice Day for an entire diocese if that is possible. This will help with the logistics for the DD and the CCHD funded group. By having one day for the diocese, there will be opportunities for parish participants to meet others from different parishes. This will help to model the importance to networking and organizing possibilities. It will put to use the skill of “one-on-ones” or conversations.

### 9:00 Welcome/Introductory Remarks/Setting the Stage

Welcome all participants and presenters. Make sure that everybody has a nametag as you are going to be encountering new people throughout the day. Have everyone briefly introduce themselves.

Points to share with the group as you prepare for the day:

- **It will be important to stay on time. This is a challenging and full day!**
- We will begin with prayer and scripture. We have chosen a scripture story about awakening to our neighbor and advocating for those living in poverty, a familiar story that asks us to look at “the story behind the story.”
- We will move to a discussion on sin and grace that will help us explore the Church’s concept of social sin and its relationship to personal sin and God’s grace.
- Following these presentations and discussions, we will travel to a project site where we will meet with leaders from a Catholic Campaign for Human Development funded group. This immersion experience will help us discover the stories behind the headline stories of poverty in the United States.
  - Share with participants that the purpose of the immersion is to move participants out of their familiar environment and offer new voices and the possibility of a new relationship **with** people who are living in poverty and low-income.
  - Also share with the group that the goals for the Journey to Justice Day are:
  - To gently and prayerfully assist participants to recognize the struggles - and the activities - of those who are living in poverty/low-income
  - To consider our Christian responsibility to respond to poverty.
  - To help break down myths and stereotypes about poverty and those who are living in poverty.
  - To offer new ways to act compassionately and justly **with** those who are living in poverty and low-income in the community and in the U.S.

- Provide a brief profile of the project the participants are about to spend time with. (Invite the CCHD Diocesan Director to be present for this session and to provide this introductory profile. If s/he cannot be there at this time, ask the DD for some material or comments that will help you provide a short, introductory profile of the CCHD project.)
- After the immersion, we will return here for a brief reflection and discussion and the closing prayer.

## 9:15 Opening Prayer and Scripture Presentation and Discussion

**Note to facilitators:** The purpose of this reflection and discussion is to provide a deeper understanding of the world in which Jesus lived and his experience and teachings relative to those who are living in poverty. It is focused on getting to the “story behind the story,” on getting participants to see beyond their own experience by breaking open the Good Samaritan parable.

### Opening reflection (13 minutes)

- Separate the larger group into small groups of four or five.
- Distribute Bibles or copies of the passage Luke 10:25-37 to each small group.

### To share with the group:

*Our prayer today is crafted around a reading from the Gospel of Luke that is very familiar to all of us. You are encouraged to enter into this reading with an open heart, recognizing that whenever we hear familiar readings from Scripture, we are always in a new place, a new environment, with a new set of possibilities before us. Scripture always has the power to strike us in new ways and to help us see new paths. So let the reading be fresh and new, and let it shed light on this day.*

*Let us prepare the altar of our hearts for offering prayer.*

*We do well never to forget our spiritual nature. As we begin this day’s journey, let us quiet ourselves for a moment, knowing that when we gather to remember God’s word, God graces and blesses us. In silence, let us open our hearts to God’s loving and transforming presence.*

(Allow a minute for quiet reflection.)

### To share with the group:

*You likely are familiar with the Good Samaritan Parable. As I read it aloud here today, I invite you to consider it from a new perspective. As we prepare for our immersion experience how does this Scripture passage speak to you today?*

Read Luke 10:25-37 to the large group.

(After a few minutes of silence, invite the small groups to briefly discuss these questions. You may want to post these questions on a piece of newsprint for everyone to see during the discussion.)

- How does this Scripture passage speak to me today?
- Which character(s) can I best relate? Why/How?

**Provide a new perspective on this parable (15 minutes)**

- Bring the group back together.
- Present the background information (page 16 in the Guidebook), historical perspective, and your own perspective of this Scripture to the entire group.

(Ask a participant to reread Luke 10: 25-37 to the large group. Allow everyone about a minute to again reflect silently on the passage.)

**Facilitate sharing of reflections in larger group (10 minutes)**

Ask these questions to prompt sharing. You may want to also post these questions on newsprint for all to see.

- What happened when you again reflected on this Scripture passage? Why?
- To what character(s) in the text do you relate? Are they the same or different than the ones you related to the first time?

**To share with the group:**

*We thank you, God, for the journey of this day. Be with us in our hearts as we look to more closely understand what it means to be neighbor to all.*

**10:00 Take a ten minute break.**

**10:10 Sin and Grace Presentation and Discussion**

**Note to Facilitators:** You may want to have a copy of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* available for this session. The purpose of this session is to further focus the work of projects funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) and the process of formation and transformation by situating poverty in the context of personal sin, social sin, structures of sin and God's grace.

**Begin by setting the following context for this session (5 minutes)**

The overall focus of the Journey to Justice process is to assist participants in the ongoing formation of their Christian social conscience so that, among other things, participants will:

- recognize the struggles and positive actions of those who are living in poverty or who are low-income, and

- begin to identify new ways to build relationships and a sense of solidarity with those who are living in poverty or are low-income; to view them as organized and empowered communities.

As baptized Catholics, we are called to help build social structures that promote life, enhance human dignity and encourage the development of community and the common good. Through God's grace and our efforts to build solidarity, a new community can arise that will provide a place at the table for all God's people.

Every person should have a copy of the Handouts listed below:

- **Handout 1: Understanding Social Sin** (page 21-23)
- **Handout 2: God's Love—The Demands of Grace** (page 24)
- **Handout 3: The Reality of Economic Privilege** (page 25 & 26)

### **Personal Reading and Reflection (10 minutes)**

Give everyone time to read the three handouts. Then ask each group to discuss their reactions to and thoughts about these Church statements on personal sin, social sin and structures of sin.

### **Large Group Discussion (25 minutes)**

Bring everyone together and ask one person from each group to briefly summarize his or her group's conversation. Minimally, draw out the following insights:

1. Social sin, in fact, does exist.
2. Institutions, social practices and social policies can be sinful. The Church also refers to these as "structures of sin."
3. Social sin is related to personal sin, but is distinct. As such, it calls for different actions.
4. Because of its nature, one does not "commit" social sin. Instead, people participate in it.

### **Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

1. Where do I see structures of sin in the examples presented in the handout?
2. How have I witnessed personal sin as a component of social sin in these cases either in the past or currently?
3. "When injustice is done it must be repaired." What do you think about this quote from the last paragraph of the handout? What does it imply about paths to reconciliation for social sin?
4. Have you personally experienced efforts to repair racial injustice? What might such efforts teach us about God's grace?

### **Closing Discussion in Large Group (20 minutes)**

Ask if there are any *brief*, closing comments. Then close this session lifting up these key points:

1. Personal sins are part of social sin.
2. The existence of poverty can be a form of social sin – i.e., poverty involves laws, practices and structures that fail to respect a large group of individuals and families of their God-given dignity.
3. We all have responsibility for social sin, for eliminating the “structures of sin” that help to create and keep people trapped in poverty. However, people living in poverty and low-income people know and understand the realities of poverty. The opportunity to participate in solutions has a special significance for people living in poverty and their families, so it is critical to support their leadership, and to walk with those living in poverty as they struggle to confront structures of sin, social sin, and poverty.
4. Review the Demands of Grace articulated in the background information.

### **11:20 Travel to the Immersion Site (30 Minutes)**

#### **11:50 Lunch and Immersion Experience**

Start the immersion informally by sharing lunch. This can be very helpful to the conversations that will follow and for initiating relationships.

(It is essential for the CCHD DD or someone from the diocese to have met with the CCHD funded group prior to this session and to have shared the Checklist for the Funded Group, see page 15 and the Critical Elements information, see page 4.)

**Members of the CCHD funded group are to lead and facilitate all aspects of this interactive immersion experience. This is their show! The immersion should conclude with a brief, informal question and answer session with the leaders of the project and the Journey to Justice participants.**

### **3:00 Travel back to the original site (30 minutes)**

#### **3:30 What We’ve Seen and Heard Presentation and Discussion (30 minutes)**

Note to Facilitators: The purpose of this segment is to encourage participants to connect their experience with their feelings in a non-judgmental way and to let the Spirit move the group. Having just returned from the immersion experience, the participants are usually very animated. They have had a moving experience, coming face to face with people who are most likely living, economically, very differently from them.

**To share with the group:**

*We are going to take the next 30 minutes or so to process and reflect on our experiences today. The most important part of this session is that we share openly and not judge one another's responses. The goal is to make this is a safe environment to reveal our feelings. What we say here is not to leave this room.*

**Small group discussion (15 minutes)**

Break participants into small groups and ask each to first reflect silently, deeply and individually on the following questions. (**Facilitators might consider posting these questions on newsprint for all to see.**)

1. What did I see?
2. What did I hear?
3. How do I feel (not think) about the experience?
4. How did the immersion experience affect my past perception, attitude and words about and my past actions toward those who are living in poverty?

**Facilitate large group discussion (15 minutes)**

Bring closure to the session by asking small groups to share a few of their reflections with the whole group. Record these comments on flipchart paper if possible.

**Close the large group session noting the following key messages:**

1. It is important to identify the systemic barriers that promote injustice in our daily lives.
2. People regardless of being “wealthy”, “doing fine”, or are “living in poverty” are able to identify in their own communities issues that need to be addressed or fixed.
3. Everyone, regardless of income level, appreciates being **listened to, dialogued with,** and can help to address social sin and the structures of sin that they participate in or are affected by.

**4:00 Opportunities for Action (20 minutes)**

**Note to facilitators:** Ideally, the local CCHD Diocesan Director or designee will present this session. The purpose of the session is to have participants understand how they can engage in efforts to address poverty and specifically with CCHD-funded groups. It is important to include the CCHD diocesan office contact information for the participants.

**If no one from the CCHD Diocesan office is able to be present, provide the following items as a handout and as much as you are able, briefly discuss these ten items.**

### **Opportunities for Action:**

1. Stay connected with and/or build relationships with a CCHD-funded project in the diocese.
2. Become involved in the diocese's CCHD work (often implemented by a committee of volunteers) of promotion, education, grants/funding, and poverty awareness.
3. Use materials from the CCHD Resources brochure for ongoing study. Visit [www.usccb.org/cchd](http://www.usccb.org/cchd) for more information.
4. Share materials from the CCHD Resources brochure with others in your parish and the diocese.
5. Assist with the Journey to Justice Day with future groups.
6. Promote and support the annual CCHD collection in your parish.
7. Promote and support diocesan anti-poverty initiatives in your parish.
8. Take questions and comments from participants.
9. Remind parishioners of the date of the annual CCHD collection in your diocese. Thank them for their support, noting that their contributions to this collection help low-income people help themselves and help make Catholic social teaching come alive.

### **4:20 Evaluations and Closing Prayer**

Go around the room and ask each person to share one word or sentence about their experience of the day.

Close with a spontaneous prayer.



## ALTERNATIVE IMMERSION EXPERIENCE

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(To be used in special cases where there are no local CCHD funded groups)

Ideally, the Journey to Justice Day will include an immersion experience with a CCHD-funded project. Occasionally, however, there is no project in the (arch)diocese that is currently funded by a national or local CCHD grant. In those instances, the facilitator will need to work with CCHD or other diocesan staff to design an acceptable alternative immersion experience.

If needed, some examples of an alternative immersion are:

1. Invite participation from a formerly funded CCHD group. If the group is still active in the diocese, meet at their office or action site. These local leaders may be able to share achievements and insights accomplished since they last received funding. This situation can be an opportunity for rich conversation about poverty and empowerment.
2. Coordinate participation from a CCHD-funded group from a neighboring diocese. This alternative may result in longer travel time and schedule adjustments for the group. Or, it may require that the group assist with gas and reasonable travel expenses that would be incurred by CCHD funded group leaders if they come to you. Pair this presentation with an immersion experience with (a) a self-help Catholic Charities empowerment project, (b) local ministry of a Catholic parish in the diocese, (c) an empowerment project of another religious denomination, or (d) a strong community organization. Underscore ways that the project addresses root causes of poverty and empowerment solutions. If the project reflects a mostly direct service approach, include reflection and discussion questions that generate ideas about needed systemic or structural changes and realistic empowerment approaches to the issue.
3. Contact St. Vincent de Paul Society, another local parish, other Church ministries, or other organizations that work with people living in poverty and low-income people to recommend individuals who have empowerment and activism expertise with low-income communities to speak about their lives as a community living in poverty—both the challenges and the achievements.

## PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE REFLECTION BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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The following contains a lot of information on Luke 10:25-37. It is provided simply as background for the Scripture reflection on the Good Samaritan story. It is not to be read to participants. Rather, it is only a source of information from which the presenter can prepare his/her own brief reflections.

### Background Information

#### *God's Revelation through Grace*

Our Christian faith is a revealed faith. The one God of history is made known to us, or revealed to us, through grace. **In grace we experience ourselves as loved by God.** Grace is essential to human nature – we say it is what makes us fully human. **It is grace that empowers us to love others.**

#### *God's Revelation through History*

God is also revealed to us through history. Salvation history is a record of the saving acts of God. The Jews of the Old Testament understood history in terms of a covenant with God: “I am your God and you will be my people . . . obey the law and be rewarded: disobey the law and you will suffer.” Central to that law was the importance of caring for the widow, orphan and the stranger. History was a record of Israel's fidelity and infidelity to the law. It revealed the truth of the covenant. The Jesus of history changed our concept of history itself. **The parables of Jesus pointed out the layers of context in our history. They showed how the Wisdom of God is revealed in the surprises of history and that this wisdom, although now revealed, was often hidden from human understanding.**

#### *God's Revelation through Scripture*

Finally, **God is revealed to us through Scripture. Sacred Scripture contains stories from early Jewish culture as well as the cultures of Israel's neighbors. It contains accounts of historical events, prophecies and the wisdom of ancient times. It also contains the stories of the early Christian communities.** These stories, histories and wisdom were recorded by human beings bound, like us, to certain cultural standards. Where is the hand of God in such a compilation?

The power of Scripture does not lie in the physical presence of the books, nor does it lie in the literal nature of the words recorded. Rather, the power of Scripture lies in its meaning, which is **revealed to us by God.** Through God's grace and guided by the Church, we are able to discern God's revelation in Scripture by reading “the **world behind** the text,” or Scripture's historical context, in conjunction with “the **world in front of** the text,” or our present context. By reflecting on the way that God has spoken through Scripture in the past and continues to speak through it today, we are better able to hear God's biblical call to action for tomorrow.

### ***The World “in front of” The Good Samaritan***

Think about your experience when reading a book or watching a movie. After a long day at work, you relish the opportunity to return home, curl up in your easy chair with a new novel or movie and enter into the world of the story that has been created for you.

The world of a particular story often looks different to different people. This is due to the fact that your experience of the world of the story is shaped, in part, by your own experience. If you are a Native American reading a novel about the Little Big Horn, you will experience the character of Custer differently than a person whose ancestors settled in the West. A black man reads Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* in a different light than a black woman. Both experience Walker's created world differently than a white man or woman.

We call these different experiences that we bring to the reading of a novel, the “**world in front of the text.**” **The world in front of the text is that accumulation of personal, cultural and historical experiences that guides our interpretation of the text's meaning.** The same process is at play when we read the revealed word of God in Sacred Scripture.

We need to acknowledge the **world in front of** the text and appreciate the vitality it provides our reading of Scripture, but it cannot be our only guide for interpretation. **The meaning of Scripture is partially revealed to us through our own experience, but this revelation is incomplete.** To be satisfied with this level of understanding would be to reduce Scripture to our own purposes. We must weave the “world in front of the text” with the “world behind the text” in order to more clearly discern the tapestry of God’s revelation.

### ***The World “behind” the Good Samaritan***

The story of the Good Samaritan may be familiar, but in order to understand the full impact of this parable, we must first understand the history of Jewish-Samaritan relations. In this parable as well as in other Gospel stories such as the story of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, we can observe the tense relationship that existed between Jews and Samaritans. This tension may go back as far as 722 B.C.E. when the Assyrians invaded, conquered, and intermarried with the Jews who were living in Samaria. Due to this intermarriage and to the Samaritans’ practice of worshipping on Mount Gerizim instead of in Jerusalem, the Samaritans came to be viewed as an entirely different ethnic group from the Jews in Judea, though both descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. By the time of Jesus, Samaritans and Jews no longer considered themselves to be neighbors, let alone related through a common ancestry.<sup>1</sup>

Given this tense relationship between Jews and Samaritans at the time of Jesus, the Parable of the Good Samaritan would have been quite shocking to its first listeners. No one would have expected Jesus to answer the Jewish scholar’s question, “Who is my neighbor?” with the example of a Samaritan. This shocking parable radically expands the traditional definition of “neighbor.” A neighbor is not simply the person who lives next door nor is it merely someone in our extended family or community. Whatever social categories we may have that define “neighbor” are thwarted by the needs of all the people we encounter. In

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 829.

this way, anyone in need is our neighbor. Jesus' parable is, in a sense, telling us, "**You do not have a neighbor. You make yourself someone's neighbor.**"

Jesus' parable is also shocking because it forces us to see the dignity and ability of "the other." Like the outsiders of any society, the Samaritans were largely written off by the dominant Jewish community, who saw the Samaritans' worship practices and lifestyle as inferior. This label of "inferiority" is utterly destroyed in Jesus' parable. The Samaritan in the story forces all those listening to recognize his ability to enact transformative love towards his Jewish neighbor. The Samaritan is a human with dignity and therefore, is not to be written off.

### ***The World "in front of" the Good Samaritan***

The world behind the Parable of the Good Samaritan provides a deep and rich understanding of Jesus' transformative message to his early followers. However, it is essential that we bring the insight we have gleaned from the historical context to bear on the world in front of the text, or our twenty-first century context.

Just as Jesus' first-century audience had preconceived notions about who their neighbors were, we, too, have culturally-constructed definitions of "neighbor." We have expectations about what our neighbor looks like. If the people moving into our community do not belong to our category of neighbor, we say that the community is "changing." In order to discern God's timeless revelation to us in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, we must reflect on this often unconscious understanding of who our neighbors are, and expose that understanding to the power of the parable. Jesus' parable radically expanded the first-century notion of a neighbor and it should do the same for us today. Bringing our own personal and social categories to the parables allows us to be challenged and shaped by these stories, just as Jesus' listeners were challenged and shaped by his original telling.

We not only need to reflect on our preconceived definitions of "neighbor," but we must also consider our often unconscious characterizations of those living in the margins of our community. Specifically, we must consider whether there are groups of people whose dignity and ability we fail to recognize. Are there communities whom we feel have forfeited their dignity and so can be appropriately "written off?"

Reflecting on both the historical and modern assumptions that are embedded in our reading of Scripture is essential to gaining a deeper understanding of Scripture's meaning in the past and in the present. Consideration of these contexts is not enough, though. We must go further and ask how, in light of the text's historical and modern contexts, Scripture is calling us to action.

### ***The Scriptural Call to Action***

We've begun to see how the world behind the Parable of the Good Samaritan can be woven with the world in front of it in order to facilitate the discernment of God's revelation to us today. It is essential not only to acknowledge the bearings of the historical and modern contexts on Scripture, but we must also ask how the weaving of these two worlds calls us to action. In other words, we must not only reflect on Scripture's message yesterday and

today, but we must go further and consider the action to which God is calling us for tomorrow.

In order to better discern the Parable of the Good Samaritan's call to action, take a few moments and prayerfully consider the answers to the following reflection questions:

*“Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29)*

- How do I define neighbor? How does my community define it? My country?
- How is Jesus challenging his audience to expand their definition of neighbor? How is he challenging me to me to expand my own definitions?
- Recall the “un-neighborly” relationship between Jews and Samaritans at the time of Jesus. Think about an experience of “un-neighborly” relationships you may have. Call to mind concrete examples of people or groups of people who you/your community/your country do not consider neighbors.
  - What would it look like to be a neighbor to those individuals or groups of people?

*“You shall... love your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)*

- Recall how the Parable of the Good Samaritan pushes its audience to recognize the dignity and gift of the marginalized Samaritan.
- Do I/my community/my country uphold the dignity and gift of all people?
- How does my community treat those on the margins of society: immigrants, refugees, those living in poverty, those with disabilities, etc.? Are they treated as people with dignity and gift?
- What would it look like to love them as neighbors? What would it look like to recognize their dignity? Call to mind some concrete ideas.

### **Conclusion**

By reflecting on the worlds behind and in front of Scripture and guided by the Church and God's grace we are better able to discern God's revelation to us today. It is not enough to discern and reflect on this revelation, however. Such discernment and reflection help us to hear God's call in Scripture, but we must take the final step and carry out that call in our own lives and communities. As you lead the Journey to Justice participants through their Scripture reflection, tie the reflections into their encounter with the CCHD-funded group and ultimately into work that they might undertake to put God's call to be neighbor into action.

## HANDOUT 1

## UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL SIN

**Personal and Social Sin: Definitions**

From the encyclical, *Charity in Truth (Caritas in Veritate)*, Pope Benedict XVI: “The Church’s wisdom has always pointed to the presence of original sin in social conditions and in the structure of society: Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social actions and morals.” (#34)

From the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*:

#118 Certain sins, moreover, constitute by their very object a direct assault on one’s neighbor. Such sins in particular are known as social sins. Social sin is every sin committed against the justice due in relations between individuals, between the individual and the community, and also between the community and the individual.

#193 . . . The structures of sin . . . must be purified and transformed into structures of solidarity through the creation or appropriate modification of laws, market regulations, and juridical systems.

Pope Francis has written frequently about structures of sin that have led to environmental degradation, economic inequality, and racism. In an [address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences](#), he summarized his reflections in *Laudato Si’* on social sin and its impact on our common home:

In the Encyclical *Laudato Si’* I stated that “we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness” (no. 53). In our modern world, we have grown up thinking ourselves owners and masters of nature, authorized to plunder it without any consideration of its hidden potential and laws of development, as if subjecting inanimate matter to our whims, with the consequence of grave loss to biodiversity, among other ills. We are not custodians of a museum or of its major artefacts to be dusted each day, but rather co-operators in protecting and developing the life and biodiversity of the planet and of human life present there. An ecological conversion capable of supporting and promoting sustainable development includes, by its very nature, both the full assuming of our human responsibilities regarding creation and its resources, as well as the search for social justice and the overcoming of an immoral system that produces misery, inequality and exclusion.

Very briefly, I would say that it falls to scientists, who work free of political, economic or ideological interests, to develop a cultural model which can face the crisis of climatic change and its social consequences, so that the vast potential of productivity

will not be reserved only for the few. Just as the scientific community, through interdisciplinary dialogue, has been able to research and demonstrate our planet's crisis, so too today that same community is called to offer a leadership that provides general and specific solutions for issues which your plenary meeting will confront: water, renewable forms of energy and food security. It has now become essential to create, with your cooperation, a normative system that includes inviolable limits and ensures the protection of ecosystems, before the new forms of power deriving from the techno-economic model causes irreversible harm not only to the environment, but also to our societies, to democracy, to justice and freedom.

In [Fratelli Tutti](#), Pope Francis noted how our current global system promotes profit over people and allows the common good to be sacrificed for the interests of the powerful (no. 12). At the root of this unjust power structure is an indifference towards the dignity and worth of the human person—what Pope Francis terms “a throwaway world”—that prioritizes our individual needs over those of the whole community, especially those who are poor and vulnerable. The persistence of unjust economic systems that favor the wealth of a few has increased inequality and now “new forms of poverty are emerging” that entrap millions within our communities (no. 21). The persistence of racism, war, and armed conflict have all fostered cultures of exclusion and division among us that have made it clear that “in today's world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia” (no. 30). In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis also drew special attention to the plight of migrants throughout the world, whose experiences serve as a stark reminder of the extreme devaluing of the human person at work in our society (no. 39). This culture of exclusion, Pope Francis wrote, has strengthened the polarization and extreme ideologies we know to be part of both our Church and global community, which allows our fears and doubts to overshadow our call to love.

### **Unpacking Social Sin**

As theologian Gregory Baum says, “Personal sin is freely chosen; social sin is collective blindness. There is sin as deed and sin as illness.” Social sin resides within a group or a community of people. It exists within any structure in society that oppresses human beings, violates human dignity, stifles freedom and/or imposes great inequity. The only way we can recognize these sinful structures is if we step outside our own world and consider the world from another person's perspective.

For example:

- Men need to understand the frustration of women who cannot achieve economic equity in society, despite equal training and hard work.
- Anglos need to understand the debilitating effects of racism on an African American's self-esteem before black and white persons can move together to address the structural roots of racism.

- People who do not live in poverty need to look outside their own experience and find ways to identify with people who do live in poverty with little to no means of escape.

Social sin results in structures, laws and policies that perpetuate widespread poverty, inequality, discrimination, violence, and other injustices.

### **Moving Forward**

Once we have recognized these patterns and structures that are sinful, we need to move toward action on behalf of justice and the common good. Such action must be collaborative; it must involve the participation of the victims as well as the perpetrators of injustice, all of which is based on a genuine desire to move toward justice by both parties. This basis is a foundation for Catholic social action.

As Catholics, we believe in the willingness, indeed, the need, of men and women to respond to grace and build a more just and humane society that is based in the virtue of solidarity. What has impeded us in the past and left this supposition untried and untested has been the challenge of bringing those who live in poverty and those who are not living in poverty together, to contribute with one another toward the common good.



## HANDOUT 2

## GOD'S LOVE—THE DEMANDS OF GRACE

What is it that God wants of us? What change does the experience of grace demand? The Catechism states that grace “perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love...” (§2000.) Simply put, **grace is necessary to achieve the fullness of our human potential.** Grace empowers us to become fully human. Locked inside each individual is some unique potential, and grace unlocks it so that we can become, in this way, like Jesus – fully human.

**But grace is not self-serving or only for “me.” Its effects always reach beyond any individual. It empowers us to reach out to others and help them to achieve the fullness of their potential.** An example of this empowerment can be found in the teacher who brings out the best in her students, the father who encourages his daughter to consider a career that honors her gifts and strengths, the friend who leads a friend out of drug dependency; all of these are instances of the empowerment of grace, clues that God is working in these lives in one way or another.

**God’s grace enables us to:**

- Act in a loving manner toward others.
- Walk with others, accompanying them on their journey.

**God’s grace helps us to:**

- Listen to each other.
- Trust in each other’s ability to discern together what must be done for the common good and what road must be taken in order to achieve the fullness of our potential as a human society.
- Trust in the right to self-determination so that we accompany others in a way that sometimes demands more than giving assistance.

**God’s grace allows us to:**

- Think in ways beyond what may be the narrowly defined cultural, social and economic categories.

**God’s grace calls us to:**

- Extend ourselves beyond the frontiers of current experience.

**From General Audience on January 15, 2014, Pope Francis:**

“We are the community of believers, we are the People of God and in this community we share the beauty of the experience of a love that precedes us all, but that at the same time calls us to be ‘channels’ of grace for one another, despite our limitations and our sins [cf. *Final Document of Aparecida*, #175b].”

## HANDOUT 3 THE REALITY OF ECONOMIC PRIVILEGE: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RACISM AND POVERTY

(Excerpt from “The Reality of Economic Privilege: The Connection between Racism and Poverty,” Catholic Charities USA Issue Brief, *Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good*, 2008, pgs. 11-12. Used with permission.)

The privileged status of whiteness did not ‘just happen.’ It has been deliberately constructed over a long period of time. White privilege is the result of social policies, institutions, and procedures that deliberately created a system that advanced the welfare of white Americans and impeded the opportunities of persons of color.

Among the most important effects and manifestations of white privilege are the economic advantages that have been conferred upon white Americans by public policy and political power throughout our history. Racism inevitably causes economic disadvantages and burdens for groups of color. Here are several key events and movements that exemplify the link between race and poverty, events that both burdened people of color seeking to escape poverty and eased the way for white Americans to advance their economic fortunes.

- The institution of slavery. Slavery means exploited labor, the labor of enslaved Africans was essential for creating wealth for others from which they often derived no benefit. Slavery resulted in the creation of wealth not only for the white slave-holding elite, but for all who benefited from and participated in a “slavery-centered” economy (e.g. Merchants, bankers, fishermen, shipbuilders, traders, auctioneers, bounty hunters, and immigrant farmers).
- The Indian Removal Act of 1830. By this act of Congress, Native Americans were forcibly removed from their lands and resettled in territory that was of no interest to whites. Their property was then made available for white settlers. This stolen land became the basis for white economic enrichment which could be passed on as an inheritance to future generations. This economic disenfranchisement also led to the impoverishment of future generations of Native Americans.
- Supreme Court Decision of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). This decision enshrined the realities of racial segregation, second-class citizenship, and “separate but equal” facilities in our national life. Among the many pernicious effects of this decision was the creation of inferior educational opportunities for African Americans. They and other communities of color endured severely restricted access to quality education. Segregated schools were poorly funded in comparison to their white counterparts. This created a deficit of educational attainment—the effects of which are still with us—which translated into economic disadvantage in the labor market, including participation in higher paying and socially prestigious professions.

- The exclusion of Asian Indians from eligibility for U.S. citizenship. In 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court (*U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind*) ruled that while Asian Indians were indeed “Caucasians” by race, they could not be considered “white”. The result was that many Asian Indians were stripped of the naturalized citizenship. This means that they were unable to legally own property; many had their assets taken from them and given to whites.
- The exclusion of domestics and agricultural workers from the Social Security Act of 1935. At the height of the Depression, this law created a new public policy that established a basic level of economic security for many of the country’s workers. However, by excluding domestics and agricultural workers, this act effectively denied Social Security pensions and benefits to 75 percent of black workers.
- The provisions of the Wagner Act (1935), which allowed unions to exclude African Americans from union membership. This legislation granted legal protections and recognition to labor unions not previously enjoyed and gave many working class whites access to higher wages and benefits. However, because the act also allowed unions to exclude blacks from union membership and its benefits, it legally protected white laborers from competition in the job market, creating economic opportunities reserved for whites, and further maintaining the existence of a lower paid, exploited labor pool.
- The failure of the Federal Housing Administration (1940’s and 1950’s) to grant loans to even minimally integrated neighborhoods. This agency provided low-cost government guaranteed loans to working class families, enabling mass home ownership and the accumulations of wealth that could be passed onto children. Ninety-eight percent of these loans were given to whites; blacks were granted less than two percent. The refusal to grant loans to integrated neighborhoods was a practice known as “redlining.”

Many more historical examples can be cited. These suffice in demonstration how white privilege was deliberately created and often state-sanctioned. It also resulted in “unjust impoverishment” for groups of color and “unjust enrichment” for white Americans. “Unjust enrichment and unjust impoverishment are critical concepts for understanding [our nation’s] past and present” economic realities and the link between racism and poverty.

The pernicious effects of this deliberate and state sanctioned “unjust impoverishment” endure to this day. This creates a serious obligation to repair the economic injuries and material deprivation that has been inflicted upon communities of color. Therefore, we support conscious efforts to correct past injustices with proactive deeds.

The responsibility to repair the harm or injury done to another is long recognized in Catholic moral theology. Traditional moral teaching speaks of the duty of restitution, based on the principle that “when injustice is done it must be repaired.”