

Rights and Responsibilities

Session Focus

This session on Catholic Social Teaching explores Rights and Responsibilities. The right to life is fundamental and includes a right to food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and essential social services. In 2021, Pope Francis declared, “The respect of the person and human rights...must always be safeguarded, and the dignity of everyone placed before everything.” Every human person has the right to life, the primary right which makes all other rights possible. But Christianity goes further in affirming that people have the right to a **life with dignity**. What makes this achievable are access to faith, family life, food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing. Christians have the responsibility to work towards respecting and achieving these rights for themselves but also for others.

Learning Objectives

This session guides learners of all ages to...

- comprehend the situation of the lack of human rights experienced by people around the world and the conditions that promote injustice
- value and appreciate the significance of Catholic teaching on human rights—everyone has a fundamental right to life and to conditions for living a decent life—and the responsibilities of Catholics to secure and respect human rights
- live their responsibilities for creating a more just world where human rights are secured and respected by engaging in action, locally and globally

Session Overview

Part 1. (10-15 minutes) Gathering

Part 2. (20 minutes) All Ages Learning Experience: Loss of Human Rights

Part 3. (75-90 minutes) In Depth Learning Experience: Human Rights and Responsibilities

- Option 1. Whole Group Format: All participants remain in the same room.
- Option 2. Age Groups Format : Participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults.

Part 4. (20 minutes) Sharing Learning Experiences

Part 5. (10 minutes) Closing Prayer Service

Design Options for In-Depth Learning

Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners
- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of leaders who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leaders to have one leader work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

Facilitation Tips for this Format:

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.

- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while small group leaders move from table to table assisting.

Materials Needed

Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service

All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Meditation: A World without Human Rights
- Equipment for visual presentation: multimedia projector and screen

In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- Poster board or newsprint, washable markers, a variety of news magazines and newspapers, pen and pencils

Closing

- Closing Prayer Service

Session Plan

Part 1. Gathering (15-20 minutes)

Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session. You can also distribute handouts for the In Depth Learning program at the beginning of that activity.
- Invite people to share a meal. Depending on the time of day, the program may end with a meal.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session in your own words, using the following text:

This session on Catholic Social Teaching explores Rights and Responsibilities. We are all familiar with human rights. Do these words sound familiar? “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The Declaration of Independence begins with a statement that we are all endowed with unalienable rights.

The Catholic tradition has always taught that the right to life is fundamental and includes a right to food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and essential social services. As the Catholic Bishops of the United States explain “Every person has a fundamental right to life—the right that makes all other rights possible. Each person also has a right to the conditions for living a decent life—faith and family life, food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing. We also have a duty to secure and respect these rights not only for ourselves, but for others, and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other and to the larger society.” (*Faithful Citizenship*, USCCB)

In this program we are going to see that many people around the world are denied basic human rights like food and water, shelter and housing, work and employment, education, and medical care. We are going to look at what our Catholic faith teaches us and what responsibilities we have for creating a world which protects human rights.

Present an overview and the schedule of the program.

Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people. Ask all members of the same family to sit together for the All Ages Learning Experience. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part 3), organize participants into three types of table groups: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults.

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience (20-25 minutes)

Involvement Phase of the Pastoral Circle Process

The All Ages Learning Experience is designed to help participants feel and understand how a particular social issue affects the lives of all people, including themselves. The first step in the Pastoral Circle process—and the basis for any action—is Involvement. Through learning activities, we connect the participants with the social issue to be explored, helping them “feel” the issue being analyzed, and exposing them to what is happening in their local community or world. This helps the participants “hear” and “think” from a broader perspective. Once people are connected with an issue or situation, they are ready to move to analysis, to ask the “why” questions from a first-hand perspective.

Preparation

Choose which method of presentation of the story “A World without Human Rights” you will use and gather what you need, including human resources, to present the story. Your choices include:

- a guided meditation
- a visual presentation with a dramatic reading
- a dramatic presentation.

Handout #1 will guide you through the preparation process.

Write these questions on newsprint or create PowerPoint slides with the questions:

- How did you feel as you gradually lost all your “rights?”
- Take a look at the results of your personal and home inventory. What would it be like to gradually lose most or all of these items?
- Is it difficult for you to imagine this situation happening to you or in your area?
- Is it hard for you to imagine that this situation is the reality for one in six people around the world? That equals more than one billion people!

Materials Needed

- Handout #1 for team preparing for the session
- Handout #2
- Pens or pencils

Ask each family, as a family, and each adolescent and adult in small groups to use Handout #2: A Personal and Home Inventory to develop a personal and home inventory. Give them several minutes to complete the worksheet.

Share the guided meditation with the group in whichever format you’ve chosen (see Handout #1).

A Meditation: A World without Human Rights

What does a world without basic human rights look like? I would like to take you on an imaginary journey. I want you to imagine what I am describing is happening to you and your family or household.

I invite you to close your eyes. Now imagine your life and your home today.

The first thing I'm going to take away from you and your family is relatively easy to part with: **Clothing**. I'll let you keep the clothes you're wearing right now, and you'll be able to wash them as often as needed. But all of the closets in your house are now empty. It's a bit embarrassing to wear the same clothes every day—people look at you strangely. Although you're somewhat discouraged and suffer from low self-esteem, all things considered, your life is still reasonably good. And you manage to cope.

But I'm afraid I'm going to have to take away item number two: **Energy**: heat, light, and power.

This, as you can imagine, is more of a problem. Now your house is always dark and usually too hot, which you can live with, or too cold, which is a bit more difficult. And you can now only wash and dry your clothes by hand, which is awkward because you have nothing to wear while they're being washed. Showers are cold, too. And you have to do the dishes by hand. There's no TV, no internet or computer, no access to music, no telephone, and no stove for cooking...you must now build a fire. And of course, you don't have a car, either. Now you have to walk to the store for food. Life is pretty miserable, and you're starting to feel desperate in many ways. You're depressed and feeling alone and singled out...a victim of a system that doesn't treat everyone fairly. But as they say, you still have your health...and so your family adapts the best it can.

But just as you are starting to adjust to all of this. I have to come along and take away something else. This is only the third takeaway...but it is a big one: **Water**.

This is a real problem. Just for drinking water, you now have to walk over a mile to a muddy stream with a couple of old milk jugs and lug them all the way back home. It's not just hard work, but also time-consuming. And the dirty water often makes you sick. That brings fever, discomfort, nausea, and diarrhea. And of course, the toilets don't work either. Now you have to go outside in the yard behind your house. This creates obvious sanitation problems, not to mention the inconvenience. It's also kind of degrading, and now you and your family get sick even more often. You don't really care anymore about the little things. Forget washing your clothes, doing the dishes or trying to cook a decent meal. No showers at all now. You're always dirty, and you feel even dirtier and ashamed. It seems like you're always at the doctor's office. But at least the health care is good in your area. And you're thankful for the fact that you're still eating well. It's quite a walk to the grocery store, but that seems like a pretty small thing at this point.

I'm afraid it's time for another takeaway. Now number four: **Your House**.

Don't worry, though. I won't leave you totally without shelter. I'm just going to trade in your home for a three-room shack of corrugated tin...about 300 square feet (that's 15 feet by 20 feet). Oh, and it has no windows, beds or couches. It does have a couple of wooden benches and chairs, though. The floor is dirt, and of course it gets muddy when it rains, which is a bit of a problem. You and your family all sleep on the floor—two or three to a room. Rats and bugs are also nuisances. The worst part now is seeing your family like this. The children don't laugh anymore; they only cry and whimper. Their faces are often blank, their eyes vacant. Their spirits are crushed. The adults are tired and worried.

Takeaway number five is devastating: **Food**.

No more grocery store. This is the biggest challenge so far. You can grow a few things in the yard—but not for all 12 months of the year. You and your family have become pretty resourceful at picking through your neighbors' garbage. It's amazing what people throw away: half-eaten apples, chicken

bones with half the meat still on them, week-old casseroles. Your neighbors' trash is now your treasure! Forget about any sense of nutrition. Just when you think you've sunk as low as you can sink, sickness and disease strike with a vengeance. Your weakened immune system can't cope with even ordinary colds, viruses, and bacterial infections. You're also dealing with things like head lice, rickets, hepatitis, parasites, and an incredible number of ailments you didn't know existed.

I'm terribly sorry but now I'm going to take away item number six: **Health Care**.

Incredibly before your very eyes, your brother dies from—of all things—diarrhea. How could that happen in your area? This seems like an unbelievably bad dream. Maybe now you're wondering what else could possibly be taken from you. You've already lost everything. Not quite.

The seventh and last thing has already been taken away from you: **Hope**.

Hope for the future, hope for your family, hope that tomorrow might be better than today.

(Hold a silent pause for a few moments.)

You may now open your eyes. I wanted each of you to feel what it is like to live in a world without basic human rights. I know that this story sounds unimaginable, especially in North America. But this is the reality of one in six people on our planet today!

(Originally developed by Heather MacLeod and World Vision, USA)

After the meditation, engage participants in discussion of the following reflection questions:

- How did you feel as you gradually lost all your "rights?"
- Take a look at the results of your personal and home inventory. What would it be like to gradually lose most or all of these items?
- Is it difficult for you to imagine this situation happening to you or in your area?
- Is it hard for you to imagine that this situation is the reality for one in six people around the world? That equals more than one billion people!

Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience (75-90 minutes)

Families with Children Learning Experiences

Activity 1. Why Are People Denied Basic Human Rights?

Pastoral Circle Process: Exploration-Analysis

Exploration or analysis, the second phase of the Pastoral Circle Process, helps the participants ask *why* in the face of human suffering and injustice. Why do these conditions exist? What role do politics or economics or cultural values play in perpetuating the problem? Exploration broadens the participants' thinking by helping them look for the causes of the injustice; examine the relationships among politics, economics, and cultural values in our world that perpetuate the injustice; and analyze the social or structural realities that keep the situation from changing. Exploration helps the participants understand the social issue more thoroughly so they can envision ways to be involved in working for justice.

1. Stories from People Around the World

Materials Needed

- Handouts #3, #4, #5, #6
- Newsprint and marker

The first learning experience engages the participants in exploring stories of real people from around the world who are suffering from the lack of basic human rights. Handout #3: Stories from People Around the World presents 22 stories of real people experiencing injustice. Read the stories in advance. You may want to select certain stories for each age group. Here are several ways of engaging the participants in experiencing and analyzing the stories.

Option 1: Dramatic Presentation of the Stories

Select up to six stories to dramatize, depending on time. Prepare a team of “actors” to present each story in the first person, each actor taking a different part in the story. Pause after each story so that the participants can reflect on the story by answering the following questions in their table groups:

- What was the individual or family in the story experiencing?
- What conditions were they living in?
- What do you think was keeping them in this situation?
- Where do you see seeds of hope in this story?

Ask the participants to use Handout #4: Why Are People Denied Basic Human Rights? to record their responses. You may also want to give them copies of the stories that are being presented.

In their table groups, ask the participants to reflect on the following questions:

- What did you learn that was new or surprising to you in these stories?
- What common threads do you see in these stories?
- What questions do you have from these stories?

Conclude by asking for summary insights from the table groups and identify common threads that are contained in all of the stories.

Option 2: Reading the Stories

Give each family table or small group table three stories to read. Be sure the stories for each group have variety, i.e., they address different human rights, they involve individuals and families, they are from different countries, they are different in their length.

Ask three different people (for families, it can be a parent or older child) to read the stories aloud while the others follow along. Ask the participants to think about how the stories reveal a lack of basic human rights and the conditions that perpetuate the situation. After each story ask the participants to pause to discuss the story by answering the following questions:

- What was the individual or family in the story experiencing?
- What conditions were they living in?

- What do you think was keeping them in this situation?
- Where do you see seeds of hope in this story?

Ask the participants to use Handout #4: Why Are People Denied Basic Human Rights? to record their responses.

In their table groups, ask the participants to reflect on what they learned:

- What did you learn that was new or surprising to you in these stories?
- What common threads do you see in these stories?
- What questions do you have from these stories?

Conclude by asking for summary insights from the table groups and identify common threads that are contained in all of the stories.

2. Analysis of the Situation

Step 1. If you were poor...

Ask each table group to discuss the question:

If you lived in a poor area of the world, what are some of the things you would not have? (Examples: food, flush toilets, toys, a doctor nearby, TV, computer, car, school, hot shower, toothbrush, police protection, drinkable water, smart phone, electricity, hospital, nice clothes.)

Give each person several minutes to develop a list. Ask the participants to use Handout #4 to record their responses. Invite group members to share items from their list with their group.

Step 2. Why is this happening to people?

Ask each table group to discuss the questions:

- Why do people lack the conditions for living a decent life (basic human rights)?
- What is causing this to happen to people?

Ask the participants to use Handout #4 to record their responses. Conclude by inviting the table groups to share several of their responses with the large group. Record their responses on newsprint for all to see. Here is a list of some of the causes, though there are many more: not enough good jobs, overpopulation, sexism, racism, famine, unequal distribution of wealth, not enough health care, poor country debt, war, disasters, not enough clean drinking water, little education, unequal access to resources, corrupt governments, and greed.

Step 3. Analysis

To concretize the situation of people in our world, ask people to stand to illustrate the numbers of people without basic human rights. To determine an easy way to have people stand, count the number of people in each table group. For example, if you have 8 people per table group and you need 1 out of 6

people to stand, ask 4 people from three tables to stand. If you need 1 out of 10 people, ask 8 people from 10 table groups to stand. Be sure the people who stand represent a diversity of ages or in the case of statistics about children, ask that children from table groups stand.

Statistics on poverty and hunger change from year to year. To get current statistics, use the following websites to fill in the blanks in the text. For information specific to your denomination, check out the Lifelong Faith Studio's Justice page: <https://www.lifelongfaithstudio.com/justice--service1.html> .

Health & Human Services, U.S. Government: Census Statistics (updated annually)
<https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty.html>

HealthCare.gov: Federal Poverty Level
<https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-fpl/>

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Poverty Statistics
<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals#no-poverty>

Poverty USA: Information and Action Ideas on Poverty
<http://www.povertyusa.org/index.php/learn>

Bread for the World Hunger: Hunger Issues
<https://www.bread.org/how-end-hunger>

Church World Service: Crop Hunger Walk
<https://crophungerwalk.org>

Lutheran World Relief: Information and Education Resources
<https://lwr.org/downloads>

The statistics are also on the handout, "The Situation of Human Rights in Our World." Fill in the blanks on this handout with current statistics. Be sure that every adolescent and adult participant has a copy of this handout. You may also want to create a PowerPoint presentation or individual newsprint sheets to display the key statistics.

Begin your introduction with the following:

There are ___ billion people in our world, of which there are approximately ___ million children age 0-4 and ___ million age 5-9, and ___ million teenagers age 10-14 and ___ million aged 15-19.

Continue by sharing the following:

1. An estimated ___ billion people in our world live on the local equivalent of less than \$1 a day. Ask 1 person for every six people to stand to represent people living on \$1 a day.
2. About ___ million people around the world are still malnourished. Ask 1 person for every eight people to stand to represent malnourished people.

3. More than 1 billion people in our world lack access to safe drinking water. Ask 1 person for every six people to stand to represent people without safe drinking water.
4. More than 2 billion people in our world lack sanitation. Ask 2 people for every six people to stand to represent people without sanitation.
5. About ___ billion people in our world are living in inadequate housing conditions in urban areas alone. Ask 1 person for every six people to stand to represent people with inadequate housing.
6. Every year ___ million young children die before their fifth birthday, mainly from preventable illnesses, such as diarrhea, acute respiratory infections or malaria. (This means ___ million out of the million children aged 0-4 will die by age 5.) Ask 1 person for every six people to stand to represent the children who will die from preventable illnesses.
7. ___ million people in the United States lack health coverage. ___ million are children. Ask 1 person in six stand to represent all the people the U.S. without health coverage.
8. There currently ___ million children—__ percent of them girls—not in primary school. (This is ___ million out of ___ million children of primary school age.) Ask 1 in 10 people to stand to represent all the children who do not have access to a primary education.

Step 4. Individual Family Discussion

Make sure the parents receive the Handout #6: Roots of Injustice so they can deepen their understanding of what causes the lack of basic human rights for so many people around the world.

Ask parents to share with their children the seven reasons why people lack the conditions for living a decent life using Handout #5: Eight Reasons.

After the parents have presented the list, ask family members to discuss their thoughts and feelings about what they have just experienced. Use the following questions:

- How are we feeling about the situation of so many people in our world today? Is it hard for us to believe that so many people are living without the basic necessities of life?
- What surprised us about the situation?
- How does the list of reasons compare to our answers in Step 2 (Why is this happening to people?)?
- What did we learn today that we didn't know before?

Activity 2. What do the Scriptures and Church Teachings Say about Human Rights?

Pastoral Circle Process: Reflection

Reflection, the third phase of the Pastoral Circle process, engages the participants in exploring the social issue from the perspective of faith—the Bible, Catholic Social Teaching, and the living response of the Catholic Church to the issue—locally, nationally, and globally. This step involves the participants in examining what the Catholic faith says about a particular social issue. It involves them in exploring what

the Catholic community is doing about social issues and what motivates its response. Reflection calls forth not just an intellectual assent to faith, but a commitment to incorporate a faith response within one's own life. The Word of God brought to bear upon the situation challenges old ways of thinking and responding by raising new questions, suggesting new insights, and opening people up to new action possibilities.

Materials Needed

- Handouts #9, #10
- Newsprint or poster paper
- Colored markers
- Magazines, scissors, glue

1. What Scripture Says . . .

Share the following:

Catholic teaching on human rights begins in the Bible. We are focusing on two Scripture passages: Isaiah 58:6-12 and Matthew 25:31-46. Remember that the message of justice is woven through the Bible, especially in the Old Testament prophets and in the message and actions of Jesus in the Gospels.

Read the passage from Isaiah 58:6-12 to the group. Invite participants to follow along on Handout #9, which includes both Scripture passages from the New American Bible.

Ask the participants to describe God's vision for people (i.e., human rights such as setting free the oppressed) and what God is asking us to do (i.e., responsibilities) using the two questions on the handout. Ask the participants to make notes on the handout.

- What is God's vision for people in Isaiah 58?
- What is God asking us to do in response to Isaiah 58?

Read the passage from Matthew 25:31-46 to the group. You might want to use several different voices for the Scripture reading.

Drama Alternative: Develop a dramatization of Matthew 25:31-46. Select participants and organize them into two groups: "sheep" and "goats." Ask them to take their respective roles and to read their lines from the story when it comes their time. The narrator (the role of Jesus) can feel free to ad lib, asking the sheep further questions about how they are serving the poor and meeting him in the poor whom they are serving. The narrator can also ask the goats why they did not notice the poor and did not see Jesus among them.

Ask the participants to identify Jesus' list of human rights in Matthew 25 and what Jesus is asking us to do (responsibilities) using the two questions on the handout. The significance of this parable is that in neglecting the poor, the outcast, and the oppressed, people are rejecting Jesus himself. Ask the participants to make notes on the handout.

- What is Jesus' list of human rights as presented in this parable?

- What is Jesus asking us to do in this parable?

2. What the Church Teaches...

Review the teachings of the Catholic Church on human rights and responsibilities. Use the following information to prepare a presentation in your own words.

a. Founded on the dignity of the human person

Human rights are founded on the inalienable dignity that each of us possesses because we have been made in the image and likeness of God. The Catholic Bishops of the United States explain it this way:

“At the summit of creation stands the creation of man and woman, made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27). As such every human being possesses an inalienable dignity that stamps human existence prior to any division into races or nations and prior to human labor and human achievement (Genesis 4-11).”
(*Economic Justice for All*)

b. The human rights of every person

“Catholic social teaching spells out the basic demands of justice in greater detail in the human rights of every person. These fundamental rights are prerequisites for a dignified life in community. The Bible vigorously affirms the sacredness of every person as a creature formed in the image and likeness of God. The biblical emphasis on covenant and community also shows that human dignity can only be realized and protected in solidarity with others. In Catholic social thought, therefore, respect for human rights and a strong sense of both personal and communal responsibility are linked, not opposed.” (*Economic Justice for All*)

Catholic social teaching recognizes three sets of rights: the right to life (including food and shelter), economic rights (including education and employment), and political and cultural rights (including religious freedom). With rights come responsibilities to others: our families, and the common good of all.

The Church upholds both personal responsibility and social rights. The right to life is fundamental and includes a right to food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and essential social services. Every person has the right to raise a family and the duty to support them. Human dignity demands religious and political freedom and the duty to exercise these rights for the common good of all persons.

3. Creative Activity: Promoting the Church’s Message

To help the participants gain deeper insight into the Scripture passages and the teachings of the Church, guide families in creating an advertisement that communicates the Church’s message.

Pass out Handout #10. Share the following directions with the participants:

Each family group (either individual families or family clusters) represents an advertising firm charged with the task of “selling” the Church’s human rights message, helping people become more aware of the Bible and Church’s teachings and moving them to action. The message you have to

work with is found in the two Scripture passages (Isaiah and Matthew) on Handout #9 and the key quotes from Church teachings on Handout #10.

Each family group or small group is to design a full-page ad that will run in local newspapers or in national magazines targeted at families with children. How will you design your ad to help people see the message in the Bible and Church's teaching on human rights in a new way? What symbols or illustrations, slogans or sayings would be appropriate?

Develop a full-color draft of your ad on the paper provided. Use the markers to draw your ad and use magazines for illustrations and pictures.

After each family has completed their ad, ask them to share it with other families near them.

4. Reflection

Ask the participants to discuss, briefly, their thoughts and feelings about what they have just experienced with their families. Use the following questions:

- What did you discover about the teachings of Scripture and the Church on human rights? What did you learn today that you didn't know before?
- How will you look at injustice differently because of these teachings?
- What difference will these teachings make in your life and in the life of your family?

Learning Experience 3. How Can We Protect the Human Rights of All People?

Pastoral Circle Process: Action

New experiences and ways of thinking lead naturally to new ways of living and acting. Complex social issues seldom lend themselves to simple solutions. Social problems can seem overwhelming. But their very complexity makes it possible to approach action for change from many different angles. If Reflection helps people to feel part of a wider faith community committed to justice, then the Action step helps them to identify the particular role they can play in weakening and eventually destroying injustice. Action, whether individual or group, is always seen within a community context. It can be locally or globally focused, short term or long term. It can be expressed in a variety of ways, but if it is grounded in Involvement, Exploration and Reflection it will be effective. While it brings about small changes in social problems, Action can produce major changes in the lives of those involved.

Preparation

Create a Rights and Responsibilities Action Booklet with action ideas and projects from which you and/or your participants can select ideas and projects that you want individuals, families, or the entire parish community to adopt. You may want to select a local, national, and international program that you want the entire parish community to adopt, providing a focus for action and giving everyone an opportunity to work together to make a difference. Make sure your booklet has a variety of projects that will make great parish-wide action projects.

Your booklet should include local/regional projects (service and justice) and national and international projects. Begin by researching local organizations involved in direct service to those in need and

organizations working to alleviate the causes of injustice (advocacy groups, community organizing groups, etc.). Check with your diocesan Catholic Charities and social justice office for recommended organizations. Be sure to include projects that your parish community already supports.

In addition to your presentation of the booklet of action ideas and featured projects, invite several representatives from local service organizations or social justice leaders in your community to share their thoughts about the importance of serving and acting for justice. Ask the speakers to share the following information in their talks:

1. the kind of work they are doing and how it responds to the needs of people locally (or nationally or internationally),
2. the reasons they are personally involved in this work/ministry,
3. the characteristics of the people they are serving,
4. the role they think the Church should be playing in this and other situations of injustice,
5. the ways that people can get involved in their work.

Create a PowerPoint presentation or large sheets of newsprint displaying the two feet with action ideas inside each foot.

Materials Needed

- Your Rights and Responsibilities Action Booklet
- Handouts #13, #14

1. Accepting Our Responsibilities and Moving to Action

Introduce the final activity by explaining to the group, in your own words, the following:

In order to protect and respect the human rights of all people, we need to accept our responsibilities for others. The Catholic Bishops of the United States explain it this way:

“We also have a duty to secure and respect these rights not only for ourselves, but for others, and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other and to the larger society.” (Faithful Citizenship, USCCB)

“In a world where some speak mostly of ‘rights’ and others mostly of ‘responsibilities,’ the Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the large society. While public debate in our nation is often divided between those who focus on personal responsibility and those who focus on social responsibilities, our tradition insists that both are necessary.” (Sharing Catholic Social Teaching. United States Catholic Bishops)

In this final activity we are going to explore ways we can all get involved, regardless of how young or old we are, and accept our responsibility to protect and respect the human rights of all people.

Introduce the speakers and invite them to share their thoughts with the community.

Following the brief presentation(s), give the participants an opportunity to ask questions.

Refer participants to Handouts #13 and #14.

Action involves helping people survive their present crisis or need *and* addressing the root causes of the problems. We call this the “two feet of social action:” direct service to those in need, and action for justice to address the causes that perpetuate the problem.

Collecting food for the food bank, working at a soup kitchen, visiting the elderly or sick, and tutoring children are common examples of direct service. Direct service must be coupled with actions aimed at removing the causes of the problems that direct service is addressing. Legislative advocacy, community organizing, and working with organizations that are changing the structures that promote injustice are examples of action for justice.

To walk with both feet of social action, an individual or family who prepares and serves a meal at the homeless shelter could also be involved with the local organization which is working to create housing, employment, and just policies for those without adequate housing, or they may make a contribution to Habitat for Humanity which addresses the worldwide problem of inadequate housing. By walking on both feet we experience the benefits of working directly with the homeless *and* learning to change the system which keeps people homeless. Real change will come about only when we work together to alleviate the present suffering caused by an injustice and organize our energies to eradicate the causes of the injustice.

Review the ideas for action in the booklet or newsletter you prepared. If your parish has chosen one or more featured projects to adopt, provide a more detailed explanation of how people can be involved in these projects.

2. Pledge to Protect the Human Rights of All People

Distribute two pledge cards to each family unit and to each individual adolescent and adult.

Invite the participants to review the Rights and Responsibilities Action Booklet and discuss how they would like to be involved as individuals and as families. Introduce the “Pledge to Protect the Human Rights of All People” on Handout #14. After families have chosen their action ideas for service and for justice, they should record them on both pledge cards. Ask families to take one pledge card home and put it on the refrigerator as a reminder of what they have pledged to do. The other pledge card will be offered up at the closing prayer service.

Adolescent and Adult Learning Experiences

Activity 1. Why Are People Denied Basic Human Rights?

Pastoral Circle Process: Involvement & Exploration

1. Stories from People Around the World

Materials Needed

- Handout #3
- Pens or pencils

Option 1. Read the stories.

Divide the participants into seven groups of approximately six people. If you have a large group, organize more than seven groups and repeat the stories with additional groups. There are 22 stories which reveal the effects of the lack of basic human rights on the lives of people in the U.S. and countries around the world.

Give each group three stories. Each person in the group should receive copies of the three stories. Be sure the three stories for each group have variety, i.e., they address different human rights, they involve individuals and families, they are from different countries, they are different in their length.

Ask three different people to read aloud the stories while the others follow along. As they read the stories, they need to analyze how the stories reveal a lack of basic human rights and the conditions that perpetuate the situation. Have them answer the following questions:

- What was the individual or family in the story experiencing?
- What conditions were they living in?
- What do you think was keeping them in this situation?
- Where do you see seeds of hope in this story?

Option 2. Dramatize the stories.

Have each group select one of their stories to present a dramatic presentation to whole group. Direct each group to choose the story they want to tell, pick actors to present the story in the first person and narrators for the story, and practice their dramatization.

Have a facilitator and timer to move the groups along. After each presentation, the facilitator pauses one minute and asks participants to write down briefly what they heard.

For either option, invite participants into reflection. In their small groups, or – depending on the numbers – in the large group, ask the participants to reflect on what they learned:

- What did you learn that was new or surprising to you in these stories?
- What common threads do you see in these stories?
- What continued questions do you have from the stories?

2. Analysis of the Situation

Option 1. The Situation of Human Rights in Our World

Materials Needed

- Handouts #4, #6, #7, #8
- Newsprint and marker

Ask each small group to discuss the question:

If you lived in a poor area of our world, what are some of the things you would not have? Examples: food, flush toilets, toys, a doctor nearby, TV, internet, smartphone, car, school, hot shower, toothbrush, police protection, drinkable water, electricity, hospital, nice clothes.

Give each person several minutes to develop a list, using Handout #4: Why Are People Denied Basic Human Rights? to record their responses. Invite group members to share items from their list with their group.

Ask each small group to discuss the questions:

- Why do people lack the conditions for living a decent life – basic human rights?
- What is causing this to happen to people?

Have participants use the handout to record their responses.

Invite the small groups to share several of their responses with the large group. Record their responses on newsprint for all to see. Here is a list of some of the causes, though there are many more: not enough good jobs, overpopulation, sexism, racism, famine, unequal distribution of wealth, not enough health care, poor country debt, war, disasters, not enough clean drinking water, little education, unequal access to resources, corrupt governments, and greed.

Review Handout #8: The Situation of Human Rights in Our World, highlighting one or two statistics in each category of human rights. Give the participants several minutes to review the list on their own. Invite them to share their feelings and thoughts on the situation of human rights. Ask the group what surprised them about the situation.

Using Handout #7: Who is Vulnerable in Our World?“, discuss how within each area the people who are most likely to be hungry are the poor, people without education or a secure job, people without land on which to grow food and people with special nutritional needs, such as children who need to grow, and pregnant and nursing women. Wars, civil disturbances, climate and environmental changes and other emergencies such as floods and earthquakes also contribute to both short-term and long-term problems.

Using Handout #6: Roots of Injustice, explore several of the reasons why people lack basic human rights in our world. Connect the key points on the handout with the response of the participants from the last discussion.

In the large group or in small groups with reporting, ask the participants to briefly discuss their thoughts and feelings about what they have just experienced. Use one or two of the following questions:

- How are you feeling about the situation of so many people in our world today? Is it hard for you to believe that so many people are living with basic necessities of life?
- What surprised you about the situation?
- What did you learn today that you didn't know before?

Option 2. The Web Chart

The Web Chart is a simple educational tool that helps people better understand justice issues. It builds an understanding of the factors involved in particular issues and helps people formulate the questions that need to be answered before they can move to a deeper understanding or to effective action. In exploring the causes of the event, the objective of the chart is to identify the issue of concern in terms of immediate and secondary causes in such a way that the different levels are clearly labeled.

Materials Needed

- One large sheet of newsprint and colored markers
- Handouts #6, #8

Begin by reviewing Handout #8: The Situation of Human Rights in Our World, highlighting one or two statistics in each category of human rights. Then give the participants several minutes to review the list on their own. Invite them to share their feelings and thoughts on the situation of human rights. Ask the group what surprised them about the situation?

Explain that by using the Web Chart, they will be examining the causes of the lack of human rights in our world. Write "Lack of Human Rights" in the center of the chart. Invite them to give reasons for the lack of human rights and write them on the chart surrounding the central message. Tell them to think in terms of different categories, such as:

- Political forces – government policies, budgets, and priorities
- Economic or business forces
- Cultural forces – values that people and societies hold
- Historical forces – things that happened in the past that influence the present

For each cause identified, include two or three examples illustrating how this cause contributes to the lack of basic human rights. Use a different colored marker to identify the immediate causes.

Using Handout #6: Roots of Injustice, review the reasons why people lack basic human rights in our world. It will help the participants to think of other causes of injustice they may have missed. Add these to the chart.

Invite the participants to ask questions and to make connections between the causes and the stories they explored.

Go a step deeper by developing secondary causes. These are things that have contributed to immediate causes you have already listed, e.g., political instability during times of war or conflict means that basic human services are neglected. Use a pen or marker of another color to identify these secondary causes.

Examine the entire Web Chart and look for connections among the causes. Draw lines between causes with arrows to show the connections and relationships among the causes.

In the large group, ask the participants to discuss, briefly, their thoughts and feelings about what they have just experienced. Use one or two of the following questions:

- How are you feeling about the situation of so many people in our world today? Is it hard for you to believe that so many people are living without the basic necessities of life?
- What surprised you about the causes of the situation and the connections among the causes?
- What did you learn today that you didn't know before?

Activity 2. What Do the Scriptures and Church Teachings Say about Human Rights?

See this activity under Families with Children Learning Experiences. All of the activities are the same for adolescents and adults, with the exception of C. For adolescents and adults, the following activity is used: Beliefs that Lead to Action.

Beliefs That Lead to Action

Materials Needed

- Handouts #9, #10, #11

This activity helps adolescent and adult participants connect beliefs from Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching with action.

Begin by asking the participants to review the two handouts: The Bible Teaches...and The Church Teaches...

Divide the adolescents and adults into small groups of 3-4 people. Ask them to complete Handout #11: Beliefs that Lead to Action as a group, working together to clarify what they believe, the situation today, and how they can act in the world for justice.

Ask them to complete the handout individually, and then share their Belief statements with their small group.

Reflection

Ask the participants to briefly discuss their thoughts and feelings about what they have just experienced with their small group. Use the following questions:

- What did you discover about the teachings of Scripture and the Church on human rights? What did you learn today that you didn't know before?
- How will you look at injustice differently because of these teachings?

- What difference will these teachings make in your life?

Part 4. Sharing Learning Experiences (20 minutes)

Invite several family groups to share their advertisement promoting the Church's message on human rights.

Invite adolescent and adult groups to share their message from Beliefs that Lead to Action with the larger group.

Conclude the learning session by asking people to rejoin their groups from the All Ages Learning Experience. Guide individuals and families in sharing what they learned through the program. In these, or your own words, say the following:

Think of everything we have done in this session to learn about the situation of human rights in our world, the message of the Bible and the Church, and the ways we can protect and respect human rights.

- What is the most important lesson you have learned tonight?
- Why do you think protecting and respecting the human rights of all people is so important for us as Catholics?

Allow several minutes for small group sharing, and if time allows, ask for responses from the group.

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (10 minutes)

Preparation

The Closing Prayer service includes an offering of the Pledge cards. Be sure to have several baskets available as the participants come forward to offer their Pledge cards.