

# A LENTEN JOURNEY THROUGH THE DESERT OF POVERTY



## WEEK 1: CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

### EDUCATION

### REFLECTION

### CHALLENGE

#### SUNDAY

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life from conception to death is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This principle is the foundation of all the principles of our social teachings.

“Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”  
-C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

Do I recognize that humans do not lose dignity because disability, poverty, age, lack of success, or race? Where do I have room for improvement? Ask God to help you see his love in dignity in a person or group of people you struggle with.

For everyone you encounter today, remind yourself to see them through the eyes of Christ challenging yourself to compliment them and then say a simple prayer for them.

#### MONDAY

Call to Family, Community and Participation

God did not create us to be alone. Our capacity to grow in community is directly impacted by the ways we organize society and our family structures. We have a duty to participate in communities and work for the common good.

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:20

How often do I recognize Christ in the midst of my family or communities? How can the time I spend with others be offered as a prayer?

Plan to eat a meal with a coworker, friend, or your family today.

#### TUESDAY

Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that people have a fundamental right to life, food, shelter, health care, education and employment. They have a right to participate in decisions which affect their lives. People have corresponding responsibilities to respect the rights of others and to work for common good.

“Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” Isaiah 1:17

What basic rights do you believe all people should have and do they contradict what our faith tells us? Reflect on where you see or hear people’s rights being violated in our community and world and how God might call you to respond?

Donate food to a food pantry and or donate clothes and or money to an organization of your choice that helps meet the basic rights of people.

<p><b>WEDNESDAY</b> Option for the Poor and Vulnerable</p>	<p>A basic moral test is to look at how the most vulnerable members of our society are faring. As Catholics, we are called to put first the needs of the poor and vulnerable.</p>	<p><i>“Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?” “Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.”</i></p> <p>God, how do you want me to respond to the needs of the poor? How can I push myself out of my comfort zone?</p>	<p>Next time you encounter a homeless person or a person in need, ask them their name and how they are doing that day. Acknowledge them as they are: a child of God.</p>
<p><b>THURSDAY</b> The Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers</p>	<p>Work is continued participation in God’s creation, and the basic rights of workers must be respected. These include the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to healthy work environments. Our faith reminds us that we should not take advantages of others and must always prioritize people over profit.</p>	<p>“It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act.” -Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, <i>Caritas in Veritate</i></p> <p>Do I know the labor conditions used to produce the clothing, food, and household items I consume? Am I offering my business to companies who care about their employees as persons with inherent dignity? Who are the low-wage workers you encounter regularly- do you affirm their dignity as made in the image and likeness of God?</p>	<p>Identify one consumer good that you can start purchasing differently, with the dignity of work in mind.</p> <p>Go out of your way to acknowledge a low wage worker today.</p>
<p><b>FRIDAY</b> Solidarity</p>	<p>We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Out of love for our neighbor, we seek to be in solidarity rather than divided. We work for justice and peace to bring about unity as one human family.</p>	<p>“ But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to the part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.” (1 Corinthians 12:24-26)</p> <p>How do I share in the joys and sufferings of others? How about those that live in poverty? Ask God to show you ways to live in solidarity with ALL people.</p>	<p>Give up one thing you really wanted to eat or do today. Offer it up as a gesture of being in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in poverty.</p>
<p><b>SATURDAY</b> Care for God’s Creation</p>	<p>Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We show respect to our Creator by being stewards of creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.</p>	<p>“On this earth there is room for everyone... At the same time we must recognize our grave duty to hand the earth on to future generations in such a condition that they too can worthily inhabit it and continue to cultivate it” -Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, <i>Caritas in Veritate</i></p> <p>Do I litter? Live wastefully? Do I see my care for creation as connected to my concern for poor person who are most at risk for environmental problems?</p>	<p>Pick up litter whenever you see it today, even if you have to go out of your way. Turn off all the lights when you leave your house today and only use electric that is necessary.</p>