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Who Is My Neighbor?

The Face of Poverty in Washington State

A Pastoral Letter from the Catholic Bishops of the State of Washington

Winter 2017



The Good Samaritan, Eugène Delacroix

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Who Is My Neighbor?

The Face of Poverty in Washington State



Courtesy: Diocese of Yakima

“I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. . . . We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them.”

– Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 198

A Pastoral Letter from the Catholic Bishops of the State of Washington

November 17, 2016

The Face of Poverty

Poverty has a face. It is more than an issue to be discussed or a problem to be solved. Poverty has a human face. It is the face of Linda, who, while out of work and raising her family, often did not know how she would provide the next meal for her children. At times she put food coloring in the children’s eggs, just to make mealtime less monotonous. Linda has stage 4 cancer, and her limited access to adequate health care adds a disquieting uncertainty to her bleak prognosis. But Linda is a fighter who has overcome drug addiction and homelessness, and now she’s helping raise her grandchildren.

When we stop and look into the face of poverty, we recognize that “the poor” are not strangers. They are our sisters and brothers, members of our human family. Those in our cities and towns who lack the most basic necessities of life — food, housing, basic health care and educational opportunities — remind us that when our neighbors are hungry, cold, sick and unprepared to share fully in the life of our community, it is more than an economic challenge. Hunger, homelessness, illness and broken dreams shatter the bonds of community that hold us together, bonds that contribute to civic peace and stability. As people of faith, our relationship with God brings us into relationship with every other person, and the needs of others call us to share the gift of love we have received from our loving and merciful Father.

As the spiritual leaders of the Catholic people in Washington State, we bishops have spent the past year listening to the voices of our neighbors living in poverty. Like Linda in the Diocese of Yakima, they shared their stories of hunger, homelessness and pain with honesty and openness. We heard stories of anguish from mothers like Karla in the Spokane Diocese, who said, “Every day is a struggle.” Her 11-year-old daughter was a toddler when Karla left her husband because he was abusive, and now her daughter is a fourth-grader filled with anger. Raising four children on her own has been difficult for Karla, and now she and her children are homeless and often sleep in their car. She used to sell her blood to buy food; and once, when one of the children was sick, she had no money for medicine and stole some Tylenol. As a result, Karla has a police record and worries that no one will hire her and wonders what kind of a future her children will have.

We listened to the stories of immigrant men and women, some with documents and some without, like Sophia, a farmworker. She spoke about relying on home remedies and over-the-counter drugs to treat a serious illness that sent her to the emergency room. After she was released, she received a \$14,000 medical bill, and with no insurance coverage she wondered how she would pay. Sophia expressed concern for others facing similar circumstances even though she and her family still confront many challenges of their own.

Many whom we met had encountered negative influences while living on the streets. Jonathan in the Archdiocese of Seattle, who grew up in a middle-class home, received an education and had a good job but suffered from depression. He began using drugs and alcohol and lost his job of 11 years. He became sober and found housing but lost it when he began using drugs again. Disowned by his family, without friends or money, he found himself homeless on the streets of Seattle. He told us, “I couldn’t understand how someone who came from where I came from could be homeless.”

Poverty has a face, and it also has a voice. But that voice often does not penetrate the wall of fear, misconception and prejudice that can separate people who are poor from those of us who have what we need. The voice of poverty can be drowned out or ignored in the halls of government, where other legitimate demands for resources also resound.

In our listening sessions, we heard “the cry of poor” (Psalm 34). We are writing this pastoral letter to all people of good faith and to political leaders because we heard in the voices of people who are poor both a plea for mercy and a desire to participate fully in the life of their communities. Reflecting on what we heard, we recognize the urgent need for action to alleviate the suffering that has become epidemic in every city, town and community in our state.

Role and Responsibility of the Catholic Community

Pope Francis wants us to be evangelized by people experiencing poverty, and in our listening sessions we learned that those living in poverty in Washington State truly “have much to teach us.” In our conversations, we learned the sad truth that many simply accept insecurity and suffering as

an inevitable condition of daily life. And with awe, we also discovered that many — if not most — who have experienced severe poverty harbor a strong desire to help others experiencing similar difficulties.

Hearing their stories raised urgent questions within us. If we believe the faith we profess, how are we to respond to so many of our neighbors who do not share the benefits of our state's economic wealth? Because the social and economic factors affecting those living in poverty are so varied and complex, what is the most effective way to relieve their anguish? Answering these and many other questions related to hunger, homelessness and chronic unemployment requires a well-formed conscience. As Catholics, we have a moral obligation to inform our consciences in light of Scripture and Catholic teaching, and then to take direct action that demonstrates concern for our sisters and brothers. What we must do for “the least” among us is the unmistakable call of the Gospel to disciples of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 14:16; 22:37-40; 25:31-46; John 13:34; 1 John 4:21). Jesus assures the least among us, whom he counts among those who are blessed, that the kingdom of God is theirs (Luke 6:20). And he assures us, as he assured the rich official, that when we share with them, we will have treasure in heaven (Luke 18:22).

Despite the clarity of the Lord's call, we find that it is not always easy to answer the question: “Who is my neighbor?” But Jesus does not ask us to solve a problem. Rather, he calls us into relationship with our neighbor, a much greater challenge.

The dignity of human life, the common good and solidarity are more than mere words and phrases. They are the foundation stones of our values and actions as faithful Catholic citizens. When we acknowledge the inherent dignity of the human person,ⁱ we definitively answer the question “Who is my neighbor?” with one word: Everyone. When we speak of the common good,ⁱⁱ we acknowledge that we are called to love our neighbor — everyone — as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Our actions must ensure everyone's right to life, to work, to basic health services and to basic education. Acting in this way, we are in solidarityⁱⁱⁱ — in relationship — with everyone, including those of different nations, races, cultures and ethnicities. Solidarity with our neighbor begins with listening and leads to action. Acting as sisters and brothers to those who are poor and marginalized, we journey with them as they seek solutions to their problems, address their challenges and take their rightful place in our communities.

Scripture and Catholic social teaching form a moral compass to guide our decisions to work for the common good.

Catholic teaching and tradition draw our attention to the words Jesus spoke when the Apostles asked him to dismiss the crowd so they could find food and lodging. He said to them, “Give them some food yourselves” (Luke 9:12-13).

Role and Responsibility of Government

Scripture and Catholic social teaching also form the basis for our understanding of the role and responsibility of government. They guide our advocacy on behalf of those who lack the basic rights of food and shelter, access to health care, a living wage and education. Jesus explicitly acknowledged legitimate public authority and the established community leaders of his day (Matthew 17:25-27; 23:3; 22:21), and he was blunt in assigning responsibility to those in leadership for serving the common good with mercy (Mark 10:42-45; Matthew 12:6-7). The authority and responsibility of public officials in pursuit of the common good also is affirmed by Catholic social teaching. Some things are best addressed by individuals, families, churches and charities; but when problems such as homelessness, hunger, drug addiction and mental illness are common to every community, it is a just and reasonable expectation that society will act cooperatively to address these problems.

The Catholic understanding of justice asserts a special concern for people who are poor and the moral imperative to pursue economic justice. Ensuring that everyone has access to basic health services is an example that came up repeatedly in our listening sessions, along with the need for decent wages and educational opportunity. Access to these social goods requires initiative by public entities, even if the services themselves are provided by private agencies and organizations. We gratefully acknowledge the programs and services in the State of Washington designed to reduce poverty, alleviate suffering and ensure basic human rights for those living in poverty. It is unfortunately true, however, that when revenue collections fall short, these essential lifelines are among the first to be reduced or eliminated. It is not our intention to prescribe specific policy options but to propose a moral basis for determining whether public policies serve justice (i.e., whether public policies serve *people*).

Our listening sessions convinced us that the plight of those living in poverty in our state is reaching crisis proportions. At the same time, we grew in awareness that providing just a little help can make a big difference. We spoke to many people whose primary obstacle to lifting themselves out of poverty was the lack of secure housing. We listened to Thomas, for example, who came from a good family but

ⁱ Human life is sacred. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Direct attacks on innocent persons are never morally acceptable, at any stage or in any condition (Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, no. 44).

ⁱⁱ The common good indicates “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 26). The common good, in fact, can be understood as the social and community dimension of the moral good (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 164).

ⁱⁱⁱ Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples toward an ever more committed unity. Solidarity must be seen above all in its value as a moral virtue that determines the order of institutions. On the basis of this principle the “structures of sin” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nos. 36, 37) that dominate relationships between individuals and peoples must be overcome (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, nos. 192-193).

“became lost” after his father passed away when he was 20. After a conviction and a period of incarceration, he was homeless. However, he said that once he found housing, “That’s where things began to turn around.” He went back to school, began a training program, graduated and now is working as a social worker in a shelter. Stories such as this convinced us that our pursuit of public initiatives to reduce poverty must begin by ensuring adequate funding for essential social services like housing, so that people like Thomas can thrive.

Pray and Act

The title of this pastoral letter is the question the scholar of the law asked Jesus: “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). In response, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan and asked, “Which of these ... in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” Jesus does not refer to the victim in his question, but directs the scholar’s attention — and ours — to those who encountered a “neighbor” in need. When the scholar answers, “The one who treated him with mercy,” Jesus gives us a decisive commandment: “Go and do likewise.”

As we listened, prayed and reflected on what we heard, we bishops considered anew our own response to the questions raised by so many living in poverty in an affluent state. Seeing the faces and hearing the voices of our brothers and sisters living in poverty, we were called to solidarity

with them. We were challenged to examine our assumptions and rethink our approaches. Scripture and Catholic social teaching provide reliable guidance for asking difficult questions and searching for solutions. Thus we have produced study materials to help our Catholic people and parishes confront the poverty in our state and explore ways we can act as a community of faith to alleviate suffering and advocate for change. In other words, how are we *to be neighbor* to those in need?

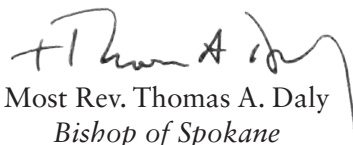
In closing, we ask you to pray with us. Pray for those living in poverty. Pray for the individuals and organizations who reach out in charity to the hungry, the homeless and all who lack basic necessities and are denied full participation in society. Pray for those who advocate to break the cycle of poverty. Pray for our public officials, who bear the daunting task of establishing true economic justice for the citizens of our state.

We have included in this message a special prayer for families and parishes, and we ask all disciples of the Lord Jesus to give thanks for all we have received from God’s bountiful hands. It is our hope that through prayer we will be inspired by God to act in solidarity with our neighbors who do not share fully in the blessings of life.

Jesus taught us to pray. He also commanded us to act (Matthew 7:21). May we always pray and act in his name to promote the common good for our neighbors, our family — his family.



Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain
Archbishop of Seattle



Most Rev. Thomas A. Daly
Bishop of Spokane



Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima



Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S.
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle

PRAYER OF A FAITHFUL COMMUNITY

Loving and merciful Father,

We thank you for the gifts of life, of family and of faith.

In Jesus, your Son, you call us to recognize everyone as brothers, sisters and neighbors.

Open our eyes to see those living in poverty as you see them.

Teach us to extend the embrace of your care to those seeking housing, health care and food.

Enliven us to protect the right to life, to work and to education.

Lead us along new paths of solidarity with immigrants and those living on the margins.

Embolden us through your Holy Spirit to seek genuine encounters with our neighbors in need.

Inspire us to act as a community of faith to alleviate poverty and advocate for change that strengthens the human family.

For all the blessings we have received from your bountiful hands, we thank you.

For blessings still to come as we work together for the common good, we rely on your ever-faithful presence.

We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Facilitator Guide

Introduction

In *Who Is My Neighbor? The Face of Poverty in Washington State*, our bishops tell us, “Pope Francis wants us to be evangelized by people experiencing poverty, and in our listening sessions we learned that those living in poverty in Washington State truly ‘have much to teach us.’”

This Study Guide is designed to enable faith communities to encounter people living in poverty in our state and to explore ways to be in solidarity with them in their suffering as we act and advocate for change. Review the Small Group Guidelines for Sharing as you begin the first session.

Leadership is an essential element of any gathering. Each session is designed to be led by a facilitator. This role can be rotated or shared. The study guide process is designed for three 2-hour sessions.

Preparation

- ☞ Read through the sessions and prepare for each.
- ☞ Set up the prayer table.
- ☞ Select readers before each session.
- ☞ Make sure participants have a booklet and the reading assignment before Session 1: to read the Pastoral Letter and study the charts on p. 6.
- ☞ Bring, or ask participants to be responsible for, refreshments for the break.

Specific Preparation for Each Session

At the beginning of each session, welcome the group. Introductions should be made at the first session and again when new members join. Depending on the size of the group, name tags might be helpful.

SESSION 1

The Face of Poverty

- ☞ Set up a prayer table with a Bible, cloth and candle. Ask three people to read for the opening prayer and the closing prayer.
- ☞ Remind participants to read the second and third sections of the Pastoral Letter and study the charts on pp. 8-9 before the next session.

SESSION 2

Responsibility to Our Neighbor

- ☞ Put on the prayer table a Bible, cloth and candle. Ask someone to read the Scripture for the opening prayer. Direct the reader not to read the Scripture citations. Also ask for readers for the Wisdom Story and the closing prayer.
- ☞ Remind participants to read the fourth section of Pastoral Letter, study the “Two Feet of Love in Action” on p. 13 and ponder the opportunities available through our Catholic organizations listed on pp. 15-17 before the next session.

SESSION 3

Pray and Act

Put on the prayer table a cloth, candle and Bible opened to the story of the Good Samaritan. Ask people to read the opening Scripture, “Show Me Shelter” and the closing prayer. Have a flip chart or whiteboard and markers for Discerning the Call of the Community.

Small Group Guidelines for Sharing

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to create and maintain a safe and supportive environment for sharing openly and honestly. Each session is composed of prayer, group discussion, reflection, analysis and action. The facilitator should review the following guidelines with participants before the first session:

- ☞ Listen with respect and without interruption, judgment or counsel.
- ☞ Each person is a potential voice of the Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Speak for yourself using “I” statements rather than “We” statements.
- ☞ Be brief so that all participants have an opportunity to speak.

Size of Discussion Groups: Generally when a group is larger than 10, it is better to break into smaller groups for discussion.

Time: Respect people’s time by starting and ending each session on time. At the beginning of the session, remind people that it is your role as facilitator to monitor the time for the benefit of the participants and the process.



“Poverty has a human face.”

– *Who Is My Neighbor?*

The Face of Poverty

Introduction to the Pastoral Letter and the Process

(10 minutes)

Leader: Thank you for coming to consider *Who Is My Neighbor? The Face of Poverty in Washington State*, the Pastoral Letter from our bishops of the Seattle Archdiocese and the Yakima and Spokane Dioceses. They tell us that “Pope Francis wants us to be evangelized by people experiencing poverty, and in our listening sessions we learned that those living in poverty in Washington State truly ‘have much to teach us.’”

During our three sessions we will use the Pastoral Letter and the accompanying Study Guide, which is designed to enable faith communities to encounter people living in poverty in our state and to explore ways to be in solidarity with them in their suffering as we act and advocate for change.

Before we begin let’s review the Small Group Guideline for Sharing on p. 4.

Now I would like to invite each person to introduce yourself and say in a sentence why you came to the discussion of the Pastoral Letter.

Opening Prayer

(5 minutes)

Setting: Put on the prayer table a cloth and candle. Ask three people to read for the opening prayer and the closing prayer.

Reader 1: Let us pray: Loving and merciful Father, we thank you for the gift of families and faith communities.

Reader 2: In Jesus, your Son, you call us to recognize everyone as our brothers and sisters. Open our eyes to see those living in poverty as our neighbors. Empower us

to extend the embrace of your care to those seeking housing, health care and food. Enliven us to protect the right to life, to work and to education. Lead us into new paths of solidarity with immigrants and those living on the margins.

Reader 3: May your Holy Spirit embolden us to encounter our neighbors in need. Inspire us to act as a community of faith to alleviate poverty and advocate for change that strengthens the human family.

All: For all the blessings we have received from your bountiful hands, we thank you. For the blessings we seek as we journey together for the common good as the Catholic community of Washington State, we rely on your ever-faithful presence. We make this prayer through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Reflection on the Faces of Poverty

(30 minutes)

Leader: We want to begin by listening to the voices of our neighbors living in poverty in Washington State.

Direction: View the video. If it’s not possible to view the video, direct the participants to read the stories on pp. 7, 11, 14.

Leader: Let’s take a few moments of quiet to reflect on the stories we experienced in the video. After the quiet, I will begin our sharing.

- ☞ What new insight about the face of poverty do I have from the video and/or stories in the Pastoral Letter?
- ☞ What encounter have I had with people living in poverty?

Direction: After the quiet, depending on the size of group, invite people to share in a small or large group.

Break

(15 minutes)

Going Deeper

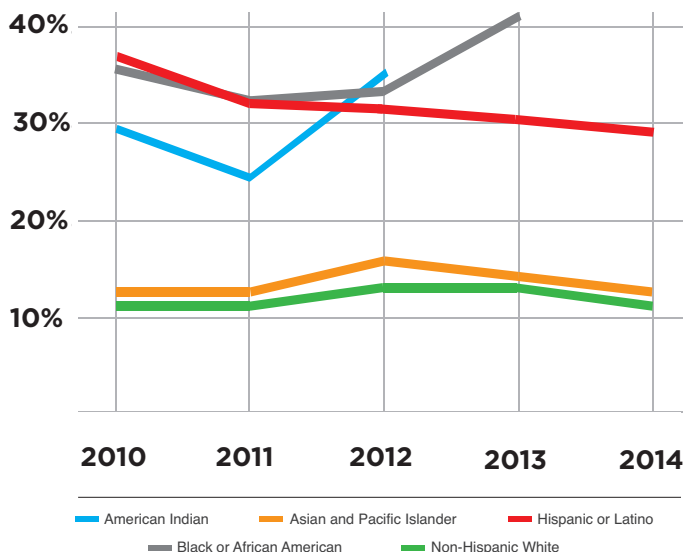
(30 minutes)

Leader: Let's take a moment to review poverty in Washington State via the charts. How does this information add to the stories we experienced in the video?

DEFINING POVERTY IN WASHINGTON STATE BY ANNUAL INCOME (SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLD)

≤ \$5,940	≤ \$11,880	≤ \$23,760
Deep Poverty	Poverty	Low Income

CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY BY RACE



Source: Kids Count Data Center 2014

Large Group Discussion

Leader: What did you learn about poverty in Washington State from the charts?

Small Group Discussion

Leader: Now we would like to take quiet time to reflect on the predictors of poverty. What do you think are the three most significant predictors of poverty?

- ☞ Education
- ☞ Lack of affordable housing
- ☞ Lack of living-wage jobs
- ☞ Access to affordable health care
- ☞ Mental health issues
- ☞ Physical disability
- ☞ Discrimination
- ☞ Lack of funding for safety-net programs
- ☞ Criminal record
- ☞ Immigration status
- ☞ Tax system
- ☞ Other

Direction: After the quiet, invite the participants to share what they consider the most significant predictors of poverty with one other person or in groups of three.

Close this section by inviting a brief discussion of what the participants consider the most significant predictors of poverty.



POVERTY IN WASHINGTON

About 1 in 8 people in Washington state (more than 860,000 people) were living in poverty last year. Roughly 1 in 17 (more than 409,000 people) were in "deep poverty," with income below 50 percent of the poverty threshold.

12.2 percent of Washingtonians in poverty
5.8 percent of Washingtonians in deep poverty

2016 poverty thresholds

\$11,880 for an individual
\$16,020 for a family of two
\$20,160 for a family of three
\$24,300 for a family of four

Source: census.gov

HOMELESSNESS IN WASHINGTON

On any given night, more than 20,000 people in Washington state are homeless. Each county conducts an annual "point-in-time" count of homeless persons, both sheltered (in emergency shelters or transitional housing) and unsheltered. The Jan. 28, 2016, count found:

12,370 sheltered
8,474 unsheltered
20,844 total homeless persons

Source: commerce.wa.gov

Integrating Our Faith

(20 minutes)

Leader: Let's take a few moments of quiet to reflect on what our bishops write to us in the first section of the Pastoral Letter and the questions that follow.

"Hunger, homelessness, illness and broken dreams shatter the bonds of community that hold us together, bonds that contribute to civic peace and stability."

"Poverty ... also has a voice. But that voice often does not penetrate the wall of fear, misconception and prejudice that can separate poor people from those of us who have what we need."

Questions:

- ✚ How am I challenged by the voices of poverty we have reflected on together?
- ✚ What prejudice or fear about poverty am I aware of in myself?

Leader: Let's form small groups to share our reflection.

Direction: Close this section by inviting those who wish to share an insight from their reflection and sharing.

Closing Reflection & Prayer: Action for the Common Good

(10 minutes)

Leader: As we conclude our time together, I invite you to reflect on the following question. We will use our reflections for our closing prayer.

- ✚ As we journey together listening to the cry of the poor, what is a hope I hold for restoring the bonds of community?

Reader: Pope Francis reminds us that "among our tasks as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor." I invite those who wish to share the hope you hold for restoring the bonds of community.

Direction: After the sharing invite all to join in the closing prayer.

All: For all the blessings we have received from your bountiful hands, we thank you. For the blessings still to come as we work together for the common good, we rely on your ever-faithful presence. We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Homework: Read the second and third sections of the Pastoral Letter and study the charts on pp. 8-9.

Stories of Hope

Overflowing with Compassion: Sheltering Those Experiencing Homelessness

"Everybody does their part. It all works together," says Elisa McGee from St. Therese Parish in Seattle. The parish walks with men who are experiencing homelessness by hosting them in the gym three nights a week, from October through March. Elisa volunteers because someone did it for her brother when he lost his home as a consequence of drug addiction. Shelter at St. Therese Parish flows out of a parish tradition of serving at St. Martin de Porres Shelter for men who are experiencing homelessness. When St. Martin's began to reach capacity, six Catholic parishes offered 34 more shelter beds each night. St. Therese Parish is striving to live out the Gospel.



PREPARES Provides Family Support

In the Diocese of Yakima the complexity of poverty is often so profound that families confront significant socioeconomic deprivation. "Maria" and "Daniel" experience this kind of poverty in Yakima. Their home is small and dilapidated, but they are grateful for it. One of their newborn triplets needs ongoing surgeries to repair a heart valve. Their eldest child reads and writes below grade level and has forgotten how to play, having become "a little adult" because Maria needs his help. Daniel works labor-intensive days on farms. Enter the compassion of the PREPARES staff. A parishioner from Holy Family Parish has become a family companion who visits 10 hours a week, bringing love, an extra set of hands and a shoulder for Maria to cry on. She reads to the children and is giving the eldest child space to learn how to play again.

Hope House

"John" and his wife "Mary" were living at the Lighthouse Mission in Bellingham with their new baby boy.



While the mission was giving them a place to sleep and eat, they were desperately in need of baby clothing and diapers. An acquaintance at the mission told John about Hope House, a Catholic Community Services (CCS) ministry, where he was loaded up with everything his baby needed. Later John, Mary and the baby returned to Hope House for their first family photo, which CCS staff framed for the family. John was brought to tears. "I love this place!" he exclaimed, adding that the help of Hope House, including connecting them with DSHS case managers, has made all the difference to his family.

“I extend to every disciple of Christ and to every person of good will a warm invitation to expand their hearts to meet the needs of the poor.”

– Pope Benedict XVI



Stephen Brashner

Responsibility to Our Neighbor

Opening Prayer

(20 minutes)

Setting: Put on the prayer table a cloth and candle. Ask someone to read the Scripture for the opening prayer. Direct the reader not to read the Scripture citations. Also ask for readers for the Wisdom Story and the closing prayer.

Leader: We gather using Lectio Divina, a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer. We will read the Scripture once, pause briefly and then read it again. As you listen, notice what passage speaks to you. After our second reading anyone who wishes may share the passage that spoke to them and a sentence of why you relate to that passage.

Reader: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” (John 13:34)

He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37)

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

“Then the king will say ... ‘Come ... inherit the kingdom prepared for you. ... For I was hungry and you gave me food ... a stranger and you welcomed me ... ill and you cared for me.’ (Matthew 25:34-36)

“Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.” (Luke 6:20)

[Jesus] said to him, “There is still one thing left for you: sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Luke 18:22)

Leader: I invite anyone who wishes to share the passage that spoke to them and a sentence of why you relate to that passage.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

County	Median Household Income (MHI)	30% MHI (monthly)	2BD FMR FY2016*	Hourly Wage Needed to Afford	Hrs/Wk @ min wage†
FRANKLIN COUNTY	\$59,664.00	\$1,491.60	\$841.00	\$17.52	74
GRANT COUNTY	\$51,667.00	\$1,291.68	\$701.00	\$14.60	62
GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY	\$44,122.00	\$1,103.05	\$831.00	\$17.31	73
KING COUNTY	\$81,916.00	\$2,047.90	\$1,523.00	\$31.73	134
PIERCE COUNTY	\$60,167.00	\$1,504.18	\$1,126.00	\$23.46	99
SPOKANE COUNTY	\$48,525.00	\$1,213.13	\$789.00	\$16.44	69
YAKIMA COUNTY	\$47,223.00	\$1,180.58	\$759.00	\$15.81	67

Key: * 2BD FMR = 2-bedroom apartment at fair market rent † Hours per week at \$9.47 needed to afford a 2-bedroom
Wage calculations assume four work weeks per month and spending no more than 30% of income on rent.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2015 and HUD (<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>)

Reflection & Large Group Discussion

(20 minutes)

Leader: Let's take a few moments of quiet to reflect on the second and third sections of the Pastoral Letter and the questions that follow. After the quiet, I will invite those who wish to share to do so.

"Pope Francis wants us to be evangelized by people experiencing poverty, and in our listening sessions we learned that those living in poverty in Washington State truly 'have much to teach us.'"

"The dignity of human life, the common good and solidarity ... are the foundation stones of our values and actions as faithful Catholic citizens."

Questions:

- ✎ What is my initial response to the reading?
- ✎ What does it mean to me to be evangelized by the poor?
- ✎ In considering the role and responsibility of the Catholic community and the government, what helps me live our Catholic values of the dignity of human life, the common good and solidarity, e.g., prayer, Eucharist, my family, my love of neighbor?

Leader: I invite those who wish to share briefly on one of the questions.

Going Deeper

(30 minutes)

Leader: Let's take time to review the statistics on salaries, housing, cost of necessities and taxes in Washington State via the charts on pp. 8-9 and complete the sentences below. Then we will have time to share our reflections in a small group.

I was surprised by ...

I was disturbed that ...

I had a question about ...

I have a new perspective on ...

Small Group Discussion

Leader: Let's form small groups to share our reflections. We will have 15 minutes for this.

Large Group Sharing

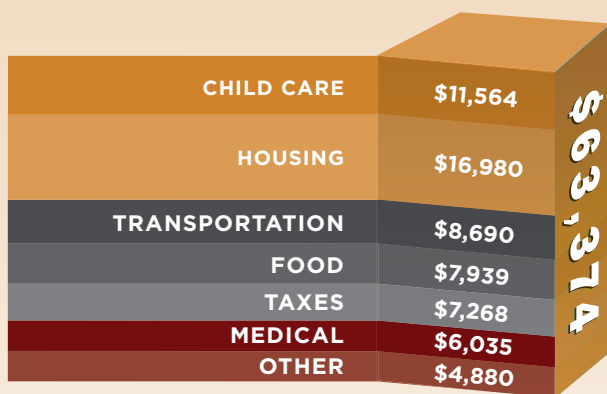
Leader: I invite each small group to share one highlight from your discussion.

Break

(10 minutes)

COST OF NECESSITIES FOR A SINGLE PARENT

WITH ONE INFANT + ONE SCHOOL-AGED CHILD



Source: MIT living wage calculator for a single parent with 2 kids

MOST COMMON JOB SALARIES

MEDIAN, FULL TIME



\$24,710

RETAIL SALES



\$23,795

CASHIER

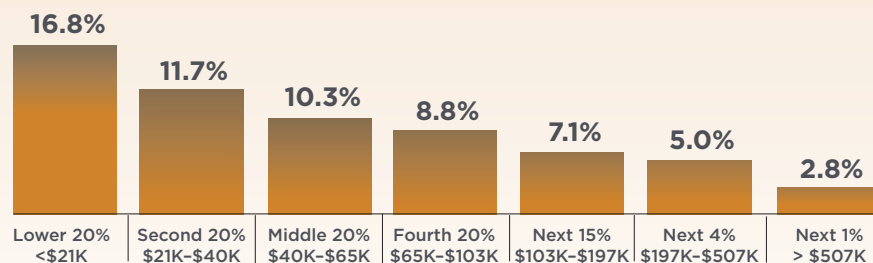


\$26,660

FOOD SERVICE

Source: May 2015 Bureau of Labor Statistics

ALL WASHINGTON TAXES PER FAMILY INCOME*



*Excludes Federal Deductions

Source: Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy. WA State & local taxes in 2015

Integrating Our Faith

(30 minutes)

Leader: As you listen to the Wisdom Story, whom do you identify with: judge, shopkeeper, woman or crowd?

Reader: A Wisdom Story

A judge was hearing the complaint against a woman who was charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She pleaded that her daughter was sick, her grandchildren were hungry. But the shopkeeper, whose loaf had been stolen, refused to drop the charge.

The judge was most reluctant to pass judgment on the woman, yet he had no alternative. “I’m sorry, but I can’t make exceptions. The law is the law. I sentence you to a fine of 10 dollars, and if you can’t pay I must send you to jail for 10 days.”

As the judge was passing sentence he took off his hat, reached into his pocket and tossed in a dollar, and then addressed the crowd:

“I am also going to impose a fine of 50 cents on every person here present in this courtroom, for living in a town where a person has to steal bread to save her

grandchildren from hunger. Please collect the fines in this hat, Mr. Bailiff, and pass them to the defendant.”

— source unknown

Leader: Let’s indicate by a show of hands. Whom do you identify with in the story at this time: judge, shopkeeper, woman or crowd?

Large Group Discussion

Leader: Now let’s take quiet time to reflect on how Catholic social teaching informs me in relationship to poverty as a Catholic and a faithful citizen. Read “A Catholic Framework for Economic Life” and reflect on the following question. After the quiet, I will begin our sharing.

Question:

✧ What new insight does Catholic social teaching give me about our — Catholic community and government — responsibility to people living in poverty?

Direction: After the quiet, invite those who wish to share their new insight on poverty.

A Catholic Framework for Economic Life

- + The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.
- + All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life and dignity of the human person, support the family and serve the common good.
- + A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring.
- + All people have a right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, safe environment, economic security).
- + All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions and to organize and join unions or other associations.
- + All people, to the extent they are able, have a corresponding duty to work, a responsibility to provide the needs of their families and an obligation to contribute to the broader society.
- + In economic life, free markets have both clear advantages and limits; government has essential responsibilities and limitations; voluntary groups have irreplaceable roles, but cannot substitute for the proper working of the market and the just policies of the state.
- + Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to ensure opportunity, meet basic human needs and pursue justice in economic life.
- + Workers, owners, managers, stockholders and consumers are moral agents in economic life. By our choices, initiative, creativity and investment, we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life and social justice.
- + The global economy has moral dimensions and human consequences. Decisions on investment, trade, aid and development should protect human life and promote human rights, especially for those most in need wherever they might live on this globe.

— U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Closing Prayer: Action for the Common Good

(10 minutes)

Reader: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-19)

Leader: What from our encounter with our neighbor living in poverty do I want to raise up in our parish and/or bring to the public square? After the quiet, I will invite those who wish to share what they want to raise up in our parish and/or bring to the public square.

Direction: Invite the sharing.

Reader: Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:20-21)

Homework: Read the final section of the Pastoral Letter. Study “Two Feet of Love in Action” on p. 13 and ponder the opportunities available through our Catholic organizations listed in the appendix on pp. 15-17.

1 in 5 CHILDREN ARE FOOD INSECURE IN WASHINGTON



Source: childrensalliance.org, 2014

Stories of Hope

Earn & Learn Boutique



St. Joseph Parish in Kennewick serves as home to the Earn & Learn Boutique, which provides a welcoming and safe place in which families can shop for free clothing and supplies for infants and children.

Donations from parishioners and other faith communities help provide families with diapers. The parish also houses a support group for teen moms and the Kaleidoscope Play & Learn Groups, which offer support to caregivers and improve children's readiness for kindergarten. St. Joseph's partnership with Catholic Family & Child Services enhances pregnancy and parenting programs throughout the community.

Parish Property in Support of Community

The work of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parishioners in Walla Walla is a testament to a community's ability to create positive change on multiple levels. They built 26 raised, wheelchair-accessible planter beds on the parish property. The fresh produce goes to the St. Vincent de Paul food bank, and a partnership with the local health district enables single mothers to garden and learn about growing healthy food. There is a rosary walking path to the creek, and parishioners work with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife to safeguard and restore the ancestral salmon run to the waterway.

A CALL IN MY HEART: Ministry to Immigrants



Esmeralda Saltos knows that the common good suffers when the U.S. loses the rich contributions of another culture by indiscriminately incarcerating and deporting those who desire to make those contributions. Saltos is a pastoral

minister at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma. She came to this country from Mexico after her father was

murdered, and she shares many of the hardships of this transition with immigrants held at the detention center. She describes her time with detainees as joyful and full of grace, despite the fact that the interactions occur in a decidedly prison-like environment. Esmeralda leads three worship services at the center every Sunday. She brings with her rosaries, Bibles and prayer books which the people eagerly snatch up. “When I’m here I see more need for God,” one man said. “Since I came here, I’ve felt empty. I began to feel that I could fill this emptiness with Jesus in my heart.”

*“Not all of us can do great things.
But we can do small things with
great love.”*

– attributed to St. Teresa of Kolkata



Courtesy Our Lady of Lourdes School, Vancouver

Pray and Act

Setting: Put on the prayer table a cloth, candle and Bible opened to the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). Ask people to read the opening Scripture, Show Me Shelter and the closing prayer. Have a flip chart or whiteboard and markers for discerning the call of the community.

Opening Prayer and Reflection

(10 minutes)

Reading: The Good Samaritan

Leader: Let’s take a moment of quiet reflection to consider the neighbor in need in our community. After the quiet, I will invite us to name “the neighbor” we hold in prayer as we begin.

Leader: I invite you to name the neighbor we hold in prayer.

Large Group Discussion

(10 minutes)

Leader: Let’s take quiet time to reflect on the final section of the Pastoral Letter, “Pray and Act,” and the question that follows. After the quiet, we will have time to share.

“Seeing the faces and hearing the voices of our brothers and sisters living in poverty, we were called to solidarity with them.”

“It is our hope that through prayer we will be inspired by God to act in solidarity with our neighbors who do not share fully in the blessings of life.”

- ✧ How am I challenged by the bishops’ call to participate in charity, social justice and advocacy in solidarity with those living in poverty for the common good?

Leader: I invite those who wish to share in a sentence one challenge you experience.

Going Deeper

(30 minutes)

Leader: Let’s turn now to the requirements of “Two Feet of Love in Action,” which symbolize the call of Christian discipleship to charity and justice. You reviewed the “Two Feet” on p. 13 in preparation for this session.

Leader: With the foot of charity we carry out works of mercy and assist people with their immediate needs for shelter, food, clothing, etc.

Leader: The foot of social justice concerns the social, political and economic aspects and, above all, the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions.

– Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

Leader: Now let’s take quiet time to consider the parallels between Luke’s Parable of the Good Samaritan and the Two Feet of Love in Action and reflect on the following question:

- ✧ What new insight do I have about the call to discipleship?

Parable of the Good Samaritan

Charity

- ✧ Assist the traveler/victim.
- ✧ Show mercy and compassion by giving immediate care.
- ✧ Pay for the room, board and medical care.

Justice

- ✧ The scorned Samaritan becomes neighbor to the wounded traveler.
- ✧ The parable provides a story of going beyond “Who is my neighbor?” to how to be in relationship with my neighbor. Jesus expands the boundaries of neighboring beyond geography, ethnicity and religious prejudice.

Leader: I invite those who wish to share a new insight you have about the call to discipleship.

Break

(15 minutes)

Discerning the Call of Community

(10 minutes)

Directions: Put on flip chart or whiteboard two columns: Charity and Social Justice & Advocacy.

Leader: As a group, let's identify and affirm how our parish or faith community is responding to the "face of poverty." As you are ready, name our engagements in charity and social justice and advocacy. I will write them for us to see.

Leader: Let's thank God for the works of charity and justice taking place within our community!

Integrating Our Faith

(30 minutes)

Leader: Before we begin to envision how we will to transform suffering and poverty into solutions that create healthy and whole Washington State communities, let's listen to the poem of one woman who is living without a home and a job.

Reader: "Show Me Shelter"

Where do I go when the shelters are full?

No one has a place for me.

The alleys are dangerous, a doorway so cold!

Maybe I'll sleep in a cardboard box.

When will someone give us more space?

How can I get a decent job when no one has rooms?

A shelter seems to help only those with special needs, but no room for me.

Maybe I'll sleep in a cardboard box.

A roof, a bed, and a place to bathe just so I can go to work.

Without a place to get clean.

I cannot get ahead.

Maybe I'll sleep in a cardboard box.

Please help me enjoy all that you have.

A place of warmth and safety from the danger outside.

Maybe I'll sleep in a cardboard box.

Please understand I want the same things as you.

A job, a safe home, and maybe somebody who cares.

– *Beloved Community*, Betty E.

Discerning Our Call

Leader: Hopefully you have had time to ponder the opportunities to be neighbor through our Catholic organizations and affiliations listed on pp. 15-17. We hope that each one will consider her/his personal and/or family's call to address poverty after the completion of our sessions. For now, let's explore our communal call.

Leader: As we consider our parish and faith community, what agencies, projects or advocacy might we consider partnering with in order to be in solidarity with those living in poverty? Let's take a moment of quiet to consider these and the next possible, communal steps. Then we'll name them and list them on our paper.

Direction: List suggestions on a flip chart or whiteboard. Lead a discussion about what is listed, noting what might need to be adjusted so that the group is comfortable with the community visioning. After this is completed, lead a discussion on the following:

Questions:

- ☞ With whom in our parish leadership will we share our visioning?
- ☞ Who in our group will share our vision and hopes with our parish leadership?
- ☞ How will the group be informed of the response of the parish leadership?

Closing Prayer & Reflection

(15 minutes)

Leader: As we conclude this part of our journey together, let's pray together the prayer we used for our first gathering. See p. 17.

Leader: Now I invite you into a few minutes of contemplative time to reflect on one gift you have received from the Pastoral Letter and our time together. After the quiet, I'll ask you to share in a sentence or two the gift you have received.

Leader: May God bless us on our journey to be neighbor to our sisters and brothers in Washington State. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother and companion on the journey. Amen.

Two Feet of Love in Action

CHARITY *(meet basic needs)*

- ▶ Volunteer at homeless shelters
- ▶ Tutor children
- ▶ Sponsor a refugee family
- ▶ Assist women who face crisis pregnancies
- ▶ Participate in St. Vincent de Paul
- ▶ Donate to food pantries and clothing closets

SOCIAL JUSTICE *(address root causes)*

- ▶ Expand access to affordable housing
- ▶ Work to improve the education system
- ▶ Extend legal protection to unborn children
- ▶ Participate in a living-wage campaign
- ▶ Engage in legislative advocacy

Stories of Hope

Intergenerational Outreach

St. Joseph Parish in Colbert, a growing community of professional families, partners with New Hope Resource Center, an ecumenical community outreach that provides food, clothing, utility and transportation help to the mostly rural surrounding area. The parish has built a greenhouse, planted a garden and adopted a nearby food bank. The Knights of Columbus offer their energy, skills and commitment to support gardens that provide cooking and food preservation classes to food bank clients. Parishioners have worked beside millennials to can food, a new concept and process for them.

Renee and the Domino Effect

For five years, Renee managed to strike the right balance between medication, therapy and help from a case manager. As a result, she was able to keep her illness under control and raise her two young sons. That delicate balance was broken when she had an emotional relapse. Unable to cope, she was admitted to a short-term treatment center and her sons were placed in temporary foster care. Trying to manage her new health crisis threatened to bring about a financial one. Renee had negotiated a payment plan with the energy company that made her monthly bills more affordable. If she missed a payment, the agreement would be broken and her bills would skyrocket. Fortunately, St. Vincent de Paul was able to step in, hear her concerns and make the monthly payment on Renee's behalf. This enabled her to focus on getting better and hopefully reuniting with her sons.



Courtesy Our Lady of Lourdes School, Vancouver



Missionary Disciples

Students from Our Lady of Lourdes School, Vancouver, have discovered that social justice can be “really cool.” The seventh-graders are part of a partnership with the Archdiocese of Seattle Missions Office in which the students participate in a three-part process — encounter, disturbance and response — addressing the questions: Who is my neighbor? Who is showing love to my neighbor? How am I called to love my neighbor? Last year the theme was hunger. Throughout the different liturgical seasons, students learned about hunger and food issues, encountered those working to feed the hungry, experienced service with the St. Vincent de Paul food and clothing bank and gleaned vegetables at a farm.



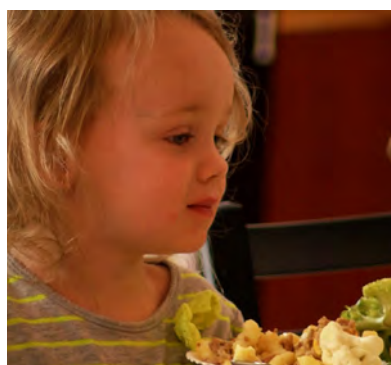
Danny Gadd

“Hospitality means more than serving a meal, opening a door or offering a bed. It means opening our hearts to others.”

– Dorothy Day



St. Michael School, Olympia



Danny Gadd

Courtesy Diocese of Yakima

SEATTLE ARCHDIOCESE

Catholic Community Services

Columbia River Family Center

Serving Clark, Skamania, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties

Clark and Skamania Counties

9300 NE Oak View Drive, Suite A
Vancouver, WA 98662-6157
360-567-2211

Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties

676 26th Ave.
Longview, WA 98632-1816
360-577-2200 or 888-649-6734

Grays Harbor Family Center

Serving Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties

410 N "H" St.
Aberdeen, WA 98520-4011
360-637-8563 or 888-415-4015

King County Family Centers

Serving North, Central, East and South King County

100 23rd Ave. S.
Seattle, WA 98144-2302
206-323-6336 or 800-499-5979

1229 W Smith St.
Kent, WA 98032-4317
253-854-0077 or 800-722-3479

11061 NE 2nd St.
Bellevue, WA 98004-5810
425-213-1963

Kitsap Family Center

Serving Kitsap, Clallam and Jefferson Counties

645 4th St., Suite 202A
Bremerton, WA 98337-1402
866-246-3642

Skagit Family Center

Serving Skagit County

614 Peterson Road
Burlington, WA 98233-2606
360-856-3054

Snohomish County Family Center

Serving Snohomish and Island Counties

1918 Everett Ave.
Everett, WA 98201-3607
425-257-2111 or 888-240-8572

Tahoma Family Center

Serving Pierce County

1323 Yakima Ave.
Tacoma, WA 98405-4457
253-383-3697 or 800-372-3697

Thurston County Family Center

Serving Thurston, Lewis and Mason Counties

604 Devoe St. S.E.
Olympia, WA 98501-2034
360-753-3340

Whatcom Family Center

Serving Whatcom County

1133 Railroad Ave., Suite 100
Bellingham, WA 98225-5054
360-676-2164

Family Behavioral Health
800-566-9053

Long Term Care
877-870-1582

Prepares

Western Washington
206-327-2474
www.preparesforlife.org

St. Vincent de Paul Stores

Auburn	Kent	Port Orchard
Bremerton	Longview	Seattle
Burien	Lynnwood	Tacoma
Everett	Monroe	
Kenmore	Parkland	

SPOKANE DIOCESE

Catholic Charities

Main Office

12 East 5th Ave.
Spokane, WA 99202
www.CatholicCharitiesSpokane.org

Regional Offices

525 S. Main, Colville, WA 99114
509-684-5671 or 800-428-6825

408 W. Poplar, Walla Walla, WA 99362
509-525-0572

Catholic Family & Child Service, Tri-Cities

2139 Van Giesen St.
Richland, WA 99354
509-946-4645

2110 W Henry St.
Pasco, WA 99301
509-545-6145

Prepares

Eastern Washington
509-309-5250
www.preparesforlife.org

St. Vincent de Paul Stores

Clarkston Dayton Walla Walla

YAKIMA DIOCESE

Catholic Charities

Main Office
5301 Tieton Drive, Suite C
Yakima, WA 98908-3748
509-965-7100
www.ccyakima.org

Catholic Family & Child Services

5301 Tieton Drive, Suite C
Yakima, WA 98908-3478
509-965-7100

2139 Van Giesen St.
Richland, WA 99354
509-946-4645

640 S. Mission St.
Wenatchee, WA 98801
509-662-6761

Prepares

Central Washington
509-946-4645
www.preparesforlife.org

St. Vincent Centers

Emergency Services Food Bank
2629 Main St.
Union Gap, WA 98903
509-457-5111

1200 Canyon Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926
509-925-2167

120 S. Morain St.
Kennewick, WA 99336
509-783-7020

STATE RESOURCES

Prepares

Statewide Coordinator
509-455-4970
www.preparesforlife.org

Northwest Harvest

www.northwestharvest.org

Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

206-223-1138
www.ipjc.org

Mercy Housing Northwest

www.mercyhousing.org/washington

Washington State Catholic Conference

206-301-0556
www.thewsc.org

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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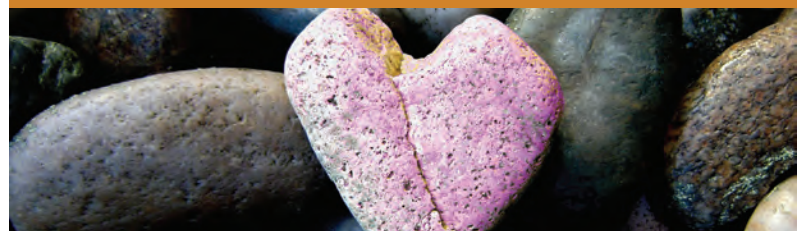
Listening session participants

Catholic Community Services of Western Washington

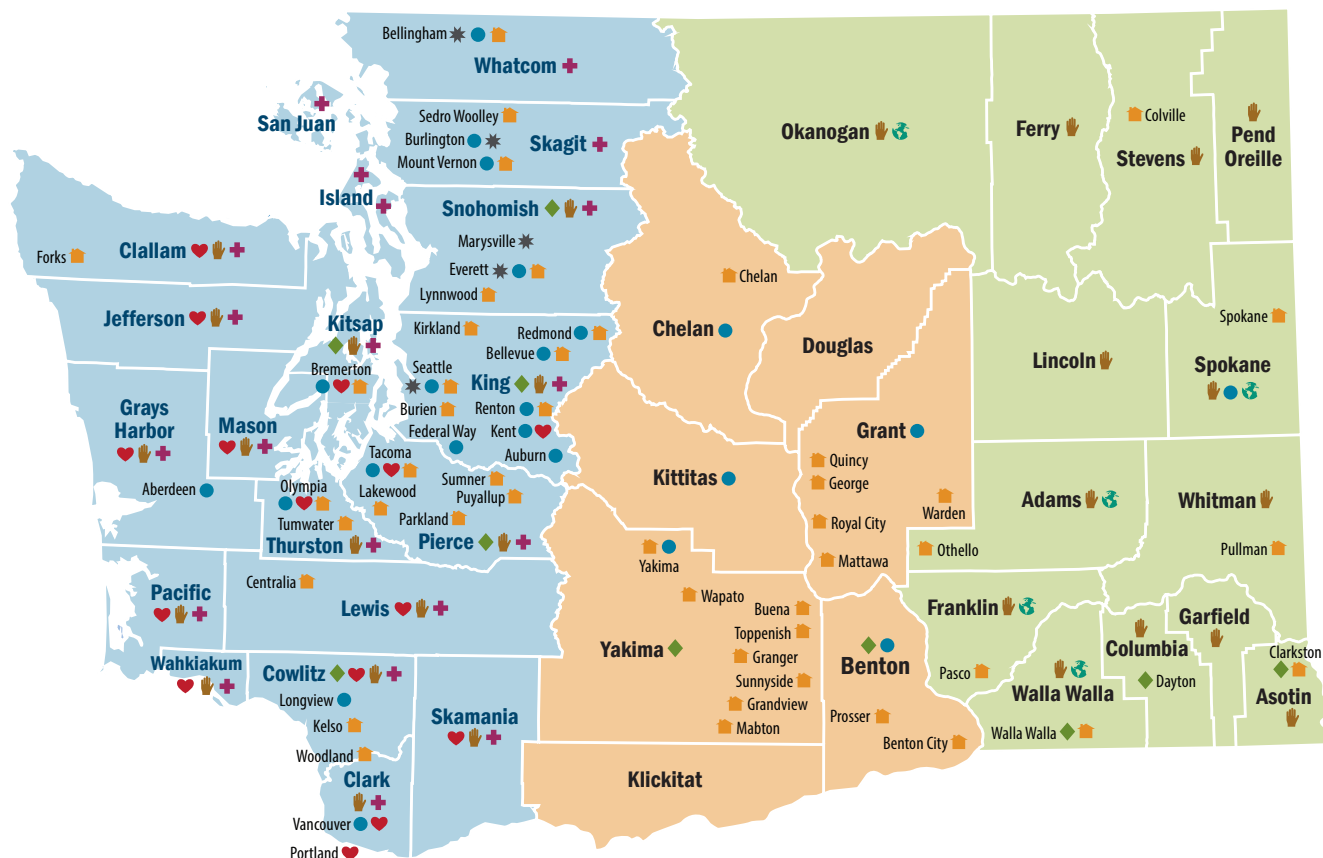
Catholic Charities Diocese of Yakima

Catholic Charities Spokane

Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center



Services by Diocese



Map indicates services provided by Catholic Charities, Catholic Community Services, Catholic Housing Services and St. Vincent de Paul.

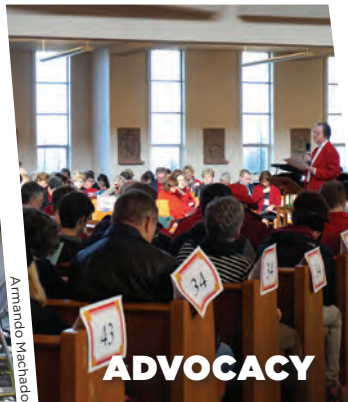
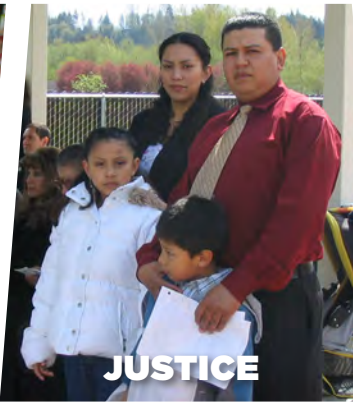
- ★ Addiction Treatment and Recovery Services
- 🏠 Housing
- ✚ Long Term Care Services (available in every county)
- Family Center/Services
- 👤 Volunteer Services
- 🌿 Refugee & Immigration Services
- ❤️ Family Behavioral Health System
- ◆ St. Vincent Centers/Stores

PRAYER OF A FAITHFUL COMMUNITY

Loving and merciful Father,
 We thank you for the gifts of life, of family and of faith.
 In Jesus, your Son, you call us to recognize everyone as brothers, sisters and neighbors.
 Open our eyes to see those living in poverty as you see them.
 Teach us to extend the embrace of your care to those seeking housing, health care and food.
 Enliven us to protect the right to life, to work and to education.
 Lead us along new paths of solidarity with immigrants and those living on the margins.
 Embolden us through your Holy Spirit to seek genuine encounters with our neighbors in need.
 Inspire us to act as a community of faith to alleviate poverty and advocate for change that strengthens the human family.
 For all the blessings we have received from your bountiful hands, we thank you.
 For blessings still to come as we work together for the common good, we rely on your ever-faithful presence.
 We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Stephen Brashers



Courtesy JPIC



Courtesy Diocese of Yakima



Washington State Catholic Conference
710 9th Ave., Seattle, WA 98104

www.thewsc.org | wsc@thewsc.org | 206-301-0556