

Who Is My Neighbor?

The Face of Poverty in Washington State



“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

On Nov. 17, 2016, the Catholic bishops of Washington State released a joint pastoral letter, *Who Is My Neighbor? The Face of Poverty in Washington State*. It was the result of listening sessions with people living on the margins conducted by the bishops in the dioceses of Seattle, Yakima and Spokane. The letter was written to help Catholics understand the impact of poverty on our brothers and sisters and to see the “face” of poverty Washington State.

The Face of Poverty

Poverty is not simply an issue to be discussed or a problem to be solved. Poverty has a human face, and those living in poverty are our sisters and brothers.

Role and Responsibility of the Catholic Community

The faces and voices of poverty embody a Gospel call to solidarity with those who do not have a place at society’s table and who desperately want to participate fully in the life of their communities.

Role and Responsibility of Government

Catholic teaching asserts that some challenges are best addressed by individuals, families, churches and charities, but homelessness, hunger, drug addiction and mental illness have become epidemic. When serious problems like these are common to every community, it is a just and reasonable expectation that society acts cooperatively through appropriate government channels to address them.

Pray and Act

Pray for those living in poverty. 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.

Pastoral Letter Resources

The bishops urge Catholics to learn more about poverty in their own communities. To provide assistance, the bishops supplemented their pastoral letter with a study guide and videos for use by parishes and schools. The videos and study guide will help answer the question “Who is my neighbor?” All pastoral letter resources are available at the WSCC website, www.thewsc.org:

- Pastoral letter – available in three languages: English, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- Study Guide (English) – order copies from the WSCC website
- Two videos – one runs about 5 minutes and the other about 17 minutes

“Those in our cities and towns who lack the most basic necessities of life ... 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.” – Who Is My Neighbor?



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.