

**Bourg Mulatresse – Panel Discussion on UN World Day of Social Justice  
7.20 pm – 7.35 pm: Thurs 20 Feb 2014**

**Theme: Morals and Values to help us build an inclusive society: *Welcoming Lazarus at the Table***

Good evening, brothers and sisters in Christ. Today, 20 February 2014, the world observes UN World Day of Social Justice (WDSJ). The UN proclaimed this day at its 62<sup>nd</sup> session in November 2007. The day was observed for the first time in 2009. The UN hopes that WSJ will “support efforts of the international community in poverty eradication, the promotion of employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.”

For us Catholics, social justice is an integral part of the mission of our Church. Remember the words in the document, *Justice in the World*, produced at the World Synod of Bishops, 1971:

“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

Firstly, I would like to ask you: What are the shared values of this parish e.g.

Faith, Love of God and love of neighbour, Respect for Human dignity, Compassion, Justice, Gratitude, Peace, Right Relationships, Community, Empathy, Friendship...?

CCSJ shares with you tonight a ‘pocket’ card of values and virtues to assist you as we seek to implement the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pastoral Priority: Regenerating the moral and spiritual values of our society. The prayer on the card reads: “Lord, help me to develop qualities of moral goodness and excellence and grow in holiness.”

We will grow in holiness when we do God’s will – daily. God imprinted a moral order in our hearts and minds and if we allow this order to lead us, we will truly build a civilization of love.

One of the key social justice principles that our Church promotes is the option or love of preference for the poor. You will remember Pope Francis saying shortly after he was elected as Pope:

“How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor!”

The Holy Father said in his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel* (26 November 2013): “I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”

Blessed John Paul II reminded us that: “The distinctive mark of the Christian, today more than ever, must be love for the poor, the weak and the suffering. Living out this demanding commitment requires a total reversal of the alleged values which make people seek only their own good: power, pleasure, the unscrupulous accumulation of wealth. Yes, it is precisely to this radical conversion that Christ's disciples are called.”

True Christian love should inspire us to be people of the Beatitudes: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy should be uppermost in our minds as we seek to live the Gospel.

Too often, we sit in our comfort zones, we drive with our windows up and our doors locked, our homes are like fortresses. We eat and drink our fill and just ask God to be merciful to those who have nothing to eat. But Disciples of Christ must do more than this.

As is stated in the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference Social Justice Statement (2013-2014): *Lazarus at our Gate*)

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/SJSandresources/2013-14-SJS-Statement.pdf>:

“We cannot be at peace eating our fill, in the knowledge that a sister or brother lies hungry or sick at our gate. We know that such a state of affairs is as far as it can be from the vision of God.” (refer to story of Lazarus and Dives)

\*Important to empower the poor/vulnerable, rather than create a dependency syndrome – the poor generally do not want handouts, they want to live in dignity and have their rights addressed.

Our Catechism reminds us that “society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority...Social justice can be obtained only in

respecting the transcendent dignity of man *and woman*...everyone should look upon his/*her* neighbour (without any exception) as ‘another self...’” (paras 1928, 1929, 1931)

Jesus taught that on the Day of Judgement God will ask what each person did to help the poor and needy: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers *and sisters* of mine, you did for me." (Mt. 25:40). We must stand in solidarity with and show compassion for the poor through our words, prayers and deeds.

The moral test of any society is “how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. People are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.” (Option for the Poor, Major themes from Catholic Social Teaching, Office for Social Justice, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis).

In his encyclical, Charity in Truth, Pope Benedict XVI calls for *authentic integral human development* which means the development of all dimensions of a person and of each person. No one should be left behind. Jesus is concerned with the whole person and with every person.

In the encyclical, the Pope says that “Development is impossible without upright men and women...whose consciences are finely attuned to the requirements of the common good.” The challenge for us is to attune our consciences to the requirements of the common good; to the needs of our brothers and sisters who are in need.

You and I can make a difference to the lives of the poor and socially excluded. As Mother Teresa said: “What you can do, I can’t do and what I can do, you can’t do, but together, we can do something beautiful for the Lord.”

If we are to create social conditions that will allow all our people to realize their human dignity and their potential, we must locate the issue of poverty within the wider concept of social exclusion.

Good governance requires that we strive to leave no one behind. Let's look behind the poverty line set at \$655 per month and address the factors that constrain progress in human development in this land of plenty. To promote social inclusion, we must understand how social exclusion impacts adversely no people's lives.

**Social exclusion** is not just about not having enough money. It is a build-up of problems across several aspects of people's lives. The IDB states that social exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environs, bad health and family breakdown. Often these issues are interlinked. A complex chain of cause and effect is then set in motion. Social exclusion "affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole" (UK Govt.).

(The UK Government's current definition of social exclusion is: 'Social Exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack of denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.')

Focusing on **social inclusion** means emphasizing things like access to services, good social networks, employment, decent housing, adequate information and support, and the ability to exercise basic rights. The key factors contributing to **social inclusion** are: (see:

[http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/social\\_inclusion\\_what.asp](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/social_inclusion_what.asp)

- adequate income
- good mental and physical health
- low risk of crime and low fear of crime, good quality neighbourhood
- provision of appropriate care
- mobility and access to transport
- good social networks
- good access to suitable local services
- opportunities for civic participation and cultural activities
- use of basic financial services
- employment, learning and skills opportunities
- opportunities to use digital technology

- suitable, well-maintained housing
- suitable information, advice, advocacy and redress
- use of common consumer goods)

There is a saying that the world has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed. In a world that has so much, almost half the world — over three billion people — live on less than \$2.50 US (about \$15TT) a day.

“Economic indicators have in recent times defined poverty based on the society it affects. Terms like absolute poverty, relative poverty and even intellectual poverty have become commonplace. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than US\$1.25 per day, and moderate poverty as less than \$2.00 or \$5.00 a day. It is a set standard which is consistent over time and between countries. Absolute poverty often referred to as destitution refers to the one ‘who lacks basic human needs, which commonly includes clean and fresh water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing and shelter.’

Relative poverty on the other hand refers to lacking a usual or socially acceptable level of resources or income as compared with others within a society or country.”  
(Union zeroes in on poverty - St Maarten)

According to UNICEF, **25,000 children die** each day due to poverty. And they “die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world. Being meek and weak in life makes these dying multitudes even more invisible in death.”

Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names.

Less than one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn't happen.

There are 2.2 billion children in the world. 1 billion (every second child) live in poverty

121 million children are out of education worldwide

75 million people in the developing world are working in slavery, forced prostitution and hazardous conditions.

There are now 11 million refugees and 30 million homeless in the developing countries.

There are about 6 million people worldwide who are being sold as humans – human trafficking is big business today and it is usually women and girls who are the victims.

You can get these and other facts on poverty at: **Poverty Facts and Stats** by Anup Shah: <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>

Around the world, when there are natural disasters, it is mainly the poor who feel the brunt of it. In Haiti many of our brothers and sisters were eating mud pies before the earthquake. Sadly, it remains to be seen whether or not the aid collected reaches those for whom it is intended. In the UK in 2010 there was an analysis of the amount of money that goes to charity from the sale of Christmas Cards by groups that say the money will go to charity. A recent report has revealed that in many cases many charities only getting a small percentage of the amount that is made when the cards are sold. Some charities get as little as 6%. The retailers and manufacturers get the rest. (Refer to Sri Lanka – aid workers – luxury – people still living in tents after 2 years.)

There are stereotypes and stigmas attached to **poverty and social exclusion**. For example, often people living in Beetham, Laventille and other areas that are not seen as posh or that are seen as crime hot spots, have difficulty getting decent employment. Many avoid giving their true address in order to gain employment. **Social inclusion** is about tackling multiple deprivation and seeking to include everyone around the table of life.

But why should we care about those who are on the margins of society? One of the most disturbing photos I have seen in TT is that of a group of men playing cards and nearby in the gutter lay a homeless man, bleeding. They didn't even acknowledge him. It was as though he did not exist. Why should we care? And then there was the TV story about the man who sat in Woodford Sq with his feet rotting and our Parliament is located just opposite; and people passed him by daily – not seeing his plight.

In TT the Network of NGOs have reported recently on a study they had commissioned. The report states that about 20% of the 1.3m people living in TT live in poverty. The last official figures we have state that the figure is 17.6% . If

we take the Network of NGOs figures, then more than 260,000 persons in TT are living in poverty.

**The Survey of Living Conditions**, prepared by Kairi Consultants Ltd - conducted in 2005, shows that **16.7 % of our people** (about **210,000** persons) live in poverty.

Kairi Consultants noted that the distribution of poverty was highly unequal. Most of the country's poor are located in

Siparia—15.1 per cent

Princes Town—11.2 per cent

San Juan/Laventille—11.0 per cent

Tunapuna/Piarco—10.1 per cent

See map and graph

These regional corporations accounted for 47.4 per cent of the total population.

“In terms of the prevalence of poverty within regional corporations,

**Sangre Grande** had the most poor persons per 100 in the population; **39.1** per cent of the population in the regional corporation of Sangre Grande was deemed to be poor,” it stated. Other regions of high poverty concentration included

- **Princes Town** (30%), the Borough of **Point Fortin** 24.6%), **Mayaro/Rio Claro** (26.6%) and

**Siparia** (27.7%),

In the areas of the highest concentration of the population, some of the poorest live within less than two miles from the most well-off. These are figures and statistics we as Church in our parishes must be using to guide our mission and our work.

The US Bishops' document: **A place at the table** (2002) states: “Concern for the poor echoes through the Scriptures—in the passion of the prophets, the words and witness of Jesus, and the example of the early Church. The Church has lived out

this concern in every age and every land. Our commitment to those who are in greatest need is rooted in the biblical vision of the sacredness of all human life...

“Catholic teaching affirms that all persons, even those on the margins of society, have basic human rights: the right to life and to those things that are necessary to the proper development of life, including faith and family, work and education, housing and health care...Jesus challenged us to see him in those who are hungry or thirsty, in strangers, in the naked and imprisoned.”

We get our mandate to stand in solidarity with the poor from the words Jesus uttered at the start of His ministry on earth Luke 4:18-19

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he has anointed me to bring good news 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 the year of the Lord's favour.*

Bringing the Good News to the poor does not mean just preaching the Gospel to the poor and doing nothing to reduce/alleviate/eradicate poverty and lift the poor to some higher, more noble place. Our anointing at Baptism means that we must act to ensure that the poor have a place at the table of life and that they are not sitting like Lazarus who waited for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's, Dives', plate. If we believe in the dignity of the person and the sanctity of life, we can't help but act.

After our last sitting of Synod, our archdiocese adopted a Mission statement that reads:

“We are the People of God in Trinidad and Tobago, building the Civilization of Love - reconciliation with God, neighbour, creation and self - through:

- The New Evangelization
- Revitalizing Catholic Culture and Identity
- Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society.”

To build “the Civilization of Love”, we must demonstrate our love for those who are poor and excluded but who are still our brothers and sisters.



Our people are our greatest asset. How do we unlock their potential and develop this asset? This is a question that many countries around the world, including us in T&T, are addressing at the current time. More and more of our people are daring to dream that the quality of their lives will be improved.

Pope John Paul II, described this preferential love for the poor as a "call to have a special openness with the small and the weak, those that suffer and weep, those that are humiliated and left on the margin of society, so as to help them win their dignity as human persons and children of God" (Pope John Paul II, "Address to Bishops of Brazil," *Origin*, July 31, 1980 p. 35.)

The Second Vatican Council's document: *The Church in the Modern World*, made it clear that **“everyone has the right to possess a sufficient amount of the earth's goods for themselves and their family.”**

The resources of our world are sufficient to meet all our needs, but not all our greed. Greed, individualism, and selfishness have led us to this juncture in TT and the world where we walk on the other side and ignore the plight of the poor. Pope Paul VI said there can be no peace without justice. We must work tirelessly for justice for the poor and excluded.

In his Peace Message in 2009, Pope Benedict XVI focused on the theme: *Fighting poverty to build peace*. He said: “The Church's social teaching has always been concerned with the poor. ...many individuals and indeed whole peoples are living today in conditions of extreme poverty. The gap between rich and poor has become more marked, even in the most economically developed nations. This is a problem which the conscience of humanity cannot ignore, since the conditions in which a great number of people are living are an insult to their innate dignity and as a result are a threat to the authentic and harmonious progress of the world community... we all share in a single divine plan: we are called to form one family in which all – individuals, peoples and nations – model their behaviour according to the principles of fraternity and responsibility.”

In fighting poverty, the Pope says we must look at *child poverty*. He rightly says: “When poverty strikes a family, the children prove to be the most vulnerable victims: almost half of those living in absolute poverty today are children.” (2.2 b. children in the world. 1 b. poor – see Anup Shah – Facts and Stats about Poverty).

He says: “To take the side of children when considering poverty means giving priority to those objectives which concern them most directly, such as caring for mothers, commitment to education, access to vaccines, medical care and drinking water, safeguarding the environment, and above all, commitment to defence of the family and the stability of relations within it. When the family is weakened, it is inevitably children who suffer. If the dignity of women and mothers is not protected, it is the children who are affected most.

“In the Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (*Hundredth Year*), Pope John Paul II warned of the need to “abandon a mentality in which the poor – as individuals and as peoples – are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced.” The poor, he wrote, “ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all.

TT is one of the countries that signed the Millenium Development Goals - to halve the number of persons living in poverty by 2015 and to halve the number of persons who suffer from extreme hunger by 2015. Things are not looking good as we are far from achieving this goal. Our poverty reduction strategies are not working fast enough.

Equality of opportunity and equity remain a forlorn dream for many who want to share in the wealth of our land. No doubt, the economic recession have had and may continue to have an adverse effect on the poor. Poverty and homelessness have become widespread in TT.

There are individual cases that stand out – such as

- the old woman (Oct 2007) who whispered in the ear of our former PM as he went on a ‘walkabout’ a couple of years ago. When asked by the media what she had said to him, she replied: “I asked him for floor boards”. Most of the needs of the poor are basic.
- And then there was the man whose foot was rotting and he sat day after day in **Woodford Square** with people passing by unconcerned until one of our TV stations aired his plight on TV.
- And every time we expect important visitors or Christmas comes around, we “round up” the people we call ‘vagrants’/street dwellers, take them far away from the eyes of our visitors, to some remote country area for assessment etc. – so that they will be out of the way. And when the visitors leave or

Christmas is over, lo and behold, many or most of the homeless find their way back to POS.

- And with poverty, come a number of other social issues that we need to address. Many of our brothers and sisters who have mental illnesses and who should be cared for in an asylum live on the streets. Others are drug addicts and need treatment. Many live on the streets.

As Shadow says: Poverty is hell. You know his song:

“wake up in de mornin an de baby cry  
de suga pan empty, de milk bottle dry  
de little boy chile on de mango tree  
de mango green, huttin up his belly  
de young gyal bawlin, she wouldn't settle  
she wipe she bamsee wit stingin nettle  
toilet paper dey neva had  
dey used tuh too too in de gully by de ole bak yard  
dey rub she dong and dey put she tuh sleep  
de rain come dong an de house does leak”.

Yes, poverty is hell for many.

The Catholic Church believes that the state has a positive moral function. That means it must ‘act’. It is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights and build the common good. Our Government should ensure that the economy works for all citizens.

As citizens, we also have a role to alleviate the suffering of the poor. We are called to be the leaven for transforming the world.

(\*\*\*Woman with ectopic pregnancy – Sangre Grande: no level playing field – denied education.)

Some time ago I addressed some Principals in Sangre Grande. They gave examples of social injustices in their area. One spoke of the plight of a nine year old boy who was always either late or absent from school. His widowed mother was ill. He had to walk a long distance - morning and afternoon - to collect water

from a standpipe for use by his family. He also had to tend to younger siblings before leaving for school.

Free education is one thing. The ability to access it is another. Access to basic amenities is a fundamental human right. During protests by citizens over the past 2 years, a constant complaint by some parents was that they could not send their children to school because they could not afford increased taxi fare. Do we know how many of our children are affected by this 'face' of poverty? Let's level the playing field so that everyone can take advantage of free education. Recently our Minister of Education announced that about 4,000 students are out of school. Where are they? How many are living in poverty and their parents can't afford their passage to go to school? How many have to stay away from school to help their parents sell in the market etc.?

Human rights are indivisible. Like all citizens, the poor want an adequate standard of living with basic amenities such as water, electricity, housing, education, good roads/drainage, affordable transport, meaningful employment, adequate nutrition and good health care. They want to be able to live in an environment in which they will feel relatively safe and secure.

- Although many researchers don't like to link poverty and crime, I ask you to visit our **prisons** and see how many of our young men of African origin are there. Many are poor and uneducated. Who are the big boys bringing in the drugs and guns? They are not in prison? I attended the Forum at UWI on Wed to discuss the Death Penalty. And while 2 speakers wanted 'vengeance', I was pleased to note that most of those present in the packed room did not support the death penalty. Many gave examples of how society has let down some of those who are committing crime e.g. 15 year old parenting her siblings.
- Poverty and education or lack of it need to be addressed. (Give example of **builder** – could not read – taught him and some of his workers for months). Ashamed to admit it.
- **Linus** the poor man who died in the labasse in Arima some time ago – see e-mail received a few months ago re garbage truck on Beetham Highway and the way in which youths run to the truck even before it stops – to get there first to rummage through the garbage – people should not have to live like this in a country that has so much.
- Poverty and crime and violence – given guns to put down a wuk
- Gangs

- Prostitution, human trafficking, anger – domestic violence
- High food prices.
- Economic recession
- Tell story of group in St Joseph – building room for old woman.
- Many individuals and organizations are playing their part to build a just society

In their document, **Economic Justice for All**, the US Bishops state: “As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental "option for the poor" -- to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor... The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation... As individuals and as a nation...we are called to make a fundamental "option for the poor". The obligation to evaluate social and economic activity from the viewpoint of the poor and the powerless arises from the radical command to love one's neighbour as one's self. Those who are marginalized and whose rights are denied have privileged claims if society is to provide justice for all. This obligation is deeply rooted in Christian belief...

“The prime purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. The "option for the poor," therefore, is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons. These wounds will be healed only by greater solidarity with the poor and among the poor themselves... The fundamental moral criterion for all economic decisions, policies, and institutions is this: They must be at the service of all people, especially the poor.

(“The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor. The "option for the poor," is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community.)

“The option for the poor is an essential part of society's effort to achieve the common good. A healthy community can be achieved only if its members give special attention to those with special needs, to those who are poor and on the margins of society.”

Our *Catechism* tells us that “Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority...Social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man... Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that ‘everyone should look upon his neighbour (without any exception) as ‘another self,’ above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity... The equal dignity of human persons requires the effort to reduce excessive social and economic inequalities. It gives urgency to the elimination of sinful inequalities.” (1928 – 1947).

**Our parishes** must become beehives of activity as we seek to walk with the two feet of Christian Service. As the US bishops said in *Communities of Salt & Light*: “We need to build local communities of faith where our social teaching is central, not fringe; where social ministry is integral, not optional; where it is the work of every believer, not just the mission of a few committed people and committees.”

Isaiah 1 – states: “*Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow. Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord.*”

Let us set things right for the poor and socially excluded. Love of neighbour impels us to work for just laws, policies, and social structures because, as the saying goes, love without social justice is like a body without a backbone. The US Bishops say in their document: “*Everyday Christianity: To hunger and thirst for justice*” (1998):

“Catholicism does not call us to abandon the world, but to help shape it. This does not mean leaving worldly tasks and responsibilities, but transforming them.”

Let us do all that we can to transform our societies; to alleviate and reduce poverty in our land and in our world. Let us show that there is some authentic, visible and credible sign that Catholics are living and working for justice in TT and in the world.

What can you and I do to promote justice? The Campaign to reduce poverty in America - where about 39m people live in poverty, has produced a 1 page list of 20 things you can do to address poverty Under the Headings: Reflect, Get informed, Get organized, Get involved, Volunteer, Donate. (See [www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty](http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty). e.g.

**Reflect:** Pray for those whose lives are impacted by poverty

Use Scripture to deepen your understanding of poverty

Familiarize yourself with Catholic social teaching on the poor

**Get informed:** Educate yourself about poverty in your community and in the world.

Identify an issue (such as health care, housing, hunger, economic security, or moral budget priorities) that you are passionate about and can take action on.

Make yourself familiar with legislation and policy proposals that impact those low-income families and individuals.

Reach out to those living in poverty in your community by participating in parish and communities activities and service

**Get organized:** (Our communities are blessed with a diversity of gifts. You should conduct a skills/gifts audit in your parish. Seek out, recognize, and utilize the diversity of gifts, experience, knowledge and competence amongst your members. It is better that many people be involved, using their particular talents and abilities, than that a few try to do everything. )

(Act as a mentor/friend to a poor family).

Invite those who are directly impacted by poverty to discuss issues with you and to become participants in the actions you all take to address poverty. Don't do things for them, do things with them.

Identify existing resources or advocacy groups working on your issue in your community.

Reach out to those living in poverty in your community by participating in parish and community activities and service

Develop a working group within your church and community – to help spread the word and raise concerns about “your issue” – make sure to involve some low-income families on your work group.

Share what you have learned with others in your community and encourage them to take action too.

**Get involved:** Let your voice be heard by involving yourself in advocacy activities at the local, state and national levels.

Identify key power brokers within the church and community who can assist you with your advocacy efforts.

(Join your Archdiocesan or Catholic Charities legislative network and become an active participant)

Contact your local elected officials with specific concerns about poverty in your community and ask for a staff contact to follow up with. Follow up with that staff.

(Engage your MPs, Councillors, the business community who should be encouraged to practise corporate social responsibility etc. )

Once you have a strong understanding of your issue, have organized some community support, and know what changes you would like to see, engage your local media to call attention to what is happening in your community.



**Volunteer:** Learn about volunteering with Catholic Charities in your community. Contact your local Catholic charities to find out how you can serve your community.

**Donate:** Learn how to support various charities.

**I end with a Prayer for an end to poverty (Christian Aid)**

**Creator God,**

**You loved the world into life.**

Forgive us when our dreams of the future  
are shaped by anything other than glimpses of a kingdom  
of justice, peace and an end to poverty.

**Incarnate God,**

**you taught us to speak out for what is right.**

Make us content with nothing less than a world  
that is transformed into the shape of love,  
where poverty shall be no more.

**Breath of God,**

**let there be abundant life.**

Inspire us with the vision of no more poverty (over),  
and give us the faith, courage and will to make it happen.

This we ask through Christ our Lord, Amen. (Christian Aid)

