

# ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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DISCOVER YOUR NEIGHBOR

S.Sprague/Sudan





# WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

**Living our faith means building a society that values all people.** We experience true joy by being in right relationship with God, each other, and creation. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that each person has inherent dignity, which includes having their basic needs met. We identify injustice by recognizing the inequities between those with greater and fewer economic resources. Jesus teaches that our salvation depends on how we as a society treat the least among us. Through encounter with one another, the rich and the poor together encounter the joy of the Gospel and are mutually transformed. *Learn more at [DiscoverYourNeighbor.org](http://DiscoverYourNeighbor.org)*

## STEP 1: PRAY

Loving God,

You created us as sisters and brothers, a family that cares for one another.

Thank you for the people in our lives who look out for us and take care of us when we are hurt or in need.

Help us to put others first, especially those people most in need around the world. Inspire us to show them the love that we receive from others.

Amen.



## STEP 2: MAKE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will examine global injustice and consider the appropriate response in light of Catholic teaching.

**WARM UP:** Sit in rows facing a box at the front of the room. Starting with the back row, take turns trying to throw a ball into the box. You cannot stand up or move closer to the box.

**DISCUSS:** How did you feel when you heard the rules of this activity? How did you feel while you were competing? How was the experience different for each row? How would you feel if you had been competing for food, shelter, water, education, or work?

**READ NEIGHBOR FOCUS. ACTIVITY:** A student stands at the front of the room facing the box. Classmates take turns calling out the challenges Kabita faced in her life. Each time a challenge is named, Kabita takes one step backwards. **PAUSE** to note the

distance between Kabita and the box. **DISCUSS:** How is Kabita's reality similar to or different from our own? What actions does Kabita take to succeed? What might have happened if no one else helped her? How would you feel if Kabita was a member of your family?

**READ FAITH PERSPECTIVE. DISCUSS:** Where would this community be seated in the box game? How do you think Fr. Shaun felt when the community in Bolivia shared their food with him? What can we learn from the community in this story about how to respond to the needs of others?

**AS A CLASS** create new rules for the box game that you think better represents a society that is more equitable or just.

## NEIGHBOR FOCUS – NEPAL

When Kabita Rai was a young girl, her family left their home to find better employment opportunities. Her father took out a loan from the owner of a brick factory in order to pay for her education. To help repay the loan, Kabita made bricks alongside her parents after her classes each day.

When Kabita's mother became sick and could no longer work, Maryknoll Father Joseph Thaler arranged for a scholarship to help Kabita continue her studies. Even with the scholarship,

Kabita continued to make bricks. In her last year of high school, her mother was hospitalized and nearly died. Kabita helped care for her mother, went to school, and worked alongside her father to keep food on the table. She graduated high school, and began studying for a degree at a college a half-hour's walk from her home. After a couple of years of college, Kabita began teaching at the Maryknoll daycare and nursery school for the children of brick factory workers while she continued to study for her degree. All the while, she kept making and hauling bricks.

## FAITH PERSPECTIVE

"A few years ago, I was in Bolivia helping out at a school and parish in the countryside. Once, I visited a small community of indigenous people, who live in simple houses without running water and sometimes without electricity. As I walked down the hill to the village, the people came outside to welcome me with open arms. Each of the women wore a bright-colored woven blanket, called an *aguayo*, tied to her back to carry things. The women sat down on the ground and opened these colorful backpacks. To my surprise, they were filled with food to share.

We ate with our hands and sat around the food, talking with one another.

"Jesus broke bread with the disciples and said, 'Do this in memory of me,' reminding us to be the body of Christ in the world. Christ is the bread of life given to us to share with others. We are a global family united in Christ through communion."

- Fr. Shaun Crumb, M.M.

## STEP 3: EXPLORE SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

### READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

**6TH GRADE:** Isaiah 58:6-11

**7TH GRADE:** John 6:1-15

**8TH GRADE:** Acts 4:32-36

**REFLECT:** How are people's needs being met in this passage? What do you hear God saying in this reading about how we are called to live as a global family? Why do you think God wants this for us?

**REWRITE:** this Scripture passage as if it were about our world today: Who is hungry, oppressed, or in need in our world? What talents and resources do you have to help meet their needs?

### WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY?

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable is one of the themes of Catholic Social Teaching. Scripture shows that God hears the cry of the poor and expects us to respond with justice. Jesus himself was born poor and was always close to the outcast. Pope Francis tells us that "today and always, the 'poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel.'" The Church must make it a priority to address the needs of those in poverty, because "there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor."

The U.S. bishops explain that, "As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response."



# STEP 4: TAKE ACTION

## PRAY, FAST, AND GIVE IN SOLIDARITY

We are one human family. Pope Francis reminds us that we must care for that family by working for the common good. During Lent, we pray, fast, and give as acts of solidarity with others in need.

**PRAY:** Each week during Lent, find a news story about people in need around the world. Create a sacred space to collect the stories in the classroom and pray for their needs together.

**FAST:** Create a two-column chart to record what you eat and drink in a week. Write healthy items in the first column and unhealthy items in the second. During Lent, fast by only eating healthy items. (Or take a break each day from social media or television, and instead use that time doing community service or praying about people whose needs you can help meet.)

**GIVE:** Choose a snack or drink item that you regularly purchase to give up for Lent. Collect the money you would have spent and donate to a project serving people in need.

**DISCUSS:** How has praying, fasting and giving changed how you think and feel? How has it affected your relationship with God? With others?

## RAISE YOUR VOICE

Show your community how Christ suffers today. Visit [DiscoverYourNeighbor.org](http://DiscoverYourNeighbor.org) to find Stations of the Cross representing global realities. Present them in your class, school, or parish. Create your own Stations and share them on Instagram [@DiscoverYourNeighbor](https://www.instagram.com/DiscoverYourNeighbor).

## BE A GLOBAL NEIGHBOR

Did you know that Maryknoll missionaries accompany people and communities affected by poverty around the world? In Nepal, Maryknoll supports communities through education, nutrition, and job training programs. Visit [DiscoverYourNeighbor.org](http://DiscoverYourNeighbor.org) to learn how to support these efforts as a family, classroom, school, or parish.

## ENGAGE YOUR FAMILY

Read Matthew 25:31-46 together. **DISCUSS:** How do you as a family take care of one another? Who else is Jesus asking you to show love to in our world?

Brainstorm three ways you can respond to people in need together during Lent.

**EXTENSION:** Remove unhealthy or unnecessary items from your family grocery list each week during Lent. Donate the money you would have spent to a cause that addresses the needs of people in experiencing poverty.