

Activity: Solidarity Path

(45 minutes)

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FACE THE FAST

Objectives

Through this activity participants will:

- experience the multiple dimensions of poverty;
- learn about and apply the principles of Catholic social teaching; and
- understand our Gospel call to live in solidarity with the poor overseas.

Activity Summary

Participants will learn about the multiple factors that contribute to the perpetuation of poverty in developing countries around the world. Through interactive participation and role-playing, they will “experience” the joys and challenges in the lives of the poor.

At the conclusion of the activity, participants will have an opportunity to discuss some principles of Catholic social teaching and how these can be used to address global poverty.

Materials Needed

- 14 pieces of construction paper (multiple colors)
- copy of *Principles of Catholic social teaching* handout
- scissors
- glue
- markers
- flipchart paper
- tape

Procedure

Preparation

On 7 sheets of construction paper (all different colors), write one of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching on the front.

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God’s Creation

On the back of each sheet, paste the corresponding definition (use *Principles of Catholic social teaching* handout).

Display the principles of Catholic social teaching in a prominent place around the room.

Option: Use *Creating a Fasting Atmosphere: Catholic Social Teaching Mural* to highlight the 7 principles in the activity space.

Place seven sheets of blank construction paper in a line on the floor. These sheets will act as “stepping stones” on the *Solidarity Path*. Feel free to decorate them with pictures from *Faces of the Fast* (see *Multi-media Presentations*) or *Solidarity and Justice Quotes* and *World Poverty & Hunger Data* (see *Setting the Context for Food Fast*).

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FACE THE FAST

Activity

Divide the participants into two groups:

Group A: This group will represent our brothers and sisters in developing countries around the world. Invite this group to “walk in someone else’s shoes” as if they were our brothers and sisters around the world facing poverty and hunger. Instruct them to stand together at the beginning of the *Solidarity Path*.

Group B: This group will represent the individual nations, humanitarian organizations and global governing bodies that are working in solidarity with the poor to address the multiple dimensions of poverty. Instruct this group to stand in a semi-circle around Group A.

Read the following scenarios aloud. After reading each one, invite both groups to look at the seven themes of Catholic social teaching and decide which principle is being applied in this scenario (there is no single right answer; recommended answers are indicated below). Each group should respond in line with the group they are representing. Discuss practical applications of this principle.

Encourage Group A and Group B to talk to each other, collaborate with each other and listen to each other’s perspectives on the issues. Once both groups agree on a principle and discuss some practical applications and solutions, replace one of the “stepping stones” on the floor with the chosen CST principle. Invite groups to move up one space on the *Solidarity Path*. Repeat until all seven principles have been chosen.

Scenarios:

1 You are an eleven year old boy living in Ghana. Your father died from AIDS when you were nine, and you left school to help care for and support your younger siblings. You would like to return to school, but if you do, your mother will not earn enough to feed you and your siblings. You hear about a school feeding program that is coming to your community. You will receive food every day at lunch, and you can even request a take-home ration that you can share with your family.

(Recommended principle: **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**)

2 You are a young wife and mother living in a small village in Burkina Faso. Your husband has been struggling to find consistent work, and your small children are not getting the adequate nutrition to support their growth. You are interested in starting your own business in the local market, but you do not have enough start-up money to purchase the necessary supplies. You do not have any credit history, and unless you find a way to finance your business, you will have to borrow from the local money-lenders who are notorious for charging exorbitant interest on their loans. You join a community-based savings bank in your village. The small loan that you receive allows you to purchase your supplies and open a stall in the marketplace. You are able to pay back your loan in full and you still have enough money left over to expand your business.

(Recommended principle: **Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers**)

3 You are a small farmer in Ethiopia. Over the past few years, you have planted the same three crops. This year, you notice that your crops are withering, and your soil is eroding rapidly. You do not have another source of income. You hear that an agriculture program is coming to your area. You join the program and learn about crop diversification, local growing cycles, irrigation techniques and water conservation practices. Now, your crops are plentiful, and your land is healthy.

(Recommended principle: **Care for God’s Creation**)

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FACE THE EAST

- 4 You are a woman living in a rural village in Egypt. Work is scarce, and you are frustrated by the perpetual poverty that afflicts your family and your neighbors. You were not sent to school as a child, and now as an adult, you feel powerless to make any real impact on your community. You feel you have no voice in your local government. You hear about a microfinance program that is coming to your village. You and seven other women in your community form a small loans group. You support and encourage one another and you guarantee one another's loans, thereby keeping default rates low. You attend an awareness session together about women's voting rights. Now several members of your group are thinking about running for local office.

(Recommended principle: **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**)

- 5 You are a day laborer in Peru. Your village lacks even the most basic necessities, including clean drinking water, electricity and public sanitation facilities. Large foreign mining corporations profit from your country's mineral wealth, without adequate regard for the Peruvian people. There is a growing sense of unrest among the laborers, and you worry that violent conflict may break out at any time. You hear about a peacebuilding program that is coming to your community. The program encourages dialogue among workers, grassroots organizations and foreign industries. It strives to promote fruitful collaboration and community development.

(Recommended principle: **Solidarity**)

- 6 You are a young father with an infant son living in the Philippines. Your son has not received all of his vaccinations because you could not afford the health care costs. You hear about a new health program that is coming to your community. The program will enable you to secure quality health care at an accredited local clinic for a low price.

(Recommended principle: **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**)

- 7 You are a young factory worker in Mexico. You and your coworkers have been subjected to a variety of labor violations, including arbitrary firings, a lack of basic occupational safety precautions, sexual harassment and breaches in collective bargaining contracts. You hear about several labor rights projects that are being implemented in your community. You are receiving education on your basic rights, and you feel empowered to improve your working conditions.

(Recommended principle: **Rights and Responsibilities**)

Debrief

After completing the *Solidarity Path*, invite participants to discuss what they learned and the new perspectives they gained in this activity.

Ask Group A to explain how it felt to walk in the shoes of the poor and the vulnerable.

- When did you feel powerless? When did you feel empowered?

Ask Group B to share their perspectives on the activity.

- Were you ever tempted to tell Group A how to resolve a problem rather than work with them? Why was it important to work in *solidarity* with Group A?

Ask all participants to reflect on these final questions.

- How can you use the principles of Catholic social teaching to guide and direct your own life and decisions?
- How do agencies, like Catholic Relief Services, use the principle of solidarity in their relief and development work throughout the world?

Activity: Solidarity Path

Handout

FACE THE FAST

Principles of Catholic social teaching

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The human person is the clearest reflection of God among us. Each person possesses a basic dignity that comes directly from our creation in the image of God. Through our actions we must express that each person is precious and the lives and welfare of all people are priorities. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.

Rights and Responsibilities

People have a fundamental right to life and those things that make life truly human: food, clothing, housing, health care, education and security. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others. The first community is the family, where we learn and act on our values. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test of our society is how our most vulnerable members are treated. Those with the greatest needs require the greatest response.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Work is an expression of our human dignity. It is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. The economy must serve people, not the other way around.

Solidarity

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that loving our neighbor has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation.