

## **Social Justice Facts: Bulletin Items Pertaining to Social Justice**

### Week 1

**Social Justice Fact:** In 2016, some 12.3 percent of Americans (15.6 million individuals) lived in household deemed to be “food insecure” by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This means that these households experienced some difficulty in securing enough food over the course of the preceding year.

**A Gospel Message:** “Bless are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied” (Luke 6:21).

**What can you do?** Generously support your parish’s St. Vincent DePaul Society or food pantry.

### Week 2

**Social Justice Fact:** In 2016, 28 million Americans remained uninsured despite the passage of healthcare reform.

**A Gospel Message:** “Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus... ‘Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons’” (Matthew 10:5-8).

**What can you do?** Support the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in advocating for health care as a basic human right.

### Week 3

**Social Justice Fact:** More than 22.5 million people in the world are now considered refugees.

**A Gospel Message:** “The king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was naked and you clothed me... Amen I say to you, whenever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew: 25-43).

**What can you do?** Support Catholic Relief Services, the official international relief and development agency for Catholics in the United States, which assists people in 98 countries on the basis of need rather than race, creed, or nationality. Catholic Relief Services creates opportunities for Catholics in the United States to live their faith in solidarity with poor people in other countries by providing financial support and addressing the root causes of poverty.

### Week 4

**Social Justice Fact:** Half of all wealth belongs to just 1 percent of the world’s population.

**A Gospel Message:** “(Jesus) unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor...’” (Luke 4:17-18).

**What can you do?** Support fair tax systems and governmental policies that adequately provide for human development both at home and abroad.

#### Week 5

**Social Justice Fact:** In 2016, some 2.3 million people were incarcerated in the United States. The United States leads the world in both the number and the percentage of its citizens it incarcerates, even surpassing more populous China, a distant second.

**A Gospel Message:** “(Jesus) unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me... He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives...’” (Luke 4:17-18).

**What can you do?** Support the move to alternative sentencing and drug treatment in the case of nonviolent crimes motivated by substance abuse.

#### Week 6

**Social Justice Fact:** Two million children worldwide are believed to be exploited through the commercial sex trade.

**A Gospel Message:** “(Jesus) unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me... He has sent me to... let the oppressed go free...’” (Luke 4:17-18).

**What can you do?** Learn about the efforts of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to address the needs of victims of human trafficking through its Office of Migration and Refugee Services.

#### Week 7

**Social Justice Fact:** According to UNICEF, some 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. Approximately 27 percent of all children in developing countries are underweight or stunted in growth due to malnutrition.

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

**What can you do?** Sponsor a child through *Unbound*, a lay Catholic organization committed to creating relationship of mutual respect between sponsors in the United States and children.

#### Week 8

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 22 percent of children in Northwest Indiana live below the poverty line.

**A Gospel Message:** And Mary said: ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... He has thrown down the rulers from the thrones but lifted up the lowly’” (Luke 1:46 and 1:52).

**What can you do?** Look into the possibility of serving as a CASA advocate for children. See [www.casaforchildren.org](http://www.casaforchildren.org).

#### Week 9

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 46.7 million people in the United States live below the poverty line.

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

**What can you do?** Support Catholic Charities with your time, talent, and treasure.

#### Week 10

**Social Justice Fact:** In the last decade, some 2 million children have died in armed conflicts around the globe. Some 3 million have been seriously injured or disabled.

**A Gospel Message:** “Blessed are you who are weeping, for you will laugh” (Luke 6:22).

**What can you do?** Pray for peace.

#### Week 11

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 6,100 hate crimes were reported in the United States in 2016. 18.6 of these reports pertained to religion.

**A Gospel Message:** “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude and insult you and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man” (Luke 6:20).

**What can you do?** Speak up when family members, co-workers, and acquaintances speak disparagingly of other religious groups. Remind them that the Catholic Church supports the right of all people to worship as they see fit.

#### Week 12

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 22 percent of all children in Indiana (333,036) live below the poverty line.

**A Gospel Message:** “(W)oe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation” (Luke 6:24).

**What can you do?** Keep abreast of emerging social justice concerns by joining the Indian Catholic Conference’s legislative alert system. See [www.indianaacc.org](http://www.indianaacc.org).

### Week 13

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 842 million people in the world do not eat enough to maintain their health.

**A Gospel Message:** “(W)oe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation” (Luke 6:24).

**What can you do?** Rediscover the discipline of fasting and donate the cost equal to one meal per week to Catholic Relief Services or to another organization committed to abolishing world hunger. See [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org).

### Week 14

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 73 percent of American women who have abortions report that they have done so, in part, because they could not afford to have a child.

**A Gospel Message:** “Amen I say to you, whenever you did for one of these least of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

**What can you do?** Support the work of the Gary Diocese’s Woman Care Center with your time, talent, and treasure. See [www.womenscaecenter.org](http://www.womenscaecenter.org).

### Week 15

**Social Justice Fact:** The United States has 5 percent of the world’s population and 25 percent of the world’s prison inmates.

**A Gospel Message:** “I was in prison and you visited me... Amen I say to you, whenever you did for one of these least brother of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:36-40.).

**What can you do?** Join the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops calling for a redirection in public resources away from the construction of more prisons toward more effective crime prevention and education programs, substance abuse treatment, and initiatives designed to rehabilitate and reintegrate ex-offenders back into society.

### Week 16

**Social Justice Fact:** The Environmental Justice Foundation estimates that up to 150 million “climate refugees” will be displaced by the impacts of global warming over the course of the next 40 years.

**A Gospel Message:** “The one who has received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come share your master’s joy’” (Matthew 25:20-21).

**What can you do?** Support public policies that promote a shift away from fossil fuels to sources of energy that are more sustainable over the long run.

### Week 17

**Social Justice Fact:** In mid- 2017, 2,817 prisoners in the United States were being held under the sentence of death.

**A Gospel Message:** “(T)o you who hear, I say love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27).

**What can you do?** Support the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ opposition to the death penalty.

### Week 18

**Social Justice Fact:** According to the U.S. Department of Labor, some 24.9 percent of citizens in the United States provided at least some volunteer service in 2015.

**A Gospel Message:** “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send our laborers for his harvest” (Luke 10:2).

**What can you do?** Contact your United Way organization and discover where you can make a difference!

### Week 19

**Social Justice Fact:** Each year, some 3.6 million referrals involving neglect or abuse are made to child protection agencies across the country.

**A Gospel Message:** “Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, ‘Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the one who sent me’” (Mark 9:36-37).

**What can you do?** Consider adoption or serving as a foster parent if you are called to do so. Alternately, consider sponsoring a child in a foreign country through a reputable Christian organization such as Unbound or NPH USA.

### Week 20

**Social Justice Fact:** The world’s eight richest people control the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the globe’s population.

**A Gospel Message:** “Take care to guard against greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions” (Luke 2:15).

**What can you do?** Learn how the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops articulate the concept of human solidarity and our obligations as a country to the world’s poor.

### Week 21

**Social Justice Fact:** The bottom 50 percent of the American population earned an average of \$16,000 in pre-tax income in 1980. This number has not changed substantially since that time. During this same time period, the incomes of the riches 1 percent of people in the United States grew by 300 percent.

**A Gospel Message:** “God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’ Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God” (Luke 2:20).

**What can you do?** Support just tax policies and public policies that promise to reverse the trend to ever greater income inequality.

### Week 22

**Social Justice Fact:** The United States allocates more than \$30 billion to foreign aid each year. In terms of total dollars, this ranks first among the developed nations. As a percentage of gross domestic income, however, it is among the lowest of the developed nations. Additionally, a significant portion of this aid goes to military and security purposes.

**A Gospel Message:** “Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach or moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Luke 12:33-34).

**What can you do?** Learn about the substantial reforms in the United States’ foreign aid policy (i.e., a shift to human development and an overall increase in expenditures) proposed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

### Week 23

**Social Justice Fact:** In the United States, 75.4 percent of all wealth is owned by the richest 10 percent of the people, the highest concentration of wealth in the developed world. The comparable figures for the other developed countries are: Australia 50.3 percent, Canada 57.4 percent, Denmark 72.2 percent, Finland 44.9 percent, France 51.8 percent, Germany 61.7 percent, Ireland 58.4 percent, Israel 68.9 percent, Italy 49.8 percent, Japan 49.1 percent, Netherlands 54.6 percent, New Zealand 57.6 percent, Norway 65.9 percent, Singapore 61.1 percent, Spain 54.0 percent, Sweden 71.1 percent, Switzerland 71.5 percent, and U.K. 53.3 percent. The United States has the most extreme wealth-concentration of all of these countries.

**A Gospel Message:** “No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13).

**What can you do?** Write a letter! Make a call! Remind your elected representatives that federal and state budgets should not be balanced on the backs of poor people.

#### Week 24

**Social Justice Fact:** Trafficking of persons exists in two distinct forms: labor trafficking and sex trafficking. It is estimated that between 14,500 and 17,500 women, children, and men are trafficked into the United States each year.

**A Gospel Message:** “You will love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

**What can you do?** Urge members of Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform that will provide legal avenues for men, women, and their families to enter the country to work and live legally and safely. Undocumented persons eager to find work are easy prey for human traffickers.

#### Week 25

**Social Justice Fact:** The planet’s average surface temperature has risen about 2.0 degrees Fahrenheit since the late 19th century, a change driven largely by increased carbon dioxide and other human-made emissions into the atmosphere. Most of this warming occurred in the past 35 years, with 16 of the 17 warmest years on record occurring since 2001.

**A Gospel Message:** “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Luke 21:25-26).

**What can you do?** Support the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in calling for the United States to remain in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

#### Week 26

**Social Justice Fact:** Hate crimes against immigrants rose some 20 percent in 2016.

**A Gospel Message:** “Jesus said to him, ‘What is written in the law? How do you read it?’ (The scholar of the law) said in reply, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.’ He replied to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this and you will live’” (Luke 10:27-28).

**What can you do?** Join the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in supporting comprehensive immigration reform.

## Week 27

**Social Justice Fact:** Almost 60 of 15 to 17 year old worldwide are not in school. Persistent disparities in access to education that are linked to gender, locality, and wealth largely account for a lack of progress in this regard.

**A Gospel Message:** “Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 17:16).

**What can you do?** Sponsor a child through Unbound or NPH USA, organizations that enable poor children in the third world to stay in school.

## Week 28

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 41 million people struggle with hunger in the United States, including 13 million children. In 2015, 5.4 million seniors struggled to secure enough to eat.

**A Gospel Message:** “(Jesus), looking at (the rich man), loved him and said to him, ‘You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions” (Mark 9:21).

**What can you do?** Support legislation that provides full funding for public programs that feed the hungry, including the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)* and the *Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)*.

## Week 29

**Social Justice Fact:** Around 9 million people die of hunger and hunger-related diseases every year.

**A Gospel Message:** “The king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food... Amen I say to you, whenever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew: 25-43).

**What can you do?** Learn about Bread for the World, an organization dedicated to the fight against hunger, poverty, and disease in the United States and throughout the world.

## Week 30

**Social Justice Fact:** Approximately 1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water. Some 4.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services. 340,000 children under five die every year from diarrheal diseases.

**A Gospel Message:** “The king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was thirsty and you gave me drink... Amen I say to you, whenever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew: 25-43).

**What can you do?** Support Catholic Relief Services, the official international relief and development agency of the Catholic Community in the United States, with your prayers and a generous financial contribution.

### Week 31

**Social Justice Fact:** Thousands of people have died in conflicts involving the Holy Land since Israel was reestablished as an independent state in 1948. The ongoing conflict has caused unrest in the region and has contributed to armed conflicts in Lebanon and Iraq and to our ongoing difficulties with Iran as well.

**A Gospel Message:** “To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic... For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same” (Luke 6:32-33).

**What can you do?** Pray for peace in the Middle East and urge our elected officials to marshal the full resources of the United States to promote a just and lasting peace.

### Week 32

**Social Justice Fact:** Following the unrest in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops condemned the “evil of racism, white supremacy and neo-Nazism.”

**A Gospel Message:** “Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37).

**What can you do?** Reflect on the extent to which we continue to harbor attitudes that are racist, sexist, or discriminatory. Pray for forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation in our region and confront discriminatory attitudes in a charitable but forthright manner.

### Week 33

**Social Justice Fact:** One in six American women report having survived an attempted or completed rape in their lifetimes.

**A Gospel Message:** “‘This daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years now, ought she not to have been set free on the sabbath day from this bondage?’ When he said this, all his adversaries were humiliated; and the whole crowd rejoiced at all the splendid deeds done by him” (Luke 13:16-17).

**What can you do?** Do not tolerate sexist talk or actions of any kind in the workplace. Name this behavior for what it is: sin.

#### Week 34

**Social Justice Fact:** The role of the lay Catholics has changed dramatically over the course of the last 40 years. It would be impossible to accomplish the social mission of the Church without the active leadership of its lay members.

**A Gospel Message:** “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

**What can you do?** Become involved with your parish’s social justice commission or whatever entity your parish uses to advance the social justice mission of the Church.

#### Week 35

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 2.8 billion people in the world live on less than \$2 per day, and approximately 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1.25 per day, the definition of "extreme global poverty."

**A Gospel Message:** “[Jesus] said to them, ‘There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves’” (Matthew 14:16).

**What can you do?** Generously support your parish’s St. Vincent DePaul Society or food pantry.

#### Week 36

**Social Justice Fact:** Some 13 million households in the United States that are single parent homes. Nearly 84 percent are headed by single mothers.

**A Gospel Message:** “Let the children come to me and not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 17:16).

**What can you do?** Volunteer with organizations that provide support for children growing up in single parent households (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers and Big Sisters).

#### Week 37

**Social Justice Fact:** After the 2010 election, state lawmakers nationwide started introducing measures making it harder to vote. The new laws range from strict photo ID requirements to early voting cutbacks to registration restrictions. Overall, 23 states, including Indiana, have adopted additional restrictions in effect since the 2010 election.

**A Gospel Message:** “Amen I say to you, whenever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew: 25-43).

**What can you do?** Vote! And get involved politically, thus following the view expressed by Pope Francis in 2013: “We need to participate for the common good. Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern.”

### Week 38

**Social Justice Fact:** The number of people displaced from their homes due to conflict and persecution last year exceeded 60 million for the first time in history, a tally greater than the population of the United Kingdom.

**A Gospel Message:** “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land” (Matthew 5:5).

**What can you do?** Follow the lead of Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich in protesting the ongoing tightening of opportunities for refugees to find safe haven in the United States: “This weekend proved to be a dark moment in U.S. history. The (recent) executive order to turn away refugees and to close our nation to those, particularly Muslims, fleeing violence, oppression and persecution is contrary to both Catholic and American values.”

### Week 39

**Social Justice Fact:** The Catholic Church’s abiding commitment to social justice has been described as its “best kept secret.”

**A Gospel Message:** “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6).

**What can you do?** Go to <https://www.votervoices.net/USCCB/home> on a regular basis to read “action alerts” pertaining to social justice concerns. These alerts are issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

### Week 40

**Social Justice Fact:** In 2003, law enforcement agencies reported 5,928 hate crimes involving 6,933 offenses to the FBI. Just over 20 percent of all of these hate crimes were motivated by sexual orientation.

**A Gospel Message:** “I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable for judgment... (A)nd whoever say, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna” (Matthew 5:22).

**What can you do?** Write members of the Indiana General Assembly asking them to support legislation that would include violence against individuals based on gender orientation in hate crime legislation.

## Week 41

**Social Justice Fact:** The “working poor” are people who spend 27 weeks or more per year in the labor force, either working or looking for work, but whose incomes, nonetheless, fall below the poverty level. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 9.5 million of people can be considered “working poor.”

**A Gospel Message:** “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroy, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Matthew 6:19-21).

**What can you do?** Write to members of the Indiana General Assembly supporting an increase in the minimum wage and the eventual adoption of a just wage law.

## Week 42

**Social Justice Fact:** Recent studies have shown that young Americans are more tolerant of others than older Americans. This includes tolerance for gays and lesbians, racial and ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and immigrants.

**A Gospel Message:** “Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove that splinter from your eye,’ while the wooden beam is in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:3-4).

**What can you do?** Jesus sought out and responded to people who were deemed of little or no value in his culture, including women, foreigners, sinners, and those who were considered unclean. Pray that we might demonstrate the same kind of tolerance that Jesus practiced.

## Week 43

**Social Justice Fact:** Fearing the rise of social and political polarization in the United States and the coarsening of dialogue in the public square, the Catholic bishops of the United States have urged all people to practice civility, charity, and justice in our shared life together.

**A Gospel Message:** “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

**What can you do?** Object when you hear others disparaged as persons because of what they believe or who they are. These kinds of *ad hominem* attacks violate the command to love one another.

## Week 44

**Social Justice Fact:** Over 12 percent of adults in the United States now lack health insurance. This percentage is expected to rise significantly as a result of changes in healthcare and tax laws and regulations adopted in 2017.

**A Gospel Message:** “Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness” (Matthew 9:35).

**What can you do?** Support public policies and candidates for office who have joined the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in recognizing health care as an essential right.

#### Week 45

**Social Justice Fact:** An estimated 250,000 youth are tried, sentenced, and incarcerated as adults every year across the United States.

**A Gospel Message:** “While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ He heard this and said, ‘Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice”” (Matthew 9:10-13).

**What can you do?** Join the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in supporting the reform of our juvenile justice system.

#### Week 46

**Social Justice Fact:** More than 650,000 ex-offenders are released from prison every year, and studies show that approximately two-thirds will be rearrested within three years of release.

**A Gospel Message:** “Then Peter approaching asked him, ‘Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times” (Matthew 18:21-22).

**What can you do?** Support the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ call for the development of “restorative justice” strategies, including job, education, and housing assistance, in order to support those who are released from prison.

#### Week 47

**Social Justice Fact:** International law prohibits the participation of children under the age of 18 in armed conflicts of any kind. Nevertheless, thousands of children have been affected by armed conflict. They are recruited into government armed forces, paramilitaries, civil militia, and a variety of other armed groups. Often they are abducted at school, on the streets, or a home. Others enlist “voluntarily,” usually because they see few other alternatives.

**A Gospel Message:** “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

**What can you do?** Political instability is often driven by poverty. Vote for political leaders who understand that the United States cannot “go it alone” in a world economy that is defined by increased interdependence.

#### Week 48

**Social Justice Fact:** Of 67 low and middle income nations, assessed by the World Bank in 2016, 17 are at high risk of not being able to pay their debts, 34 are at medium risk, and only 12 are at low risk. Four are already in default). This situation has changed dramatically as a result of changes in the world economy since the 2008 crash. The impacts on these countries will be dramatic and will undoubtedly lead to increased poverty and political instability.

**A Gospel Message:** “The (Pharisees) preach, but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens [hard to carry] and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them” (Matthew 23:3-4).

**What can you do?** Urge your U.S. senators and representatives to support legislation that enables poor nations to avoid default on their loans without crippling their ability to meet the developmental needs of their citizens.

#### Week 49

**Social Justice Fact:** In 2015, 43.1 million people lived in poverty in the United States. In all some 13.5 percent of Americans live in poverty.

**A Gospel Message:** “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside are full of plunder and self-indulgence” (Matthew 23:25).

**What can you do?** Support the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Catholic Campaign for Human Development. Many of the projects supported by CCHD embody the corporal works of mercy and include protecting worker rights, expanding access to healthcare, and reforming the criminal justice system. Twenty-five percent of funds collected in this annual campaign remain in the diocese to support local projects.

#### Week 50

**Social Justice Fact:** The United States has 4.7 percent of the world’s population and holds 21.7 percent of the world’s wealth.

**A Gospel Message:** “Whoever wish to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:34-35).

**What can you do?** Enter into a sustained personal and family reflection pertaining to lifestyle choices. Consider how restraint in the use of the earth’s resources might be embodied in a spirituality that better reflects Gospel values.

#### Week 51

**Social Justice Fact:** Recent tax changes are expected by many economists to further boost income inequality in the United States.

**A Gospel Message:** “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

**What can you do?** Join the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in seeking the repeal of recent tax changes that have been deemed “unconscionable” and “unacceptable” because of their “fundamental structural flaws,” which “will raise income taxes on the working poor while simultaneously providing a large tax cut to the wealthy.”

#### Week 52

**Social Justice Fact:** Service to others can be performed in many and varied ways, including volunteer work in parishes and in local nonprofit organizations.

**A Gospel Message:** “(W)hen he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, ‘Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me “teacher” and “master,” and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (John 13:12-15).

**What can you do?** Join a ministry! Volunteer in your community! Advocate on behalf of those who have no voice!