

Learning Activities for the “Transforming the World” Chapter

(LifelongFaith Associates)

Advanced Preparation

Copy the following handouts:

- *A World without the Basic Essentials for Life*
- *The Global Situation Today*
- *Ideas for Transforming the World*
- *Transforming the World Action Plan*
- *Transforming Our World Prayer Services* (optional)

You will need newsprint and markers for table groups. Check the activities that you select to see if other materials are needed.

For additional education resources and action ideas consult the following web sites of justice organizations. Also consult the list on page 12.15 in *Living Well*.

- Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org
For education resources see: <http://education.crs.org>
- Church World Service: www.churchworldservice.org (Resource Library)
- Heifer Project: www.heifer.org
- Institute for Peace and Justice: www.ipj-ppj.org
- Justice, Peace, and Development, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:
www.usccb.org
For education resources: www.usccb.org/sdwp/foreducators.shtml
Catholics Confront Global Poverty Campaign: www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty
- World Vision: www.worldvision.org
For education resources see: www.worldvision.org/content.nsf/learn/educational-curriculum?Open&lpos=lft_txt_Educational-Curriculum

Suggested Setting

- Organize the participants into table groups.
- Decorate the table appropriately and use a placemat or table tent to present the evening program.
- Have all of the learning materials and handouts on the table.
- Include a blessing or prayer at the tables for all participants.

Part 1. Experience

1. Yearning for Justice – Stories of Transformation

People can make a difference in serving the poor, acting for justice, making peace, and caring for creation. Begin the session by sharing with the group the opening stories on pages 12.2 – 12.5 in *Living Well*. (For more information about Olga Murray and the Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation go to: www.nyof.org.)

Invite several people from your church community who are involved in serving the poor, acting for justice, making peace, or caring for creation to share their story in 3-5 minutes with the group. Ask them to share what inspired them to get involved and what they are doing.

After hearing the stories, have the participants at table groups discuss the stories that have heard using the following questions:

- What inspired this person or group to do something?
- What first step did this person or group take?
- Why did other people get involved?
- What qualities do you think helped this person or group achieve their goal?

2. Experiencing a World without the Basic Essentials for Life

The meditation, “A World without the Basic Essentials for Life,” helps people enter into the reality of the situation of over 1 billion people who live in poverty in our world today. The meditation can be utilized in several different ways, depending on your participants: 1) a guided meditation, 2) a visual presentation with a dramatic reading, and 3) a dramatic presentation. Review the handout and select the method that will work best with your group.

3. Quiz: The Global Situation Today

Use the quiz, *The Global Situation Today*, to “test” people’s awareness of the global situation of poverty and injustice today. Ask the adults to complete the quiz on their own. Parents can work with their children to complete the quiz. (All answers are true.)

Use the accompanying PowerPoint presentation to present the answers. Each fact is illustrated with a picture. Or create your own PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the answers.

4. Why Should We Be Concerned about Transforming the World?

To help people recognize why people of faith need to be concerned about acting to transform the world present the quote from Rabbi Ron Wolfson about “repairing the world” on page 12.6. in *Living Well*. Then offer the following reasons people of faith need to be concerned. Feel free to add other reasons. Create a PowerPoint presentation with the quote and the reasons.

- Our faith calls us to it. The Gospel and church teaching place our service of the poor and vulnerable and our work for justice at the center of Christian witness.
- Our nation needs it. Too many Americans, especially children, are growing up poor in the richest nation on earth. The blessings and burdens of American life are not being shared fairly.

- Our world requires it. More than 30,000 children die every day from hunger, deprivation, and their consequences. Disease and debt, corruption and conflict are threatening the lives and dignity of millions in our increasingly globalized world.
- Our salvation demands it. In Jesus' description of the Last Judgment, the critical question is 'What did you do for the least of these?' Jesus identified himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the imprisoned, and the stranger, insisting that when we serve them we serve him.
- Our actions can make a difference.

Invite table groups to discuss the reasons and add their own.

2.The Christian Practice of Transforming the World

The Exploring section of is organized into four theme of the Christian practice of transforming the world, each with a focusing Scripture teaching:

- 1) We serve the poor and vulnerable
- 2) We work for justice to ensure the rights of all people
- 3) We work for peace
- 4) We care for creation

You can explore of the Christian practice of Transforming the World in one of three ways:

Approach 1. Guided Experience

Guide the participants through the four elements of transforming the world with a mix of presentation and group work engaging the participants in experiencing all four elements.

Approach 2. Group Work and Presentations

Assign one of the four elements to individual table groups (with a large group there will be several tables working on each element). Ask the table groups to read the Scripture story and commentary in the *Living Well* book, and prepare a creative presentation of the content to share with the whole group. Create worksheets using the activities below for each work group.

Approach 3. Learning Stations

Offer four learning stations using the activities below and have the participants move from station to station in four groups of equal size to experience the activities and presentations. It would be best to have four rooms, one for each learning station, and have people move from room to room.

1. We Serve the Poor and Vulnerable

Introduce the Christian concern for the poor and vulnerable using page 12.7 in *Living Well*. Then explore the Parable of the Final Judgment and the Parable of the Good Samaritan using the activities below.

a) Scripture Reading #1. Matthew 25:31-46 (The Final Judgment)

Develop a dramatization of Matthew 25:31-46. Select participants and organize them into two groups: "sheep" and "goats." Ask them to take their respective roles and to read their lines from the story when it comes their time. The narrator (the role of Jesus) can feel free to ad lib, asking the sheep further

questions about how they are serving the poor and meeting him in the poor whom they are serving. The narrator can also ask the goals why they did not notice the poor and did not see Jesus among them.

Ask the table groups to identify Jesus' list of the basic essentials for life in Matthew 25 and what Jesus is asking us to do (responsibilities):

- What is Jesus' list of the essential as presented in this parable?
- What is Jesus is asking us to do in this parable?

Invite responses to the two questions from the table groups. Conclude by emphasizing that what is so significant in this parable is that in neglecting the poor, the outcast, and the oppressed, people are rejecting Jesus himself.

b) Scripture Reading #2. Luke 10:25-37 (The Good Samaritan)

Here are two suggestions for presenting The Parable of the Good Samaritan:

Option 1: Dramatic Reading of the Parable

Read the passage from Luke 16:19-31 to the group. Use multiple readers, assigning each reader a different part: narrator, Good Samaritan, and innkeeper. Follow the dramatic reading with the brief reflection and discussion.

Option 2: Dramatic Presentation of the Parable

Create your own dramatization of parable with a narrator and actors playing the roles. First, read the passage from Luke 16:19-31 to the group. Dramatize the parable. Then conduct a brief reflection and discussion.

Ask table groups to discuss the parable using the following reflection questions:

- What is Jesus' message to us in this parable?
- What is Jesus is asking us to do in this parable?
- Was the story addressed just to individuals, or is there a message in the story for families, groups, and institutions (the church, business, government) as well?

Share with the participants this reflection on the parable by Albert Nolan from his book *Jesus Before Christianity*.

"...the basis of this solidarity or love is compassion – that emotion which wells up from the pit of one's stomach at the sight of another's need. The parable of the Good Samaritan is recorded by Luke (10:29-37) as an answer to the question, Who is my neighbor? The answer is not every person and any person, true as that may be in itself. The answer is a parable which is told in such a way that it leads us on to identify ourselves emotionally with a man who had the misfortune of falling among thieves. We feel his disappointment when those are who are supposed to live in solidarity with him, a priest and a levite, pass by on the other side. We share his relief and his joy when an enemy Samaritan is moved with compassion to break through the barriers of group solidarity to help him in his need. If we allow the parable to move us, if we allow the parable to release those deeper emotions which we have been taught to fear, we shall never again have to ask you our neighbor might be or what our love might mean. We shall go and do likewise in the teeth of whatever barriers. Only compassion can teach a person what solidarity with other human beings means....Of such is the 'kingdom' of God." (Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001, 82)

Alternative Activity: The Good Samaritan for Today

Give each group the task of writing a contemporary Parable of the Good Samaritan on a justice issue. Review the following process with the group, giving an example if possible. You may want to give the participants examples of situations that they may want to use. After the groups have completed their writing, ask for volunteers to present their stories to the entire group. If there is a drawing to accompany the picture, have the children show it.

1. Who is the person, group or nation in the ditch?

Identify and describe a contemporary situation where a person, group of people, or entire nation is being injured or oppressed (the man in the ditch). You can use a situation you learned about in this session or situation you learned about at school or a current news story. The story can be local, national, or global.

2. Who passes them by and why?

Identify and describe two people, groups, organizations, or nations that see the injured or oppressed and choose to do nothing (walk past the man in the ditch). Describe why you think they did not stop and address the situation on injustice?

3. Who stops and what do they do?

Identify and describe the person, group, organization, or nation that does see the injured or oppressed and act. Describe what they do and why they are doing it?

After everyone has presented, conclude with a table group discussions on the meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan today.

- What is Jesus' message to us in this parable?
- What is Jesus asking us to do in this parable?
- Was the story addressed just to individuals, or is there a message in the story for families, groups, and institutions (church, business, government) as well?

c) Applying the Scriptures to Life Today

Invite the table groups to develop a list of the ways we serve the poor and vulnerable. Develop the list on a sheet of newsprint. (Use a sheet of newsprint to record the ways people serve, then add the contributions from the next three elements to the same newsprint sheet. In this way table groups will develop a summary of ways to transform the world, generated by the participants.)

- What are you doing personally and what do you see others around you doing to serve the poor and vulnerable?
- What is our church doing to serve the poor and vulnerable?
- What are leaders and organizations in the community doing to serve the poor and vulnerable?
- What are people, leaders, and organizations doing globally to serve the poor and vulnerable?

2. We Work for Justice to Ensure the Rights of All People

Introduce the Christian concern for justice using page 12.8 in *Living Well*. Then explore the Scripture reading from Isaiah 58 and the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus using the activities below.

a) Scripture Reading #1. Isaiah 58:6-12

Read the passage from Isaiah 58:6-12 to the group. Ask the participants at table groups to describe God's vision of justice (such as setting free the oppressed) and what God is asking us to do (responsibilities) using the following two questions.

- What is God's vision of justice in Isaiah 58?
- What is God asking us to do in Isaiah 58?

b) Scripture Reading #2. Luke 16:19-31 (The Rich Man and Lazarus)

Presentation a dramatic reading or re-enactment of Luke 16:19-31, using multiple readers, assigning each reader a different part: narrator, Lazarus, Rich Man, Abraham. Follow the dramatic reading by asking table groups to discuss the following questions:

- What is Jesus' message to us in this parable?
- What is Jesus asking us to do in this parable?
- Was the story addressed just to individuals, or is there a message in the story for families, groups, and institutions (church, business, government) as well?

Alternative Activity: A Contemporary Re-writing or Illustrating of the Parable

People can rewrite the parable by using a contemporary setting or issues with examples and people of today. This will help people identify with the story and its meaning for our lives today. Ask them to imagine: If Jesus were here today, how would he "re-work" this Gospel passage to speak to people today? Table groups should have a copy of the Gospel passage to re-write or to illustrate. Children can illustrate the story (with drawings and pictures from magazines).

Additional Approaches

- Rewrite the Gospel story as an eyewitness account of something Jesus did or as an interview script of a person who met Jesus (e.g., a person Jesus healed).
- Rewrite the Gospel passage from a particular point of view, e.g., the different characters in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.
- Rewrite the Gospel story using creative methods such as storyboards for a TV show or a movie, a TV newscast, a commercial, and/or a newspaper or magazine story.
- Rewrite the Gospel story by putting yourself in the story. Rewrite the story from a first person point of view, describing the events as though you were in the story participating. Arrange the situation so that at the end of the story they are alone with Jesus, concluding their story with a dialogue between Jesus and themselves, discussing what happened.

After presentations from table groups, ask each group to discuss the following questions:

- What is Jesus' message to us in this parable?
- What is Jesus asking us to do in this parable?

- Was the story addressed just to individuals, or is there a message in the story for families, groups, and institutions (church, business, government) as well?

c) Applying the Scriptures to Life Today

Invite the table groups to develop a list of the ways we work for justice to ensure the rights of all people. Develop the list on a sheet of newsprint. (Use a sheet of newsprint to record the ways people serve, then add the contributions from the next three elements to the same newsprint sheet. In this way table groups will develop a summary of ways to transform the world, generated by the participants.)

- What are you doing personally and what do you see others around you doing to work for justice to ensure the rights of all people?
- What is our church doing to work for justice to ensure the rights of all people?
- What are leaders and organizations in the community doing to work for justice to ensure the rights of all people?
- What are people, leaders, and organizations doing globally to work for justice to ensure the rights of all people?

3. We Work for Peace

Introduce the Christian concern for peace using page 12.9 in *Living Well*. Then explore the biblical vision of peace in Micah 4:1-4 using the activities below.

a) A Biblical Vision of Peace: Micah 4:2-4

Our focusing Scripture reading is from the prophet Micah and his vision of peace. It includes the well-known image of turning swords into ploughshares. There are two ways you can present the passage to the participants.

Option 1: Dramatic Reading of the Parable

Read the passage from Micah 4:1-4 to the group, use multiple readers, assigning each reader several lines.

Option 2: Scripture and Photo Presentation

Prepare a photo slide show using PowerPoint to illustrate the reading from Micah. Select photos that match with each line in the passage. Play instrumental music in the background.

Use these reflections by Scripture scholar Walter Brueggemann on Micah 4:1-4 to present Micah's view of the challenges of working for peace.

"...Micah proposes a radical alternative for the ordering of society... This is a remarkable scenario, which envisions a complete reordering of international power. Micah offers a vision of the nations submitting to the torah of Yahweh. And when that submission has been made, there can be disarmament, some will not have what rightly belongs to another. Disarmament is not a commitment in a vacuum, but is part of the justice-making process. The other side of the issue, in this poem, is the willingness to settle for a peasant standard of living, content with vine and fig tree. So peace envisioned here requires of a shift of economic priorities, which permits the end of greed, the end of rapacious taxes, the end of exploitation either by strong parties or by ruthless governments.

“The poem envisions a changed system. But it also presumes a changed set of social priorities and social appetites. It anticipates nothing less than the dismantling of the presently known world for the sake of an alternative world not yet embodied.

“The poem is a part of Micah’s vision of justice. The justice of which Micah speaks requires two elements:

- a) A firm and clear critique of what is going on. Micah sees clearly that what is going on is the rapaciousness of the strong against the weak, all in the name of the war system. Micah does not flinch. But we may also be sure that in his time, or in ours, such a massive critique will be mightily resisted.
- b) A poetic scenario of an alternative way to order society around the gifts of God...It is this act of liberated hope that gives credibility to the critique. For unless there is an alternative around which to rally, then one should not knock the only game in town. But the poetry of 4:1-4 asserts that the present way is not the only game in town. Prophetic faith invites Israel to an alternative.”

(Walter Brueggemann, “Voices of the Night – Against Justice,” in *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly* by Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Parks, and Thomas Groome. New York: Paulist Press, 1986, 9-11)

b) What Would Jesus Say?

If Jesus was teaching today, what would he say about the violence in our world today. Imagine him giving a “Sermon on Peace” to people today. Have table groups work together to review the Scripture passages OR read each passage to the group (using a PowerPoint presentation to provide a visual of the passage). You may need to create a handout for participants to use.

1. Greatest Commandment: Matthew 22:34-40
2. Love Your Enemies: Matthew 5:43-45
3. Love Your Enemies: Luke 6:32, 35-36
4. Do Not Judge: Luke 6:37-39, 41-42
5. Forgiveness: Matthew 18:21-22
6. Genuine Love: Romans 12:9-21

Ask them to apply their passage(s) to different situations of violence in our world today (local, national, and international). Groups should complete a sentence such as:

“In this situation of violence (*name the situation*), Jesus would say...”

OR

“The world chooses violence (*name the situation*), but I say...”

Each table group develops a report or presentation to give to all of the participants. Groups can write their “Sermon” using different techniques, such as creating a TV or radio commercial, a letter or advertisement to the nation that would appear in national newspapers, or a top ten list of things Jesus would say in response to violence today.

Ask each table group to present one or two items from their work to share with the whole group.

c) Applying the Scriptures to Life Today

Invite the table groups to develop a list of the ways we work for peace. Develop the list on a sheet of newsprint. (Use a sheet of newsprint to record the ways people serve, then add the contributions from the next three elements to the same newsprint sheet. In this way table groups will develop a summary of ways to transform the world, generated by the participants.)

- What are you doing personally and what do you see others around you doing to work for peace?
- What is our church doing to work for peace?
- What are leaders and organizations in the community doing to work for peace?
- What are people, leaders, and organizations doing globally to work for peace?

4. We Care for Creation

a) Introduction

To set the stage for exploring care for creation show the opening sequence of *The Lion King* video/DVD concluding at the end of the song, "Circle of Life."

b) A Vision of God's Creation in Psalm 104

Introduce the Christian concern for creation using page 12.10 in *Living Well*. Then explore Psalm 104 using one or more of the activities below.

- **Photo-Slide Show:** Prepare a photo-slide show using PowerPoint or other presentation program to present images of creation, illustrating Psalm 104. Play instrumental music in the background and read verses from Psalm 104. You can use the entire psalm or select particular verses. Use a variety of readers.
- **Blue Planet Video:** Use a video segment from *Blue Planet* to illustrate Psalm 104 or 148. Turn off the sound on the video, play instrumental music in the background, and read verses from Psalm 104 or 148. You can use the entire psalm or select particular verses. Use a variety of readers. You can rent the video or purchase it from the IMAX corporation: www.imax.com or 1-800-263-IMAX (\$29.95). (It is also available through Amazon.com.)

Blue Planet, a presentation of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum and Lockheed Corporation in cooperation with NASA, reveals the Earth from space. Orbiting two hundred miles above Earth's surface, we can see familiar landforms: the majestic Himalayan Range, giant sand dunes in the Namib desert, the jewel-like islands of the Caribbean. From this unique vantage point we see how natural forces – volcanoes, earthquakes, and hurricanes affect our planet, and how a powerful new force, human beings, have begun to alter the face of the earth. From the rainforests of the Amazon to the grasslands of the Serengeti, *Blue Planet* inspires a renewed appreciation of life on Earth – our only home.

c) Why We Should Care for Creation

Select one or more of the following activities to help the participants explore caring for creation.

Activity 1: A Letter from God

Each person or family or entire table group writes a letter from God to humankind about why people should care for creation.

- Review Psalm 24, 104 and 148 and pages 12.10 in *Living Well*.
- Write a letter from God using the following format:
 - “To my people. . .”
 - “I am concerned about. . .” (Identify some of ways that human beings abuse God’s creation.)
 - “I want you to care for my creation by. . .” (Identify why God thinks it is important to care for creation and what people need to do.)
- Share the letters in table groups.

Activity 2. Creation Posters

Create a poster with a message from God to all humankind and then illustrates the message with drawings and/or magazine pictures. Groups need an 11x17 sheet of paper, markers, and crayons. Each table group needs magazines with lots of pictures such as news magazines, outdoor magazines, travel magazines, and *National Geographic*.

- Review Psalm 24, 104 and 148 and pages 12.10 in *Living Well*.
- Create a short message from God to the people of the Earth about the importance of caring for creation. Groups may want to use the popular format of the billboards with messages from God. For example: “That ‘Love Thy Neighbor’ Thing, I Meant It.” – God and “What Part of ‘Thou Shalt Not...’ Didn’t You Understand?” – God. Groups can illustrate their message with drawings and/or magazine pictures.
- Share the posters with the whole group.

Activity 3: A Public Service Announcement from God

Involve the groups in creating public service announcements for TV or radio about caring for God’s creation. Groups can target their announcement to particular audiences: families, youth, adults, government officials, business leaders, et al. Their task is to write the copy (text) for a public service announcement from God

- Review Psalm 24, 104 and 148 and pages 12.10 in *Living Well*.
- Recall the ways human beings abuse God’s creation.
- Write the text for God’s public service announcement to human beings. Groups can write their announcement in a variety of different forms: a letter from God, a rap from God, etc. They may want to use the popular format of the billboards with messages from God. For example: “That ‘Love Thy Neighbor’ Thing, I Meant It.” – God and “What Part of ‘Thou Shalt Not...’ Didn’t You Understand?” – God.
- Share the public service announcements with the whole group.

Activity 4: Top Ten Reasons for Caring for God’s Creation.

Involve the groups in creating a “Top Ten Reasons for Caring for God’s Creation.”

- Review Psalm 24, 104 and 148 and pages 12.10 in *Living Well*.
- Recall the ways human beings abuse God’s creation.
- Develop a top ten list of reasons for caring for God’s creation. Groups brainstorm a list of reasons, then select ten teachings they want to include in their top ten list. The group compiles the list and then ranks them in importance from #10 to #1.

- Share the Top Ten lists with the whole group.

c) Applying the Scriptures to Life Today

Invite the table groups to develop a list of the ways we care for creation. Develop the list on a sheet of newsprint. (Use a sheet of newsprint to record the ways people serve, then add the contributions from the next three elements to the same newsprint sheet. In this way table groups will develop a summary of ways to transform the world, generated by the participants.)

- What are you doing personally and what do you see others around you doing to care for creation?
- What is our church doing to care for creation?
- What are leaders and organizations in the community doing to care for creation?
- What are people, leaders, and organizations doing globally to care for creation?

Quadrant 3. Ways to Live the Christian Practice of Transforming the World

The “Living” section in “Transforming the World” serves as a guide for discerning what actions people can take to develop or strengthen the ways they serve, work for justice and peace, and care for creation. Here are several ways to introduce people to the practice of transforming the world.

1. Testimonies of Service, Justice, Peace, and Care for Creation

Invite members of the church community and representatives from local organizations to share the ways that are engaged in transforming the world. Try to have at least four presenters – one for each of the four elements: service to the poor, work for justice and advocacy, work for peace, and care for creation.

Prepare the presenters by asking them to share with the group the following information: 1) the kind of work they are doing and how it responds to the needs of people or creation – locally, nationally, or internationally, 2) the reasons they are personally involved in this work/ministry, 3) how they are living their Christian faith through their work/ministry, and 4) the ways that people can get involved in their work. Presentations should be approximately 5 minutes.

2. Film Presentations of Service, Justice, Peace, and Care for Creation

Most national justice organizations have developed video presentations of their work. Try to select an organization for each of the four elements: service to the poor, work for justice and advocacy, work for peace, and care for creation. Contact the organizations to obtain a short video presentation (several are listed below, more are included on page 12.15 in *Living Well*). Many organizations have short videos online at their websites. If you have an internet connection for your presentation, you can show a video from their website. Here are several organizations with the video resources:

- Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org
- Church World Service: www.churchworldservice.org
- Habitat for Humanity: www.habitat.org
- Heifer Project: www.heifer.org
- International Justice Mission: www.ijm.org
- World Vision: www.worldvision.org

Quadrant 4. Living the Practice of Transforming the World

Review the variety of ideas for transforming the world on pages 12.11 – 12.4 in *Living Well*. These ideas are also on the handout, *Ideas for Transforming the World* so that people can use the ideas as a “checklist” to identify the types of actions in which they would like to be involved.

Review the list of action ideas that groups developed during the “Exploring” part of the session. At the conclusion of each of the four elements table groups developed their list of the things that were being done: individually, as a church community, in the civic community, and internationally.

Give each household (individuals, couples, or families with children/teens) time to review the ideas and ask them to select issues and ideas that moves their hearts and passions.

Tell people to use worksheet, *Transforming the World Action Plan*, to move from an idea into action. People can use the worksheet to confirm their commitment to transforming the world through a plan of action – as an individual and/or as a family or household. They should consider the following questions as they formulate their plan:

- What is the need or issue you are addressing?
- How have you studied the need or issue?
- What type of action or project are you going to be involved in? Will it be a local project or a national/international project?
- How will you implement your action or project? What steps will you take? What resources will you need? How much time will be involved?

After they have created a plan for living the practice in their daily life, invite each household to share their plans for one idea with their table group.

Conclude in prayer using one of the two prayer services (included) and/or the prayer on page 12.16 in the “Transforming the World” chapter.

“A World without the Basic Essentials for Life”

The meditation, “A World without Human Rights,” can be utilized in several different ways: a guided meditation, a visual presentation with a dramatic reading, and a dramatic presentation. Review the story and select the method that will work best with your group.

Option 1: Guided Meditation

A guided imagery experience provides an opportunity to open ourselves, in a small way, to what it would be like to lose all of our basic human rights. Prepare the group for guided imagery experience. Dim the room’s lights (if possible), play soft background music, and ask the participants to make themselves as physically comfortable as possible and to close their eyes.

Guide the participants through the meditation activity. Use several different voices to read the meditation. If possible have different readers for each of the seven “take-aways.” When the meditation is finished, ask the participants to remain silent for a minute or two, getting in touch with the thoughts and feelings they had during the meditation. Ask them to think about the reflection questions and then share their thoughts with their small group. (See reflection questions below.)

Option 2: Visual Presentation with a Dramatic Reading of the Story

Create a visual presentation, using PowerPoint or other presentation programs, that illustrates the story and the reduction of the standard of living. Start with pictures of a typical middle class home and lifestyle and then select pictures which illustrate each loss. Have a different reader for each “take-away.” You can use pictures of your area, collect them from other parishioners, and find them online.

When the presentation is finished, ask the participants to remain silent for a minute or two, getting in touch with their thoughts and feelings. Ask them to think about the reflection questions and then share their thoughts with their small group. (See reflection questions below.)

Option 3: Dramatic Presentation

Develop a dramatic interpretation of the story by creating a model of a typical middle class house, complete with everything that is going to be taken-away in the story, e.g., tables and chairs, appliances, TV, CD player, food, etc. Have a “family” role play the story and express the emotions that people who typically express at each step of the story. Have “stage hands” take away things as the story is read. Have a different reader for each “take-away.” Try to obtain a large refrigerator box to replace the house when you finally lose it. Continue through each “loss” until there is literally nothing left.

When the drama is finished, ask the participants to remain silent for a minute or two, getting in touch with their thoughts and feelings. Ask them to think about the reflection questions and then share their thoughts with their small group. (See reflection questions below.)

Reflection Questions

Write these questions on newsprint or create PowerPoint slides with the questions:

- How did you feel as you gradually lost all of your “rights?”
- Take a look at the results of your personal and home inventory. What would it be like to gradually lose most or all of these items?
- Is it difficult for you to image this situation happening to you or in your area?
- Is it hard for you to imagine that this situation is the reality for one in six people around the world? (That’s over one billion people.)

A Meditation: A World without the Basic Essentials for Life

What would a world without the basic essentials for human life look like? I would like to take every one of you on an imaginary journey. I want you to imagine what I am describing is happening to you and your family (or household).

I want you to close your eyes, Please do so now. Imagine your life and your home today.

The first thing I'm going to take away from you and your family is an easy one: **Clothing**. I'll let you keep the clothes you're wearing right now, and you'll be able to wash them as often as needed. But all of the closets in your house are now empty. It's a bit embarrassing to wear the same clothes every day – people look at you strangely. Although you're somewhat discouraged and suffer from low self-esteem, all things considered, your life is still reasonably good. And you manage to cope.

But I'm afraid I'm going to have to take away item number two: **Energy**: heat, light, and power.

This, as you can imagine, is more of a problem. Now your house is always dark and usually too hot, which you can live with, or too cold, which is a bit more difficult. And you can now only wash and dry your clothes by hand, which is awkward because you have nothing to wear while they're being washed. Showers are cold, too. And you have to do the dishes by hand. There's no TV, no computer, no radio, no telephone, and no stove for cooking...you must now build a fire. And of course, you don't have a car, either. Now you have to walk to the store for food. Life is pretty miserable, and you're starting to feel desperate in many ways. You're depressed and feeling alone and singled out...a victim of a system that doesn't treat everyone fairly. But as they say, you still have your health...and so your family adapts the best it can.

But just as you're starting to adjust to all of this. I have to come along and take away something else. This is only the third takeaway...but it is a big one: **Water**.

This is a real problem. Just for drinking water, you now have to walk over a mile to a muddy stream with a couple of old milk jugs and lug them all the way back home. It's not just hard work, but also time-consuming. And the dirty water often makes you sick. That brings fever, discomfort, nausea, and diarrhea. And of course, the toilets don't work either. Now you have to go outside in the yard behind your house. This creates obvious sanitation problems, not to mention the inconvenience. It's also kind of degrading, and how you and your family get sick even more often. You don't really care anymore about the little things. Forget washing your clothes, doing the dishes or trying to cook a decent meal. No showers at all now. You're always dirty, and you feel even dirtier and ashamed. It seems like you're always at the doctor's office. But at least the health care is good in your area. And you're thankful for the fact that you're still eating well. It's quite a walk to the grocery store, but that seems like a pretty small thing at this point.

I'm afraid it's time for another takeaway. Now number four: **Your House**.

Don't worry, though. I won't leave you totally without shelter. I'm just going to trade in your home for a three-room shack of corrugated tin...about 300 square feet (that's 15 feet by 20 feet). Oh, and it has no windows, beds or couches. It does have a couple of wooden benches and chairs, though. The floor is dirt, and of course it gets muddy when it rains, which is a bit of a problem. You and your family all sleep on the floor – two or three to a room. Rats and bugs are also nuisances. The worst part now is seeing your family like this. The children don't laugh anymore; they only cry and whimper. Their faces are often blank, their eyes vacant. Their spirits are crushed. The adults are tired and worried.

Takeaway number five is devastating: **Food**.

No more grocery store. This is the biggest challenge so far. You can grow a few things in the yard – but not for all 12 months of the year. You and your family have become pretty resourceful at picking through your neighbors' garbage. It's amazing what people throw away: half-eaten apples, chicken bones with half the meat still on them, week-old casseroles. Your neighbors' trash is not your treasure! Forget about any sense of nutrition. And now just when you think you've sunk as low as you can sink, sickness and disease strike with a vengeance. Now your weakened immune system can't cope with even ordinary colds, viruses, and bacterial infections. You're also dealing with things like head lice, rickets, hepatitis, parasites and an incredible number of ailments you didn't know existed.

I'm terribly sorry but now I'm going to take away item number six: **Health Care**.

Incredibly before your very eyes, your brother dies from – of all things – diarrhea. How could that happen in your area? This seems like an unbelievably bad dream. Maybe now you're wondering what else could possibly be taken from you. You've already lost everything. Not quite.

The seventh and last thing has already been taken away from you: **Hope**.

Hope for the future, hope for your family, hope that tomorrow might be better than today.

You may now open your eyes. I wanted each of you to feel what it is like to live in a world without the basic essential for life. I know that this story sounds unimaginable, especially in the United States. But this is the reality of one in six people on our planet today!

(Originally developed by Heather MacLeod and World Vision, USA.)

The Global Situation Today

- True False 1) Nearly 1 out of 2 people in the world today (3 billion people) live on less than \$2 a day and lack the basic necessities of life.
- True False 2) Almost 1 out of 7 people in the world (1 billion people) are hungry.
- True False 3) 93 million primary school-age children are too poor to go to school.
- True False 4) 32 million people are infected with HIV/AIDS; 22 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- True False 5) 15 million children have lost a parent to AIDS.
- True False 6) Almost 1 out of 6 people in the world (1.4 billion people) lack access to clean water.
- True False 7) 26,000 children die each day, most from preventable causes.
- True False 8) Every 30 seconds a child in Africa dies of malaria.
- True False 9) About 1.6 billion people live in substandard housing.
- True False 10) About 100 million people are homeless in the world.
- True False 11) Hunger and poverty claim 25,000 lives every day around the world; the majority are children.
- True False 12) Each year more than 2 million children are exploited in the global commercial sex trade.
- True False 13) 27 million people are held as slaves in our world today.
- True False 14) 1 in 6 children in the U.S. lives below the poverty level.

Ideas for Transforming the World

Action to Serve the Poor and Vulnerable

- Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- Donate goods such as food for the local food bank, clothing, school kits for children, personal essentials for those at a homeless shelter, a toy collection at Christmas, packages for prisoners.
- Care for the elderly by visiting them at a convalescent home or senior citizen facility or doing chores and shopping.
- Tutor children or become a Big Brother or Sister.
- Build or repair homes.
- Support efforts to provide vaccines and medical care to the world's poor, such as mosquito nets for malaria prevention, immunizations against childhood disease, and HIV/AIDS treatment.
- Work with people who have disabling conditions.
- Give generously to those in need at home and abroad by making a financial donation to support the efforts of groups who work with the poor.
- Adopt a community in another country by supporting them financially and learning about their culture and community life.
- Sponsor a child or family through a international sponsorship program such as World Vision.
- Support organizations that are building schools and libraries for children in the poorest countries of the world; provide books and/or our money to purchase books for children.

Action for Justice

- Be an advocate for just policies and priorities that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God's creation, and build peace; become familiar with pending legislation or proposals that affect people's basic needs; write advocacy letters or emails.
- Work with groups to change legislation or budget priorities the ensure the human rights of people.
- Support organizations working for justice—locally, nationally, and internationally by promoting the purpose and activities of organizations, providing financial support, and volunteering time to work with the organization.

- Develop a program or campaign to educate people in your church or community about a particular justice issue.
- Loan money, through organizations involved in microlending, to an individual entrepreneur in the developing world so they can start a business and help to alleviate poverty in their community.
- Use your purchasing power to buy fair trade products, such as coffee, chocolate, and crafts, that benefit local producers in the developing world. Look for the Fair Trade label.

Work for Peace

- Work to end the violence against women and children; work with programs.
- Work to end the violence of human trafficking of children by working with organizations seek to shut down trafficking rings and providing support for the victims.
- Address violence in the media through nonsupport of products by not purchasing and/or abstaining or limiting exposure to violent TV shows, movies, video games, and toys.
- Work with organizations that seek to build bridges of understanding among people who have been hostile toward each other.
- Be an advocate for government policies that promote peace and diplomacy; engage in letter/email writing around peace issues.

Caring for Creation

- Take basic, doable actions, personally and with your household, to reduce your "environmental footprint" and save our habitat (water, trees) and prevent climate-warming emissions.
- Adopt a piece of the planet through the Nature Conservatory's "Adopt an Acre" and "Rescue the Reef" programs, and the Rainforest Alliance's "Adopt-a-Rainforest" program.
- Protect endangered species and their habitats through the World Wildlife Fund's projects.
- Care for the environment by planting trees in your community or organizing a clean-up the community day.
- Recycle all your paper, glass, aluminum, and plastic, as well electronics.
- Be an advocate for government policies and programs that support the environment and encourage alternative energy.

Transforming the World Action Plan

Now it's time to act. Confirm your commitment to transforming the world through a plan of action—as an individual and/or as a family or household. Be sure to consider the following questions as you formulate your plan:

- ✓ **What is the need or issue you are addressing?**

- ✓ **How have you studied the need or issue?**

- ✓ **What type of action or project are you going to be involved in? Will it be a local project or a national/international project?**

- ✓ **How will you implement your action or project? What steps will you take? What resources will you need? How much time will be involved?**

**Pray for the courage, patience, and compassion
to transform the world through your actions.**

Pledge of Nonviolence

Institute for Peace and Justice

Making peace must start within ourselves, in our family, and in our relationships with people and the world. We commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceable people.

Respect Self and Others.

To respect myself, to affirm others and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks and self-destructive behavior.

I/we commit to...

Communicate Better.

To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

I/we commit to...

Listen Carefully.

To listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with me, and to consider others' feelings and needs rather than insist on having my own way.

I/we commit to...

Forgive.

To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another, to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

I/we commit to...

Respect Nature.

To treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.

I/we commit to...

Play Creatively.

To select entertainment and toys that support our family's values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny or acceptable.

I/we commit to...

Be Courageous,

To challenge violence in all its forms whenever I encounter it, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

I/we commit to...

How Environmentally-Friendly Are You?

How environmentally-friendly are you today? Use the following nineteen items to determine several of the ways you and your home have an impact on the environment. Place a check-mark next to each item that is true about your practices or about your home.

- I recycle cans.
- I recycle bottles.
- I recycle magazines and newspapers.
- My car averages at least 27.5 miles per gallon (federal car fuel economy average) or at least 22.2 for SUVs and light trucks.
- I use public transportation, walk, bicycle, or carpool to work or school.
- I take short showers.
- I have installed water saving devices in my home, e.g., a low-flow shower head or a low-flow toilet (or toilet dam to reduce the amount of water in every flush).
- I have purchased energy-efficient appliances.
- I have replaced standard light bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights (CFLs).
- I eat meat at dinner time less than three times per week.
- I have insulated our house to conserve energy.
- I turn down the thermostat in winter (68 degrees or lower) in the winter time (heating).
- I set the air conditioner to use less energy in the summer (setting the thermostat above 76 degrees).
- I turn off the lights and other appliances when out of the room or house.
- I turn off water while brushing teeth, shaving, washing dishes, and so forth.
- I have reduced the amount of unwanted junk mail (e.g., catalogs) by calling the companies and removing our names from their mailing lists.
- I have reduced or eliminated the use of pesticides in our garden and on our lawn.
- I purchase organic grown fruits, vegetables, and other foods which do not use pesticides.
- I purchase products that are made from recycled materials and from companies that produce environment-friendly products.

How did you do?

- ✓ If you checked 16-19 items, you are in the environment-friendly hall of fame.
- ✓ If you checked 11-15 items, you are making progress in becoming environment-friendly, so identify what areas you need to improve next.
- ✓ If you checked 6-10 items, you have begun to become environment-friendly, but there are lots of improvements you can make.
- ✓ If you check under 5 items, you haven't begun to think about the environmental impact just you and your home has on the environment. There's lots of work to do.

Reflection

- How are you living environment-friendly practices? Which practices are strengths?
- What more could you do? Where do you see improvement?

Transforming Our World Prayer Service

Opening Prayer

God of justice, defender of the poor, open our eyes and ears to the suffering of our neighbors around the world.

Move us to have compassion for those who lack the basic necessities of life.

Strengthen us to act for justice and serve the needs of your people.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Listen

The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.

If you put an end to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word; if you give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need, then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon. And I will always guide you and satisfy you with good things. I will keep you strong and well.

(Isaiah 58:6-7, 9-11)

Respond

Today, O God, you bring before us the poor of our world. You remind us that we are called to serve them as we would care for ourselves. We offer to you now these special needs...

For all the peoples of our world, especially the young, who are hungry and poor, and for those who die each day from lack of food and water, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

For all those families in our world who do not have a house to live in or adequate shelter to protect them, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

For all those children who are unable to attend school and obtain an education that will prepare them to work and support their families when they are adults, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

For all those mothers and fathers around the world, who cannot find a job and who work at wages too low to support their family with food and shelter, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

For all the peoples of our world, especially children, who are suffering from preventable illness and do not access to medical care, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, friend of the poor,

We believe that every person has a right to life and to the conditions for living a decent life: food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing.

We recognize that we have a special responsibility to assist people in need.

Help us to see that in serving the needs of the poorest in our world, we are serving you.

Amen!

Transforming Our World Prayer Service

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus,
Open my eyes that they may see the needs of the poor;
move my hands that they may feed the hungry;
touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing;
teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers;
let me share my possessions to clothe the naked;
give me the care that strengthens the sick;
make me share in the quest to set the prisoner free.
In serving the needs of the poor may we grow closer to you.
Amen.

Listen

“At the end of life we will not be judged by
how many diplomas we have received,
how much money we have made,
how many great things we have done.

We will be judged by
‘I was hungry and you gave me food to eat,
I was naked and you clothed me
I was homeless and you took me in.’

Hungry not only for bread – but for love
Naked not only for clothing – but naked of human dignity and respect
Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks – but homeless because of rejection.

This is Christ in distressing disguise.”

Mother Teresa (*Words To Love By...*)

Respond

Jesus challenges us to serve those in need. In fact we will be judged by how well we have served others. Let us now pray that God will give us the eyes to see those in need and to act.

Leader: I was hungry and you gave me food....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was thirsty and you gave me drink....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was a stranger and you welcomed me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was naked and you clothed me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was ill and you comforted me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Closing Prayer

God, true light and source of all light, may we recognize you in oppressed people and poor people, in homeless people and hungry people. May we be open to your Spirit that we may be a means of healing, strength and peace for all your people. We ask this through Jesus, your son and our brother. Amen.