



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

[USCCB](#) > [Beliefs And Teachings](#) > [Who We Teach](#)

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? AN ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH GROUPS

This activity presents students with different social justice-related scenarios, and requires them to work together to create responses. It is best for students who have some experience with Catholic social teaching and specific justice issues, as it involves the application of concepts in a practical way.

The activity is the most effective when the participating students have completed direct service to the poor recently. After working at a soup kitchen, housing rehabilitation group, nursing home or any other agency involved in service to the poor, this activity provides a way to move from doing service to thinking about - and in turn doing - social justice. Often, when students see poverty firsthand, they become inspired to do something about it. "What Would You Do?" provides some tools to students to help get them started working for justice in their daily lives. The activity, however, can also be completed apart from direct service.

Preparation: Print copies of the three scenarios, bearing in mind that each group of 4-6 students will need one copy of any of the scenarios (one scenario per group). Make sure each group will have ample paper and writing utensils. If students are not familiar with sweatshops or fair trade, consult the provided resources and prepare to brief the students on these concepts before the activity. Also read over the "Possible Responses" page, which provides sample responses to the scenarios. Please note that these provided responses are just several possibilities among a countless number, and are only included to generate ideas so that the instructor might ensure that the students are on the right track.

Execution: Divide students randomly into groups of 4-6. Randomly assign each group one of the scenarios sheets. Break into groups for 30-

45 minutes, instructing the students to follow the directions on their scenario sheet. Move from group to group through the time to track progress. Also alert the students that they will report on their work to the entire group when the small groups reconvene. Affirm students' ideas after each presentation, highlighting the most feasible aspects of their plans. After small group presentations, share the "Success Stories" with the entire group. Close with large-group discussion and prayer (discussion questions and prayer service included). Consider providing students with copies of the resources page or a list of more extensive resources of your own choosing so participants have something that can help them act for social justice in their everyday lives.

**This activity was created and successfully executed on the JusticeworX program, a faith-based summer immersion program for high school students sponsored by the Center for FaithJustice and St. Joseph's Seminary in Princeton, NJ. Learn more at www.justiceworx.org.*

Scenario #1: No Sweat

"Yet the workers' rights cannot be doomed to be the mere result of economic systems aimed at maximum profits. The thing that must shape the whole economy is respect for the workers' rights within each country and all through the world's economy." (On Human Work, Pope John Paul II, #17.)

One day during lunch, your student council sets up a table in the cafeteria and starts to sell student council tee-shirts for a fundraiser. You head over to the table to check out a shirt. On the label, you read that the shirt was made by a company that is known for its use of sweatshops. Concerned, you take a look at the tag on your Basketball State Champions tee-shirt that you bought from the school the year before, and find out that it is made by that same company. Upset that your school seems to be supporting a company that has unjust labor practices, you mention it to your friends and decide to do something about it.

As a group, think of a way to respond to this situation. Here are some questions to get you started:

- How could you work to get your parish to stop supporting companies with bad labor policies? What would you do first?
- How might you learn more about fair trade?
- How could you get more people involved in your efforts? Who in the parish's leadership would you talk to? How would you do it?
- How could you raise awareness around the parish? What kinds of activities could you plan to address the issue?

Talk through your ideas, and pick one member of the group to be the recorder. Remember, at the end of the planning time you will all be presenting your ideas to the whole group.

Whatever you plan, BE SPECIFIC and BE CREATIVE! This isn't just an activity to pass the time, but the start of something that you should be able to make happen in your lives.

Scenario #2: Making Trade Fair

"A just trading system-in addition to breaking down barriers to promote growth-should enhance the life and dignity of everyone, lessen economic injustice, and help eradicate poverty." (A Call to Solidarity with Africa, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)

About once a month, your parish invites everyone to stay after Mass for coffee and donuts. One month, your parents sign you up to help get the coffee ready, so you spend one of the morning Masses in the kitchen, brewing a huge amount of coffee. As you are pouring the grounds into the coffee maker for the seventh or eighth time, you realize that the coffee your parish is using is not fair trade certified, meaning that the coffee was most likely grown and produced by people in Central or South America not earning a just wage for their work. Concerned, you tell some friends of yours in the youth group about what you saw, and you decide to do something about it. As a group, think of a way to respond to this situation. Here are some questions to get you started:

- How could you work to get your parish to stop supporting companies with bad labor policies? What would you do first?
- How might you learn more about fair trade?
- How could you get more people involved in your efforts? Who in the parish's leadership would you talk to? How would you do it?
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Scenario #3: The Least of My Brothers and Sisters

"As Catholics, we must come together with a common conviction that we can no longer tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land and so much hunger and deprivation in our world." (A Place at the Table, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, pg. 1)

In your social studies class one day, your teacher tells you about the poverty that exists across the world. You learn that nearly half of the people in the world live on less than \$2 a day, and that about 30,000 children die each day due to poverty. Shocked by these statistics, you and some friends in class decide that you want to do whatever you can to help combat world poverty.

As a group, think of a way to respond to this situation. Here are some questions to get you started:

- How could you work in your school to make a stand against poverty? What would you do first?
- How might you learn more about poverty and other related issues?

- How could you get more people involved in your efforts? Who in the school's leadership would you talk to? How would you do it?
- How could you raise awareness around the parish? What kinds of activities could you plan to address the issue?

Whatever you plan, BE SPECIFIC and BE CREATIVE! This isn't just an activity to pass the time, but the start of something that you should be able to make happen in your lives.

Possible Responses

- As movements get started, it is important to emphasize that students consult leadership figures, whether that be a principal at a high school or a priest at a parish. The students working against sweatshop apparel in school, for instance, would want to schedule a meeting with the principal to discuss their concerns. Emphasize that the students cannot work for change by themselves, but need to work with their peers and the leadership figures in schools or parishes. Teachers and youth ministers can be great allies in students' attempts to make positive change.
- For all scenarios, an important step is to get people involved. Responses could include talking to friends to get them involved; contacting people at their school via the Internet; or making an announcement at a youth group meeting or in the context of another group. Once a group comes together, it is important to define a mission, elect leaders and set up committees, as needed.
- When people start becoming interested in the cause, an essential step is education. The Internet can be a great source of information, as long as the sites are reliable. The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (www.usccb.org/cchd) is a good resource for poverty information, and the United Nations has a wealth of information online regarding poverty and labor issues. If students want to make an appeal to a pastor in favor of using fair trade coffee, for example, students must be able to provide the pastor with prices, coffee providers, and general information about fair trade. For more information on fair trade, direct students to Catholic Relief Services' fair trade page, found at www.crsfairtrade.org. The importance of education cannot be overstated.

- Once a group has started learning more about issues, there are various ways to get the word out. Posters, fliers, Web sites, etc. are all good ways to advertise the cause.
- With more people involved, all kinds of activities are appropriate. A group might want to plan a volleyball tournament to raise money and awareness, or a prayer vigil at their parish for the poor across the world. Perhaps the fair trade group might want to organize a fundraiser selling fair trade coffee or chocolate at their parish.
- Lobbying elected officials on behalf of social justice-related legislation is an effective strategy. Letter-writing or phone-calling campaigns to elected officials are good ways for students to have their voices heard. Many representatives say that one received letter represents far more constituents, and a unified letter-writing effort can have a real impact. Contact information for all national elected officials can be found at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.

Success Stories

Craig Kielburger and "Free The Children"

One day in 1995, Craig Kielburger, a 12-year old kid from Toronto, was looking through the newspaper for the comics section. While flipping through the pages, he found a story about a Pakistani child named Iqbal Masih, who had just been murdered. Iqbal had spent much of his childhood making carpets, after he was sold into slavery at the age of four. He worked 16 hours a day and had insufficient food and care. When he was 10, Iqbal escaped from slavery and began to tour the world, speaking out against child slavery. Two years later, he was murdered in Pakistan. Some people thought that the carpet industry in Pakistan was responsible for his murder, since Iqbal had brought the industry attention that it didn't want.

After reading Iqbal's story, Craig was inspired to take action. Working with a few classmates, he founded the group Free The Children. As more and more kids got involved, the group grew and chapters were established all over the world. Free The Children has since built over 400 primary schools, giving 35,000 children access to education. Craig is now

24 years old, and has traveled the world speaking out in defense of children's rights. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times. Craig's story shows that you can make a difference no matter how old you are. With support from his friends and family, Craig took action and has changed the world.

Immaculata High School

While Craig's story is inspirational, it can also be a bit intimidating. But you don't have to found a worldwide organization to make a difference. Several students from Immaculata High School in Somerville, New Jersey, started a program at their high school after spending a week of their summer serving the poor in Trenton, New Jersey's state capital. Shocked by the poverty they witnessed so close to home, the students felt a need to take action. "What if students in our high school would all donate one dime each school day to fight poverty?" the students wondered. With a fairly large school and plenty of school days, the students figured they could raise a lot of money for an organization devoted to working against poverty. Working with their campus minister and in collaboration with the Center of FaithJustice in Princeton, NJ, the students began their own initiative, getting more students involved. They planned a collection strategy, designed tee-shirts to raise awareness, and started collecting donations in the cafeteria during lunch periods. In its first few weeks, the group collected almost \$1,000. The group both raises money to fight poverty and gets all of the students at Immaculata thinking about poverty and what they can do to fight it.

Fair Trade on Campus

At colleges across the country, students have led campaigns to bring fair trade coffee to their campuses. In 2006, students at the College of William and Mary convinced the school's dining services to offer only fair trade coffee, and similar policies have been instituted at countless schools. With knowledge and widespread support, it is hard for any institution to turn down the adoption of fair trade coffee usage. With the added moral dimension for Catholics, as workers' rights are fundamental to Catholic social teaching, convincing a parish to start using fair trade

coffee is highly feasible.

"What Would You Do?" Resources

Catholic Social Teaching

- Quick Links to important **Catholic social teaching statements**, the philosophical and theological basis for the activity.

Poverty

- The **Catholic Campaign for Human Development's Virtual Poverty Tour** is an effective tool to help visualize how poverty in America affects lives.
- **United Nations' Cyber School Bus: Poverty Curriculum.** . . .
- **MercyCorps.** . . .
, an agency dedicated to alleviating poverty and creating just societies, provides helpful information on its web site.

Fair Trade

- **Catholic Relief Services Fair Trade.** . . .
. Background information on fair trade and lists of product providers.
- **TransFair USA.** . . .
, Fair Trade certifiers

Sweatshops

- **Archdiocese of Newark.** . . .
requires **sweat-free uniforms.** . . . for Catholic schools
- **Just Garments.** . . .
, based in El Salvador, produces sweat-free clothing available online.

* Please note that discovering what clothing companies do and do not use sweatshops is a difficult task. Careful research is important.

Closing Discussion and Prayer

After the final "Success Story," take a few minutes to process the activity as a large group. Here are some discussion questions:

- What did you learn from this activity? What was the hardest part? The easiest?
- Were there any points when your group didn't agree? What did you do then?
- Do you think you could actually do something like this in your life?
- Why is it important for us as Catholics to do this type of thing?

When the discussion is finished, take a minute to move the group into a prayerful state. Distribute copies of "The Long View," the attached prayer by Archbishop Oscar Romero. Begin the service with a reminder that all the service we do and the justice we work for is done in God's name; we can work for change only through His strength. This theme is echoed in the Romero prayer. A quick background sketch of Romero would be helpful.

Leader: Let us conclude this activity in prayer. Take a moment to place yourselves in the presence of God. (*Pause*) Lord our God, thank you for your inspiration today in all of our new ideas. Give us the strength to work for justice every day of our lives. Help us to take these ideas and make them realities. And help us to remember that whenever we work for justice, we do it because it is what you call us to do. Our work might only be a small step on the road toward social justice for all of your people, but we have faith that one day, your peace and justice shall reign.

Oscar Romero was the Archbishop of San Salvador in the Latin American country of El Salvador in the late 1970s. He was appointed archbishop during a civil war in El Salvador, and at first he remained quiet about the war. But as he traveled the country, Romero saw the ravages of war and poverty, and he began to speak out. His message

was of peace and freedom, and his outspoken faith led to his assassination in 1980. Romero did not live to see ultimate justice achieved, but he realized during his life that he was just a humble servant of God, called to work against poverty and injustice as well as he could. Together, let us recite "The Long View," one of Romero's most famous prayers.

Read "The Long View" together.

The Long View

A Prayer by Archbishop Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation
in realizing that. This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well. It may be incomplete,

but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.
Amen.

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