

to teach

vt 1. To impart knowledge or skill; to instruct. 2. To provide knowledge of; instruct in. 3. To cause to learn by example or experience. 4. To advocate or preach.



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A PLACE AT THE TABLE

In this issue of *To Teach*, we look at four ways to make a place at the table for the poor and vulnerable: *prayer*, *education*, *service*, and *advocacy*. In these ways, we respond as witnesses of God's love and justice to protect the rights and dignity of others.

WHO SITS AT YOUR HOLIDAY TABLE?

Thanksgiving is approaching, a time when most Americans sit down to a feast table with turkey and all the trimmings. During the pre-Christmas season, food again becomes a focal point when a flurry of parties and reunions with family and friends gets underway. The selection of holiday foods for many of us carries with it sweet associations and cherished traditions.

In the midst of our feasting, it is easy to forget that millions of people will not find a place at a table during this—or any other—time of the year. Consider these statistics:

- More than 30,000 children die every day from hunger, deprivation, and their consequences.
- Almost 800 million people around the world live with hunger or malnutrition as a daily fact of life.
- One-sixth of children in the United States grow up poor, despite living in the richest nation in the world.
- More than three billion people (half the world's population) live on less than \$2 a day; more than 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 a day.
- 34 million Americans live below the poverty level (\$17,960 yearly income for a family of four).

As the holidays approach, consider the various “tables” at which you will

be seated. Who will sit with you? Who might be excluded, forgotten, or ignored? Consider the following.

Children sit at tables with their parents, peers, teachers, and caregivers. What about children who are impoverished? What food and nutrients for their bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits are they lacking? How are the children in your school well-fed or undernourished?

Parents sit at tables, often sandwiched between their own parents and their children. In some countries, the AIDS pandemic is wiping out a generation of fathers and mothers, leaving vital places at the table empty. In what ways do the parents of your students need help and support as they take their place at the family table?

Educational colleagues and associates sit at tables, trying to work together to ensure the best possible environment for children to learn and grow. In some parts of the world, the positions of teachers, administrators, and support staff in schools are undercut by lack of financial support or by civil unrest. In what ways do your colleagues join together to work for the common good?

Expanding the places at the table for those who would otherwise be left out is both challenging and hopeful.

And our efforts connect us to that other important table—the table where Catholics gather to celebrate the Eucharist. This is an act of faith, one that commits us to the poor. This, in turn, enables us to see and recognize the face of Christ in our world—and respond.

Help Overcome Poverty in the United States on Nov. 23

In 1970, the Catholic bishops of the United States established the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) as an agency to help people work their way out of poverty. Through private donations and annual parish collections, CCHD has offered more than \$260 million in support to nearly 4,000 self-help projects developed by grassroots groups of poor people in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Grants are awarded on the basis of need, not religious affiliation.

Every year, on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, a special collection is taken up in U.S. parishes to help the work of this vital agency. This year, that collection falls on November 23. Visit www.povertyusa.org to find out more about CCHD's work and how your school can get involved.

At a Glance



“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, p. 1

Make a place at the table in your school through prayer, education, service, and advocacy using the following resources.

Prayer

- Include a prayer for the poor at the start of school day.
- Pray the Our Father with students daily.
- Celebrate the Eucharist monthly with a special collection for the poor in the local community.

Education

- Download educational materials on poverty in the United States from www.povertyusa.org. Give the poverty quiz to middle and high school students as an introduction to a longer lesson on poverty.
- Use one session from *Poverty and Faithjustice* as part of each of the November and December faculty meetings.
- Distribute copies of *Making a Place at the Table* to all parents. Use it as a discussion starter at home or during a PTA or PTO meeting on how to address poverty, especially after the holidays.
- Encourage each lower grade (grades 1-5) to view *A Mouse's Tale* and *The Richest Dog in the World*.
- For an international perspective, go to the Catholic Relief Services website (www.catholicrelief.org) for advocacy and educational materials on international issues, as well as information on relief and development efforts of the Church in the United States. A Kids' Page, for students in Grades 3-8, contains

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THE BOOKSTORE

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children—A Pastoral Reflection of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

Provides a beginning point for prayer, reflection, and action on the causes of poverty.

English: No. 5-519, 36 pp., \$3.95

Spanish: No. 5-880, 40 pp., \$3.95

MAKING A PLACE AT THE TABLE

This brief summary of *A Place at the Table* highlights what we can do as families and individuals, as members of churches and community groups, in the marketplace, and through governmental agencies.

English: No. 5-542, 8-panel brochure, 25/\$10.00

Spanish: No. 5-898, 8-panel brochure, 25/\$10.00

POVERTY AND FAITHJUSTICE

An Adult Education Program on Christian Discipleship in the United States

Offers an education program for adults to promote a deeper understanding of and commitment to “faithjustice.”

English: No. 5-240, 24 pp., \$2.50

Spanish: No. 5-807, 24 pp., \$2.50

SHARING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

Highlights the seven major themes of Catholic social teaching and provides recommendations for incorporating it in all forms of Catholic education and formation.

English: No. 5-281, 32 pp., \$3.95

Spanish: No. 5-803, 32 pp., \$3.95

When ordering, use the code “F506” on your order form or give this code to the sales representative. Quantity discounts are available on all publications. Call toll-free 800-235-8722 for more information. To order these resources or to obtain a free catalog of other USCCB titles, call toll-free 800-235-8722. In the Washington metropolitan area or from outside the United States, call 202-722-8716. Visit the bishops' Internet site located at www.usccb.org. Para ordenar recursos en español, llame al 800-235-8722 y presione 4 para hablar con un representante del servicio al cliente, en español.

PEOPLE LIKE US

This resource challenges the commonly held prejudice that poor people are fundamentally different from others and cites examples of efforts to eradicate poverty.

No. 5-186, 40 pp., \$2.50

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR AND WITH THE POOR (BOOK 4)

Contains Scripture readings, reflections, focus questions, and suggested actions.

English: No. 5-191, 28 pp.

Spanish: No. 5-851, 28 pp.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR (BOOK 5)

Contains Scripture readings, reflections, focus questions, and suggested actions.

English: No. 5-192, 28 pp.

Spanish: No. 5-853, 28 pp.

THE MOUSE'S TALE (VIDEO)

Presents an animated cartoon on food production, hunger, and famine.

No. 605-0, 11 min., \$17.95

THE RICHEST DOG IN THE WORLD (VIDEO)

Presents, in animated form, the challenges regarding the world's poor: aid imbalance, interdependence, empowering the poor, and limits to growth.

No. 604-2, 10 min., \$17.95

CATHOLIC HOUSEHOLD BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS

The basic Catholic prayer book!

No. 292-6, 444 pp.

1-9 copies, \$19.95 each

10-24 copies, \$14.95 each

25+ copies, \$9.95 each



to teach

Winter 2003

WAYS TO MAKE A PLACE AT THE TABLE FOR THE POOR

for Principals & School Boards

- Order copies of *A Place at the Table* for all members of your school board. Discuss the four institutions (legs) that hold up the table. Initiate a discussion about ways to strengthen and improve relations with parents and with business and community leaders. Develop a plan of action and determine at least five strategic steps to take before the end of the school year.
- In November and December, distribute copies of *Making a Place at the Table* to faculty members. Use the guiding principles to decide on plans for a social outreach project that will involve students, parents, and faculty during the Advent season.
- With your school board and faculty, reassess your school mission statement. How does it reflect your school's commitment to Catholic social teaching? Use *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching* as a resource to review the seven major themes of Catholic social teaching with your school board and faculty.
- Organize an in-service for faculty members based on the themes of Catholic social teaching. Check with the diocesan office of Catholic education for resource ideas and potential speakers. If possible, invite other schools in your area.
- Work with your school's PTO to plan and implement a fall festival. Donate all or part of the proceeds to the CCHD November 23 anti-poverty collection.
- Alert parents to current issues regarding the poor and encourage them to be involved and informed citizens. In your school newsletter, print information about the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (www.usccb.org) and those of other organizations that will help them in this regard.
- Contact your local Catholic Charities and arrange to have a speaker address parents and school boards about local issues and the work that is being done to address them.

for Teachers

- Have your students write a prayer for Thanksgiving that includes those who will have no place at any table during the holidays. Use blessings from *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* as models for this prayer.
- Create a class mural depicting a Thanksgiving table that includes *everyone*, regardless of economic status. Encourage creativity and "global" thinking. With older children, use *People Like Us* as a resource to help expand attitudes and opinions about poor people.
- Provide take-home ideas for parents to use with their children that include information about the CCHD collection on November 23 and ideas for serving the poor during Advent.
- Send home a list of websites for families that will educate them about issues of poverty and hunger. You will find suggestions for these on page 2 of this newsletter.
- Distribute copies of *Making a Place at the Table* to middle to high school students. Where do they see poverty in their community? How they are called to become involved to make a change?
- Engage older students in research about the meaning and effects of globalization on poverty. How can it both help and hurt those in need?
- Read the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31). Have students write about or discuss what would have happened if the rich man had fed Lazarus instead of ignoring him.
- Use sessions from *Preferential Option for and with the Poor* or *Solidarity with the Poor* as lesson plans with older students, especially during November and December. Discuss with them how their reflection on poverty affects their experience of preparing for and experiencing the holidays.





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MAKING CHOICES FOR A BETTER WORLD

A table is a place where people gather to share food, tell stories, and make decisions. It is a place of belonging and connection. Many people have no place at the table because they are poor and marginalized by society. In order to make room, we can make choices to have a smaller place at the table. Here are ways to do this within the context of your school:

- Encourage students to focus less on *receiving* during Christmas and more on how they can be *generous*. Have them make lists that focus on the needs of others in their families and neighborhoods, as well as those who are without resources.
- Suggest that families shop for Christmas at stores and websites that offer fair-trade items. This means that handmade articles are purchased directly from artisans and craftsmen in order to guarantee them a living wage. For information on this, visit the Fair Trade website, [www.fairtrade resource.org](http://www.fairtraderesource.org).
- Incorporate a school-wide policy to use resources well. Recycle as much as possible and look at ways to reuse items whenever feasible. Encourage families to do the same. Such efforts help reduce the consumption of many of the world's natural resources.
- Include prayers for the poor in all student body assemblies and liturgies, as well as faculty and school board meetings.

“Catholic schools are among the best anti-poverty programs, offering first-rate education, moral truth, and discipline in communities across our nation.”

—A Place at the Table, p. 14

At a Glance

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interactive games, puzzles, and facts about hunger. Teacher resources are included, plus a sign-up for the newsletter *Going Global with Youth*.

Service

- Invite each class or grade level to implement one of the action items listed at the end of any of the sessions in *Preferential Option for and with the Poor* or *Solidarity with the Poor*.

Advocacy

- Invite local community and political leaders to talk with teachers, staff, and students about how they and your school can better advocate for the needs of the poor in your community.
- Visit Catholic Charities USA's website—www.catholiccharitiesusa.org—for advocacy materials that you can use in your school.