

# Setting a Place at the Table: Living our Missionary Call



## Solidarity The World Connected in Faith

Catholic Social Teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. Because God is the father of us all, we are one human family and have a responsibility to care for one another. The principles of Catholic Social Teaching are all interrelated, but for the month of October, we broaden our understanding of solidarity.

**Solidarity** is the principle that **we are connected with our neighbors**: down the street, throughout the country, and around the world. This spirit of solidarity unites all people whether they are rich or poor, weak or strong. It helps to create a society that recognizes that we live in an interdependent world. We proclaim this each time we recite our profession of faith. *We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church...* (that is *catholic* with a small "c" meaning universal.)

"Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortune of so many near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say the good of all and each individual because we are really responsible for all."

Pope John Paul II

## Key Terms:

### **Solidarity:** (Elementary School Level)

We are one human family. We are brothers and sisters even if we are different. We need to get along with each other. Solidarity means not fighting and helping others. We should love our neighbors all over the world.



**Solidarity:** (Middle School Level) We are one human family regardless of what we look like, think, or where we come from. We are all brothers and sisters and must love our neighbor on a global level. Solidarity means promoting peace in a world full of fighting.

**Interdependence:** Each of us needs others and depends on others, to both survive and thrive. We are always in relationship with each other and are part of a global family regardless of the unique qualities we often use to distinguish ourselves.

**Food Insecurity:** Exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods is limited or uncertain. Time and energy is expended figuring out what to do about the situation.

## **Solidarity Lesson Plan Idea #1:** (Elementary & Middle School Level)

### **We Are All Connected**

**Supplies:** pencils/pens, paper, ball for the first activity, ball of yarn.

**Setting the Stage:** Gather students in an open area and ask for a volunteer. Have the volunteer stand in a position so that there is plenty of room in front of him to do the rest of the activity and place a pencil across the front of his feet. Tell him that his feet cannot move past the pencil. Place a ball a distance in front of the pencil - enough so that he can reach the ball. Ask the student to pick up the ball, reminding him to keep his feet behind the pencil. Take the ball from him and move it a further distance away but

still enough for him to reach and instruct him to pick up the ball again. Continue to do this until the ball gets far enough out that he cannot reach it. The goal is to get the person to ask someone else in the room to get the ball for him even though the directions never stated that they could not ask someone for help.

**Discussion of Activity:** Ask the students what happened during the activity? What was the purpose? (To remind us that we need to help one another. As Catholics we are called by our faith to care for and help each other. The Catholic Social Teaching principle of Solidarity tells us that we have a responsibility to commit ourselves to the common good of all people. It is our responsibility to help one another.)



Ask the students what they think this activity has to do with the topic of Solidarity? How far do you think our responsibility to help others extends? Just inside our families and communities? (We are called to help everyone - locally and globally.) What was the world's response when the Tsunami hit Japan last year? (Everyone was trying to send aid. Fundraisers and benefits were held to raise funds.) The Tsunami relief is one example of solidarity in action globally.

**Solidarity Web:** Read Matthew 25: 34-40. Have the students sit in a circle. Holding on to the end of the ball of yarn, unroll several feet of it and toss the ball to a student in the circle. That student then states one action that can help us live out our commitment to ensure the common good of all people. It can be an act of solidarity in our family, in our community or in the world. (Stress that this is a brainstorming process so no idea is incorrect and ideas should not be repeated.) The yarn is then tossed to another student and the process continues until everyone has a piece of the yarn and has stated an action. Once the yarn web is formed invite the students to hold their strand up high so that all can look up at the web and then bring it back down. Ask them what they notice about the web. (We are all connected. Every person is needed in order for the web to exist.) Ask every other student to drop their strand of yarn in front of them and note what happens to the web. (It is not complete without everyone holding his or her part. The web still exists even though it is not as strong as it was before. When someone is weak, the rest of the web can help hold him or her up.)

Now have the students wind the web back up in reverse order (The students who dropped their yarn will first need to pick it up again.) Each student winds his or her yarn back onto the ball of yarn and offers a prayer of support and solidarity for a person or group in need. "Blessed are..." Students respond, "Lord hear our pray."

## **Solidarity Lesson Plan Idea #2** (Elementary & Middle School Level)

### **We Live in Solidarity with Others - A Simulation**

Do you ever wonder what life is like in countries of the global south- countries where hunger and poverty are experienced daily? What is their mealtime like?

**Materials:** For each student - a plate, bowl, knife, spoon, fork and glass and a piece of plain bread; water

**Procedure:** Students gather at a table(s). Each section below includes a simple instruction followed by a short commentary. Do this activity slowly, allowing for individual time for reflection after each part.



"Let's start with what we know about our lives and set our dinner table - plate, bowl, knife, fork, spoon and glass." (Each student also receives 1 piece of bread and  $\frac{1}{2}$  glass of water.)

Offer together the following prayer: Loving God, we gather together today in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world. We have so much but know that many experience hunger every day. Bless our meal today. Help us to always remember that we are one human family, and it is our responsibility to share with others. Amen.

**"Lift up your soup bowl"**

Our soup bowls are empty. We join in solidarity with the many people around the world who do not have any hot food today.

**"Lift up your knife"**

Today our knives will not be needed. We share this meal in solidarity with those who will have no meat. Today we will not have the protein from meat that is needed for a healthy diet.

**"Take a bite of your piece of bread"**

Our only nourishment at this meal is from a plain piece of bread. As we eat, we are reminded that bread is the staple food for many people in the world. It does not provide all the nutrients needed to be healthy.

**"Take a drink of your water"**

We often take for granted water because it is always there. At this meal, we remember many who do not have clean, available water.

**"Lift up your fork"**

Today we will not need our forks as we seek solidarity with the people of the world who do not have fresh fruits and vegetables to help nourish them.

**"Lastly, lift up your spoon"**

At this meal, our spoon is not needed. We join in solidarity with the many people in the world who do not have an added treat of dessert and can barely survive on the food that they have.

Invite the students to finish their "meal" and share what they learned from the experience. Did this experience help them better understand the meaning of solidarity? Can this understanding become an action? One suggestion: Donate the money saved at this meal to a local food bank or organization feeding the homeless.

**Closing Prayer**

**Reader:** We pray for the people of all nations, tribes, and continents across the world, that we will see what we have in common with each other rather than look for divisions. We pray to the Lord.

**All:** God of all cultures, make us one family.

**Reader:** We pray for appreciation of the gifts which each culture in our world contributes to the human family. We pray to the Lord.

**All:** God of all cultures, make us one family.

**Reader:** We pray for our parish family, that we will stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world who do not have what they need to live in dignity and hope. We pray to the Lord.

**All:** God of all cultures, make us one family.

**Reader:** Loving God, we thank you for making us one human family while making each of us unique and gifted in his or her way. Help us to see your

image in every person we meet as we strive to become a world of unity and peace. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus, who gathered all people to himself.

**All:** Amen

(From: Generations of Faith Online)

**To close in song:** Sing *We are Many Parts* by Marty Haugen

## Fast Facts to Share

- More than half of the world's population lives on less than two dollars a day. More than 1.2 billion people live on less than one dollar a day.
- Almost 800 million people across the globe, most of them children, live with hunger or malnutrition as a regular fact of life. They live in desperate poverty, which means they die younger than they should, struggle with hunger and disease, and live with little hope and less opportunity for a life of dignity.
- In the United States, thirty-four million people live below the official poverty line.
- The younger you are in our country, the more likely you are to be poor. More than 15 percent of our preschoolers are growing up poor. Discrimination, lack of opportunity, and economic injustice make poverty worse, especially for those in racial and ethnic communities and for persons with disabilities.

(USCCB, Bread for the World)

## School Wide Initiatives & Other Resources

**Two Feet of Love in Action:** The US Conference of Catholic Bishops provides an educational resource on the two distinct, but complementary, ways we can put the Gospel in action in response to God's love: *social justice* (addressing systemic, root causes of problems that affect many people) and *charitable works* (short-term, emergency assistance for individuals.)

[www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/two-feet-of-love-in-action.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/two-feet-of-love-in-action.cfm)



**Poverty Student Action Project:** This guide contains ideas and suggestions for educating about poverty and our Catholic response for grades K-8.

<http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/poverty-education/>

## **Scriptural Foundations**

We are called to global solidarity. We are one human family regardless of national, racial, ethnic, gender, economic or ideological boundaries. As Christians, we are, as St. Paul reminds us, one body, and love of neighbor has global dimensions.

### **Genesis 12:1-3**

God blessed Israel so that all nations would be blessed through it.

### **Psalms 72**

Living in right relationship with others brings peace.

### **Psalms 122**

Peace be with you! For the sake of the Lord, I will seek your good.

### **Zechariah 8:16**

These are the things you should do: Speak truth, judge well, make peace.

### **Matthew 5:9**

Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called children of God.

### **Matthew 5:21-24**

Be reconciled to one another before coming to the altar.

### **Romans 13:8-10**

Living rightly means to love one another.

### **1 Corinthians 12:12-26**

If one member suffers, all suffer. If one member is honored, all rejoice.

### **Colossians 3:9-17**

Above all, clothe yourself with love and let the peace of Christ reign in your hearts.

## Quotes on Solidarity

"Solidarity helps us to see the 'other' -whether a person, people or nation- not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our 'neighbor,' a 'helper' to be made a sharer on a par with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God."

*On Social Concern, #39*

"We have to move from our devotion to independence, through an understanding of interdependence, to a commitment to human solidarity. That challenge must find its realization in the kind of community we build among us. Love implies concern for all - especially the poor - and a continued search for those social and economic structures that permit everyone to share in a community that is a part of a redeemed creation."

*USCCB, Economic Justice for All, #365*

"There can be no progress towards the complete development of the human person without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity."

*On the Development of Peoples, #43*

"The solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist."

*Mother and Teacher, #157*



## Statements by Pope Francis that relate to Solidarity

*source:*

[Evangelii Gaudium : Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World \(the Joy of the Gospel\)](#)

54. "In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting. To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us."

189. "Solidarity is a spontaneous reaction by those who recognize that the social function of property and the universal destination of goods are realities which come before private property. The private ownership of goods is justified by the need to protect and increase them, so that they can better serve the common good; for this reason, solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them. These convictions and habits of solidarity, when they are put into practice, open the way to other structural transformations and make them possible. Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual."

190. "Sometimes it is a matter of hearing the cry of entire peoples, the poorest peoples of the earth, since "peace is founded not only on respect for human rights, but also on respect for the rights of peoples".[154] Sadly, even human rights can be used as a justification for an inordinate defense of individual rights or the rights of the richer peoples. With due respect for the autonomy and culture of every nation, we must never forget that the planet belongs to all mankind and is meant for all mankind; the mere fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity. It must be reiterated that 'the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.'[155] To speak properly of our own rights, we need to broaden our

perspective and to hear the plea of other peoples and other regions than those of our own country. We need to grow in a solidarity which 'would allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny,' [156] since 'every person is called to self-fulfilment.' [157]"

202. "The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of society, but because society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it, and which can only lead to new crises. Welfare projects, which meet certain urgent needs, should be considered merely temporary responses. As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality,[173] no solution will be found for the world's problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills. "

203. "The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies. At times, however, they seem to be a mere addendum imported from without in order to fill out a political discourse lacking in perspectives or plans for true and integral development. How many words prove irksome to this system! It is irksome when the question of ethics is raised, when global solidarity is invoked, when the distribution of goods is mentioned, when reference is made to protecting labour and defending the dignity of the powerless, when allusion is made to a God who demands a commitment to justice. At other times these issues are exploited by a rhetoric which cheapens them. Casual indifference in the face of such questions empties our lives and our words of all meaning.

Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all."