



## *The JustFaith Catholic Series* PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### About the Series

This four-part JustFaith Catholic series guides small groups in exploring the Gospel's call to respond to poverty in their local communities and in our world. It also equips them with the tools they need to take action in a way that is effective, sustainable, and in accordance with Catholic social teaching. The programs in the JustFaith Catholic series are:

- Faith and Poverty: A Biblical Response (on local poverty)
- Faith and Poverty: A Solidarity Response (on local poverty)
- Faith and Poverty: A Justice Response (on local poverty)
- Faith and Poverty: A Global Response (on global poverty)<sup>1</sup>

Each program in the JustFaith Catholic series includes eight two hour sessions, plus an immersion experience with a community or organization working to alleviate poverty. Additionally, the first program contains a six hour retreat (three hours for virtual groups); the fourth program contains a two hour retreat. All gatherings include prayer, dialogue, active listening, and relationship-building.

You can stop after your first program, or you can offer all four. We recommend that groups take the three programs on local poverty — Faith and Poverty: A Biblical Response, Faith and Poverty: A Solidarity Response, and Justice Response — in order. **However, Faith and Poverty: A Global Response can be offered as a standalone program OR as the first or last program in the JustFaith Catholic series.**

### Immersion and Guest Speakers

Each of the four programs in this JustFaith Catholic series contains an opportunity for an immersion experience, which connects participants with organizations working to alleviate poverty. This real-world experience guides groups in discerning how they can put their learning into action. Facilitators set up the immersion experiences with the organization and use the program materials to guide the group in prayerful reflection around their experience. In the programs on local poverty, this will ideally take place between Sessions 6 and 7; in Faith and Poverty: A Global Response, the immersion experience is integrated into Session 8.

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<sup>1</sup> This program can be taken as a standalone program. It can also be taken first — before Faith and Poverty: A Biblical Response — or it can be taken last — after Faith and Poverty: A Justice Response.



Each program also provides space for you to invite a guest speaker to Session 5. Guest speakers provide real-world wisdom and help participants plug into the work of alleviating poverty in their communities.

## Retreat

Faith and Poverty: A Biblical Response contains a six-hour retreat (three hours for virtual groups) between Sessions 2 and 3; Faith and Poverty: A Global Response, contains a two-hour retreat before Session 1. The retreats create foundational spaces for building community, establishing trust, and seeking spiritual renewal. The retreat outlines provide all the instructions you will need to facilitate the retreats while also participating in them. JustFaith Ministries has designed this retreat to keep costs to a minimum and to make preparation steps simple.

## Virtual Adaptations

Our programs are available for both in-person and virtual use. If you are meeting in person, check with health guidelines to ensure that it is safe to do so. JustFaith Ministries provides training and support for using Zoom.

## Facilitator Support

The JustFaith Ministries staff is available to support you throughout your JustFaith journey. Whether you have a question about navigating a difficult conversation within your group, or if you aren't sure how to access an online video, simply give us a call and we will walk you through it. In addition, our website offers facilitator training tools and videos.

We encourage co-facilitation when possible. The role of "facilitator" is to simply ensure that all group members' voices are heard and that guidelines for holy conversation are followed. You don't need to be a clergy person, be an expert on the material, or have experience leading conversations in order to facilitate a JustFaith Ministries program.

## FAITH & POVERTY: A BIBLICAL RESPONSE

### *The first program on local poverty*

Faith and Poverty: A Biblical Response lays the theological foundation for responding to poverty in our communities, so that we might engage in action in a way that honors the image of God in those we seek to serve. In this program centered on Catholic social teaching, participants explore these two questions:

1. What tools does my faith have to offer regarding huge questions around poverty and injustice?, and



2. In light of poverty and other forms of human suffering, what is the Good News of the Gospel? In addition to the readings, group members engage in prayer and reflection around Catholic Social Teaching during and between sessions. Participants emerge from this program with a transformed understanding of who they are as God's child and how God is calling them to use their lives.

### Books:

- *Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis
- [Poverty: Responding Like Jesus](#) by Kenneth R. Himes, OFM and Connor M. Kelly

### Overview of Sessions

**Session 1: Holy Conversation vs Debate** — In today's polarized world, it can be difficult to talk about important and controversial subjects such as poverty. This session gives participants practical tools for engaging in conversations around difficult topics, equipping them to transform heated discussions into expressions of their faith.

**Session 2: Compassion versus Tolerance** — Throughout Scripture, the Kingdom of God is described as all people united to one another and to Godself; therefore, the Gospel beckons us to widen our circle of care and compassion beyond those who look and think like us. In this session, participants discern how a biblical understanding of *Kingdom* could transform their priorities and decisions.

**One-Day Retreat:** This six-hour time apart (three hours for virtual groups) builds community and trust, creating space for introspection and spiritual reflection.

**Session 3: Wonder vs. Judgment** — This session challenges participants to look beyond their assumptions in order to encounter God's image within all people.

**Session 4: Abundance vs. Scarcity** — Whether in regard to money, time, love, or security, it's easy to worry that we don't have enough and that there isn't enough to go around. In this session, participants explore how a scarcity mindset prevents them from giving and loving generously, and how a mindset of abundance can cultivate joy in their spiritual lives and community.

**Session 5: Equity vs. Equality vs. Social Justice** — In the first half of the session, participants hear from a guest speaker from the local community. They then explore the relationship between privilege and justice.

**Session 6: Working For versus Working With** — Those who are poor have unique gifts and wisdom to offer our communities. In this session, participants discern how to engage in ministry and service that



involves reciprocity and mutual respect.

**Immersion Experience in the Local Community** — see above for more information.

**Session 7: Reading Scripture with the Poor** — Jesus chose to live not among the rich and powerful, but among the marginalized. We encounter Jesus in this same context still today. In this session, participants explore how solidarity with the poor draws us closer to Jesus himself.

**Session 8: Action vs. Apathy** — Participants explore barriers which keep Christians from community engagement, and then they discern ways to eliminate them, both in their personal lives and in their faith communities.

## FAITH & POVERTY: A SOLIDARITY RESPONSE

### *The second program on local poverty*

Faith and Poverty: A Solidarity Response explores local poverty and introduces participants to the tips and tools they need to respond. Together, participants navigate questions such as: “Why are the poor poor?”, “Why don’t people in poverty just get a job?”, “What are some common hurdles that people in poverty face?”, and “What are some practical tools for alleviating poverty in my community?” In addition to the readings, group members engage in prayer and reflection around Catholic social teaching throughout the week between sessions. Participants emerge from this program better equipped to help alleviate poverty in their communities, as well as stand in solidarity with those experiencing poverty.

#### **Books:**

- *Evicted* by Matthew Desmond
- *Beyond Empowerment: A Pilgrimage with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development* by Jeffrey Odell Korgen

#### **Overview of Sessions**

**Session 1: Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers** — In this session, participants review group guidelines for holy conversations. They then learn about and discuss the biblical and theological basis for advocating for the rights of workers.



**Session 2: The Cost to Live** — In order to better understand how much it really costs to “get by,” the group engages in a simple simulation called “Making Choices.” They also explore the cost of living in their local community, as compared to the standard income of low-wage workers. Participants then explore ways to advocate for living wages and stand in solidarity with workers in poverty.

**Session 3: The Social Safety Net** — Participants learn about public benefits. Who is eligible? How much do they receive? What is it like to live on public benefits?

**Session 4: The Cliff Effect** — The group explores a common obstacle that traps people in the “welfare system,” keeping them from better wages and a better quality of life. Participants then explore ways they work alongside those experiencing poverty to eliminate this barrier to financial health.

**Session 5: Poverty and Health** — After hearing from a guest speaker, participants learn about the detrimental effects of poverty on health. The group then brainstorms ways to ensure access to physical, emotional, and spiritual care for all people.

**Session 6: Trauma and Addiction** — Participants learn about a common correlation between trauma, addiction, and poverty. They then envision ways to improve access to mental health care for those experiencing poverty, as well as support those in recovery.

### **Immersion Experience in the Local Community**

**Session 7: Housing** — The group explores systemic barriers that keep people from accessing affordable housing and envisions ways in which they can help reduce homelessness in their own communities.

**Session 8: Grassroots Organizing 101** — The group learns how to accompany low-income leaders to create sustainable change in their local communities.

## **FAITH & POVERTY: A JUSTICE RESPONSE**

### *The third program on local poverty*

Faith and Poverty: A Justice Response introduces participants to the systems and structures that perpetuate poverty in their communities. Participants awaken to the systemic barriers that keep certain people from rising out of poverty, as these barriers are often invisible to those of us who don't have to face them. This program gives special attention to communities of color who are disproportionately and unjustly affected by poverty. In addition to the readings, group members engage in prayer and reflection around Catholic social teaching throughout the week between sessions. Participants emerge from this



program with the courage and tools to lead their parishes and communities in working for systemic justice on a local level.

### Books:

- *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson
- *A New Way to Be Church* by Jack Jezreel

### Overview of Sessions

**Session 1: Talking about Hard Things** — After reviewing group guidelines for holy conversation, the group spiritually and emotionally prepares to confront difficult issues that perpetuate poverty.

**Session 2: Systemic Racism 101** — The group learns what systemic racism is and discusses how it perpetuates poverty.

**Session 3: Mass Incarceration** — Participants explore how mass incarceration traps families and communities in poverty.

**Session 4: Immigration and Poverty** — The group learns about the policies and practices that bind immigrant families and communities to poverty.

**Session 5: The Wealth Gap** — After hearing from a guest speaker from the local community, participants explore how our nation's wealth gap affects social mobility.

**Session 6: Poverty and the Environment** — The group discusses the relationship among environmental justice, climate change, and poverty.

### Immersion Experience in the Local Community

**Session 7: Preferential Option for the Poor** — As one of the US Catholic Bishops' major themes of Catholic social teaching, this session on the Preferential Option for the Poor will explore Scripture's power to bring liberation and renewal to marginalized communities, as well as our own churches and relationships.

**Session 8: Local Advocacy 101** — The group explores techniques for creating effective change in their local communities.



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*ministries*



## FAITH & POVERTY: A GLOBAL RESPONSE

### *On global poverty*

Faith and Poverty: A Global Response, developed in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), invites participants to a new understanding of the dynamics, structures, causes, and consequences of global poverty. Through engagement with Scripture, Catholic social teaching, poetry, story, and multiple other formats, participants gain insights into the complexity of this global crisis and the insistent demands for a response rooted in the spirituality of the Scriptures. By encouraging new spiritual practices and informed action, Faith and Poverty: A Global Response aims to cultivate a groundswell of action and advocacy in solidarity with those whose lives are affected by severe poverty across the globe.

As stated above, Faith and Poverty: A Global Response can be offered as a standalone program OR as the first or last program in the JustFaith Catholic series.



#### **Books:**

- *The Earth Cries Out* by Gary Gardner
- *Brave Souls: Experiencing the Audacious Power of Empathy* by Belinda Bauman

*There is also a Spiritual Practice booklet designed specifically for this program, written by JustFaith Ministries' Consultant and Scripture Scholar, Tricia Hoyt.*

#### **Overview of Sessions**

**Session 1: What is Sustainable Ecology?** — The group becomes familiar with the concept of sustainability and explores what Pope Francis terms “sustainable ecology.”

**Session 2: Addressing Basic Human Needs** — The group learns how the lens of integral human development demands the inclusion of the effects of environmental degradation, climate change, and neglected infrastructure.

**Session 3: Economic Empowerment and Poverty Reduction** — Participants explore innovations in social enterprise, investment, fair trade, and local finance that embody Pope Francis' vision of economic structures that are pro-poor—a new economy that is more attentive to ethical principles.

**Session 4: The Legacy of Oppressive Systems and Structures** — The group learns about the legacy of military conquest, slavery, and colonization that affects poor, developing countries today.





**Session 5: Responding to Conflict and Violence** — After hearing from a guest speaker whose work involves refugees, participants explore how poverty is a contributor to and a consequence of conflict and violence.

**Session 6: Poverty and the Environment** — The group discusses the relationship among environmental justice, climate change, and poverty.

**Session 7: Addressing the Root Causes of Poverty** — The group assesses where God may be calling them to use their talents to address the root causes of poverty, social injustice, violence, and hunger.

**Session 8: Global Solidarity Next Steps** — Through an immersion experience with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the group lays out a strategy for developing into a chapter supporting the global solidarity efforts of U.S. Catholics.