

SAMPLE SESSION

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Each week, participants will engage in short, accessible weekly assignments to help them prepare for rich and meaningful in-session dialogue. These assignments may include short articles, podcast episodes, excerpts from Church documents, and spiritual practices.

For Session 2, participants will:

- Review the Community of Trust Guidelines, which guide the group in conversations of deep listening and mutual respect, even when disagreement arises.
- Listen to an original JustFaith Ministries podcast episode on the origins of Catholic Social Teaching. An accompanying podcast listening guide includes questions for optional self-reflection and a summary of key points.
- Read an excerpt from Pope Leo XIV's *Dilexi Te: Apostolic Exhortation on Love for the Poor*.

PREVIEW

Seeing With Fresh Eyes:
The Dignity Of Work and the Rights Of Workers

Activity	Minutes
Welcome & Opening Meditation	10 minutes
Video: CST 101: Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers	5 minutes
Small Group Dialogue	25 minutes
Large Group Dialogue	25 minutes
Announcements	5 minutes
See, Judge, Act	10 minutes
Closing Meditation	10 minutes

PREVIEW

Items needed for this Session:

- A blank poster board or easel pad, with the heading "ACT!" written at the top.
- Paper and pens/pencils for journaling during the Closing Mediation
- Presentation slides (optional, provided by JFM)
- Clock or timer
- All participants will need their Participant Packets
- LCD Projector/TV and internet access for online videos/music
- Candle and matches, tablecloth, and cross or other symbol for prayer table
- Snack signup sheet

Links to pull up before the session begins:

Play through the ads at the beginning of the videos

- CST 101: The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers (3:53 mins): bit.ly/4tMwC1k
- "God with Us" - song by Sarah Hart · Jayme Thompson

- Optional: Soft background music for the opening meditation
- Optional "What is Catholic Labor Network?" (3:45 min)[1]: bit.ly/41x8EeL

Session 2 Notes to Co-Facilitators

As you prepare for Session 2, here are a few items to keep in mind.

1. Small Group and Large Group Sharing: This session includes two distinct dialogue moments. You will begin with small group conversations that are intentionally more personal. This smaller setting gives each participant the time and space to share openly and reflect more deeply. Encourage each group to choose someone to read the questions aloud and help ensure everyone has a chance to speak. Facilitators are encouraged to join a small group – after all, this is your journey too!

After small group sharing, you will reconvene in the large group. As you guide the discussion, aim for meaningful reflection while also noticing when it may be time to move on to the next question. Gently steer participants away from conversational rabbit holes or tangents; if needed, you can create a "parking lot" list of topics to return to in a separate conversation apart from the seven sessions.

The need to get through every reflection question can be a source of anxiety for many facilitators. Because some groups move through the questions more quickly than others, we have intentionally included more questions than you will likely have time to explore. Release the need to get to them all. Instead, choose the questions that seem most helpful for your group and keep the conversation moving at a thoughtful, steady pace.

2. **Recognize the Range of Workplace Realities:** Participants may come with very different stories around work. Some may have held meaningful, life-giving jobs; others may have experienced unhealthy or even abusive workplaces; others may be struggling to find a job; still others may conduct unpaid labor such as caring for children or an aging parent. Rather than assuming that all participants have had an opportunity for life-affirming employment, speak and act in a way that honors the complexity of emotions and experiences they may be bringing to this topic.

[1] See "See, Judge.... ACT!" section for more information about who Catholic Labor Network is and how this video would be used.

PREVIEW

3. **Preparing to "ACT!"**

Before the session, take a moment to prepare the "ACT!" poster or easel pad. It does not need to be elaborate—just write "ACT!" clearly at the top and leave room for a list. After briefly explaining the methodology of See-Judge-Act, you will share that each week the group will brainstorm concrete ideas for action, which will guide your final session of discernment.

If you have additional questions, the JustFaith staff is a phone call or email away. You can schedule a 15-minute chat with JFM staff at justfaith.org/calendly. Blessings on your time together.

Welcome and Opening Meditation (10 minutes)

If desired, turn on some instrumental music to play in the background. Be sure to keep it at a very low volume so that it does not risk dominating the space.

Warmly welcome each person as they enter your meeting space. Invite participants to turn to Session 2 Attachment B of the Participant Packet.

Ask for two volunteers to read the Scripture reflection. Begin with these or similar words:

> **Welcome, everyone! It is good to be with all of you. Last week, we introduced the theme of human dignity and practiced noticing God's image in one another. Today, we will continue to address the theme of human dignity, discerning how this foundational principle calls us to uphold the dignity of work and the rights of workers.**

Facilitator 1: **Let us prepare our hearts and minds, and relax our body postures, as we begin with prayer.**

Facilitator 2: *Light the candle with a match. Then after cupping the match and reverently blowing it out, say:*

As we light our candle, we remember that the light of Christ is present within us and among us this day and always.

PREVIEW

Facilitator 1: **And we welcome the Word of God to this sacred space.**

5-10 second pause.

Facilitator 2: A Reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah 42:1-7.

Brief pause. Indicate to the first reader that they may begin.

Reader 1: Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one with whom I am pleased.

Reader 2: Upon him I have put my spirit;
he shall bring forth justice to the nations.

Reader 1: He will not cry out, nor shout,
nor make his voice heard in the street.

Reader 2: A bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench.
He will faithfully bring forth justice.

Reader 1: He will not grow dim or be bruised
until he establishes justice on the earth;
the coastlands will wait for his teaching.

Reader 2: Thus says God, the Lord,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and its produce,

Reader 1: Who gives breath to its people
and spirit to those who walk on it:

Reader 2: I, the Lord, have called you for justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;

Reader 1: I formed you, and set you

PREVIEW

as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,

Reader 2: To open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

Reader 1: The Word of the Lord

All: **Thanks be to God**

Facilitator 1: **We will pause to give time for those who would like to do so to share, in just a few words, any word or phrase that resonated with you or stood out for you. Just the word or phrase. No need to have an explanation.**

Facilitator 2: *Models the sharing by offering their own brief response of 1–4 words, then opens the floor for others to share.*

After it appears that all who wish to have shared, say, in these or similar words:

Thank you. As we continue our prayer, we ponder the wisdom of the Prophet Isaiah in this meditation:

Facilitator 1: **The prophet speaks,**
his voice offering itself as the channel
for the wisdom of God.

The prophet speaks,
and even today we hear
what he and the ancients knew:
that we travel in two streams of spirituality
in our worship of the One God...

PREVIEW

Facilitator 2: **We flow in gratitude to God who holds covenant with us,**
hears our cries, is our salvation
and insists relentlessly on justice,
—the God who saves.

And we rejoice in the same God
who is Creator, Spirit, Word,
who names all Creation as good
–the God who blesses.

Facilitator 1: **Let us pause for reflection.** *Pause for 10 seconds.*

Facilitator 2: **O God, you who are both Creator and Savior, bring us to gratitude and humility this day in the face of such blessings. Open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts to your sacred presence among us in this gathering.**

We offer you this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Turn off the instrumental music.

Video on The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers (5 minutes)

Introduce the video:

The prophet insists relentlessly on justice, and that insistence continues even today, in large part among Catholics working to end exploitation of the poor. We will now watch a short video to introduce our Catholic Social Teaching Theme, The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers.

Play "CST 101: The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers" (3:53 mins): bit.ly/4tMwC1k

After the video, move directly to the small group dialogue.

PREVIEW

Small Group Dialogue (25 minutes)

Give the following instructions:

> **We'll now break into groups of three or four to answer the questions on Session 2 Attachment C.**
>
> **In each group, choose one person to serve as the small group facilitator. Their role is simple: to read the questions aloud, help make sure everyone has an opportunity to share, and gently call the group back if it veers off-topic. You may not get to all the questions, and that's okay.**
>
> **You'll have about 15 minutes for this conversation.**

If possible, each facilitator should choose a small group to participate in.

Session 2 Attachment C: Small Group Dialogue

Choose a facilitator in your small group to read the questions aloud, ensure everyone has a chance to speak, and help the group remain on-topic. You may not get to all of the questions, and that's okay.

- In the video, Msgr. Ray East states: "Work is God's gift to us. We're able to use the different gifts God has given us – spiritual gifts, mental gifts, to make the world a better place." Describe a time when, whether in paid work or through uncompensated labor, you were able to use your gifts to make the world better. What did this experience feel like for you? Did this experience affect the way you saw yourself, God, or the world?
- Share a brief story about work conditions (positive or negative, paid or unpaid labor) that you have experienced. How did this work experience affect you, your relationships, your self-understanding, or your faith?
- Especially in a time in which so many workers struggle to make ends meet, the conversation around the dignity of work is deeply intertwined with that of poverty and economic justice. Invite a member of your group to slowly and prayerfully reread no. 5 of *Dilexi Te:*

PREVIEW

Love for the Lord, then, is one with love for the poor. The same Jesus who tells us, "The poor you will always have with you" (Mt 26:11), also promises the disciples: "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20). We likewise think of his saying: "Just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). This is not a matter of mere human kindness but a revelation: contact with those who are lowly and powerless is a fundamental way of encountering the Lord of history. In the poor, he continues to speak to us.

Reflect:

"You did it to me": When we perform acts of charity, we often see ourselves as being the hands and feet of Christ. But here, Pope Leo reminds us that, in this story, Jesus identifies with the one in need of charity. It is through the poor that God speaks to us. When have you encountered Jesus in someone who was struggling with poverty in any of its forms?

Reflection on Small Group Dialogue (10 minutes)

After reconvening participants, ask the large group:

What did you learn about yourself, your faith, or the nature of work through the small group experience? What from your conversation would you like to carry in your heart or implement in your life?

After wrapping up the conversation, close with these or similar words:

God of love,
We give you thanks for the stories shared in this space;
we honor them as sacred.
We pause now to pray for each person in our small group.

Pause for about 30 seconds (4-5 breaths).

As we continue in our conversation,
continue to speak to us
through one another.
Amen.

PREVIEW

Large Group Dialogue (25 minutes)

Guide the group in a conversation around the reflection questions printed on Session 2 Attachment D.

Facilitation instructions:

- After reading each question aloud, invite participants to pause for silence to collect their thoughts before the group begins sharing.
- Using the mutual invitation method[2] or taking turns around the room, invite each participant to share once. Then open the floor for conversation.
- **<u>You may not get to all of the discussion questions, and that's okay.</u>** You can move through the questions in order, or you can choose the questions that are most meaningful and relevant to your group.

Session 2 Attachment D: Large Group Dialogue Questions

You may not have time to get to all of the discussion questions, and that's okay*; optionally, you can plan to journal about your responses to the unanswered questions after the session.*

- In the USCCB video "The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers," former Executive Vice President of Catholic Relief Services, Joan Rosenhauer, states: "Because the Church recognizes that every person is created in God's image and likeness and therefore has inherent dignity, we also recognize that work exists for people. People don't exist for work." In what ways does this statement defy the norms of our society? If we were to take this statement seriously, what would we need to change?

[2] The Mutual Invitation Method is a style of group dialogue that generates conversations rooted in deep listening and respect. Instructions are included in the Facilitator Overview.

PREVIEW

- The video mentions rights including sick leave, family leave, a safe working environment, just wages, support in retirement, time for leisure and rest, healthcare, and the option to join a union.
    - Which of these rights do you see being upheld? Which have you seen being violated? Consider especially the institutions of which you are affiliated – your parish, school, and workplace, for example.
    - What systemic obstacles make it difficult for some employers – small businesses, churches, or nonprofits, for example – to provide the rights consistently? Are there creative or communal solutions that might help us move closer to justice rather than using those obstacles as excuses?
    - Catholic Social Teaching says workers have responsibilities too – such as offering a "fair day's work for a fair day's wage." How have you experienced the balance of rights and responsibilities in the workplaces you've known? In your experience, can there be an emotional or spiritual benefit to providing "a fair day's work"?
- In *Dilexi Te*, Pope Leo writes:

    > *A concrete commitment to the poor must also be accompanied by a change in mentality that can have an impact at the cultural level. In fact,* ***the illusion of happiness derived from a comfortable life pushes many people towards a vision of life centered on the accumulation of wealth and social success at all costs****, even at the expense of others and by taking advantage of unjust social ideals and political-economic systems that favor the strongest* (no. 11).

    Do you ever find yourself caught up in the false promise that more money and a higher status will make you truly happy? How might our current culture around work, career, and "success" contribute to our own suffering and the suffering of others?

- Pope Leo writes:

    > *The poor are not there by chance or by blind and cruel fate. Nor, for most of them, is poverty a choice. Yet, there are those who still presume to make this claim, thus revealing their own blindness and cruelty. Of course, among the*

PREVIEW

poor there are also those who do not want to work, perhaps because their ancestors, who worked all their lives, died poor. However, there are so many others — men and women — who nonetheless work from dawn to dusk, perhaps collecting scraps or the like, even though they know that their hard work will only help them to scrape by, but never really improve their lives. Nor can it be said that most of the poor are such because they do not "deserve" otherwise, as maintained by that specious view of meritocracy that sees only the successful as "deserving" (no. 14).

How does this excerpt challenge you, affirm your experience, or alter your perspective about people in poverty?

- As Nebu mentioned in the podcast, we may be on the cusp of our industrial revolution. How can Catholic Social Teaching and centuries of papal wisdom guide our collective decision making around AI, automation, and other massive changes in the workforce?

After concluding the large group discussion:

We pause to recenter ourselves in the presence of God.

Pause for 1-2 breaths.

Hear these words from Dorothy Day, a Catholic journalist and co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement who devoted her life to hospitality, nonviolence, and solidarity with the poor:

Read slowly:

What we would like to do is change the world–make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute–the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words–we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening

PREVIEW

circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as our friend.

Pause briefly, and conclude with "Amen."

Announcements (5 minutes)

1. Ensure all participants know where in the Participant Packet they can find the preparation assignments for Session 3. Ask a volunteer to read the assignments aloud. Emphasize the importance of completing these assignments in order to have a robust and meaningful conversation in Session 3. **Note aloud that the spiritual practice (attending Mass and reading two short articles ahead of time) will require advance planning.**
2. Remind participants to sign up to bring snacks, if relevant, being mindful of dietary restrictions. Encourage participants to avoid plastic packaging and to choose items produced in a way that honor God's Creation and God's people.

See, Judge..... ACT! (10 minutes)

Transition to a conversation about action steps:

Let us hear again the words of the Prophet Isaiah 42:6-7:

I, the Lord, have called you for justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;

I formed you, and set you
as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,

To open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

PREVIEW

Pause briefly (one breath).

> **With the Prophet's words in mind, we will now transition to discerning how to respond to God's call to justice. How can we live out our God-given vocation of working alongside our neighbors to bring light, healing, and freedom into our world?**

Get out the "ACT" list you created. Invite participants to turn to Session 2 Attachment E.[3] Provide a summary of the See-Judge-Act method.

> **The See-Judge-Act methodology was developed by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn to help Catholics discern how to respond to the difficult and confusing social problems we see in our world, such as the exploitation of workers. This method is a cycle of three steps:**
>
> 1. **First, we see *what's going on* around us, observing where human dignity is respected and where it's not.**
> 2. **Then, we judge (or evaluate) the situation: we investigate why the situation is happening and turn to Scripture and Church teaching for wisdom.**
> 3. **Finally, we take action.**
>
> **Each week, through prayer, study, and dialogue, we will practice *seeing* the reality of poverty and *judging (or evaluating)* it in light of our faith. Then, we will brainstorm how we can respond through *action*.**
>
> **We'll record our answers on our "ACT!" list.** *Gesture to the "ACT!" list you created.* **You can go ahead and get started with your action items now if you want, but during Session 6 we'll use the list to help us select two action steps: one we will take as individuals, and one we will take together as a group.**

Pause briefly to ensure everyone understands. Then turn to today's action brainstorming opportunity:

[3] There is no need to spend much time dissecting the handout – participants will have an opportunity to review it as part of the preparation assignments for Session 3.

PREVIEW

What actions could we take to uphold the dignity of work and the rights of workers?

Record participants' answers on the "ACT!" easel pad/poster. You may need to remind participants that this is just a brainstorming opportunity – there is no need to commit to an action item just yet.

Then, add two additional suggestions to the list:

- **In the video we watched earlier, Joan Rosenhauer states: "As consumers we need to be aware that really every purchasing decision is a moral decision."**

  Write "purchase ethically-produced food and consumer items" on the "ACT!" list.

- The Catholic Labor Network unites Catholics to advance the principles of Catholic Social Teaching on the dignity of work and the rights of workers through prayer, education, and action. The Catholic Labor Network offers faith-centered education, supports workers as they advocate for their rights, and creates opportunities for Catholics to stand in solidarity through advocacy and organizing.

  Write "get involved with Catholic Labor Network" on the "ACT!" list.

  If you have time, show the video "What is Catholic Labor Network?" (3:45 min): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnpJHBJ-3_0

PREVIEW

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Pass out paper and pens/pencils. Invite participants to turn to Session 2 Attachment E.

As we turn to our closing meditation, let us pause to take a breath and to notice God's presence surrounding us.

Pause for two breaths.

We live in a world that often values people according to their so-called "net worth," their job title, what they can make or give or produce, and how much they accomplish in a day.

We will now listen to a song called "God With Us" by Sarah Hart and Jayme Thompson, which reminds us that God's unconditional love is greater than the economic systems that lie to us about our worth and value. Human dignity is *not* earned through productivity or meritocracy. Our worth precedes our work. Every worker is first and foremost a beloved child of God.

As we listen to this song, consider either or both of two questions. You can journal or reflect in the way that is most beneficial to you – you will not be asked to share your answers.

1. **In what ways have I allowed busyness, accomplishments, comparison, or worldly ideas of "success" to define my worth?**
2. **What would it look like to root my identity more deeply in God's unconditional love?**

Play "God with Us" (4:11 mins):

After the song, close with the following prayer:

Let us pray.

We are held in love as old as the ages
In arms divine yet near
We are wrapped in light and wonder

PREVIEW

And healed with balm and care.
Let us breathe this air of promise
And feel our hearts revived
As hope alive renews us
And carries us this day.

A Circle of Prayer

Ask the group:

> **Would anyone like to request prayer or support from the group in the upcoming week?**

Give time for prayer requests. Conclude with these words, spoken in unison:

> **We are disciples on a journey.**
> **We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.**
> **We hold one another as we carry the concerns of each other and our neighbors.**
>
> **We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country.**
> **Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit,**
> **that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom,**
> **in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.**

Extinguish the candle. Optionally, invite participants to stick around for community building time and continued conversation.

PREVIEW