

A Summons to Conversion and to Change

In his [message](#) for Lent 2017, Pope Francis focuses on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. He writes:

“Lazarus teaches us that *other persons are a gift*. A right relationship with people consists in gratefully recognizing their value. Even the poor person at the door of the rich is not a nuisance, but a summons to conversion and to change. The parable first invites us to open the doors of our heart to others because each person is a gift, whether it be our neighbour or an anonymous pauper. Lent is a favourable season for opening the doors to all those in need and recognizing in them the face of Christ. Each of us meets people like this every day. Each life that we encounter is a gift deserving acceptance, respect and love.”

How can we recognize people who are materially poor, or people who in one way or another need more from us than we might care to give, as **gifts** rather than problems to be solved or burdens to be endured?

We can start by slowing down, listening to their stories, seeing them as persons, and giving up our own sense of superiority, something the rich man in the parable could never bring himself to do.

Photo by Jennifer Hardy/
Catholic Relief Services



Each Lent, through the annual Rice Bowl program, Catholic Relief Services gives us the opportunity to get to know individuals from the Global South by hearing their stories and learning about their lives. These stories tell of the ways they are reclaiming the human dignity that structural economic injustice has denied them. These stories and these people are **gifts** to us, reminders of the importance of family and community, testimony to our common humanity.

Go to www.crsricebowl.org for a trove of resource, including prayers, meatless recipes and videos, as part of your Lenten practice of conversion.



“On behalf of the Bishops and people of the Catholic Church, as the Chairman of the Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs, I want to express our deep sympathy, solidarity, and support to our Jewish brothers and sisters who have experienced once again a surge of anti-Semitic actions in the United States. I wish to offer our deepest concern, as well as our unequivocal rejection of these hateful actions. The Catholic Church stands in love with the Jewish community in the current face of anti-Semitism.”

-Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski, Bishop of Springfield

Photo by Karen Kasmanuski/
Catholic Relief Services





SAVE THE DATE:

DIOCESAN SOCIAL MINISTRY CONFERENCE Saturday May 20

St. Mary's School, 16 West Gibson St, Canandaigua NY

Pastors, parish staff, teachers, youth and faith formation leaders,
and all social ministry volunteers are encouraged to attend.

Do you know local elected officials or business owners from your parish?
Invite them to join in too!

At this year's annual social ministry gathering, you'll have the opportunity to get a taste of what it means to live in poverty in the U.S. by participating in a **Poverty Simulation**. This experience is described as follows:

"This learning tool has been created as a way to help people understand the realities of poverty. During a simulation, participants role-play the lives of low-income families. Some are [welfare] recipients, some are disabled, and some are senior citizens on Social Security. They have the stressful task of providing for basic necessities and shelter on a limited budget during the course of four 15-minute "weeks."

They interact with human service agencies, grocers, pawnbrokers, bill collectors, job interviewers, police officers and others. Although play money is used, [the role playing] is not a game. It is a simulation that enables participants to look at poverty from a variety of angles and then to recognize and discuss the potential for change within their local communities." Discussions and workshops will follow the simulation.

Please start publicizing this opportunity in your parish!

To learn more, contact the Justice & Peace Ministry coordinator from your county.

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