



resources for short-term, international mission and immersion trips

POST-IMMERSION

Includes 2 sample sessions to help groups reflect on their experience and what it means for their lives after they've returned home



faith. action. results.

what now?

OBJECTIVES

- Help participants integrate their service immersion experience into their daily lives by:
 - Providing formation about charity and social justice to give them a framework they can use for reflection and to make change.
 - Brainstorming practical ways they can live in solidarity with people around the world through the choices they make now that they are back at home.

MATERIALS

- Bible opened to Mark 6:7-11
- Flip chart paper
- Internet access
- Items for a prayer space: cloth, candle, cross, etc.
- Laptop and projector
- Marker
- Music player
- Copies of the “Solidarity Pledge” handout for each participant
- Reflective music
- Sheet of paper
- Small table
- Sticky notes
- Videos:
 - [“CRS Fair Trade: Be a Fan!”](#) video from CRS’ YouTube channel
 - [“CCGP: This Is What Solidarity Looks Like”](#) video from CRS’ YouTube channel
 - Optional, for college/university groups: [“Become a CRS Student Ambassador”](#) video from CRS’ YouTube channel

PREPARATION

This session includes an overview of charity and social justice as the “Two Feet of Love in Action.” If you are not familiar with this framework or would like to brush up on it, visit usccb.org and search for “Two Feet of Love in Action.”

- Invite participants ahead of time to bring a symbol of their experience on the trip. It could be a photo, an object or even a word written on a slip of paper.
- Make copies of the handout.
- Set up a table for the prayer space with a cloth, candle, etc.
- Divide the flip chart into two columns labeled “Charity” and “Social Justice.”

- Test the video links and make sure the audiovisual equipment works.
- Cue reflective music.
- Prepare a list of prayer partners. (If you have an odd number, make one group of three.)
- Invite two readers to read Mark 6:7-11 for the closing prayer.

Note to facilitator: *This session is designed to help participants think about how they can live in solidarity with people in need overseas after returning home. It focuses on fair trade and legislative advocacy as two key ways participants can make a difference in the lives of people around the world through daily decision making. To learn more about CRS' work with fair trade and legislative advocacy in preparation for this meeting, visit crsfairtrade.org and confrontglobalpoverty.org. CRS also provides networks for colleges, high schools and parishes to practice global solidarity. These networks train and equip participants to be lifelong leaders and advocates for the poor. Before this session begins, peruse the information and websites below and consider how participants from your service immersion trip can, as members of a particular institution, collaborate with CRS in our global humanitarian work.*

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS: Motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the CRS Global High School program provides opportunities for Catholic secondary schools to join CRS in educating students about Catholic social teaching and advocate for solidarity with the global poor. ghs.crs.org

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: CRS University engages students, faculty and staff in acts of solidarity to build a more just and peaceful world. The CRS Student Ambassador program engages chapters of CRS Student Ambassadors in mobilizing their campus communities to act on global emergencies and injustices. university.crs.org

PARISHES: CRS Parish Ambassadors are active parishioners with a passion for global solidarity. They inspire their parish to become global disciples and respond to concerns facing our most vulnerable brothers and sisters around the world. crs.org/parishambassador

SESSION OVERVIEW

- Welcome (15 minutes)
- Opening prayer (5 minutes)
- What now? (30 minutes)
- Solidarity pledge (25 minutes)
- Housekeeping, logistics and final announcements (5 minutes)
- Closing prayer (10 minutes)

welcome (15 minutes)

- Welcome participants back.
- Invite them to share a symbol of their trip and why they chose it. Ask them to put their symbol on the table or prayer space.
- Share that this session will focus on beginning the real work of solidarity at home. Explain that you will reflect on what you can do in the United States to support people in need around the world.

opening prayer (5 minutes)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...



Loving God,

*We pray in thanksgiving for all of our blessings.
And we thank you, especially, for the community
gathered and for everyone we met on our trip.*

*We ask that we will not allow the experience we had—
the stories of those we encountered and a deeper understanding
of the poverty that many people face—to fade with our memories
of the experience.*

*Transform us, so that we are forever changed by our experience,
and will bring it with us wherever we go.*

*Make us witnesses to your Gospel message to care for the poor
and oppressed. Fill us with the strength to be faithful to this
message even in the small things.*

We ask all this in Jesus' name.

Amen

what now? (30 minutes)

REFLECTION

- Explain that it can be difficult to process an experience that is so different from our norm: We don't know how to talk about it or integrate it into our daily life.
- Discuss together:
 - How has the return to your “normal” life been?
 - How have you shared your story? (You might ask here about the pros and cons of posting photos on social media if it doesn't come up naturally.)
 - What has been challenging about sharing your story with family and friends?

INTRODUCTION

- Share that many people return from international service immersion with a strong passion that eventually fades into a vague compassion. What can you do to keep the experience alive now that you're back? Some ideas:
 - Praying daily for those you met during your trip
 - Living more simply
 - Sharing your stories through a presentation at your parish, school or university
- Explain that as Catholics, we are invited to respond to those in need through charitable works and social justice. We call this the "Two Feet of Love in Action" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Two Feet of Love in Action.)
- Explain that one foot is charity and one foot, social justice. We need to walk on both feet to follow Christ on the journey of discipleship. **Charity** involves being in direct service to those in need. **Social justice** works to remove the root causes and address the structures that cause poverty.
- Invite people to voice general examples of living out charity and/or social justice.

DISCUSSION

- Explain that when you were on the trip, you practiced solidarity through charity. You spent time directly serving those in need.
- Discuss together and write responses to the following question on the "charitable works" side of the flip chart paper:
 - What are some ways you can continue to practice solidarity through charity?

SUGGESTIONS: CHARITABLE WORKS

- Connect to existing service opportunities in your community or explore new opportunities inspired by your experience on the trip.
- Share that Catholic Relief Services, the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States, serves poor and vulnerable people worldwide in more than 100 countries and does this in the name of Catholics in the United States. CRS offers a number of ways for Catholics in the United States to live their faith in solidarity with their brothers and sisters overseas:
 - Help lead (or launch) CRS Rice Bowl (crsricebowl.org) in your community to encourage people to pray, fast and give to those in need during Lent. (*Note: While 75 percent of Rice Bowl donations help people overseas, 25 percent of the money stays in your diocese, supporting local community efforts.*)
 - Hold a Helping Hands food packing and hunger awareness event (helpinghands.crs.org).
 - Support a CRS faithACTS project overseas (faithacts.crs.org). You can choose a specific project to pray for, support and get updates about.

- Say that you also have the opportunity as Catholics in the United States to make a difference through social justice.
- Discuss together and write responses to the following question on the “social justice” side of the flip chart:
 - What are some ways you can continue to be in solidarity with those in need overseas through working for social justice?

SUGGESTIONS: WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Consider how working to change local structures and systems, like working for immigration reform, can have global impact.
- Add “fair trade” and “legislative advocacy” to the “social justice” side of the flip chart.
- Share that participants have power as consumers and citizens to directly impact people’s lives overseas.
- Explain that fair trade and legislative advocacy are two ways you can continue to work for social justice in solidarity with those you encountered.

FAIR TRADE

- Share that what you buy has a direct impact on people around the world. Invite participants to think about people you met who had difficulty finding work or who were not paid well. Explain that fair trade is a relationship between consumers, and farmers and artisans. The goal of fair trade is ensuring that farmers and artisans receive a fair wage and work in safe conditions.
- Show the video: [“CRS Fair Trade: Be a Fan!”](#)
- Invite participants to act on what they learned from their trip by buying fair trade. Explain that fair trade includes items people consume daily—like coffee, tea and olive oil—as well as crafts and home goods suitable for gifts. Invite them to consider making a larger impact by asking those in authority at their school, parish or university to commit to using fair trade products whenever possible.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

- Explain that participants can practice social justice through legislative advocacy. Our policies can have a huge impact on the poor overseas. Through advocacy, we can ask our legislators to support policies that help the poor with sustainable solutions.
- Explain that CRS and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have a joint action network called Catholics Confront Global Poverty, or CCGP. CCGP represents the official voice of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States on policy issues related to improving the lives of the poor and vulnerable worldwide.
- Show the video: [“CCGP: This is What Solidarity Looks Like”](#)
- Note that updated information is available on the CCGP website, confrontglobalpoverty.org.

- Explain that through CCGP, you can also get text updates about how you can advocate for the poor overseas on current and emerging issues. Invite people to sign up for these action alerts by texting “CCGP” to 30644. They will get a text response asking for their email address and ZIP code. This information will help CCGP identify their congressional representatives and those who are connected to key issues.
- Share information (see Preparation section) about how organizations like colleges, universities and Catholic high schools, as well as students and parishioners, can live in global solidarity with others.

If you are working with a college or university group, show the video “[Become a CRS Student Ambassador](#)” and encourage students to visit university.crs.org/students to sign up.

solidarity pledge (25 minutes)

INTRODUCTION

- Reiterate that we can continue to live in solidarity with those we met on our trip—and people in need overseas who we will never meet—by performing acts of charity and working for social justice.
- Give participants a few minutes to make a solidarity pledge to do something specific between now and the time you meet again.

REFLECTION

- Distribute the “Solidarity Pledge” handout and give participants 15 minutes to fill it out.
- After participants have had a chance to reflect and write their solidarity pledges, bring the group back together.
- Explain that we are not on the journey alone, and that Christ, our community of faith and those gathered here will walk with us.
- Explain that everyone will have a prayer partner—someone to pray for and check in with between now and your next meeting—regarding their transition and progress with their solidarity pledge.
- Introduce participants to their prayer partners.
- Invite them to pair up and spend a few minutes sharing their solidarity pledges.
- Ask them to schedule to meet or talk by phone between now and your next meeting.

housekeeping, logistics and final announcements (5 minutes)

- Announce the date and time of your next session (2 to 3 months in the future.)
- Share other logistical information.

closing prayer (10 minutes)

- Give each person a sticky note. Ask them to write their solidarity commitment on it.
- Tell participants that you are sent on mission as Christ's disciples. As prayer partners, you will journey two by two, but you will also travel together, holding each other in prayer. You will close by reflecting on a Scripture passage describing how Jesus sends his disciples on mission, and you will have a moment to share how you will live out your mission in the coming months.
- Say that you'll reflect on the passage through "Lectio Divina." Explain that "Lectio Divina" is a Benedictine practice of meditating with Scripture. It typically includes reading a Scripture multiple times and reflecting with them in different ways. In your adapted version of "Lectio Divina," you will read and reflect on the Scripture passage twice.
- After the first reading of the Scripture, you will invite people to share a word or a phrase that resonates with them. There's no need to offer an explanation—they can simply share the word.
- After the passage is read a second time, you will invite them to offer a few words about how they plan to live as Christ's disciples in the coming months.
- Invite two people to read Mark 6:7-11.
- Begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- Signal a reader to read the passage the first time.
- After a period of silence, ask: What word or phrase resonates with you?
- Allow each person to share a word or phrase.
- Signal the second reader to read the passage a second time.
- After a period of silence, ask: How are you going to live out Christ's mission in the coming months? Ask participants to place their sticky on the table (prayer space) after they share.
- After everyone shares, close with a spontaneous prayer and the sign of the cross.

Note: Save the sticky notes on a piece of paper for your second follow-up session.

SOLIDARITY **pledge**

- What are some of your gifts and talents? How do you think you can offer them for charity and social justice?

- Which of the ideas mentioned do you feel most passionate about?

- Based on these reflections, list a few actions you can take in the coming months to live in solidarity with the poor overseas:

SOME IDEAS:

AS A CONSUMER, you can make a difference by purchasing items that help workers in other countries earn fair wages. Buying fair trade items helps skilled artisans and farmers maintain their craft and improve their families' lives. CRS Fair Trade offers items you use on a regular basis—like coffee, tea and olive oil—and gifts for special occasions. crsfairtrade.org

THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY, you can contact your member of Congress and invite him or her to support policies that will protect the poor everywhere. Help confront the causes of global poverty—like hunger, disease, conflict and injustice—through Catholics Confront Global Poverty, or CCGP. CCGP, an initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and CRS, provides email updates about policy issues that affect poor and vulnerable people worldwide. confrontglobalpoverty.org

DURING LENT, you can enrich your family's 40-day journey—and turn your fast into a feast for others. Prayerfully walk through the 40 days of Lent and learn about the lives of our poorest brothers and sisters through daily reflections, stories of hope and classic devotions. Simple, meatless recipes bring the flavors of distant countries into your kitchen each Friday—and invite you to put the money you save by eating simply into your CRS Rice Bowl. crsricebowl.org

Get involved as members of a high school, college or university, or parish!

Catholic high schools: ghs.crs.org or education.crs.org
Youth ministry: foodfast.org

Colleges and universities: university.crs.org
Parishes: crs.org/parishambassador

back to normal?

OBJECTIVES

- Provide an opportunity for participants to check in about their lives since returning from the trip and to process how they have integrated the experience into their lives.
- Spend time in fellowship over a shared meal.

MATERIALS

- Bible opened to Luke 16:19–31
- Sticky notes from post-immersion session one

PREPARATION

- This session should be held 2 to 3 months after your return. (See post-immersion session one.)
- Make arrangements for the shared meal. If you are having a potluck, ask participants in advance to bring different parts of the meal. If you choose to go to a restaurant together, make a reservation and make sure participants know they will need to pay for their own meals.

SESSION OVERVIEW

- Welcome (15 minutes)
- Opening prayer (5 minutes)
- Seeing Lazarus (20 minutes)
- Solidarity pledge (30 minutes)
- Shared meal (50 minutes)

welcome (15 minutes)

Welcome participants

Share that today's session is a chance to check in about how things have been going since the trip and to share a meal in fellowship.

Ask everyone to share something that has surprised or challenged them since they got back.

opening prayer (5 minutes)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ...

God the Father,

We give you thanks for all the marvels you have created.

*We praise you and we bless you for the inestimable
grace of life that you give to us.*

Transform us, make us better Christians,

living testimonies of your mercy and of your power.

Strip us, Lord, of all roots of bitterness,

of false pride and haughtiness of heart.

Make us meek and humble of heart

as was our Lord Jesus Christ,

and never let us wound with our words or actions

the dignity of any person.

Put in our hearts the ardent desire

to work earnestly for those who are poor and in need.

Show us the garment with which you clothed us

the day we received you as Lord and savior of our lives.

May we wear those garments at the service

of our neighbors and this community.

Use us Lord, for your work.

Amen

Adapted from Ligia de Milla, El Salvador, *Prayer Without Borders*

seeing Lazarus (20 minutes)

INTRODUCTION

Explain that you will read the parable of the Rich Man and reflect on how this reading resonates with you now that you are back to the rhythm of your normal lives.

DISCUSSION

- Discuss together:
 - How has the service immersion trip affected your faith journey? What has changed in your life? What has remained the same that you would like to change?
- Read Luke 16:19–31
- Discuss together:
 - How does this reading resonate with or challenge you, now that you are back in your normal routine?

solidarity pledge (30 minutes)

INTRODUCTION

- Share that you will take some time to discuss the pledges participants made in the previous session and the successes and challenges of trying to live those commitments.
- Read the words on the sticky notes. They represent where each member was several months ago, immediately after the trip.

DISCUSSION

- Invite participants to pair up with their prayer partners for about 10 minutes to discuss successes and challenges in their efforts to fulfill their solidarity pledges.
- Bring the group back together. Discuss:
 - What came up in your small group discussions?
 - What do you think you need to make your commitment to solidarity a part of your daily life?

shared meal (50 minutes)

- Enjoy a shared meal. Invite a participant to lead a prayer before the meal.