



# resources for short-term, international mission and immersion trips

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## PRE-IMMERSION

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*Includes 3 sample orientation sessions  
to prepare groups taking trips*



**faith. action. results.**

# who are we and why are we here?

## OBJECTIVES

- Allow participants to get to know one another.
- Reflect on your framework for approaching the trip, and the role of relationships.

## MATERIALS

- Bible opened to Luke 16:19-31
- Music and lyrics or audio file of “Break My Heart” (Jennifer Martin, Spirit & Song)
- Music player
- Name tags
- Copies of handouts for each participant: “Why are you here?” and “The Rich Man and Lazarus”
- Pens
- Reflective music

## PREPARATION

- Make copies of the handouts.
- Cue reflective music.
- Ask two people to read the Scripture passage for the opening prayer.
- Review logistical information to communicate to the group.
- Prepare someone to lead “Break My Heart” or cue it for the closing prayer.

## SESSION OVERVIEW

- Welcome (5 minutes)
- Introductions (15 minutes)
- Opening prayer (15 minutes)
- Reflection: Why are you here? (25 minutes)
- Reflection: The Rich Man and Lazarus (30 minutes)
- Housekeeping, logistics and final announcements (25 minutes)
- Closing prayer (5 minutes)

## welcome (5 minutes)

- Welcome all participants. Invite them to wear name tags.
- Explain that this meeting is to get to know each other and to reflect about how they are approaching the trip.

## introductions (15 minutes)

Invite each person to introduce themselves, share the meaning of their name and why it was chosen, and tell how they like to spend their free time.

## opening prayer (15 minutes)

- Explain that you are participating in this trip as people of faith. Christ invites us to see him in what Blessed Teresa of Calcutta calls the “most distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor.”
- Explain that you will use the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus to reflect on how you will approach the trip.
- Begin with an adapted “Lectio Divina.”
- Explain that “Lectio Divina” is a Benedictine practice of meditating with Scripture. It typically includes reading a Scripture multiple times and reflecting on it in different ways. In your adapted version of “Lectio Divina,” you will read and reflect on the Scripture passage twice.
- Invite a person to read Luke 16:19–31. (Begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.)
- After he or she reads the passage, pause for a period of silence and then ask: What word or phrase resonates with you?
- Invite a second reader to read the same passage. After they finish, pause for another period of silence and ask participants to talk about what resonated with or challenged them.
- Close with a prayer and the sign of the cross.

## reflection: why are you here? (25 minutes)

- Distribute the “Why are you here?” handout to participants.
- Give them 5–10 minutes to silently reflect on what motivated them to participate in this journey.

### DISCUSSION

- Ask them to share their responses in groups of two or three.
- If time allows, close the sharing with a large-group discussion.

## reflection: the Rich man and Lazarus (30 minutes)

- Explain that how we approach our trip affects us and the community we will visit.

- Invite participants to keep in mind that the trip is not about this one week but about our lives as disciples. We are called by our Baptism to be Christ's disciples and to live out his mission in the world. The way each participant approaches the trip will determine how it affects their lives immediately and in the longer term.
- Explain that this time is set aside to reflect more deeply on the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, and that you will use the story to consider how we are invited into a relationship with those who suffer, and what that relationship gives to—and asks of—us.
- Tell participants that the reflection and its implications for relationship were developed by Catholic Relief Services, the official international humanitarian and development agency of the Catholic Church in the United States. CRS has worked with poor and vulnerable people around the world for more than 70 years.
- Distribute “The Rich Man and Lazarus” handout.

#### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What resonated with you from the reading? What challenged you?
- Do you really believe that those who are poor have as much to offer you as you have to offer them? Why or why not?
- What gifts do you think our host community might offer us?
- How might you need to shift your perspective in order to take a relationship-based approach?

#### **CLOSING**

After discussing the questions, note that you will participate in similar reflection opportunities during your trip, focusing on the experience and how it connects with our faith. Explain that this theological reflection is crucial to the service experience, and will place your experience within the context of your faith.

## **housekeeping, logistics and final announcements** (25 minutes)

- Use this time to share logistical information with your group. The following suggestions are not an exhaustive list:
  - Articulate expectations of participants before, during and after the trip.
  - Provide a list of needed immunizations. Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)) website for additional information. Explain where they can get them—and the deadline for getting immunized.
  - Provide information about passports and visas, and explain how to get them.
  - Confirm the departure and return dates. If participants have to book their own flights, provide some options and what they need to book them.
- Field questions.

## **closing prayer** (5 minutes)

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

*God of Compassion,*

*The Holy Father Pope Francis challenges us to learn how to cry  
To brave that pain, and so enter into true solidarity  
with your people.*

*For those who face hunger  
For those who face war  
For those who face exploitation  
For those who face displacement  
I stand in solidarity.*

*For those who face unjust discrimination  
For those who face indifference  
For those who face a lack of opportunity  
For those who face a lack of health care  
I stand in solidarity.*

*But in truth, I stand a little reluctantly  
And I stand a little far off  
Detached and apart from the great human drama,  
Lingering in the orchestra, even as you call me to the center  
stage.*

*Lord, help me to look again at  
what has been done to your people  
To their lives and to their dignity  
So that slowly, and then more strongly,  
I will allow myself to cry  
For it is only in those tears that we truly become one  
My trepidations fall away  
And I step forward and stand anew.*

*Teach me to cry.*

*Amen*

Play or sing together: "Break My Heart"

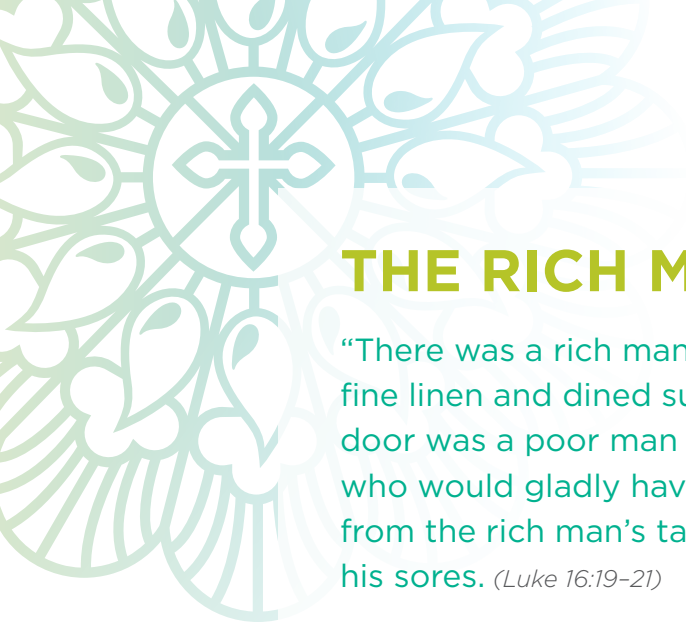
# why ARE YOU HERE?

■ What motivated you to sign up for this trip?

■ What do you hope to gain from this experience?

■ What about this experience do you feel nervous or unsure about?

■ What does taking this trip have to do with your faith?



## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. (Luke 16:19–21)

Each year, more than 1.6 million Christians in the United States pack up their passports and bug spray, and board planes to go on short-term service trips overseas. Many of these trip participants might describe their motivation this way: “I have so much, and there are others who have so little. I am going on a mission trip to give back and serve the poor.” The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus offers us a metaphor for their motivation. The parable paints a stark divide between the world’s rich and poor, warning of eternal anguish for those who do not respond compassionately to the poor at their doors.

Mission trips frequently engage participants in construction and other types of service projects. After they return home, many participants would like to make a meaningful difference beyond their experience, yet are not sure how to do it. Facing extreme poverty up close, especially for the first time, can be overwhelming. It tosses us out of our comfort zones and leads us into a spiritual and vocational journey we may not be prepared for. We may prefer to place our experiences in a box, on a high shelf, or in a back closet. And we prefer to leave it there, like old love letters or clothing that no longer fits. We don’t know what to do with the experience. We leave the United States to serve the poor overseas, but after a week or so we come home and resume our lives. The poor remain poor, and we remain divided.

The Lazarus parable teaches us that this division does not reflect God’s vision for humanity. Each of us—rich and poor—is created in God’s image to love and serve one another as one Body of Christ. Jesus was a healer during his public ministry. But he needed the healing love and presence of his companions as he suffered on the cross. Similarly, Lazarus was in need of healing—in the form of food and attention—but he was also a healer. His presence alone was healing: It manifested injustice and provided the rich man a lens to reflect on his own contribution to this injustice, and to change his life.

The Lazarus parable points to a humanity divided and in need. Yet we are all healers in need of healing. Each member of the human family has spiritual and material gifts to offer, and each of us needs these gifts as well. The Christian sojourner, in humility and vulnerability, encounters others in their giftedness and their neediness. She offers the same of herself. And she seeks to heal the divisions that distort the oneness of the Body of Christ.

This neediness and giftedness in everyone invites a new model for reflection upon mission experiences. Rather than focusing on what participants can give (service, action, time, donations), we reflect upon the giftedness of host communities and the neediness of participants—and ask how we can overcome divisions between the two. This requires a relationship-based approach that forges bonds between sending and receiving communities and leads participants to address the disease of poverty when they return home. The experience then becomes more than a short trip overseas. It is a first step in the larger Christian mission to heal divisions.



Photo by Jake Lyell for CRS

**What does a relationship-based approach look like?** CRS—with more than 70 years of encountering Christ in people who are poor—has developed guidelines, based in Catholic teaching, for working in partnership with local communities. These principles, which focus on relationship-based service grounded in mutuality, can help groups frame their trip as one of mutual healing.

■ **A RELATIONSHIP-BASED APPROACH MEANS working with the host community to plan the trip.**

In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Lazarus voices his need—but the rich man does not hear. Even though we may be trying to help, we must resist the urge to identify a community’s needs for its people. If a work project is included, it should be designed according to the needs the local community articulates and it should be sustainable after the group leaves.

■ **A RELATIONSHIP-BASED APPROACH IS ABOUT more than building and bringing “stuff.”**

If the exchange is based solely on resources, then those with few material resources are excluded from full and mutual participation. When the relationship itself is highly valued, it allows for mutual participation and transformation. We all have the ability to love, pray and be present to one another.

■ **A RELATIONSHIP-BASED APPROACH DEEPENS OUR FAITH BY inviting us to experience the universality of the Catholic Church.**

We grow in a deeper recognition of our unity in Christ when we pray and worship with our host community. As we come to know brothers and sisters of faith from other cultures, we understand Scripture in new ways and see new models of parish communities. We concretely experience our oneness in Christ and are encouraged to enlarge our tent, expanding our sense of shared humanity with all God’s people.



■ **A RELATIONSHIP-BASED APPROACH ASKS questions about the injustices facing the host community and our part in those injustices.**

Immersion trips can provide participants with a first glance at the challenges that people in a community face. It is important to pay attention to these issues and to analyze their causes. We should also reflect on how our daily decisions, including how we vote and what we buy, affect communities like our host community.

■ **A RELATIONSHIP-BASED APPROACH MEANS we reflect on and pray about our experience.**

Sometimes the last thing we want to do after a tiring day or trip is to gather together to talk and pray about it. Groups should set aside time before, during and after a trip to reflect intentionally on how to contextualize their experience within our Scripture and Tradition, and on how it invites our personal healing as well as the healing of divisions within the Body of Christ.

■ **A RELATIONSHIP-BASED APPROACH MEANS the trip is only the beginning of the relationship.**

If you choose to enter into relationship with others during your immersion trip, something unusual will happen to you when you leave. The stories you hear and share will forever shape how you care for other people around the world, even those you will never meet.

St. John Paul II wrote, “[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, no. 38)

Many people return from international service immersion with a passion that eventually fades into a vague compassion and shallow distress for the masses. Although the initial passion is great, the challenge is deepening it into a real and lifelong love for Christ, who is present in everyone, especially in those who are most vulnerable.

When we enter into relationship with people who suffer beyond what we can imagine, our hearts open. The divide between Lazarus and the rich man begins to close. And we can no longer turn away when we hear about something that seems removed from our own lives, because we realize that our own woundedness and healing are bound up with the woundedness and healing of all members of the Body of Christ.

# called to solidarity

## OBJECTIVES

- Learn about underlying social justice issues that face communities around the world, including the country you will visit.
- Reflect on how Christ invites us to respond to injustices by living in solidarity with those in need.

## MATERIALS

- Candle, cloth and other items for a prayer space
- Handout with demographic data about the country you are visiting
- Music and lyrics or audio file of “We Are One Body” (Dana Scallon, Spirit & Song)
- Music player
- Name tags
- Copies of handouts for each participant: “What is Solidarity?” and “Global Poverty Overview”
- Pens
- Reflective music
- Optional: Materials for Crossroads of the World activity (best for youth or young adult participants)
  - Large meeting space
  - Tape
  - 30 8½ × 11 sheets of colored paper, numbered 1 to 30
  - Copies of:
    - The country resource for each country. Each one printed on a different color of paper.  
**Note:** If you have a small group, consider choosing only 1 to 2 of these resources to limit the time needed to set up and complete the activity.
    - Young person introductions, enough for each participant.  
**Note:** The country resources—one for Zimbabwe, The Holy Land, India and Haiti, should you choose to use all four—and the young person introductions can be found at [crs.org/crossroads](https://crs.org/crossroads). The other documents listed there are not needed for this activity. They are included within this resource.
  - 1 red paper clip
  - 3 silver paper clips
  - 1 small box with a lid (Cut a hole in the lid, large enough so a person can reach their arm in the box without removing the lid.)
  - 2 garbage cans
  - 2 wood blocks
  - Crumpled paper

## PREPARATION

- This session assumes that the facilitator has a working knowledge of Catholic social teaching and social justice. If you are unfamiliar with or need a review of these topics, search the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website ([usccb.org](http://usccb.org)) for “Catholic social teaching” or “Two Feet of Love in Action” for helpful background information.
- Research and print information about the country you are visiting for participants. The following are possible sources:
  - CIA World Factbook: [cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/](http://cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)
  - The World Bank: [worldbank.org/en/country](http://worldbank.org/en/country)
  - Culture Grams: [culturegrams.com](http://culturegrams.com), a subscription service that provides country information
  - Ask your country or project host for information about some of the issues particular to the part of the country you're visiting. They might be able to talk about their community and country in a video conference with your group.
  - Contact CRS at 866-608-5978. We may have a representative available to share information about the country and the Church's work there.
- Make copies of the handouts.
- Prepare someone to lead the song or cue “We Are One Body” for the closing song.
- Prepare the Crossroads of the World activity: (**Note:** this activity is optional and best for youth or young adult participants. It requires about an hour of preparation.)
  - In a large room or hallway, tape the 30 numbered 8½ × 11 sheets of paper to the wall. Tape the country resources pages, which are also numbered, under the blank sheets. If a country resource has a Part II sheet, temporarily set it aside. When you are finished, you will have some areas with multiple pages taped to the wall and other areas where only one page is taped to the wall. The numbers on each of the country resource pages are intentionally out of sequence. Do not change the numbers.
  - Additional setup for country resources with Part II pages:
    - #26—Place the 4 paper clips in the box. Label the outside of the box “Zimbabwe #26.” Make sure the box has a lid so participants can't see what color paper clip they choose. Next to the box, place the country resource Zimbabwe #26 Part II face down, and write Zimbabwe #26 on the back.
    - #1—Place a wooden block in each trash can. Tape a copy of the Haiti #1 Part II country resource. Place the crumpled paper on top of the wood blocks.
- Cue reflective music to play during the Crossroads of the World activity.

## SESSION OVERVIEW

- Welcome and introduction (20 minutes)
- Opening prayer (5 minutes)
- Choose *one* of the following activities (45 minutes each):
  - Crossroads of the World (appropriate for youth/young adults)
  - Social Justice Issues Facing Host Country/Community (appropriate for adults)
- Called to solidarity (30 minutes)
- Housekeeping, logistics and final announcements (15 minutes)
- Closing prayer (5 minutes)

## welcome and introduction (20 minutes)

- Welcome all participants, and ask them to wear name tags.
- Invite everyone to introduce themselves (if necessary).
- Explain that the purpose of the meeting will be to learn about some of the social justice issues facing communities around the world, including the country that you will visit, and to reflect on how Christ invites us to respond to injustices in solidarity with those in need.

## opening prayer (5 minutes)

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

*“But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, Jacob, and formed you, Israel:  
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name: you are mine.” (Isaiah 43:1)*

*Loving God,*

*I did not know you*

*But I was yours.*

*And they do not know me*

*And I do not know them*

*But they are mine*

*And I am theirs.*

*Let no chasm, no river, no drought or storm,*

*No war, no exodus, no border, natural or constructed,*

*No device of man nor devil*

*Come between us*

*Or halt the love that burns within me,*

*The grace that flows from you.*

*Let me think on no man unless*

*I think joyful thoughts of brotherhood,*

*Let me think on no woman unless*

*I think tender thoughts of sisterhood,*

*Friend and stranger,*

*Ally and enemy,*

*Brothers,*

*Sisters.*

*They are mine*

*And I am theirs,*

*Because we are yours*

*Amen*



## crossroads of the world (45 minutes)

### INTRODUCTION

- Explain that this activity is an interactive learning opportunity highlighting the plight of poor young people around the world.
- The activity will invite participants to put themselves in the shoes of someone from Zimbabwe, the Holy Land, India or Haiti.
- By making decisions and learning about their consequences, participants will have a better understanding of the realities that young people overseas live with each day.
- Explain that participants will be asked to make a decision and that their decision will set them on a path they will follow throughout the activity.
- Distribute young person introductions to participants. Note that participants may do the activity multiple times if they choose.
- Ask them to choose the story of a person from one country.
- Explain that each country is printed on a different color of paper.
- Have them go to the indicated number and read the directions that correspond to the character in the country they've been assigned.

### DISCUSSION

After the activity, reconvene and discuss:

- What struck you most about your character's life?
- What challenges—either because of their personal situation or society—did your character face?
- What decisions were you forced to make? Why did you make those decisions?
- How much freedom did you have in this activity? How did that freedom compare with the freedom you have in your life?
- Share that people in many countries around the world deal with challenges like the characters in the Crossroads of the World activity. They have limited freedom, face violence and oppression, must help support their families rather than go to school, and lack access to food, water, medical care, sufficient shelter and other basic necessities.
- Explain that the societies people live in often affect the choices they make.
- Share that during your trip, as you become more familiar with the realities facing your host community, you will take time to do social analysis and ask why people are living in such conditions.
- Take time to provide demographic data about the country you will visit, and be sure to note some of the social justice issues that affect the people living there. (**Note:** You could also use this time to invite someone from the host community, or a CRS representative, to phone or hold a video call with your group.)

## social justice issues facing host country/community (45 minutes)

### INTRODUCTION

- Explain that poverty has many causes.
- Many people have limited freedom, face violence and oppression, are forced to help support their families rather than go to school, and lack access to food, water, medical care, sufficient shelter and other basic necessities.
- Explain that the societies people live in often affect the choices they make.
- Share that during your trip, as you become more familiar with the realities facing your host community, you will take time to do social analysis—and to ask why people are living in such conditions.



Photo by Sam Tarling for CRS

### DISCUSSION

- Distribute the “Global Poverty Overview” and any demographic data about the country you are visiting. Ask participants to review it. (**Note:** You could also use this time to invite someone from the host community, or a CRS representative, to phone or hold a video call with your group.)
  - Reflection questions:
    - What surprised or challenged you?
    - What are some of the underlying causes of poverty facing the country we are visiting?
    - What questions did this information raise for you? What would you like to learn more about?
    - How did you understand CRS’ integral human development approach—and why do you think it might be successful?

## called to solidarity (30 minutes)

### INTRODUCTION

- Share that part of the reason communities of faith take immersion trips is because we believe that the suffering of others deeply affects us.
- Explain that the Catholic Church has developed a body of teaching, called Catholic social teaching, that outlines how we live our faith in the world. One of the themes of Catholic social teaching is solidarity, or that “we are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world.” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching)
- Explain that we are a part of the Body of Christ and can’t live disconnected from people who suffer.
- Say that this trip will remind us that our call to solidarity is not just about the time that we are away, but about how we live our faith, even during times when we are not directly encountering the reality of the suffering of those around the world on a daily basis.

### REFLECTION

- Distribute the “What is Solidarity?” handout.
- Invite them to reflect on what solidarity means and develop their own definition. Encourage them to be creative.
- If time allows, invite them to share their definitions.

## housekeeping, logistics and final announcements (15 minutes)

- Announce your next meeting date, time and other necessary information.
- Share the final flight arrangements.
- Discuss the packing list.
- Review your in-country itinerary, if applicable.

## closing prayer (5 minutes)

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



*Heavenly Father,*

*Help us live our faith by serving our brothers and sisters around the world who are tested and troubled by life’s cruelest circumstances.*

*Grant us the will and means to feed, clothe, shelter, heal and comfort those who suffer immensely.*

*Through your many blessings may we share and receive hope and love in abundance.*

*Amen*

Close by singing or listening to the song “We Are One Body”

# WHAT IS solidarity?

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

Saint John Paul II, “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,” No. 38



**“If one member of Christ’s body suffers, all suffer. If one member is honored, all rejoice.”**

1 Corinthians 12:12-26



“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Matthew 25:35-40



**“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”**

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta



## ■ Solidarity in your own words

Create your own definition of solidarity in 30 words or fewer.

“The solidarity which binds all [people] 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.”

Saint John XXIII, “Mater et Magistra,” No. 157



“Who is responsible for the blood of these brothers and sisters of ours? Nobody! That is our answer: It isn’t me; I don’t have anything to do with it; it must be someone else, but certainly not me. Yet God is asking each of us: ‘Where is the blood of your brother which cries out to me?’ Today no one in our world feels responsible; we have lost a sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters. We have fallen into the hypocrisy of the priest and the Levite whom Jesus described in the parable of the Good Samaritan: we see our brother half dead on the side of the road, and perhaps we say to ourselves: ‘poor soul ... !’ and then go on our way. It’s not our responsibility, and with that we feel reassured, assuaged.”

Visit to Lampedusa, Homily of Holy Father  
Pope Francis, July 8, 2013



# global poverty OVERVIEW

**ACCORDING TO THE WORLD BANK, IN 2011, 2.2 BILLION PEOPLE LIVED ON LESS THAN \$2 A DAY.**

The number had decreased only slightly in 30 years: it was 2.59 billion in 1981. In some countries, there is also a widening gap between rich and poor, leading to even greater disparity between those who can and cannot access good schools, health care, safe water, electricity and other critical services. Natural disasters, economic shocks (such as the Great Recession), climate change and lack of food undermine progress.

## CAUSES OF POVERTY

There are many underlying causes of poverty. Climate change, for example, is expected to hit developing countries the hardest. Higher temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns will lead to rising sea levels and more frequent weather-related disasters, posing risks for agriculture, food and water supplies. Natural disasters push already vulnerable people into poverty and make the poor even poorer. The world needs to produce at least 50 percent more food to feed a projected 9 billion people by 2050. But climate change could cut crop yields by more than 25 percent. Poverty is also linked to violence. Many places affected by poverty are either on the edge of or recovering from

violent conflict or war. Thus, addressing poverty also involves understanding and addressing the underlying causes of war, and seeking reconciliation in societies divided by race, ethnic origin or economic opportunity.

Disparity in economic opportunity—based on race, ethnic origin, social class or gender—is another cause of poverty. Economic opportunity ensures adequate livelihoods so that education, health care and basic necessities like food and shelter are available to all. Creating economic opportunity includes raising wages, increasing access to quality education and providing training in the skills needed for today's job market.

## RESPONSES TO POVERTY

Poverty is a complex problem that must be addressed at all levels. CRS carries out the commitment of the bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. We seek to promote human development by responding to major emergencies, fighting disease and poverty, and nurturing peaceful and just societies. CRS also strives to support and strengthen the work of Catholic overseas service and volunteer programs, with a goal to work collaboratively and reduce the number of poor and vulnerable worldwide.

CRS has developed a framework, integral human development, or IHD, which is based in Catholic teaching and designed to address poverty holistically. It promotes the good of every person and the whole person—cultural, economic, social, political and spiritual. The basic approach is to build resilience among poor and vulnerable people so they are less vulnerable to crises, to improve livelihoods so families can become self-sustaining, and to work to mitigate the effects of climate change and natural disasters. This can only happen when people work collaboratively across all sectors of civil society. IHD is a poverty-alleviation strategy that works.

CRS responds to emergencies around the world—providing food, water, shelter and clothing to people in desperate need immediately following a disaster. CRS continues to support communities in the long run by improving livelihoods and strengthening civil society so communities can better respond to future disasters. From the very beginning of a disaster, CRS works with affected communities with the ultimate goal of moving from relief through reconstruction. CRS also helps communities worldwide prevent future disasters through peacebuilding and disaster preparation.

The work of solidarity is not limited to large organizations like CRS or the World Bank. As members of one human family, each of us is touched by the suffering of others and we long to respond. Traveling to a country deeply affected by poverty will bring these statistics and programs to life. Later reflections will encourage you to commit to building solidarity and working for the common good.

## SOURCES

[Catholic Relief Services](#)

[The World Bank](#) (worldbank.org)

["Poverty Overview"](#)

["Poverty Reduction in Practice: How and Where We Work"](#)

["Food Security Overview"](#)

Lamberty, Kim. ["The Art of Accompaniment."](#) *Missiology: An International Review* (2014).

## sent on mission



*Photo by Jim Stipe/CRS*

### OBJECTIVES

- Think collectively about your objectives for the trip.
- Participate in a commissioning ritual as you prepare for your trip.
- Spend time in fellowship over a shared meal.

### MATERIALS

- Bible opened to Matthew 19:16-30
- Crosses (or a symbolic item from the country you are visiting) for each participant to use in the commissioning
- Flip chart paper
- Items needed for a shared meal
- Markers
- Music and lyrics or audio file of “Walk Together Children” (ValLimar Jansen and Frank Jansen, Spirit & Song)
- Music player
- Copies of handouts for each participant: “Seeing Lazarus” and “Group Vision”
- Pens
- Sign-up sheet for volunteers to lead a prayer on one or more nights of your trip

## PREPARATION

- Make any arrangements needed for the shared meal. If you are having a potluck meal, ask participants in advance to bring different parts of the meal. If you are going to a restaurant, make sure participants know in advance the reservation, cost and payment details.
- Purchase crosses (or other symbolic item) for the commissioning in advance. You might consider purchasing items from CRS' fair trade partner SERRV. Go to [serrv.org/crs](http://serrv.org/crs) and search for "gifts of faith."
- Make copies of the handouts.
- Ask four readers to read the opening prayer.
- Prepare someone to lead the song or cue "Walk Together Children."
- Write expectations and tips for a successful journey on the flip chart. (See the session outline for details.)
- Prepare a prayer space for the commissioning prayer, including a Bible and the crosses or symbolic items for the commissioning.
- Ask a reader to read Matthew 19:16–30.
- Invite a participant to lead a prayer before the meal.

**Note:** Consider inviting participants' families and friends to the commissioning or have the commissioning in front of a parish or other community you belong to. Or, see if you can receive a blessing in front of the community before the end of a Mass.

## SESSION OVERVIEW

- Welcome and introduction (10 minutes)
- Opening prayer (5 minutes)
- Setting a group vision (15 minutes)
- Anticipating the journey (20 minutes)
- Trip expectations (10 minutes)
- Housekeeping, logistics and final announcements (5 minutes)
- Commissioning (10 minutes)
- Shared meal (45 minutes)

## welcome and introduction (10 minutes)

- Welcome participants.
- Ask everyone to introduce themselves (if necessary).
- Explain that the purpose of today's meeting is to think collectively about objectives for the trip, to be commissioned for the journey and to spend time in fellowship.

## opening prayer (5 minutes)

Invite participants to pray together, "Seeing Lazarus."

### LEADER

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

*Christ Jesus,*

*As we reflect on with the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-25), may your words echo in our own lives.*

### READER ONE

***There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day.***

*Lord, help us remember our relative riches compared with many around the world. We are grateful for the opportunity to take this trip, which is a privilege that many people will never have.*

### READER TWO

***And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores.***

*Help us to not only recognize Lazarus lying on our doorstep, but to not be afraid to look at, hold and befriend him—especially when it is inconvenient or uncomfortable.*

### READER THREE

***When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.***

*May we remember that the poor have a special place in your dwelling place, and that we will be judged at the end of our lives by how we treat the poorest and most vulnerable people.*



#### READER FOUR

*And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented.*

*Generous God, you offered the rich man the chance to care for Lazarus—a chance for salvation and for the Rich Man's own healing and freedom. We ask that you help us always be mindful of what the poor offer us instead of focusing only on what we can give.*

#### LEADER

*We ask all of this in Jesus' name.*

*Amen*

Close by singing or listening to “Walk Together Children.”

## setting a group vision (15 minutes)

### INTRODUCTION

- Share that you are taking this trip as a community. Each person is taking the journey with their own hopes and goal in mind—but these also shape the group's hopes.
- Explain that this exercise will allow the group to share their own hopes for the journey and agree on a group vision for the trip.

### REFLECTION

- Ask the group to silently call to mind their hopes for the upcoming journey. Distribute the “Group Vision” handout and ask participants to write your shared vision on the top of the handout.

### DISCUSSION

- Ask participants to share their hopes with the group. Take notes on the flip chart paper.
- After everyone has shared, begin as a group to combine similar themes. Narrow these to 2 to 3 points.
- Explain that these will create your group's vision. Once the group has determined their group vision, remind them that it will help guide them throughout the journey. Distribute the “Group Vision” handout and ask participants to write your shared vision on the top of the handout.
- Share that to fulfill the group vision, all participants will need to take an active part in the journey. Each person (or maybe more than one, depending on the size of your group) will be invited to lead a prayer to open your nightly reflections during the trip. Pass around the sign-up sheet. (Alternative: Consider having people sign up to prepare a prayer that corresponds to the theme of each daily reflection. See the daily reflections in the “Immersion” section for themes.)



*Photo by Karen Kasmauski for CRS*

## anticipating the journey (20 minutes)

### INTRODUCTION

- This is a chance for participants to share sources of anxiety and support before the trip.
- Discussing participants' anxieties may help you better understand where participants are coming from and help them realize that others may also be nervous about the trip.

### REFLECTION

- Ask participants to reflect on these two questions, located on the bottom half of the "Group Vision" handout:
  - Is there anything about this trip that you're anxious or unsure about? If so, what?
  - Who or what do you think will be a source of support for you on this journey?

### DISCUSSION

- After participants have had a few minutes to reflect on these questions, give them 5-10 minutes to discuss their answers in groups of two to three.
- Ask participants to share their answers with the larger group. Write their responses on the flip chart as a reminder that participants have similar concerns.
- Try to address their anxieties by providing information about the trip that can help diminish their nervousness.

## trip expectations (10 minutes)

- Take some time to provide the group with your expectations, including ground rules.
- Please see a sample list of expectations and tips below. These are only suggestions and *not an exhaustive list*. Please edit them so they are appropriate for your group. In addition to the list of suggested expectations below, consider:
  - Providing information on photography policies (check with the host community about their policy ahead of time.)
  - Providing the participants with your policy on electronics (phone, tablets, etc.)
  - Helping participants prepare to encounter people asking for money. Emphasize that for safety reasons, participants should not give money to beggars or unintentionally flaunt their money. If participants would like to give a gift to the host community, make sure to consult your hosts before doing so.
- Share expectations with participants. Ask them if there are any other expectations they think should be added to the list.

### SUGGESTIONS

1. Stay open to the Spirit.
2. Seek Christ in all the people you meet.
3. Be aware of the itinerary at all times.
4. Participate in all activities.
5. Respect all ideas and group input.
6. Be mindful of and open to cultural lessons.
7. Be flexible.
8. Stay with the group.
9. Participate fully in group reflection and prayer every day.
10. Be on time.

### TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL AND HEALTHY JOURNEY

#### DO

- Ask questions
- Listen
- Learn a lot
- Drink bottled water only
- Tell a group leader if you get sick
- Have fun

#### DON'T

- Eat from street vendors
- Give money to beggars
- Drink tap water (including ice) or use it to brush your teeth
- Eat salad, fruit or veggies that aren't cooked or can't be peeled

## housekeeping, logistics and final announcements (5 minutes)

- Go over additional logistical information.
- Field questions about packing, departure information, etc.

## commissioning (10 minutes)

### LEADER

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

We entrust ourselves to the hands of the Lord, no matter where he calls us. We pray that we will recognize God's goodness in the hospitality we receive, that we will bring the Good News to all we meet and be ready to receive it, that we will be courteous toward all, and that we will greet the poor and afflicted with kindness and love.

As we prepare to take this journey, let us listen together to a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

### READER ONE

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

*Now someone approached him and said, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?" He answered him, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He asked him, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied,*

*"You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

*The young man said to him, "All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.*

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."*

*When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible."*

*Then Peter said to him in reply, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life.*

*But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.*

The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.



#### LEADER

Lord, the young man said he had observed all the commandments and asked, “What do I still lack?” As we prepare to embark on our journey, help us embrace your invitation to be open to doing what we still lack. You told the young man to abandon all he had to follow you. But the young man was unable to take the extra step. We pray that you give us the courage to be free of all the comfort we cling to. Transform us and help us give ourselves over to you—and in the service of others—more freely. Amen

#### DISTRIBUTION OF CROSSES

These crosses [or other symbolic objects] are a sign of our commitment to following Christ on the journey of discipleship and our commitment to enter as fully as we can into relationship with each other and those we meet.

*Invite participants forward to receive a cross (or symbolic object).*

#### LEADER

May the Lord remain constantly at our side and in his mercy guide our journey in ways that are pleasing to him.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

### shared meal (45 minutes)

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



*Photo by Karen Kasmauski for CRS*

## seeing Lazarus

### LEADER

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

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*May we remember that the poor have a special place in your dwelling place, and that we will be judged at the end of our lives by how we treat the poorest and most vulnerable people.*



# GROUP **vision**

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■ Is there anything about this trip that you're anxious or unsure about? If so, what?

■ Who or what do you think will be a source of support for you on this journey?