

LIVING OUR FAITH at St Philip Neri

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"Called to live out our Catholic faith and its social teaching, this commission seeks to transform the world through education, advocacy and service to empower the people of the parish to work for peace and justice."

-Peace & Justice Commission Mission Statement

The St. Philip Neri Peace & Justice Commission has decided to embark on a journey ... and you are invited to join us! Our group has been actively involved in the life of the parish and larger community for a number of years. We have addressed many topics and focus areas, from the death penalty to homelessness to refugee resettlement to health care to voluntary simplicity. With your help, we have been able to apply Catholic teaching and make a real difference in some of these areas. In others, we have merely scratched the surface.

Over the next six months, we have decided to go deeper through study and prayer to look at one specific focus area ... **poverty**. Our hope is that through this time of discernment, we will be drawn to new areas of ministry, education and advocacy. As always, you are welcome to join us at our meetings the first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Paulist Center. We also invite you to join us in spirit:

- as partners in prayer;
- as co-learners as we embark on this course of study; and
- as co-workers as we engage in new areas of ministry and spread the good news.

"The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation ... As individuals and as a nation, therefore, we are called to make a fundamental "option for the poor." The obligation to evaluate social and economic activity from the viewpoint of the poor and the powerless arises from the radical command to love one's neighbor as one's self."

-US Bishops Conference, *Economic Justice for All*, 1986

Poverty Quiz. Let's start by seeing just how much we know about the reality of poverty in our country.

1. The current federal minimum wage per hour is: \$_____.
2. The current Oregon minimum wage per hour is: \$_____.
3. If you are a single parent with two children, you can support your family making the federal minimum wage. True or False? _____
4. The majority of people living below the poverty line are African American. True or False? _____
5. Over 30 million Americans live below the poverty line? True or False? _____
6. Is the poverty rate highest among the elderly or children? _____
7. How many people are likely to experience homelessness in a given year?
 - a. 500,000
 - b. 2 million
 - c. 3.5 million
 - d. 1 million
8. What percentage of Americans are 2 paychecks away from homelessness?
 - a. 15%
 - b. 5%
 - c. 40%
9. Most minimum wage jobs are held by:
 - a. men
 - b. women
 - c. teenagers
 - d. evenly split between all three
10. The top 20% of households receive about 25% of national income. True or False? _____

The answers are on the other side. ↩

(Source: Center of Concern, Education for Justice website)

Poverty Quiz Answers. Let's see how we did.

1. The current federal minimum wage per hour is:
\$5.15 per hour (\$10,712 per year at full time).
2. The current Oregon minimum wage per hour is:
\$7.50 per hour (\$15,600 per year at full time).
3. If you are a single parent with two children, you can support your family making federal minimum wage.
False. A single parent family with two children cannot be supported on federal minimum wage. The federal poverty line for this family is \$15,067. An Oregon family would fall just over of the federal poverty line.
4. The majority of people living below the poverty line are African American.
False. The majority of people living below the poverty line in the US are white. However, the poverty rates for African-Americans and Hispanics are more than 3 times higher than the poverty rates for whites.
5. Over 30 million Americans live below the poverty line?
True. In 2004, 1.1 million more people fell into poverty bringing the total to 37 million people.
6. Is the poverty rate highest among the elderly or children?
Children. One in six children lives in poverty, whereas one in ten people over the age of 65 lives in poverty.
7. How many people are likely to experience homelessness in a given year?
3.5 million people – 1.34 million of them children.
8. What percentage of Americans are 2 paychecks away from homelessness?
40% of Americans are 2 paychecks away from being homeless.
9. Most minimum wage jobs are held by:
Women.
10. The top 20% of households receive about 25% of national income.
False. The top 20% of households receive 50.4% of national income, while the remaining 80% receive only 49.6%. The top 1% of income earners (2.7 million people) receive 12.9% of national income, as much as the poorest 100 million people combined.

What is this "Poverty Line" anyway?

Food, shelter, clothing, health care, transportation - these are only the beginnings of the basic necessities of modern American living. Each year, the federal government calculates the minimum amount of money required by families to meet these basic needs. The resulting calculation is what is commonly referred to as the "poverty line." Using 2004 data, the government has set the 2005 poverty guidelines at:

Size of Family Unit	Weighted Average Thresholds
One person (unrelated individual)	\$9,645
Under 65 years	\$9,827
65 years and over	\$9,060
Two persons	\$12,334
Householder under 65	\$12,649
Householder 65 and over	\$11,418
Three persons	\$15,067
Four persons	\$19,307
Five persons	\$22,831
Six persons	\$25,788
Seven persons	\$29,236
Eight persons	\$32,641
Nine persons or more	\$39,048

Could you support your family on this amount?

Do you think the poverty line is an adequate reflection of what is needed to provide the "bare necessities"?

Prayer as we begin our work on poverty:

Christ, who showed great compassion to the poor
Give us compassion toward those in poverty.
Your wish is for all your children to live with dignity,
with adequate food, shelter, health care and
education.

Help us take up your work as a community of faith.
Guide us as we seek just solutions to poverty in our
midst.

Amen