

A Bible Study on Solidarity

We are our Neighbors' Keepers

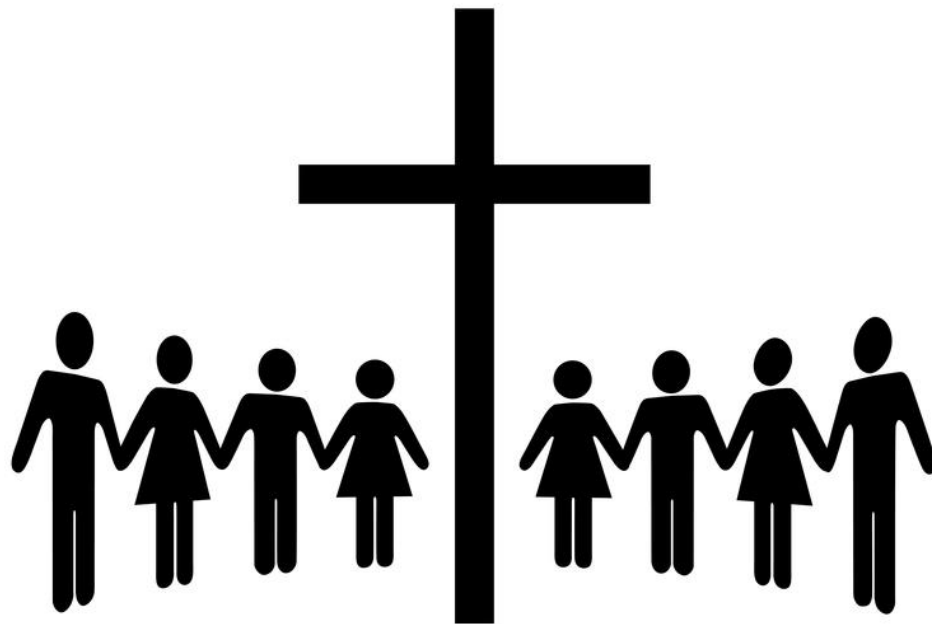


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A Brief Overview

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) have identified seven core themes in Catholic Social Teaching (CST). This six session bible study on “Solidarity” is one of those themes. This study may be adapted to meet the needs of a given group to meet weekly or monthly. Each session can be run approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Leaders of this study act more as facilitators rather than teachers. Knowledge of the material is not a prerequisite for a good study. The discussion questions in each section are meant to be thought provoking, used to open up a discussion into practical ways to live our faith. The facilitator of the group is a fellow learner. If questions arise, the facilitator can refer them to a pastor, members of parish staff, or the Parish Social Ministry Office of Catholic Charities, and bring answers back to the next meeting. If time allows, a study group could incorporate social time, which could include refreshments or a meal.

Components of the Bible Study

1. **Opening Prayer:** *A Prayer for Global Solidarity*. (Groups are free to adapt or use a different opening prayer.)
2. **Bible Passage and Discussion Questions:** Each week a bible passage related to the given theme is read. Questions are provided to prompt group discussion and reflection, but members should feel free to discuss whatever questions or insights the passage raises for them. It is not a requirement that all questions be used in the discussion.
3. **Papal Encyclicals.** A brief teaching from our recent Popes on each theme with discussion questions is provided. Feel free to discuss other questions that may arise apart from the prepared questions.
4. **Challenge Activities.** This activity is provided to put the session’s theme into action. Group members may decide to do something together, or they may decide what they will do as individuals. Some people may already be doing what is suggested, so it may only be a challenge to continue what they are already doing. If you are doing a weekly study, it will probably be too much to add another challenge activity each week. Instead, encourage members to commit to one or two things a month.
5. **Closing Prayer.** The closing prayer changes with each session. Groups can use the prepared prayer or use a different prayer that the group agrees to.

Session 1: Solidarity

Opening Prayer: *A Prayer for Global Solidarity*

CRS Video on Solidarity

YouTube video found at **crs.org/resource-center**

Scroll down to Catholic Social Teaching 101 Videos

Bible Passage and Discussion Questions: Love for Enemies

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
Matthew 5:43-48 (NABRE)

Questions for Reflection:

1. In this scripture passage, what words or phrases intrigued you the most?
2. Who are the most common enemies of people in our culture?
3. Who are your enemies? (You may talk in general here.)
4. Do you find Jesus’ call to love your enemy challenging? Explain.
5. How can you practically live out Jesus’ command in this passage?

USCCB Teaching: Solidarity

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. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that if you want peace, work for justice. The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the success stories in our culture and our community regarding solidarity?
2. What are examples of how our culture fails to live out the concept of solidarity?
3. Where do you feel the work of justice is most lacking in our society?
4. Who are the peacemakers in your life?
5. What do we need to achieve peace?
6. What can we do to achieve solidarity in our own community?

Challenge Activities:

- Reach out to someone in your parish who seems to be an outsider.
- Advocate for groups who lack a voice in your community.
- Attend community events and/or join groups that work toward solidarity.
- Write a letter to the editor or contact political officials to support immigrants and refugees who are struggling in our country and in the world.
- Make a commitment to be a peacemaker by never using violent words or actions and treating others with respect, even those whose opinions and actions you disagree with.

Closing Prayer: Start with petitions, then pray the reflection *A Few Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer*. Finish with the *Our Father*.

Session 2: The Common Good

Opening Prayer: *A Prayer for Global Solidarity*

Bible Passage and Discussion Questions: One Body, Many Parts

“As a body is one, though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, “Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,” it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, “Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,” it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I do not need you.” If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.” 1 Cor. Chap 12: 12-21 & 26 (NABRE)

Questions for Reflection:

1. What in this passage intrigues you?
2. What does this passage say to you about the functioning of an organization or community?
3. What are the divisions you see in today’s society? Our Church?
4. What does this passage have to say to you about the part each of us plays in God’s plan?
5. What are examples of diversity in our midst? Does diversity lead to tension? In what ways can diversity enrich us?

Passage from “On Social Concern” – John Paul II

“[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.” (St. John Paul II, *On Social Concern*)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is challenging about this encyclical from St. John Paul II?
2. What do we need to do to commit ourselves to the common good? Give an example.
3. How can we truly be “responsible for all”?
4. Is majority rule always just? How do we balance the needs of the many in cases when the needs of the minority are so great?
5. What are the challenges in living the ideal of the common good?

Challenge Activities:

- Identify a group of people whose needs in our society are not being met. What is one small thing that you could do to make a difference?
- Structures in our society sometimes lead to inequalities. Spend time reading and reflecting about current injustices.
- Commit to one practice that champions the common good.

Closing Prayer: Reflection: *We Shall Speak and Work for our Brothers and Sisters*. Finish with the *Our Father*.

Session 3: Love Your Neighbor

Opening Prayer: *A Prayer for Global Solidarity*

Bible Passage and Discussion Questions -- Love Fulfills the Law

“Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, [namely] “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.” Romans: Chap 13: 8-10 (NABRE)

Questions for Reflection:

1. What is a word or phrase that jumps out to you in this passage?
2. How do you react to the passage, “Love does no evil to the neighbor”?
3. In our society, who is considered our neighbor?
4. According to Romans, who is our neighbor?
5. What is the challenge in living out the teaching of this passage?

Passage from “Charity in Truth” – Pope Benedict

“To love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is the good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of "all of us", made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. ... To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth*)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the challenge in this encyclical?
2. What does it mean to work toward the “Common Good”?
3. Where do we fail in this in our society?
4. How do we balance the common good with our own individual good?
5. Why is this teaching on the Common Good hard to follow?

Challenge Activities:

- Read the encyclical “Charity in Truth” to learn more about the common good.
- Reflect on the needs in our society and community in prayer. What are you called to do?
- Act on the needs you see to reach the Common Good.
- Consider who you find hardest to love, and pray for the grace to love them anyway.

Closing Prayer: Reflection: *Hope Began with Only One*, follow with petitions and the *Our Father*.

Session 4: The Call to be Peacemakers

Opening Prayer: *A Prayer for Global Solidarity*

Bible Passage and Discussion Questions – The Messianic Vision

“He shall judge between the nations, and set terms for many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!” Isaiah 2: 4-5 (NABRE)

Questions for Reflection:

1. What images intrigue you about this passage?
2. Is the call to be peacemakers realistic in today’s world?
3. What would be a modern equivalent of “beating swords into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks”?
4. What can we do in the service of peace?
5. Is peace possible?

Passage from “On Christianity and Social Progress” – St. John XXIII

“The solidarity which binds all men 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.” (St. John XXIII, *On Christianity and Social Progress*)

Discussion Questions:

1. What stands out to you from the words of St. John XXIII?
2. What should wealthy nations do to overcome the “hunger, misery and poverty of other nations”?
3. What are examples of how nations of the world are dependent on one another?
4. How might addressing social imbalances lead to lasting peace?
5. What successes have we had in addressing social imbalances? What have been our failures?

Challenge Activities:

- Inform yourself about the current issues, and be a voice.
- Be a peacemaker in your community, working to be a voice of reason and correcting injustices with humbleness.
- Support policies and organizations who support developing nations.
- Pray for peace.

Closing Prayer: Read *The Beatitudes*, follow with petitions and the *Our Father*.

Session 5 -- Economic Solidarity

Opening Prayer: *A Prayer for Global Solidarity*

Bible Passage and Discussion Questions – Life in the Christian Community

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.” Acts Chapter 4: 32-35 (NABRE)

Questions for Reflection:

1. What intrigues you about the passage above?
2. Is what is described in the first generation Church even possible today?
3. What can we learn and apply from this passage from Acts?
4. A common teaching in our faith, is that what we have been given is not our own, but a gift from God. What does that mean to you? Can this teaching be practically lived?
5. What do we owe to the poor among us?

Passage from Laudato Si -- Pope Francis

“In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods, but, as I mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good.” (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* (Laudato Si))

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing you take from this passage from Laudato Si?
2. How do we live out the ideal of giving “preferential treatment for the poor”?
3. What does your Church or community do to respond to the plight of the poor?
4. What can you do in your community and beyond?
5. What does it mean to be in solidarity with the poor?

Challenge Activities:

- Become informed about the issues of poverty in your community and in the world.
- Write to your legislators at budget time to be a voice to the poor.
- Live simply by taking just what you need in this world’s goods and sharing of your surplus.
- Seek encounters with the poor by helping in shelters, food shelves, doing mission trips, etc.
- Support organizations like Catholic Relief Services, Bread for the World, Oxfam, etc... who work with the poor to raise their standard.

Closing Prayer: *Prayer During Difficult Economic Times.* Follow with petitions and the *Our Father*.

Session 6 – Care of Creation

Opening Prayer: *A Prayer for Global Solidarity*

Bible Passage and Discussion Questions – The Creation Story

“Then God said: Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal. And so it happened: God made every kind of wild animal, every kind of tame animal, and every kind of thing that crawls on the ground. God saw that it was good. Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

God created mankind in his image;
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.”
Genesis Chap 1: 24-31 (NABRE)

Questions for Reflection:

1. What word or phrase are you drawn to in this passage? Why?
2. What in creation do you feel most drawn too?
3. How can we be good stewards of what God has created?
4. How does care of creation fit into your faith?

Passage from Laudato Si -- Pope Francis

“Developing countries, where the most important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future. The land of the southern poor is rich and mostly unpolluted, yet access to ownership of goods and resources for meeting vital needs is inhibited by a system of commercial relations and ownership which is structurally perverse.... As the United States bishops have said, greater attention must be given to "the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests". We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference.” (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si)*)

Discussion Questions:

1. What in this passage most intrigues you?
2. How do we balance economic advancement with the care of creation?
3. What are the things that we need to do to create a sustainable future?
4. What do you find most challenging in the above passage?
5. What are some success stories in overcoming the “globalization of indifference”?

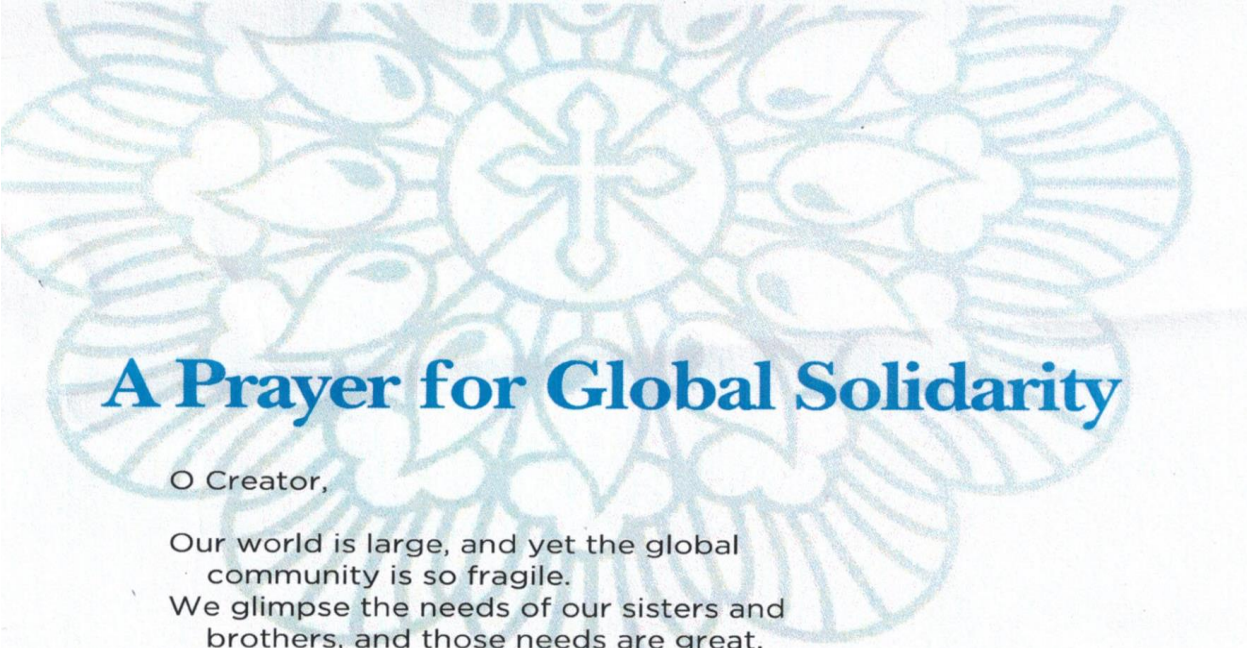
Challenge Activities:

- Recycle, reuse, repurpose.
- Become informed on environmental issues and make your voice heard.
- Live within your means.
- Give generously of time and treasure to sustain creation into the future.

Closing Prayer: Pray together *A Prayer for our Earth* (from Laudato Si'). Finish with prayers of petition and the *Our Father*.

Appendix

- i. A Prayer for Global Solidarity
- ii. A Few Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer
- iii. We Shall Speak and Work for our Brothers and Sisters
- iv. Hope Began with Only One
- v. The Beatitudes
- vi. Prayer During Difficult Economic Times
- vii. A Prayer for Our Earth (from Laudato Si')



A Prayer for Global Solidarity

O Creator,

Our world is large, and yet the global
community is so fragile.

We glimpse the needs of our sisters and
brothers, and those needs are great.

We want to turn away, but you call us back.

We want simple solutions, but you want us to
help solve the complex problems.

Through your Church, you call us to listen, to learn,
to reflect and to act.

Give us a deep sense of our place in this web of Creation.

Give us the wisdom of mind and generosity of
heart to seek your will in the world today.

Inspire us to respond to the call to live in solidarity with
impoverished countries of the world,
so that all children of God might live in dignity and peace.

Amen

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A Few Thoughts on The Lord's Prayer

I cannot pray *Our*, if my faith has no room for others and their need.

I cannot pray *Father*, if I do not demonstrate this relationship to God in my daily living.

I cannot pray *who art in heaven*, if all of my interests and pursuits are in earthly things.

I cannot pray *hallowed be thy name*, if I am not striving, with God's help, to be holy.

I cannot pray *thy kingdom come*, if I am unwilling to accept God's rule in my life.

I cannot pray *thy will be done*, if I am unwilling or resentful of having it in my life.

I cannot pray *on earth as it is in Heaven*, unless I am truly ready to give myself to God's Service here and now.

I cannot pray *give us this day our daily bread*, without expending honest effort for it, or if I would withhold from my neighbor the bread that I receive.

I cannot pray *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*, if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.

I cannot pray *lead us not into temptation*, if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.

I cannot pray *deliver us from evil*, if I am not prepared to fight evil with my life and prayer.

I cannot pray *thine is the kingdom*, if I am unwilling to obey the King.

I cannot pray *thine is the power and the glory*, if I am seeking power for myself and my own glory first.

I cannot pray *forever and ever*, if I am too anxious about each day's affairs.

I cannot pray *Amen*, unless I honestly say, "Cost what it may, this is my prayer."

We Shall Speak and Work for our Brothers and Sisters

Opening Prayer: Leader

We thank you Father, Teacher and Lord. We thank you for the grace of being together and boldly ask what is your wish for us. We ask for your Spirit to challenge us again and again as we make your word come alive as we preach with our very lives.
Amen.

Reflection

Leader: Are we the people who live for others, who teach the good news by our lives?

Response: With God's help we will be that people (repeat
after each verse)

Leader: Are we a community recognized and known for our love?

Leader: Are we the people who thirst for justice and peace?

Leader: Are we men and women courageous enough to make peace, who are strong enough to be gentle?

Leader: Are we the ones who take seriously our titles -- "Salt of the Earth" and "Light of the World"?

Leader: Do we believe the Spirit of God fills us and sends us in our homes jobs and classrooms?

All: With God's strength we will be the people called to open wide the great debate about our prejudices and lack of forgiveness. With God's help we will be students of God's word and teachers of God's love. We will give a new and richer meaning to the words respect and care. Help our belief, Lord, and accept our pledge to You and to each other....in Christ's name. Amen.

Hope Began with Only One

MY CHILD, I've often heard your questions: This message is my answer. You're concerned about the hungry in the world, millions who are starving...and you ask, "What can I do?" **FEED ONE**

You grieve for all the unborn children murdered every day...and you ask: "What can I Do?" **SAVE ONE**

You're haunted by the homeless poor who wander city streets...and you ask: "What Can I do?" **SHELTER ONE**

You feel compassion for those who suffer pain, sorrow and despair...and you ask, "What can I do?" **COMFORT ONE**

Your heart goes out to the lonely, the abused, and the imprisoned...and you ask... "What can I do?" **LOVE ONE**

Remember this, My Child...two thousand years ago the world was filled with those in need, just as it is today, and when the helpless and the hopeless called out to Me for mercy, I sent a Savior... **HOPE BEGAN WITH ONLY ONE!**

Prayer by B.J. Hoff

THE BEATITUDES

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

6 Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me.

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (NABRE)

PRAYER DURING DIFFICULT ECONOMIC TIMES

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Gracious God,

We know that your love is infinite and that you care about all areas of our life.
In this time of economic insecurity, help us to trust that all of our security is in you.
Keep us mindful that you always have and always will provide for our needs.
Apart from you we can do nothing.

Merciful God,

We ask that you give our leaders the wisdom to guide our nation and the world
out of the current economic crisis.
Help us to protect the poor and all those who are struggling during this difficult time.
Provide for their needs and give them hope.
Open new opportunities for them and furnish the resources they need to live with
dignity. Encourage those who have enough to share essential resources
with those who lack the necessities of life,
and to do so with humble, grateful and loving hearts.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Our Earth (from Laudato Si')

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace