

Phase 2: Session 11

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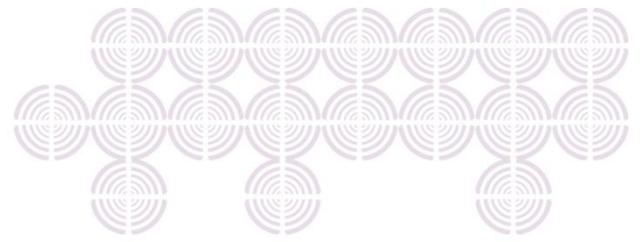
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With additional support from: Catholic Charities USA



Session Overview and Materials

Session Focus: Children, Education, and Poverty

Set chairs in a circle around the central prayer table.

Section	Timing
Opening Prayer	10 minutes
Guest Speaker	60 minutes
BREAK	10 minutes
Business Items	10 minutes
New Perspectives Dialogue: reflecting on the readings and videos	55 minutes
Closing Prayer	5 minutes

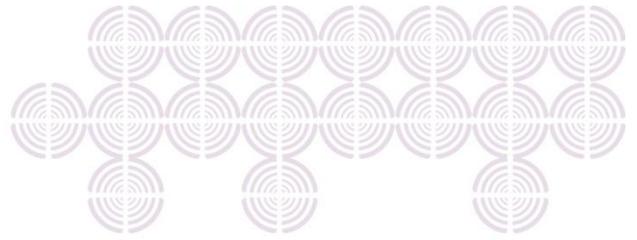
Session Checklist

For the group:

- Large pillar candle and matches
- Bible
- A cross or crucifix
- Reflective music
- Computer with internet connection
- Digital projector and speakers
- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* or a print out of Paragraph 449

For each participant:

- Session 11 Participant Handout
- Copies of handouts the guest speaker might have



Session Notes for the Co-Facilitators

At this point in the process, you might observe some participants becoming pained or saddened over the realities of the world they are encountering in JustFaith. Some may express that it was easier to live without having to negotiate this suffering and hardship. Some may express a desire for “good news,” solutions, and action. All of these are understandable and common responses among JustFaith participants.

It might be tempting for co-facilitators to try to “fix” the situation, assuming that it is not good for people to experience this kind of discomfort. However, it is recommended that you resist this inclination. It is important that we recognize the life situations in which many of our sisters and brothers find themselves. For compassion to become real and mature, we must know the realities of the world.

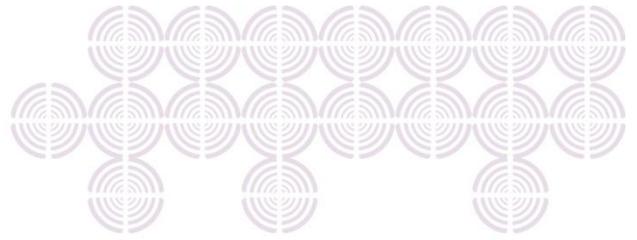
As followers of Jesus, we know that we arrive at Easter only by experiencing Good Friday, that we bear the cross of suffering and live our way into resurrection and joy. We are called to create this way through love. We are called to love one another - to love our neighbor as ourselves. Love does not run away or hide its face from what is difficult or painful. Love *takes in* the other.

Encourage participants to take any discomfort they may be experiencing to their prayer and journaling time. Encourage them to invite God to help them find meaning in their disillusionment. Remind them that almost nobody grows when they are living insulated, comfortable lives. Facing challenge is a great occasion of grace. The Holy Spirit waits.

Jonathan Kozol, whom you will “meet” in Session 11, loves children, specifically poor and minority children whose stories he tells in his many books. He is a Harvard graduate who went to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, came from a wealthy and privileged family, and was fired in 1965 from a substitute teaching position with the Boston Public Schools for teaching Langston Hughes' poem “Ballad of the Landlord.” After this, Kozol began writing about issues surrounding poverty and education.

In his 1991 book, *Savage Inequalities*, he writes that he “decided early on in [his] journey to listen very carefully to children, and to let their voices and their judgments and their longings find a place within the nation's dialogue about their destinies.”

In his 1995 book, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*, a minister living in the poorest area of New York City says: “Everything breaks down in a place like this...the pipes...the phone...the electricity and heat. Why wouldn't the family break down also?” In this book Kozol offers comfort in the form of the last verse of the song, “Amazing Grace”: “Through many dangers, toils, and snares...grace will lead me home.” Kozol will challenge participants as he



expresses his views about education in America; his message will sadden some in the group and will be a struggle for others.

Most likely, both Kozol and the guest speaker will bring further discomfort as well as hope, both sadness and joy to this session.

Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Items needed: Bible marked at Ephesians 1: 17-19, a pillar candle, cross
Symbols: A cross – sign of great love and resurrection, of faith and hope
Environment: Set the candle and cross on the prayer table.

As you distribute the handout, welcome participants with these words:

In this session, we will begin with a guest speaker who will give us a view of children and poverty in our community. Afterward, we will discuss poverty and education as well as poverty and the environment in areas where the poorest kids in our nation live.

Let us begin with prayer.

Light the pillar candle on the prayer table and dim the lights.

Hold up the cross and introduce the symbol with these words:

The cross – sign of great love and resurrection, symbol of our faith, sign of hope.

Pass the cross around the circle and invite participants to hold the symbol for a moment of silent prayer. After the cross has gone around the circle, replace it in the center of the prayer space.

Call to Prayer

Offer this prayer:

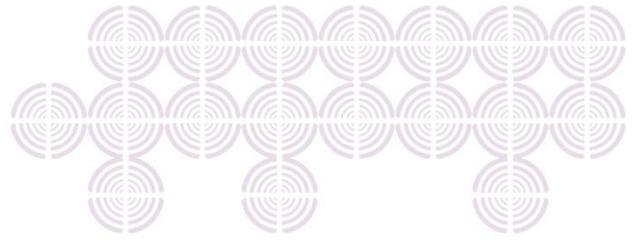
Jesus, in your name we gather. You are here in our midst.

**In the presence of your Spirit, we become your body,
to listen... to share... to learn.... to care... and to pray for one another.**

Move within us. Move among us.

Spirit of Compassion, bind us to one another.

Propel us out into your world to be your compassionate justice.



Scripture Reading

Read **Ephesians 1: 17-19**. Pause for one full minute of silence.

Re-read the Scripture passage. Pause once more for reflection.

Meditation – We Believe

Invite participants to take turns reading the sections below, pausing between sections.

**I will not believe in the law of the strongest,
In the language of guns,
In the power of the powerful.**

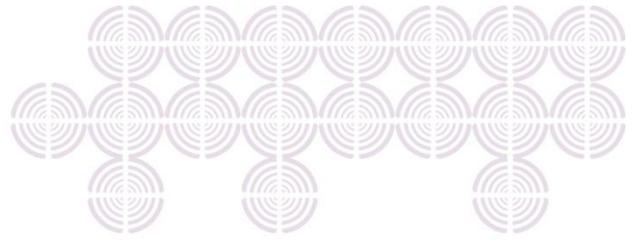
**I want to believe in the rights of all,
In the open hand,
In the strength of the nonviolent.**

**I will not believe in race or riches,
In privileges,
In the established order.**

**I want to believe that all human beings
Are human beings
And that the order of force and of injustice
Is a disorder.**

**I will not believe that I don't have to concern myself
With what happens from here.**

I want to believe that the whole world



Is my home, the field that I sow,
And that all reap what all have sown.

I will not believe that I can combat oppression out there
If I tolerate injustice here.

I want to believe that what is right
Is the same here and there
And that I will not be free
While even one human being is excluded.

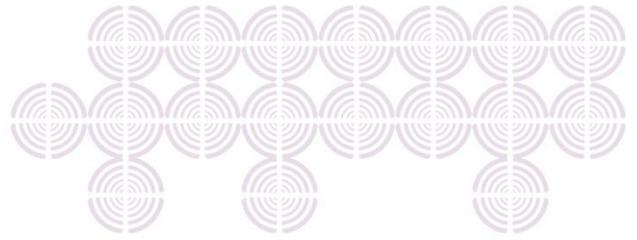
I will not believe that war and hunger are inevitable
And that peace is inaccessible.

I want to believe in the love of bare hands,
In peace on earth.

I will not believe that any effort is in vain.
I will not believe that the dream of human beings
Continues being only a dream
And that death is the end.

But I dare to believe in the dream of God;
A new heaven, a new earth
Where justice reigns.

Dom Helder Camara, Prayer Without Borders (Catholic Relief Services, 2004), 44-45. Used with permission for JustFaith sessions only.



Prayer of the Heart

Leader: **Let us take this prayer adapted from the Letter to the Ephesians to heart.
Echo this simple prayer, line by line.**

Leader: **Give us the spirit of wisdom,**

All: Give us the spirit of wisdom,

Leader: **So that, with the eyes of our hearts,**

All: So that, with the eyes of our hearts,

Leader: **enlightened,**

All: enlightened,

Leader: **We may know the hope**

All: We may know the hope

Leader: **to which God has called us.**

All: to which God has called us.

Leader: **Let this prayer echo in our hearts.**

Rite of Blessing

Invite participants to follow you as you mark a cross on your forehead, lips, and heart:

Bless with me the thoughts, the words, and the stirrings of our hearts that we will share in dialogue:

(Cross forehead) **Holy Spirit, inspire our thoughts...**

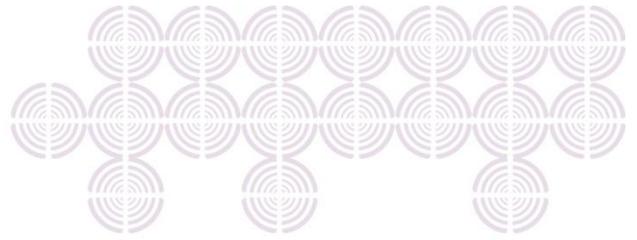
(Cross lips) **May we speak your truth...**

(Cross heart) **May our hearts be opened.**

AMEN.

Guest Speaker on Children in Poverty (60 minutes)

It is likely that you will have ample resources for locating a speaker who can address the circumstances of children living in poverty. It is okay if the speaker is more familiar with local or national poverty than with global poverty, the topic that was noted in the Facilitator Guide. No



matter who the speaker may be or what agency or organization they may represent, make sure to ask the speaker to address in some way the effect of education or the lack of education on the children they work with or are familiar with. The following ideas are offered as starting points:

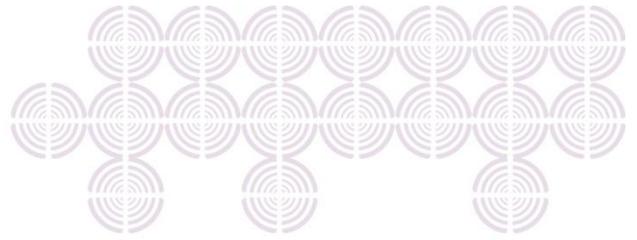
- Local staff of agencies such as Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children or UNICEF, etc.
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), an organization that exists to support and promote volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in safe, permanent homes. CASA recruits and trains volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children. Staff or volunteers from CASA can speak at length about the situations children in your community are facing.
- The Head Start program is designed for low-income families with pre-school children. This program, usually offered through the public school system, can be a good source of speakers who have insight into the challenges children face.
- Many urban communities have shelters that work with families with children who are experiencing homelessness. The staff of these agencies might be able to relate stories that highlight the reasons why families become homeless and the effect it has on children, especially children's education.
- You may know a teacher, a guidance counselor, a principal or school administrator who can address the challenges and successes of educating children who are living in poverty.

Ask the guest speaker(s) and each participant to share their names. Then, invite the guest speaker(s) to describe their background and organization. Encourage the speaker to leave at least 15 minutes at the end for questions. Offer to be the timekeeper, so the speaker knows when it is time for the question/answer phase.

At the end, be sure to ask the group to thank the speaker(s). Offer a quick prayer, if you wish, to bless their work and provide gratitude for their willingness to share their work with the JustFaith group.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Invite participants to share refreshments (if provided).



Business Items (10 minutes)

Discuss the date and logistics for the upcoming immersion experience, if necessary.

Reflecting on the Readings and Videos (55 minutes)

Have the computer with internet connection, digital projector, and speakers set up and ready to play the second video segment of Kozol's speech at Amherst on "Education in America." Access to this video segment can be found online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R09EfxHuIXA>, or you can get the direct link on the Participant Resource Page (tinyurl.com/jfc2014-2015) under Session 11.

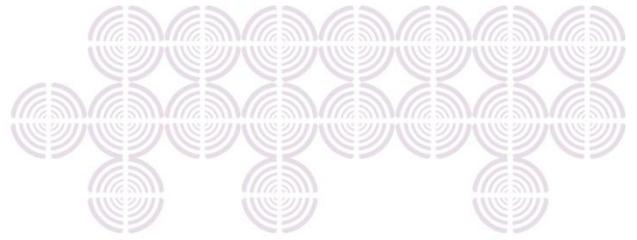
Read the following quotation from Jonathan Kozol's newest book, *Fire in the Ashes*, as a preface to the video and the dialogue:

"Children in the inner cities, we are told, must be 'held accountable' for their success or failure. But none of these children can be held accountable for choosing where they had been born or where they led their childhood. Nor can they be blamed for the historic failings of their schools" (page 302).

When referring to the young men and women who successfully completed high school and/or college, Kozol writes, "The point I need to emphasize again is that all of these children had unusual advantages. Someone intervened in every case, and with dramatic consequences. ...If any lesson may be learned from the academic breakthroughs achieved by [two students I have known], Pineapple and Jeremy, it is not that we should celebrate exceptionality of opportunity but that the public schools themselves in neighborhoods of widespread destitution ought to have the rich resources, small classes, and well-prepared and well-rewarded teachers that would enable us to give every child the feast of learning that is now available to children of the poor only on the basis of a careful selectivity or by catching the attention of empathetic people" (pages 303-304).

Watch segment 2 of Kozol's talk at Amherst. After watching this seven-minute video, try to spend time with each of the following three questions. Remember though that it is most important to let dialogue continue if there is a good exchange happening.

1. In the second part of the video, Kozol refers to the alarming statistics for pediatric asthma in the South Bronx and how it was exacerbated by the medical waste incinerator that was built in that very poor neighborhood. He labels the placement of this incinerator as "environmental racism." Name a few places in your city or state where structural or environmental racism is occurring. What would happen if there was a proposal to place a medical waste incinerator near your kids' school? How would you and your neighbors



respond?

2. In the video we just watched, Kozol says, “Wouldn’t you think that a truly good society would say...look at what these kids have against them from the start. ...They have done nothing wrong, have committed no sin...With all the odds they face in all the areas where we have power, let’s give them the very best a rich society can afford [in education and healthcare].” Why would a rich society like the United States choose not to provide the best educational and healthcare resource to its poorest “little kids”? What excuses do we offer? Are our excuses valid? Why? Why not?
3. Catholic social teaching calls us to live in solidarity with others, especially with those who are poor. In what ways are you being called to live in solidarity with children in the poorest schools in your city or state? In other areas of the country and the world?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Read aloud the first full paragraph of section 449 (page 194) of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Read slowly to allow each person to prayerfully reflect on message of the text.

Return to the Symbol

Pick up the cross and offer these final words of blessing:

The cross – sign of great love and resurrection, symbol of our faith, sign of hope.

Replace the cross on the prayer table.

A Circle of Prayer

Invite the group to stand, form a tight circle, and link hands.

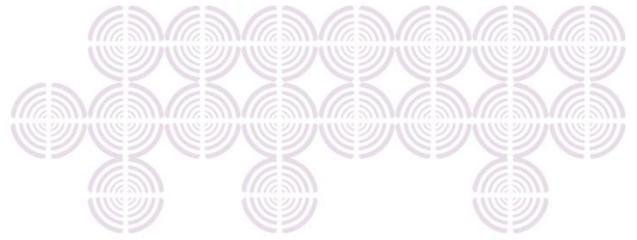
In these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it with the group:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns and intercessions of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.



Words to Live By

Leader: **Let us again take prayer to heart. Repeat the prayer after me.**

Leader: **Give us the spirit of wisdom,**

All: Give us the spirit of wisdom,

Leader: **So that, with the eyes of our hearts,**

All: So that, with the eyes of our hearts,

Leader: **enlightened,**

All: enlightened,

Leader: **We may know the hope**

All: We may know the hope

Leader: **to which God has called us.**

All: to which God has called us.

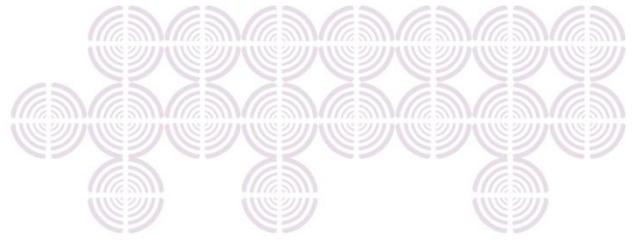
Leader: **Let this prayer echo in our hearts.**

A Sign of God's Peace

Leader: **Now, we share in the peace for which our world hungers.**

With a sign of peace, we affirm one another for the journey ahead.

May we extend God's peace to all!



Session 11 Handout

Opening Prayer: We Believe

I will not believe in the law of the strongest,
In the language of guns,
In the power of the powerful.

I want to believe in the rights of all,
In the open hand,
In the strength of the non-violent.

I will not believe in race or riches,
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I want to believe that all human beings
Are human beings
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Is a disorder.

I will not believe that I don't have to concern myself
With what happens from here.

I want to believe that the whole world
Is my home, the field that I sow,
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I want to believe that what is right
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