

Taking a child He placed it in their midst, and putting His arms around it He said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in My name, receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but the One who sent Me." ~Mark 9:36-37



Off to a Good Start: Combating Childhood Poverty

As the new school year begins, our thoughts turn to children. Jesus Himself made a point of emphasizing their precious worth. Yet in the United States, it does not appear that we truly value children. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty:

*"More than 16 million children in the United States – **22% of all children** – live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level – \$23,550 a year for a family of four.*

*Research shows that, on average, families need an income of about twice that level to cover basic expenses. Using this standard, **45% of children live in low-income families.***

***Most of these children have parents who work**, but low wages and unstable employment leave their families struggling to make ends meet. Poverty can impede children's ability to learn and contribute to social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Poverty also can contribute to poor [physical] health and mental health. Risks are greatest for children who experience poverty when they are young and/or experience deep and persistent poverty.*

*Research is clear that **poverty is the single greatest threat to children's well-being.** But effective public policies – to make work pay for low-income parents and to provide high-quality early care and learning experiences for their children – can make a difference."*

In response to the unacceptable rates of childhood poverty, our Diocesan Public Policy Committee is calling on parishes to speak up for low income children and specifically to advocate for increased funding for child care subsidies by our state government. If you aren't currently raising kids, you might not realize how expensive good quality child care is and how vitally important those subsidies are for working parents. Child care can cost \$5,000, \$7,000, up to even \$14,000 per year, depending on the type of care and the age of the child.

Without support to cover this major expense, parents are often forced to quit their jobs or to place their children in undesirable and even unhealthy child care situations. Early childhood studies show that without proper child care that includes good nutrition and positive, stimulating educational activity, kids start to fall behind. "Babysitting" which involves hours in front of the TV affects children's ability to learn and to interact socially. This can take a toll on their success in school and in work for the rest of their lives.

"Invest in Kids" Advocacy on the State Budget October 18-19

Participate in the diocese-wide petition signing, asking Governor Cuomo and State legislative leaders to include increased funding for child care subsidies in the upcoming state budget.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

As part of the ongoing focus on children in poverty, the Diocesan Public Policy Committee is asking you and your parish to gather petition signatures during the weekend of **October 18 and 19**, calling for an additional \$172 Million for NYS child care subsidies. (Your parish can choose a different weekend in October if that works better for your parish schedule.)

Why October? Because this is the time of year that the governor and his administration are putting together the proposed state budget for the coming fiscal year. This is the time when we need to remind them that too many working families are struggling and too many kids are falling behind because of lack of access to high quality child care. This is the time they should **invest in kids**, for not just for the sake of those children and their families, but for all of us!

The Justice & Peace Ministry staff (see their contact information below) will be distributing bulletin notices, information flyers and the petitions on this issue in the coming weeks. Please help to organize your parish's participation in this diocesan-wide effort to be a voice for children.

Support for Syrian Refugees

Since the beginning of this year, hundreds of thousands of people from Syria have fled the civil war raging in their country, seeking sanctuary in Europe.

So far the United States government has spoken of allowing 10,000 of these refugees into the U.S., while Germany is gearing up to accept 800,000 refugees and tiny Jordan is already home to over 600,000 refugees.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Justice for Immigrants Campaign is calling on our country to be a substantial part of the solution to this humanitarian crisis. They are asking Catholics to call their members of Congress on **September 24**, the day Pope Francis will address our legislators. Please call your Representative and both Senators that day requesting they pass **comprehensive immigration reform** and that our country extend a welcome to **65,000** Syrian refugees.



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Caritas Internationalis

Rep. Chris Collins: 202-225-5265

Sen. Charles Schumer: 202-224-6542

Rep. John Katko: 202-225-3701

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand 202- 224-4451

Rep. Tom Reed: 202-225-3161

Rep. Louise Slaughter: 202-225-3615

If you don't know who your representative is, go to

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>

To learn more about the refugee crisis and the reactions by Pope Francis and Catholic Relief Services go to: <http://americamagazine.org/issue/migrant-pope> and <http://www.crs.org/stories/refugee-crisis-delivering-aid-experience-commitment>

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