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IT IS AN ACT OF LOVE TO:  
**Shelter the Homeless**

Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, In the comfort of this meeting place, we pause to give thanks for secure shelter, and to remember those who are homeless. Open our hearts to the vulnerable and dispossessed among us. Lead us to care for one another as you care for us, to share our wealth as you share blessings with us. Grant us earthly warmth and lodging and a spiritual place prepared for us that we may dwell in the House of the Lord forever. Amen.

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

-Samuel 7:10-16

-In this passage, what does God promise?

-Have you ever felt "homeless"?

## SOCIAL INQUIRY

### Introduction

How many people in the United States experience homelessness? This is a complicated question to answer. Most studies take a “snap shot” of homelessness at one point in time by counting people who are in shelters or on the streets. In early 2015, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reported a point-in-time estimate of 564,708 experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2015.

- Of that number 206,286 were people in families
- 358,422 were individuals
- About 15% were considered “chronically homeless” individuals
- About 2% were considered “chronically homeless” people in families
- About 8% of homeless people are veterans

(2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, November 2015, US Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development.)

Homelessness among families is often hidden from view. Families may be doubled-up in overcrowded apartments with relatives or friends, moving frequently. Some sleep in cars or campgrounds. The children may be sent to stay with relatives to avoid shelter life. In these situations life can be noisy, chaotic, and lack privacy. Homelessness increases the likelihood that families will separate or dissolve.

“Family homelessness is caused by the combined effects of lack of affordable housing, unemployment, limited access to resources and supports, health and mental health challenges, the challenges of raising children as a single parent, and experiences of violence. As the gap between housing costs and income continues to widen, more and more families are at risk of homelessness. Even a seemingly minor event can trigger a catastrophic outcome and catapult a family onto the streets.” (The National Center on Family Homelessness, American Research Institute, 2016)

One of the ways that the homeless are coping is to create encampments and “tent cities”. These are met with varying degrees of acceptance in communities. Some communities are opting to criminalize this and are creating anti-encampment ordinances. Some organizations, like the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, are advocating for communities to take a constructive approach in addressing encampments. In response, HUD is awarding funding application incentives to adopt best practices such as permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing. (HUD Number 15-116)

One of the ways the Catholic Church has responded to homelessness is through Catholic Charities and a commitment to safe, decent housing for all.

Catholic Charities provides assistance to the homeless in the following ways:

1. Work to prevent homelessness by providing financial assistance for rent, mortgage or utility payments; and by helping resolve issues that may lead to homelessness.
2. Provide emergency shelter for people in a housing crisis and assist them in finding and keeping permanent housing.
3. Offer a number of temporary, transitional, permanent and supportive housing options for seniors, individuals, and families; and for people who are disabled, chronically mentally ill or homeless.
4. Provide families with counseling on home purchasing, homeownership responsibilities, financing and foreclosure prevention.

When we encounter the homeless, we must see the face of Christ. Las Posadas is a traditional Mexican Christmas festival during which the faithful reenact Joseph and Mary's search for lodging in Bethlehem. They knock on the doors of "inns" only to be told there is no room for the Holy Family. For many individuals and families in the US, this feeling of rejection and insecurity is very real today.

### Observe

1. As a family, describe your home. What would you miss most if you were suddenly displaced from your home?
2. Find estimates of the number of homeless individuals in your community. How many of these are men; women; children? What resources are available to them?
3. What sorts of housing options are available in your area? What organizations provide affordable housing? What support is offered families facing foreclosure?
4. When have you been offered shelter by someone else? When have you opened your home to another?

### Judge

1. Does everyone have a right to safe and affordable housing? Explain your answer.
2. What is the difference between a house and a home?
3. What qualities should the Christian home, the domestic church, offer to its inhabitants and visitors?
4. What more can your community do to address homelessness?

### Act

1. Organize a parish effort to provide shelter and support to a local family in need.
2. Donate money or volunteer with an organization that cares for homeless or displaced persons. Explore the possibility of going on a domestic or international mission trip to help with housing needs.

3. Appreciate the warmth and welcome of your home. Talk with your family about ways to work together to keep your home clean and organized.
4. Open your home to someone in particular need of hospitality.

### **Status Update**

“@cfmact It is an act of love to provide shelter to those in need”  
#ChristianFamilyMovement

### Look Ahead to the Next Meeting

1. Date \_\_\_\_\_
2. Time \_\_\_\_\_
3. Place
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.
6. Who could we invite to join our group?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Take turns saying the petitions and join together in the response.

Leader: For all women and men, boys and girls who are homeless this day, That they may find shelter.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those sleeping under bridges, on park benches, in doorways or bus stations, That they may find rest.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who can only find shelter for the night but must wander in the daytime, That they may find security.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For families broken because they could not afford to pay their rent or mortgage, That they may find hope.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those displaced by natural disaster, That they may find peace.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who find themselves far from friends and relatives, from the familiar, That they may find community.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: And, for those of us with warm houses, comfortable homes, That we not be lulled into complacency and forgetfulness.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader; Jesus, help us to see you in the face of every homeless person, everyone in need of our hospitality, so that we may be empowered to bring justice and peace to the world.

All Amen.