

Reflections on Issues
Facing our Neighbors on the Margins

Topic	Reflections
Care for Creation	<u>from Maryknoll magazine Classroom Program</u> Have students read Genesis, Chapter 1 and count the number of verses that say, “God saw that it was good.” There are seven. Explain that the authors of the story came from a culture that understood their dependence on the earth. This produced reverence for creation and the Creator. Reflection: <i>In what ways are we dependent on the earth for our lives? In what ways do we disrespect God’s creation?</i> Explain that the U.S. Catholic bishops have developed principles based on the values Jesus taught. One of those principles is Care for Creation. Distribute the following explanation of this principle: We show our respect for the creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all God’s creation.
Immigration and the Movement of Peoples	<u>from Maryknoll magazine Classroom Program</u> Have students read Luke 2:1-7. During this season of Advent remember that Jesus was born to a poor and vulnerable family, immigrants in a strange land. Ask students to imagine the following scenarios: a homeless man staggering down the street, obviously in need of help, yells at you as you pass by; a young woman with a baby knocks on your door, tells you her baby is sick and she has no money and asks for food for her baby; a disabled vet sits on the corner and begs for money. What is your immediate reaction to these people? What thoughts go through your head as you try to decide whether or not to help them? Facilitate a discussion on our feelings about helping those we are often wary of. Students will likely express a variety of responses, including fear of being taken advantage of, discomfort with people they are unfamiliar with, fear of doing the wrong thing and making the situation worse, sympathy, a sense of helplessness, etc.

	Remind students that Jesus was born to a family who had to ask for help from strangers the night their son was born. Just as someone helped them, we need to respond to those most in need.
Education	<u>from Education for Justice: A Project of Center of Concern</u> Pray: Universal God, You must be saddened by the disparity of educational resources across the globe. Mourning God, What do you feel when your children lose their dreams? God who is One, You call us to challenge the inequality that divides our world. God of Strength, We see your vision of opportunity for all. Help us to bring your vision to life. Amen. Have students discuss all the things that they want to be and do in life. Ask students what their lives would be like if they were denied an education. What about their lives would be different if they knew education was not an option? What opportunities do you have that some other people around the world do not have? Facilitate a discussion around the following questions: 1. Why is education an important right? Ask small groups to come up with their own definition of 'right' and share with the whole group. 2. What is the difference between a right and a privilege? 3. What privileges do you have that maybe some other kids do not?
Global Women's Justice	Read John 4:25-29. Explain to students that, in Jesus' time, men were seen as better than women. Ask students to reflect: Do you think Jesus felt this way? Why? Do you think men and women (or boys and girls) are always treated equally in our world? Why? (Encourage male students to listen and reflect on the responses of their female classmates.) Challenge students to identify situations in their own lives where gender inequality is occurring and to think of ways they could confront and correct these situations.
Economic Justice and Poverty	<u>from Maryknoll magazine Classroom Program</u> Divide students into groups and assign one of the following Scripture passages to each group: Psalm 82:1–4, Psalm 72:1–4,

	Psalm 41:1–4, Matthew 25:31–46, Matthew 19:21, 1 John 3:17–18. Have them read the Scripture reference, tell where it comes from in the Bible (Old or New Testament), identify what it says about God’s attitude toward the poor and brainstorm concrete ways we as individuals can put this into practice. As part of this discussion, familiarize students with the Catholic Social Teaching principle of the Preferential Option for the Poor, which states: “Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring” (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching). The teaching says, “The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons” (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Economic Justice for All #88). Potential classroom activities (from USCCB/CCHD Poverty Education): • “Stack the Deck”: This classroom activity helps students to see how a person’s circumstances, background and choices impact their economic standing and opportunity. • “Take a Step”: This classroom activity helps students to reflect on the unequal playing field of the U.S. that allows some to accumulate wealth and opportunity while many others continue to fall behind.
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