



# Justice Summit on Human Dignity

March 8, 2022



*Humanizing  
Homelessness*



# Opening Prayer

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Hear our prayer today for all people who are homeless this day. For those sleeping under bridges, on park benches, in doorways or bus stations. For those who can only find shelter for the night but must wander in the daytime. For families broken because they could not afford to pay the rent. For those who have no relatives or friends who can take them in. For those who have no place to keep possessions that remind them who they are. For those who are afraid and hopeless. For those who have been let down by our social safety net. For all these people, we pray that you will provide shelter, security and hope. We pray that those of us with warm houses not be lulled into complacency and forgetfulness. Jesus, **help us to see your face in the eyes of every homeless person we meet** so that we may be empowered through word and deed, and through all the means we have, to bring justice and peace to those who are homeless. Amen.

# Justice Summit on Human Dignity

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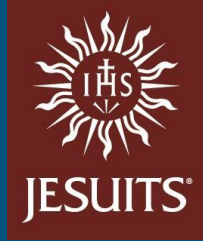
## *Humanizing Homelessness*

The goals of the Justice Summit include:

- Address the myths and stereotypes of people who are experiencing homelessness
- Increase awareness of the various causes of homelessness
- Emphasize the importance of seeing and honoring the dignity of all
- Discern action and advocacy steps to “Walk With the Excluded” in our community



# Universal Apostolic Preferences



Promoting  
Discernment  
and the  
Spiritual  
Exercises



Walking with  
the Excluded



Caring for our  
Common Home



Journeying  
with the Youth



As a Jesuit community, we are called to continue to deepen our work with the four Universal Apostolic Preferences.

This year's Summit will focus on "Walking with the Excluded."

*Walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice.*

# Catholic Social Teaching

## Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the **dignity** of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.

We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.



Human dignity is the same for all human beings: when I trample on the dignity of another, I am trampling on my own.

— Pope Francis —



# 7 Principles of Constructive Dialogue

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Before we begin, it is important to keep in mind the principles that will help guide our conversations.

1. Presume good intentions.
2. Use “I” statements.
3. Understand that the speaker’s experience is valid for him/her.
4. Ask questions of others as individuals.
5. Listen to understand, not to respond.
6. Recognize that one’s intent may be different from one’s impact.
7. Seek to raise the bar for yourself, your teachers, and your classmates.

# Opening Reflection

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Students: Close your eyes and imagine a person who is experiencing homelessness.

See the image as vividly as possible including multiple senses.

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What is this person doing?

Now, open your eyes and write at least 10-12 adjectives or descriptive phrases that describe the person you just pictured.



# Did anyone have “Olympic Medalist” on their list?

- Yes, even Olympic medalists can wind up homeless.
- Click on the link to a story recently updated in the Seattle Times about **Rebecca Twigg** who went from being an Olympic medalist to living on the streets in Seattle.
- Experiencing “success” in one area of life does not make anyone immune from possibly experiencing homelessness at some point in their life.



Article:

[What an Olympic medalist, homeless in Seattle, wants you to know. - Seattle Times](#)



# Breaking Down Stereotypes

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Let's take a look at nationwide and local statistics to address some of the stereotypes of the homeless population.



Advisors: Hang the 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% signs in order around your room.

Students: As each new question appears on the following slides, move to the area of the room that best represents your answer. Be prepared to explain your answer.



# What Percentage? - Question 1

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What percentage of people experiencing homelessness nationwide have a job?



# What Percentage? - Answer 1

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40-60%

According to the National Coalition of Homelessness, 40-60% of people experiencing homelessness nationwide are employed. However, a paycheck does not necessarily solve their homelessness or other challenges.



# What Percentage? - Question 2

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What percentage of people report drug/alcohol addiction as being the cause of the homelessness they are experiencing?



# What Percentage? - Answer 2

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20%

Only 20% of people nationwide report drugs and alcohol as the cause of their homelessness. Drug and alcohol abuse are often the *result* of trying to cope with being homeless, not the *cause*.



# What Percentage? - Question 3

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What percentage of people experiencing homelessness are families with children?



# What Percentage? - Answer 3

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**30%**

According to the nationwide Point-in-Time Count that occurred in January 2020, families with children make up 30% of the people experiencing homelessness.



*Courtney, Wayne, Athena, Aiden, and Addy  
Family experiencing homelessness in Seattle*



# What Percentage? - Question 4

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What percentage of people experiencing homelessness are considered to be “chronically homeless”?

*(Have been continually homeless for a year or have experienced homelessness at least four times in the last three years for a combined length of time for at least a year.)*





# What Percentage? - Answer 4

19%

According to the nationwide Point-in-Time Count that occurred in January 2020, chronically homeless people make up 19% of the homeless population. A vast majority of people experiencing homelessness are not trying to “milk the system” or rely on years and years of support.



# What Percentage? - Question 5

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What percentage of people experiencing homelessness in Pierce County need to find shelter in their car, an encampment or other outdoor location?



# What Percentage? - Answer 5

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**70%**

According to the 2021 Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness, there are 998 emergency shelter beds and 15 safe parking units across Pierce County, leaving about 2,287 people without shelter each night.



*Encampment on S. 8th and Yakima*



# What Percentage? - Question 6

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What percentage of people experiencing homelessness in Pierce County are people of color?



# What Percentage? - Answer 6

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**50%**

According to the 2021 Point in Time count, **50%** of the homeless population are people of color.

However, people of color only make up **27%** of the population in Pierce County so additional measures are needed to address this racial inequity in our community.



# What Percentage? - Question 7

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What percentage of students in the Tacoma Public School District are experiencing homelessness?



# What Percentage? - Answer 7

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**5%**

According to the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, **1,455 students** in the Tacoma Public School District (5.1%) are homeless as of October 1st, 2021.

Imagine having to deal with the daily stressors you currently experience in school while also not having some place you can call home to return to each night.



# What Causes Homelessness?

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- With a partner, brainstorm a list of the causes of homelessness.
- Then, select what you think are the top 3 causes of what leads to someone experiencing homelessness in Pierce County.
- Share your responses with the class.
- Click to the next slide to check your answers.





# Causes of Homelessness

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The 2021 Point-in-Time Count conducted by Pierce County identified the top 3 causes of homelessness.

Oftentimes, a major unexpected expense such as a medical bill or car repair can lead to homelessness, especially for those families who live paycheck-to-paycheck.

## **The main causes of homelessness are economic and housing-related**

There are often many causes for becoming homeless. These are the top three most common:

- 1.** Family crisis
- 2.** No affordable housing
- 3.** Loss of job

# What Types of Disabilities Impact the Homeless Population the Most?

- Oftentimes people who are experiencing homelessness are also dealing with other unresolved issues.
- With a partner, put the following types of disabilities in order of which ones impact the homeless population the most in Pierce County.
  - Chronic health condition
  - Developmental disability
  - Mental illness
  - Physical disability
  - Substance Use
- Click to the following slide to check your answers.



## Mental illness is the most commonly reported disability

Here is the breakdown of the most commonly reported disabilities. Some people reported having multiple disabilities.

### Mental illness

41%

### Physical disability

30%

### Chronic health condition

30%

### Substance use

20%

### Developmental disability

11%

The 2021 Point-in-Time Count conducted by Pierce County identified mental illness as the most commonly reported disability.

People experiencing homelessness not only need access to affordable housing, but they also need support and resources to deal with multiple issues.



# Humanizing Homelessness

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Enough of the numbers, let's hear directly from some people who have experienced homelessness.

The following excerpts are from the **"Stories About Home"** event sponsored by Seattle University where people shared their stories of experiencing homelessness.

Click on the link to the right to hear **Mindy Woods** tell her story of how dealing with health issues led her and her son to experience homelessness.



# Humanizing Homelessness

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Next, listen to **Michael Brooks** tell his story of going from being homeless and hopeless to becoming a case manager for mental health services after he took the steps to heal his own emotional pain he had experienced.

*“Homelessness is a physical manifestation of our emotional turmoil.” - Michael Brooks*



# What can you do?

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**Nikki Gane**, founder of “*Dignity For Divas*” shares the action steps she has taken to ensure that people who are experiencing homelessness, as she once did, are treated with dignity.

*“Everybody who is broken was once whole.”*

- Nikki Gane



# Closing Reflection

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*“I want you to think about what you’re thinking about when you think about homelessness and ask yourself, why?” - Nikki Gane*

- Return to the list you made at the beginning of this lesson.
- Do the words you chose uphold the person’s dignity?
- What words can you add or change to not perpetuate the stereotypes of the homeless population?



# Next Steps - C.A.R.E.

You can help end homelessness by  
**CARE**ing:

**C - Contribute**

**A - Advocate**

**R - Reach-out**

**E - Educate**

**Contribute:** Participate in food and clothing drives, donate money, etc.

**Advocate:** Communicate with local, state, and national policymakers.

**Reach-out:** Volunteer your time with various local organizations.

**Educate:** Continue to learn more about the complexities of the causes and solutions of homelessness.

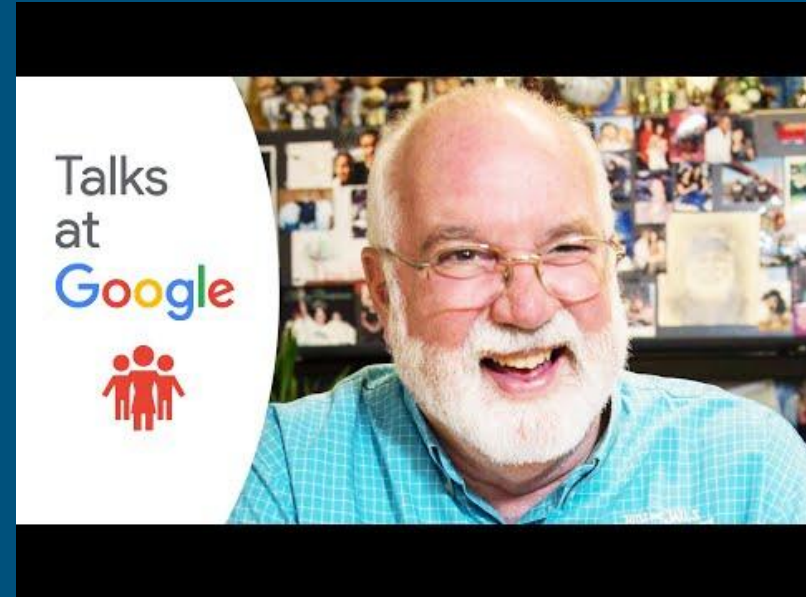
*Specific opportunities in the above categories will continue to be shared throughout the school year. Find ways to get involved!*

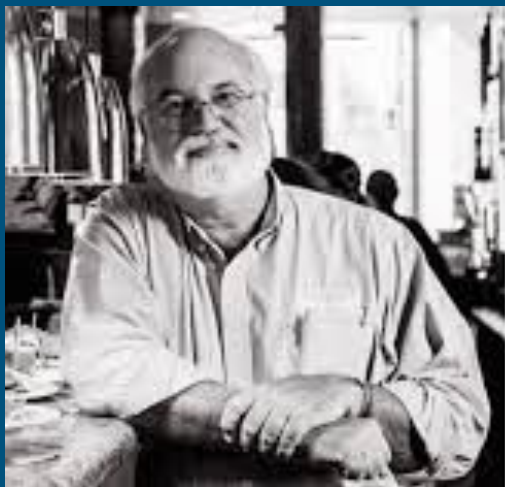


# Next Summit Step: Fr. Boyle

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- **Fr. Greg Boyle**, author of “Tattoos on the Heart” will be our keynote speaker next class, Thu 3/10.
- His message of **compassion** and **kinship** reminds us to see and honor the **dignity** of each individual.
- His work with Homeboy Industries serves as a model for how we can work with all types of people who are marginalized, including the homeless population.
- Click on the link to the right to watch a brief video of Fr. Boyle talking about the “Power of Extravagant Tenderness.”





“And so the voices  
at the margins get heard  
and the circle of compassion  
widens. Souls feeling their  
worth, refusing to forget  
that we belong to  
each other.”

—Gregory Boyle

“We are sent to the  
margins **NOT** to  
make a difference  
but so that the folks  
on the margins will  
make *us* different.”

-Father Greg Boyle

“If there is a fundamental  
challenge within these stories,  
it is simply to change our  
lurking suspicion that some  
lives matter less than other  
lives.”

— Gregory J. Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart:  
The Power of Boundless Compassion*



# Sources used

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[Jesuits: Universal Apostolic Preferences](#)

[United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Human Dignity](#)

[Council for the Homeless](#)

[National Alliance to End Homelessness:](#)

[Pierce County 2021 Plan Survey](#)

[Facing Homelessness - Seattle](#)

[You Know Me Now](#)

[Project on Family Homelessness - Seattle University](#)

[National Coalition for the Homeless](#)

[Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#)