

In the midst of this financial crisis we hear plenty about Wall Street as well as Main Street. Sadly we hear little about the Back Streets. We hear nothing about those who live up the hollows. Most of us in West Virginia have never seen Wall Street, yet we know that its fortunes affect our lives. Twenty years ago that wasn't as much the case. Now more than half the people in this country have some interest in the stock market because of pension or personal investment. The recent crises have weakened our industries, investments, banks, and our futures. We hope and pray for healing. In the meantime those who have the fewest resources to cope with adversity—the poor—are hurt the worst. Our response to the plight of the least of these is the greatest measure of our nation's moral health.

There is much our nation must do to right itself. These problems are too big to go untreated. We all have a part to play. It is time we lend our support to our elected officials who sincerely desire to see our nation and the world prosper. The Catholic Charities USA Campaign To Reduce Poverty focuses on four areas (Healthcare, Housing, Hunger, and Family Economic Security) in order to help Catholics advocate for just policies.

- In the U.S., 1 in 8 people live in poverty; in West Virginia 1 in 6 people live in poverty (over 306,000 people). In the U.S., 1 in 6 children live in poverty; in West Virginia, 1 in 4 children. West Virginia is the sixth most poverty-stricken state in the union.
- Almost half of all Americans will have experienced poverty for a year or more at some point in their lives by the time they reach age 60.
- West Virginia boasts one of the highest percentages of homeowners. From 2000-2004 approximately 8 out of 10 West Virginians owned their own homes. That's above the national average of fewer than 7 out of ten. Yet the median value of West Virginians' homes (around \$81,000) is the third lowest in the nation.
- Catholic Charities agencies serve one in every 10 people living in poverty. Catholic Charities West Virginia served 73,563 persons in 2006.

To combat poverty in our state the Catholic Conference of WV, Catholic Charities WVA, and the Justice and Life Office support policies that would:

- encourage education as the best means of escaping poverty by providing workable options,
- make quality child care available in every county,
- encourage employers to consider on-site child care through grants and other incentives,
- explore options for aiding people in obtaining reliable transportation to work,
- and create jobs with just wages and benefits.

Please prayerfully consider giving your active support for the Church's position on these issues. To be continually informed on how you can effectively advocate on these issues, contact the Justice and Life office at: [tgarland@dwc.org](mailto:tgarland@dwc.org). Please use the following subject line: Legislative/Action Network.

For further study of the problem visit: [catholicconferencewv.org/WelfareReform](http://catholicconferencewv.org/WelfareReform), and [catholiccharitiesusa.org](http://catholiccharitiesusa.org).