

family and neighbors to play their part.

How can you use your influence or position to help the needy? Consider these steps:

- Develop a local education strategy—Help form a coalition of individuals and groups to attack poverty locally. Sponsor educational events.
- Spread the word—Inform the media about your activities. Invite local artists and writers as well as business people to get involved.
- Meet politicians—Hold meetings with local officials to discuss issues related to poverty. Get other constituents to express interest.

“Generosity is a sign of gratitude,” wrote Rev. Bernard Haring. “It speaks of inner freedom. Generous people are free to the extent that they seek to honor not themselves, but those to whom they give.”

It is more blessed to give than to receive.
Acts 20:35

Working and poor

Having a job does not guarantee exemption from poverty. In fact, according to a nationwide study of people receiving emergency food aid in the U.S., working families made up 40 percent of people receiving food aid.

• Poverty has dogged Zena Garcia and her children for years. When her husband found a

 SINCE 1945, THE CHRISTOPHERS have used the media to spread the message that there's nobody like you and you can make a difference. The non-profit organization is rooted in a Judeo-Christian tradition of service to God and humanity expressed in its motto—“It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.”

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job, she believed things would be different. “My husband is working as hard as he can, but it's still not enough to pay the bills,” she says. One week, Zena Garcia had to make a choice: pay the gas bill or buy shoes for her daughter.

• Roxanne Pimentel, 43 and HIV-positive, raised a son by herself. Now that her son is 20, it hurts her that “I can't afford to pay for his college education,” she says. Yet, Pimentel works at a job that requires her to be on call, round the clock, despite her illness.

You can aid the working poor by donating used business-type clothing, books and educational materials or an old computer to groups that help those seeking work.

Happy are those who consider the poor; the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble.
Psalm 41:1

Consider this

The fact that the top fifth of the world's wealthiest individuals control roughly 85 percent of the planet's gross domestic product stands in stark contrast to the fact that one fourth of the world's population scrapes by on less than \$1 per day.

The United Nations has proclaimed 1997-2006 the “Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.” For the first time, the world has the technology, wealth and know-how to eliminate poverty. The following principles can serve as the basis for thought and action:

- The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.
- Economic and human activity must be respectful of human limitations and of the environment.
- A moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable fare.
- People have a right to basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, safety and economic security.

• To the extent of their abilities, people have a duty to be productive members of society.

• As citizens, we are all called to work for greater economic justice in the face of persistent poverty.

Do good,...be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share,...take hold of the life that really is life.
1 Timothy 6:18,19

Voices of the Poor

“Poverty is like living in jail, waiting to be free.” —Jamaica

“For a poor person everything is terrible—illness, humiliation, shame. We are afraid of everything; we depend on everyone. No one needs us. We are like garbage that everyone wants to get rid of.” —Moldova

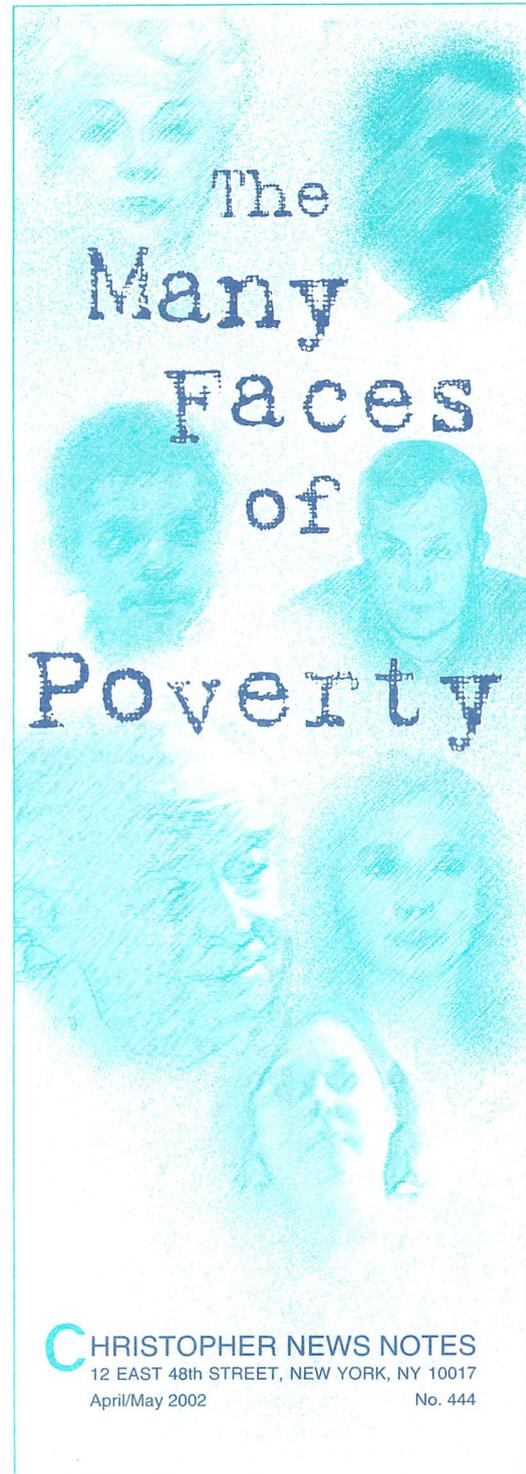
“Poverty is lack of freedom, enslaved by crushing daily burden, by depression and fear of what the future will bring.” —U.S.A.

“When one is poor, she has no say in public. She feels inferior. She has no food, so there is famine in her house.” —Uganda

“Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease. It attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away at one's dignity and drives one into total despair.” —The Balkans

How to Help

For suggestions on volunteer activities and other ways to help poor people, send for our Poverty Resource List. Write to: The Christophers, 12 East 48th Street, New York, NY 10017; call, 212-759-4050; or e-mail, mail@christophers.org



The Many Faces of Poverty

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Coming Next

A view of marriage from the perspective of husbands and wives who have been together for many years.

What is poverty? Who are the world's poor men, women and children? Why do the poor remain poor?

As the new millennium begins, poverty continues to plague the planet as it has since the dawn of recorded history. Poor people not only lack adequate food, shelter and clothing but also access to gainful employment.

One thing is certain: the poor themselves are the true poverty experts.

- "I've never been without a job this long. I have a daughter; she just turned 12. When school started, I bought her two shirts and two pairs of pants, all I could afford. Pretty soon, they are going to cut off our phone, gas, and heat. I'm waiting for a miracle," says an unemployed woman in Brooklyn, New York.

- When Yacouba Diarra was just 14, he left his native Mali to work in the Ivory Coast cultivating cocoa. After a year of backbreaking work, Yacouba received only \$13—roughly four cents a day. He is one of many children who work for pennies for fear of starving.

- "Poverty is not about money," says Neil Hoffman who struggles to make ends meet by farming in his native Kentucky. "It's a way of life. Once you're in that cycle you think you can't break out of it." His family's annual income: about \$8500.

One thing is clear: poverty wears many faces.

Global yet local

For those not held in its grip, poverty seems an impersonal, distant and insurmountable enigma. Statistics tell part of the story:

- More than 840 million people worldwide are malnourished.

- More than one billion people in the developing world still do not have access to the most basic of human needs—health care, clean water, education—and have a life expectancy of only 40.

- Poverty kills a child every three seconds.
- If the U.S. poor were grouped into an imaginary state, it would be the second largest state in the U.S. (right behind California), with 32

million living below the federal poverty line.

- Nearly half of all poor people in the U.S. suffer from chronic poverty, meaning they've lived below the poverty line for more than two years.

While these statistics are daunting, the personal aspect of poverty is perhaps the most compelling reason for each of us to become actively involved. What's more, acting on behalf of the needy can enrich your life spiritually and bring new fulfillment to your life, as well as the lives of those you are helping.

"Social action is not the preserve of some special interest group," says John Francis Kavanaugh, author of *Following Christ in a Consumer Society*. "It is an imperative of faith. World hunger, destitution...are affairs of spirituality. The human spirit is at stake, not 'just' the human body."

Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor Him.
Proverbs 14:31

Myths About Poverty

Myth: Poverty is an isolated world issue that affects only certain cultures and geographical areas.

- Fact: In industrial countries, more than 100 million people live below the poverty line, more than 5 million are homeless and roughly 37 million are jobless.

Myth: Poverty is a result of the failure of the person who is poor.

- Fact: Poverty is often the result of circumstances and events beyond the control of the individual.

Myth: The world cannot really afford to eradicate poverty; it would be too expensive.

- Fact: The estimated cost of wiping out poverty is 1% of global income. Effective debt relief to the 20 poorest countries would cost \$5.5 billion.

Myth: Poor people lack basic budgeting skills, which is a cause of their plight.

- Fact: Many who live far below the poverty line must spend all or most of their income on basic needs. Anyone who manages to feed and clothe a family on a very limited income has to budget.

One person matters

Poverty can be overcome. According to the United Nations Development Program, "Wherever you live, whoever you are, and whatever you already do, there is always something more you can do to make poverty decline."

- Edith Jarquin, director of a pre-school in New Jersey, collects clothing, books and toys to send to her native Nicaragua. Because she and her mother are in touch with several churches there, they are able to send supplies directly to those in need.

- Victoria Welle and fellow college students organized a protest in Chicago to bring attention to striking workers who receive below-poverty wages at a Mexican factory. Jailed for her activism, the student "thought about all of the people who have been arrested for what they believe in: Dorothy Day, Jesus. It made me realize I was part of a tradition that was bigger than myself."

- Billy Barnaart has not received a salary in over a year for his volunteer work in Cambodia to help the poor with HIV/AIDS. "Our volunteers sometimes do not have food themselves. But, we keep working."

- Kellie Tabron donates time to Big Brothers/Big Sisters, an organization that matches underprivileged teens with good role models. "Perhaps if I show (my Little Sister) a good example, and show her there is hope, she'll break the cycle of poverty," says the Big Sister.

- Melanie Hobbs works at a literacy program for adults in an area where "there were no public transportation systems or technical training programs." She wants to open up options for urban poor people.

Pope John Paul II said, "Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ Himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice."

Jesus said... "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow Me."
Matthew 19:21

What you can do today

A Chinese proverb says that "talk doesn't cook rice." If you want to make a difference you have to make a start, right where you are.

- Contribute time to an organization that serves meals to the homeless and poor.

- Assist church or community groups in collecting clothing and other goods.

- Help elderly or disabled persons on a tight budget with chores or household repairs.

- Donate what money you can to make a difference. Ask about where your dollars go. Reputable organizations will provide financial information.

- Invest in companies or entities whose policies, practices or products do not diminish human dignity.

- Write your elected officials in support of equal pay for equal work, living wages and adequate benefits for all.

- Through your example, encourage friends,

