Pope Francis Sends Letter to Movement Leaders on Easter Sunday Amid COVID-19
Calls on World to Consider Universal Basic Wage

Washington - Today, on Easter Sunday Faith in Action, Catholic bishops and other community and religious organizations welcomed Pope Francis's moving message to grassroots leaders across the globe who are “an invisible army, fighting in the most dangerous trenches; an army whose only weapons are solidarity, hope, and community spirit...at a time when no one can save themselves alone.” The Pope’s letter includes a call for the world to consider a universal basic wage that would acknowledge and dignify the “noble and essential” work carried out by workers who struggle to put food on their tables.

The Pope’s letter comes at a moment when the U.S. Congress is considering whether to provide ongoing living wage cash payments to working people, including immigrant families who pay federal taxes and work on the frontlines, but were cruelly left out of the first CARES Act. Pope Francis should be our moral conscience as we make these life and death decisions.

The Easter Sunday letter is addressed in personal terms to grassroots leaders who’ve met regularly with Pope Francis under the banner of the World Meeting of Popular Movements. “You do not enjoy the superficial pleasures that anesthetize so many consciences, yet you always suffer from the harm they produce. The ills that afflict everyone hit you twice as hard,” he says. In 2017 Faith in Action partnered with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Vatican to organize a U.S. Regional Meeting of Popular Movements that brought together 600 faith, community and labor organizers and leaders with 20 Catholic Bishops to identify alternatives to an economy based on exclusion and racial inequality.

Nieves Pacheco, COVID-19 positive mother, Faith in Action Bay Area, Redwood City, CA
“My whole family of immigrants lost their jobs the second week of March. We haven’t paid the rent this month. But my biggest concern is our health. Two weeks ago I started to feel very painful symptoms, and I was told by a doctor at the clinic on April 7 that I had tested positive for COVID-19. It’s urgent that our elected leaders hear our cries as human beings. I have faith in God that their hearts will be touched. So many of our families are in crisis. This is an emergency.”

Rev. Alvin Herring executive director of Faith in Action
“The COVID-19 pandemic is causing immense human suffering all across the world especially in communities of color. Millions of people have been excluded from federal emergency economic aid and unemployment insurance. Everyday families have to face the reality of going to an essential job at a grocery store or delivery service to pay the bills, knowing they may not have access to protective equipment or testing, risking their health, their families, and the community.

Joseph Tomás Mckellar, co-director, PICO California
“Pope Francis’s letter reminds us that no matter where we come from, what we look like, or how much money we have, it’s time to pull together and take care of one another. The choices our government makes now to help us weather this pandemic can also pave a better course for the future of our communities. Now is the time for us to unite across our differences and make a universal basic income a human right, helping every-day people in pursuit of a safe and thriving country.”

Bishop Robert McElroy, Diocese of San Diego
“In the midst of our isolation, fear and loneliness in these days of pandemic, we experience the profound vulnerability that unites every man and woman in common peril. Yet in this very vulnerability we also see reflected in our world the scars of race and class divisions that compound every element of the suffering which the corona virus brings for the poor, the shattered and the marginalized.

The fundamental elements of human dignity that our society is attempting to cobble together in this moment of crisis as a foundation for survival – basic family income, health care, housing, and access to jobs -- are not the pre-requisites for a single moment of vulnerability. Pope Francis reminds us today, they are the enduring foundation for an order of justice that reflects the transforming power of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ that we celebrate on this and every Easter!”

Most Rev. Salvatore Cordileone, Archbishop of San Francisco
“I join my voice to that of Pope Francis in thanking our brothers and sisters of popular movements and organizations for being the face of the compassionate Christ to the face of the suffering Christ. Even with government-sponsored programs, in times of crisis it is always the poor who suffer the most, especially those living in the shadows of society. Thank you for being the invisible army, fighting in the most dangerous trenches, bringing light, sustenance and hope to those who are most dear to our loving God.”

Pastor Trena Turner, Victory In Praise Church, Stockton, CA, executive director, Faith in the Valley
“Pope Francis’ letter highlights our apprehension that our lawmakers cannot or will not fully address this crisis. At Faith in the Valley, and in many of our social justice organizations, we’ve repeatedly asserted that those closest to the pain and brokenness of our systems are the true experts that can provide counsel on the resources and policies needed to build stronger communities. It cannot be expected that these experts, many who are essential workers, must risk their health to bring us solutions while they struggle to survive. Sustainable employment, safe and affordable housing, quality, easily accessible food, and universal health care are basic tenets of dignity and humanity. Perhaps this pandemic will force us to understand the impact to all when these basic tenets are unavailable to some. As a Christian, I pray we will not return to life pre-COVID-19. We must find a way to rise from this dark time into a different and brighter tomorrow.”

Rev. Timothy P. Kesicki, S.J., President, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States
“Pope Leo XIII once wrote that ‘whenever the interest of a particular class suffers, or is threatened with harm, which in no way can be prevented, the public authority must step up to deal with it.’ One hundred and twenty-nine years later Pope Francis is continuing this message by calling for a universal basic wage to protect the rights and the dignity of workers. We cannot just ride this pandemic out, Pope Francis is calling us to a deeper conversion and transformation as an Easter
People. We are now called to take action and ensure that all workers are cared for at this critical time.

**James Martin, SJ, Jesuit priest and author**

"Pope Francis reminds once again, and now in the midst of a pandemic, how worldwide catastrophes hit the poor and marginalized the hardest. And he asks us, as Jesus did, to remember these brothers and sisters as we make decisions for the common good of our world."

**LaTanya Ward, formerly incarcerated resident of South Central Los Angeles, L.A. Voice**

“My community and I feel that this crisis is barely new. This is our everyday reality. We are receiving bare minimum assistance. Black, Latin-X/Hispanic, Immigrants - we as the undesirables are forced to magically survive with little to nothing, while under attack. I feel as though we must rethink and reroute our movements and voices up a bit higher, a bit more spiritual, because we are in a struggle to survive.”

**Most Reverend José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles**

Here in the world’s most prosperous country, we have been humbled and chastened by the coronavirus pandemic. Many of us, for the first time, are now sharing in the insecurity and anxiety that define ordinary life for millions of our brothers and sisters around the world. Many have lost their jobs suddenly and are worried about how they will provide for their families. Many are sick without access to adequate medical treatments and equipment. Many feel stress and fear, sensing that their futures depend on forces beyond their control and decisions made by others. Our Holy Father’s letter reminds us that the brunt of this pandemic, like the brunt of every social crisis, is being borne by the poor and those who live on the margins of society. I am also deeply concerned about the growing personal and social costs of this pandemic, and especially the emotional, mental, and spiritual toll that will only grow as social isolation policies continue for the indefinite future. There are also moral questions about how care is being delivered in this health emergency, including what protections are being provided to health care workers, their working conditions, and how decisions are being made about patient care. As a society, we are seeing very clearly in this health emergency that we are responsible for one another and that we are called to serve one another and care for one another. This is a beautiful truth that we are witnessing every day during this pandemic — in our hospitals and homes, in our charities, and in all the quiet, unseen acts of self-sacrifice and service in our families and communities.

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*Faith in Action is an international network of faith-based organizations in the U.S. and in Haiti, El Salvador and Rwanda working to create a world in which everyone is included, can thrive and have their voice heard. Faith in Action works with 3,000 religious congregations in the U.S. in more than 240 cities and towns through 46 local and state federations. For more information, visit [www.faithinaction.org](http://www.faithinaction.org). Faith in Action is a 501c(3). Faith in Action and its affiliates are non-partisan and are not aligned explicitly or implicitly with any candidate or party. We do not endorse or support candidates for office.*