

Solidarity Reflection & Challenge

The social and economic conditions in Latin America, and especially in Guatemala, work in tandem to form some of the most oppressive living circumstances in the developing world. The economy in Guatemala is primarily agrarian, and while some large landowners can thrive on producing the country's cash crops, the majority of the population is forced into a precarious life of subsistence farming. Natural disasters and seasons of low crop yield exert additional pressure on rural families who already go without proper access to running water, electricity, and many other amenities.

Guatemala's social inequalities compound the hardships of the country's economic struggles. In a country where nearly 60% of the population lives in poverty, indigenous groups are twice as likely to be impoverished. A 36-year civil war, in which the indigenous people were primarily affected, ended in the mid-1990s; however, inadequate controls on post-war violence and lack of access to education has led to the development of youth-led gangs.

In the face of these social and economic hardships, the only option for many Guatemalans is to pursue happiness in a land of greater opportunity. Our faith teaches us that our loving God is partial to the plight of the oppressed and the immigrant (see Exodus 6:6-8). As we endeavor to gain a greater sense of solidarity by walking in the footsteps of our Guatemalan brothers and sisters throughout this campaign, consider the following:

- How cognizant am I of the blessings of my economic and social situation? When I take my walks, do I realize that I do so in relative safety and that I have swift access to food and running water for refreshment afterwards?
- The social tiers of Guatemala are not unique to that country. While the indigenous populations experience vulnerability in Guatemala, there are marginalized groups in our own city. Who are these groups, and what can I do to promote equality and justice?

Solidarity Challenge: Endeavor to be more mindful of your economic and/or social security this week and offer up humble thanksgiving to God for this gift. Identify one area of luxury in your life

and do without it this week. Offer this as a sacrifice of solidarity for those who go without (ex: shorter showers, no dessert, or even just turning the water off as you brush your teeth).

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, today you call us to welcome the members of God's family who come to our land to escape oppression, poverty, persecution, violence, and war. Like your disciples, we too are filled with fear and doubt and even suspicion. We build barriers in our hearts and in our minds. Lord Jesus, help us by your grace to see in this human family a reflection of the divine unity of the one Most Holy Trinity in whom we make our prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

--US Conference of Catholic Bishops: Prayer for Migrants and Refugees.

Further reading:

- http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website00955A/WEB/PDF/GUAPA_-5.PDF
- [Fiscal Policy, Inequality, and Ethnic Divide in Guatemala](#)