



Twenty years ago, the Québec National Assembly unanimously adopted the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion*. Today, Québec society is still marked by significant socio-economic inequalities. These inequalities have even increased since the law came into force in March 2003.

According to Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup> from 2004 to 2019,

the average income of the richest 10% of the population has increased by 23.4%

the average income of the poorest 10% has increased by only 4.6%

1. *Book of Proverbs 28:27* (the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition, is used throughout this message).

2. Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté, *Une question de droit! Examen critique de l'application de la Loi visant à lutter contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale à l'occasion de son 20<sup>e</sup> anniversaire*, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, p. 20.

The Church of God in Québec took part in many ways in the popular movement that led to the adoption of this historic law<sup>3</sup>. Today we are called upon to raise awareness and remind the government and civil society the importance to ensure that this law is applied in a more generous and inclusive manner. Over time, it seems that it is not so much poverty and social exclusion that have disappeared from our collective horizon, but rather the very idea of a possibility and a will to eliminate them! In solidarity with community organizations that fight *for and with* impoverished people, let us rekindle the thirst for social justice that lies at the root of this project to eliminate poverty, so that it may truly become our project for society: “let justice roll down like water; and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream<sup>4</sup>.”



**This thirst for social justice takes us directly back to the Old Testament, where it is written: “There will, however, be no one in need among you<sup>5</sup>”. According to the text, the condition for this future absence is the attentive listening to the Word of God and the full implementation of the commandment of justice and charity<sup>6</sup>.**

This commandment requires not only direct assistance to those in need (charity in the ordinary sense of the word), but also ensuring that laws and social structures (such as those governing debt, for example, including the terms of debt forgiveness) have the effect of increasing justice in our society. Unless this demanding call is heeded, “there will never cease to be some in need on the earth<sup>7</sup>.” This pragmatic observation does not mean that poverty should not be fought. On the contrary: it rather establishes the duty to help the poor and the unfortunate, both through direct aid and through solidarity aimed at social change.

When Jesus takes up this biblical word in Bethany, affirming that “you always have the poor with you<sup>8</sup>”, he is updating this commandment of solidarity. With Pope Francis, let us understand this Gospel passage as a reminder of the duty to give, but also and above all as a call to be close to impoverished people, as Christ did, and therefore to always include them among us, to be and walk with them, in order to bring about a just and fraternal society, a prefiguration of the Kingdom of God<sup>9</sup>. Impoverished people evangelize us because by going to meet them, we also meet Jesus Christ, a prelude to

3. See, for instance, the messages of the Quebec Assembly of Catholic Bishops for May 1st in 1995, *To End with the Poverty of Women*, and in 2000, *Eliminating Poverty, It Is Possible and We Want It*. These messages were written in response to, and in support of, the social and political actions of Catholic justice networks in Québec.

4. *Book of Amos* 5:24.

5. *Book of Deuteronomy* 15:4. This passage gave its title to the [message for May 1st, 2019](#), in which the Quebec Assembly of Catholic Bishops supported the 5-10-15 Campaign of the Collective for a Quebec Without Poverty.

6. *Book of Deuteronomy* 15:5.

7. *Book of Deuteronomy* 15:11.

8. *Gospel According to Matthew* 26:11; *Gospel According to Mark* 14:7; *Gospel According to John* 12:8.

9. Pope Francis, [“The poor you will always have with you” \(Mk 14:7\)](#), Message of his Holiness Pope Francis for the Fifth World Day of the poor, Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

a profound conversion of our being and our action<sup>10</sup>. This is confirmed by the testimonies of Christians who, in the name of their faith, have committed themselves to solidarity with impoverished people, with a view to systemic change, whether in their work, in a living environment or in the context of a broader social movement.

**On the occasion of May 1st, International Workers' Day and the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, we wish to bring to the attention of all people of good will the significant effects of the current economic situation on the living conditions of impoverished people.**



Rising prices are hitting hardest, and most significantly, families and single people who are already in difficult socio-economic situations<sup>11</sup>, including members of Indigenous communities<sup>12</sup> and workers with precarious migratory status, in all regions of the province. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the forms of economic recovery that were put forward have also made women, and more specifically mothers, more vulnerable to inflation<sup>13</sup>. In this context where it is becoming increasingly expensive to find housing, food, clothing and transportation, the number of requests for assistance from food banks has jumped by 33% since 2019 in Canada<sup>14</sup>.

In response, the Québec government provided \$6 million in emergency assistance to food banks in December 2022<sup>15</sup>. While such one-time assistance is necessary, it is not sufficient to fundamentally transform the economic system that perpetuates poverty and social exclusion. Policies that focus on the differential effects of inflation on the most vulnerable must be considered. In this sense, we support, with this message, the solidarity campaign for the expansion of access to the Quebec Basic Income program, which came into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. All people on social assistance should have access to it<sup>16</sup>.

Christians of all ages and backgrounds are invited to read, meditate and discuss this text, alone and in groups, and then to redouble their efforts to work *for and with* those in need, for “Where the poor are concerned, it is not talk that matters; what matters is rolling up our sleeves and putting our faith into practice through a direct involvement, one that cannot be delegated<sup>17</sup>.”

10. See Gérard Laverdure, *Du dépannage à la justice sociale. Un parti pris pour les exclus*, Montréal, Fides, 1995.

11. Pierre-Antoine Harvey et Minh Nguyen, « [L'inégalité face à l'inflation. Une croissance du coût de la vie selon les revenus des familles](#) », *Note socioéconomique*, Institut de recherche et d'informations socioéconomiques, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020; Éric Desrosiers, « [Tous inégaux devant l'inflation](#) », *Le Devoir*, Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

12. La Presse canadienne, « [Statistique Canada: l'inflation a un effet sur les dépenses dites nécessaires](#) », Mar. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

13. Francis Hébert-Bernier, « [Inéquitable, la relance économique rend les femmes vulnérables à l'inflation](#) », *Pivot*, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

14. Radio-Canada, « [Demande record dans les banques alimentaires au Canada, dit un rapport](#) », *ICI Radio-Canada*, Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

15. Agence QMI, « [Une aide d'urgence de 6 M\\$ versée aux banques alimentaires, frappées par l'inflation](#) », *Journal de Québec*, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

16. Virginie Larrivière et Serge Petitclerc, « [Toutes les personnes assistées sociales devraient avoir le Revenu de base](#) », *Le Devoir*, Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

17. Pope Francis, [For your sake Christ became poor \(cf. 2 Cor 8:9\)](#), Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Sixth World Day of the Poor, Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022, no 7.

# TO GO FURTHER



## QUESTIONS TO ENGAGE

What can I do in my parish or community to help reduce the impact of inflation on the impoverished?

What community organization or social movement can I support in my community?

Can I participate in a national demonstration or sign a petition to demand that the elimination of poverty become a real collective project in Québec?

How can I contact elected officials in my riding and region to raise awareness about the importance of working *for and with* the impoverished?

In what other ways can I deepen the social dimension of my Christian faith?

## A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# PARCOURS AMOS

Devenir solidaires, agir ensemble!

*The Amos Course – Becoming Solidary, Acting Together*, is a tool for adults interested in learning analysis and social action skills, created in partnership by the Office de catéchèse du Québec, the Centre justice et foi and the Council on Church and Society.

It is available [free of charge online](#).

For more information, contact your diocese or Simon Labrecque, secretary of the Council on Church and Society

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IN FRENCH ONLY

**GUIDE D'ANNONCIATION**

**PARCOURS AMOS**  
Devenir solidaires, agir ensemble!

RENCONTRE D'INTRODUCTION AU PARCOURS

TEMPS 23:40

**Objectif**

Permettre aux personnes participantes de nommer les grands défis de la justice sociale et d'envisager un premier contact avec le document *1000 heures d'été*.

**Déroulement de l'activité**

INTRODUCTION	CONTENU	TEMPS APPROXIMATIF
<b>Accueillir les personnes participantes au premier rendez-vous</b>	Présentation de la rencontre	5 min
<b>1. Les enjeux</b>	Présentation de la rencontre et de son objectif. Présentation de la vidéo <i>1000 heures d'été</i> et de son lien avec le thème de la justice sociale.	10 min
<b>2. Analyse</b>	Les personnes participantes analysent la vidéo et discutent de son contenu. Elles identifient les enjeux de la justice sociale et les liens avec le thème de la justice sociale.	20 min
<b>3. Échange en grand groupe</b>	Les personnes participantes partagent leurs réflexions et leurs idées. Elles discutent de la vidéo et de son lien avec le thème de la justice sociale.	15 min

**Étapes pour réaliser une rencontre et une interview en vue de votre production.**

1. Identifier deux ou trois personnes ou organismes possibles.
2. Prendre contact avec la personne à rencontrer ou l'organisme à visiter. Expliquer le but de l'interview et explorer leur intérêt. Envoyer un courriel qui résume le document.
3. Confirmer l'interview (date, heure et lieu). Prevoir assez de temps pour l'interview et les questions de suivi. Envoyer les questions à la personne ou à l'organisme (avant l'interview). Prevoir quelques minutes pour prendre des images et filmer de ce que la personne interviewée suggère.
4. Le jour de l'interview, arriver 15 minutes avant l'interview. Ne pas oublier la personne interviewée à répondre à toutes les questions. Il est bon de vérifier la matériel d'enregistrement (son, images) avant l'interview. Sans oublier l'identification d'éventuels témoins de voix et d'images à toutes les personnes enregistrées ou prises en photo.

Une fois le premier montage réalisé (audio, PDF, vidéo, etc.), il est conseillé de la remettre à la personne interviewée ou aux responsables de l'organisme concerné, qui pourra le réutiliser, modifier ou l'adapter.



This message was prepared by the Council on Church and Society of the Quebec Assembly of Catholic Bishops. Its members are: **Frédéric Barriault, Sabrina Di Matteo, Émilie Frémont-Cloutier, Bishop René Guay, Bishop Claude Hamelin, Mathieu Lavigne, Simon Labrecque (secretary), Bishop Marc Pelchat (president) and Sasha Valdes.**

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