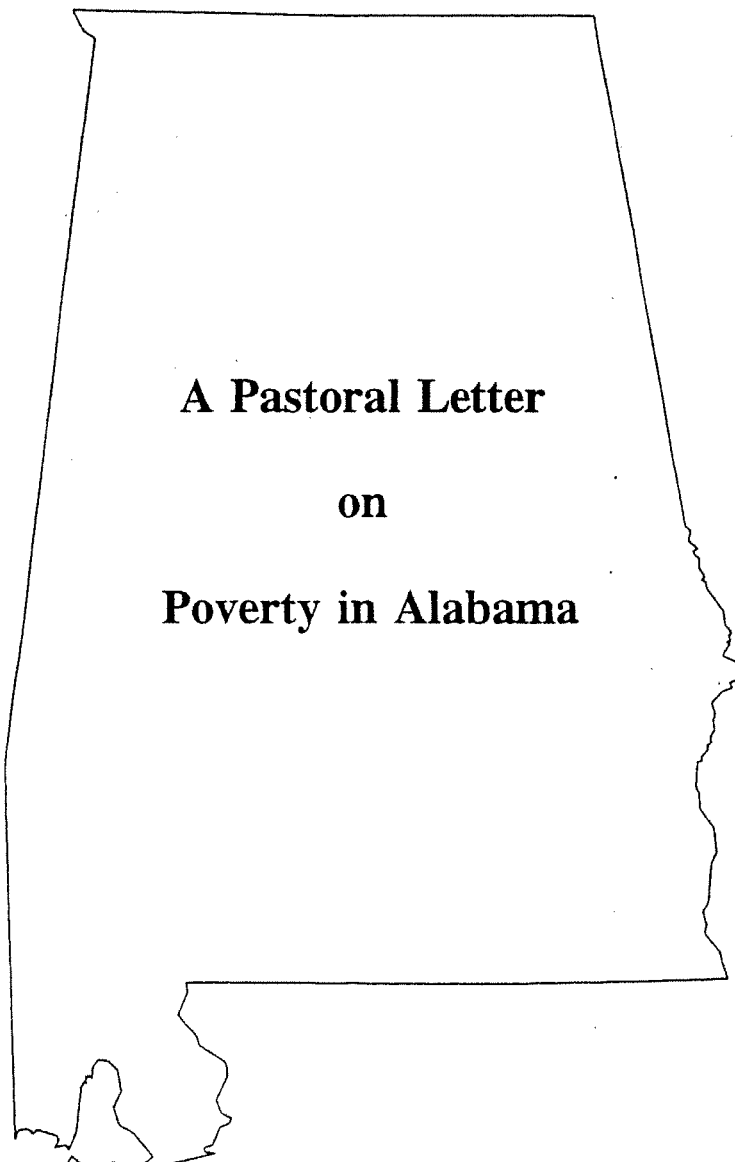


Make Justice Your Aim



**A Pastoral Letter
on
Poverty in Alabama**

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December 8, 1990

Introduction

1. The prophetic mandate to "make justice your aim" (Isaiah 1:17) challenges us to a constant review of our circumstances, an ongoing reading of the signs of the times, to determine whether justice is indeed our aim. In an attempt to conduct such a review, we have entered into a process of listening to the people of Alabama. We consulted with many civic, business, political, and religious leaders.¹ The most compelling witness, however, came from the poor. Through days of statewide hearings, the fear, the anxiety, the frustration, the despair of Alabama's poor were evident. Having heard in the cries of the poor the call of Jesus Christ, we are prompted to respond with a message of understanding and hope.

2. Ours is a beautiful state populated by a talented and energetic people whose culture values hospitality. Matching the geographic diversity of a land that encompasses the gulf coast in the south and mountains in the north, Alabamians are characterized by a cultural diversity that includes native American, European, African, Asian, and Latin American roots. Alabama is rich in natural resources: forests, mineral deposits, petroleum, arable land, and seafood. For many of us, Alabama is truly "a land where you can eat bread without stint and where you will lack nothing" (Deuteronomy 8:9).

3. On the other hand, there are many Alabamians who do lack something. Our unemployment rate is consistently higher than the national average. Many of our citizens are discriminated against because of their race. Many

cannot get a good education, adequate health care, essential transportation, or good care for their children while they work. All of us are burdened with an unfair tax system. These conditions are symptoms of injustice to which we direct our attention.

4. Jesus told us that we will ultimately be judged by whether or not we have reached out to the least of our brothers and sisters (Matthew 25). Throughout history the Church has sought to embrace the cause of such brothers and sisters, following the command of Jesus: "When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" (Luke 14:13).

Eutaw

I worked 7:00 AM till 3:00-5:00 PM for two elderly white women. I got \$112 a week, no extra. They hurt my feelings all the time, but I stayed because I thought they needed help. Then I found out they had plenty of money. Now I work at a restaurant for \$105 a week. - Mary

5. In 1986, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States issued a pastoral letter entitled *Economic Justice for All*.² The purpose of that letter was to examine the U.S. economy in the light of the principles of Catholic social teaching. The letter enunciated six basic principles of economic justice: 1) economic decisions and institutions must protect the dignity of the human person; 2) human dignity can be realized and protected only in community; 3) all

1. The process of listening which was conducted by the Peace and Justice Commissions of the Archdiocese of Mobile and the Diocese of Birmingham was multi-faceted. Between February and May 1989 there were hearings of those adversely affected by the economy held in Gadsden, Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, Robertsdale, Enterprise, Selma, Mobile, Florence, Atmore, Huntsville, Montgomery, and Tuskegee. A questionnaire was used to obtain input from parish councils and other parish leaders in the Archdiocese of Mobile and the Diocese of Birmingham. A statewide "Survey on Economic Issues" was sent to a random sample of Catholic households in Alabama in May 1989. Consultation meetings were held with business leaders in Birmingham in October 1989 and Montgomery and Mobile in February and March 1990. Consultation was also done with professionals in the fields of education, social work, business, economics, labor, religion, research, industrial relations, politics, advocacy and medicine.

people have a right to participate in the economic life of society; 4) all members of society have a special obligation to the poor and vulnerable; 5) human rights are the minimum conditions for life in community; 6) society as a whole, acting through public and private institutions, has the moral responsibility to enhance human dignity and protect human rights.

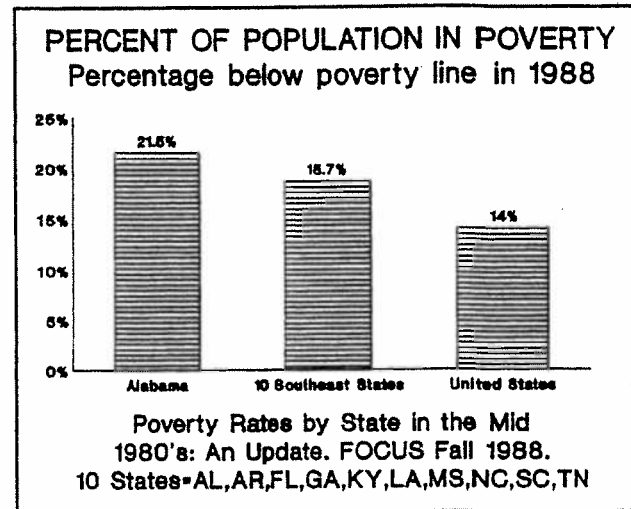
6. Fundamental to the message of that pastoral letter is the principle that every individual has the right to "life, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and basic education."³ Since these are precisely the things that the poor lack, "the fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority."⁴ The letter challenges us, when faced with "a brother or sister [who] has nothing to wear and has no food for the day," to "give them the necessities of the body" (James 2:15-16). It calls on us to review the economy to see how well the basic needs of the poor are being met.

7. We, the Catholic bishops of Alabama, seek to respond to that call by examining the Alabama economy with particular emphasis on the needs of poor people. While we address ourselves primarily to our brothers and sisters in the Catholic community of Alabama, we hope that all Alabamians will find in this letter a positive message that will encourage them to work together for the well-being of all our citizens.

Poverty in Alabama

8. *Economic Justice for All* defines poverty as "the lack of sufficient material resources required for a decent life,"⁵ but it goes on to broaden that definition: "Poverty is not merely the lack of adequate financial resources. It entails a more profound kind of deprivation, a denial of full participation in the economic, social, and political life of society and an inability to influence decisions that affect one's life. It means being powerless in a way that assaults not only one's pocketbook but also one's fundamental human dignity."⁶

9. As in the national pastoral, we will use the official government definition of poverty in order to provide a common ground for discussion.⁷ The 1990 poverty line for a family of three is \$10,560, and for a family of four is \$12,700.



10. Alabama now has a higher percentage of poor people than forty-six other states.⁸ Nearly twenty-two percent of Alabama's population is in poverty, in other words, about one of every five persons!

11. Why is there so much poverty in Alabama? Some would have us believe that the fault lies with the poor themselves, who are accused of having large families and of being lazy and/or immoral. But as we noted in the national pastoral, "70 percent of [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] AFDC families have only one or two children and ... people who are poor have the same strong desire to work that characterizes the rest of the population."⁹

12. There is no single factor which is entirely or even largely responsible for the amount of poverty that exists in Alabama. Rather, there are many reasons for the poverty in our state. The following deserve particular consideration: 1) the absence of sufficient economic development in the state to provide good jobs for more Alabamians; 2) a poor educational system; 3) a tax system in need of fundamental reform; 4) discrimination

against minorities and women in education and employment; 5) the powerlessness of the poor in the political arena; 6) welfare dependency; 7) lack of access to medical care; and 8) negative attitudes such as lack of esteem for education, contempt for the poor, and hostility to government.

13. The effects of these factors on people's lives are devastating. In 1988 Alabama had the highest infant mortality rate in the nation.¹⁰ There are Alabamians who are living in cars or under bridges or in shacks that have no running water or indoor plumbing. There are Alabamians who go to bed hungry most nights. There are Alabamians condemned to joblessness because of an inadequate education or unavailability of suitable day care opportunities, or simply the lack of a job that would support them. Others work hard at jobs that lack adequate pay. "That so many people are poor in a nation as rich as ours is a social and moral scandal that we cannot ignore."¹¹

How We Deal with Poverty in Alabama

14. "Dealing with poverty is not a luxury to which our nation can attend when it finds the time and resources. Rather, it is a moral imperative of the highest priority."¹² How are we dealing with poverty in Alabama? There are disturbing indications that Alabama could do a better job of dealing with poverty.

15. Poor Alabamians, for example, often stand alone in time of need. Alabama's Aid to Dependent Children program (ADC, commonly referred to as "welfare") provides cash benefits which are so far below the poverty line that in 1987 the ADC benefit level for a family of three ranked 51st out of all the states and the District of Columbia. Maximum ADC and food stamp benefits would have to be doubled just to reach the level at which the federal government would consider a family to be living in poverty. Yet, when adjusted for inflation, ADC benefits have fallen considerably over the last two decades.¹³ While we acknowledge the recently enacted five percent increase in ADC benefits, we deplore the

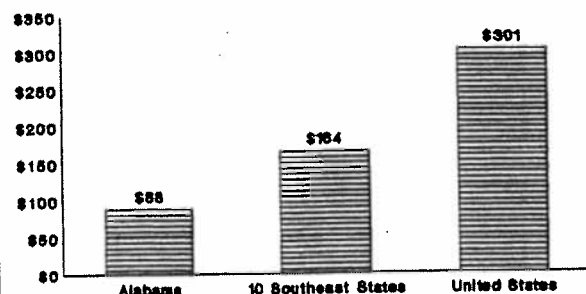
fact that Alabama still has the lowest benefit level of all the states.

ALABAMA "WELFARE" FACTS 1990

- ADC only for one parent households.
- Maximum ADC benefit for one parent and two children = \$124 a month.
- No children, no ADC.
- Maximum food stamp allowance for a family of 3 = \$260 a month.

16. There are many in Alabama who often go to bed hungry. The Loaves and Fish feeding program in Mobile reports that in the last five years the daily feeding average has gone up from 150 meals per day to 200 meals, and the monthly average is up from 3500 to 4500. The Firehouse Shelter in Birmingham served eighty meals a day when it opened in 1984 and averaged 204 meals a day in 1989. Yet between January 1983 and September 1988, participation in the food stamp program by Alabamians fell by 29 percent.¹⁴ All of this indicates that many Alabamians are not having their food needs met.

AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN (ADC) ADC payment for one child in 1989



Characteristics of State Plans for AFDC
US DHHS, Washington D.C. 1989 edition
10 STATES=AL,AR,FL,GA,KY,LA,MS,NC,SC,TN

17. Homelessness is on the rise in Alabama, and inadequate housing is common throughout the state. In Birmingham alone there are 4700 on the waiting list for public housing. Demand in Birmingham for shelter rose from 50 requests

monthly in 1988 to 200 in 1989. No new beds are available, and half of the turnaways are children.¹⁵ A 1989 survey of 850 social service agencies estimated that there were 17,318 people ages 21 and under who were homeless in Alabama, including 2,452 in Jefferson County 1,236 in Baldwin County, 1,105 in Tuscaloosa County and 1,076 in Mobile County.¹⁶ For all such Alabamians "homeless poverty is wormwood and gall" (Lamentations 3:19).

18. The poor in Alabama lack adequate medical care. Our state does not provide Medicaid coverage to 2-parent families or to most income-eligible children under 18 years of age. The Alabama Medicaid program is very limited in scope.¹⁷ In our hearings held around the state in the winter and spring of 1989 we repeatedly heard of medical needs not being met and of medical problems causing financial ruin and poverty.

Greene County

I have a back problem from a fall in 1973. My husband got cancer in 1987. We get only the most important medicine or

don't take it as often, only 1 or 2, not 3 times a day. We cut back on food so we have money for medicine and bills. Many times we go to bed hungry. - Mellie

Unemployment and Poverty in Alabama

19. "The first line of attack against poverty must be to build and sustain a healthy economy that provides employment opportunities at just wages for all adults who are able to work."¹⁸ How is Alabama doing at this "first line of attack against poverty"? During the 1980s Alabama's annual unemployment rate averaged three percentage points higher than the national rate. Some improvement took place as the decade came to a close, but at the end of 1989, with a national unemployment rate of over 5 percent and a state unemployment rate of over 7 percent, twenty of Alabama's sixty-seven counties had double-digit unemployment.¹⁹ All too many Alabamians are like the people in the parable of the workers in the

vineyard who were "standing idle in the marketplace" not because they did not want to work but because no one would hire them (Matthew 20:3,7).

20. There are multiple factors contributing to Alabama's unemployment problem.²⁰ Alabama's traditional strategy of luring industries with promises of cheap labor, tax abatements, and other incentives has not served us well. While providing some jobs, such efforts have often impeded more permanent solutions. Alabama must develop a policy of reinvesting in education, local business initiatives, infrastructure, and capital improvements.

21. Not only does Alabama have a higher unemployment rate than most other states, but also fewer of its unemployed receive insurance benefits.²¹ What happens to these workers who do not get unemployment benefits? Many families subsist on a much reduced income as one or the other spouse works at a part-time job with low pay and no benefits.

Mobile

I lived in my car through the winter of '87. It was difficult for me to find work, having to take sponge baths in gas station rest rooms, and wearing clothes I had slept in.

Would you hire someone who had no address or telephone, dirty and unironed clothes, and had not bathed in days or weeks? - Daniel

22. Catholic social teaching has strongly defended the right of the individual to productive employment and the right of society to expect productive employment from all those who can work. Corresponding to these rights are the mutual responsibilities of the individual to contribute to the common good through productive work, and of society to ensure that the individual's right to work is protected. What we said in *Economic Justice for All* applies to Alabama as well as to the entire nation: "We must make it possible as a nation for every one who is seeking

a job to find employment within a reasonable amount of time."²²

Education and Poverty in Alabama

23. Good education is basic to the struggle against poverty and unemployment. This is why we asserted that "investment in a skilled work force is a prerequisite both for sustaining economic growth and achieving greater justice in the United States."²³ More must be done in Alabama to invest energies and resources in developing a skilled work force. Alabama business leaders assure us that jobs are available in our state for skilled and well-educated workers.²⁴

Decatur

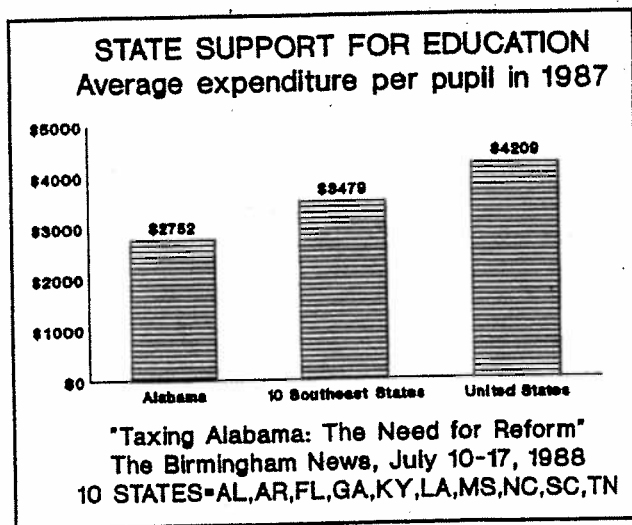
I work with migrant workers. They are from a foreign land and do not speak English. They are brought in by bus or truck to farm in Alabama. Transportation is \$200 a head. For \$90 they live in

a trailer not fit for an animal. Five year olds pick crops. There is no doctor for pregnant women. No government agency will help because they are illegal. We need these people and bring them here, but they are treated like they do not belong. They are treated so badly because there is nowhere to go for help. One man was locked up and let out to work at night, then paid \$10 a week. If hurt on the job, there is no compensation. These are people of strong faith.
- Grace

24. There are many illiterate adults in Alabama.²⁵ A majority of the adults in most Alabama counties have not completed high school.²⁶ The economic consequences of poor education are severe. The 1980 census revealed that Madison County had both the lowest illiteracy rate and the second highest family income, while Greene County had both the highest illiteracy rate and the lowest family income.²⁷ In 1988 an illiterate person in Alabama earned 36 percent less than a literate person. A person with less than a high school education earned 16 percent less than a person with a high school diploma. The unemployment rate for high school dropouts was close to double that of high school graduates.²⁸ In

1988 about 62 percent of the heads of Alabama families receiving public assistance did not have high school diplomas, and 85 percent of all inmates in Alabama prisons had not completed high school.²⁹ The connection between poor education and poverty is obvious.

25. The high drop-out rate and the high rate of illiteracy reflect hopelessness among many young people. These rates also suggest that there is a cultural perception that education is not very important. "Total revenues per pupil in Alabama were lower than in any other state in 1988, according to the National Education Association. While the state's schools were 12th highest in federal revenues per pupil, and 27th in state revenues per pupil, they were 48th in local revenues per pupil and received only one-fourth the local support per pupil that was average among the states."³⁰ Significant improvement in Alabama's educational system will come only when there is a consensus about the value of quality education for everyone and a willingness to pay for it.



26. There are inequalities of opportunity within the public school system which can be detected when comparing urban and rural schools, or schools in black and white neighborhoods.³¹ The attitudes and policies which produce these inequalities concern us. We especially lament the

fact that private schools and academies are sometimes used to perpetuate segregation. To counter these circumstances, we see a need for more parental involvement, an increased sense of community, enlightened political leadership, and tax reform to get needed revenue.

The Response to Poverty

27. What is the proper response to poverty, to the poor who are among us? There are some things that Alabamians can do individually and collectively. The Gospel challenges Christians to do these things as part of their special obligation "to be mindful of the poor" (Galatians 2:10).

28. All must cooperate in trying to meet the needs of poor people by understanding the actual experiences of those who live in poverty.

29. We must do all that we can to help in meeting basic human needs and overcoming poverty in our state.

30. We must counter the negative attitudes projected on the poor by so much of our society, recalling the injunction of Scripture: "He who mocks the poor blasphemes his Maker" (Proverbs 17:5).

Birmingham

I have fifteen years of construction experience, as office manager for several large construction companies. In November my husband and I were

both laid off. Nothing opened and we applied for food stamps. I was considered trainable. They offered me \$2 an hour for nine months clerical training. I don't need nine months training. I don't need a free handout that wastes tax money. I need a spring board. I need to learn the computer, which won't take nine months. Going to the food stamp office was very demeaning. I am a strong person. But all pride was stripped away. - Joan

voting booth must speak more loudly than our words. The example of Jesus challenges us "to speak for those who have no one to speak for them, to be a defender of the defenseless, who in biblical terms are the poor."³²

32. We must work together in the struggle to overcome poverty. We can take part in community efforts to improve impoverished neighborhoods. We can form networks of concerned citizens to alleviate unjust economic and social conditions. We can work in these and other ways to change structures that perpetuate injustice.

33. We must make it known that we support quality education for everyone. As voting citizens we must make it clear to the political leadership that we want changes made that would enable all Alabamians to become better educated. We must express support for realistic and equitable efforts to increase revenues to pay for improved education.

34. We must share with the poor, following the example of Zacchaeus, whose generosity in sharing his possessions with the poor was acknowledged by Jesus (Luke 19:1-10). We must be generous in direct help programs such as Catholic Charities.

Changing the Alabama Economy

35. Our study of poverty in Alabama convinces us that certain changes should take place in our state's economy.

Russellville

I would love to work, but I can't find a job. I was incarcerated, now nobody will let me do better. I go for help and they ask a million questions. If my parents give me a dollar I have to report it.

If I get help for utilities it is counted as income. I have two teenage children who were embarrassed to have their mother speak. - Rosemary

31. We must make our voices heard at work and in the marketplace, and our actions in the

36. There should be a change to move hearts from hardness toward the poor manifested by so much of our society. This will require an end to "actions, words, or attitudes that stigmatize the poor, that exaggerate the benefits received by the poor, and that inflate the amount of fraud in welfare payments."³³

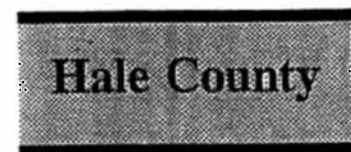
37. Each sector of Alabama society must play its part in dealing with poverty. We believe that individuals, churches, private organizations, community groups, businesses, and governments can all contribute to the alleviation of poverty, and all are obliged to do so.

38. We must make a commitment in the state of Alabama to an economic growth that will benefit all Alabamians, not just the specially privileged. Economic growth will not automatically reduce poverty, but poverty will not be reduced without economic growth.

39. Employers must pay just wages to employees, and they must recognize the right of workers to organize. We are particularly distressed by the growing trend of underemployment and part-time employment, which some employers use to justify paying less than a living wage with no benefits.

40. Job training programs must be adequate and must prepare people for jobs that are available.³⁴

41. Child care services and public transportation must be accessible and affordable to those who seek job training and employment.



There is no work to help the people. Young men sit on the corner and work one day at a time. Back in the 1950s there was a lot of farmers, not so much now.

The drought was rough. New catfish ponds take my well water. - Elmer

42. Alabama policies and programs must be supportive of family values and the dignity of all workers. We especially note the vulnerability of the small family farm and migrant workers.

43. A fundamental reform of our tax system is urgently required. Our regressive system of low property taxes, high sales taxes, and income tax on low income families is an intolerable injustice favoring the rich and burdening the poor. In our process of consultation we were told by business leaders, community leaders and the poor that comprehensive tax reform is an essential first step in the process of promoting a more just economy. No group should be exempt from paying just taxes. All of us must look beyond narrow personal interests to the common good; paying just taxes is the duty of every citizen and every business entity. We are encouraged by efforts underway to reform the tax system.

44. Comprehensive welfare reform must be undertaken as part of an ongoing effort to come as close as we can to a system that meets genuine need without producing dependency or breaking up families. We welcome the movement, under federal mandate,³⁵ in the direction of welfare reform, but we insist that these must be genuine reforms benefitting the recipients, not punitive measures merely labeled as reform.

45. The education system must be substantially changed. A way should be found to improve the tax base for education, including the enhancement of local funding, and also to improve the distribution and allocation of funds through proper management. Changes in the education system should be aimed at alleviating the inequalities that exist, so that we will be able to provide a quality education to every Alabamian, regardless of race, economic condition, or the county of residence. None of this will happen without a change in the fundamental attitude toward the importance of education.

46. Many Alabamians, especially the working poor, do not have access to health care. Programs are needed to insure adequate health care for all

citizens. Alabamians must participate in the national dialogue seeking to shape a new just health policy.

Huntsville

I worked for GE and NASA. I got cancer and used up \$250,000 in insurance. I need \$250 a month in prescriptions. I'm only 56. I expected to die before the money ran out, but

God didn't want me yet. The problem with being on top is that the fall to the bottom can be traumatic. - Eugene

47. Alabama people of faith from all religions and denominations have taken part in programs to help the poor and in efforts to deal with poverty. We would like to see increased cooperation among the different faith communities in working for these goals. Working together, these communities of faith in Alabama can be a powerful voice calling for the changes needed in our state.

Challenges to Alabama Catholics

48. As we said in *Economic Justice for All*, "we would be insincere were we to deny a need for renewal in the economic life of the church."³⁶ As our contribution, therefore, to the struggle to eliminate poverty, we make the following commitments and recommendations.

49. Efforts are underway in both dioceses to assess where we stand, as employers, in relation to just wages, benefits, etc. In Birmingham a committee was formed in 1990 to assess wages and benefits in the diocese. In the Archdiocese of Mobile several committees have been reviewing funding, wages, and benefits; some have completed their work, others are still in process. Though each diocese is following its own path in pursuing these matters, we are committed to continue this evaluation and we are determined to move toward greater economic justice within our own Church. We emphasize that any improvement must necessarily involve increases in

giving on the part of members in the Church. All participate in a corporate responsibility for all are members of the Body of Christ.

Baldwin County

I throw my hands up and quit. Then I say, no, Virginia, you gotta keep going. I have even stooped so low as to

go to welfare, and that is something I never wanted to do, but they couldn't help. - Virginia

50. We direct parishes to make a special commitment to social ministry. Parishes can begin with an analysis of their commitment to the poor by asking themselves such questions as: How good are we at sharing our financial resources with the needy? Do we have any facilities that can be made available to the needy or to those who help the needy? Does our parish express concern for the poor in its educational programs and liturgical celebrations? Do we welcome all people to parish life and worship, regardless of their poverty or wealth? (James 2:1-4)

51. While we strongly encourage efforts to provide food, shelter, and clothing to the poor, we with like emphasis encourage advocacy efforts on behalf of structural change. We urge Catholics as individuals and through their parishes to become involved in working for justice and charity. At the very least, all Catholics should exercise the duties and privileges of citizenship - they should vote and they must pay just taxes.

52. We expect priests and deacons to preach the social teachings of the Church as an integral part of their ministry. This requires continued study and the leadership that promotes action on behalf of justice.

53. We encourage all parish leaders to work with the clergy and lay leaders of other faith communities in studying economic and social

situations and developing responses that both meet immediate needs and change unjust structures. We also encourage parish leaders to work with other groups that have common economic and social concerns.

Selma

Every time it seems I see a little light at the end of the tunnel, something comes up and the light just fades away. Sometimes I am so depressed I feel like I am drowning in a pool of water. My mind says go on and drown, but my body says don't drown, you have too much work to do. - Stephanie

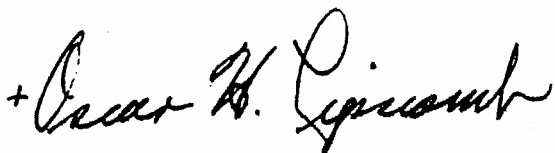
54. We charge our Peace and Justice Commissions with the task of assisting with the implementation of this pastoral letter throughout the state. We ask them to provide resource materials and study guides on the areas covered in this pastoral.

Conclusion

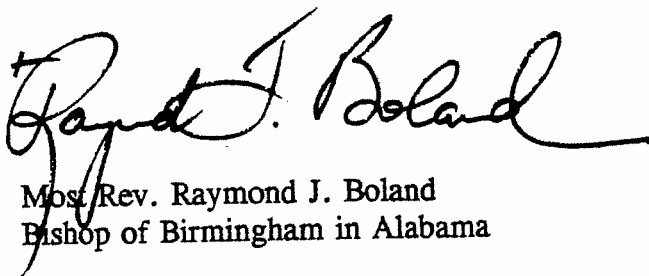
55. The early Christian experience of communal life reflected a special concern for the poor, so that Luke could declare that "there was no needy person among them" (Acts 4:34). We, however, do have needy people among us, and we are charged by Jesus Christ to care for them in a special way. Jesus "became poor although he was rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9), was anointed "to bring glad tidings to the poor" (Luke 4:18), and proclaimed the poor blessed (Luke 6:20). He identified himself with the needy: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:35-36). This is the challenge facing us as Catholic citizens of Alabama. Empowered by God's spirit, we will "make justice our aim."

56. "Come now, let us set things right" (Isaiah 1:18).

Given at Mobile and Birmingham on this Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1990



Most Rev. Oscar H. Lipscomb
Archbishop of Mobile



Most Rev. Raymond J. Boland
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama

On December 2, 1990, the Reverend Albert (Steve) Foley, S.J. died. Father Foley was a person who, throughout his thirty seven years in Alabama, sought to make justice his aim and to set things right through his ministry and personal witness in race relations and civil rights. He was instrumental in the development of this pastoral and it is with gratitude that we dedicate this letter to one who was both pioneer and prophet.

NOTES

2. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (Washington: USCC Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, 1986).
3. *Economic Justice for All*, 80.
4. *Ibid.*, 90.
5. *Ibid.*, 173.
6. *Ibid.*, 188.
7. See *Economic Justice for All*, 173 and footnote 27. The government's definition is based on multiplying by three the cost of the Department of Agriculture's lowest cost food plan. The definition is adjusted for inflation each year.
8. The Corporation for Enterprise Development, *The 1989 Development Report Card for the States* (Washington, 1989) p. 26.
9. *Economic Justice for All*, 193.
10. *The 1989 Development Report Card for the States*, p. 27.
11. *Economic Justice for All*, 16.
12. *Ibid.*, 170.
13. Alabama Coalition Against Hunger, *Standing in the Welfare Lines* (Auburn, March 1989) p. 3.
14. Shapiro and Greenstein, on pp. 3-4 of "Alabama: A State Analysis," provided the following 1987 data. In Alabama, under ADC a single parent with two children is eligible for a maximum cash benefit of \$118 per month, or \$1,416 per year. This ADC benefit equals just 15.6 percent of the 1987 poverty line for a family of three, a benefit level which ranks 51st out of all the states and the District of Columbia. The maximum food stamp benefit for a 3-person family receiving the maximum ADC cash benefit equals \$228 per month. At most, ADC and food stamp benefits combined can equal 45.8 percent of the poverty line. For a family of three without any income, ADC benefit payments equal only 30.7 percent of the 'need standard,' the amount of money determined by the state to be necessary to meet the minimal standard of living in Alabama. The maximum ADC benefit for a 4-person family fell 37.8 percent from 1970 to 1987 after adjusting for inflation.
15. National Coalition for the Homeless, *American Nightmare: A Decade of Homelessness in the United States* (Washington, December 1989), pp. 28-32. This report was based on research done during August and September 1989.
16. *Services for Homeless Children and Their Families*, a research report by Barbara Chandler, Carol S. Drolen, and Lucinda Lee Roff of the School of Social Work, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, September 1989. Data were collected from May - August 1989.
17. Alabama does not provide Medicaid coverage to 2-parent families who meet the welfare eligibility requirements. Alabama extends Medicaid coverage only to some income-eligible children under 18 years of age. It is one of 19 states that has chosen to restrict this coverage to certain small groups of children. Alabama is one of 14 states that does not have a Medically Needy program. Consequently, in Alabama the Medicaid income eligibility limit is the same as the welfare income eligibility limit, which is only 15.6 percent of the 3-person poverty level. In 1986, Alabama covered 14 out of 32 possible Medicaid services, which is less than the 21 options covered in the median state. Shapiro and Greenstein, "Alabama: A State Analysis," pp. 8-10.
18. *Economic Justice for All*, 196.
19. Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, *Alabama Sub-State Labor Market News* (Montgomery, January 1990).
20. *Economic Justice for All* lists the factors contributing to the national unemployment as: population growth, women entering the labor force, immigrants, technological changes, increased competition in world markets, discrimination in employment, high levels of defense spending, the failure to invest sufficiently in certain industries and regions, inadequate education and training for new workers, and insufficient mechanisms to assist workers displaced by new technology (144-49).
21. On a nationwide basis, 33 percent of unemployed workers received unemployment insurance benefits in an average month in 1986. In Alabama the figure was 23.6 percent, placing it 44th among all the states by this

- measure. The strength of unemployment insurance coverage was down from 1979 when 37.1 percent of the unemployed in Alabama received insurance benefits. Shapiro and Greenstein, "Alabama: A State Analysis," p. 12.
22. *Economic Justice for All*, 136.
 23. *Ibid.*, 159.
 24. Consultation meetings were held with twenty-five business leaders in Birmingham on October 12, 1989, with four leaders in Montgomery on February 17, 1990, and with fourteen leaders in Mobile on March 1, 1990.
 25. The Alabama State Department of Education reports that there are 220,000 adults 25 years or older who are functionally illiterate. (*Selected Demographic Data and Program Information Alabama*, Bulletin 1986, No. 48.) The Corporation for Enterprise Development, using U.S. Department of Education estimates, reports that 13 percent of adults ages 16 to 64 were illiterate in 1985. (*The 1989 Development Report Card for the States*, p. 61.) The *Alabama Journal* reported that "As of 1980, there were more than 1 million illiterate adults in Alabama. About 38 percent of all adults, 16 or older, were illiterate, ranking Alabama ninth worst among states." (Emily Bentley, "Bottom of the Class," *The Alabama Journal* [Montgomery, October 1988] p. 32.) Estimates vary but all indicate a high number.
 26. The 1980 census revealed that half or more of the adults 25 years old and over living in 47 of the 67 counties in Alabama had not completed high school. Alabama State Department of Education, *Selected Demographic Data and Program Information Alabama*, Bulletin 1989, No. 48.
 27. "Alabama Program Plan for Adult Education," submitted by the State Department of Education for 1990-1993, p.10, par.3.1.
 28. Dr. B.W. Walden, "The Startling Facts About Adult Illiteracy," unpublished 1988 report prepared for the State Department of Education, p. 1.
 29. "Bottom of the Class," *The Alabama Journal*, p. 31.
 30. *The PARCA Report*, Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, Samford University, Birmingham, No. 4, Summer 1989, p.1.
 31. It should be noted that the development of "magnet schools," such as in Mobile County, is an attempt to provide higher quality education in poorer and minority neighborhoods.
 32. *Economic Justice for All*, 52.
 33. *Ibid.*, 194.
 34. Adequate and appropriate job training was a theme mentioned by a number of testifiers at the hearings of the poor. The need to train people for real job was mentioned by the business leaders, and it was a major concern in the statewide "Survey on Economic Issues" that was part of the consultation process.
 35. The National Family Support Act of 1988 mandated welfare reform. Regulations governing this act were issued in October, 1989. All states must put together a job training program that provides education, training, and employment experience for welfare recipients. The states must guarantee child care for those who need it, even up to one year after leaving welfare. All states must implement welfare payments for two-parent families by 1994.
 36. *Economic Justice for All*, 349.

The idea of a pastoral statement on the Alabama economy grew out of discussions between the Peace and Justice Commission of Mobile and the Office of Implementation, The Pastoral Letter on the U.S. Economy, U.S. Catholic Conference. The writing committee for the original drafts was chaired by Gerald Darring. The committee members were Sr. Mary McGehee, O.S.B., Nicholas De Rocher, Richard Ambrose, Tyrone Webb, Sr. Beth Butler, M.S.B.T., Dorothy Shippen, and Sr. Maureen Kennedy, O.P.

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