

## Catholic Perspectives on the Housing Crisis

Through our Charities agencies, dioceses, and parishes, the Catholic Community serves tens of thousands of men, women, and children who struggle to avoid homelessness and to maintain adequate housing. Besides sheltering homeless people who turn to us for help, we have built, and continued to maintain, thousands of affordable housing units. All of these experiences have demonstrated to us how homelessness and inadequate, substandard housing destroys lives, undermines families, hurts communities, and weakens the social fabric of our nation. Despite our efforts—and the efforts of so many others—there is just not enough affordable housing available.

The Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University found in a recent study that "the incidence of housing affordability problems barely eased for low income households and started to increase among moderate income households" in the booming economy of the 1990's. Currently, there is no state in the union where a minimum wage worker can afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment at the fair market rent.

The USCCB statement, *Putting Children and Families First*, notes: "Many families cannot find or afford decent housing, or must spend so much of their income for shelter that they forego other necessities, such as food and medicine.... [The Catholic bishops] support housing policies which seek to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing and help families pay for it." We must put in place a sustainable source of funds to build affordable housing.

*Theodore Cardinal McCarrick  
Archbishop of Washington  
Chairman, Domestic Policy Committee  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

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Basic human dignity requires decent and safe shelter. It is necessary for families to thrive, and essential if a society is to sustain itself. The right to shelter is a consistent theme in Catholic social teaching; a society has to protect that right.

It is a scandal that in our prosperous country, the lack of decent, affordable housing still affects so many people.

*Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.  
Archbishop of Chicago*

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The family, as the basic cell of society, has a full right to housing adequate to its needs, so that it can develop a genuine domestic communion.

The Church recognizes this fundamental right and is aware of her obligation to work together with others in order to ensure that it is recognized in practice.

*Pope John Paul II  
Lenten Message 1997*