



**Scriptural Reflections
from
Jewish, Christian, Islamic and American Indian Traditions**

- Isaiah 32:15-18* *Then will the desert become an orchard, and the orchard will be regarded as a forest. Right will dwell in the desert and justice abide in the orchard. Justice will bring about peace. Right will produce calm and security. My people will live in peaceful country, in secure dwellings and quiet resting places.*
- Isaiah 58:6-8* *This is the fasting that I wish . . . Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless, clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed*
- Isaiah 58:10-12* *If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and gloom shall become for you like midday . . . Then ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake, and the foundations from ages past shall raise up;
“Repairer of the breach,” they shall call you, “Restorer of ruined households”*
- Proverbs 24:3,4* *By wisdom is a house built, by understanding is it made firm, and by knowledge are its rooms filled with every precious and pleasing thing.*
- Matthew 25:34,35* *Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*
- Galatians 6:9* *And let us not grow weary of doing good. If we do not relax our efforts, in due time we shall reap our harvest. While we have the opportunity, let us do good to all*
- The Qu’ran 59:9,10* *The ones who have set up housekeeping and faith before them should love anyone who has migrated to them . . . Those who are shielded from their own avarice will be prosperous.*
- American Indian Prayer* *Grandfather, Sacred One, teach us love, compassion and honor, that we may heal the earth and heal each other.*



Theological Reflections¹

From The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World:

The joy and hope, the grief and anxiety of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted: this is the joy and hope, the grief and anxiety, of the followers of Christ.

From John Paul II:

The church, 'the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way,' feels it has a serious obligation to join with those who are working, without self-interest and with dedication to find concrete and urgent solutions to the housing problem and to see that the homeless receive the necessary attention and concern on the part of public authorities.²

From the Pontifical Commission Justitia et Pax:

Political authorities, religious leaders, and, in general, public opinion all recognize that a situation in which millions of human beings lack adequate housing is a serious problem A fundamental human right is, in reality, being violated. An adequate response to such a large-scale problem calls for the shaping of a consistent political will, as well as increased awareness of the collective responsibility of all, and particularly of Christians, for the future of society.³

From the United States Catholic Conference:

The recent words of our Holy Father pose a special challenge for American Catholics. They call us to renewed reflection and effective action on the national disgrace of widespread homelessness in our midst and the broader housing crisis that undermines the life and dignity of so many of our sisters and brothers who lack a decent place to live. . .

We come to this issue as pastors, not policy-makers, as teachers, not housing technicians. But we know from our own pastoral experience and the work of our dioceses and parishes across the nation that homelessness and poor housing are destroying lives, undermining families, hurting communities, and weakening the social fabric of our nation. Homeless people and those without adequate housing frequently turn to the Church for help. We see their suffering. We feel their pain. Across this nation, the church is reaching out in an unprecedented way to provide shelter to tens of thousands of men, women and children. . .

We are deeply involved in housing. But our efforts cannot and should not substitute for effective and just public policies to deal with the crisis of homelessness and the urgent need for decent housing in our communities and country. . .

It is not our role or our expertise to describe the specific policies and programs to meet these needs. But we can suggest some directions and criteria for a renewed commitment



to decent housing. We believe that the major goals for national housing policy should include the following:

- *Preservation: Effective policies to help preserve, maintain and improve what low-cost, decent housing we already have*
- *Production: Creative, costs-effective, and flexible programs that will increase the supply of quality housing for low-income families, the elderly, and others in great need.*
- *Participation: Encouraging the active and sustained involvement and empowerment of the homeless, tenants, neighborhood residents, and housing consumers. We need to build on the American traditions of homeownership, self-help, and neighborhood participation.*
- *Partnership: Ongoing support for effective and creative partnerships among nonprofit community groups, churches, private developers, government at all levels, and financial institutions to build and preserve affordable housing*
- *Affordability: Efforts to help families obtain decent housing at costs that do not require neglect of other basic necessities.*
- *Opportunity: Stronger efforts to combat discrimination in housing against racial and ethnic minorities, women, those with handicapping conditions, and families with children. . . .*

As believers, we find our reason and direction for action in the life of Jesus and the reaching of his Church. We are reminded by the gospel that the first human problem Jesus faced on earth was a lack of shelter. There was “no room in the inn” for the Holy Family in Bethlehem. Today, we see in the faces of homeless men, women, and children, the face of Christ. We know that in reaching out to them, standing with them in defending their rights, in working with them and their families for decent housing, we serve the Lord.

¹United State Catholic Conference, “Homelessness and Housing: A Human Tragedy, A Moral Challenge, A Statement of the Administrative Board, (March 24, 1988)

²Pope John Paul II, Letter to Pontifical Commission *Justitia et Pax* (December 8, 1987)

³Pontifical Commission *Justitia et Pax*, *What Have You Done to Your Homeless Brother? The Church and the Housing Problem* (Washington, D.C.: USCC Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, 1988), p. 8.