

LIVING ON LESS THAN \$1 A DAY

page  
1/2

*This reflection is designed to give youth some sense of what it means to be poor in the Global South. This is a graphic, first-hand account of life and the struggle to rise above it and was written in the diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus, a slum-dweller in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Her diary is called Child of the Dark and was published in 1962. This activity is effective with groups of all ages.*

OUTLINE //

- The technique refashions the home they imagined and the life of its inhabitants into a typical scene in the Global South, where many people live on less than a \$1 a day.
- Allow your group to quiet themselves and get comfortable.

REFLECTION //

Read aloud slowly to help youth imagine the situation or show the YouTube video created by the youth group LOFT at Canadian Martyrs parish in Vancouver, BC for their THINKfast in 2007.

Imagine your home...

Take out the furniture, except a few old blankets, a kitchen table and one chair.  
Take away all the clothing, except for the oldest dress or suit for each member of the family, and one shirt or blouse. Leave a pair of shoes for one member.

Empty the pantry and refrigerator except for a small bag of flour, some sugar and salt, a few mouldy potatoes for tonight's dinner, a handful of onions and a dish of dried beans.

Dismantle the bathroom, shut off the water, and remove the electronic wiring.  
Take away the house itself and move the family into a tool shed.  
Remove all the other houses in the neighbourhood and set up a shantytown.

Cancel all subscriptions to newspapers, magazines and book clubs. This is no great loss as the family is now illiterate.  
Leave one small radio for the whole shantytown.



CANADIAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR

**Development  
and Peace**

www.dev.org

LIVING ON LESS THAN \$1 A DAY

page  
2/2

Move the nearest clinic or hospital 10 kilometers away and put a midwife in charge instead of a doctor.

Throw out the bankbooks, stock certificates, pension plans and insurance policies, and leave the family a cash savings of \$5.

Give the head of the family three acres to cultivate as a tenant farmer. On this he can raise \$300 in cash crops, of which 1/3 will go to the landlord and 1/10 to the local moneylender.

Take off 25 to 30 years from your life expectancy.

*(pause)*

Look around your new home and neighbourhood. How do you feel? How do you live day to day? What do you want to do to improve the situation?

The text is from the diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus. What do you think she wants to teach us?

*Source: Robert Heilbroner, The Great Ascent.*



CANADIAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR

**Development  
and Peace**

www.devp.org