

# **Priests urged to preach about effects of poverty, job loss on families**

WASHINGTON - The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is urging priests across the country to preach about "the terrible toll the current economic turmoil is taking on families and communities."

In a letter to his fellow bishops, Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York said he was writing at the recommendation of the Administrative Committee, which directs the work of the USCCB between general assemblies.

The committee "wanted something more than a public statement," he said in the letter, dated Sept. 15 and made public Sept. 19.

"I hope we can use our opportunities as pastors, teachers and leaders to focus public attention and priority on the scandal of so much poverty and so many without work in our society," Archbishop Dolan said, noting that special resources and materials to assist in that effort would be posted in an Unemployment and Poverty section of the USCCB website, [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

"Widespread unemployment, underemployment and pervasive poverty are diminishing human lives, undermining human dignity and hurting children and families," he said.

The archbishop pointed out that the U.S. Census Bureau had released statistics during the Sept. 13-14 Administrative Committee meeting showing that 46 million people, including 16 million children, were living in poverty in the United States in 2010.

"These numbers bring home to us the human costs and moral consequences of a broken economy that cannot fully utilize the talents, energy and work of all our people," he said. "The common good will not advance; economic security will not be achieved; and individual initiative will be weakened when so many live without the

dignity of work and bear the crushing burden of poverty.”

He said African-Americans and Hispanics “live with unemployment and poverty at far higher rates than others” and immigrant workers were “especially vulnerable to exploitation and unfair treatment,” in contradiction to “our national pledge of ‘liberty and justice for all’ ” and “the consistent teaching of our church.”

Archbishop Dolan said “the best way out of poverty is to work at a living wage.”

The nation’s “economic failures have fundamental institutional and systemic elements that have either been ignored or made worse by political and economic behaviors, which have undermined trust and confidence,” he said.

“However, this is not time to make excuses or place blame,” the archbishop said. “It is time for everyone to accept their own personal and institutional responsibility to help create jobs and to overcome poverty, each in accord with their own abilities and opportunities.

“Individuals and families, faith-based and community groups, businesses and labor, government at every level, all must work together and find effective ways to promote the common good in national and economic life,” Archbishop Dolan said.