

“An Economy for All” Community Dinner

Planning Guide

Overview

At NETWORK, our current policy agenda, “[An Economy for All](#),” reflects our work for an economy and society where all of us can thrive – not just a select, ultra-wealthy few. This means working for federal policies that deliver what we need to live good, flourishing lives, including affordable health care, housing, and food; dignified jobs with paid leave; clean air and water; a humane immigration system; and a say in the decisions that shape our lives.

This dinner is an opportunity to connect and collectively imagine a new economic life that makes life better for all people in our communities. At this event, you will gather community members to share concerns through a brief synodal listening exercise, learn about Catholic teaching on economic justice, and together envision what “An Economy for All” would look like in your community. To help make that vision a reality, the event will close with an opportunity for participants to check and update their voter registration, make a voting plan, and find resources to support them in voting.

NETWORK staff are here to support you! Reach out to us at info@networklobby.org for help with any questions about your event.

Supplies

1. Flyers to advertise the event. Here is a [flyer template](#) you can use (please make a copy before you make your edits so others can use the template, too.) But remember, personal invitations work best!
2. Sticky notes (you will need about 3 sticky notes per participant).
3. Print and hang the [Bread and Roses poster](#); participants will add sticky notes to it during the conversation.
4. A copy of this guide for you to use as a script during the event.
5. Speaker for playing music (optional: projector).
6. Food and beverages – potluck encouraged!
7. Paper plates, napkins, cups, etc.
8. Copies of NETWORK’s [An Economy for All policy agenda](#) (as many as needed).
9. Copies of the USCCB [“A Catholic Framework for Economic Life”](#) (as many as needed).
10. Copies of [NETWORK’s Dilexi Te reflection guide](#) (as many as needed).

Tip: If you have any copies of these documents remaining at the end of your event, encourage participants to pass them out to friends, family, fellow parishioners, etc.!

Gathering

- Invite participants to help themselves to dinner and find a seat.
- Pass out ten sticky notes and a copy of [An Economy for All policy agenda](#) and [“A Catholic Framework for Economic Life”](#) to each attendee.
- Once participants are settled, welcome them (sample language below).
 - *Welcome, everyone! Thank you for coming to dinner tonight. Together, we are going to connect, learn, and imagine what a better economy and society would look like for our communities. Before we get started with some music, please take a moment to introduce yourself to anyone sitting near you whom you haven’t met.*
- Then, open the event by playing the song, [“Bread and Roses”](#). Before playing the song, share the history of “Bread and Roses”:
 - *As you can see from our banner, a key theme of tonight’s dinner is building an economy for all of us, where we all have both “bread and roses.” This slogan comes from 1912, when some 20,000 textile workers, led by women in immigrant communities, went on strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts for higher wages and safer working conditions after discovering that they had been shorted on their weekly pay by 32 cents. The banners they carried, which read “We want bread, and roses too,” gave the strike—and the song we’re about to hear—its name.*
 - *At the time, many workers couldn’t survive without the several loaves of bread they bought with the 32 cents that they were shorted in their pay. For the strikers, bread symbolized survival, while roses represented the things that made life beautiful – such as overtime pay and time for leisure.*

Community Conversation

Part 1 – Conversation in the Spirit

- To start, ask participants to consider the question below. Let them know that they will be asked to share their response in a small group.
 - **Question: What are the issues that keep you up at night? What concerns or worries you most?**
 - *Examples:*
 - *Not being able to find an apartment you can afford near work or school,*
 - *Rising health care premiums and medical bills,*
 - *The price of groceries rising and loved ones at risk of going hungry.*

- Introduce the process.
 - *We are going to share our response to this question using a process inspired by the holy listening process used at the Vatican's Synod on Synodality that Pope Francis led.*
 - *We are now going to get into small groups to share our response to the discussion question. Each person will have two minutes to speak. While they are speaking, no one may interrupt them or comment on what they have shared. Try to really listen with openness to what they are sharing, and how the Holy Spirit might be present in their words and experiences. After all group members have shared, the discussion will open up for brief reflections on the common themes you heard.*
- Help participants get into groups of 3-4 people with those around them and have each group select a timekeeper.
- After about 8 minutes, remind the groups to transition to reflecting on the common themes that emerged in their group.
- After a few more minutes, bring the large group back together. Thank everyone for participating. Ask one person from each group to briefly summarize the common themes they heard in their group, without naming names (*Example: "Many of us are concerned about paying rent," "Several folks are worried for the future of our country," etc.*)

Part 2 – A Catholic Framework for Economic Life

- Introduce the next section of the discussion:
 - *Many of the concerns we just named are a result of laws and policies that make it hard for many of us and our loved ones to survive, much less thrive. The document we will look at next is called "A Catholic Framework for Economic Life," and it reflects the Catholic Church's teachings on how we should build a moral economy and distribute resources.*
- Ask participants to take a few minutes to look over the 10 principles of the document in front of them, ["A Catholic Framework for Economic Life."](#)
- Then, ask participants to "turn and talk" with their neighbor for about 5 minutes to respond to the following question.

Question: Which principle stands out to you or resonates with you most, and why?

- After discussion, invite 2-3 participants to share with the large group about which principle they chose, and why.

Part 3 – Envisioning an Economy for All

- Continue the conversation with a large group discussion. Allow a few minutes for discussion on the question below.

Question 1: The Catholic teaching we just read says: “*The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.*” What would it look like to live in a world where “the economy is for the person, not the person for the economy”? What would your everyday life be like?

- For the following question, offer examples of bread and roses to help get ideas flowing.

Question 2: Earlier, we noted how “bread” symbolizes what we need to survive, and “roses” symbolize the things that make life good and beautiful. What “bread” and what “roses” do you dream of for your community?

- **Examples of “bread”:** *Being able to rent a safe, well-maintained apartment without spending more than 30% of your income; reliable public transit that doesn’t pollute your community; quality health care that is affordable and available to all.*
- **Example of “roses”:** *Community gardens, music programs in schools, public art installations, local recreation centers, playgrounds open outside of work hours, etc.*

Tip: Think about the third spaces you would want in your community or the pleasures in life as examples of “roses”. Remember that these are all subjective – some people might feel strongly that music programs in schools are “bread,” and that is okay!

- Instead of discussing as a large group, **invite participants to write or draw their answers on sticky notes.** They can do as many sticky notes—as many “breads” and “roses”—as they’d like. Allow several minutes for this.
- As they are ready, ask participants to put their sticky notes on the Bread and Roses poster. Once completed, invite participants to take a few minutes to move up to the poster and look at the group’s sticky notes, reflecting.
- After some time, summarize for the group what you see on the poster: *E.g. “I see ‘quality health care for all’ written many times” “I see drawings of community gardens and fresh food!”* You can invite others to offer their observations, too.
- Conclude your large group discussion with the following question.

Question 3: Together, we have just created a beautiful vision of what our communities could look like if we had “an economy for all,” where everyone has both bread and roses. What can we do to make this vision a reality?

- If necessary, prompt participants to look at the handout [An Economy for All policy agenda](#), to think about policies and laws that would help us achieve an Economy for All. This could include universal health care, subsidized childcare, free community college, investments in public transportation and green energy, etc.

Call to Action

Read aloud: One important step we can take toward this vision of an Economy for All is by **voting** for leaders who will deliver both bread and roses – the things our communities need to not only survive, but thrive. The Catholic tradition calls all people to participate in shaping our shared future, and by voting we can build a country where all of us can thrive!

I now invite you to take out your phones or laptops and take a moment to check your voter registration status or even register to vote! NETWORK's voter webpage, networkadvocates.org/vote, has a tool that makes it easy, along with many more voter resources to help you be an informed and engaged voter – and to help others do the same.

Closing & Prayer

After participants have spent a few minutes checking their voter registration status, bring everyone back together for a final question and closing prayer.

Final question: What are you taking away from this conversation?

Then, ask someone to lead the group in the USCCB prayer, "Help Us Build Communities in God's Vision of Justice." The prayer is printed below and can be found on page 8 of [NETWORK's Dilexi Te reflection guide](#).

Holy Spirit, we praise and thank you! You anoint us to bring glad tidings to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, recover sight for the blind, free the oppressed, and build communities in keeping with God's vision of justice. Show us how to be light of the world, salt of the earth, seeds that sprout love, and leaven that infuses humanity with the desire to promote human dignity and solidarity. Help us to listen so that those in poverty can lead our efforts to proclaim a more hopeful vision, liberate captives from injustice, heal the blindness of the powerful, free us all from self-centeredness, and build community to overcome poverty.

Tip: Have copies of [NETWORK's Dilexi Te reflection guide](#) available for anyone who wants to take one at the end of the event, for continued reflection.

Report back stories to NETWORK

Stories from lived experiences help us better advocate for our communities. If you heard someone share a particularly compelling story at this event, please ask them if they would be open to having a NETWORK staff member follow up with them to hear about their experiences. If they agree, please write down their name and email address and send it to info@networklobby.org.