

# VOICES TO THE CAPITOL



April 2010

## Meditation

### The Economics of Love for Neighbor

Jesus never avoided uncomfortable subjects. Where polite society might frown on talking openly about money, Jesus confronted people's beliefs, both spoken and unspoken, regarding finances. He understood how much of human life is affected by our attitudes toward wealth, by the way workers are compensated, and especially by economic realities—including taxes—that affect everyone.

More than once, Jesus was questioned about the morality of paying taxes. In each case, he acknowledged the responsibility to pay taxes while drawing attention to the deeper questions about the place of economics in our lives. When asked to pay the temple tax, he directed his disciple to catch a fish, whose mouth held a coin worth enough to pay for both of their taxes (Matthew 17:24-27).

When asked about the lawfulness of paying taxes to the emperor, he reminded the Pharisees that their first loyalty is owed to God. Everything belongs to God, the first and greatest giver. Since we are made in God's image, we can follow that example and order our economic life, including our tax policies, accordingly (Matthew 22:15-22).

These stories affirm the central place of an economics of sharing in a life governed by love for neighbor.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, who provided for the needs of a complete stranger after he had been beaten, robbed, and left for dead (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus told that story to expand our understanding of who is our neighbor, not to tell us to wait until someone is bleeding by the roadside before we help. In telling his disciples to "go and do likewise," isn't he also calling us to make provisions for our neighbors who are victimized by their situation in life? (Source: [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org))

**Prayer:** Gracious God, we know that you want us to seek justice for hungry and poor people. Help us take compassionate actions to another level, moving beyond simple acts of sharing with those in need to the more encompassing action of advocacy.

*Keep the faith and live the vision! Carol*

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### Tax credits are a difficult and boring topic. Why should we advocate for this?

In his 2009 book *The Rising of Bread for the World* (Paulist Press), Bread founder Art Simon wrote about the work that Bread members did to significantly expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in the mid-1980s and early 1990s. He summed up why tax credits are a hunger issue: "The EITC deserves further expansion.... These programs and statistics may seem so remote from your life as to induce an afternoon nap. But, believe me, to kids who are forced to skip meals, or to a mother battling the odds to nourish them, or to a man working for a wage that forces his family to choose between heat or food, medicine or food, clothes or food, what I write about is the difference between desperation and hope. It is a matter of human decency on our part to tilt the arrangement toward hope."

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Ask your church to observe  
Peace with Justice Sunday,  
May 30th!

**Legislative Action** Is from UMCOR endorsed Bread for the World. To learn more, go to: [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org) or call 1/800-82-BREAD.

Our action this month is to urge our Congressmen to protect and strengthen key tax credits — the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit.

The EITC and CTC are critical to helping working families make ends meet and feed their families. The costs of basic needs have risen while wages have remained largely stagnant.

If Congress does not act to extend the most recent expansions to the EITC and CTC made in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009:

- 7 million low-income people could lose EITC benefits
- 6 million children will lose the CTC benefit completely, and 10 million children will receive a smaller credit
- More than 1.5 million people -- including nearly 800,000 children -- will fall back into poverty.

Sample letter (putting in your own words is most effective)

Our nation needs a bold, comprehensive strategy to end childhood hunger in the United States. It's vital that we make sure low-income families can meet their basic needs—including food. I ask you to protect and strengthen key tax credits that can make a big difference for low-income workers and their families.

These programs work. In 2005, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) alone lifted more than 5 million people above the poverty line, including 2.6 million children. But we can and must do more. Nearly one in four children lives in a family that struggles to put food on the table. We need to protect and strengthen EITC and the Child Tax Credit and work toward a day when no parent has to send a child to bed hungry.

Sincerely, Name and Address

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*Please observe Peace with Justice Sunday, May 30th and support the special offering which keeps Peace with Justice Ministries going in our conference and funds shalom projects around the world!*