

## **"Making Ends Meet" Challenge**

**TELL.** each participant or team their candy will become symbolic of their "budget" and not to eat their candies until the end of the activity—That is your paycheck!

**EXPLAIN** that for the purposes of the activity, each person or team is to pretend they are married with two children. One adult in the household is working full-time and the other is working two part-time jobs. Both make minimum wage.

The family has a limited budget and only 15 candies to spend.

### **THEY HAVE SOME TOUGH DECISIONS TO MAKE.**

Each participant must study their choices in each row and invest their candies with 1, 2 or 3 candies depending on what is most important to them—But they'll notice housing is different. Like real life, housing takes up far more of your budget than anything else.

***THEY CANNOT SKIP A ROW***

### **INITIAL FEEDBACK/REFLECTION**

After they are done making their choices, ask how it felt to invest their candies. (Usual response will likely be, "There were not enough candies")

### **NOW TELL THEM THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE.**

One of their children has an infected tooth and has to see a dentist. Even if they chose good healthcare, the family does not have dental insurance. In order to get the child dental care the family must give up 2 candies. Tell the participant/family to take off 2 candies and adjust the rest as needed.

### **TELL THEM THERE HAS BEEN ANOTHER CHANGE.**

One parent just got laid off with no severance pay. They have to take off 4 candies to adjust. Let them go through the exercise of taking off the 4 candies and adjusting the rest.

### **MORAL OF THE STORY:**

How often do we hear the criticism or judgment that people in poverty just make bad choices? Or they need to work harder.

- Hardworking people make these kinds of tough decisions every day, trying to meet their basic needs, and that includes our clients.
- Many people associate Catholic Charities with homelessness, and while that is a certainly a lot of what we do, we serve families and low-income individuals as well.
- AND, contrary to popular belief, many people experiencing homelessness have jobs and are working while they are in shelter.

**INVITE:** At Catholic Charities, yes, we are doing charity and meeting those immediate needs (the band-aids) like shelter and food, BUT we also have an advocacy team working on systemic changes such as economic justice, affordable housing, child care reform, etc.