



**Leading Facts: \$13,000:** The average amount owed by the average family with an imprisoned family member in fines and court fees alone. Also, more than half the gross income of a family of four at the poverty line. Coming at the same time as the loss of income when a wage earner goes to jail or prison, such financial hits cause one in five families with an incarcerated family member to be evicted.

**Learn More:** In November 2017, the Justice and Peace Committee attended the Ignatian Family Teach-In in Washington D.C., during which we discussed the topic of mass incarceration and advocated for criminal justice reform on Capitol Hill. Mass incarceration is of grave concern to us because of the threat such extreme practices of imprisonment make to human dignity, one of the main pillars of Catholic Social Teaching. We are also concerned about mass incarceration because it is one of the leading causes of poverty and hunger in our nation. In fact, according to the [Social Science Research Network](#), U.S. poverty would have dropped by 20 percent between 1980 and 2004 if not for mass incarceration. There are many contributing factors to the creation of this reality, one major factor being the collateral consequences formerly incarcerated people face upon returning from prison. Federal law permanently bans people with felony drug convictions from receiving welfare benefits and SNAP, formerly known as food stamps. Many returning citizens are also barred from public housing. Without such resources, it is difficult to forge a new life, thus predisposing formerly incarcerated individuals and their families to hunger and poverty. For a more in depth exploration on the intersectionality of these issues, check out the [Mass Incarceration Briefing](#) Paper provided by Bread for the World.



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