Opening Prayer

Lord, be with the young people, the orphans, and the caregivers affected daily by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In their faces, we see the suffering face of Christ. Help us not to turn away in despair, frustration or apathy. Instead, give us the courage to raise our voices and join with all people of faith in calling for medicines and aid for parents and children in Africa and throughout the world. Amen.

Reflection

“The HIV/AIDS epidemic is undoubtedly one of the major catastrophes of our time, especially in Africa. It is not only a health problem, since the disease has tragic consequences for the social, economic and political life of peoples. I welcome the efforts presently being made at the national, regional and international level to face this challenge through the implementation of a plan of action aimed at prevention and treatment of the disease. Your announcement that a UN world AIDS fund will be set up in the near future gives hope to all . . . In the fight against the epidemic, the international community should draw its inspiration from a constructive vision of human dignity . . . The Catholic Church, through her Magisterium and her commitment to the victims of HIV/AIDS, continues to affirm the sacred value of life. Her efforts with regard to prevention and assistance to those affected, often in cooperation with the institutions of the United Nations, are in keeping with her mission of love and service to the lives of all, from conception to natural death.”

Pope John Paul II, Address Message to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization, June 26, 2001

Closing Prayer

“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”
(Matthew 25:40)
True / False Quiz

Directions: True or False? Read each statement and then circle True or False.

**General Information on HIV/AIDS**
1. There are 40 million adults and children living with HIV/AIDS. True / False
2. In 2003, 5 million people became newly infected with HIV. True / False
3. The AIDS pandemic has killed just less than 17 million people worldwide. True / False
4. Worldwide HIV/AIDS is now the eighth leading cause of death. True / False

**Women and HIV/AIDS**
5. Studies have shown that HIV infection rates in young women are about equal to that of young men. True / False
6. 1/3 of all countries still have no official policies to ensure that women have access to prevention and care of HIV/AIDS. True / False

**Children and HIV/AIDS**
7. Across the globe, 2.7 million children are currently infected with HIV/AIDS. True / False

**Africa and HIV/AIDS**
8. Within the last 24 hours, HIV/AIDS killed 3,000 Africans, 10% of them children. True / False
9. Out of the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS, 2/3 are in sub-Saharan Africa. True / False
10. HIV/AIDS is now the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa. True / False

**Africa’s AIDS Orphans**
11. In sub-Saharan Africa nearly two million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS since 2000. True / False
12. By 2010, sub-Saharan Africa will be home to an estimated 14 million orphaned children, and more than 1/4 will have lost one or both parents to AIDS. True / False

**International Debt and HIV/AIDS**
13. The world’s very poorest countries have the highest HIV/AIDS death and infection rates. True / False
14. Sub-Saharan Africa spends approximately $13.5 billion per annum repaying debts. True / False

**Treatment for HIV/AIDS**
15. Seven out of 10 people who urgently need treatment for HIV/AIDS are not getting it, and prevention is still only reaching one in three people who should have it. True / False
16. In the developing world, the disease is rampant because countries can’t afford to buy desperately needed anti-retroviral drugs that are manufactured and controlled by massive Western pharmaceutical companies. True / False
True / False Quiz Answers

General Information on HIV/AIDS
1. True. There are 40 million adults and children living with HIV/AIDS.
2. True. In 2003, 5 million people became newly infected with HIV—more than in any single year since the crisis began.
3. False. The AIDS pandemic has already killed 20 million people worldwide.
4. False. HIV/AIDS is now the fourth leading cause of death worldwide.

Women and HIV/AIDS
5. False. Studies have shown that HIV infection rates in young women are 3-5 times higher than among young men. Biological and social factors—poverty, abuse, violence, lack of information, coercion by older men, and men having several concurrent sexual relationships that entrap young women in a giant network of infection—make women and girls more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS than men and boys.
6. True. 1/3 of all countries still have no policies to ensure that women have access to prevention and care of HIV/AIDS.

Children and HIV/AIDS
7. True. Across the globe, 2.7 million children are currently infected with HIV/AIDS.

Africa and HIV/AIDS
8. False. Within the last 24 hours, HIV/AIDS killed 5,500 Africans, half of them children.
9. True. Out of the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS, 2/3 are in sub-Saharan Africa.
10. True. HIV/AIDS is now the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa.
11. False. In sub-Saharan Africa nearly four million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS since 2000.
12. False. By 2010, sub-Saharan Africa will be home to an estimated 18 million orphaned children, and more than 1/3 will have lost one or both parents to AIDS. These numbers are so large they have the potential to undermine the stability of entire countries.

International Debt and HIV/AIDS
13. True. The servicing of billions of dollars worth of debt to a handful of developed nations is preventing poor countries from spending on the education and health of their own people. Education is the most effective means of preventing HIV infection, while good quality, well-resourced healthcare and drugs are the most effective means of alleviating suffering caused by the disease. Debt repayment is preventing both.
14. True. Sub-Saharan Africa spends approximately $13.5 billion per annum repaying debts. The Global AIDS Alliance estimates that this region needs $15 billion to combat HIV/AIDS each year.

Treatment for HIV/AIDS
15. False. Nine out of 10 people who urgently need treatment for HIV/AIDS are not getting it, and prevention is still only reaching one in five people who should have it.
16. True. Many countries can’t afford to buy desperately needed anti-retroviral drugs that are manufactured and controlled by massive Western pharmaceutical companies.

Sources: UNICEF, USAID, UNAIDS, Oxfam, AIDSChannel.org, Global AIDS Alliance
Discussion Questions

1. After reflecting on the global AIDS epidemic, discuss why you think (or do not think) that we, as U.S. citizens, have any responsibility to play an active role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Do we, as followers of Christ, have any responsibility to play a role in the fight against HIV/AIDS? Why or why not?

2. Who will care for the 18 million orphaned children predicted to be living in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2010? Who will grow their food, teach them at school, care for them at home? What can be done to lessen the scope of this impending crisis? Why is it important that the United States, together with the global community, address the issue of HIV/AIDS in Africa?

3. Why does the Vatican consider health care to be a fundamental human right? Even if health care was treated as a universal human right, should access to medicines also be a right, or should access be reserved for those who can pay?

4. How does poverty impact those suffering from HIV/AIDS? How might campaigning to forgive international debt impact countries that are greatly suffering from HIV/AIDS?

5. Young women are very vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. How does this reflect on their status in society? How does the dignity of the human person relate to women’s rights relate to HIV/AIDS?

6. What do you know about U.S. efforts in the global fight against HIV/AIDS? Has the U.S. worked closely with the United Nations? How can you find out more about this? Why is it important to do so?

7. The information presented in the quiz answers is by no means the final word on global HIV/AIDS. What would be your priorities for your group’s further exploration of the HIV/AIDS epidemic?

8. What are some ways in which you and your group can join in existing efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS?
Case Studies

Orphan: Marie

Maggie lives near Kitwe in Zambia with her paternal grandmother, Eleanor, who is around 70 years old. Maggie was 13 when she told her story.

“When my mum died in 1998, everything changed. I don’t really remember Daddy – I’m told he died in 1995. They both died of AIDS.

My older sisters had married and left home. After Mum passed away I was taken away with my little sister Josephine, who was born just after Daddy died, to the home of my mum’s sister. She lived in a distant village in Northern Zambia. It was such a poor place to live. We had nothing.

My aunt was a widow and had her own children. The she fell sick, and we all had to look after her, until she died. Her children, Josephine, and I were left with her aged mother, my maternal grandmother. There was never enough to eat, even though we worked long days in the garden instead of going to school. We had no blanket, just a place to sleep on the mud floor in the house. Our clothes were tattered.

Worst of all, I was the only one in the world to look after Josephine, who was suffering fevers, diarrhea and body pains. I recognized the sickness of AIDS. I despaired; I thought we were both going to die.

But I had not been forgotten. My late father’s mother, Eleanor, heard we were in trouble. She sold her furniture to buy a bus ticket so she could come looking for us. She was shocked at the way we were living, and agreed to take my two cousins and I home with her.

Things are so much better here. But Josephine was too sick to travel, and she died soon after we left. I am still sad that my little sister died in the village and never got to come here.

Now, I am going to school again. I have clothes to wear, and there92s enough to eat. I’m so happy that my gran came to find me and bring me back from that village. And I’m grateful that I can go to school every day.”
Grandfather caregiver: Kenneth

Kenneth Kavwenge is a sprightly 75 year-old widower in Kandani, Malawi. His tendency towards cheerful optimism was battered when Martha, the last of his ten children died, leaving him with three orphaned grandchildren. He said the following two weeks after the funeral.

“Martha had been sick with AIDS for five months, and her husband died the same way a few years ago. It was not until she was tested and found to be HIV-positive, only a month before she died, that I realized how much AIDS had hurt our family. She told me she knew her days were up, and asked me to take care of the kids.

I felt so sad that this was the only choice for the children, because I am very old. I couldn’t answer her because I didn’t know how I would take care of the children. Now there’s no-one but me here for them, to try and make sure they have clothes, soap, and food. I’m still strong and healthy, but of course I wonder how long I can keep it up.

My older grandson is dependable and works hard around the house and in the gardens. That helps, though it’s a lot of work for a boy of 14. He is growing up to be a good man and he’s doing well at school.

I spend a lot of my time now going around the village, talking to people about AIDS, helping care for the sick. I’m doing what I can to get my fellow church-goers to be more active about HIV.

Even in the past it was hard when there was nobody to take care of the children, and grandparents would take the responsibility. This would happen, for instance, when a mother died in childbirth, and the father died later of some disease. But back then that was very rare.

People weren’t dying as they are nowadays.

AIDS has really spoiled lives in our community, creating too many orphans. You don’t see many people my age any more as you go about, but when you find them, you find them with orphans.”
Young person with HIV/AIDS: Kelvin

Kelvin Mkuntha was 14 years old when he told about his life with AIDS, sitting on a mat in front of his widowed grandmother Fulare’s home in Matalala, Central Malawi. He as since died.

“The looked after me well in the hospital, but it’s better to be home and I’m glad to be here.

My blood was tested, and I was told I had HIV. They said that maybe I got HIV from caring for my mother when I was very ill, here at my gran’s house. I think I was doing a good job helping her, keeping the place clean and preparing her for bathing. She died of AIDS in the district hospital, while my stepsister and I were looking after her.

I saw her suffering while my stepfather was with other women. He sent my mother and me away as soon as he realized Mother was getting sick. He hasn’t helped Grandmother or me at all. He took my stepsister away, and that troubles me, because I loved her and am lonely now. But I do get visitors, and that means a lot to me.

My best friend, John, comes often and cheers me up. On Saturdays he spends the whole day here; other days he only drops in for a short time because he has been at school.

I was doing well at school. I’m sorry that I haven’t been well enough to go for six months now. The sores in my mouth and pain in my throat are worst, but I’m also coughing a lot and I’ve got bad diarrhea.

I wanted to study to become a medical doctor. They are good people. We had a medical assistant in the local clinic who was kind and looked after me very well. Now he has gone to work with an NGO that deals with leprosy, and there is no-one to replace him.

I used to feel like going to church too; it was very encouraging. But I’m too sick now. It’s nice when friends come here to pray with me. I believe that people don’t die forever – there’s life after death, and my mother is still alive in heaven. Heaven is up there, a joyful place where there is God and Jesus, and life forever. I’d like to see that. If I want to get there, I have to die first, don’t I?


Discussion Questions
1. Imagine that you are one of the case studies above - how would you feel if you were one of the people highlighted?
2. How do lack of education, social stigma, and poverty all impact peoples’ ability to deal with HIV/AIDS
3. Which of the people in the case studies would be most likely to be featured in a U.S. news story? By a U.S. aid organization? Why? Which of the roles above are you least likely to hear about? How can we better be in solidarity with these people?