

Briefly noted

News in the [October 19, 2010](#) issue

The number of people in poverty in America increased to its highest recorded point last year, and the poverty rate rose to its highest level since 1994, new statistics show. The Census Bureau released data September 16 that showed a significant annual increase in poverty, rising 1.1 percentage points to 14.3 percent in 2009. A total of 43.6 million live in poverty—the highest since recording began in 1959—and up from 39.8 million in 2008. Larry Snyder, president and CEO of Catholic Charities, said that while the statistics were staggering, they did not come as a surprise to those who work with people in poverty on a daily basis. "These numbers are further proof that as a nation it is time to reexamine our failing system of safety nets," said Snyder. David Beckmann, president of the antihunger group Bread for the World, echoed Snyder's concern, calling "the faithful to get off the couch and change the politics of hunger and poverty." While government leaders are eager to support the rich and the middle class, they are leaving the poor behind, said Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches.

The European Parliament has expressed concern at the devastation wrought on the Jordan River and has called on Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority to "cooperate and rehabilitate" it. It marked the first time the European Parliament has directly called upon leaders in the region to address the state of the Jordan River, said the Friends of the Earth Middle East, an ecological advocacy group with offices in Amman, Bethlehem and Tel Aviv which has championed the cause of the Lower Jordan's rehabilitation. At the same time the parliament welcomed cooperation among the Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian local communities that are facing water challenges in the Lower Jordan River area. It called on Israel and Jordan to "fully honor" commitments made in their peace treaty concerning the river's restoration. Both countries have baptismal sites for pilgrims on the banks of the polluted river.