



A Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty



Excerpt from

Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes
by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (1997) on the

Theological Foundations of Global Solidarity

The Moral Challenge

Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gn 4:9), has global implications and is a special challenge for our time, touching not one brother but all our sisters and brothers. Are we responsible for the fate of the world's poor? Do we have duties to suffering people in far-off places? Must we respond to the needs of suffering refugees in distant nations? Are we keepers of the creation for future generations?

For the followers of Jesus, the answer is yes. Indeed, we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. As members of God's one human family, we acknowledge our duties to people in far-off places. We accept God's charge to care for all human life and for all creation.

We have heard the Lord's command, "Love your neighbor as yourself." In our linked and limited world, loving our neighbor has global implications. In faith, we know our neighbors live in Rwanda and Sudan, in East Timor and China, in Bosnia and Central America, as well as across our country and next door. Baptism, confirmation, and continuing participation in the body of Christ call us to action for "the least among us" without regard for boundaries or borders.

One Human Family

Beyond differences of language, race, ethnicity, gender, culture, and nation, we are one human family. Whether at World Youth Day, on World Mission Sunday, or in the daily celebration of the liturgy, the Church gathers people of every nation, uniting them in worship of the one God who is maker and redeemer of all. In so doing, the Church attests to the God-given unity of the human family and the human calling to build community.

Promoting the unity of the human family is the task of the whole Church. It belongs to the Holy Father, but it also belongs to the local parish. In the eucharist the Church prays for the peace of the world and the growth of the Church in love, and it advances these gifts. Readings from Acts and the Letters of Paul tell us of the concern of distant churches for the needy communities in Jerusalem and Macedonia. In faith, the world's

hungry and homeless, the victims of injustice and religious persecution, are not mere issues; they are our sisters and brothers.

The Demands of Solidarity

Pope John Paul II has written, “Sacred Scripture continually speaks to us of an active commitment to our neighbor and demands of us a shared responsibility for all of humanity. This duty is not limited to one’s own family, nation or state, but extends progressively to all . . . so no one can consider himself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family” (*Centesimus Annus* [CA], no. 51).

Duties of solidarity and the sacrifices they entail fall not just on individuals but on groups and nations as well (CA, no. 51; *Populorum Progressio*, no. 48). According to Pope John Paul II, solidarity with the human family consists in “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 38). In pursuit of solidarity, Pope John Paul II calls for a worldwide effort to promote development, an effort that “involves sacrificing the positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed economies” in the interest of “an overall human enrichment to the family of nations” (CA, no. 52).

Solidarity is action on behalf of the one human family, calling us to help overcome the divisions in our world. Solidarity binds the rich to the poor. It makes the free zealous for the cause of the oppressed. It drives the comfortable and secure to take risks for the victims of tyranny and war. It calls those who are strong to care for those who are weak and vulnerable across the spectrum of human life. It opens homes and hearts to those in flight from terror and to migrants whose daily toil supports affluent lifestyles. Peacemaking, as Pope John Paul II has told us, is the work of solidarity.

Pope John Paul II sharply challenges the growing gaps between rich and poor nations and between rich and poor within nations. He recognizes important values of market economics but insists that they be guided by the option for the poor and the principle of the global common good. He challenges leaders to respect human life and human rights, to protect workers and the vulnerable. He insists that nations halt the arms trade, ban landmines, promote true development, and relieve the crushing burden of international debt. The Holy Father’s call to global responsibility is the core of a Catholic international agenda and the foundation of a Catholic commitment to solidarity.

For the full statement, see “Resources” at www.usccb.org/globalpoverty or www.catholicrelief.org/globalpoverty.