



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Committee on
International Justice
and Peace



Symposium of Episcopal Conferences
of Africa and Madagascar
Justice, Peace and Development Commission

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN HOPE:

International Assistance and Mutual Solidarity between the Bishops and Faithful of the United States and Africa

A Joint Statement of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Justice, Peace and Development Commission of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)

As brother bishops, we address the Church in the United States and Africa with a call to renewed fraternity and mutual solidarity between our peoples. Faithful to the Church's mission, we affirm that "integral human development – the development of every person and the whole person, especially of the poorest and most neglected in the community – is at the very heart of evangelization."¹ Throughout the 2025 Jubilee Year and now, we have been urged, as Catholic brothers and sisters, to "discover hope in the *signs of the times* that the Lord gives us."² In the context of a significant reduction in U.S. international assistance programs, we offer a vision of hope in Jesus Christ, source of our hope. We remain committed to international humanitarian and development cooperation which saves and affirms human life, and which deeply respects the needs and values of local communities.

We give thanks for the many fruits of hope as we approach a quarter century since the U.S. bishops responded to the appeal of the Synod of Bishops for Africa with *A Call to Solidarity with Africa*, and four years since the Chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace emitted *A Renewed Call to Solidarity with Africa*, strengthening the U.S. Church's support for pastoral initiatives across the African continent, and promoting continuous advocacy in favor of justice, peace, and integral development. We also contemplate renewed hope for reconciliation and peace, heralded by the bishops of Africa and Madagascar's newly established roadmap for the ministry of the Church on the continent over the next 25 years.

As we look together towards the future, we return to the following key principles of the Church's social teaching to guide us:

We assert that international assistance is an important means of promoting human dignity, protecting human life, and pursuing the international **common good**; helping both Africans and Americans to live in security and peace.

We proclaim that the Church and the state, both in the U.S. and Africa, have a shared responsibility to promote the **inherent human dignity** of all, and to take action to protect human life, with special concern for the most vulnerable.

¹ Pope John Paul II. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 68. (September 14, 1995).

https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html

² Pope Francis. *Spes Non Confundit*, 7. Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year

2025. (May 9, 2024). https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/20240509_spes-non-confundit_bolla-giubileo2025.html

We affirm the continued moral and human value of ***solidarity*** between our peoples, in the belief that we flourish when we freely share the material resources, human capacities, and rich spiritual gifts with which we have been blessed.

We promote respect for ***subsidiarity***, encouraging responsible stewardship by building up the capacity of local communities and bolstering people's ability to care for those closest to them.

In the face of extreme challenges, we pray for renewed bonds of fraternity between the peoples of the U.S. and Africa, rooted not in paternalism or extractivism,³ but in mutual solidarity.

We offer the following guiding themes for valuing and strengthening the rich reciprocal ties that we share:

The Role of the Church in Delivering Aid and Building Local Capacity: International assistance funding remains crucial to continue strengthening the self-reliance of African institutions, both civil and religious, and making existing humanitarian initiatives even more effective. Catholic institutions are uniquely placed to deliver development assistance and humanitarian relief that respect human life and reach those most in need. The Church is blessed with a vast and trusted network of actors deeply engaged in local communities, who empower those closest to the challenge by providing key resources and building local capacity.

The Family as the Fundamental Unit of Society: The promotion of true solidarity demands support for the family, "founded upon the stable union between a man and a woman,"⁴ as the bedrock of culture and the fundamental cell of society. International humanitarian and development cooperation should work in harmony with the "acute sense of solidarity and community life" in African cultures and reject the imposition of all "practices hostile to life."⁵

Young People and Entrepreneurship: Africa is a continent abundant in hope, visible in its youthful demographics, its vibrant entrepreneurial spirit, and its growing Catholic population. Together, our people can benefit from this dynamism and help address the challenges that it presents by deepening the economic and social ties between us.

Climate Justice and Care for Creation: The Church in Africa has been on the forefront of calling the faithful to ecological conversion. The effects of climate change and environmental degradation disproportionately impact the continent's poorest and most vulnerable, deepening cycles of instability, displacement, hunger, violence, and extremism. The stark impacts of environmental injustice are a cry to the American people, and the world, to make care for creation a central consideration in international relations, public policy, and everyday life.

³ A Call for Climate Justice and the Common Home. A Message from the Catholic Episcopal Conferences and Councils of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean on the Occasion of COP30. (June 12, 2025).

https://adn.celam.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/ENG_The-Churches-Global-South-on-occasion-of-COP30.pdf

⁴ Pope Leo XIV. Audience to Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See. (May 16, 2025).

<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/may/documents/20250516-corpo-diplomatico.html1>.

⁵ Pope John Paul II. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43.

Critical Minerals: Africa is a continent abundant in many of the minerals essential to modern technology. In the quest for securing these resources, many have trampled on the dignity of local peoples. Mineral-rich areas of the continent remain hotspots for instability, violence, proxy wars, and various forms of child and forced labor. There is a need for mutually beneficial trade dynamics between the U.S. and African countries that “create new employment possibilities and provide useful resources,” shaped by equity and deep respect for the rights and hopes of the poor.⁶

Peacebuilding: In the face of long-entrenched conflicts, increasing religious extremism, mass displacement, and the continual loss of life, the Catholic bishops in Africa offer a prophetic witness to the world, as peacebuilders and bold preachers of hope. The U.S. faithful can draw inspiration from their witness in facing their own nation’s challenges. The U.S. Church may also play a role in facilitating lasting peace in Africa by promoting responsible investment practices, human-centered diplomacy, and respect for religious freedom.

Contributions of the African Church and African Diaspora in the Life of the American Faithful: We reject a one-sided vision of fraternity and solidarity that undervalues the tremendous contributions of the African Church and African diaspora communities to the life of the faithful in the United States. The American Church is strengthened by the witness of the African saints and modern-day martyrs and enriched by the wisdom of African theologians. African clergy and religious generously share their missionary gifts in service of the American Church, with a close and tangible presence every day.

The faithful of the U.S. and Africa are gifts to one another. Together, we call for robust lifesaving and life-affirming U.S. assistance to the continent, grounded in thoughtful partnership, and pray for the flourishing of an ever-deeper fraternity. We echo the words of St. John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Africa*: “For it is precisely by means of fostering and strengthening solidarity that the Church can make a specific and decisive contribution to a true culture of peace.”⁷ May the Lord bless our peoples, as we walk together as brothers and sisters in hope.



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February 2nd, 2026
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

⁶ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 364. (May 26, 2006).
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

⁷ Pope John Paul II. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 138.