

A Renewed Call to **SOLIDARITY WITH AFRICA**



The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on International Justice and Peace has released a new statement, *A Renewed Call to Solidarity with Africa*. This short document invites the U.S. Church to celebrate the gifts and contributions of the Church in Africa and to join our brothers and sisters in prayer, solidarity and advocacy.

Both this new statement, along with its predecessor from 2001ⁱ are born out of authentic relationship between bishops of the United States and bishops in Africa. Through ongoing engagement via many Church programs including the work of Catholic Relief Services and domestic Church activities in Africa, the Church across the world has been edified by the exchanges of stories, hopefulness, and shared challenge. One message is clear: the Church in Africa is a sign of hope for our world.

- Africa accounted for almost 60% of the worldwide increase in Catholics in 2018.ⁱⁱ
- Africa added 1,649 priests in 2019.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In 2019, Africa was the only continent to increase the number of major seminarians, adding 509.^{iv}
- The Church in Africa has more healthcare centers, hospitals, primary and secondary schools than any region in the world.^v

At the same time, Catholics must retain and recommit to fulsome advocacy with and for our brothers and sisters in Africa. “While the Church across Africa confidently plays her faithful role, all too often she encounters a government that fails to act justly.”^{vi} Among other challenges, corrupt influences focused on the accumulation of wealth and power make it nearly impossible for people to work together toward the common good. The local church in Nigeria shared in one message, “The very survival of the nation is at stake.”^{vii} A few prominent examples include:

- Education: Less than half of African students meet minimum competency levels and spend only an average of 5.6 years in school.

“The Church in Africa’s lived proclamation of the gospel, including her schools, health structures, social care facilities, relief and development activities, and Justice and Peace Commissions, is a rich and continent-wide source of human development, faith formation and peacebuilding.”^{iv}

- **Rising Terrorism:** In the last decade, sustained terror attacks spread from just four countries to nine. Often, attacks are targeted at religious groups.
- **Health:** Africa collectively accounts for 16% of the world’s population, yet the vast majority of worldwide deaths from HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other infections come from the countries of Africa.

Advocacy, prayer and signs of solidarity from Catholics in the U.S. strengthen our bond to one another despite the physical distance from the people of Africa. The bishops in the United States call us to take note of, “the challenges and opportunities that Africa faces and . . . the strong bonds of communion that the Church in the U.S. and Africa share.”^{viii} There are many ways for Catholics in the U.S. to get involved, in addition to reading and praying with the full statement.

1. [Pray!](#) We can never underestimate the power of prayer.
2. Connect with the work of [Catholic Relief Services](#) and know how they support human flourishing across Africa.
3. [Advocate for policies](#) that support human dignity and life-saving humanitarian relief.
4. [Learn more about the Church in Africa](#) and how the U.S. support is vital.
5. Give to the [Solidarity in Africa](#) Fund and to [Catholic Relief Services](#).

ⁱ [Call to Solidarity with Africa](#), Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 2001.

ⁱⁱ Agenzia Fides, Catholic Church Statistics, 18 October 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} *We Must Pull Back from the Brink of Collapse*, Statement of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, February 21, 2021.

^{viii} *A Renewed Call to Solidarity with Africa*, Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on International Justice and Peace, March 2022.

