



Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes

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Introduction

At a time of dramatic global changes and challenges, Catholics in the United States face special responsibilities and opportunities. We are members of a universal Church that transcends national boundaries and calls us to live in solidarity and justice with the peoples of the world. We are also citizens of a powerful democracy with enormous influence beyond our borders. As Catholics and Americans we are uniquely called to global solidarity.

One of God's greatest gifts is the universal character of the Church, blessing and calling us to live in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in faith. In many ways our community of faith practices solidarity every day. Missionaries preach the Gospel and celebrate the eucharist. Catholic relief workers feed the hungry and promote development. Our prayers, donations, and volunteers assist the Church in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. The United States Catholic Conference and other Catholic groups defend human life and human rights, promote global justice, and pursue peace.

However, these international institutions, programs, and collections have not yet awakened a true sense of solidarity among many Catholics in the United States. The international commitment of the Church in the United States is not all it can and should be. Our parishes often act as islands of local religious activity rather than as parts of the mystical body of Christ. At the parish level, where the Church lives, we need to integrate more fully the international dimensions of Catholic discipleship within a truly universal Church.

While many parishes do build global bridges, the Church's teaching on global solidarity is too often unknown, unheard, or unheeded. The coming jubilee offers U.S. parishes a graced moment to strengthen our international solidarity, since the themes of the millennium call us so clearly to this vital task.

The Church's teaching on international justice and peace is not simply a mandate for a few large agencies, but a challenge for every believer and every Catholic community of faith. The demands of solidarity require not another program, but greater awareness and integration into the ongoing life of the parish. The Church's universal character can be better reflected in how every parish prays, educates, serves, and acts. A parish reaching beyond its own members and beyond national boundaries is a truly "catholic" parish. An important role for the parish is to challenge and encourage every believer to greater global solidarity.

These reflections are intended for pastors, parish leaders, and other involved Catholics. They address the Catholic call to global solidarity in two distinct but related ways. One is the individual responsibility of every Catholic founded in our baptism and expressed in our everyday choices and actions. Another is the essential role of the parish as the spiritual home and religious resource for the Christian faithful, both sacramental and educational, and as a place for common prayer and action in pursuit of global solidarity.

A few years ago we developed and adopted *Communities of Salt and Light*, a modest reflection on the social mission of the parish. We would like to build on the remarkable response to this document and encourage parishes to strengthen ties of solidarity with all the peoples of the world, especially the poor and persecuted. We also wish to provide a framework for parish leaders looking to strengthen or initiate programs of international solidarity.

Signs of the Times

For Catholics in the United States, the call to international solidarity takes on special urgency. We live in the largest of the world's wealthy nations, a global military and political power. Yet all around us are signs of suffering and need:

- 35,000 persons die of hunger and its consequences every day around the world.
- The specter of genocide and ethnic violence has become sadly familiar in Central Africa and other places.
- Christian and other believers are persecuted or harassed in China, Vietnam, Indonesia, parts of the Middle East, and within our own hemisphere.
- Conflicts with religious dimensions divide and destroy people in Bosnia, Sudan, Northern Ireland, East Timor, and too many other places.
- Foreign debt crushes hopes and paralyzes progress in too many poor nations.
- Refugees and displaced persons are overwhelming borders in much of the world.
- 26,000 people, mostly civilians, are maimed or killed every year by antipersonnel landmines.
- Forests, rivers, and other parts of God's creation are being destroyed by environmental neglect and devastation.
- Some nations and nongovernmental organizations resort to attacks on human life, including coerced abortion and sterilization.

These are just some examples of the crisis of solidarity facing our world.

Our world has changed dramatically. Walls have fallen and communism has collapsed. Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, and Nelson Mandela have moved from prison cells to presidential offices. The Cold War has ended, but our world is still haunted by too much violence and not enough development for those in need.

During the last decade, the rapid globalization of markets, communication, and transportation has dramatically drawn the world together. Global economic forces empower some and impoverish many. The gulf between rich and poor nations has widened, and the sense of responsibility toward the world's poor and oppressed has grown weaker. The world watched for too long as thousands died in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Zaire.

There is increasing complacency about the defense of human rights. Our country is tempted to turn its back on long traditions of openness and hospitality to immigrants and refugees who have nowhere to turn. The United States ranks first in the world in the weapons we sell to poor nations yet near last in the proportion of our resources we devote to development for the poor.

Our nation is deeply affected by economic, political, and social forces around the globe. The effects of these forces are evident in our economy, the immigrants and refugees among us, the threat of terrorism, dynamics of the drug trade, and pressures on workers. We are tempted by the illusion of isolationism to turn away from global leadership in an understandable but dangerous preoccupation with the problems of our own communities and nation. In the face of these challenges we see divergent paths. One path is that of indifference, even hostility to global engagement. Another path views the world as simply a global market for the goods and services of the United States.

Our faith calls us to a different road—a path of global responsibility and solidarity. The call to solidarity is at the heart of Pope John Paul II's leadership. He has insisted that the test of national leadership is how we reach out to defend and enhance the dignity of the poor and vulnerable, at home and around the world. He calls us to defense of all human life and care for God's creation. In his visits to this country, the Holy Father called on our nation to "spare no effort in advancing authentic freedom and in fostering human rights and solidarity."

Theological Foundations

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.

U.S. Catholic Responses and Responsibilities

Around the United States, parishes, dioceses, and national church agencies strengthen the ties that bind our global family of faith. The U.S. Catholic community is a leader in global missions, relief, and development efforts. Our missionaries and relief workers risk their lives to preach and act on the Gospel.

Catholic Relief Services is our community's international relief and development arm, offering the solidarity of the American Catholic community to people in more than eighty countries. Each year, the United States Catholic Conference's Migration and Refugee Services assists almost a third of the refugees who flee religious and political persecution and immigrants seeking a new life. Through annual collections, the Church in the United States provides financial and other support for the mission and pastoral programs of the Church in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. Through the Propagation of the Faith we help preach the Gospel, aid missionaries, and support the development of local churches. Through the work of our International Policy Committee, the U.S. bishops advocate for the needs of the poor and vulnerable around the globe.

The international agencies of the U.S. bishops are working together to strengthen the international witness of the United States Catholic Conference and to help parishes recognize their responsibilities as parts of a universal Church. Accompanying this reflection are brief summaries of the work of these agencies and how parishes can reach them. There are many other examples of U.S. Catholic international commitment: the Holy Childhood Association, Catholic Near East Welfare Association, National Council of Catholic Women, mission societies, religious advocacy groups, volunteer programs, exchange programs, and thousands of other ties between our Catholic community and the Church in other lands. These efforts put the Gospel to work and change lives here and abroad.

Across the country parishes are building relationships with sister parishes, especially in Latin America but also in Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Oceania. Parish committees and legislative networks respond to pleas for help and advocate on issues of development, human rights, and peace. Parishes honor the memories of martyrs in Central America and Africa, and they act in defense of the unborn, the hungry, migrants, and refugees. Human rights advocates work for the release of prisoners of conscience and those suffering for their faith. Many parishes work on an ecumenical and interfaith basis to build bridges and act effectively on issues of global solidarity. These commitments transform and enrich U.S. parishes. As bishops, we seek to fan these flames of charity and justice in our parishes, dioceses, and national structures, so that the Church in the United States will be better light for our world.

Our international responsibilities enrich parish life and deepen genuine Catholic identity. Integrating themes of solidarity into the routines of parish life will make for a richer, more Catholic experience of Church. In giving a little, we receive much more.

All these efforts cannot be cause for complacency. Given the size of our community, our response through the years has not fully reflected our capacity or our calling. While much has been given overall, many of us have given little or nothing. The crisis of solidarity in our world demands more attention, more action, and more generosity from Catholics in the United States.

A Strategy of Integration

We have much to learn from those parishes that are leading the way in making global solidarity an integral part of parish ministry. They understand that social mission and solidarity are not a task for the few, and that concern for the Church in foreign lands cannot be confined to an occasional small offering. Christ is calling us to do more. In a sense, our parishes need to be more Catholic and less parochial. A suffering world must find a place in the pastoral priorities of every Catholic parish.

Catholic communities of faith should measure their prayer, education, and action by how they serve the life, dignity, and rights of the human person at home and abroad. A parish's "catholicity" is illustrated in its willingness to go beyond its own boundaries to extend the Gospel, serve those in need, and work for global justice and peace. This is not

a work for a few agencies or one parish committee, but for every believer and every local community of faith. This solidarity is expressed in our prayer and stewardship, how we form our children and invest our resources, and the choices we make at work and in the public arena.

These are matters of fundamental justice. Our nation has special responsibilities. Principled and constructive U.S. leadership is essential to build a safer, more just world. As Pope John Paul II insists again and again, our efforts must begin with fundamental reform of the “structures of violence” that bring suffering and death to the poor. The Catholic community will continue to speak on behalf of increased development assistance, relief from international debt, curbs on the arms trade, and respect for human life and the rights of families. We will continue to oppose population policies that insist on inclusion of abortion among the methods of family planning. Our foreign aid and peacemaking efforts can be reformed and improved, but they cannot be abandoned. Massive cuts in recent years in U.S. assistance for the poor around the world are an evasion of our responsibility as a prosperous nation and world leader. The recent decline in resources for sustainable development must be reversed.

It is not only the poor who need our solidarity and advocacy. Our world is still marked by destruction of human life and denial of human rights and religious liberty in so many places. Genuine solidarity requires active and informed citizenship. It requires common action to address the fundamental causes of injustice and the sources of violence in our world.

A “framework for international integration” is offered at the end of these reflections to help parishes reflect, as communities of faith in a universal Church, on international dimensions of parish life.

Conclusion

The Catholic community in the United States should be proud of the mission, advocacy, humanitarian relief, and development activities of our Church. U.S. Catholics are generous, active, committed, and concerned. But we must recognize that still too many children die, too many weapons are sold, and too many believers are persecuted.

Through the eyes of faith, the starving child, the believer in jail, and the woman without clean water or health care are not issues, but Jesus in disguise. The human and moral costs of the arms trade, international debt, environmental neglect, and ethnic violence are not abstractions, but tests of our faith. Violence in the Holy Land, tribal combat in Africa, religious persecution, and starvation around the world are not just headlines, but a call to action. As Catholics, we are called to renew the earth, not escape its challenge.

Our faith challenges us to reach out to those in need, to take on the global status quo, and to resist the immorality of isolationism. Pope John Paul II reminds us that a turn to “selfish isolation” would not only be a “betrayal of humanity’s legitimate expectations . . . but also a real desertion of a moral obligation.”

In one sense, we need to move our Church’s concern from strong teaching to creative action. Working together, we can continue to help missionaries preach the Gospel, empower poor people in their own development, help the Church live and grow in lands marked by repression and poverty, and assist countries emerging from authoritarian rule. We must help reform and increase development assistance, curb the arms trade, ban landmines, relieve debt, and protect human life and human rights.

Many middle-aged and older Catholics grew up with a keen sense of “mission” and concern for children half a world away. Years ago we raised funds for “pagan babies,” cleaned our plates, and prayed after Mass for the conversion of Russia. We didn’t have global TV networks or the Internet, but we had a sense of responsibility. Over the years, we have continued this tradition through our missions, our collections for and advocacy on international needs, and our global development programs. We need to acknowledge and renew this traditional Catholic consciousness in a new age of global communications and economic interdependence. We respond very generously when the network news tells us of hurricanes and famines, but how will we help those victimized by the less visible disasters of poverty caused by structural injustice, such as debt, ethnic conflict, and the arms trade? Our Church and parishes must call us anew to

sacrifice and concern for a new generation of children who need food, justice, peace, and the Gospel. A central task for the next century is building families of faith that reach out beyond national boundaries.

As we approach the jubilee, let us rediscover in our time the meaning of the mystical body of Christ. We should mark the new millennium by making our families and local communities of faith signs of genuine solidarity—praying, teaching, preaching, and acting with new urgency and creativity on the international obligations of our faith. As our Holy Father has pointed out, “A commitment to justice and peace in a world like ours, marked by so many conflicts and intolerable social and economic inequalities, is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee” (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 51). This calls us to a new openness, a strategy of integration, and a true commitment to solidarity. In the words of the Apostle Paul, we must strive “to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:3-6).

List of Organizations

****Propagation of the Faith (Diocesan Mission Office)**

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith fosters the universal missionary spirit of the Church, sensitizing Catholics to the universal implication of their baptism into Christ. Through World Mission Sunday, the Propagation of the Faith encourages prayer, collects funds, and catechizes on the missionary dimension of the Catholic faith. Through the Missionary Cooperation Plan, missionaries speak in parishes. In a wide variety of written and audiovisual materials, the Propagation of the Faith focuses on the proclamation of the Gospel, the building up of the Church, and authentic human development. Contact: Your Diocesan Director for Propagation of the Faith (or The Society for the Propagation of the Faith)

366 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10001
Phone: (800) 431-2222
Fax: (212) 563-8725
Internet: www.propfaith.org

****Catholic Relief Services**

On behalf of the U.S. Catholic community, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) serves millions of poor people all over the world. By responding to victims of disasters, supporting community self-help projects, and contributing to more just societies, CRS provides opportunities for people who have no political voice, no economic power, and no social status. It provides active expression of Christ’s love throughout the world and strengthens the local Catholic Church’s ability to serve the poor. For American Catholics, CRS is a vehicle to express solidarity with those whom we will never personally meet in more than eighty countries. Contact: Church Outreach Department

Catholic Relief Services
209 West Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone: (410) 625-2220, ext. 3214
Fax: (410) 234-3183
E-mail: wokeefe@catholicrelief.org

Department of Social Development and World Peace

The USCC Department of Social Development and World Peace helps the U.S. bishops share Catholic social teaching, apply and advocate its principles on major international issues, and stand in solidarity with the Church in other parts of the world. Through its Office of International Justice and Peace, the bishops’ conference develops policy and advocates on issues of global justice and peace, human rights and religious liberty, debt and development. Parishes use USCC statements, alerts, and other resources to reflect, educate, and act on international issues on their own or as participants in diocesan ministry and legislative activities. Contact: Office of International Justice and Peace

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Phone: (202) 541-3199
Fax: (202) 541-3339
E-mail: Jhiatt-booker@uscgb.org
Internet: www.uscgb.org/sdwp

Secretariat for Latin America

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Latin America serves the Committee on the Church in Latin America in responding to the mandate of the U.S. bishops to maintain an active relationship with the Church in Latin America. The secretariat develops and administers the National Collection for the Church in Latin America and manages a program of financial assistance to the Latin American church. An effective educational program in North America is carried out to inform the U.S. public about the reality of the Church in Latin America and to promote solidarity and a deeper relationship between the Church in the United States and in Latin America. Contact: Secretariat for Latin America

National Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 Fourth Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20017-1194
Phone: (202) 541-3050
Fax: (202) 541-3460
E-mail: mtorres-reilly@uscgb.org

Office to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe

The Office to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe staffs the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee to Aid the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. The office promotes and administers the U.S. bishops' annual collection for eastern Europe, provides financial support for the Church in central and eastern Europe, and informs U.S. Catholics about the conditions and need of the Church in the post-communist era. The office maintains contact with the Church and the episcopal conferences of eastern Europe and acts as a resource to the bishops in matters regarding the Church of that region. Contact: Office to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe

National Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 Fourth Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20017-1194
Phone: (202) 541-3400
Fax: (202) 541-3406
E-mail: rgs@uscgb.org

Migration and Refugee Services

On behalf of the bishops in the United States, Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) works through more than one hundred dioceses to welcome, care for, and integrate newcomers into U.S. society. MRS welcomes Catholic newcomers into the Church, educates Americans to respect diverse cultures, and promotes justice, compassion, and respect for the dignity of every person. As one of the oldest and largest private resettlement agencies in the world, MRS promotes policies and services to meet the pastoral and human needs of migrants, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, displaced persons, and other people on the move through its pastoral care, refugee programs, and policy units. Contact: Migration and Refugee Services

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3211 Fourth Street, N.E.
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Phone: (202) 541-3352
Fax: (202) 541-3399
E-mail: cphan@uscgb.org

Catholic Near East Welfare Association

Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) is a special agency of the Holy See established in 1926 to support the pastoral mission and institutions of the Catholic churches of the East and to provide humanitarian assistance to the needy and afflicted without regard to nationality, race, or religion. It also has been entrusted by the Holy Father with

the responsibility for promoting the union of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. CNEWA raises and distributes funds to help meet the material and spiritual needs of churches and peoples of the Middle East, Northeast Africa, India, and Eastern Europe and to Eastern Catholics everywhere. Contact: Catholic Near East Welfare Association
1011 First Avenue
New York, NY 10022
Phone: (212) 826-1480
Fax: (212) 838-1344
E-mail: bad@cnewa.org

Committee on the Missions

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Missions coordinates the U.S. Catholic overseas mission effort, basing itself on the 1986 pastoral statement *To the Ends of the Earth* and subsequent papal encyclicals such as *Redemptoris Missio*. The committee works closely with the Pontifical Missionary Societies, the mission-sending societies of men and women, organizations of lay missionaries, and other organizations promoting the mission *ad gentes*, encouraging, supporting, and fostering mission animation efforts in the United States. Contact: Committee on the Missions

National Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 Fourth Street, N.E.
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Appendix: A Framework for Parish Global Solidarity

This framework seeks to help parishes explore how to better integrate the international responsibilities of Catholic faith in local communities of faith. It is drawn from *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish*. The framework is complemented by a parish global solidarity resource, which offers suggestions to parish leaders in assessing and strengthening their parish commitment to global solidarity.

Anchoring Solidarity: Prayer, Worship, and Preaching

One of the most important ways to focus on the Catholic call to solidarity is through prayer and worship. In our parishes, the eucharist represents a central setting for discovering and expressing solidarity. Gathered around the altar, we are reminded of our connection to all of God's people through the mystical body of Christ. The eucharist makes present the sacrifice of Calvary in which Christ's blood is shed for the redemption of the world. Our call to solidarity has its roots in this mystery and in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we proclaim every time we gather for eucharist.

While care must be taken to avoid ideological uses of liturgy, the eucharist and the Gospel call the Church to proclaim and express the global solidarity of the people of God. International concerns can be reflected in the introduction to the Mass, general intercessions, and music. There is no greater opportunity to help Catholics understand the social dimensions of our faith than in the homily. Preachers can connect the gospel message of love for our neighbor and the biblical values of justice and peace to the real struggles of people in other lands that we see on the evening news. Inviting returned missionaries or relief workers to preach or speak to the congregation can provide examples of faith in action that can lead to concrete acts of solidarity. We can also use various collections for missions, development, and relief as opportunities to raise awareness and promote action on the needs of people in other lands. Through prayer, worship, and preaching we can deepen our understanding of the call to build greater justice and peace.

Teaching Solidarity: Education and Formation

Education and formation are key arenas for teaching global solidarity. We strongly support Catholic educators who consistently integrate international concerns into their curricula and programs such as geography, history, and science classes, as well as religious education and formation. Many Catholic educators are finding creative ways to reflect and

act on the call to global solidarity, from principals and teachers who encourage their students to participate in Lenten relief programs to adult educators who host speakers on missions or international issues.

While much is being done, too many educational programs still neglect or ignore the global dimensions of our Catholic calling. We urge all Catholic educators to share the Church's teaching on the global dimensions of our social mission more intentionally, more explicitly, and more creatively. We encourage the incorporation of the call to global solidarity into our schools, religious education programs, sacramental preparation, and Christian initiation programs. We need to match efforts to share the principle of solidarity with opportunities to act on it—to share our financial and material resources, to search for the structural causes of poverty, to promote development, and to advocate for human life, human dignity, and human rights.

Living Solidarity: Work, Family, Citizenship

Many choices about international concerns are made in economic and public life. American corporations shape the world as much as government action. Business, union, and government leaders make decisions every day that enhance or undermine human life and dignity around the world. How believers invest and consume—and the choices we make as voters and citizens—can shape a world of greater or lesser justice, more or less peace.

The Church's commitment to global solidarity belongs especially to lay people. It is reflected at least as much in the choices of lay Catholics in commerce and politics as in the statements and advocacy of our bishops' conference. How U.S. businesses act abroad sets standards that advance or diminish justice. Catholics should bring their awareness of global solidarity to their diverse roles in business and commerce, in education and communications, and in the labor movement and public life. As teachers, broadcasters, journalists, and entertainers, Catholics can awaken a sense, not only of the world's problems, but also our capacity to respond. As citizens, we can urge public officials and legislators to seriously address the problems of the world's persecuted, poor, and displaced.

In today's complex world, the demands of solidarity cannot be filled simply by an occasional gift or contribution, although generosity is required of each of us. Solidarity demands responses and initiatives that are as rich and varied as our relationships, responsibilities, and lives.

Investing in Solidarity: Stewardship

Catholics in the United States have given many millions of dollars to reach out to brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. In three decades, Catholics in our country have contributed more than \$80 million through our Latin America collection alone. Through the annual Propagation of the Faith collection, we support missionaries who share the faith in every part of the world. Through parish collections and other activities, Catholic Relief Services provides not only emergency food to the hungry but also long-term support for development, health care, and sustainable agriculture in 2,000 projects around the world. In our collection for Central and Eastern Europe, Catholics in the United States help to rebuild churches and communities torn apart by years of repression. This is an impressive record of generosity.

One particular example of family stewardship is Operation Rice Bowl of Catholic Relief Services. This Lenten program suggests that families skip a meal or eat only rice. The money saved from these "sacrificial" meals is shared with the poor through CRS. We endorse this and other family signs of solidarity.

While we are proud of and encouraged by the generosity of our people, we know we can do even more. We've seen it so often in our own dioceses. When we see clearly the suffering of others—down the block or half a world away—we respond with remarkable charity and compassion. Our Church calls us to see more clearly the suffering, needs, and potential of our sisters and brothers and helps us respond with even greater generosity and sacrifice.

However, stewardship is about more than how we use our money and resources. All we have comes from God. We are stewards not only of our money, but also our time, our energy, and indeed our whole lives. Stewardship for global solidarity means that we share what we have and what we are to make life better for those who are poor and vulnerable

at home and around the world. It means that we take time to work for just policies and a more peaceful world and that we give even more generously to these international collections.

Practicing Solidarity: Outreach and Charity

Parishes are called to help those who suffer in our own communities and in situations of poverty and pain around the world. Turning the human struggle we see on the nightly news into effective parish outreach on a global level demands initiative and creativity. It most often starts with building relationships, sometimes with members of the parish who are from countries where there is war, famine, and human suffering. Or the relationship may begin with our own mission efforts, Catholic Relief Services, or a diocesan resettlement office.

One special way parishes have reached out in solidarity is through a process known as twinning, in which a parish in the United States develops an ongoing relationship with a parish in another part of the world. Our Secretariat for Latin America reports that more than 1,700 parishes in the United States have connected in special relationships with Catholic communities in Central and South America. We welcome “twinning” relationships and encourage the development of these relationships in ways that avoid dependency and paternalism. These bridges of faith offer as much to U.S. parishes as their partners. We are evangelized and changed as we help other communities of faith.

Promoting Solidarity: Advocacy and Political Responsibility

True parish commitment to global solidarity will not stop with financial aid or compassionate service efforts. Pursuing justice is at the core of the call to solidarity. Parishes can promote a broader, truly universal sense of political responsibility by calling Catholics to be informed and involved in international peace and justice issues, responding to the leadership of the Holy Father. Parishes have special opportunities to develop leadership, to promote citizenship, and to provide forums for discussion and action on global issues. Legislative networks and state Catholic conferences are effective tools for helping believers act on the international dimensions of our faith.

Active citizenship by Catholics is also required if U.S. policies are to reflect our best values and traditions. The voices of parishioners need to be heard on behalf of children who are being destroyed by abortion, starvation, landmines, or lack of health care. We need to be heard as we approach the jubilee on how international debt transfers wealth from poor nations to rich societies and diminishes the lives and integrity of so many. We need to be heard especially on behalf of women, who bear the greatest burdens of poverty and injustice. We need to be heard on behalf of the millions of child laborers in the world. We can insist that U.S. corporations eliminate child laborers in all their assembly operations.

Parishes should offer nonpartisan opportunities for members to register to vote, to become informed on international issues, and to communicate with legislators. We can help convince our nation that building peace, combating poverty and despair, and protecting human life and human rights are not only moral imperatives, but also wise national priorities. We can help shape a world that will be a safer, more secure, and more just home for all of us.