

Peace Resources 2009



In his landmark encyclical, *On the Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio)*, Pope Paul VI offered a compelling message of encouragement to all men and women of good will to work towards the economic development of all peoples, and towards the development of peace. Pope Paul VI saw development and peace as being tied together, both dependent on the other.

Written in 1967, *Populorum Progressio* was presented to a rapidly changing world. Globalization—the rapid spread of factories, multinational companies, and international trade throughout the world—was at the time just beginning, with many questions about what it would bring. The world saw frequent revolutions and oppressions as people struggled to gain economic equality, often in brutal and violent ways. In the midst of the Cold War, the new, desperately poor republics had to choose between two materialistic ideologies promising the best hope of economic advancement and power, with battles often erupting between the two factions.

While so many people and countries were struggling with desperate poverty, and so many in wealthy countries were trying to determine their roles, and how best to help others, Pope Paul VI wrote an incisive letter, outlining our responsibilities to others, and explaining why we must be concerned about others—both because it was the right thing to do, but also because it was the practical thing to do. *Populorum Progressio* claimed that there would never be peace until there was justice and equality. Pope Paul VI wrote that, “Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war, the result of an ever precarious balance of forces. No, peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among [peoples].” He also wrote the now famous line that, “Development is the new name for peace,” placing economic justice and development as the new goal for all who prayed for peace and an end to violence.

Forty years later, in a world which largely failed to heed the Holy Father’s advice we face many of the same problems. Pope Paul VI cautioned against greed, and yet now, due to the greed of many, we are seeing an economic collapse in the United States. Because of globalization, there is a worldwide economic depression, and a global food crisis. In the United States we face new global threats and across the world we see instability and violence due to

many cultural root causes, but fueled in part by the continuing inequality between the haves and the have-nots.

It is therefore timely that for his Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2009, our present Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has built upon the teachings of his predecessors with a document entitled, “Fighting Poverty to Build Peace.” According to Cardinal Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in this Message the Holy Father, “shows us how peace and the fight against poverty intersect.”

In this “2009 World Day of Peace Message,” Benedict XVI notes with urgency that, “Our world shows increasing evidence of a grave threat to peace: many individuals and indeed whole peoples are living today in conditions of extreme poverty. The gap between rich and poor has become more marked, even in the most economically developed nations. This is a problem which the conscience of humanity cannot ignore, since the conditions in which a great number of people are living are an insult to their innate dignity and as a result are a threat to the authentic and harmonious progress of the world community.”

The Holy Father’s Message lifts up several areas of urgent attention, including the ongoing food crisis, child poverty, and pandemic diseases, and highlights the need for solidarity and to address these issues faithfully. We have been given much food for thought and prayerful consideration. In the following pages, the Arlington Diocese Peace and Justice Commission reflects on particular points and areas of concern in Benedict XVI’s Message, and offers suggestions for actions for all of us who are called to be peace-builders, as well as a calendar of local events during the year.

Let us all pray for peace and justice in the New Year, as we work to meet the needs of the poor and answer the cries of the hungry.

“Everyone should put his hand to the work which falls to his share, at once and immediately.”—Pope Leo XIII

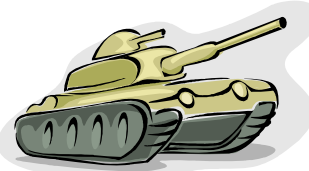
Child Poverty



Child poverty is also a priority concern. “Almost half of those living in poverty today are children. To take the side of children when considering poverty means giving priority to... caring for mothers, commitment to education, access to vaccines, medical care and drinking water, safeguarding the environment, and, above all, commitment to defense of the family and the stability of relations within it. When the family is weakened, it is inevitably children who suffer. If the dignity of women and mothers is not protected, it is the children who are affected most.”

Almost one billion children worldwide—about 45% of all children—are living in poverty, in many cases such drastic poverty that they will die from malnutrition, unsanitary water, or lack of access to medical care. An estimated 1.8 million children under five die each year from easily prevented, easily treated diarrheal illnesses. This means that the lack of clean water kills nearly 5000 children each day. Millions of children worldwide are also orphaned due to illnesses or, worse, violent conflicts. As people of faith, we cannot abandon these vulnerable members of society.

Disarmament and Development



The relationship between **disarmament and development** deserves particular attention from a moral standpoint. “The current level of world military expenditure gives cause for concern. ...immense military expenditure, involving material and human resources and arms, is in fact diverted from development projects for peoples, especially the poorest who are most in need of aid. ... What is more, an excessive increase in military expenditure risks accelerating the arms race, producing pockets of underdevelopment and desperation, so that it can paradoxically become a cause of instability, tension and conflict.”

Last year, global military spending topped US\$1.2 trillion. The United States accounted for nearly half of this, spending US\$529 billion. The United Nations estimates that a mere US\$11 billion is needed to meet the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015.

Money given to military and defense spending is kept from much needed poverty eradication and peace building programs, it is true. But more challenging is the fact that wars often cause poverty. They take lives, destroy infrastructure, and make trade all but impossible. And in areas where there are ongoing violent conflicts, all resources must go to much needed refugee assistance and helping the wounded, instead of sustainable economic development projects.

Global Food Crisis



The **current food crisis** “places in jeopardy the fulfillment of basic needs. This crisis is characterized not so much by a shortage of food, as by difficulty in gaining access to it and by different forms of speculation: in other words, by a structural lack of political and economic institutions capable of addressing needs and emergencies. Malnutrition can also cause grave mental and physical damage to the population, depriving many people of the energy necessary to escape from poverty unaided. This contributes to the widening gap of inequality, and can provoke violent reactions. All the indicators of relative poverty in recent years point to an increased disparity between rich and poor.”

Acute hunger, starvation and famine are all too common in the world today. But many people who are not facing death from starvation are nevertheless at serious risk of long-term problems caused by malnourishment. Pregnant women are at particular risk of malnutrition, and their children are at particular risk of dying in infancy. If they survive, they usually suffer lifelong physical and cognitive disabilities. Chronic malnourishment and vitamin and mineral deficiencies cause lifelong problems, leading to stunted growth, a weakened immune system, lack of energy, and mental retardation. In fact, the World Health Organization estimates that poor nutrition and a lack of food and calories cause one in three people to have disabilities or die prematurely. Chronic hunger is therefore both a symptom, and cause, of poverty in the developing world.

Pandemic Diseases



According to the Holy Father's message, one concern "Has to do with **pandemic diseases**, such as malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Insofar as they affect the wealth-producing sectors of the population, they are a significant factor in the overall deterioration of conditions in the country concerned. ...It also happens that countries afflicted by some of these pandemics find themselves held hostage, when they try to address them, by those who make economic aid conditional upon the implementation of anti-life policies." Benedict XVI encourages "educational campaigns aimed especially at the young, to promote a sexual ethic that fully corresponds to the dignity of the person, and he urges that the necessary medicines and treatments be made available to poorer people as well as those not living in poverty."

Currently, between 300 and 500 million people are infected with malaria each year, and it is now the 4th most common cause of death for children under five. This is despite the fact that mosquito nets cost only a few dollars each, and anti-malaria drugs-such as chloroquine and quinine-cost between US\$0.13 and \$0.38 a day. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has begun to slow in sub-Saharan Africa, but is on the rise in other countries. HIV/AIDS is a particularly devastating disease in developing countries, as it takes the most productive members of society out of the workforce, and is creating a generation of orphans.

Other diseases often treated with immunizations are rising in other countries as violence and poverty make it more and more difficult to meet immunization needs within countries. According to Dr. Peter Salama, the Immunization Director for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "The Democratic Republic of Congo is a classic example, where sustained civil war, particularly in the eastern part of the DRC, has led to our inability to deliver any health interventions in that part of the world."

Conclusion

The messages put forth in our Holy Father's World Day of Peace Message for 2009 are not new. Since the beginning of our social justice teachings, the Church has always been concerned with inequalities between people and nations, and in addressing the desperate poverty that so many people find themselves, and has long seen and brought attention to the connection between destitution and conflict. In this document, Pope Benedict XVI re-emphasizes and expands what was presented to us both in *Populorum Progressio*, but also Pope John Paul II's 1993 World Day of Peace Message, "If You Want Peace, Reach Out to the Poor." Our Catholic tradition calls us to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

The call to solidarity does not simply mean that we should be aware of the suffering of those around us. As Catholics, we cannot hear of the suffering of people throughout the world without feeling a call to do something, to find some way to assist. And so, below, we offer suggestions as for how we can work to encourage global development and poverty alleviation, and move towards a world of peace and equality.

It is also important to recognize the inequalities and problems within our own country and community as well. Within our own country, at least 13.3 million children live in poverty, and approximately 38 million are food insecure-meaning they do not know where their next meal is coming from, and are often malnourished. We cannot ignore the poverty in our own backyards any more than we can ignore the poverty we see overseas. And so, below we show many ways to be involved in social justice issues in your own community and state as well.

Please do not consider this the final list of how you can become involved; we encourage you to research all of these issues further, and become involved in any way you can. What is most important is that we do something. For, as we have been taught by Matthew 25:40, Whatever we do unto the least of our brothers and sisters, we have done unto the Lord.

Actions

- Contribute to **Catholic Relief Services** (CRS), which uses its funds to promote community development and empowerment programs, and emergency assistance in the poorest areas of the world. <http://www.crs.org>
- Participate in **Rice Bowl** during Lent. While you fast during Lent, donate what you save to this CRS program. Also available are Lenten reflections, and educational materials for children of all ages. <http://orb.crs.org>
- Sign up for **advocacy alerts** from the USCCB's Justice, Peace and Human Development program. Issues they are currently working on include: promoting peace in the Holy Land, advocating for additional poverty focused development aid, protecting consciousness protections in international funding, and halting global warming. <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/subform.shtml>
- Participate in Bread for the World's **Offering of Letters**, in which the congregation sends letters to Congress asking for funding for anti-hunger programs. <http://www.bread.org>
- Consider setting up a **Parish Twinning** program at your parish, where you will support and work with a sister parish in the developing world. <http://www.parishprogram.org/>
- Support our Sister Dioceses of Bánica and Pedro Santana in the Dominican Republic. Contact the **Office of Propagation of the Faith** to find out how.
- Begin the **Just Faith** program at your parish, a 30-week study of how our Catholic Faith and social justice are related. <http://www.justfaith.org>
- Support the work of the **Catholic Campaign for Human Development** (CCHD), which supports community empowerment here at home. <http://www.usccb.org/cchd/>
- Become part of the **Virginia Catholic Conference** (VCC), and receive alerts and easy ways to lobby your legislators on poverty issues, pro-life policies, and other issues of human life and dignity. <http://www.vacatholic.org>
- Start a **Parish Social Ministry** committee at your own parish, to educate your parish and act on these and other issues! http://www.cdda.net/programs_parish.php

For Further Reading

Arlington Diocese Peace and Justice Commission.

http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/peace/peace_and_justice.php

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Arlington. <http://www.cdda.net>

Virginia Catholic Conference. <http://vacatholic.org>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Justice, Peace and Human Development Office.

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp>

Catholic Relief Services. <http://www.crs.org>

Previous World Day of Peace Messages.

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/worlddayofpeacewebsite.shtml>

Bread for the World. <http://www.bread.org>

International Crisis Group. (For information about global conflicts.)

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm>

World Health Organization (For information about global diseases)

<http://www.who.int/en/>

UNICEF (For information about child poverty and hunger)

<http://www.unicef.org/>

Upcoming Peace and Justice Events

January 4th through 10th– National Migration Week

Educate about immigration issues

Advocate with elected officials in support of just immigration policies

Support Diocesan Office of Migration and Refugee Services.:

http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/outreach/mra_about.php

19th–National Observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Work to eradicate the causes of racism

Focus on peaceful change through non-violence

For speeches of MLK, Jr. visit:

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/speeches/contents.htm>

22nd - National March for Life and Local Respect Life Programs

Focus on the foundational human right: the right to life.

Join others from your parish in Marching for Life in Washington, DC.

Participate in local advocacy throughout the year.

http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/familylife/respect_life.php

26th -- Catholic Advocacy Day in Virginia State Capital

Opportunity to advocate with State officials on the justice dimensions of statewide issues & legislation.

Sponsored by Virginia Catholic Conference. To join a bus from

Northern Virginia, contact Marisa Vertrees,

mvertrees@stcharleschurch.org, 703-527-5500, ext. 126

http://www.vacatholic.org/documents/AdvocacyDay2009FlyerFINAL_001.pdf

