



TOWARD THE FUTURE, UNITED IN FAITH AND TRUST:

Pastoral Letter by the President
of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
for the 50th anniversary of the
Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace / Caritas Canada

The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace / Caritas Canada celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2017. In the name of all the Bishops of Canada, I extend deepest gratitude, congratulations and encouragement. Bishops today continue to support the vision, mission and mandate given by our predecessors in 1967: "... to assist the poor and the oppressed people of the world in their struggle for justice and to educate us in Canada about the problems of underdevelopment."¹ This is the sacred trust and challenge that on their behalf I again convey. Once more also, on their behalf, I appeal to clergy, consecrated persons and laity to work closely with and support Development and Peace / Caritas Canada.

The immediate preparations for this anniversary were made during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, for at the heart of the Church's every endeavor is its evangelizing mission to proclaim the Gospel of justice, peace and mercy. Responsible for teaching, sanctifying and leading the Catholic community, Bishops recognize the significant work that Development and Peace / Caritas Canada has accomplished in helping to respond to the needs and suffering of the world's most vulnerable, acting on what Blessed Paul VI, 50 years ago, in his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* called an "urgent plea":

The hungry nations of the world cry out to the peoples blessed with abundance. And the Church, cut to the quick by this cry, asks each and every man to hear his brother's plea and answer it lovingly.²

Over the years, many Bishops from our country have participated in Development and Peace / Caritas Canada observer missions in the Global South. These have been opportunities to witness firsthand the life-giving impact of the assistance and accompaniment provided. Bishops have been profoundly moved by how the resources donated by Catholics and other Canadians are used

¹ Statement on the 10th anniversary of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace by the then President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Most Reverend Emmett Carter, in *Do Justice: The Social Teaching of the Canadian Catholic Bishops*, ed. E.F. Sheridan, S.J. (Sherbrooke: Éditions Paulines, 1987), pp. 322-3.

² Blessed Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, On the Development of Peoples, 26 March 1967, nos. 87, 3. The decision by the Bishops of Canada to establish what would become CCOOP was unanimously affirmed in principle during their 12-14 October 1966, Plenary Assembly. A provisional constitution was unanimously approved by the Board (today the Permanent Council) of the national Conference of Bishops on 10 March 1967, and the Board of the new organization held its first meeting on 8 June 1967.

by Development and Peace / Caritas Canada to transform the lives of men, women and children. This care and attention covers the full spectrum of assistance and solidarity, including both emergency relief as well as long-term and sustainable development.

For example, in 2014 the delegation which visited the Philippines in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan noted:

*Canadian Catholics, through the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace / Caritas Canada, have contributed significantly to the initial relief effort in collaboration with Caritas Filipinas. Help has included providing material support like food and shelter, but also helping the affected residents plan their future in the aftermath of this catastrophic event which has destroyed families and left so many displaced.*³

Not only did Development and Peace / Caritas Canada respond to the immediate needs of people, it ensured that the effort was sustainable. To that end it worked

*with the community to ensure the distribution of new homes was equitable, and that the new community would be sustainable, resilient, unified, and able to provide social and economic improvement for its members. Much of this involved educating the people, which can include teaching alternate forms of livelihood, improved (or new) agricultural practices, teaching citizens their rights with respect to various levels of government and helping the community to organize itself so it can make decisions for the good of all its members.*⁴

The campaigns of Development and Peace / Caritas Canada, with the multitude of resources that accompany them, likewise provide education to people within Canada and beyond. Campaigns such as *Crisis in Syria: Giving Hope through Solidarity, 2011-2015*, and more recently *Create a Climate of Change 2015* are examples of heartfelt initiatives that respond to immediate crises and reflect the vision outlined in recent magisterial documents such as *Laudato Si'*.

Countless young people who have participated in the 25-hour *THINKfast* have been motivated to work for change. Many youth became further involved in international development and volunteered in the Global South. We celebrate these life-changing endeavours, all the while challenging Development and Peace / Caritas Canada to continue to seek new, creative and meaningful ways to engage and empower Catholic youth in the work of justice and peace.

³ “Report on a visit to Tacloban and Palo, areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan /Yolanda”, by Dr. Patrick Fletcher, Senior Advisor for Theology and Social Doctrine: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (19 August 2014). {http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/19_August_2014_-_Tacloban_and_Palo_-_EN.pdf}

⁴ “Report on a visit to Giporlos, areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda”, by Dr. Patrick Fletcher, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (22 August 2014). {http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/22_August_2014_-_Giporlos_visit_-_EN.pdf}

Catholics across Canada participate each year in the *Share Lent* campaigns. They are educated about the international needs of their brothers and sisters. They learn that the proceeds of these campaigns seek to ensure meaningful and sustained changes to oppressive and unjust structures and systems in the Global South.

Through its participation in *Caritas Internationalis*, the members and staff of Development and Peace are directly linked with Catholic assistance and development agencies around the world. These offer important opportunities for solidarity and collaboration, and an even more extensive range of partners whose work is rooted in the local realities of the Church and the Global South. For these reasons, we encourage Development and Peace / Caritas Canada to continue its efforts to involve in its mission and work new Canadians as well as Eastern Catholics across our country. Both groups offer invaluable perspectives and insights on the situations of the Global South, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, all of which are areas in which CCODP is active. *Caritas Internationalis*, along with the new Canadians and Eastern Catholics among us, provides a rich diversity of expertise and talent which is extremely important when responding to the complexities of regional tensions and different forms of violence. Developmental assistance itself has become all the more difficult and challenging today because of what Pope Francis refers to as

*many false rights and – at the same time – broad sectors which are vulnerable, victims of power badly exercised These sectors are closely interconnected and made increasingly fragile by dominant political and economic relationships.*⁵

By collaborating with other Catholic agencies, Development and Peace / Caritas Canada is better equipped for recognizing and protecting the transcendent dimension of the human person and ensuring that international assistance is inspired by, and directed toward, authentic, integral and sustainable development. This is the Church's vision of human development, and it has been articulated and emphasized in papal teaching for over half a century.⁶ It means that disaster assistance and long-term development aid must respect the moral dimension, address the needs of the full human person, be concerned for the surrounding world, and respect God's intended order, proceeding "in line with God's original gift of all that is," and bringing "the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development."⁷ This specific vision and approach includes respecting conscience, addressing life issues, and being concerned for marriage and families.⁸ In the words that Pope Francis used in his conclusion for his first annual Message for the World Day for Peace, issued in 2014:

⁵ Pope Francis, Address to the members of the General Assembly of the United Nations (25 September 2015).

⁶ References to earlier papal teaching related to development are provided in *Populorum Progressio*, no. 2. Pope Francis gives a more recent summary in *Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace*, his Message for the 2014 World Day of Peace, no. 4.

⁷ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home, 2016, nos. 5 and 13; see also his insistence that authentic development includes human rights (no. 93) and should indicate the relationship between human life and the moral law (no. 155).

⁸ *Populorum Progressio* already makes explicit that authentic human development includes respect for marriage and the family (no. 36; also nos. 37 and 38).

The necessary realism proper to politics and economy cannot be reduced to mere technical know-how bereft of ideals and unconcerned with the transcendent dimension of man. When this openness to God is lacking, every human activity is impoverished and persons are reduced to objects that can be exploited. Only when politics and the economy are open to moving within the wide space ensured by the One who loves each man and each woman, will they achieve an ordering based on a genuine spirit of fraternal charity and become effective instruments of integral human development and peace.⁹

The success of Development and Peace / Caritas Canada is largely dependent on the work that takes place at the grassroots level with the faithful in each diocese, eparchy, parish and religious house throughout Canada. Local involvement is vital – for the Church itself as well as for all work on behalf of justice and peace. The importance particularly of strong parish involvement must never be underestimated – both in our own country and in the Global South. The engagement and collaboration of the community of faith is necessary for every Catholic justice and peace agency – and in the same way charitable and social justice activities are essential for the Church in proclaiming the Gospel. This local presence and involvement must be promoted and encouraged – by Bishops, parish leaders and Development and Peace / Caritas Canada – if it is to sustain itself as a vital Catholic organization dedicated to justice, peace and solidarity.

Close identification and collaboration with the Church and its pastors are crucial if a Catholic agency is to be more than humanitarian and philanthropic. *Populorum Progressio* begins by noting the interest, concern and the duty of the Church to help in the serious problem of “*hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance*”, and so addresses its appeal “*first of all*” to Catholics – hierarchy and laity.¹⁰ The mission of CCODP is to be a witness of mercy, reaching out in the name of Christ. Members, staff, supporters and volunteers who serve this cause are to live “an ecclesial existence, a life lived in the Church”, “open to the ‘We’ of the Church”.¹¹ The mission and mandate of Development and Peace / Caritas Canada are ecclesial, and its members, staff, supporters and volunteers called to serve with and on behalf of the Church, because its mission and witness of charity are essential: “*For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.*”¹² This is why *Populorum Progressio* insists that “*Technical expertise is necessary, but it must be accompanied by concrete signs of genuine love.*”¹³ The centrality of love and charity in emergency assistance and international aid is highlighted by Blessed Paul VI as well as Pope Francis as part of the threefold mission of authentic and integral development:

⁹ *Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace*, no. 10.

¹⁰ *Populorum Progressio*, nos. 1, 81.

¹¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, On Faith, 2013, nos. 22, 39.

¹² Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, On Christian Love, 2005, no. 25.

¹³ *Populorum Progressio*, no. 72.

the *duty of solidarity*, which requires the richer ... to assist the less developed; the *duty of social justice*, which requires the realignment of relationships ... in terms of greater fairness; and the *duty of universal charity*, which entails the promotion of a more humane world for all, a world in which each has something to give and to receive¹⁴

Teachers, sanctifiers and leaders of the Catholic community – summoning all its members to faith and holiness as witnesses of God’s love and mercy – the Bishops look with hope and trust toward a better future. In their name, I encourage and urge Development and Peace / Caritas Canada, along with all Catholics in our country:

- To continue the mission of announcing the Good News of the Gospel by giving witness to mercy and being bearers of joy and peace;
- To give new energy and impetus to education and formation for justice and peace;
- To renew efforts which will empower and engage youth and new Canadians in the work for justice and peace;
- To continue promoting development projects that respect and promote the sacredness and dignity of the human person at every stage of human life;
- To work together in strengthening our common ecclesial identity and outreach;
- To foster a communion of solidarity among all Catholic development and humanitarian agencies, as well as with all Catholic lay associations, movements and organizations;
- To explore and help identify possible ways by which Catholics in our country can expand and improve emergency aid and development assistance to those communities and regions within Canada which are in need of assistance and encouragement.

The 50th anniversary of Development and Peace / Caritas Canada is an opportunity for all the Church in our country to walk together into the future, conscious of our common identity, mission, and dedication to service. We urge CCODP members, staff and supporters, together with clergy, consecrated persons and all the laity, not to dwell on past achievements or former ways of doing things, but to focus on current challenges and opportunities, keeping an eye on the horizon with its emerging problems and new approaches.

“*To walk is the art of looking at the horizon,*” Pope Francis has remarked, “*thinking about where I want to go but also enduring the fatigue. And many times, the walk is difficult, it is not easy....*”¹⁵ However challenging that journey may be, we are all the more effective in facing the serious and urgent challenges of our world when we walk together. The same invitation and the same challenge were extended 50 years ago by Blessed Paul VI:

¹⁴ *Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace*, no. 4, citing *Populorum Progressio*, no. 44.

¹⁵ Pope Francis, unscripted conversation with students as reported by Laura Ieraci, “Pope launches into spontaneous Q&A with students”, Vatican Radio, 8 June 2013.

{http://en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2013/06/07/pope_launches_into_spontaneous_qa_with_students/en1-699446}

*We must travel this road together, united in minds and hearts. Hence we feel it necessary to remind everyone of the seriousness of this issue in all its dimensions, and to impress upon them the need for action. The moment for action has reached a critical juncture. Can countless innocent children be saved? Can countless destitute families obtain more human living conditions? Can world peace and human civilization be preserved intact?*¹⁶

Solemnity of Christ the King
Solemn conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy
20 November 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas Crosby" with a cross symbol to the left.

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton and
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops

¹⁶ *Populorum Progressio*, no. 80.