CREATE A CLIMATE OF CHANGE

Share Lent 2016 Development and Peace CARITAS CANADA
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Creating a Climate of Change is this year’s theme for the Share Lent campaign of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. A number of Pope Francis’ intentions are at the heart of the campaign: most notably, his encyclical on care for our common home, *Laudato Si’* (Praise be to you), and the Jubilee Year of Mercy he has proclaimed. Development and Peace, our Church’s organization in Canada for international solidarity, offers us concrete ways to respond to the Pope’s invitations by working together to build a world that is more just and more in keeping with human dignity. What is proposed is truly an experience of the Church’s long-standing tradition of referring to the “corporal works of mercy,” which in turn point to the explicit commands of Jesus Christ. Feed the hungry. Give drink to the thirsty. Clothe the naked. Visit the imprisoned – including those caught in unjust economic and social structures, as the Pope has also reminded us.

The Holy Father’s encyclical calls us to hope. He invites us to consider a courageous question: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” This, in turn, leads us to other pointed questions: “What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the Earth have of us?” (160) Our responses should help us see more clearly and honestly that what is at stake is our own dignity and that of every human being. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us.

The Earth is a marvellous gift from the Creator, but we are not its owners. We are its stewards. By working together, we can preserve our common home, and strengthened by the Spirit prepare the way toward a new heaven and a new Earth.

The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy invites us to be merciful and forgiving like our heavenly Father. God calls us to compassion, so as to open our hearts and eyes to the sufferings of others, understand them in their distress, and find ways to bring comfort and assistance. Development and Peace gives a wonderful opportunity to join our efforts with our sisters and brothers in the Global South who struggle to improve their conditions of life and to live in full dignity.

Thank you for being in solidarity with the mission and mandate that the Bishops of Canada have entrusted to Development and Peace. My brother Bishops and I are grateful for your commitment and for being generous in giving to this year’s Share Lent collection.

May the Holy Spirit lead us through the Lenten desert with joy, as we allow him to reshape and transform our hearts and lives through hope and mercy!

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton and
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops
Together, let’s CREATE A CLIMATE OF CHANGE

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis invites us to be “Merciful like the Father” and to experience the forgiving love of Christ. In his Bull of Indiction Misericordiae Vultus (MV), he reminds us that the practice of pilgrimage holds a special place in this Holy Year as it opens our hearts to compassion and love.

“May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God’s mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us.” (MV 14)

Lent is a time of reflection and renewal, when we contemplate Jesus’ death for the salvation of humankind and are compelled towards action through his resurrection. It is the opportune moment to set out on the pilgrimage the Holy Father speaks of and to take action on the multiple crises that are affecting humanity.

Development and Peace invites you to join in a Climate of Change pilgrimage to experience the “opening of our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates.” (MV 15)

In this booklet, you will find a story for each week of our Share Lent campaign. Pope Francis frequently reminds us that land, labour and lodging are at the core of dignity for every person, and the stories presented here come from the local organizations that we work with in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, who are empowering the most poor and vulnerable to lift themselves out of poverty. Let us feel their wounds and witness the dignity they are denied, but let us also experience the call of solidarity, and the warmth and friendship we can offer.

In his encyclical Laudato Si’ (LS), Pope Francis writes of the throwaway culture that has propelled our common home into a climate crisis whose effects are felt most by the poor of the Global South. We hope this journey will help you reflect on how this path of mercy must also be lived in our everyday actions. Ultimately, it is the mercy of the poor that we must seek and that will set us free.

We hope you will enjoy your Climate of Change pilgrimage!
Adonis Medjine is a survivor of the massive earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12th, 2010. For several years, she has been involved with the local organization Fanm Deside, a long-time Development and Peace partner whose mission is to improve the status of women in Haiti, who are made vulnerable due to a lack of recognition of their rights.

Fanm Deside has created the social enterprise BON POUL, which specializes in raising and marketing broiler chickens. The profits from this enterprise help to finance Fanm Deside’s activities amongst the most poor and vulnerable women in Haiti. The chicken coop is located in Jacmel in the south of the country, and is the only one in the community.

Adonis is one of three people recruited to help run the coop. She is a controller, meaning she feeds, waters and treats the chickens, and checks on the coop conditions (temperature, humidity, lighting, etc.) She also prepares the receipts and the crates of chickens for delivery. With her job, she is able to provide for her family.

“I have a husband and two children. Thanks to this job and the wages I receive, I can take care of my family, send my children to school and complete a few projects.”

The creation of the chicken coop has meant steady employment for the community, especially for women. The chickens are sold to shopkeepers who are members of Fanm Deside, as well as at local markets and to hotels located in the capital Port-au-Prince. “The chicken coop is very useful for all the women in the community. Our Haitian chickens are less expensive than imported ones, so shopkeepers make a better profit, which in turn allows them to send their children to school. And the women who buy the chickens save money. Everyone benefits in some way, and our purchasing power goes up!”

“Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life.”

(MV 2)
Liz Benítez, 13, lives with her parents and brother in Paraguay. Her family lives on an asentamiento, a piece of land where a community is settled, with 50 other families.

In Paraguay, small family farmers are victims of huge inequalities when it comes to access to land. One percent of landowners hold 77 percent of fertile land. Liz’s community lived on land whose ownership was contested by a company. After years of struggle, the government granted the community only a small fraction of the land it once occupied and the entire community was forced to move onto this minuscule parcel.

Since moving, Liz can no longer go to school. The closest high school is 20 kms away. “The school is very far, and I had to go there on my own. It scared me! I love learning but it’s just not possible at the moment.”

Her father, like many other members of the community, is part of the Paraguayan Peasant Movement. This Development and Peace partner is helping peasants defend their land rights. The people of the community, like many other peasant leaders in the country, have received threats and are often repressed by the State and police.

Liz dreams of one day returning to school, and for her community to live in peace.

“There have been many instances where I have been mistreated. It really makes me sad. I no longer want to live these problems. I just want to live peacefully with my family.”

Ricardo Nuñez, a member of the Paraguayan Peasant Movement is thankful for Development and Peace’s support. “We need Development and Peace so that the movement can grow, provide training, hold assemblies and be rooted at the national and local levels. Several people have no protection, and they need the movement to help them defend their rights.”

“The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel.”

(MV 9)
Try Mopurto, his wife and their 2-year-old daughter are part of the landless urban poor of the city of Jogjakarta who live in the kampungs. Suffering from mental illness, it has been hard for Try to provide stability for his family: “We often move because we are not accepted by the people around us since we work as street musicians and by scavenging,” he explains.

Although literally translated as “village” or “community” in Indonesian, the word kampung has sadly come to mean a slum. Development and Peace’s partner Arkomjogja, however, is trying to bring back the true meaning of the word kampung. This association of community architects is working in some of the poorest slums in Indonesia to ensure that people have decent housing that addresses the real needs of the community.

“Community architecture is design that is made and constructed by the community. It is more than just the physical and the aesthetics. It is an ideology on how to manage community creativity, local wisdom, and community knowledge. It reveals the identity, the passion and spirit of togetherness of the community,” says Yuli Kusworo, Coordinator of Arkomjogja.

Arkomjogja has been working in kampungs that run along the riverbanks of the city of Jogjakarta and which are being ignored in city development plans. It has helped organize these communities, providing them with trainings on community mapping, planning, design and construction. Arkomjogja works in partnership with Paguyuban Kalijawi, a women’s association that runs a community savings fund used to renovate the many dilapidated and ramshackle houses in their kampungs.

Try’s family is one that has benefitted from the newfound unity that Arkomjogja has brought into his community. His home, which is built completely from scavenged materials, had thin walls and a leaky roof, so he submitted a proposal to the Paguyuban Kalijawi fund for renovations. It was approved and thanks to training provided by Arkomjogja, other members of the community were able to help him with the renovations.

There are already 215 houses that have been renovated in the kampungs of Jogjakarta, but for those living there, the work of Arkomjogja has contributed much more than physical improvements.

Try says that he and his family feel accepted and are treated well in their community. Having a peaceful and solid house has helped stabilize his mental illness, and has made for a better life for his family:

“My home is my heaven because here we feel the meaning of brotherhood in the social life of the kampung.”

“Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help!”

(MV 15)
“This is the time to allow our hearts to be touched! . . . It is the time to listen to the cry of the innocent people who are deprived of their property, their dignity, their feelings, and even their very lives.”

(MV 19)
“Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.”

(MV 10)

During this season of Lent, Pope Francis has challenged us to experience a conversion that opens our hearts to be merciful.

This conversion must fill us with the courage to not only extend our hand to our sisters and brothers in the Global South but to transform our lives so that all can live in dignity.

In his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis calls on our spirit of solidarity by reminding us that the Earth is our common home. It is not meant for one people or one nation, but for all of God’s children.

With the way that we currently live, we are eating up the Earth’s precious resources, pushing temperatures to rise to dangerous levels and in the process denying millions adequate food, proper shelter and a decent wage.

Let us finish this pilgrimage towards conversion by choosing to take steps to live more simply, by being in communion with all of humanity and caring for our common home. There are many ways to begin on this new path: make your home more sustainable; consider your needs rather than your wants; generate less waste; eat local and organic foods as much as possible; or try to commute in a more sustainable way.

And, as Pope Francis reminds us, the path is already laid out for us: “The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things.”

(LS 223)
This Lent, let us look into the eyes of our sisters and brothers in the Global South and show them our solidarity.

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2. Give to your Share Lent parish collection.

Thank you for your generous gift.