

MESSAGE TO PARISHES AND SCHOOLS

My dear sisters and brothers:

My name is _____, and I am bringing you this message on behalf of Development and Peace – Caritas Canada, and billions of women all over the world.

I would like to begin by inviting all of the women and girls in the congregation/classroom to stand up. [Wait for women to stand.]

Did you know that women and girls just like you are essential in building peace and security in society? Studies have shown that a peace agreement is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years if women are included in its creation. This is because women are recognized as honest brokers in peace processes.

Did you know that the number of women in Parliament is the most effective predictor of peace in any country? Studies have shown that the more women parliamentarians there are in a given country, the less likely it is to ever be in a state of civil war.

Did you know that women all over the world, women just like you, are key players in reducing the likelihood of societies relapsing into conflict? In fact, in countries where at least 35 percent of parliamentarians are women, the risk of reverting to conflict is close to zero.

Did you know that the essential role of your sisters around the world in peacebuilding and conflict prevention was formally recognized in the year 2000 by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325? For the first time, it recognizes crimes committed against women in armed conflicts, including sexual violence and forced displacement, and stresses the absolute importance of women's participation at all levels of peace processes.

Did you know that right now, as you stand here, your sisters all over the world are still being barred from peace processes and peace operations? The evidence shows that women play a vital role in creating lasting peace. Nevertheless, discrimination, marginalization by decision-makers, gender-based violence and cultural practices continue to stand solidly between women and a peace that would benefit all humanity. Did you know that there is something that we can all do about this?

As Development and Peace celebrates our 50th anniversary this fall, we also celebrate all the women who have been part of our rich history. Development and Peace invites you to learn more about why the empowerment of women is so important in any plan for peace. We also invite you to take action to help women who are currently barred from peacemaking and peacekeeping processes.

And so I invite ALL of you to now stand up! [Wait for all to stand.]

I invite all of you to continue to stand up in solidarity with each other and with your sisters around the world by becoming ambassadors for true peace. I invite all of you to become peacebuilders. I invite all of you to act now to ensure that all women have fair access to peace processes. The simplest way to do this is to sign our Action Card. It asks the Canadian government to support women and women's organizations working for peace by increasing Canada's official development assistance to build a more peaceful world.

For those who would like to do more, I encourage you to meet with or write to your Member of Parliament and ask them to support women who are working for peace in developing countries that are in conflict or at risk of conflict.

Also, consider becoming a member of Development and Peace, so that you never miss an opportunity to work for social, political, ecological and economic justice all over the world!

As long as we continue to allow others to bar women from peace processes, we ourselves continue to bar humanity from lasting peace. Together in solidarity, true peace is possible!