

The Symbols of Solidarity is an optional activity aimed at bringing to life our campaign's theme and main message. The symbols can be used in a procession before or during Mass, or at any other gathering. If you plan on using the Symbols of Solidarity during Mass, it is important that you first consult with the pastor to see if it meets diocesan liturgical directives as well as the approved liturgical practice of your parish. Schools can also consider displaying these symbols throughout Lent in the chapel or another appropriate place.

The procession of each symbol starts when the narrator begins to read the section for that symbol, and it ends at the front of the church or room, or whichever location the pastor has judged best. You may wish to have just one narrator or different voices for each part. Allow brief pauses between symbols for reflection. The entire procession generally takes between 10 and 15 minutes, but can be shortened (or lengthened) in order to suit your parish's particular needs. Those who carry the symbols should remain at the front of the church or room so that all participants can join hands after the presentation of the last symbol. It is suggested that, given this year's campaign theme, women and girls be given these roles.

You will need:

- A place to put the symbols after they are carried in – perhaps close to the sanctuary, on a table decorated for this purpose, or a special area in the room where the procession will take place.
- A water jug to symbolize the way that women provide the necessities of life for their families.
- A branch or a potted plant to symbolize women activists.
- A hardhat to represent women labourers and tradespeople.
- A ballot, representing women voters and women politicians.

Script for narrator

In May 2016, Pope Francis asked us to pray so “that in all countries of the world, women may be honoured, respected and valued for their essential contribution to society.” He reminded us that greater participation by women is needed in order to build more sustainable economies and healthier societies. Since 1967, with your support, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada has been working to ensure that women are involved in finding sustainable solutions to the challenges of poverty and inequality, and to the recovery of communities hit hard by conflicts and disasters.

Today, we offer to you symbols that represent the many roles that women play in the development of their communities and countries. Women are at the heart of change. May we hear their voices and may their message of hope and love open our hearts to compassion for our sisters.



1st symbol
A water jug

Women throughout the world are relied on by their families to provide the necessities of life. This **water jug** symbolizes the 40 billion hours that women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa spend each year collecting water so their families' needs can be met. Development and Peace works to make water more accessible to communities and life easier for the women and girls who are tasked with fetching it. In northeastern Somalia in the Horn of Africa, Development and Peace has provided funding so communities can build covers for rainwater storage tanks. This prevents evaporation and contamination of this precious resource. Thirty-five thousand people have improved access to fresh water because of this project.



2nd symbol
A branch or a plotted plant

This **branch (or plant)** has been brought here to put us in communion with Berta Cáceres, an Indigenous leader, mother, midwife and environmental activist from Honduras. Berta, a friend of Development and Peace, led a struggle to stop the building of four hydro-electric dams that would have destroyed a river her people rely on – a project in which they were given no say. A year ago, in March 2016, Berta was murdered in her home by armed men believed to be connected to the military and the company building the dams. We remember Berta and other women activists like her, who work for the cause of social justice, often in the face of threats to their lives.



3rd symbol
A hardhat

This **hardhat** represents the many women who play roles in the construction of their communities. In the Philippines, women like Marlyn Saoy are at the forefront of the Pope Francis Village, a Development and Peace reconstruction project that is helping communities build a new village after theirs were destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan. Marlyn is taking part in the construction of the village. She also plans budgets, purchases supplies and meets with government officials. Thanks to the project, Marlyn has been able to take training courses where she has furthered her knowledge of construction and gained confidence in her abilities.



4th symbol
A ballot

This **ballot** represents the power women have in the political arena as voters, candidates and elected officials. Women are playing a greater role in politics and in voting for the politicians that will best serve their communities. Many of our partners, like the National Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), have instituted programs that educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities as voters and encourage full participation, particularly of women and youth. Development and Peace has been working with the national Church to ensure a fair electoral process and to encourage citizen participation since the first free elections in the DRC in 2006.

Concluding prayer

(The celebrant can be asked to pray these words.)



Let us pray

Loving God,

We place these Symbols of Solidarity before you.

We offer them in gratitude for, and as a reminder of, the many roles women play in our community and in communities around the world.

Help us to always value the gifts of women in our world.

May we never forget that women are pillars of society and the bedrock of our families.

This we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

