

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On his recent arrival in Africa, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that “At a time of global food shortages, financial turmoil, and disturbing patterns of climate change,” the Global South “suffers disproportionately.” This means more and more people “are falling prey to hunger, poverty, and disease,” and crying out “for reconciliation, justice and peace.”

While the current financial crisis is certainly having a painful impact for us in Canada, it is disastrous for those living in the Global South. There are growing calls for the United Nations to address the global economic crisis, with reports on how Africa is already experiencing violence resulting from economic instability. Some experts say the world’s worst affected countries may see a decline in income of up to 50 percent.

Over the past few days, several serious concerns have been expressed about projects involving five groups in Mexico, which the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace has assisted with financing.

The questions that have been raised are important, and are being carefully looked into by Development and Peace. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is working closely with Development and Peace to clarify these questions and to ensure that, if necessary, rectifications are made.

At the same time, it is important for dioceses and parishes to recognize the tremendous importance of the Share Lent collection, held in most places across Canada on the Fifth Sunday of Lent. Sharing temporal riches and giving to the needy have always been part of the threefold Lenten tradition for Christians: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

In his 2009 Message for Lent, the Holy Father reminds us that it has been “the hallmark of the Christian community” to take up special collections, with “the faithful being invited to give to the poor what had been set aside from their fast. This practice needs to be rediscovered and encouraged again in our day, especially during the liturgical season of Lent.”

The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace is the official development agency of the Church in Canada, and respects the sacredness of human life from conception to its natural end. By contributing to Development and Peace this year on 29 March, our gifts can bear fruit for the life of the world. To serve Christ, we are invited to follow his example – to give of ourselves, that others may live.

+ V. James Weisgerber
Archbishop of Winnipeg
President
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