

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Lent is the period when catechumens traditionally prepare for the sacraments at Easter. It is also the season when the entire community of faith, and we individually, are renewed for our ongoing journey in conversion and faith. Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming “Repent and believe in the good news” (Mark 1.15). Lent renews us on the way of conversion and faith through prayer, fasting, and works of mercy. In his [Lenten message](#) this year, the Holy Father notes how we are also assisted on this journey by concern for one another and mutual encouragement.

Pope Benedict XVI also reminds us of another word in our Lenten vocabulary: scrutinize. The Lord tells us to scrutinize and be concerned about the log in our own eye, not the speck in our neighbour’s eye (Luke 6.41). Be concerned for one another, the Holy Father tells us. Don’t be isolated, indifferent or disinterested in your brothers and sisters. “Our hearts should never be so wrapped up in our affairs and problems that they fail to hear the cry of the poor,” he says. Reach out to others. Open your hearts to their needs.

For Catholics in Canada, the annual Share Lent Collection offers a special opportunity to hear the cry of the poor and to reach out to those in need. A few months ago, I was part of a solidarity visit to Haiti, organized by the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. It was a moving experience. Time and time again, we met those whose lives had been crushed under the weight of poverty and oppression, but now are able to find new dignity and hope. This is possible because of the generosity of Catholics, the concern of many men and women of good will, and the services offered by Development and Peace, Caritas Internationalis, and other partner organizations that assist the poor and afflicted. As followers of the Lord Jesus, we must always keep before us the faces and lives of the impoverished and marginalized. These are our brothers and sisters whom we can so easily overlook and forget. This is the ministry the Bishops of Canada entrusted to Development and Peace 45 years ago: to help the Church in Canada and each of its members accompany, assist and remember the poor.

The journey of faith and conversion includes many moments when we see a need to improve and renew society, the community of faith, and ourselves individually. Development and Peace is well aware it too must adapt and improve. That is why the Bishops of Canada have established a Standing Committee of Bishops to assist Development and Peace in its own journey of renewal and revitalization – in its ongoing *aggiornamento*, to use the phrase so

popular at the time of the Council.

If Canadian Catholics have concerns about the effectiveness or appropriateness of Development and Peace activities, they can send their questions to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Our Standing Committee will then explore with Development and Peace whether it may need to make adjustments or improvements in order to enhance the good work that Development and Peace is doing and has been called to do.

My sisters and brothers, I encourage you to be as generous as your means allow in support of the Share Lent Collection. During our Lenten journey, let us “encourage one another and build each other up... always seeking to do good to one another and to all” (1 Thessalonians 5.11,15). May the Holy Spirit renew our community and each of us in ever greater concern for one another – more generous in acts of mercy, compassionate through fasting, steadfast in prayer.

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