



Faithful Citizenship 2008

Seventh in a Series

Solidarity / Care of God's Creation

“(Solidarity) then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”

Sollicitudo rei socialis (On Social Concern) 38

Catholic Social Doctrine

The principle of solidarity is the Church's way of reminding us that “we are all in this together.” As the bishops teach in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship (FCFC 53)*, “We are one human family, whatever our national, racial ethnic, economic and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions...and includes the Scriptural call to welcome the stranger among us...”

Solidarity does not simply mean that the “haves” in this world should share with the “have-nots.” We are called to stand with the poor and the rich, with the young and the old, with the developed and the developing nations, not just because they need us, but also because we need them.

Ultimately, solidarity is a reflection of our universality as a Church.

Our solidarity with all on earth also calls us to care for God's creation. As the bishops teach, “we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of God's creation. Care for the earth is a duty of our faith and a sign of our concern for all people.” (*FCFC 54*)

Our misuse of the earth's resources leads to suffering, particularly for those without political and economic power. Those in poverty are more likely to live in

environments that bear the scars of reckless development and the blight of toxic air and water.

Today, our duty as stewards has new urgency because the visible effect of this exploitation has been made even more distant with the development of a global economy. Third World nations are driven to misuse their native natural resources to meet the consumption demands of developed nations.

At the same time, Pope John Paul II cautioned against caring for “the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction” while expending little effort “to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic ‘human ecology’” (*Centesimus annus 38*).

Thus, our respect for the goods of the earth that God has given to our care must always be affirmed in the context of our reverence for the fundamental value of human life – and our solidarity with all of humanity and the created order.

In a world where one-fifth of the population survives on less than one dollar per day, where some twenty countries are involved in major armed conflict, and where poverty, corruption, and repressive regimes bring untold suffering to millions of people, we simply cannot remain indifferent.

As faithful citizens, we are called to follow in the way of Jesus and love our neighbors as ourselves. In evaluating public policies, this means looking beyond our own comfort and economic well-being and firmly standing with our neighbors, both near and far, to seek justice and peace for all.

Key Issues

As an international leader, the United States should commit to upholding the values of "liberty and justice for all" for our brothers and sisters both at home and abroad.

Therefore we call on you to:

- Help alleviate **global poverty** through a comprehensive development agenda, including substantially increased development aid for the poorest countries, more equitable trade policies, and continuing efforts to relieve the crushing burdens of debt and disease.
- Ensure the promotion of **religious liberty** and other basic human rights as an integral part of U.S. foreign policy.
- Promote **energy conservation** and the development of **alternative, renewable, and clean energy sources**.
- Clean the **land, air, and water**, so that born and unborn children, who are most vulnerable to environmental toxins, can lead healthy lives.

- Address **global climate change**, focusing on prudence, pursuit of the common good, and the impact on the poor.
- Recognize that **environmental degradation** disproportionately harms the world's poorest inhabitants.
- Provide more consistent political and financial support for appropriate international programs, **international bodies**, and international law, so that these institutions may become more effective, responsible, and responsive agents for addressing global problems.
- Protect **refugees** through safe haven in other countries, including the U.S., especially for women and children, victims of human trafficking, and religious minorities.
- Address **regional conflicts** in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Congo, Sudan, Colombia, and West Africa.
- Actively pursue comprehensive negotiations leading to a just and peaceful resolution that respects the legitimate claims and aspirations of both **Israelis and Palestinians**.

Resources

Centesimus annus (The Hundredth Year), Pope John Paul II, 1991

Sollicitudo rei socialis (On Social Concern), Pope John Paul II, 1987

Pacem in terris (Peace on Earth), Pope John XXIII, 1963

"*For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food*" (Mt 25:35) *Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*, USCCB, 2003

A Place at the Table, A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children, USCCB, 2002

A Call to Solidarity with Africa, USCCB, 2001

Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, USCCB 2001

A Jubilee Call for Debt Forgiveness, Administrative Board of the USCCB, 1999

Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes, USCC, 1998

The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace, USCC, 1993

Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching, USCC, 1992

Resources available on the web:
Go to www.wisconsinatholic.org
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