



# Issues

Office of Peace and Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation  
*Diocese of Gary*

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## Confronting global poverty

On January 1<sup>st</sup> this year, during the celebration of the World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict XVI offered a reflection titled *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*. In it, he cited a Pope John Paul II statement of 1993, emphasizing poverty as a contributory factor to conflict. More specifically, he addressed the cyclical nature of poverty wherein poverty leads to conflict, which in turn leads to more poverty. This cycle is visible in the nations in the Horn of Africa where food insecurity and violence are inextricably linked. In an effort to depict an accurate portrayal of poverty, Benedict illuminates the many issues associated with global poverty—

- The complex phenomenon of globalization and its chilling effect on underdeveloped nations.
- In wealthy societies, the issue of marginalization as well as moral and spiritual poverty.
- The prevalence of pandemic diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS in impoverished countries.
- The high rate of poverty among children, the most vulnerable victims worldwide.
- The relationship between disarmament and development—nations spending resources on building arms rather than development.
- The current food crisis and its disproportionate effect on poorer nations—effecting them more deeply and more often.

According to Pope Benedict, fighting poverty in an effort to build peace is one of the basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching—Global Solidarity between rich and poor nations and within individual nations. This solidarity is founded on the beliefs in the common good and the common code of ethics for all.

In response to Pope Benedict's message, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services during the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering last February, launched a two year national effort, "Catholics Confront Global Poverty". This effort urges Catholics to confront global poverty by learning about it and taking actions to defend the life and dignity of people living in poverty. Specifically, the effort focuses on seven key issues in confronting global poverty—

1. Increasing international assistance
2. Strengthening international peacemaking
3. Reforming United States trade and agricultural policies
4. Completing debt relief

5. Addressing global climate change
6. Supporting the participation and consent of local communities in natural resources extraction
7. Addressing the root causes of migration

This effort is ambitious to say the least. I suggest beginning with a visit to the CCGP website [www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/). The site offers ways to pray, learn, and share. Though these activities are set in the context of a diocese, they should be seen as activities for groups of all kinds—in a parish, school, or diocesan office—to do together. Indeed, a major focus of the campaign of Catholics Confronting Global Poverty is to see this as part of the common good and to have the experience of working for the common good.

Frankly, any steps taken to address the issue of global poverty, whether it be through education or action, will be beneficial. For Catholics, participating in the effort to overcome global poverty will reinforce a central concept of Catholic Social Teaching—care for the common good. ✠

James M. Dixon, S.J.

## Global climate change—threat to the common good

Among the seven issues the U.S. Bishops say are key to confronting global poverty, one is addressing global climate change. That echoes their statement, *Global Climate Change: a Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*. A way of addressing this issue is to take the Saint Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor. It is a promise and a commitment that individuals, families, parishes, organizations and institutions can make to live our faith by protecting God's creation and advocating on behalf of people in poverty. The poor face the harshest impacts, although it is estimated they only contribute about 3% to global climate change.

The present pace and scale of development in the Athabasca oil sands cannot be morally justified. Active steps to alleviate this environmental damage must be undertaken.

Bishop Luc Bouchard  
Diocese in Alberta, Canada

### The Saint Francis Pledge

I/we pledge to:

- † **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God's creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- † **LEARN** about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
- † **ASSESS** how we—as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations—contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
- † **ACT** to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
- † **ADVOCATE** for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.

The Saint Francis Pledge is on the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change website [www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org](http://www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org). The site offers a way to register your promise/commitment and specific suggestions and ideas for the five elements. Promoting the Saint Francis Pledge in a parish or among a group of parishes would be a wonderful project for parish commissions of Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation.

#### Northwest Indiana

The Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center in Seattle offers a useful and inexpensive resource, *Care for All Creation*. This six session program is designed for parishes and offers informative

readings. **Sessions #3 and #4 are especially useful in Northwest Indiana. Those sessions deal with water and toxics issues which are very important to people who rely on Lake Michigan as their primary water source.** Almost weekly, there are stories in the local media about toxics being introduced into Lake Michigan, chiefly by the BP oil refinery, which wants to bring Canadian oil sands to Whiting to process. There is an eye-opening story on the oil sands, *Canadian Oil Boom* in National Geographic, March 2009.

Continued next page

### The common good

The Church's social teaching is a treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. The common good is a concept central to the Catholic Social Teaching tradition. Several of the key themes that are at the heart of Catholic social tradition—

- ▶ Life and dignity of the human person
- ▶ Call to family, community, and participation
- ▶ Rights and responsibilities
- ▶ Option for the poor and vulnerable
- ▶ The dignity of work and the rights of workers
- ▶ Solidarity
- ▶ Care for God's creation

**Climate change** continued

Bishop Luc Bouchard is the Bishop of St. Paul, the Diocese in Alberta, Canada where the oil sands are located. In January, he issued a pastoral letter, *The Integrity of Creation and the Athabasca Oil Sands*. In the letter he criticizes the industry

stating, “The present pace and scale of development in the Athabasca oil sands cannot be morally justified. Active steps to alleviate this environmental damage must be undertaken.”✠

**State of a nation**

Citizens of Haiti, the Western Hemisphere’s poorest nation, suffer the hardships of conflict and food insecurity on a daily basis. The tiny nation has neither the financial nor agricultural means to provide for its nine million citizens. Haiti’s dire poverty is exacerbated by the needs of a large population and by political and socioeconomic instability.

In addition to being the poorest nation, Haiti has the highest rate of unemployment in the Western Hemisphere—nearly 70% of the population are without jobs. Even more astonishing, nearly 80% of Haiti’s population lives below the poverty line, with more than two-thirds of Haitians living on less than a dollar a day. As with many other countries suffering the harmful health effects of global poverty, Haiti is plagued with high rates of malaria, TB, and HIV. In the small country, nearly 120,000 women and children are living with HIV.

**A call to help**

In her visit to Haiti this spring, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stressed the importance of caring for the citizens of Haiti now, before the already dire situation becomes even worse. “The repercussions of bad practices and policies will take years to be reversed but it is important that we start now and today. We are treading on very fragile ground. If we take no action now, the results will be catastrophic. If we cannot deliver today and we can’t find the means to transform the vision of the future, we will be held collectively responsible for not hearing millions of voices”.\*

For many years, the Diocese of Gary has been engaged in a special partnership with the people of Haiti through the work of Catholic Relief Services and the Global Solidarity Partnership Program. This is our response to the exhortation from the U.S. Bishops Conference asking Catholics to build families of faith that reach out beyond national boundaries.

Both the Diocese of Gary and Heartland Center are committed to making a difference in the lives of the people in our partner country of Haiti. The projects we support—

- READ program - an agriculture program in the northern part of Haiti that helps over 200 farmers protect and develop 5,000 acres of land
- Maison Arc-en-Ciel in Port-au-Prince, an orphanage dedicated to serving children with AIDS
- Education projects in Fort-Liberté - teacher training and scholarships for children who would otherwise be unable to go to school

The people of the Diocese of Gary have again shown their generosity. We will be making another gift to support these projects.✠

\*Labott, C. March 2009. *Clinton calls on donors to help Haiti*. CNN.com. Retrieved March 14, 2009.

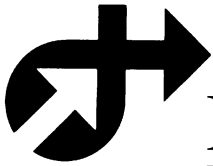
**Mark your calendar!**

**Learn more about Haiti—our partner country**  
**Presentation by Dr. Leonardo Shamamba,**  
**the HIV and AIDS Reach Out Coordinator with**  
**Catholic Relief Services in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti**

**Thursday, September 17, 2009, 7:00 pm**

St. Mary Parish Hildebrandt Hall  
 525 N. Broad St., Griffith, Indiana

Dr. Shamamba brings broad experience to his work with CRS, having been a lecturer, a member of the Africa HIV and AIDS Team, a member of many task forces, and worked in Niger, Somalia, and Democratic Republic of Congo.



## Indiana Catholic Conference—the process works!

Early this year, Senate Bill 296 was proposed in the Indiana Senate. The bill called for death row prisoners to be moved from Indiana State Prison in Michigan City to Super Max in Westville. Bishop Melczek of the Diocese of Gary strongly opposed the bill, calling provisions inappropriate and harmful. If the bill had passed, death row inmates, who could remain on death row from 10 to 20 years, would be in total isolation. It would be very difficult, even impossible for the prisoners to have meaningful participation in religious services.

It was reported at the ICC Diocesan Coordinators meeting in May, that the bill was changed and the prisoners would not be moved. The minutes state, “...change directly attributable to efforts by Bishop Melczek, Fr. Link and Deacons Lunsford and Codespoti.”—*Good work!*

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