

LIVING OUR FAITH at St Philip Neri

July 2004 Volume 2 Issue 4

Global Solidarity. Welcome to the latest issue of "Living our Faith," the Peace & Justice Commission newsletter. This issue highlights another core theme of Catholic Social Teaching – Global Solidarity. Unlike past newsletters, this issue does not focus on specific ways our parish is currently answering this call but rather seeks to raise awareness and foster creative thinking about ways we can act in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the globe. One situation of urgent need is the **crisis in the Sudan**. Read more on the back page for ways you can help.

In this era of globalization, our world is interconnected by new technologies of communication, the constant movement of money and peoples, and by a global marketplace that makes the boundaries of nations less significant than ever before. And yet, our culture has a tendency to turn inwards, indifferent and sometimes isolationist in our relationship to the rest of the world.

Solidarity is a way of "being with" our sisters and brothers in God's family around the globe. Catholic Social Teaching proclaims that we are all one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity in our daily lives means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an ever increasingly interdependent world.

Solidarity is not a vague feeling of compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of people in far flung lands, but rather a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good of all wherever they may live.

A "universal" vision of the common good demands this: we need to broaden our gaze to embrace the needs of the entire human family. The phenomenon of globalization itself calls for openness and sharing, if it is not to be a source of exclusion and marginalization, but rather a basis for solidarity and the sharing of all in the production and exchange of goods."

-Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, #101

You're not alone if you're asking just what we at St. Philip Neri can do about such a large issue. At a conference in Toronto in September, 2003, a group of scholars, academics and social justice activists gathered to assess the relevance of Catholic Social Teaching to the globalizing dynamics of today. A general consensus emerged from this group that a successful response to the challenge of developing a global ethic must begin in local faith communities. Catholic Social Teaching only works if it evolves from the lived faith experience of local communities of church around the world like ours. There's really no where else to start.

Pope Paul VI challenged Catholics to join with other Christians and all people of good will to "discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political, and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed." (*Ogtogesimo Adveniens*, #4) This is perhaps even more of a challenge today in 2004.

What steps can we take broaden our gaze and discern our options and commitments?

- 🌐 Pray and reflect on what it means to be a member of God's global human family. Use the reflection guide on the back as a starting place.
- 🌐 Read the newspaper and online news sources to stay current on global affairs. Learn about the crisis in Sudan on the back page of this newsletter.
- 🌐 Make an effort to learn where the goods you use each day are made and under what conditions.
- 🌐 Educate yourself about "globalization." Yes it's a buzz word but it's here to stay. Some places to start:

US Bishops Conference

"Humanizing the Global Economy"

www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalization.htm

National Catholic Rural Life Conference

Globalization & Trade Relationships

www.ncrlc.com/Rural-Life-Globalization.html

Global Solidarity = Global Citizenship

Prayer & Reflection Guide

Scripture:

Genesis 4: 9-10

Then the Lord asked Cain. "Where is your brother Abel?" He answered, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord then said: "What have you done! Listen: your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil!"

Mark 8: 23-25

He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Putting spittle on his eyes he laid his hands on him and asked, "Do you see anything?" Looking up he replied, "I see people looking like trees and walking." Then he laid hands on his eyes a second time and he saw clearly; his sight was restored and he could see everything distinctly.

Catholic Social Teaching:

"Solidarity helps us to see the 'other' - whether a person, people or nation .. as our 'neighbor,' ... to be made as sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by god." - Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, #39

Reflection Questions:

1. Cain's question has global implications and is a special challenge for our time. What are our responsibilities to the world's poor and suffering people in far-off places?
2. As you reflect on the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, can you identify some "blind spots" in your knowledge and understanding of other peoples and nations? Why is it a challenge to see all people as neighbors, on par with ourselves?

Prayer:

O God of Mercy,
Open our Eyes
just as Jesus restored the blind man's sight.
May we have clear vision to create
structures of justice
that include all Your people.
Heal us of the blindness of our own assumptions.
Release us from our clouded perceptions.
Make our hearts and minds clear
that we may see the world as You see it.
Amen
Barbara Heming, H.M.

Crisis in Sudan - Frequently Asked Questions

Information borrowed from www.mercycorps.org

What is the crisis in Darfur, Sudan?

Increasingly brutal attacks by armed militias have forced approximately 1.2 million Sudanese citizens, mostly black villagers, from their homes. These militias have burned villages, looted, stolen livestock and committed rape and murder. It's estimated that nearly 30,000 people have died in Darfur over the past year as a result of this violence.

Over 130,000 Sudanese have fled to the neighboring country of Chad as refugees, while more than a million remain homeless in Darfur. The United Nations is calling the situation in Darfur "the world's worst humanitarian crisis." World leaders, including United States Secretary of State Colin Powell, have visited Sudan to call for an end to hostilities and cooperation from the Government of Sudan in getting urgent aid to people in Darfur.

What is the current situation in Darfur?

Thousands of families lost everything – homes, belongings, livestock and crops – when they were driven from their villages. Now homeless and scattered across Darfur's barren desert, these families are struggling to meet their daily needs. According to United Nations estimates:

- 49 percent of displaced Sudanese lack food
- 88 percent lack shelter
- 67 percent lack water
- 93 percent lack adequate sanitation

Unless these people receive immediate aid, it's estimated that more than 350,000 men, women and children will die from hunger, exposure and disease within the next few months. The need is overwhelming: it's certain that over a million people will need food and other assistance at least until December.

What can you do to help?

- 🌐 The response to the humanitarian crisis needs resources. Donate to Mercy Corps International (based in Portland - www.mercycorps.org) or Catholic Relief Services (www.catholicrelief.org)
- 🌐 Call and write letters to Congress, the President and the Secretary of State to urge active US participation to save lives in Darfur before it's too late.
- 🌐 Stay up to date on latest developments. Tell friends, family, coworkers and neighbors about our "neighbors" across the globe who need our help.