

## FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT – YEAR B

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews. 5:7-9; John 12:20-33

***Development & Peace - 2024***

by Father Charles Fillion

17 March 2024

Brothers and sisters, the fifth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to solidarity. It offers us an opportunity to reflect on the importance of being committed to solidarity. And for this parish, it has been an important part of their history. Since the 1960s, Saint-Norbert has been instrumental in an organization called the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, known today as Development and Peace – Caritas Canada. For those who don't know this Organization, or others simply need a refresher, it was established in 1967 by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

I myself became involved since the 1980's. Why? Because I like their two-fold mission. Development and Peace – Caritas Canada addresses the root causes of poverty, oppression, and inequality by working with partners in the Global South and by mobilizing Canadians in the common struggle for justice and dignity. It is not just a band-aid or we give or do something for the poor people. We believe those who have been impoverished by unjust systems are powerful actors for social change. We listen to, amplify, and join their voices. We walk side-by-side with all who struggle for justice, taking up our cause together.

The second mission is education. Informed by the work of our global partners, we draw connections showing how the actions of citizens, companies, and the government of Canada affect communities abroad. Through our campaigns and actions, our thousands of members across Canada engage the public by raising awareness about the root causes of injustice and inviting their communities to take action in solidarity with others around the world. And this is not only financially but taking some kind of action. Here is a very small display of what D & P – Caritas Canada has done in the past.

1978 | Opposing Apartheid in South Africa - *A Time to Act* - a national Christmas card campaign is organized. Cards are sent to South African political prisoners. The campaign is a precursor to the annual Fall Education and Action campaign.

1988 | First THINKfast - This 25-hour education and fundraising fast is still held in many schools and parishes across the country.

1988-89 | Ending Apartheid - The campaign *Southern Africa: Under Siege* raises 120,000 signatures requesting that the Canadian government increase sanctions against South Africa.

2000-03 | *The Earth is for All; Not for Sale* - This three-year campaign critiques international financial institutions that exert control over countries of the Global South. The bio-patenting of seeds and its effect on the livelihoods of the world's farmers is one of the issues exposed.

This year, the theme of Development and Peace — Caritas Canada's Share Lent campaign, *Create Hope: Reaping our Rights*, is very much like the parable in the Gospel of John of the grain of wheat that falls into the earth. That grain symbolizes Jesus Christ's sacrifice and resurrection. The parable teaches us about death and rebirth, emphasizing that life emerges from the generosity of self-giving. This verse reminds us that positive change can come from sacrifice and selfless gestures. This year, we are called to sow seeds of justice and dignity to support the rights of small farmers of the Global South, helping to create an environment in which they can thrive and ensure bountiful harvests for their communities.

We are also invited to reflect on how we respond to God's calls in our daily lives. Solidarity is an invitation to act on behalf of those most in need, to give of our time, our resources and our love. This can be done through everyday gestures, small acts that can help weave the threads of a more caring and supportive community. Cultivating solidarity means helping build a community where everyone's rights are respected, guaranteed and protected. It is an act of recognition of the fundamental dignity of every human being, reflecting our collective responsibility towards social justice.

In a world where challenges sometimes seem insurmountable, and which is marked by division and individualism, solidarity shines like a beacon of hope that can guide us through our lives. It is vital that our commitment goes beyond mere words and takes the form of meaningful actions in our daily lives. Let every gesture of compassion, however modest, be a vibrant testimony to our love for our neighbour and our deep desire to build a better world for us all.

By donating to Development and Peace — Caritas Canada, we can give concrete expression to our commitment by actively participating in building a more just and loving world. It is through such actions that we can truly embody the words of the Gospel and respond to God's call to act on behalf of the most vulnerable. Solidarity leads us along the path of humanity, reminding us that our true strength lies in our ability to support one another. We are all united by divine creation. Our every act of charity and kindness helps build the Kingdom of God on Earth.

This Solidarity Sunday, we are invited to sow seeds of compassion and solidarity to support vulnerable communities around the world. Like the grain of wheat that produces an abundant harvest, our commitment to Development and Peace can transform lives and foster the flourishing of the communities we support. During this Lenten season, I hope that the solidarity that creates hope will continue shining in your hearts and radiating in your lives, lighting the way to a future of compassion, solidarity and fraternity.