

Lent 3 - Monday

50th Anniversary of Development and Peace

Holy Rosary Cathedral

29 February 2016

Dear brother priests and deacons, and dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Gospel

When today's Gospel opens, Jesus has just read aloud from the Prophet Isaiah in the synagogue of his hometown, Nazareth, that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him and that he had been anointed to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom to the enslaved, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim a year of God's favour (cf. Lk 4:18-19). But, although amazed at Jesus' teaching, the people opposed him. He was too ordinary. They thought they knew all about him and therefore wanted to block his message. They treated his message with contempt, because in their imagination –as in ours! – salvation should come from something great, something majestic; only the powerful, those who have strength or money or power, can save us. They failed to understand that “salvation only comes from the small things, the simplicity of the things of God.”¹ From the simplicity of the Incarnation.

Jesus was aware of his fate. It was no different from that of the prophets who came before him (cf. Lk 4:24). And the crowd, furious, reacted by wanting to kill him. His very presence implied a claim, and they intuited that recognizing the authority of his claim would require of them a profound change of mind and heart.

But they did not want to change. And so, in fury, they sought to cast Jesus out of their world. Out of mind and out of sight.

¹ Francis, Morning Meditation (29 February 2016).

This situation described in Scripture does not just belong to the past. It is often our reaction today to the Church's prophetic voice. We often resent the pressure of truth bearing in upon us: about the sanctity of life from conception to its natural end, so attacked at this very moment in our country today, about our call to be in solidarity with all peoples of the world, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religion.

Development and Peace

Tonight in our magnificent Cathedral we are marking the beginning of the 50th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Canadian Catholic Organization of Development and Peace, more familiarly called D&P, and best known for its sponsorship of our Archdiocesan annual Share Lent appeal and assistance provided in emergency situations around the world caused by natural and man-made disasters, such as the recent earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal, typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines and the migrant crisis in the Middle East.

Development and Peace was established in 1967 by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*, which placed international solidarity at the centre of its message and declared that "Development is the new word for Peace." Hence the name of the organization.

The philosophy or the mission of D &P is grounded in Catholic social teaching, especially as developed by Popes Blessed Paul VI, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and now Francis. The dignity and worth of every human person, as created in God's image and redeemed by the Blood of Christ, is at its centre. The Gospel, with particular attention given to the preferential option for the poor, inspires not just *what* it does but *how* D&P does it.

Development and Peace is part of a vast network of similar organizations throughout the world and is, in fact, the Canadian member of *Caritas Internationalis*, which, at the level of the universal Church, promotes communication, coordination and cooperation among the Church's numerous charitable agencies in the various countries. *Caritas* carries out the Church's mission of making manifest, through practical charity and works of justice, that love which is God himself and which he demands that we foster.

“In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.”²

Not only Catholics but Canadians of all religious beliefs, as well as those with no faith, have the responsibility of helping the world's poor and disadvantaged, those whom Pope Francis so often repeats are “on the periphery” or margins, either by urging governments, corporations and others to implement change, or by donating time or money to support development efforts.

How does D&P carry out its mission? It works with partners in the Global South and in the developed world which promote alternatives to unjust social, political and economic structures, and it educates Canadians about the causes of poverty and mobilizes them towards actions for change.

For nearly 50 years, Development and Peace has supported more than 15,000 local initiatives in areas such as agriculture, education, community action as well as the consolidation of peace and advocacy for human rights in 70 countries. I

² Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 158.

myself was privileged to see D&P in action during a visit to the Philippines in the summer of 2014. It was amazing to see and experience first-hand how effective its initiatives were, especially in collaborating with *Caritas* in the Philippines. At the heart of the initiatives was the idea of community development, of people sharing in developing and shaping their own future so that they can take control of their destiny.

Just last Friday the Holy Father reminded participants in a conference that charity and justice need to be reflected more and more in the life of the Church. “The mission that our charitable organizations carry out is important,” – he said – “because they provide so many poor people with a more dignified and human life, which is needed more than ever. But this mission is of utmost importance because, not with words, but with *concrete* love it can make every person feel loved by the Father, loved as his son or daughter and destined for eternal life with him. I would like to thank all those who daily are committing themselves to this mission which challenges every Christian. In this Jubilee Year, my intention has been to emphasize that we can all experience the grace of the Jubilee by putting into practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.”³

Conclusion

As Catholics in Vancouver we celebrate with joy the gift that Development and Peace has been to the Church and society in Canada by helping us to exercise our responsibility, our solidarity, and our dignity as followers of Jesus and as citizens of this world.

³ Francis, Address to Participants in the International Congress Marking the 10th Anniversary of the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (26 February 2016).

During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, every one of us is asked to contribute towards a solution which can only be the result of a joint effort.⁴ And the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, now beginning its fiftieth year, has been – and we pray always will be – an instrument that helps us to live the Lord’s command that we love one another – practically and concretely – just as he loved us by his sacrificial Death on the Cross: the saving mystery which we celebrate in this our Eucharist of Thanksgiving for Development and Peace.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

⁴ Francis, Address to Participants in the Meeting Sponsored by the “Foundation for Sustainable Development” on “Environmental Justice and Climate Change” (11 September 2015).