



## From A Bishop's Journal (722)

### Fortieth Anniversary of Development and Peace

**T**he Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace is a truly prophetic movement which the Lord raised up in our country through the agency of the bishops in the wake of Pope Paul VI's 1967 prophetic text on the development of peoples; the organisation reminds us that we must pay attention to the poorest of our brothers and sisters.

#### Our Lords and Masters

Throughout the history of humankind, the Lord has sent prophets, pastors, and conscience raisers to remind us that we are all brothers and sisters and that we must care for the poor. Saint Vincent de Paul, who lived in seventeenth-century France, looked on the poor as his lords and masters: "Let us go," he wrote, "and serve the poor with renewed love, and let us seek out the abandoned. Let us confess before God that they are our masters and that we are unworthy of offering them our small services." For 40 years, now, Development and Peace dedicates the money it receives from its generous benefactors to give to the disenfranchised of the Third World the means of moving away from their misery thanks to the partnerships developed with competence and in solidarity with the people of the Southern Hemisphere. As the federal government doubles the amount given by the population for Third World relief, millions of dollars are thus shared with the poor of the earth. The Diocese of Edmundston has raised at least over two million dollars in the past 40 years: these are bonds that have been created with those whom Vincent de Paul called his lords and whom we call our partners.

#### Do Works of Justice

Saint Basil the Great, who lived in the fourth century, did not mince words when he addressed himself to the poor: "The bread you are hoarding belongs to the hungry, so do works of justice and peace; the money you put away belongs to those who live in misery, and the goods you waste belong to the unprovided for; the cloak you hide away belongs to the naked man: do a deed of justice; give freedom to the oppressed, and speech to the voiceless. Do works of justice." For this gospel of justice and charity, Saint Paul was willing to go to the ends of the earth to proclaim it to every generation. "If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries, if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." We

are very often wrong to equate justice and charity. Christ owed no debt to the humankind, but he gave up body and soul to free us, give us life, give life to our brothers and sisters, and life to the full. He gave up his body and poured out his blood for us.

### **Moncton, September 13, 1984**

When Pope John Paul II came to Moncton, his whole homily was a call to social justice, and he offered us a great model, Saint John Chrysostom, a martyr of pastoral courage who died in his second exile, at the beginning of the fifth century... When I visited Rome in 1999, while we were sharing together about Moncton and Edmundston, I told the Pope that I had very much appreciated the homily on social justice that he delivered in Moncton. He turned to me and replied, to my great surprise: "It was September 13, 1984, on the feast of St. John Chrysostom!" Fifteen years had elapsed, and he still remembered! John Paul II recalled how Saint John Chrysostom did not mince his words, either; he would say: "You want to honour the body of Christ? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it with silk here in church, while you leave it suffering from the cold and from lack of clothing, outside the church. God has no need for gold chalices, but of souls of gold. Start by feeding the famished, and then decorate the altar with what is left."

### **A Work Schedule for Human Rights**

In Moncton, Pope John Paul said: "It is evident that if it is well understood, faith brings about all the commitments to charity that can be imagined today: respect of persons, of their freedom and dignity, so that they are not crushed beneath new social constraints, respect of human rights, according to the well-known charters, the right to life from conception, right to one's reputation, right to development and to freedom of conscience, refusal of violence and torture, concern for all the underprivileged, the women, workers, unemployed, and immigrants, and the establishment of social measures for greater equality and justice. For every man and woman, beyond individual interests or privileges, working towards simplicity of life and sharing, in contrast to the race for profits, consumerism, artificial satisfaction, in a way that we ourselves not forget what is basic, and to allow the poor, whoever they may be, to lead a life of dignity; a more universal openness to the basic needs of the poor countries, especially those we call the Southern Hemisphere, regions where every day thousands of humans die, for lack of basic needs. To this end, a concern for finding effective solutions for a more equitable sharing of worldly goods and opportunities." This is what Pope John Paul II stated, in Moncton, in 1984. We could say that he drew up a work schedule not only for the members of Development and Peace but for all our communities, a plan of justice and charity.

### **Prophetic Gestures**

Whenever you sign a Development and Peace postcard to support the call of good drinking water for everyone, when you sign a petition for mining companies respect the dignity of the peasants and miners, when you take part in Sharing Meals, when you collect pop cans and soda bottles for Development and Peace, or stamps, or when you make a quilt for the profit of the organisation, you perform a work of justice and peace. You continue the tradition of the great prophets who moulded

our history with the help of very small gestures, but with intense charity and justice. So, you deserve to be called peacemakers, sons and daughters of God.

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