



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

February 28, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we begin the holy season of Lent and consider how we shall respond to the Gospel's call to renewal, I am pleased to write to you about **Development and Peace**. This agency of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops helps the poor of Africa, Asia and Latin America in two principal ways - **by raising money through Share Lent** for community projects in the Global South and **by doing educational work** on global issues here at home. As part of Caritas International and with other partners, Development and Peace also plays a key role in providing **emergency relief** after disasters such as the 2004 tsunami in South East Asia.

The theme of this year's Share Lent campaign is once more **"I believe: I give"**. For the last few months, the worldwide economic crisis has been front and centre in the media on a daily basis. While this crisis affects us all, the poor in countries of the South are the hardest hit. For them, this crisis means job loss, salary reduction and the deterioration of living conditions. The gap between rich and poor nations grows even more huge and harmful, and the number of people living on less than \$1.25 per day has increased sharply by nearly 100 million. Today, two billion poor people in Asia, Africa and Latin America – a full one third of humanity - do not have the health programmes, the educational opportunities, the housing or the clean water to which they are entitled as God's people.

Through its work, Development and Peace is an agent of hope for the suffering. For example in **Sierra Leone, West Africa**, an organization called the **Network Movement for Justice and Development** has worked with local groups and churches in 90 communities to carry out development projects in parts of the country that were devastated by civil war and by the diamond mining and smuggling that fuelled a war. This partner of Development and Peace also works to involve more women, young people and other marginalized groups in local decision-making. When we support Development and Peace through our donations on Solidarity Sunday (the fifth Sunday in Lent), we support hundreds of partner groups like the **Network Movement for Justice and Development** who work tirelessly to improve the lives of the poorest of the poor. The need is enormous, but be assured that **your gift will make a difference**, sometimes the difference between life and death.

In the past the people of this Archdiocese have responded very generously to appeals for solidarity and for financial support for the poor of Africa, Asian and Latin America. Our belief in justice and international solidarity leads us **to pray, to act and to give**. I urge you to pay close attention to the messages from Development and Peace that will be presented during Lent, and please give as generously as you can when the Share Lent collection is taken up in your parish.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton