

Some Reflections on Our Call to Solidarity . . .



When you consider solidarity, consider the God who is eternal love becoming one of us—one with us. When you think of solidarity, think of Jesus the Nazarene, who took on the sufferings of all humanity—even to death on a cross. When you pray for solidarity, pray for the grace to give yourself freely for the sake of the other—pray for the grace to embrace the common good.

“[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” (John Paul II, [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis](#), [Italian](#), [Polish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#) n. 38)

The virtue of solidarity is self-evident in the life and message of Jesus Christ:

. . . who is one with humanity even to the point of ‘death on a cross’ (Phil 2:8). In him it is always possible to recognize the living sign of that measureless and transcendent love of *God-with-us*, who takes on the infirmities of his people, walks with them, saves them and makes them one. In him and thanks to him, life in society too, despite all its contradictions and ambiguities, can be rediscovered as a place of life and hope, in that it is a sign of grace that is continuously offered to all and because it is an invitation to ever higher and more involved forms of sharing. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#), [Italian](#), [Polish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#), n. 196)

Solidarity in Crisis and in Hope by S. Roxanne Schares

Peoples and nations throughout the world have followed closely the events in Kenya during the last few months: the post-election conflict and violence and the movement to a peace agreement between the leaders. The crisis caused untold suffering to thousands of people, the death of 1,500 and the wounding of many more, the displacement of 600,000, and the shattering of countless lives and livelihoods. Everyone in Kenya has been affected in some way.



School Sisters of Notre Dame around the world were also deeply affected. Within the country, sisters were concerned for the well-being of families, friends, and colleagues as well as for their own. They reached out in support to those around them. Communities shared food and basic supplies with neighbors. Sisters visited the wounded and displaced; some helped with food distribution in makeshift camps and church centers. They offered spiritual and psychological support to many. Their witness of courage and love inspired others to respond.

Within the congregation, sisters prayed and fasted for peace and sent messages of support to those in Kenya facing the violence. [The JPIC Commission of the Unions of Superiors General](#) in Rome sent a letter to the Kenyan Church leaders, the conferences of bishops and women and men religious, expressing support of their efforts to call for an end to violence and to encourage the following of the channel of dialogue in pursuit of truth and justice.

Groups within Kenya as well as international bodies, including the [Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network](#) and the [Africa Faith Justice Network](#), of which SSND is a member, collaborated in advocacy efforts. Petitions to which SSNDs and many others around the world responded were circulated through the *Shalom* network.

Although much was done to express solidarity, questions linger in the hearts and minds of many about what else could have been done. As the leaders and people of Kenya continue the work of re-establishing peace, setting up a power-sharing government and a truth and reconciliation commission, addressing humanitarian issues and beginning the healing process, we continue to ask, What more might be required of us in living solidarity?

Full Employment and Decent Work for All by S. Ann Scholz

Despite continued record economic growth in many parts of the world:

- Half the world's workers earn less than US \$2.00 a day.
- 200 million children under age 15 work instead of going to school.
- 12.3 million women and men work in slavery.
- 2.2 million people die because of work-related accidents or diseases every year.



Clearly something is desperately wrong when global policies and practices permit a few to amass staggering wealth while forcing many to live in abject poverty.

Catholic Social Teaching has urged the faithful to defend the lives and dignity of the most vulnerable workers. (Pope Paul VI, [Populorum Progressio](#), [German](#), [Italian](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#))

According to the Most Rev. Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D., *A Time to Remember: A Time to Recommit*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Labor Day 2007 Message (Sept 3, 2007):

... For more than a century, the Church has insisted that 'human work is a key . . . to the whole social question (Pope John Paul II, [Laborem Exercens](#), [Italian](#), [Polish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#)) and our tradition has defended the right of workers to join together to secure decent work, wages, and a voice in economic life. ... This message of solidarity and the pursuit of the global common good builds on the tradition begun by Pope Leo XIII in [Rerum Novarum](#), [Italian](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#), in 1891 ...

and continues to challenge our 21st Century reality.

It was fitting, then, that Catholic NGOs played a leading role in the recently completed meeting of the [UN Commission for Social Development](#). The 46th session of the Commission focused on the formulation of policy for "[Promoting Full Employment & Decent Work for All.](#)"

Together with their brothers and sisters from trade unions, youth from around the world, and people of good will of every faith tradition, NGOs challenged the Commission to strengthen the social dimensions of the global economy and address the systemic issues that constrain attempts to achieve decent work for all.

As with most meetings of [ECOSOC](#) Commissions, the outcome was mixed.

The final resolution does address many of the concerns raised by NGOs, including the right of those working in the informal sector to social protection; the need to promote gender equality; the importance of social dialogue at the workplace; and the right of all migrants, regardless of their immigration status, to enjoy the full protection of all human rights.

However, many wish the Commission had called for the participation of persons living in extreme poverty in policy discussions that affect them; had addressed more fully the widespread situation of youth unemployment and underemployment; had considered the impact of climate change on job loss and the creation of alternative “green” employment; and had taken seriously the call for broad consultative frameworks for dialogue with all stakeholders – including representatives of civil society.

European *Shalom* Clubs by S. Margrit Hopfler



Europe has two new *Shalom* Clubs, one in Munich and one in Westphalia. Both were started after a student and a teacher from each school participated in the [UN's 51st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#) in February 2007.

The “*Shalom*-Club am [TGGaA](#)” (Munich) and the “*PAX-an Shalom*-Arbeitskreis am [Gymnasium Brede](#), (Brakel) were founded at the end of the 2006-07 school year and started operating in September 2007. Both clubs enjoyed the visit of the International *Shalom* Coordinator in November 2007. Then S. Roxanne Schares had discussions with club members about world issues. In a welcome ritual for the new clubs, she presented the group with a candle and each member with a medal of Mother Theresa and a white ribbon with the words “End Poverty Now!”

Whereas the Munich Club supports schools in Ghana and plans to support local and international institutions, the Club in Westphalia collects money for an SSND kindergarten in Romania and becomes involved in various efforts to promote the [Millennium Development Goals](#) and human rights, such as stopping girls from becoming child soldiers.



Today a big part of the world is covered by European *Shalom* Clubs: the *Shalom* Club in [Amberg](#), Bavaria supports the education of women in Honduras, El Salvador and in Afghanistan, and assists with projects of local and church charities as needed. The Magnificat Rehabilitation and Volunteer Center “*Shalom*” in [Nowy Sacz](#), Poland is very much involved in helping other youth in their town. At the same time they are committed to spreading the idea of mutual respect and tolerance as well as to sharing the richness of cultures and traditions in 34 countries that are on the geographical crossing (cities with the same latitude or longitude) with Nowy Sacz.

SSND Delegates Advocate for Girls by Julie Gilberto-Brady, Communications Coordinator, NAMA



Students from Mount Mary College in Milwaukee joined the SSND delegation to the 52nd session of the [UN Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW) February 25 to March 7, 2008. They worked along side other SSND delegates to ensure that the Commission adequately addressed the needs and concerns of the most vulnerable women and girls as member-states considered this year’s priority theme, “financing for gender equality and empowerment of women.”

The delegates’ agenda included roundtable discussions focused on lessons learned and good practices; interactive expert panels to identify key policy initiatives, and parallel events organized by member states and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to address important issues.

Members of the SSND delegation joined other NGO representatives in drawing attention to girls. Unfortunately, the girl child is too often undervalued by her community, shortchanged by her government, and neglected by the Commission.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame joined other NGOs in supporting a written statement that was presented to the CSW. The statement included recommendations that governments institute effective measurements of previously set goals related to the girl child, develop comprehensive education strategies that will allocate dependable funding for universal education, and create gender responsive budgeting processes that explicitly allocate monies for programs addressing girls' needs, as well as ending human trafficking and eliminating violence against the girl child.

A full account of SSND Delegation's activities at the 2008 meeting of the CSW is available at on the [SSND NAMA Website](#).

Opportunities to Act

Education for All Week—April 21-27 2008



[Education for All](#) is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth, and adults first made at the [World Conference](#) on Education for All in 1990. It met again in [Dakar](#), Senegal and affirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All by the year 2015. They identified six key education goals that aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

[Global Action Week](#) is a world wide campaign to raise awareness of the importance of Education for All. You can download planning materials in *English*, *Portuguese*, and *Spanish*. Teach this year's "[World's Biggest Lesson](#)" on April 23. Lesson plans are available in *English* and *Spanish*.

Walk the World—June 1, 2008

It is not too soon to start planning. The fourth annual Walk the World will take place on Sunday, June 1, 2008. Details will be available soon at <http://www.fighthunger.org/>.



World Environment Day—June 5, 2008

[World Environment Day](#), commemorated each year on June 5, is a time to seriously examine the state of the environment and to consider the actions each of us and each of our communities and countries must take to preserve all of life on Earth. The choice of the theme for 2008, *Kick the Habit! Towards a Low Carbon Economy*, reflects the sense that climate change is one of the most serious moral and defining issues of our times.



The challenges posed by the degradation of the environment can provide an opportunity to build a more peaceful, just, and sustainable future for humankind and all creation if we act now. [Plan ways](#) to mark this international day, ways that will lead to the change we desire.