



International Solidarity Reflection

Eradication of Poverty

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Introduction

To international organizations poverty is the condition for 20% of the world's population, who have an income equivalent to \$400 a year. Poverty is misery for those one billion people living on less than "one dollar a day". The eradication of poverty begins with the eradication of misery. Poverty and misery are not just chronic historical facts, but a fact that today oppresses more than ever before in history. The conditions of poverty and misery in the world and the concentration of wealth and the proliferation of millionaires are undoubtedly one of the greatest concerns in our world today. It is the most tragic "sign of the times", which contradicts the plan of God and human dignity.

Call to Prayer

"Called to solidarity" among ourselves and "with all of Creation," we "risk all that we are and all that we have" to reduce the material and spiritual poverty in the world, in peoples, in families. We are prepared to give "our lives to be bread blessed, broken and shared for the life of the world." (from the *Call to Solidarity*)

Experience

The [International Monetary Fund](#) said that due to the global economic crisis, the existing poverty could extend this year to nearly 90 million more people. The Indian subcontinent and sub-Saharan Africa today are the poorest regions of the world.

Millennium Development Goal #1 is to reduce poverty by 50% by 2015. But the goal is endangered because of the global crisis. It is also believed that malnutrition will increase as a result of the crisis, affecting more than one billion inhabitants of the world. To combat this, it is essential that governments invest primarily in agriculture to give a boost to this sector. The developing countries are those most affected by the crisis. Because exports and domestic demand will fall the recovery will be slow, making the fight against poverty more difficult.

Poverty currently affects a very high percentage of people in several countries developed or underdeveloped, whether they are called developed or underdeveloped. Since the 1990s poverty decreased among certain segments of the Asian continent on an average of 5% and in Latin America by 3%, while in other countries it has remained the same. Malnutrition is also a part of poverty. In this case those who suffer most are children, who are under 5 years of age and underweight. In Africa in the last 10 years this problem has increased by 3%; in Asia it decreased by 7%; and in Latin America it decreased by 5%.

Currently there are at least 900 million people around the world living in extreme poverty

Reflection

Reading 1: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink."
(Mt. 25:35)

A fifth aspect of the struggle against material poverty refers to the current food crisis, which threatens the satisfaction of basic needs. This crisis is characterized not so much by the lack of food, but by difficulties in obtaining it and by speculative phenomena ... Malnutrition can also cause severe psychophysical damage to the population, depriving people of the energy needed to escape from their state of poverty without special assistance. *(Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace, 2009)*

Reading 2: "Blessed are the poor, because the Kingdom of God is theirs." *(Luke 6:20)*

A third aspect, to which the programs to combat poverty have to be attentive and which shows its intrinsic moral dimension, is the poverty of children. When poverty strikes a family, children are the most vulnerable: nearly half of those living in absolute poverty are children. *(Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace, 2009)*

Reading 3: "All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common ... and distributed the money among them, according to the needs of each one" *(Acts 2: 44)*

The battle against poverty needs men and women who live in profound fraternity and are able to accompany individuals, families and communities in the path of authentic human development. ...Among these principles it is important to remember the 'preferential love for the poor' in light of the primacy of charity, witnessed by the entire Christian tradition, beginning with the early church. *(Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace, 2009)*

Action

During this month of October in which we are called to pray and to act to "eradicate poverty":

- **Let** Christ's words resound in our hearts: "Give them to eat." *(Luke 9.13)*
- **Look around** and become aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters.
- **Inform** and interest ourselves in the current reality of poverty in our country and world.
- **Support** creative solidarity initiatives, not only to distribute the superfluous, but especially to change life styles, patterns of production and consumption, and consolidated power structures that govern society today.

Closing Prayer

"Stay with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent. (Lk. 24:29)

Stay with us, Lord; keep us company, even though we have not always recognized you. Stay with us, because all around us the shadows are deepening, and you are the Light; discouragement is eating its way into our hearts: make them burn with the certainty of Easter. We are tired of the journey, but you comfort us in the breaking of bread, so that we are able to proclaim to our brothers and sisters that you have truly risen and have entrusted us with the mission of being witnesses of your resurrection.

Stay with us, Lord, when mists of doubt, weariness, or difficulty rise up around our Catholic faith; you are Truth itself, you are the one who reveals the Father to us: enlighten our minds with your word, and help us to experience the beauty of believing in you.

Remain in our families, enlighten them in their doubts, sustain them in their difficulties, and console them in their sufferings and in their daily labors, when around them shadows build up which threaten their unity and their natural identity. You are Life itself: remain in our homes, so that they may continue to be nests where human life is generously born, where life is welcomed, loved and respected from conception to natural death." *(Pope Benedict XVI, Inaugural Address Aparecida, 2007, part 6. Stay With Us)*