



International Solidarity Reflection

Solidarity

Shalom

School Sisters of Notre Dame

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Introduction

The Gospel and the documents of the Church and of our congregation call us to live in solidarity with the needy, but what is solidarity? The late Cardinal Archbishop of Santiago, Chile, Msgr. Raúl Silva Henríquez, defined it: “Solidarity is love today, which frees the poor, the persecuted, the sick, the sinner, everyone, especially those who suffer or are oppressed, from their needs.”

Call to Prayer

United in love with our needy sisters and brothers throughout the world, may we respond generously, offering our resources, time, talents, and prayers on their behalf. May we truly be “bread blessed, broken and shared for the life of the world.”

Experience

For years Myriam and Gabriel were making improvements on their small wooden house in a lower class neighborhood. One night a fire broke out. Gabriel, Myriam, and the young daughter who lived with them escaped with their lives but lost everything else. The community reacted quickly to help this family. The parish lent them a house which they could occupy, and neighbors, who had little themselves, donated furniture, clothing, and food. An extra bed arrived, which could have been sold to supply some other necessity, but Myriam and Gabriel gave it to a neighbor who had none.

Before last Christmas one of the catechists asked his two oldest sons to organize a presentation of the Christmas story with the children of the neighborhood. The two young fellows asked their friends for help, motivated the children, and organized a wonderful presentation. From this experience grew the idea of organizing a summer program for the children of this area, who would not have the possibility of other vacation activities. Nineteen young people met each morning to plan activities and in the afternoon they greeted the sixty children, ages 4 to 13, who participated in the month-long program. To buy the necessary supplies and snacks for the group, the young people went from door to door asking for donations from the people in this lower class neighborhood to finance the project. The program was repeated during the two-week winter vacation this year, with the participation of forty-five children. The young people now meet every Saturday evening for prayer and to plan this summer’s program.

Reflection

“We Christians, as disciples - missionaries, are called to contemplate in the suffering faces of our brothers and sisters, the face of Christ who calls us to serve him in them... From our faith in Christ also springs solidarity as a permanent act of encounter, brotherhood and service, which must be manifested in visible options and gestures, principally in defense of the life and rights of the most vulnerable and excluded, and in the permanent accompaniment of them in their struggles to be agents of change and transformation of their situation... The Holy

Father has reminded us that the Church is called to be the ‘lawyer of justice and defender of the poor’ before ‘intolerable social and economic inequalities which cry to heaven’.”
(Document of the V Latin American Episcopal Conference, Nos. 393-395 Aparecida, Brazil, 2007)

“Nourishing ourselves with Jesus we will have the strength to assume the task of being witnesses of his life in the midst of our people. If Jesus makes himself food, we also are called to be food for others. Each time that we ask: ‘What would Christ do in my place?’ we have the possibility of assuming Jesus’ project and of living as Jesus did: opting for the impoverished and acting in solidarity with them. We are food for others when we offer ourselves in solidarity so that all may have a better quality of life. To know Jesus and to make our own his project of liberation of the oppressed is to become like him ‘bread for the life of the world’, ‘life offered in favor of others’, because *‘there is no greater love than to give your life for your friends’*. Each time that I offer myself in solidarity, I make myself with Jesus bread for the life of the world.” (Solidarity Month, Chile, August 2009)

Action

- Share your time and be with others – simply be with those who are suffering or sorrowing and listen to them.
- Share your material resources.
- Care for the environment – air, trees, water. Planet Earth is everyone’s home.
- Practice solidarity in daily life: talk to the neighbor; avoid the repetition of rumors, offer to help; give the seat to someone who needs it; dispose of rubbish in the proper containers; greet the people whom you meet; give thanks; treat each person in a friendly manner.
- Teach children to share their toys. Give them good examples of solidarity.
- Become a volunteer.
- Inform yourself on what happens in the world, country, and neighborhood and collaborate with solidarity initiatives.

Closing Prayer

In your welcoming silence you invite us to be your word translated into thousands of languages, adapted to every situation. You want to express yourself, Lord, on our lips, in the whisper to the terminally ill, in the cry that shakes injustice, in the loving question to the woman in the neighborhood with the sick child, in the syllable that leads a child to literacy.

In your respect for our history, you invite us to be your hands to produce rice, wash the family clothes, save life through surgery... In your apparent paralysis, you send us to walk. We are your feet and you lead us to the most marginalized lives; soft footsteps so as not to wake the children who sleep in their innocence, strong steps to go down to the mine or to arrive in a hurry carrying a perfumed letter. You ask us to be your ears, so that your listening has a face, attention and emotion, so that it does not dilute in the air the complaints against your absence, the confessions of the repentant past, the doubt that paralyzes life and the love which shares their joy.

Thank you Lord, because you need us. How would you announce your proposal without someone who listens in silence? How would you look tenderly without a heart that feels your look? How would you cry out in defense of life without someone who understands your outrage at so much death and is willing to lend his voice? Thank you, Lord, because you need us. (Marcelo Marúa)