

“People of Faith Engaged to Transform the World”

By: Dr. Jude Marie Banatte

It is an honor and a real privilege for me to be with you today in such an event: a full day Conference to engage in the work of justice based upon our responsibility as people of faith

Working for justice is part of everyone’s engagement to transform today’s world.

I will take the opportunity to congratulate the organizers of the event and to thank them for selecting a voice from Haiti to talk about this very important topic, more specifically in the context of Haiti.

Most of you might be thinking about how we, as people of faith, can work for justice.

We will agree with the gospel that says;

- “Faith without works is dead”. (James 2:14-26)
- For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. (Matthew 25:35)

I am sure each of you here has personal experience of translating your faith into action

I. Actions on Behalf of Faith:

Two examples:

1 great example of the translation of faith into action is the solidarity between parishes through the parish twinning program.

It is estimated that there are more than 400 partnerships established between the church here and the church in Haiti. It is probably the case for other sister countries where the church in the U.S. and the people of God here live their faith in solidarity with less wealthy churches and less wealthy.

There is no doubt these partnerships contribute largely to improve living conditions of other brother and sisters in Christ living in challenging settings with low if not no access to basic social services. Moreover, it offers opportunities to achieve tangible impact in a short period of time. However, it faces significant limitation in term of allowing the people to fulfill their human’s potential.

- 230,000 killed
- 300,000 injured
- 1,000,000 homeless
- 2,300,000 IDPs
- 7,8 billion loss

Another very striking example of actions taken on behalf of faith has been the outpouring generosity in the EQ response in Haiti.

- Amount of rubble: a train, almost 2,000 mile long (from California to Indiana)
- Imagine the time it took to clear the 9/11 site. 10 years to inaugurate

The humanitarian relief effort in Haiti to respond to the huge suffering of the Haitian people in this tragedy was fabulous. It has even been considered as the U.S. largest humanitarian response ever; and so, from many perspectives: the government, the church, and most importantly acting in solidarity and on behalf of faith.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your prayers, generosity, and direct engagement on the ground for some of you.

Thank you for your support and contributions, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as the leading arms of the U.S. church, in partnership with the church in Haiti has been able to:

- Implement community resettlement program to help 10,000-plus families resettle in their neighborhood of origin in Port-au-Prince.
- Build 10,600 transitional shelters in PAP
- Provide 10,000,000 meals to more than 1,000,000 people both in Port-au-Prince and in the communities where the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have migrated in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.
- Help workers crush rubble to fill almost 1,800 dump trucks.
- Hire more than 12,000 people in temporary cash transfer activities.
- Registered more than 1,126 separated or unaccompanied children for family tracing and reunification services and have reunified 588 of them
- Provided vouchers to 8,062 farmers and their families to buy seeds
- Installed 1,320 latrines, wash stations, portable water tanks and inflatable water bladders in Port-au-Prince and the surrounding area.
- Supported 250 schools, orphanages and childcare centers.

This very same example calls our attention on underlying conditions before EQ as what have happened could have been less tragic.

- EQ in Chile one month later, 500 times more powerful → less devastation
- EQ in Japan last year 10,000 times more powerful → less devastation 1/10 death toll in Haiti (mostly due to Tsunami)

The root causes of the devastation in Haiti were related unjust structures that have existed way before the EQ. Everyone here knows that this country has been struggling since its independence at the beginning of the 19th century. (I will not talk about this) But, the way the country was structured and organized, were the major factors causing such a loss.

- Historical underdevelopment
 - Construction regulation
- Centralization
 - Access to services
 - Job opportunities
- Ignorance/Preparedness

These two examples call our attention on:

Need for sustainable development in developing country such as Haiti

It becomes more and more important to work hand in hand with Haitians and the Haitian church to help them rebuild the country better and stronger. It is not for tomorrow, but it is totally possible!

The Haitian Episcopal Conference in its message of September 2010 says: *“The church itself embodies God’s love and fulfills its mission by promoting the fullness of the human person who stands at the center of the new Haiti. More than food and shelter, chapels and schools, clinics and convents, we aim to build up every Haitian man and woman in his or her totality: physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. If our work does not involve the whole person and every person, it is not true development. This is then our goal: Integral Human Development”.*

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This message, from the Haitian Church, reminds us that the Development of the country goes through the developments of the Haitians.

Nothing new here!

At the same time, we also know that development of the individual depends greatly on the structures. The difference between Haitians here in the U.S. and Haitians at home is not in the individuals, it is in the structures that are different and that offer the individuals better chances to fulfill their potential.

Let's think about the day where every citizen of the developing countries will be able to provide for themselves, accomplishing the Will of God. Some of you here will say: he must be dreaming with open eyes.

Is that possible?

It is, however, there are the major challenges to sustainable development in underserved communities (Haiti)

Globalization seen from the perspective of that effort towards the unity of the great human family is commendable. Globalization enhances communication, increases solidarity between those fighting for democracy. In theory, it calls every person to be a citizen of the earth and projects the latter as a global village where everyone has his/her part of responsibility to protect it for example...

However, the globalized world brings some overarching challenges that impede the long term development and hinder process through which the poor in the world would fulfill their human potential. Among these challenges:

Poverty

Poverty is the state for the majority of the world's people and nations. Why is this?

It is enough to blame poor people for their own predicament? Have they been lazy, made poor decisions, and been solely responsible for their troubles? What about their governments? Have they pursued policies that actually harm successful development? Such causes of poverty and inequality are no doubt real.

But deeper and more global causes of poverty, this silent killer takes 1 child's life every 4 seconds, are often less discussed and scrutinized.

- Almost half of the world – over 3 billion people – live on less than \$2.50 a day.
- Only 1 out of 4 poor people in the world have access to piped water in their homes.
- In 2005, the wealthiest 20% of the world accounted for 76.6% of total private consumption. The poorest 20%, just 1.5%
- Less than 1% of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn't happen. Think about this.
- The differential in income between poor and rich is constantly widening.

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Hunger

Does the world produce enough food to feed everyone?

According to recent Food and Agriculture Organizations_(FAO) estimates, the world produces enough food to feed everyone. World agriculture produces 17% more calories per person today than it did 30 years ago, despite a 70% population increase. This is enough to provide everyone in the world with at least 2,720 kilocalories (kcal) per person per day. However, over 1 billion people go hungry while many of us throw away food...Just take a look at trash bins in the cafeterias.

This is certainly not the first time that you will hear that human being and the machine are in competition for the world harvests, as part of the cereal production is converted into fuel for machines.

Hunger in the world is more associated to the perpetuation of unjust structures that sustain inequitable distribution and access to resources. This poses the issue of social justice.

II. Social Justice

Social justice generally refers to the idea of creating a society that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being.

Women empowerment after participating in program.

Is this what we are living in today's world? I am not quite sure

Pope Paul IV says; “If you want peace, work for justice”

Martin Luther King Jr: “True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice”.

The constitution of the International Labour Organization affirms that “Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice”.

The question today is:

How can the church contribute to the solution of urgent social and political problems and meet the challenge of poverty and misery? The problems are various and complex and cannot be addressed with global programs.

In this context, it is inevitable to mention the problem of structures, especially those that create/perpetuate injustice.

Just structures are a condition without which, a just order is not possible in society.

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The church, our church, continues to address these issues through clinics, schools, and ministries around the world. It also engages directly in denouncing injustice in human rights and advocating for more just structures.

I am sure many of you here are already participating in this mission in a way or another

Today it is important to think about how you can and how you will deepen your commitment this mission?

Transforming the world = Transforming the unjust structures.

Transforming unjust structures = Working for justice!

The scriptures say: “For the tree is known by its fruits” (Matthew 12:33)

These global issues call us on bigger fronts than just charity. Charity does a lot of good and alleviates a lot of suffering. However, global issues call us on the front of advocacy to change the unjust structures that perpetuate misery hunger, poverty, in sum the suffering of the people of God. (Invite people to reflect on the path of Nelson Mandela in his combat against apartheid)

Today, the Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry of the Archdiocese of Hartford offers us another opportunity to be educated, empowered and skilled to work for justice, based upon our responsibility of people of faith.

As disciples of Jesus-Christ, we are called to be “the light of the world”, our faith calls us to be the change in this world.

Thank you