



**Reminder to support the 2013 Share Lent Collection
of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace,
by the Most Reverend Richard Smith, President,
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops**

My dear sisters and brothers,

This coming Sunday, 17 March, with the approval and support of the Bishops of Canada, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) is undertaking the Share Lent Collection. The 2013 theme for this annual project involving our dioceses and parishes is “Human Dignity: More than Ever”.

Dignity is a frequent theme in the teaching of our Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides more than 50 references to dignity, including the dignity of the human body, of the family, and of the people of God. Human dignity comes from our being created and redeemed in the image of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* gives more than 130 references to human dignity. A central concern in modern Catholic teaching, it has been discussed frequently and consistently by the Popes for more than a century. The 1891 Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII focused on those conditions of capital and labour which are “repugnant” to our “dignity as human beings” (n. 36).

Our former Pope, Benedict XVI, referred to human dignity some 15 times in his last Encyclical from 2009, *Caritas in Veritate*. It is the “transcendent dignity of men and women” (n. 29), Benedict said, that together with justice and peace must link “life ethics and social ethics” (n. 15). It is because of the “dignity of the individual and the demands of justice”, he explained, we need to give priority to providing “access to steady employment for everyone”, and avoid “disparities in wealth” that are “excessive and morally unacceptable” (n. 32).

As I noted in my earlier message supporting the 2013 Share Lent Collection: “Belief in human dignity has been the driving force of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace for the past 45 years. It is not economic progress but the human person, made in the image of God, who is at the heart of its mission. This gives a special quality to the work of Development and Peace, which would not be possible without your generous support of the Share Lent campaign” (<http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/statements-a-letters/3538-human-dignity-more-than-ever>).

The Bishops of Canada encourage all Catholics in our country to support the mission of CCODP, which is also our national agency for *Caritas Internationalis*. We have established a Standing Committee of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops which works closely with CCODP, encouraging and assisting it in its ongoing renewal and revitalization. With the members and

staff of Development and Peace, we continue to search for ways so that CCODP can be even more effective in “helping people to appreciate the importance of sharing, respect and love in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ”, while also accomplishing its “valuable educational function” within our Christian communities (Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter issued *motu proprio*, *On the Service of Charity*).

To repeat the words of our new Holy Father, Francis, on the day of his election as Pope, “we take up this journey: Bishop and People... journey of fraternity, of love, of trust among us. Let us always pray for one another. Let us pray for the whole world, that there may be a great spirit of fraternity.” It is the hope of the Bishops of Canada that each of you be part of this “journey of the Church”. Human development and dignity are an essential expression of the Gospel of Christ, and at the heart and centre of the mission of CCODP.

+ Richard Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton and
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops

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