



Staying Connected



a publication designed for alumni of Catholic full-time volunteer programs
brought to you by the St. Vincent Pallotti Center

Volume 12, Number 2

Spring 2010

Staying Connected to Global Solidarity

The call to solidarity influences each of us in different ways. Solidarity may bring some of us to a commitment to workers' rights, others to non-violent action, others to work to end abortion and some to environmental protection. Our commitment to service has brought us determination to live by our beliefs in Christ's message to the universal church.

This issue of *Staying Connected* will address solidarity in the global context. In these pages, you will find articles on how our lives touch global issues, including domestic politics and decisions on what products to buy. There are resources on global solidarity, a scriptural reflection on hope, and a list of ways to remain in solidarity with your volunteer program.

As Pope John Paul II reminded us, we are called to work for the common good. We find varying perspectives on the means to the common good. In these issues we share perspectives. Our intent is not to promote sides nor a political agenda. We write on global solidarity to have the knowledge and tools in order to address our call and work for 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
On Social Concern
1987

Hope in Times of Despair

Lord make me an instrument of your peace...

With the recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile- and in any time of global crisis- people become desperate to reach out to loved ones and those whom they see suffering. This desire to reach out to others is a holy desire and essential to Christianity. The despair and desperation to do so, however, are not. If our desires to help and serve become thoughts of hopelessness, it can become a natural downward spiral. The virtue to combat this temptation of despair is the gift of hope.

Hope is one of the three theological virtues St. Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13: “Faith, hope and love remain these three...” (1 Corinth. 13: 13). And while love may be the greatest among them, you cannot have love without hope. An important virtue for our modern age, often media moguls, advertisers, and big business want us to lose hope in ourselves and in others in order to boost sales and make us buy into their products. We should be aware that our concept of hope is constantly being pulled at, and not always for necessary or beneficial reasons.

In the peace prayer attributed to St. Francis, each imperfection or vice listed is matched with a virtue: “In despair, let me find hope.” If you find yourself despairing in times of global tragedy, say the Prayer of St. Francis and trust that calling upon God to give you the virtue of hope IS the best thing you can be doing for others and for the world.

Stepping outside of ourselves in times of despair can be hard, but it is a sure way to bring about hope. Reaching out to others to share your prayers, your thoughts, or perhaps your monetary donation IS a way to bring about hope, even if it does not feel like much. In fact, it is all God really asks of us.

The multiplication of the loaves in Scripture is a good example of this. In the Gospel, the apostles gather what little food they have: five loaves and two fish. Christ turns that little meal into something great, able to feed thousands. If we have trust and hope that our little gifts of prayer and sacrifice are enough, God can turn those gifts into what is needed.

Cardinal Van Thuan speaks about this hope in his book *Testimony of Hope* (Pauline Books and Media, 2000). Taken prisoner in Vietnam during the height of the Communist regime, Cardinal Van Thuan receives hope from the tiniest piece of bread that becomes Eucharist for himself and his fellow prisoners. He receives hope in the words of Scripture and conversations with prison guards. In the most desperate of circumstances, he does not lose hope because of the trust he has in God and his Church.

If you are currently despairing because of global crises or other circumstances, allow the words of Christ to comfort you: “It is I. Do not be afraid” (John 6:20). Do not be afraid to reach out to others and to Him in times of despair and trust that your small gifts and sufferings can be turned into great hope for all.

The Immigration Question



You probably are aware that the word catholic means universal. We belong to a worldwide Church. Despite differences of language and culture, Catholics who gather around the altar for Mass in Washington, D.C. or Chicago or Los Angeles are engaged in the same action as Catholics who gather in Nairobi or Manila or Buenos Aires. The Eucharist itself is an act of global solidarity!

As Catholics who are also citizens of the United States, we might ask ourselves how these feelings of solidarity with the world influence our views on controversial topics here at home. One area in which this question arises often is the Catholic view on illegal immigration. The bishops of the United States have encouraged us to welcome all immigrants to our land regardless of their legal status, recalling such stories from Scripture as Joseph's reception in Egypt and Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. The Bible is replete with stories of strangers in a strange land, and mistreatment of an alien is a recurring indictment against people who fall short of being worthy of God's kingdom. Individual pastors have taken pro-active stands to help undocumented immigrants, with church basements occasionally being converted into sanctuary shelters.

American Catholics are often divided in reacting to this issue. One camp takes its view from the legal perspective that undocumented immigrants are simply breaking the law and should be deported. They wonder why our Church leaders are welcoming these newcomers at a time when so many people born in our country are struggling to find jobs and feed their families. They might point to isolated incidents in which illegal immigrants have committed serious crimes against American citizens. Moreover, they might proclaim that their own ancestors were also immigrants to this country, but they arrived legally.

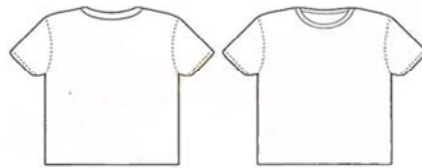
Another group of Catholics might see the same issue from an entirely different perspective. Returned lay missionaries who have spent time in the developing world know that the trauma and violence experienced by many indigenous people are real. They also know that many people cannot receive US visas due to the political party they support or the ethnic group they were born into in their own country. Surely people who have known such pain deserve a chance at a better life. People who have studied liberation theology might point to the fact that in his words and actions, Jesus Christ continually expressed a preferential option for the poor. Shouldn't we do the same, they might ask. Others see injustice in the possibility of some day denying tuition assistance to a college student who was born here in the United States to parents who came here illegally.

The contentious issue of illegal immigration poses a real domestic challenge to our desired state of global solidarity. Faithful Catholics find themselves on opposite sides of the issue. Where do you stand? How did your volunteer experience inform your opinion? What are you doing to tell policy makers about your opinion?

For further reading to become better informed on this issue, visit:

- "A Guide to Understanding Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration and the Movement of Peoples," at www.usccb.org/mrs/cst.pdf.
- "Migration in the Light of Catholic Social Teaching," at <http://education.crs.org/migration.cfm>.
- "Catholic Social Teaching and Migration," by J. Bryan Hehir at www.nccbuscc.org/mrs/hehir.shtml.
- *And You Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching* by Donald Kerwin and Jill Marie Gerschutz. 2009 Lexington Books.





Solidarity in a Global Economy

Take a minute to look over the clothing you are wearing, and the products in your bag or on your desk. Examine the tags on the clothing and the “made in” stamps on other items. How many countries are represented? On any given day, we are likely to wear, use, see, hear, and taste items produced all over the world.

In today’s global economy, items we buy at our local stores may have already traveled more miles than we will travel in our lifetimes! In “Waste Couture: Environmental Impact of the Clothing Industry” (Environmental Health Perspectives, Vol. 115, No. 9), writer Luz Claudio traces the often surprising life-cycle of a cheap cotton t-shirt. Cotton is grown in the United States. That cotton is shipped to China where it is milled and woven into fabric, and then sewn into a t-shirt. The finished t-shirt is returned to the U. S., purchased, and worn. The shirt may wear out over time, or the purchaser may simply decide (s)he doesn’t want it anymore. At this point, (s)he might simply throw the shirt away (Claudio notes that clothing represents approximately 4% of municipal solid waste in the U.S.), or (s)he may pass the shirt on through re-sale or donation.

If the shirt is donated to an organization like Goodwill, it has a 1-in-5 chance of winding up in a Goodwill shop. Companies like Goodwill can only re-sell a small portion of the clothing donations they receive, so the remaining 80% is often sold by the pound to textile recyclers. These U.S. companies turn some of the clothing into industrial rags and stuffing materials, which are shipped to factories all over the world. The most desirable clothing items are sold to Japan, where vintage American fashion is popular. Other clothing is put into 100-pound bales and shipped to small markets in the developing world.

This humble cotton t-shirt contains a powerful message: as consumers in a global economy, we are part of a complex web of relationships which spans the globe, whether we realize it or not. Catholic social teaching calls upon us to approach these relationships with an eye toward solidarity. So, in the case of clothing, solidarity calls us to recognize that all human beings have the right to adequate and affordable clothing, that the workers who make our clothing have the right to fair wages and working conditions, and that we all have an obligation to make sure that the way we make and distribute clothing does minimal damage to our shared environment. Solidarity adds a level of respect, care, and mutuality into the interdependent global economy in which we live.

How do we live out the call to solidarity within our global economy? This task feels overwhelming at times, but there are many small steps we can take. We can educate ourselves about the products we use every day by reading articles like Claudio’s (available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1964887/>) or books like Pietra Rivoli’s *The Travels of a T-shirt in the Global Economy* (Wiley Publishers, 2009). We can also contact companies to ask questions or voice concerns regarding their methods of production and distribution. We can support companies that practice fair trade (see the Resource Center of our website for listings). We can research and support legislation which favors environmentally and socially responsible trade. Finally, we can experiment with making some of our own goods (sewing, knitting, cooking from scratch, etc.), which is a great way to understand more about the products we consume and have some fun learning a new skill.

Solidarity by Staying Connected to Your Program

Now that you are home, do you ever wonder how you can help give back to your program? Have you ever talked up your volunteer experience and found yourself flooded with memories of good times, challenging times and dirty bathrooms? Staying in touch with your volunteer program is a straightforward way to act with justice and live in solidarity. Here are a few ideas to continue your solidarity with your program...



Contact your program and offer to be a point person and make calls to people who are looking for information on the program. Talk to them about your experience and honestly answer any questions they may have. Your personal knowledge and insight are great resources for potential volunteers.



Take brochures of your program to your church, local colleges, coffee house bulletin boards, retirement community centers – anywhere people may be looking for a radical change! Call the Pallotti Center and we can send copies of *Connections* directories to share with those looking for a variety of service options.



**The St. Vincent Pallotti Center
for Apostolic Development**

415 Michigan Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20017

Change of Address Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Washington, DC
Permit #3188

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Hope in Times of Despair
- * The Immigration Question
- * Solidarity in the Global Economy
- * Resources for Global Solidarity

Would you like to receive future editions of *Staying Connected* via email? If so, please let us know by emailing us at:

stayingconnected@pallotticenter.org



Help us recycle. Please do your part by passing on your copy to another former volunteer or by recycling the paper. Thanks!

Solidarity by Staying Connected to Your Program continued from pg 3...



If you live near a college, offer to represent your program at a service fair. It helps your program save money on travel and it is a wonderful experience for reconnecting with your experience. Don't forget pictures from your service.



Find out if your program is sponsoring any reunions or retreats. Beyond the stories and camaraderie, there is something special about former volunteers. They get it. They are a community who can share the commitment to solidarity.



Use social networks. Raise awareness of your program through Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Be sure your program has your current email and snail-mail address. Keep in touch with the main office so they know what happens to that wonderful person they once knew!

Resources for Global Solidarity

Online: The US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Statement on Global Solidarity, *Called to Global Solidarity*, published in November of 1997 can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalsolidarity.shtml>

Catholic Relief Services has a retreat outline, *Praying Without Borders: A Day of Reflection on Global Solidarity*, which can be found at: http://education.crs.org/resources/prayers/prayer_without_borders.pdf

The St. Vincent Pallotti Center Resource Page on Fair Trade:
<http://www.pallotticenter.org/index.php?m=static&action=fairTrade>

Print: *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World* by Tracy Kidder
Paul Farmer is a world health doctor most noted for his work in Haiti with an emphasis on the correlation between infectious disease and poverty. Farmer cofounded Partners in Health for "providing a preferential option for the poor in health care".

No Room at the Table: Earth's Most Vulnerable Children by Donald Dunson
Fr. Dunson illustrates his first hand experiences with some of the world's most forgotten children. His writing is transcontinental as he calls his readers to "stand in solidarity" with the world's neediest children.

Film: The San Damiano Foundation Films
Gerry Straub left a successful career in Hollywood to share faces and stories of those in need in the world through film. His films are graphic, poignant and demanding of a spiritual response to the needs of the poor and vulnerable in the world today.

Staying Connected: Assisting in the continuing formation of former lay volunteers.

The St. Vincent Pallotti Center for Apostolic Development **Authors and Editors:** Alicia Brooks, Michael Goggin, Molly Linehan and Julia Strukely **Production Editor:** Molly Linehan
E-mail: stayingconnected@pallotticenter.org **Website:** www.pallotticenter.org

These materials are copyrighted. ©2010 Volume 12, Number 2 The St. Vincent Pallotti Center
Unauthorized reproduction is prohibited. The Pallotti Center hereby gives permission to reproduce all or any of the contents of this publication so long as proper credit is given to The St. Vincent Pallotti Center and so long as reproduced materials are distributed *free of charge*.

Mission: Our goal is to promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church, and to support lay volunteers *before, during and after* their term of service.

Inspiration: The Center takes inspiration from Saint Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850), who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an image of God and as called to be missionary. Please visit our website, www.pallotticenter.org, for more information.