

## MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT OF YOUR PEACE

# The social teaching of 'solidarity'

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## Seventh in a series

The Church's social teaching of Solidarity begins with Creation. God created everything and everyone, and therefore each one of us stands in relation to the rest of creation.

### Solidarity means that we need to have an awareness of each other and of each other's needs

Especially in the west, we tend to think of ourselves as independent beings, as standing on our own two feet, and we value that independence. The reality is that none of us can go it alone. St. Paul expressed it very well: We are all members of the Body of Christ.

Solidarity means that we need to have an awareness of each other and of each other's needs. This aware-

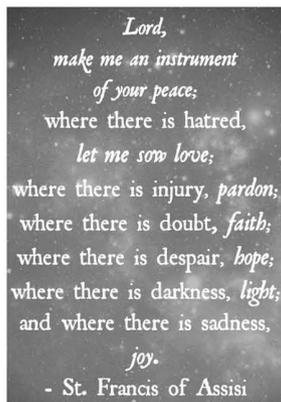
ness of the needs leads us to action to help alleviate the root causes of the other's suffering.

Sometimes, this may mean that we offer financial assistance, but primarily it requires that we acknowledge and respect the other person and work side-by-side, rather than simply impose a solution.

In other words, solidarity is a commitment to a relationship of equals that leads to action.

On a smaller scale, this might mean that, rather than the simple act of putting money in a homeless beggar cup (which might help, but primarily makes us feel better), we take time to go a buy a couple of sandwiches and invite the homeless person to share our meal, because he is hungry for more than just food. Or, when we put money in his cup, we take a moment to talk and simply acknowledge his humanity by looking him in the eye and offering a smile or a touch.

A good example of soli-



arity is our aptly names Solidarity in Faith endeavor. The Diocese of Ogdensburg has begun a twinning relationship with the Diocese of Latakia in Syria. It is not primarily a fundraising project, but rather, it is a building of a relationship with a bishop, his priests and the faithful people of Latakia.

It is not an abstract idea of donating money to a far-away cause. Rather, a particular relationship was established between our Bishop and a Bishop in Syria, namely Bishop Chbeir. This relationship included an exchange of letters, the establishment of a coordinating committee leading to a visit by Bishop Chbeir to our diocese.

In his visit us in the North Country, Bishop Chbeir told us the stories about the struggles of his priests, of the difficulties in training seminary candidates to

learn French so that they can better study theology. He shared with us that the Church in Latakia, in addition to the normal providing sacraments and religious education, also needs to care for refugees from the war, of children who are traumatized by violence.

Yet despite the hardships and struggles of leading a diocese in a war zone, Bishop Chbeir also shared with us the peace he found by gardening and the joy of being able share the bounty of the garden to feed his staff and seminary candidates.

He showed us the beauty of the roses that he propagated in his garden, symbolic that war cannot destroy the human spirit. With pride, he shared with us the dedication of his priests, who, in spite of poverty and sometime ill health, go out to minister to the people.

Our solidarity with the people of Latakia is not about offering a handout, but rather a building a relationship of prayer and faith. In this relationship, we have learned from Bishop Chbeir's ready smile that, even in suffering and hardship, faith and joy endure and that we have brothers and sisters on the other side of the world who count on our prayers and solidarity.

Pope Francis echoes this understanding when he said during the 2013 World Youth Day celebration that

"the culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not ... what builds up and leads to a more habitable world: rather, it is the culture of solidarity that does so; the culture of solidarity means seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters.

### This awareness of the needs leads us to action to help alleviate the root causes of the other's suffering.

"And we are all brothers and sisters," he said

### Suggestions for this week,

- Watch Bishop Chbeir's appeal for prayer and fasting for peace in Syria, which can be found on our Diocesan Website at <https://www.rcdony.org/ab-out-the-diocese/solidarity-in-faith/what-can-you-do.html> and learn more about life of our brothers and sisters in Syria by reading <https://www.rcdony.org/ab-out-the-diocese/solidarity-in-faith/learn-more.html>

- Read 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12
- When you give a donation, whether to your parish, or some other charitable organization, think about and pray for the people who will receive the actual benefit.

- Do you allow others to walk with you when you are in need? How hard is it for you to ask for assistance and give others the opportunity to enter into solidarity with you?



As we celebrate the Last Supper which leads us to the feast of Resurrection, the family of Monsignor Robert McCarthy would like to thank all the priests who came from across the diocese to con-celebrate his funeral on January 12th.

Special thanks also to Bishop LaValley for his many visits and support, to our uncle's long time friend, Fr. Dan Keefe for his frequent phone calls and to Fr. Steve Murray, Monsignor Whitmore and Fr. Wylie for the many years of fraternal and pastoral care.

Easter blessings on all of you!

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