

The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace—shortened to “Development and Peace” or D&P—is a jewel of social justice service to aid the Global South.

I witnessed their wonderful work on the ground on a familiarization trip to Ethiopia in 2013. Teams had dug wells to make clean water available to nearby poor communities. Soil management specialists had planted trees to prevent erosion. Relief workers had provided tools and seeds after drought conditions. Now resourced, local planning groups were ready to take their future in hand. D&P was instrumental in changing the prospects of some of the neediest people in the Horn of Africa.

With the blessing of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB), for more than fifty years, D&P has been active in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. D&P strikes partnerships with similarly motivated movements for justice and social solidarity.

In several instances, this has drawn criticism. Some journalists have brought to light that certain D&P partners seem to have entered into arrangements with partners of their own who not only advocate justice, but also take stances (for example, the promotion of contraception and abortion) contrary to the moral standards espoused by the Catholic Church.

This has resulted in a review led by D&P and assisted by CCCB staff and several bishops. Accordingly, they temporarily suspended funding for partners under examination. Thus, none of the funds raised in the annual Lenten collection taken on Solidarity Sunday would go to those partners. First, it must be clear that they respect the dignity of humans from conception to natural death.

Just as D&P would not knowingly participate with entities that were racist or opposed to the right of labourers to unionize, so D&P expects

its partners to affirm the dignity of human life from the womb to the tomb.

This year during Lent, Development and Peace has taken up the challenge Pope Francis has given to Caritas International to make known the plight of migrants forced to flee their homelands. So, D&P comes to the support of refugees who live in camps caring for migrants, helping poor communities who share what little they have.

One of these efforts invites local projects to join in walking the circumference of the globe—slightly more than 40,000 km!—in solidarity with the 68.5 million forced migrants worldwide.

On Saturday afternoon, April 6, with Gatineau Archbishop Paul-André Durocher, I will take part in a Capital Region Walk. We welcome you to join us and heed Pope Francis's call to "Share the Journey" in a concrete way.

This solidarity experience will begin with a photo exhibition, a presentation by Archbishop Durocher on "Catholic Social Teaching and Forced Migration," and reflections by workers who engaged with the aggrieved who had to flee their homelands. It begins at 12:30PM at Notre-Dame-de-l'Île parish, 115 boulevard Sacré-Cœur, Gatineau. The walk will leave the church at 2:20PM and terminate at Notre Dame Cathedral Basilica in Ottawa. There, we will concelebrate a bilingual Mass at 5PM to anticipate the Fifth Sunday of Lent, which is "Solidarity Sunday."

Through prayer, taking part in the Eucharistic celebration, Lenten sacrifices, alms, and other gestures of solidarity, we will learn to better love and serve the Lord Jesus.

I encourage you also to donate to D&P on Solidarity Sunday, April 7, the

Fifth Sunday of Lent, to help build a more just world.

By hearing first-hand stories of forced migration and destitution, we pray that God may open our hearts during Lent and prepare us to celebrate the Paschal Mystery at Easter “with the joy of minds made pure.”

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