

Catholic Campaign for Human Development: An Introduction to CCHD's Mission and Principles

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) carries out today the enduring mission of Jesus Christ to

***"bring good news to the poor,
liberty to captives,
new sight to the blind, and
to set the downtrodden free."** (Luke 4:18).*

In low-income communities across the United States, CCHD puts into practice Catholic teaching on the **life and dignity of every human person**, the Gospel command to care for "the least of these" (Matthew 25), and our Holy Father's call to practice "solidarity" in helping poor people help themselves to overcome injustice and escape poverty.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is the domestic anti-poverty program of the U.S. Catholic Bishops. The bishops have given CCHD the mission to address the root causes of poverty in America through promotion and support of community-controlled, self-help organizations. From the beginning, CCHD has the complementary mission of educating on poverty and its causes in our nation. This dual pastoral strategy of empowerment of the poor and education for justice reflects the mandate of the Scriptures and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. CCHD is a work of faith and a sign of the Gospel at work.

The mission of CCHD is made possible by the generous support of Catholics in the United States, especially through an annual collection taken up in most parishes the Sunday before Thanksgiving. CCHD's grants to local, low-income community organizations are awarded and evaluated in close partnership with local Catholic dioceses and all grants are approved by the local bishop.

CCHD is an integral and distinctive part of the Catholic Community's broad commitment to assist low-income people, families and communities in our country. This Catholic commitment includes the presence and ministry of our Catholic parishes, the empowering and inspiring work of Catholic schools, the essential services and outreach of Catholic Charities, the quality care of Catholic hospitals and health ministries, and countless other examples of service to "the least of these" by dioceses, religious communities, Catholic organizations and individual Catholics and their families.

Like these other Catholic ministries, CCHD reaches out to the broader community, helping people seeking to overcome poverty without regard to their race, ethnicity or religion. Together with these other examples of the Gospel at work, CCHD's low-income community empowerment and education activities represent unique, complementary

and essential parts of the Church's social mission as proclaimed by Jesus Christ and taught by His Church.

Pope Benedict XVI has outlined CCHD's integral role in the Church's social mission in his two powerful encyclicals on charity:

Love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind is as essential to her as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel...The church cannot neglect the service of charity anymore than she can neglect the sacraments and the word. (21)

Christian charity is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations (22)

[The Church] cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. (28)

Charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as "social charity." (29) Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est

If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them...Not only is justice not extraneous to charity...justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it... Justice is the primary way of charity."

The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them. Every Christian is called to practice this charity...This is the institutional path ... the political path of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly." (Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas In Veritate, # 7)

CCHD Principles

CCHD works to break the cycle of poverty by helping low-income people help themselves and improve their own communities. By helping the poor to participate in the decisions and actions that affect their lives, CCHD offers a hand up, not a hand out, helping people and communities overcome injustice, escape poverty, and build bridges of solidarity. A major part of CCHD's mission from the very beginning is to support "organized groups of white and minority poor to develop economic strength and political power" (Founding Bishops' Resolution).

In making grants to self-help low-income community organizations, CCHD reflects and expresses the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly in the criteria and guidelines for accepting and funding applications from groups seeking CCHD support. The Catholic moral principles at the center of the CCHD mission, criteria and guidelines are:

Human Life and Dignity

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. (U.S. Catholic Bishops, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, 1998.)

*Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person. We judge any economic system by what it does for and to people and by how it permits all to participate in it. The economy should serve people, not the other way around. (U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, 1986, #13.)*

Respect for the life and dignity of every person is the foundation of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. A principle goal of CCHD is promoting respect for the lives and dignity of the poor and vulnerable, those without power or status. This essential principle is why CCHD will not fund organizations that engage in activities that conflict with Catholic teaching on human life and dignity, that promote abortion or euthanasia, undermine the family, or tolerate racism or unjust discrimination. CCHD seeks to help change the social structures and policies which undermine or diminish human life and dignity, especially for the poor and powerless.

The Option for the Poor

"You shall not defraud a poor and needy hired servant, whether he be one of your own countrymen or one of the aliens who live in your communities. (Deuteronomy 24:14-15)

*Poor and vulnerable people have a special place in Catholic social teaching. A basic moral test of a society is how its most vulnerable members are faring . . . Our tradition calls us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. (U.S. Catholic Bishops. *A Century of Social Teaching: A Common Heritage, A Continuing Challenge*, 1990.)*

*If the poor are to be given priority, then there has to be enough room for an ethical approach to economics..., an ethical approach to politics..., and an ethical approach to participation capable of harnessing the contributions of civil society at local and international levels. (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009 World Day of Peace Message: *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*, #12.)*

CCHD is an example of how the Catholic Community "puts the needs of the poor first." CCHD reaches out, involves and supports people who are poor in acting together to improve their lives, overcome injustice, and escape poverty. An essential part of the CCHD criteria and guidelines is the participation of low-income people in addressing their own situations. An organization must be focused on changing and improving the conditions of low-income people and communities and should substantially be made up of and governed by people who are poor. CCHD is a sign of how the Church practices what it teaches on the priority for the poor.

Participation

*How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy— directly affects the common good and the capacity of individuals to develop their full potential. Every person and association has a right and a duty to participate actively in shaping society and to promote the well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. (U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 2007, #47)*

[P]articipation ... is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which he belongs. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004, #189.)

According to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* it is "absolutely necessary to encourage participation above all of the most disadvantaged (#189)." This requirement is reflected in CCHD's insistence that poor people themselves have an essential leadership role in the organizations funded by CCHD. This is why CCHD does not fund groups that do admirable work, but do it "for the poor", rather than organizing and standing with those who are poor in changing the structures that leave them poor.

Solidarity

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians, 3:28)

*Positive signs in the contemporary world are the growing awareness of the solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another, and their public demonstrations on the social scene which, without recourse to violence, present their own needs and rights.... By virtue of their own evangelical duty, the Church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests, and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of the good of groups in the context of the common good. (Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, no. 39.)*

[Solidarity] also presupposes the effort for a more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation. Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor.... (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1993, #s 1940, 1941.)

CCHD promotes and practices solidarity by supporting organizations and activities which bring poor people together to make a positive difference in their own communities. CCHD also advances solidarity by encouraging and supporting bridges of understanding and common action to overcome poverty and advance the common good. In the words of Pope John Paul II, solidarity 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." (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1988, #38.)

This why CCHD insists that organizations generate cooperation among and within diverse groups in the interest of a more integrated and mutually understanding society. It is also why CCHD supports and encourages organizations, which involve Catholic parishes, schools, dioceses and other Catholic groups as well as other religious and community organizations to join together to practice solidarity and to promote the common good.

Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity is among the most constant and characteristic directives of the Church's social doctrine.... It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities.... This is the realm of civil society, understood as the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings.... This network of relationships strengthens the social fabric and constitutes the basis of a true community of persons.... (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004, #185.)

The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfill their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004, #189.)

Subsidiarity, with its insistence on the value and importance of local organizations and relationships is a foundation of CCHD's criteria and guidelines for funding. CCHD begins with and focuses on building local, neighborhood, community capacity. CCHD helps people work together to make a difference in their own lives, families and local communities. CCHD is subsidiarity in action.

Human Rights and Responsibilities

Woe to those who enact unjust statutes and who write oppressive decrees, Depriving the needy of judgment and robbing my people's poor of their rights. (Isaiah 10:1-2)

People have a fundamental right to life and to those things that make life truly human: food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services, and employment. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities –to one another, to our families, and to the larger society, to respect the rights of others and to work for the common good. (U.S. Catholic Bishops, A Century of Social Teaching: A Common Heritage, A Continuing Challenge, 1990.)

The commitment to both rights and responsibilities is a distinctive aspect of CCHD's work. The organizations funded by CCHD often work for respect for and protection of basic human rights and insist on accountability--from their own members, the organization, public officials and major institutions. CCHD supports vehicles that empower the powerless to defend their own dignity and rights. CCHD also holds organizations accountable for leadership development, financial sustainability, compliance with CCHD guidelines, and fulfilling the commitments made in the application.

The Call to Community

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common. (Acts 2:42-44)

Many parishes are joining with other churches and groups to rebuild a sense of community in their own neighborhoods and towns. Parish leaders are taking the time to listen to the concerns of their members and are organizing to act on those concerns. These kind of church-based and community organizations are making a difference on housing, crime, education, and economic issues in local communities. Parish participation in such community efforts develops leaders, provides concrete handles to deal with key issues, and builds the capacity of the parish to act on our values.

*The Campaign for Human Development has provided vital resources to many self-help organizations empowering the poor to seek greater justice. Parish support and participation in these organizations help put Catholic social teaching into action and to revitalize local communities. (U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Communities of Salt and Light*, 1993.)*

CCHD provides concrete ways for Catholic parishes and individuals to work together in community to carry out Jesus' mission and Catholic social teaching. Community organizing can offer training, strategies, skills, relationships and vehicles for action to work with others to confront injustice, promote solidarity, and overcome poverty. CCHD can help Catholics answer the call of the Scriptures to be the "salt, light and leaven."

Conclusion

CCHD is a tested, faithful and creative response to the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI:

I extend to every disciple of Christ and to every person of good will a warm invitation to expand their hearts to meet the needs of the poor and to take whatever practical steps are possible in order to help them. The truth of the axiom cannot be refuted: "to fight poverty is to build peace." (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009 World Day of Peace Message #15.)