



As we begin a new year to live out our Chapter's Directions and make a difference in our world and in our relationships, we will look at the **message of Pope Benedict XVI for the World Day of Peace January 1, 2009**. This may help us to have a deeper understanding of our directions Communion, Interconnectedness, Non-Violence, Transformation, and Integrity of Creation, being Women Disciples and living out our Commitment to Life.

Here are some of the excerpts from Pope Benedict's message:

## **Fighting Poverty to Build Peace**

Once again, as the New Year begins, I want to extend good wishes for peace to people everywhere. With this message I would like to propose a reflection on the theme: ***Fighting Poverty to Build Peace***.

Back in 1993, my venerable predecessor Pope John Paul II, in his [Message for the World Day of Peace that year](#), drew attention to the negative repercussions for peace when entire populations live in poverty. Poverty is often a contributory factor or a compounding element in conflicts, including armed ones. In turn, these conflicts fuel further tragic situations of poverty.

"Our world," he wrote, "shows increasing evidence of another grave threat to peace: many individuals and indeed whole peoples are living today in conditions of extreme poverty. The gap between rich and poor has become more marked, even in the most economically developed nations. This is a problem which the conscience of humanity cannot ignore, since the conditions in which a great number of people are living are an insult to their innate dignity and as a result are a threat to the authentic and harmonious progress of the world community."



CRS teaches traditional leaders conflict resolution and mediation skills as a means of helping them to mobilize and unite their communities for peace.

*Photo by David Snyder for CRS*

## **'Called to form one family'**

In this context, fighting poverty requires ***attentive consideration of the complex phenomenon of globalization***. This is important from a methodological standpoint, because it suggests drawing upon the fruits of economic and sociological research into the many different aspects of poverty. Yet the reference to globalization should also alert us to the spiritual and moral implications of the question, urging us, in our dealings with the poor, to set out from the clear recognition that we all share in a single divine plan: we are called to form one family in which all—individuals, peoples and nations—model their behavior according to the principles of fraternity and responsibility....

## **Global solidarity and the fight against poverty**

One of the most important ways of building peace is through a form of globalization directed towards the interests of the whole human family. In order to govern globalization, however, there needs to be a strong sense of global solidarity between rich and poor countries, as well as within individual countries, including affluent ones.

A "common code of ethics" is also needed, consisting of norms based not upon mere consensus, but rooted in the natural law inscribed by the Creator on the conscience of every human being (cf. Rom 2:14-15).

*Does not every one of us sense deep within his or her conscience a call to make a personal contribution to the common good and to peace in society?*

Globalization eliminates certain barriers, but is still able to build new ones; it brings peoples together, but spatial and temporal proximity does not of itself create the conditions for true communion and authentic peace. Effective means to redress the marginalization of the world's poor through globalization will only be found if people everywhere feel personally outraged by the injustices in the world and by the concomitant violations of human rights.

The Church, which is the "sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race", will continue to offer her contribution so that injustices and misunderstandings may be resolved, leading to a world of greater peace and solidarity....

## **A warm invitation'**

At the start of the New Year, then, 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."

Thanks to Catholic Relief Service:

- Ⓢ What struck me in Pope Benedict's Message?
- Ⓢ How can I live out my "word of commitment from the 2009 Assembly?"
- Ⓢ What is my prayer?

For a complete copy of the 2009 Message for the World Day of Peace see:

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20081208\\_xlii-world-day-peace\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20081208_xlii-world-day-peace_en.html)