

Statement on Poverty:

Faith Issues to be considered by candidates for public office

The Franciscan Federation

The members of the Franciscan Federation join together in a declaration that aims to rally a serious commitment from government leaders and citizens to support an all out effort to defeat poverty in America and around the globe. There are about 24,000 people who die every day from hunger or hunger related causes. Three-fourths of the deaths are children under the age of five, according to current statistics revealed on TheHungerSite.com.

The war on poverty begins with the recognition of human rights as it is emphasized within Catholic social teachings and realized in matters that provide for the inherent dignity of all members of the human family.

Our Catholic tradition teaches that an ethical attitude is reflected by a commitment to advocate on behalf of a multi-faceted approach to alleviating poverty. Consistency and support of public policies designed to strengthen and sustain those living in poverty is proof of the unswerving devotion that our faith tradition expects of its civic leaders. A steadfast dedication to the notion of dignity as a fundamental right should be carried out in a manner that provides for adequate food, health care and decent housing and pursued consistently with a commitment to provide educational excellence and job opportunities. Essentially, all paths should result in respect for the quality of life. As Franciscans, we seek support from political leaders who dare to take the steps necessary to reduce poverty both on a national and international basis. The emphasis requires a holistic, system-wide approach to the eradication of economic destitution.

Beginning with the identification of factors that contribute to poverty, including a lack of security, oppressive economics and violence along with HIV/AIDS and other preventable diseases, we stand in solidarity with those who are impoverished and persist in raising objections about political, civil and cultural violations that rob people of their social rights. Our faith drives us to refuse to accept prejudice, racism, discrimination, or the minimization of the individual.

Faith also demands vigilance and protection from the threat of potential environmental hazards, such as toxic waste dumping and pollution produced by unethical corporations that especially dot the landscape surrounding impoverished communities. We seek authentic collaboration with environmentalists and scientists to put a halt to global warming by emphasizing good stewardship of God's creation.

As staunch supporters of a number of anti-poverty organizations, Franciscans back the proposed 2008 Foreign Operations Bill, which serves as an example of responsible legislation. Designed to benefit society's most vulnerable members, the bill targets the oppressive elements that contribute to entrenched poverty, namely inadequate health care, poor education, and the scarcity of genuine job opportunities. Furthermore, we call on legislators to work within the global community to provide refugee assistance and adequate international disaster assistance while ensuring access to clean drinking water.

We call for prioritization of the Millennium Development Goals and for the cancellation of debt to the International Monetary Fund by Third World developing countries. We remain committed to the fight against poverty as it is revealed in a variety of circumstances in the 21st century.