



The Challenge Of Faithful Citizenship

Listed below is Question #3 of the Catholic Bishops' Recent statement to American Catholics entitled *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*. As with the previous two questions and the others to follow in subsequent weeks, we offer a reflection for your thoughtful consideration.

3. How will we address the tragic fact that more than 30,000 children die every day as a result of hunger, international debt, and lack of development around the world?

In vivid contrast to Questions 1 and 2 of this document which tend to be more nuanced, if you will, Question #3 is blunt and direct, almost piercing the heart of all who read it. Once again we turn to Scripture to hear the words of Jesus: **“Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them but Jesus said, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”**

How our God must weep at the treatment of children worldwide today. To wit: Worldwide, nearly 50% of the deaths of children under age 5 is due to malnutrition. (*World Health Organization*). More than 6,000,000 children in developing countries die each year, mostly from hunger-related causes. (*Bread for the World*). The poorest tenth of U.S. citizens has an average income higher than two-thirds of the world. One-fifth of the world's population, 1.2 billion people — half of whom are children — lives in “conditions of almost unimaginable suffering and want.” (*UNICEF*). It is estimated that the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion per year — less than people in the U.S. and Europe spend on pet food! (*Bread for the World*).

As we live presently in our coded world of fear and anxiety, conscious of our own mortality in a way never imagined before, let us resolve to remember these children. In the words of author Jonathan Schell, **“Because everything we do and everything we are is in jeopardy, and because the peril is immediate and unremitting, every person is the right person to act and every moment is the right moment to begin.”**

—St. Bede Justice & Peace Ministry

For a complete text of the Bishops' statement, please see www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship