



Global development, or bridging the gap between the rich and poor, is a great challenge and moral concern. But, what is authentic development? What does it look like? The Catholic Church has much to say on the topic.

Background

After the Cold War, wealthy countries lost interest in helping developing countries. Assistance either did not address the unique priorities of the developing country or it came with conditions that developing countries could not meet. Meanwhile, developing nations lacked democratic institutions that permitted citizens to participate. Most approaches to policy were autocratic and took a “top-down” approach.

National Strategies: Today, it is widely accepted that effective change cannot be promoted from outside a country. So, the trend is to develop a national strategy that strengthens democracy and gives national institutions greater legitimacy. Policies are sound and nationally owned; human rights are protected; and citizens play an active role in formulating and supporting policy.

Catholic Social Teaching

Unfortunately, the world is not a level playing field, and decisions by wealthier nations often undermine the strategic work of a developing nation. The Catholic Church recognizes the delicate balance and speaks to the need for solidarity:

Developing poor countries requires moving beyond a “strict market mentality” and becoming aware of “duty to solidarity, justice and universal charity.”

Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004

Underdevelopment of some countries is not inevitable; it is the result of erroneous human choices and “structures of sin” that prevent the full development of peoples. Authentic development is the right of people and all nations.

Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004

Authentic development can only happen when the present trade system is transformed and promotes trade regulations that benefit poor countries rather than developed countries and multinational corporations.

Authentic development supports 1) local participation in all decisions impacting residents, including development projects proposed by others and 2) participation of developing countries in the decisions of international bodies that affect them.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994

Authentic development is more than building projects and bringing in modern technology and goods. (It) must include social, cultural, and moral dimensions.

Paul VI, On the Development of Peoples, 1967 and John Paul II, On Social Concerns, 1987

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Next Social Justice Mtg.: Thurs.6/28/07; 7:30-9:30, Rm. 227