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February 21, 2023
St. Peter Damian

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you during this Lenten season, and to request your support for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace - Caritas Canada. The theme of this year's Share Lent campaign is *Create Hope: Stand for the Land*.

We continue to be inspired by Pope Francis' encyclicals *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*. The Holy Father began work on these encyclicals before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the current circumstances that our world faces today have rendered the central message of both papal letters all the more prophetic and urgent.

A key emphasis of Pope Francis is linking the love of neighbour – and especially those who make up the poorest nations and those on the social and geographical peripheries – with the care and protection of the land and all creation. As the Pope states in *Laudato Si*:

“If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith.” (see *LS* #64)

Our Catholic faith and our Indigenous brothers and sisters teach us that ‘the land’ is holy and is a gift from God, who sustains our lives and provides for the sustenance and flourishing our human families and human communities. As St. Paul exclaims:

“He (Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (See Colossians 1: 15-17)

The land is holy – because it has been created and is sustained by the Father-Creator, with His Son, the Saviour of the world. The land is a ‘sacrament’ of God – it reveals sacred features. It also helps us grow and heal. As Pope Francis states:

“A healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change.” (see *LS* #218)

In this time of fear, uncertainty, and social polarization – we need to hear the call of Christ and His Gospel to realize the meaning of being the People of God – who commit to a caring way of *all* our brothers and sisters... and of all that God has created and given us to sustain and bless His people.

This Lent, we can support the *Create Hope: Stand for the Land* campaign by holding in our hearts and prayers those persons both locally and around the world who *seek hope* as they strive to overcome poverty, injustice, conflict and war, ill-health, and many other circumstances which rupture the relationship with the land and creation. We also need to be especially vigilant about the temptation to allow fear to fuel other ‘sins,’ including: unhealthy competition for limited resources; short-term exploitation of the land versus its care and respect for the ‘seventh generation’; a lack of caring and ‘heart’ for the brother and sister who is beyond our gaze and concern.

During this Lenten season, let us pray and support the *Create Hope: Stand for the Land* campaign by a renewed commitment to *have the same mind and heart as Christ Jesus* – who holds in His Sacred Heart all peoples and all creation. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops again designates the Fifth Sunday of Lent as Solidarity Sunday, when our annual Share Lent collection will be taken up. On Sunday, March 26, I ask you to please be generous in donating to Development and Peace / Caritas Canada.

Sincerely in Christ,



✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen
Bishop of Saskatoon