

Message for Parishioners (approximately 5 minutes)

Good morning (evening) and thank you for this opportunity to talk about the new DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE education campaign. My name is _____ and I am a member of _____ parish and a member of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, you will remember, is an important part of our Canadian church. For the past 45 years we have been supporting and empowering the poor in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

Let me first thank you for your generosity during Lent. Your donations give us the resources that DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE needs to carry on its work for global social justice. Thank you.

This year, we are putting the issue of hunger front and centre. One in eight people in the world still suffer from hunger, when there is enough food for all. It is a scandal that so many people are hungry, when we have the means to change this. Our Catholic tradition teaches us to ask critical questions. What is the cause of this widespread hunger? How can we change this? What can I do?

One of the most important ways we can stop hunger is to support small family farmers. We have been told that large industrial agriculture is the best way to feed the world. That bigger is always better and that technology will save us. But consider this: small family farms feed over two-thirds of the world's people. Women and men family farmers are the key to feeding the poorest of the poor. Yes! Small family farms feed themselves and their communities, and are a very important part of reducing hunger and poverty. But they are facing incredible challenges.

It all starts with a seed. That glass of orange juice you had for breakfast. The tomatoes in your salad for lunch. The bread in your sandwich. Seeds are the starting point, and we now know that whoever controls seeds, controls the future of farming and our food system.

Let me tell you a story about Noémie. Noémie has a small family farm in Brazil. She is a leader with MPA, a movement of small-scale farmers supported by DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. In Brazil, the largest agricultural businesses are lobbying hard to control the country's seed supplies, putting local crop varieties at risk. The companies want the sole rights over genetic material, failing to recognize farmers' rights to save, exchange, and produce seeds. In the face of this, Noémie and the MPA set up seed fairs for farmers. Most of the seeds that are shared at the seed fairs are ones that have been conscientiously and carefully kept by women in their vegetable gardens.

At the seed fairs, farmers received seeds on the brink of extinction – including 8 varieties of local corn – giving them the chance to reintroduce these heirloom seeds and expand their crops. With these seeds – which they grew, harvested and saved the best seeds from – they returned to the fair the following season to trade them. At one of the first seed fairs, Noémie saw seeds she had not seen since her grandmother's time. Can you imagine? A type of squash, not seen for more than a generation, was shared again for the first time!

Farmers need access to seeds. Local seeds that are adapted to their realities to grow food. This is a crucial moment. Let's work together to solve this problem. We can make a difference! By choosing to eat food grown organically by our own local farmers, we support their role as guardians of seeds.

And, we can demand that our elected officials ensure that small family farmers have the right to continue to use the seeds that they have preserved for generations. Read the campaign material, and choose how you can help solve the problem of hunger.

