

September 2008



### Steps toward Reorienting U.S. Foreign Policy

“The U.S. has invested hundreds of billions of dollars to fight and win wars. But very little money or time has been invested in the tools necessary to prevent deadly conflict. As a result, when U.S. policymakers look for tools to respond to wars and escalating conflicts, they find a toolbox with only one implement — a military hammer.

Changing budget priorities and reorienting U.S. foreign policy could take years, or even decades. But Congress can take a first step toward building a toolbox for peace by funding common sense, proven strategies to prevent war, help to deescalate wars when they break out, and help win the peace when the fighting has stopped. Here are five steps your members of Congress could take this year to build the peace toolbox:

1. Fund Civilian Peacebuilders
2. Fund Reconciliation Programs
3. Full Funding for U.S. Diplomacy
4. Fully Fund U.N. Peacekeeping and Pay \$1.2 Billion in Arrears
5. Double Funding for Development Assistance”

“Persuading Congress to Work for Peace,”  
FCNL Washington Newsletter,  
Friends Committee on National Legislation, Feb 2008.

### Religious Sisters Advocate for Hungry People

“Sister Rosemary Davis, IHM, [social justice coordinator of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Immaculata, Pennsylvania] works with a team of 24 sisters. Together they make up an effective networking system. Once they agreed to conduct [Offering of Letters](#) as one of their major initiatives for the year, they then communicated weekly by email. Each team took on sending messages about the Offering to each of their four convents. The team decided on three words to guide their work: education, prayer, and action....

The teams began by sending what they called ‘Info Alerts’ every Tuesday for several weeks before the actual Offering of Letters. The alerts contained information for the members of the Order introducing [Bread for the World](#) and our Offering of Letters and explaining our past legislative victories and the tangible effects they have had for hungry people. They also shared general information on hunger. When it came time to actually write the letters, the response was overwhelming. They generated more than 600 letters. About 260 of those letters came from their infirmary, where many of their elderly or ill sisters live. ‘That’s what great about the Offering of Letters,’ Sister Davis says. ‘It is something that anyone can do. You don’t have to carry a picket sign to make a difference.’”

“Religious Sisters Advocate for Hungry People,”  
From the Field, [Bread](#), [Bread for the World](#), June 2008.

### Environmentalism, a Distinctive Feature of Pope Benedict’s Social Teaching

“[E]nvironmentalism has emerged as perhaps the most distinctive new feature of [Benedict XVI’s](#) social teaching to the Gospel’s call to love and solidarity. It is in serving the common good that lay Catholics serve the coming of God’s kingdom.... Benedict sees environmentalism as part of a deeper spiritual shift away from what he called in Australia the ‘folly of consumerism,’ toward a lifestyle rooted in the traditional virtues of self-sacrifice and solidarity. The pope also sees care for the earth as part of a continuum of moral truths, including defense of human life and dignity.

Jesuit Father Keith Pecklers of Rome’s Gregorian University said that Benedict is aware that appreciation for nature as the ‘book of creation’ was a *leitmotif* of the early church. In that sense, Benedict’s ecology is less a matter of [aggiornamento](#) than [ressourcement](#) — not an innovation but a return to the sources. Whatever his point of entry, Benedict has been willing to put his money where his mouth is. For example, he’s authorized the installation of more than 1,000 solar panels atop the Vatican’s Paul VI audience hall to provide electrical current, light, and heating and cooling. The Vatican has also inked an agreement to become the first ‘[carbon-neutral](#)’ state in Europe.”

“Catholic Environmentalism: Green Teachings,  
Initiatives Take Hold among Catholics Worldwide”  
by John Allen, Jr.,  
[National Catholic Reporter](#), Aug 8, 2008.



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## Portland Archdiocese Adopts Fair and Just Workplace Principles

“In February (2008), the [Archdiocese of Portland](#), Oregon became the second diocese in the nation to formally adopt the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([USCCB](#)) Subcommittee on Health Care’s guidelines as diocesan policy. The guidelines call on Catholic hospitals to work with union supporters to establish a mutually agreeable, fair union election process. The Catholic Diocese of Santa Rosa, California, adopted the guidelines in 2007 at the recommendation of its Priests’ Council.

Archbishop John Vlazny adopted the guidelines at the recommendation of the 30-member Presbyteral Council. The Council voted unanimously in favor of adopting the principles outlined in the USCCB Working Paper after months of careful study and in the context of a union organizing campaign at [Providence Health and Services](#) hospitals in the Portland Archdiocese. Caregivers at Providence Health and Services have reported a systematic effort to discourage them from organizing a union. Their claims have been corroborated by a Workers’ Rights Board Fair Election Oversight Commission chaired by the Oregon Secretary of State, Bill Bradbury, as well as by senior pastors who met with employees and Providence management. The USCCB Working Paper, *A Fair and Just Workplace: Principles and Practices for Catholic Health Care* calls on Catholic hospitals to work with union supporters to establish a

fair union election process and states that, ‘When an organizing campaign is initiated, all parties should agree on ground rules.’”

“Portland Archdiocese Adopts Fair and Just Workplace Principles,”  
*Faith Works, Interfaith Worker Justice*, Spring 2008.

## Putting Catholic Social Teaching into Practice as Mayor

“Once elected mayor, I had regular opportunities to turn Catholic social theory into practice. By the time I completed my term, I had learned some things about relating the church’s social ethic to the circumstances of the local community. First, I learned that service as an elected official or as an appointee to a board or committee is a rich opportunity for Christian witness....

For those seeking ideas about how to pursue the work of social justice locally, I recommend looking to four important aspects of community life....

1. Bring services to the people; do not make people come to the services....
2. Remove the obstacles that prevent people from participating in social systems....
3. Exercise a preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged by representing their perspectives in the development and implementation of local policies and programs....
4. Keep the information flowing, and find ways to keep people connected.”

“A Theologian in Town Hall” by Georgia Masters Keightley, *America*, June 9, 2008.

