

AFRICA: Challenges and Hopes

A) Background

- Basic facts (From Wikipedia)

Africa is the world's 2nd largest and 2nd most populous continent, after Asia, accounting for about 15% of the world's human population (a billion people). 50% of Africans are under 25 years old.

Africa is home to many different cultures, languages (over 1000) and religions. 350 million Africans are Christians and more than 116 million are Catholics (nearly 15% of the entire African population).

The continent has 54 sovereign states and encompasses numerous climate areas: the only continent stretching from the northern temperate to southern temperate zones.

Natural resources form the core of most African economies. Agricultural products such as coffee, cocoa and maize, and mineral resources such as petroleum, gold, diamonds are used for both subsistence and commercial purposes.

- Historical overview (from Catholic Relief Services)

Africa, particularly central eastern Africa, is widely regarded within the scientific community to be the origin of humans with the discovery of fossils of the earliest hominids and their ancestors dating back to around 7 million years ago. The earliest *Homo sapiens* (modern human) fossils dated to circa 200,000 years ago were found in Ethiopia. Therefore Africa has been called "the cradle of humanity".

Africa's ancient history boasts many great civilizations, including those in Nigeria, Niger, Nubia, Egypt and Zimbabwe. In the 1st and 2nd century AD, increased trade with the outside world brought Christianity to the continent, followed by Islam in the 6th century. Interactions with outsiders also brought increasing interest in the extraction of Africa's rich natural resources.

In 1444, the first slaves were brought to Portugal from northern Mauritania, marking the beginning of the slave trade that lasted for 400 years.

The colonization of Africa began when British settlers landed there in the early 1800s. Weakened African kingdoms were not able to resist to aggression by European powers from France, England, Portugal, Germany, Belgium and Italy, and the sweeping colonization of the continent followed.

The end of World War II marked the beginning of the end of colonial rule with wars of liberation starting throughout the continent. The onset of the Cold War pitted allies of the US against those of the Soviet Union, and with it came the proliferation of weapons, proxy wars and brutal dictatorships.

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought in an era of free trade and the call for democracy in Africa.

B) Africa's challenges

- Prosperity-poverty paradox

Although Africa has abundant natural resources - land, water, agriculture, minerals, tourist sites -, it remains the world's poorest (the bottom 25 ranked nations in the world were all African in 2003 [UN]) and most underdeveloped continent, due to a variety of causes affecting a large proportion of the people who reside in the African continent that may include:

spread of deadly diseases and viruses (notably HIV/AIDS and malaria);

corrupt governments (often having committed serious human rights violations) and bad governance;

high levels of illiteracy;

malnutrition, inadequate water supply and sanitation, climate change;

low access to health care, low life expectancy;

lack of access to foreign capital, reduced foreign aid, detrimental terms of trade and accumulated debts;

frequent tribal/ethnic and military conflicts (ranging from guerrilla warfare to genocide).

Africa today faces many challenges, but has great potentials and Africans are resilient and hopeful. (Center of Concern, Wikipedia, CRS)

A look at some of the challenges facing Africa through some illustrative cases.

- Conflicts

Past and present in Angola, Sierra Leone, Niger, Ivory Coast, Burundi, Rwanda, DR Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, etc....

Causes (USCCB, CRS):

ethnic differences and hatred (genocide in Rwanda), further exacerbated by

legacy of the colonial era: arbitrary borders, programs of alienation, discrimination, social exclusion, and manipulation of ethnic identity intended to ensure domination and control employed later by politicians and military leaders in post-colonial Africa;

continuous intervention of former colonial rulers;

political instability;

economical policies;

competition over natural resources: in particular diamonds (Angola, Sierra Leone, DR Congo) and oil (Angola, Niger Delta, southern Sudan) have been associated with deeper economic impoverishment, political disenfranchisement, and ecological disasters for the people and the region. Foreign corporations—American, European, Asian, and others—reap large profits from diamonds and oil while too often demonstrating little concern for the negative impact their activities may have on peace, stability, human rights, and the environment.

Impacts

Refugees and Displaced Persons: Africa hosts more than 3.5 million refugees - 30 % of the world's total - and 50 % of the world's 25 million internally displaced persons (4 million for Sudan alone, the largest number in any country in the world). Many live in camps, subject to violence, shortages of food, and insufficient sanitation and potable water. Because of a lack of resources and political will from the international community, many refugees, for whom resettlement is the only durable solution, languish in camps for years. (USCCB)

In Zimbabwe, there has been increasing racism against the white farmers, due to poverty and lack of land ownership by Africans. The results of the post-2000 land reform have been disastrous for the economy: the primary beneficiaries were members of the Government and their families, despite the fact that most had no experience in running a farm, resulting in a tremendous drop in agricultural production and widespread starvation and famine. Zimbabwe once so rich in agricultural products that it was dubbed the "bread basket" of Southern Africa, is now struggling to feed its own population with 45% of the population considered malnourished. (Global issues)

Rape reaching epidemic proportion in some countries: rape has been used as a weapon of war and causes severe impact on the victims with psychological injuries including feelings of fear, helplessness, desperation, and often later developing to depression, anxiety disorders and shame in addition to the physical injuries. Often women victims of war rape are stigmatized and excluded from their families or communities, remain unable to find a husband and without family support to provide for their child. Fears of rape in Kenya's slums is keeping poor Kenyan women away from communal toilets, and increasing the risk of disease. (Global issues)

- Infectious Diseases

Facts (Global Issues):

They—including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria—are responsible for almost half of all deaths in developing countries and continue to blight the lives of the poor across the world. These three diseases cause more than 5 million deaths each year.

Malaria: Every year there are 350–500 million cases of malaria, with 1 million fatalities. Africa accounts for 90% of malarial deaths and African children account for over 80 % of malaria victims worldwide.

AIDS/HIV: for 2008

2 million deaths from AIDS with 70% in Sub-Saharan Africa

33.4 million living with HIV with 67% of adult HIV cases in Sub-Saharan Africa

2.7 million new infections of HIV with over 90% of new HIV infections amongst children in Sub-Saharan Africa

Challenges:

Controversies surrounding the way the epidemic is being fought: When giving money to combat AIDS, international organizations and governments often devise their own programs without the participation of the recipient populations where the money is to be channeled, *i. e.* without practicing the Catholic Social Teaching principle of subsidiarity, which would lead them to empower local people to direct the fight against AIDS. (Education for Justice)

Difficulties surrounding the issue of drug patents: Pharmaceutical companies carry out the research that eventually leads to producing drugs to combat diseases such as AIDS; in return, they have patents on these drugs so that other companies cannot reproduce them and profit, and have been demanding extremely high prices for AIDS drugs - antiretrovirals (ARVs), making them far out of reach for most Africans.

Moreover, because of the patents, it is illegal to condense the various drugs from different companies into simpler and cheaper treatment plans. The US had pledged \$15 billion to fight AIDS, but is stipulating that all ARVs be purchased from US pharmaceutical companies, whose drugs cost twice as much as those from India or South Africa and are not condensed into simple doses. This allows only half as many lives to be saved as would be if the drugs were purchased from generic producers in India or South Africa. (Education for Justice, Global issues)

Impacts:

The death toll is having a severe impact on many economies in the region. Those most affected by illness are the poorest people who do not have access to health care, drugs, clean water, or daily minimum nutritional requirements. Life expectancy in some nations is already decreasing rapidly. Poverty is deepening because of work loss and school dropouts. Constraints such as social norms and taboos, or lack of decisive or effective institutions have all contributed to the situation getting worse (Ex South Africa).

Where the adult population HIV infection rate is greater than 20%, African economies are shrinking, as is the case in Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya. (USCCB)

- Hunger & climate change

Where: Niger, Sudan, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe.....

Causes: drought (rain failure), flooding, war and ethnic clashes that displaced persons to area already affected by food shortage, HIV/AIDS pandemic which decreased the population that is strong enough and skilled enough to farm, restrictive policies and mismanagement of food by some governments, disagreement over donation of genetically modified food making more difficult to deliver the food aid, land reform. (USCCB, BBC news)

Impacts:

Millions of people are facing starvation. Children are so badly malnourished they are at severe risk of dying, and will suffer from stunted development.

The consequences of global warming in Africa: agricultural output is expected to decrease by 50%, resulting in severe undernourishment. Health burden and conflicts will increase as populations fight over dwindling resources. The costs of adaptation and mitigation are, however, extremely high and beyond the means of African countries, whose life styles and work patterns are not the *causes* of global warming but who profoundly experience the *consequences* of global warming. It is therefore important for the international community to help in financing the cost of climate change adaptation and mitigation in Africa. This is a moral truth that must be acknowledged and responded to if justice is to be done. (UN, Center of Concern)

- Aid/Trade/Debt

Aid: Foreign aid or (development assistance) is often regarded as being too much, or wasted on corrupt recipient governments. In reality, both the quantity and quality of aid have been poor.

In 1970, the world's rich countries agreed to give 0.7% of their gross national income as official international development aid, annually. Since that time, rich nations have rarely met their actual promised targets. According to aid groups, G8 countries will deliver 44% of their combined commitments to sub-Saharan Africa by 2010

Contrary to popular opinion, the US is often the largest donor in dollar terms, but ranks amongst the lowest in terms of percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) and meeting the stated 0.7% target. Furthermore, aid has often come with a price such as conditions that the recipient must use overpriced goods and services from donor countries. (Global issues, USCCB)

Trade: International trade and economic arrangements have done little to benefit the African people and has further exacerbated the problem. IMF/World Bank policies like Structural Adjustment have aggressively opened up African nations with disastrous effects, including the requirements to cut back on health, education (and AIDS is a huge problem), public services and so on, while growing food and extracting resources for export primarily, etc, thus continuing the colonial era arrangement. In addition rich country protectionism denies market access for poor country products, while rich nations use aid as a lever to open poor country markets to their products. (Global issues)

Debt: Third world debt has long been recognized as a major obstacle to human development. For every \$1 in aid a developing country receives, over \$25 is spent on debt repayment.

A number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa pay debt services that average close to 25% of government revenues, thereby shifting already limited resources away from vital health delivery services, education, and other efforts to eliminate poverty. This debt is partly the result of the unjust transfer to them of the debts of the colonizing States; odious debt is debt that resulted from loans to an illegitimate or dictatorial government that used the money to oppress the people or for personal purposes (ex: South Africa with debt from apartheid) (Global issues, USCCB)

Financial crisis: because of the financial instability and uncertainty in industrialized nations, it can be expected that foreign investment in Africa will reduce and foreign aid is likely to diminish, while African countries could face increasing pressure for debt repayment, causing further cuts in social services such as health and education. Even international donor organizations have started to feel the financial crunch. As such the Millennium Development Goals to address many concerns, such as halving poverty and hunger around the world, will be affected. (Global issues)

C) Stories of Hopes

Yet, there are hopeful signs of economic growth, democratic change, fewer conflicts and African leaders taking responsibility. Below are some among many stories of hope from the challenges described above.

Conflicts

South Africa: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu was a court-like restorative justice body assembled after the abolition of apartheid. Witnesses who were identified as victims of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements about their experiences, and some were selected for public hearings. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution. The TRC was seen by many as a crucial component of the transition to full and free democracy in South Africa. Despite some flaws, it is generally (although not universally) thought to have been successful. (Wikipedia)

Rwanda: after the 1994 conflict the population consisted of 70 % women. Since then, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been assisting women to form groups for support and reconstruction. Hundreds of these groups are in existence. At the local level, women are creating self-help groups, or cooperatives, to assist survivors, widows or returned refugees in dealing with the trauma of the war, or simply to meet the everyday needs of providing for their families and taking practical steps for reconstruction of their communities and lives. (Education for Justice)

Kenya: SIDAREC (the Slums Information Development and Resources Centers) have been awarded ONE Africa Award with a prize of \$100,000 for their work engaging and empowering disadvantaged youth in the urban slums of Kenya's capital Nairobi and actively preventing violence. The group's initiatives include the "Slums News" newspaper, the "Ghetto FM" community radio station and a community training center. Their members also use the arts - drama, puppetry, poetry and dance - to provoke discussion of contentious issues, particularly among members of different ethnic communities. Through a SIDAREC entrepreneurship program many people in the slums, especially youth and women, have benefited from support to launch businesses - including a former criminal group that decided to 'go straight' and build a housing project and community toilet with SIDAREC training and startup funding. (One)

Infectious diseases

Malaria has been tackled through the delivery of bed-nets to help protect families. 200 million bed-nets were delivered by the end of 2009, partly through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria from malaria, substantially reducing malaria deaths in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Kenya.

HIV/AIDS: Nearly three million people now receive anti-retroviral drugs to fight HIV/Aids. Several countries have had success in fighting AIDS: Senegal, Malawi, Uganda,....

Senegal stands out with an HIV prevalence rate of about 1% among adults, compared with 36% in Botswana and about 20% in South Africa. Their success comes from an early 'awareness and prevention' campaign, sex education, an active government policy which dates back to the late 80s, and political will. Senegal was the first country on the continent to negotiate a 90 % cut in the price of AIDS drugs from the multinational pharmaceutical companies and offering universal access to anti-retroviral drugs. The government also recognized that steps were needed to deal with the religious and cultural taboos head on, using mass media to raise awareness effectively. (Global issues)

In *South Africa* there are many organizations working to slow down the progress of the AIDS epidemic, through education, programs to reduce social stigma, and attempts to increase access to medicine. A local organization works especially with children affected by the disease, running a transition home for orphaned children, and doing outreach programs in schools. They also work

with the parents and caregivers of the children and community leaders in a “safe homes, safe streets” program, which promotes a healthy out-of- school environment for the children to be in. (Education for Justice)

Hunger & Climate change

Malawi: Like many African countries, Malawi has been prone to food shortages due to droughts and under-investment in agriculture. Since 2005/06, the government has provided subsidies to smallholder farmers through vouchers to purchase fertilizer and seeds that enable them to produce a more robust crop. The program has made a substantial contribution to food security. In tandem with good rains and appropriate macroeconomic policies, it has enabled Malawi to produce a surplus of maize since 2007 and there are early indications that the number of children under 5 who are severely underweight is decreasing. (One)

Mali: Stop Sahel is an organization started in 1984, working in developing environmental teams of local people who become involved in starting tree nurseries, composting, honey extraction, soil conservation, and mud-stove building to reduce the need for firewood. The work of Stop Sahel has been key in stopping desertification and deforestation, securing a better future for generations to come in some areas. (Education for Justice)

Research: There are many research projects with the goal of enhancing crops. For instance, they are starting a project at TAMU for developing high-yielding cowpea varieties with high protein and enhanced levels of antioxidants and complex carbohydrates, which provide health benefits beyond nutrition. Some of the high-yielding lines of cowpeas the group is working on already show drought and aphid tolerance, as well as resistance to other diseases.

Aid/Trade/Debts

Aid: Far more is now given by workers sending home remittances from abroad, by private investors and by some of the giant philanthropic trusts, like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation or the Ford Foundation. It has helped millions into school, with 75% of children now attending classes across Africa. In Burkina Faso and Zambia attendance has reached 90%.

Brain gain: Africa may still be suffering from a chronic brain drain but some of the continent's elite are turning their backs on the West and taking their talents back home. Across nine African countries, Africans were returning from working or studying abroad either for patriotic reasons or because of the growing opportunities back home. Not only are more people returning, but they are coming home sooner. Also, in a relatively new trend, digital technology allows African academics and other professionals abroad to support African universities, schools or individuals back home to bridge the skills gap with the West. (BBC News)

Trade: A new international cocoa agreement was reached that will ensure better prices for stakeholders, including small farmers. The agreement also promotes development projects and, very importantly, enhances market transparency giving to farmers up-to-date information on consumption of cocoa and the use and prices of the main products. In fact, prices paid to small producers have been on the rise for the past four to five years (Global Issues)

Debt: since 1996, two initiatives have cancelled nearly \$110 billion worth of debt for poor countries, \$93 billion of which was in African countries. In exchange for this debt relief, qualifying countries agreed to channel their debt savings to poverty reduction activities. As a result, many African governments used debt savings to help abolish primary school fees, Mozambique used its debt service savings to vaccinate children against tetanus, whooping cough and diphtheria, as well as to install electricity in schools and to build new ones, while Cameroon used its debt savings to launch a national HIV/AIDS plan for education, testing and prevention, including of mother-to-child transmission. (One)

D) Why should we care?

Our faith demands it – Catholic Social Teaching:

Life and Dignity of the Human Person: “The essential point for Catholic Social Teaching is the dignity of every human life. Created by God and redeemed by Christ, every person possesses a fundamental dignity that comes from God, not from any human attribute or accomplishment.... The dignity of every person must always be respected because each person is a precious child of God.” (USCCB, ‘For I was hungry and you give me food’, 2003, #7)

The Common Good and Solidarity: “The unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbors is emphasized. One is so closely connected to the other that to say that we love God becomes a lie if we are closed to our neighbor or hate him all together. St. John’s words should rather be interpreted to mean that love of our neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with God, and that closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Carita Est*, 2005, #16)

“Catholic Social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family.... Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that ‘loving our neighbor’ has global dimensions in an interdependent world.” (USCCB, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, 2000, #5)

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: “Poverty is a plague against which humanity must fight without cease.” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2005)

“As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental ‘option for the poor’ – to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life style, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. This ‘option for the poor’ does not mean pitting one group against another, but rather, strengthening the whole community by assisting those who are the most vulnerable. As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response.” (USCCB, *Economic Justice for All*, 1986, #16)

The United States has special responsibilities:

“Our call to solidarity with the church, nations, and peoples of Africa, particularly the nations of sub-Saharan Africa, recognizes and is based on the special responsibilities and opportunities that we have as Catholics and citizens of the United States. As Catholics, we embrace the universal character of our Christian identity, an identity that transcends national boundaries and calls us to live in solidarity and justice with the peoples of the world. As Americans, we acknowledge the singular position enjoyed by the United States as one of the wealthiest nations on earth, but privilege cannot be divorced from responsibility . . . We cannot satisfy our moral obligations to the world’s poor by allowing only a few crumbs from the table of material abundance to fall upon the nations and peoples of sub-Saharan Africa.” (USCCB, *A Call to Solidarity With Africa*, 2001)

We can make a difference:

“As individuals, all citizens have a duty to assist the poor through acts of charity and personal commitment. But private charity and voluntary action are not sufficient. We also carry out our moral responsibility to assist and empower the poor by working collectively through government to establish just and effective public policies” (USCCB, *Economic Justice for All*, 1986)

E) What is the Catholic Church doing?

USCCB’s 2001 pastoral letter: A Call to Solidarity with Africa:

“The urgency of our attention to the Church and the peoples of Africa is prompted by two conflicting convictions: hope and concern. We write in hope, recognizing the history, strength, spirituality,

courage, and capacity of the Church and peoples of Africa. We write with deep concern, witnessing the proliferation of armed conflict, a deterioration in health care and education infrastructures, the weakening of social and community structures, and an increasing spread of disease and other threats to the lives of our African brothers and sisters. Our fear is that Africa's hopes could be destroyed by indifference and inaction in Africa and around the world. For these reasons, we raise our voices and echo the plea made by the Holy See at the U.N. Millennium Summit, that Africa be given special attention, and that efforts be made which are really capable of meeting its needs.

..... Recent gatherings and initiatives are signs of a growing international commitment to work with African countries to fight poverty, HIV/AIDS, and infectious diseases, and to promote peace, security, and development. These overdue efforts must be encouraged and promoted. "

Catholic Relief Services (CRS):

Catholic Relief Services approaches emergency relief and long-term development holistically, ensuring that all people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, are able to participate in the very fullness of life — to have access to basic necessities, health care and education — all within peaceful, just communities. To achieve this, they focus on six key areas of service:

Emergencies in areas devastated by natural disasters and wars, providing water, food, shelter, protection from abuses and other basic needs

Hunger by developing agriculture, improving water and sanitation, developing sustainable work options, providing microfinance to support small businesses, and providing a safety net for those who have no other means of support.

Education by promoting increased access to educational opportunities for marginalized children, improved quality education and increased community involvement in education.

Health by establishing community-based health care systems focusing on HIV/AIDS, child survival, developing proper water and sanitation systems, improving nutrition, and advancing maternal and child health.

Peace through conflict resolution, education and prevention as well as strengthening civil society through civic organizations that help communities collectively advocate for their own needs.

Advocacy by working to help American Catholics put their faith into action by advocating for changes that uproot the unjust structures that constrain the lives of the poor and perpetuate poverty, conflict and inequality.

F) What can we do?

Pray for people throughout the world seeking to rise from the indignities of poverty, especially for our brothers and sisters in Africa ...for U.S. policies that can help make it happen...for all who stand in solidarity with the world's poor.

Learn about Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. economic policies, and the world's poor.

Ask the question: how will the decisions of U.S. policy makers impact the poor, both in the United States and overseas.

Stay inform about local, US and world issues.

Share what you learned with your family and friends.

Advocate on behalf of the peoples of Africa by contacting your elected officials to make the case for trade, aid and debt policies that overcome poverty and promote development for impoverished people. Consider signing up for the CRS advocacy network (actioncenter.crs.org/) or for Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty, a joined effort of CRS and USCCB to fight poverty by advocating for US policies that foster economic and social development for people living in poverty throughout the world, focusing on just trade, effective aid and reduced debt (www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/)

G) References

BBC news: www.bbc.co.uk/news/; CNN world news: www.cnn.com/WORLD/

US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB): www.usccb.org/

A Call to Solidarity with Africa, USCCB, 2001 (www.usccb.org/sdwp/africa.shtml)

Catholic Relief Services: (crs.org/)

Catholic Campaign against Global Poverty: (www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/)

Center for Concern (www.coc.org/): a Catholic institute “working collaboratively to create a world where economic and social systems guarantee basic rights, uphold human dignity, promote sustainable livelihoods and renew Earth.”

Global issues (www.globalissues.org/): a web site looking into global issues that affect everyone and aiming to show how most issues are inter-related.

One (www.one.org/us/issues/): a grassroots campaign and advocacy organization, committed to the fight against extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa. Cofounded by Bono and other campaigners, ONE is nonpartisan and works closely with African policy makers and activists.

The World Bank (www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/thematic.htm) also offers a wealth of information on developing countries by topics and countries.

H) Prayers

Gracious God, as we gather together, we pray in thanksgiving for the gifts you bestow upon us. We pray that you will help us to use these gifts wisely and generously in our work to overcome poverty. Please open our eyes to the opportunities we have to make the world a better place through our own actions. Open our hearts to our brothers and sisters around the world who suffer indignities and hardships because of poverty. Help us to be effective advocates for policies that promote fair trade, provide effective assistance to those in need, and offer debt relief so that resources can be used to meet basic human needs. Let your Spirit guide us in these efforts and in all things. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessed are those who promote justice with enthusiasm. Their organization will be a bastion and their struggle for human rights will be blessed. In their homes will be tenderness and vigor in abundance. Their solidarity can always be counted on.

Blessed are those workers who share their bread with the hungry and, in the manner of Jesus, raise up those bowed down. They will never vacillate and the memory of their goodness lives forever.

Blessed are those workers who watched over the lives of their companions and, in the way of Jesus, expel the demons that attack them. They will never waver and trust in them will be perpetual.

They will not be afraid of adversities; they will live forever, firm and confident in Jesus. Their spirit will remain unbreakable, without fear, until they see the retreat of their enemies. They announce to their companions the Good News, their joy consists in the defense of their dignity. Therefore, they will raise their heads at every hour. Amen. (From CRS ‘Prayer Without Border, based on Psalm 112)

Did you miss any of the Conversations about Contemporary Concerns this summer? You can find the notes about the social justice topics discussed on St. Mary’s website at www.aggiecatholic.org/index.cfm?load=page&page=785