

World AIDS Day 2005

Statement of Caritas Internationalis:

**“Keeping the Promise in Service, Advocacy, and Faith”**

In 1987, more than 150 members of Caritas Internationalis<sup>1</sup> included the situation of HIV and AIDS as a concern for prioritized reflection and action in the Confederation Work Plan. At each subsequent General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis, held every four years, the HIV pandemic has warranted similar attention and commitment.

The Caritas Confederation of national Catholic emergency relief, social service, and development organisations has kept its promise to contribute significantly to the global response to HIV and AIDS in the following ways:

- by disseminating information and educational opportunities about HIV and AIDS among its member organizations and other Church structures in all parts of the world;
- by promoting solidarity in support of HIV and AIDS programs sponsored by Caritas and other Catholic structures in developing countries;
- by advocating on the global, national, and local levels for a more comprehensive laws and policies to assure full access to care, treatment, support and education among those living with and/or affected by the pandemic;
- by discouraging stigma and discrimination toward and encouraging compassionate, non-judgmental care and attention those who directly know the impact of HIV.

In June 2005, Pope Benedict XVI indicated his intention to maintain the policy of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, who distinguished himself through particular care and concern for those living with HIV and AIDS. Thus Pope Benedict urged group of African Bishops visiting the Holy See:

I urge you to continue your efforts to fight this virus, which not only kills but seriously threatens the economic and social stability of the continent. The Catholic Church has always been in the forefront, both in prevention and in treatment of this illness.<sup>2</sup>

Inspired by the encouragement offered by our Holy Father, Caritas Internationalis pledges itself to “keep the promise” in the global response to HIV and AIDS by building capacity among its member organisations and other Catholic health and social service organisations worldwide:

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<sup>1</sup> As of November 2005, Caritas Internationalis has 162 national member organisations working in more than 200 countries of the world.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano* 15 June 2005

Member of: Pontifical Council Cor Unum – Conference of International Catholic Organizations  
Consultative status: ECOSOC (General St.) – FAO – WFP – UNESCO – UNICEF – ILO (special list) – Council of Europe

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- to “scale up” their HIV- and AIDS-related activities as is demanded by the growing threat and impact of this pandemic;
- to fulfill the commitment of collaboration with UNAIDS in accord with the Memorandum of Understanding between our two organisations first established in 2001, but always maintaining conformity to the teachings of the Catholic Church which provide the foundation of Caritas action in the world;
- to advocate for more transparent and more comprehensive “keeping the promises” made by governments in the 2001 UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV and AIDS and in the Millennium Development Summit;
- to join with our sisters and brothers living with HIV and AIDS in their attempts to live positively and responsibly with this virus.

On this World AIDS Day 2005, Caritas Internationalis renews its faith in God and its adherence to the strategies promoted by Pope John Paul II in his message to the observance of the World Day of the Sick, held on 11 February 2005, in Yaounde, Cameroon:

Everyone must feel involved in the battle against AIDS. In this area too, it is the task of government leaders and civil authorities to make available to citizens clear and correct information, and to earmark sufficient resources to provide education in health care for young people. I encourage international organizations to promote initiatives in this field that are inspired by wisdom and solidarity, and always to strive to defend human dignity and to protect the inviolable right to life ...

Of course, financial resources are necessary for scientific research in the health-care sector and further resources are required to put the newly discovered drugs on the market, but in the face of emergencies such as AIDS, the preservation of human life must come before any other criterion ...

At the next World Day of the Sick, let us therefore proclaim the hope of total health for Africa and for all humanity, as we strive to work with greater determination at the service of this important cause.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, Message to Observance of World Day of the Sick, 11 February 2005, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/sick/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_20040929\\_world-day-of-the-sick-2005\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/sick/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20040929_world-day-of-the-sick-2005_en.html)