



# A Journey to Justice

## with the Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty



### Debt Forgiveness: A Jubilee

Diocese of Oakland

**This Week:**  
**Debt Forgiveness**

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**Journey to Justice Series:**

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#### Faces of Hope



**Debt Relief Works!**

In 2006, thanks to debt cancellation:

**Zambia** was able to hire 4,500 new teachers and abolish fees for rural healthcare;

**Mozambique** introduced a free immunization program for children;

**Burkina Faso** achieved an increase of 26 percent in access to safe drinking water.

#### Did You Know...

... that 50 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are struggling to repay enormous debts owed to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other banks?

... that at the current rate of repayment, it would take many of them a hundred years to free themselves of their debt?

... that many developing countries spend more money on debt repayment than on health care?

... that, as a result, 30,000 children die *every day* of easily preventable diseases?

#### Progress is Possible

We in the developed world are beginning to realize that it is largely because of this crushing burden of debt repayment that many countries in the global South continue to be mired in poverty. Often these debts were incurred years ago by corrupt regimes, and the people who are now suffering the consequences have never derived any benefit from the loan. The cancellation of debts is a crucial first step towards poverty reduction, enabling poor countries to allocate funds to education, health care, and basic infrastructure.

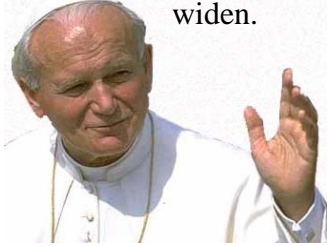
In 2005 people of many faiths worked together and won a promise from the Bush administration, other world leaders, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to cancel the debts of 20 of the poorest countries. It was a good first step. However, many nations were left out of this agreement. Furthermore, even those who were promised debt cancellation are facing delays or are finding that there are “strings” attached in the form of harsh economic requirements.

2007 has been designated a “jubilee year” because it is the mid-point between 2000, the year when the Millennium Development Goals to reduce global poverty were set, and their target date of 2015. As the new Congress convenes, we, as informed citizens, can communicate that debt relief is a priority, that it gives impoverished nations the fresh start necessary for development to help build a better, safer world.

## From our Faith Tradition: Jubilee

*“If you want peace, work for justice.”*

The Church’s teaching on debt reaches back to the Old Testament, especially the Book of Leviticus (25:1-55). “Jubilee” was an ideal, held up periodically to remind the Israelites that God wanted them to create a society in which the fruits of the earth would be shared by all. One of the important parts of the jubilee tradition was the forgiveness of debts, which aimed to ensure that the gap between rich and poor would not continue to widen.



In our time, the tradition has a global dimension. Pope John Paul II suggested that “Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor of the world proposing the jubilee as an appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing substantially, if not canceling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations.”

## Learn More

- Jeffrey Sachs, [The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for our Time](#) (Penguin, 2005)
- From Jubilee USA: learn about debt relief and Sabbath Year 2007 <http://www.jubileeusa.org>
- Learn how poverty spurs immigration:  
Justice for Immigrants: Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org)
- Going Global with Youth: educational resources from CRS for youth <http://education.crs.org/>

## Pray and Celebrate

God our Creator,  
To those who are hungry and thirsty, give food and drink.  
To those who are not hungry and thirsty, give a hunger and a thirst for justice.  
Help us to share in the creation of a more just and peaceful world.  
Bless the Lenten alms we set aside in our household for the good or any sister or brother in need.  
We pray through Christ our Lord.  
*Amen.*

## Transformation: Take Action

- Write letters to your Senators and Representative urging them to support legislation that would cancel the debts of more impoverished countries. [www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org) Click on **Take Action**. Consider becoming a Jubilee Congregation.
- Face the Fast- the Food Fast- a hunger retreat using materials from Catholic Relief Services: <http://www.foodfast.org/index.cfm>

