

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT, YEAR C, RCL
DEUTERONOMY 26:1-11; PSALM 91:1-2, 9-16; ROMANS 10:8B-13; LUKE 4:1-13
FOCUS ON ERD AND THE SDGs

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2-14-16

Holy Lent to you all! We've got some good stories to frame our Lenten journey in our Scripture lessons this morning. In our OT lesson, we see the prescribed affirmations of how the worshippers are to keep their covenant with God and in our Epistle, we hear about how close God is to us—"The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart" and what we are supposed to do with that belief. "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him." How do we live that out?

Our focus for adult forum this program year has been Reconciliation: reconciliation with God, with each other, with ourselves, and with the world. We can all respond to God's call to reconciliation—it is another aspect of sharing our faith with the world. We can participate in reconciliation in many ways, but today, we are going to focus on Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) and our Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs, because those are definite responses by our church and other nations and organizations around the world to enter into reconciliation. We developed the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs in 2000 and 193 nations recommitted to this call last year—re-naming them "The Global Goals for Sustainable Development" and expanding them to 17 goals, making our goal date 2030. These goals are an important extension of what we work toward as Christians...in bringing the Kingdom of God to people here on earth.

We will be learning a little bit more about some of "The Global Goals for Sustainable Development" during our sermon time this morning. We've grouped them into general topic categories. Now it's time to pick a goal, any goal! [Congregation member picks goal paper at random and priest matches the goal up with the visual]

GOALS 1 and 2: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Child friendly language: No more empty tummies, everyone can have what they need. There is plenty of food for everyone to have enough.

Prop: Apple

"If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one." - Mother Teresa

What is it like to live on \$1 a day? Well, Selina Bonefesi knows and she was willing to let the Christian Science Monitor tell her story:

(BOWA, MALAWI) At 8 a.m., after seeing her husband off to work and her children off to school, Selina Bonefesi puts on her entrepreneur's hat. Mrs. Bonefesi has a small business making fritters - fried cakes made of wheat, salt, sugar, and yeast.

She'll spend the morning mixing, waiting for the dough to rise, and frying, cranking out as many as 300 of the tasty treats and selling them from her home to passersby. By the end of the week, between her household chores and running her business, she'll have logged more hours than a Fortune 500 CEO.

But she'll only earn about \$1 a day.

Selina, her husband, and four children are among the 1.2 billion people in the world living on less than a dollar a day - what the United Nations calls "extreme poverty." Many of them are in Africa. Some live in rural villages, others in urban shantytowns; some can be found in the deserts of Chad, others in the jungles of the Congo. Yet Selina's family in Malawi is typical: they have limited education, little access to jobs or capital, and are ruled by an indebted government that lacks a coherent plan for helping its poorest citizens.

While Selina and Bonefesi will continue to work diligently at their businesses, Bonefesi wants Western readers to know: "It is good to live in Malawi, but poverty is the real struggle. If there are other countries that are willing to help, let them help us fight poverty. Poverty is the biggest enemy we know."

GOAL 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING (REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY AND IMPROVE CHILD MORTALITY) **Child friendly terms: No more child deaths when they could have easily been made well. Children under the age of five don't get sick or die from diseases that can be cured with a visit to the doctor and good medicine. Improve health for pregnant women. Pregnant women can visit a midwife, nurse or doctor during their pregnancy and when they have their baby. If they need medicine, it is available.**

Prop: Doll

"Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance." - Article 25, 1949 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Across the world, young children and pregnant women are bearing the brunt of deteriorating health systems. Every year, nearly 10 million children die before their fifth birthday, most of them from preventable or treatable causes such as measles, diarrhea, malnutrition and other ailments that more affluent countries no longer worry about. Approximately 500,000 mothers die each year from complications during child birth, and tens of millions more suffer from pregnancy related illnesses and injuries. Africa's child mortality rate is 20 times that of the United States and its maternal mortality rate is 65 times that of the United States.

The challenge here is not a lack of technology, but a lack of access to technology. There is a shortage of health care workers, basic equipment, predictable financing and infrastructure, and a growing recognition among policymakers that global health programs must be designed in a way that strengthens access to basic neo-natal care and prevention measures like vaccines.

GOAL 4- ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION **Child friendly language: All children can go to at least a few years of school regardless of where they live or how much money they have.**

Prop: Book

"Education is not filling a bucket but lighting a fire." - William B. Yeats

In the book, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace . . . One School at a Time*, Greg Mortenson, and journalist David Oliver Relin, recount the journey that led Mortenson from a failed 1993 attempt to climb Pakistan's K2, the world's second highest mountain, to successfully establish schools in some of the most remote regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In 1993 Mortenson was descending from his failed attempt to reach the peak of K2. Exhausted and disoriented, he wandered away from his group into the most desolate reaches of northern Pakistan. Alone, without food, water, or shelter he stumbled into an impoverished Pakistani village where he was nursed back to health.

While recovering he observed the village's 84 children sitting outdoors, scratching their lessons in the dirt with sticks. The village was so poor that it could not afford the \$1-a-day salary to hire a teacher. When he left the village, he promised that he would return to build them a school. From that rash, heartfelt promise grew one of the most incredible humanitarian campaigns of our time. In an early effort to raise money he wrote letters to 580 celebrities, businessmen, and other prominent Americans. His only reply was a \$100 check from NBC's Tom Brokaw. Selling everything he owned, he still only raised \$2,400. But his efforts changed when a group of elementary school children in River Falls, Wisconsin, donated \$623.40 in pennies, who inspired adults to begin to take action. The 283 foot **Braldu Bridge** was completed in 1995 and the **Korphe School** was completed in 1996. Since then, he's established 78 schools. In pursuit of his goal, Mortenson has survived an armed kidnapping, fatwas issued by enraged mullahs, repeated death threats, and wrenching separations from his wife and children. Yet his success speaks for itself.

GOALS 5 and 10: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN In child friendly language: Let girls and boys, women and men, be equal. Women are treated fairly and with respect, when they go to work and when they are at home with their families.

Prop: Dollar bill

"The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all." - Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, leader of Burma's democracy movement

Did You Know...

Of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty around the world, 70% are women. (Source: World Revolution)

In the least developed countries nearly twice as many women over age 15 are illiterate compared to men. (Source: UNFPA)

Two-thirds of children denied primary education are girls, and 75% of the world's 876 million illiterate adults are women. (Source: AskWoman)

Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours, produce half of the world's food, and yet earn only 10% of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's property. (Source: World Development Indicators, 1997, Womankind Worldwide)

GOALS 6, 7, 12, 13, 14: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY **Child friendly language:** Create a healthy environment for everyone, always. Everyone has access to clean water to drink and use for washing. The environment is better protected so that all children, and their children, and their children can enjoy the trees, fresh air, clean water, fresh food and beautiful places.

Prop: Plant

"I join many of my colleagues and many of you on this committee in sharing a profound concern that climate change will most severely affect those living in poverty and the most vulnerable in our communities here in the United States and around the world. I want to be absolutely clear; inaction on our part is the most costly of all courses of action for those living in poverty." – The 26th Presiding Bishop, Katharine Jefferts Schori in testimony to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on the link between global poverty and climate change.

Did You Know...

In our world today around 2.5 billion people do not have access to improved sanitation and some 1.2 billion people do not have access to an improved source of water. (Source: Why do the Millennium Development Goals matter? Brochure)

Each day at least 10,000 people worldwide die from disease-infected water. In many parts of the world, useable fresh water (about 1% of the planet's total) is a resource more valuable than oil and even more essential to life.

By 2015, some 3 billion people were living in countries where fresh water was in short supply; by 2050, the number could be as high as 7 billion. Numbers this large are difficult to comprehend, which is why the most specific examples are the most horrifying. Consider the Taliban's unauthorized construction of a dam on the Helmand River in eastern Afghanistan in the 1990s and its effect on neighboring Iran, where a 4,000-square-kilometer lake has been sucked bone-dry. All fish have disappeared and so has the village that until recently depended on catching them. What remains is an exposed lakebed, rapidly being covered by dunes from frequent sandstorms. A modest example maybe, but a particularly haunting symbol for a growing global problem.

GOAL 15: LIFE ON LAND (COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA, AND OTHER DISEASES) **Child friendly language:** Work to end AIDS, malaria and other diseases. People across the world are protected from bugs that spread disease and make people sick, in simple ways like mosquito nets or with medicine to make them better again.

Prop: Prescription bottle if you don't have a net

Did You Know...

One million people die each year from malaria — an easily preventable disease.

14,000 new HIV/AIDS infections are diagnosed every day.

Episcopal Relief & Development is the managing partner in Ghana for NetsforLife®, a malaria prevention program partnership comprised of individual, foundation, and corporate sponsors. Episcopal Relief & Development is working with ADDRO to distribute long-lasting insecticide-treated nets and educate communities in prevention and treatment methods.

GOALS 8, 9, 11, 16, & 17: CREATE A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT WITH TARGETS FOR AID, TRADE, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, AND DEBT RELIEF Child friendly language: "Thumbs up" to the whole world working together for good. Rich governments help poor governments, and people help other people in different countries by sharing money or by paying them fair prices for food when they buy it.

Prop: Globe or map

Jesus said, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' "

Did You Know...

The United Nations estimates that unfair trade rules deny poor countries \$700 billion every year. Less than 0.01% of this could save the sight of 30 million people. (Source: ChristianAid)

In 1970, 22 of the world's richest countries pledged to spend 0.7% of their national income on aid. 34 years later, only 5 countries have kept that promise. The UK hasn't. (Source: Save The Children)

The poorest 49 countries make up 10% of the world's population but account for only 0.4% of world trade. Their share has halved since 1980. (Source: ChristianAid)

Closing Remarks

In our Gospel today, we hear of Jesus going out into the wilderness for 40 days and being tempted by the devil. In looking at The Global Goals for Sustainable Development, we hear about people living in a variety of physical, emotional, and spiritual desolation. Perhaps we are tempted to look away or impose our own agenda on our brothers and sisters? We are in Lent—a time of looking at our own spiritual wilderness...a time to think about where Jesus is calling us to minister to the physical, emotional, and spiritual wildernesses of this world. How can we do our part in reconciliation? The Sustainable Development Goals are just a start. During Lent, I encourage you to check out the ERD and SDG websites and pray about one action that you can do to make a difference in ushering in reconciliation in the world. Who knows how you might change a life? God knows that yours will certainly be changed. AMEN.