



Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church
3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017

December 1, 2008

Your Eminence/Your Excellency,

The annual World AIDS Day commemoration on Monday, December 1, 2008, is a special international observance held to call the attention of people throughout the world to the catastrophic effects of HIV/AIDS on the world population. There are an estimated 40 million people world-wide living with HIV/AIDS – 37 million adults and 2.5 million children younger than 15 years of age. Especially hard-hit are sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, as well as communities of color in the United States and the Caribbean.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that there may be up to 1 million people living with HIV in the United States today. 56,300 new infections will be added this year, a number that is substantially higher than the previous estimate of 40,000 annual new infections. Of these new cases, over 47 percent are in African American communities, 33 percent are Europeans, Latinos account for 17 percent, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Alaska Natives and American Indians each represent roughly 1 percent of the total reported AIDS cases.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI appealed for solidarity with those living with and otherwise affected by HIV/AIDS throughout the world. He focused on the grave situation of children and families so affected in Africa.

The pontiff said he shared their concern for the devastation the virus is causing in Africa and said he has prayed for “all those whose lives have been shattered by this cruel epidemic.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Message to African Bishops of South Africa 2005)

There is an urgent need to reach out and mobilize the Catholic community and the general public to fight the HIV/AIDS crisis. Our Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church along with our Subcommittees on Hispanic Affairs, African American Affairs, Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs, Native American Affairs, and Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers, have joined together to speak with one voice on addressing this crisis in our communities.

We invite you to encourage the faithful under your charge to join their prayers with others in the hope that an end to this epidemic will soon be realized. Available on our Publishing website is a prayer for the Healing of AIDS: (www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=751).

If you have questions, please contact the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church at 202/541-3350 (www.usccb.org/cdc).

With prayerful best wishes, we are

Fraternally yours,

+ José H. Gómez

Most Reverend José H. Gómez
Chairman, Committee on Cultural
Diversity in the Church

+ Richard J. Garcia

Most Reverend Richard J. Garcia
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Hispanic Affairs

+ Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.

Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
Chairman, Subcommittee on Native
American Affairs

+ Martin D. Holley

Most Reverend Martin D. Holley
Chairman, Subcommittee on
African American Affairs

+ John R. Manz

Most Reverend John R. Manz
Chairman, Subcommittee on Pastoral
Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers

+ Oscar A. Solis

Most Reverend Oscar Azarcon Solis
Chairman, Subcommittee on Asian
and Pacific Islanders