

# TO WELCOME 2017, STOP AND REFLECT ON OUR VOCATION

**T**he new year is an invitation to renewal, conversion, reflection. For those of us working in global health, it's an opportunity to go forward, unwavering, in the belief that we are to share the Earth's resources with all of God's people, be it by reaching out in times of disaster, medical mission experiences, twinning programs, funding or other means.



**BRUCE  
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With Pope Francis' call to encounter, and with his example, we have an unprecedented opportunity to meet people where they are, to share the Good News that they are loved, they are valued, they are respected and they are seen as equals. Add to that the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, and new doors are opening that welcome collaboration and partnership

with faith-based actors. We are in a time ripe for making strides to eradicate poverty and extend the Earth's resources to all.

CHA affords me an interesting vantage point from which to see threads of discussion from the church and from various parts of secular society that, if woven together, create a beautiful tapestry of dialogue that may help to create a road map for this unprecedented opportunity. Terms long unique to faith-based institutions now can be heard coming from leaders of government and nongovernmental organizations ready to partner with ministries to eradicate poverty and improve maternal and child health. International meetings of faith-based and secular leaders are being held regularly to discuss possible collaborations, new partnerships are being created and a renewed spirit is present in many of those who long have been involved in international development.

For Catholic health care, we have an opportunity to reflect on our mission, understand how we can be most helpful, bring together the right resources and move forward with renewed energy and a sense of optimism. We know that we aren't going to solve all of the world's problems, but we also know that we have an important role to play.

How do we do our part in a way that is true to our heritage, overcomes the shortcomings and sometimes harmful consequences of our past efforts and celebrates the successes we have had in getting to this point? That is our question to ponder this new year.

To provide some insights and inspiration as we move into 2017, here are some quotes from the past couple of years that resonate with me. They cause me to pause, they inspire me or they ignite my passion for this vocation. I offer them to you to ignite your passion and desire to redouble your efforts; evaluate what you are doing in international outreach to meet communities where they are; determine if you are operating under a double standard by which you do things in low- and middle-income countries that you never would dream of doing in a U.S.-based clinic; and assess how you are sharing the Good News through your actions rather than your words. My hope is that these quotations from people you may or may not have heard of will spark in you a love for the journey — one in which all of God's people have dignity.

*"Be a global citizen. Act with passion and compassion. Help us make this world safer and more sustainable today and for the generations that will follow us. That is our moral responsibility."*

*— U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon*

*"Go out to others and share the good news that God, our Father, walks at our side. He frees us from anonymity, from a life of emptiness, and brings us to the school of encounter. He removes us from the fray of competition and self-absorption, and he opens before us the path of peace. That peace which is born of accepting others, that peace which fills our hearts whenever we look*

upon those in need as our brothers and sisters.”

— Pope Francis

“We stand at the threshold of what was once considered an impossible goal: the end of extreme poverty in our lifetime. In fact, our optimism and recent evidence has strengthened our resolve to be even more ambitious. Just a few months ago, we estimated that in 2015 for the first time in history the percentage of people living in extreme poverty fell below 10 percent. We have strengthened our vision of a world free of poverty by 2030 by also resolving to boost the prosperity of the bottom 40 percent of the population in developing countries. This is the first time that the World Bank Group has set a target for income inequality. Our optimism about the future is fueled by the political agreement that was reached in September of 2015 when UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon officially announced a shift from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals — moving from a narrower focus on eight specific goals to a much more comprehensive agenda.”

— World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim

“When it comes to global health, there is no ‘them’... only ‘us.’”

— Global Health Council

“But only recently have I become aware of the problem with such an approach. ‘I’ was the subject; ‘they’ were the object. ‘I’ was graciously doing what I could to help and support ‘them.’

In reality, the problem was ‘I’ and not ‘them.’

— Rev. Charles E. Curran

“You all know the story of the folks in a village who kept recovering bodies from their river and burying them, until finally, someone decided they needed to go up river to find out why those peo-

ple were dying. I think Pope Francis, from his orientation as one from the Global South and his personal identification with the poor, had seen enough — not only untimely deaths and systemic impoverishment, but even more the inadequacy of charitable and development responses. He says clearly that poverty ‘is a global problem created by systems that by their very nature perpetuate inequity.’ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, chapter 4) He is referring explicitly to the dominant global economic theory: ‘People continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting.’ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 54).”

— Rev. William A. Vos

“Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth — these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women’s empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.”

— Ban Ki-moon

“The 2030 agenda for sustainable development wants to make sure these and many other disasters are averted. The agenda aims to do nothing less than transform the way the world, and the international systems that govern it, work. The goals and targets are broad, visionary, and supremely ambitious. They have been criticized by some as utopian, unaffordable, out of touch, and out of reach. I disagree. The vision inspires optimism and hope, but

it is also firmly anchored in the realities of a world that desperately needs to change. The ambition of the agenda is to tackle the root causes of the world’s many woes, from the degrading misery of poverty to the consequences of terrorism and violence, in an integrated and interactive way. The agenda puts the people left behind first.”

— Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization

“What we also have to do is foster greater coherence between humanitarian response and sustainable development. The first part of this is about learning. Throughout my career I’ve worked on development and humanitarian challenges, and I think the two communities have a great deal to learn from each other. I’ve often said since becoming Administrator that development is an aspiration but it’s also a discipline. Humanitarian response is also a discipline. Right? For any successful development venture to succeed, it must be focused on making sure progress can last well into the future. We all know and agree with that. That takes a careful understanding of the political, economic, and social contexts and a commitment to building capacity of the country’s government and communities. But for emergency responders, sustainability has simply not been a guiding principle in the past. The objective is most often to meet the needs, stabilize, and move on to the next fire. But there are opportunities for more coherence there. Another concept prevalent in our development work is the idea of value for money. This is just as important in humanitarian response, and we need to start thinking about it that way.”

— USAID Administrator Gayle Smith

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