

Dear Friends in Christ, recently the Halton Catholic School Board voted to stop raising funds for charities and organizations that were not in keeping with the principle of Catholic mission. In particular, they refused to give donations to any institutions that did not uphold the sanctity of life from conception to natural death, including any charities or non-profits that “publicly support, either directly or indirectly, abortion, contraception, sterilization, euthanasia, or embryonic stem cell research.” Their actions were not only courageous (given that they were going to experience many forms of oppositions against their decision) but also in conformity with the Church’s moral and social teachings.

Just a few days ago, the Office of Public Relations & Communications from the Archdiocese of Toronto issued a statement from Thomas Cardinal Collins regarding Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace. The full statement reads: “Since 1967, the Catholic bishops of Canada have entrusted the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace (CCODP) with the mandate of working in developing countries to support projects that reflect the social justice mission of the Catholic Church. We also rely on CCODP, as the Canadian member of the Vatican’s humanitarian relief network, Caritas Internationalis, to channel emergency funds when disaster strikes.

In the Archdiocese of Toronto, many donors and volunteers faithfully contribute to this important work. I am grateful for their continued support of our brothers and sisters in need.

In 2009, due to concerns about problematic partners in numerous countries, I announced that the Archdiocese of Toronto would require CCODP to provide greater scrutiny of its projects with overseas partners to ensure that they are consistent with Catholic teaching. CCODP is a significant recipient of funds collected as part of our annual ShareLife appeal. We consider our relationship with our donors to be that of a sacred trust. It was therefore also communicated to CCODP that funding from the Archdiocese of Toronto would require letters of endorsement from a local Catholic bishop or bishops’ conference to ensure that projects and partners were appropriately vetted at the local level and certified to be in harmony with our faith. This process has continued for almost a decade. Our donors’ funds have not been disbursed until these assurances were provided.

A recent review of CCODP partners, conducted by representatives of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB), has produced alarming concerns about dozens of overseas organizations. We anticipate a more detailed report on the situation in the coming months. In the interim, we will be withholding our 2018 allocation to CCODP until more information is provided to the CCCC. **As CCODP is the development arm established by the Catholic bishops, it is critical to ensure that it allocates no funds to projects or groups that operate contrary to the moral and social teachings of the church** (my emphasis).” Cardinal Thomas Collins Archbishop of Toronto April 11, 2018. [Additional information: A statement by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on questions concerning CCODP partners can be found at: bit.ly/cccbccodpapr18].

Many Catholics today make innumerable donations to various organizations based on noble intent, goodwill, and with the belief that their respective chosen organizations are compliant and in conformity with the Church’s teachings. Both the Halton Board’s decision to withhold funds to certain organizations and the Cardinal’s recent letter has revealed that isn’t always the case. If you are giving to any organizations (especially secular, non-Catholic ones), don’t be afraid to ask some questions: How are my funds being used? What type of programs are they supporting? Are these programs in conformity with our Faith? Etc.... Although sharing our resources is an important dimension of our religious duties, nevertheless, as Catholics, we should ensure that we are giving in a responsible manner, that is, we are only contributing to those organizations that are in conformity with our church’s moral and social teachings.

Pax Christi, Fr. Thomas