Prayers and Reflections

OPENING REFLECTIONS

Scripture
Here is my servant . . . I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.
Isaiah 42:1

Catholic Social Teaching
The United Nations represents the obligatory path of modern civilization and of world peace.
Pope Paul VI, Address to the United Nations, 1965

In the work of promoting justice, building peace, and ensuring that human dignity and human rights are respected throughout the world, you [the United Nations] have the full and complete support of the Catholic Church.
Pope John Paul II, Address to the United Nations, 1995

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer For A Uniting of Nations
O loving and gracious Creator,
Your love embraces all members of the human family,
Your care extends to the least of those among us,
to all our brothers and sisters in every part of the earth.

You call us to a mature love and concern for the entire human community.
You call us as individuals, as a nation, as a united community of nations.
Let us hear this prayer in our hearts and respond with faith and good will.

Bless all efforts toward uniting peoples and nations.
Bless the United Nations
As it strives to be an authentic community,
As it witnesses to the needs of all, to the rights of all,
As it toils in the difficult work of peacemaking in all its aspects.

Grant us the wisdom and the grace
To become a true global family
And witness Your Reign on this earth.

Amen.
Activities

1) Begin with the opening reflections on page 1 of this unit.

2) Catholic Social Teaching and the United Nations Charter: Have participants in your group or class read over page 4. Then have them fill out the chart on page 3 and discuss the similarities between CST and the UN values, as well as answer the questions on the top of that page.

Share the following quote from the Holy See’s UN representative, Archbishop Migliore, and discuss this post-Iraq perspective on the United Nations:

*The recent Iraqi crisis has drawn attention to the need for a greater commitment to the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter in order to avoid unilateral actions which could lead to the weakening of international law and existing agreements.*

*It is the time for all to work together to plan a sort of constitutional engineering of humanity, which will not give life to a super world state, but that – as suggested in John XXIII’s ‘Pacem in Terris’ – will continue and further the process already under way of shared participation at levels that are transparent and articulated with authority.*

3) Matching Activity: To learn about the different bodies of the United Nations and their functions, have your group or class match the titles on the left column with the descriptions on the right column.

*The correct answers are: General Assembly-F; Security Council-C; Economic and Social Council-A; International Court of Justice-E; UN System-B (The UN, the IMF and the World Bank all grew out of the Bretton Woods Conference held in the U.S. after World War II); Secretariat-D*

Ask your group to discuss the most surprising and/or interesting facts they learned about the UN.

4) United Nations Achievement Quiz: Distribute the UN Quiz (pages 6-7) and have class/group break up into small groups. Have them discuss the questions and choose answers. Then hand out the answers (page 8-10), and have participants take turns reading the answers aloud. Discuss whether or not the actual work of the UN lives up to the values of its Charter (page 4).

5) End with the closing prayer.
### Activity: Catholic Social Teaching and the UN Charter

- **a)** Divide into small groups.
- **b)** Read “Some Key Themes from Catholic Social Teaching” and “The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations,” found on page 4.
- **c)** Look for phrases from the Preamble that are similar to the CST themes. Fill in the chart below.
- **d)** Once everyone is finished, discuss the questions in the next column in small groups and then share with all.

#### Questions

1. **How similar are the main themes of the UN Charter and some major CST themes?** Why do you think this is so? Is it surprising that the Church has shown a great deal of support for the UN?

2. **There has been criticism of the UN in the U.S., especially before the Iraqi war.** What criticisms have you heard or read about? The U.S. is now seeking the help of the United Nations. **What do you think is changing U.S. perspectives on the UN?**

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<th>Catholic Social Teaching Themes</th>
<th>United Nations Charter Themes</th>
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Some Key Themes from Catholic Social Teaching

**Human Dignity**
Made in the image of God, women and men have a preeminent place in the social order.

**Solidarity**
We belong to one human family. As such we have mutual obligations to promote the rights and development of all people across communities, nations, and the world, irrespective of national boundaries.

**Promotion of Peace**
Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among humans and among nations.

**Promotion of the Common Good**
The common good is the sum total of all those conditions of social living -- economic, political, cultural -- which make it possible for women and men readily and fully to achieve the perfection of their humanity.

**Option for the Poor**
A preferential love should be shown for the poor . . . the economically disadvantaged who, as a consequence of their status, suffer oppression and powerlessness.

**Political and Economic Rights**
All human persons enjoy inalienable rights, which are political-legal (e.g. voting, free speech, migration) and social-economic (e.g. food, shelter, work, education).

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The United Nations Charter

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, AND FOR THESE ENDS

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and

to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.

Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.

Adapted from Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret, Orbis Press, 2003
The United Nations, and the large family of specialized organizations represented by it, are the natural forum for developing a mentality and strategy of international solidarity.

Pope John Paul II, Address to the Secretary General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination of the United Nations, April 2000

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Match the titles of the United Nations bodies (below) with the boxes on the right detailing the duties of these bodies.

The UN General Assembly

The UN Security Council

The UN Economic and Social Council

The International Court of Justice

The UN System/Trustee Council

The UN Secretariat

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A. The central forum for discussion for international economic and social issues and formulating policy recommendations, working to promote higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social viability. Consulting with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it seeks solutions to international socioeconomic, health, and other problems through international and cultural cooperation and advocates for the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The 54 members are elected for 3-year terms and make up five regional commissions.

B. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank for Development Group, and 12 other independent organizations known as ‘specialized agencies’ are linked to the UN through cooperative agreements.

C. Made up of 15 members, it is seen as the primary instrument for establishing and maintaining international peace, preventing war by settling disputes between nations. It offers guidance, mediation in conflict, encourages cease-fire, and sends out peacekeeping missions (made up of member nation forces). It can engage in measures of enforcement such as imposition of economic sanctions or authorizing “all necessary means.” The 5 permanent members are: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The other 10 members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms and represent five regions of the world. Decisions of the council require nine yes votes, but a decision cannot be made if there is a veto by a permanent member.

D. Kofi Annan of Ghana, the seventh and current Secretary-General of the United Nations, carries out mediation and diplomacy through this body of 8,900 staff members from 160 countries which carries out the administrative duties of the UN.

E. It is housed at The Hague in the Netherlands. It focuses on universal human rights as an international mechanism to hold individuals accountable for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes when their national judicial system is either unable or unwilling to do so. Created in 2002, its 15 judges (of different nationalities) are elected to nine-year terms by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The ruling and effectiveness of the Court is dependent upon a state’s acceptance of its jurisdiction.

F. A “parliament” of 190 nations that meets to discuss matters affecting world peace and security. Decisions on “important matters” are decided by a two-thirds majority of those present (each member state has one vote), with other decisions by majority vote. Makes recommendations but does not hold any powers of enforcement.

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1 Japan, Germany, India, Brazil and Nigeria (the last 3 have larger populations than several current UN Security Council members) are lobbying for permanent seats on the Council.
United Nations (UN) Quiz

Do you know the answers to the following questions about the function of the UN in the world? The answers are on pages 8-10 that follow.

1. The UN supervised elections in which of the following countries in the last decade?
   a. Cambodia
   b. Zimbabwe
   c. Sierra Leone
   d. East Timor

2. Which of the following are specialized agencies of the UN?
   a. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
   b. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
   c. International Labour Organization (ILO)
   d. World Health Organization (WHO)
   e. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

3. What is the primary focus of UNICEF?
   a. Immunizations for children
   b. Girls’ education
   c. HIV/AIDS prevention for children
   d. Nutrition for children

4. In which four regions was the UN undertaking peacekeeping operations in 2002?
   a. Central America, Africa, Europe, and North America
   b. Asia, Africa, The Middle East, and Europe
   c. Asia, The Middle East, Central America, and Africa
   d. Africa, South America, Asia, and The Middle East

5. What does the UN World Food Programme (WFP) provide?
   a. Regulation of food production
   b. Loan assistance to farmers
   c. Resources to fight global hunger
   d. Landmine disarmament

6. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)…
   a. Develops athletic programs
   b. Works on development of the image of the UN as an organization
   c. Promotes people-centered economic and social development of poor countries
   d. Analyzes the progress of development and the challenges that are barriers to full development for poor countries

7. The International Labour Organization (ILO) seeks primarily to promote…
   a. International corporations
   b. Human and labor rights
   c. Just work
   d. Organization of unions
United Nations (UN) Quiz (continued)

8. Which of the following are UN conventions or treaties?
   a. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
   b. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
   c. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism (CERD)
   d. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
   e. Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
   f. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

9. The U.S. rejoined what UN organization after a 19-year boycott, prompting world news coverage on September 29, 2003?
   a. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
   b. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
   c. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
   d. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

10. The UN needs to raise how much money annually to fund its world wide efforts?
    a. $942 million
    b. $1.9 billion
    c. $2.6 billion
    d. $3.4 billion

11. The UN sponsored which of the following international conferences?
    a. The World Summit for Children
    b. The World Conference of Indigenous Persons
    c. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
    d. The World Conference on Human Rights
    e. The World Food Summit

12. True or False? A delegation from the Holy See is a permanent observer to the UN.
United Nations (UN) Quiz Answers

1. a, b, c and d
The UN supervised the 1993 elections in Cambodia as part of its largest peacekeeping effort ever, and it supervised the 1999 referendum in East Timor. The UN has also assisted in the elections held in many other countries, such as Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Comoros, Fiji, Bangladesh, Sao Tome and Principe and many others.

2. a, b, c, d, e and f
These are all specialized agencies of the UN, coordinated by the Economic and Social Council. There are 40 UN agencies in total. Some of the others include: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) and The World Bank.

3. a, b, c and d
These are all foci of UNICEF, with additional focus on:
- monitoring and statistics of children
- teaching life skills
- eliminating gender inequality
- helping countries in crisis
- unifying communities and families proactively for children
- adolescence issues
- building a protective environment for children
- education from early childhood

4. b
In 2002, UN peacekeepers were in Asia, Africa, The Middle East, and Europe. In Asia, they were active in East Timor and on the India-Pakistan border; in Africa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone and the Western Sahara; in The Middle East, in Golan Heights, on the Iraq-Kuwait border and in Lebanon; and in Europe, Cyprus, Georgia and Kosovo.

5. c
Fighting global hunger. In 2002, the World Food Programme fed 72 million people in 82 countries. After the 2001 earthquakes in El Salvador, the WFP made an emergency appeal to help 200,000 vulnerable victims, who ultimately received some of the 4.2 million tons of food distributed that year.

6. c and d
The United Nations Development Program assists countries in building and sharing solutions to: democratic governance, poverty, crisis prevention, energy and environment, technology and HIV/AIDS. Since 1985, the UNDP has helped some 80 countries adopt multiparty elections, a hallmark of democracy. Each year the UNDP produces an Annual Human Development Report, focusing on the progress toward full economic and social development of poor countries.

7. b and c
The International Labour Organization seeks to promote social justice and internationally recognized economic and labor rights: “Retention of cheap labor practices maintains a nation in a cycle of poverty which relies on low costs and low productivity for maintaining income” (Just Work Project). In 2001, the ILO and Self Employment Women Association (SEWA) set up a project in 10 Indian villages targeting women artisans to train in handicraft, shelter reconstruction and earthquake resistant construction, allowing women to have multiple roles in society.
United Nations (UN) Quiz Answers (continued)

8. a, b, c, d, e, and f
These are only six of the more well-known of 51 conventions and declarations that have been developed by the UN since 1927. A UN convention is a treaty created by member states that binds signing nation-states to enforceable laws. To create a treaty, working groups draft and propose the treaty and present it to the General Assembly, which then votes to adopt it (a two-thirds vote is required for adoption). The treaty is then proposed to member nation-states for signatures. After member nation-states sign and ratify the treaty, it enters into force for those countries. A nation-state that doesn’t want to sign a particular treaty can also declare an objection to the treaty, and states can also object to objections. A nation-state also has the option of signing with reservations, excluding or altering certain provisions of a treaty, as long as the changes aren’t incompatible with the purpose of the treaty. Additionally, nation-state can add limitations to a treaty, creating state laws that guide the treaty’s application to that state’s given culture.

Therefore, a country can sign a treaty, but if it is not ratified by the state, it has only signatory status and is not legally binding. A signature declares that the state agrees with the principles set forth in the treaty, but ratification declares intent to be legally bound to the treaty’s terms.

None of the six aforementioned treaties have been ratified by all UN member states, although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been signed by all member states. Two member states (the U.S. and Somalia) have not ratified it.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) has been signed by 145 nations and ratified by 138 nations (not including the U.S.).

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) has been signed by 148 nations and ratified by 140 nations (including the U.S.).

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has been signed by 162 nations and ratified by 153 nations (including the U.S.).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has been signed by 170 nations and ratified by 167 nations (not including the U.S.).

The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) has been signed by 130 nations and ratified by 119 nations (including the U.S.).

9. a
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was created in 1945 to focus on free primary education, protection of culture and heritage, protection against racial prejudice, and the human genome and human rights. In 1974, Pope Paul VI awarded UNESCO the John XXIII Peace Prize. The Reagan administration withdrew from UNESCO in 1984, and took with it a quarter of UNESCO’s budget, but the Bush administration decided to rejoin the organization in September 2003.
The United Nations

United Nations (UN) Quiz Answers (continued)

10. c
The UN’s budget for 2002-2003 amounted to 2.6 billion dollars. The main source of funds for UN work is the contributions of Member States, which are assessed on a sliding scale. The basic criterion of the scale is the country’s capacity to pay. Currently, the U.S. is assessed at 22% of the UN budget. In 2002, only 117 Member States had paid their regular budget contributions in full. Of those owing some $305 million in regular budget assessments at the end of 2002, the United States owed $190 million or 62 per cent; Brazil owed $37 million, or 12 per cent; and Argentina owed $30 million or 10 per cent, with 69 other Member States having total outstanding amounts of $48 million or 16 per cent. (UN Press, May 8, 2003)

11. a, c, d, and e

12. True
The Holy See is a permanent observer to the UN but is considering applying for full membership. Catholic Popes, especially John Paul II have consistently supported and championed the work of the UN.