

"We are so hungry"

Sister Claudette Laverdiere, MM tells this story that she heard from a missionary sister in Nairobi, Kenya who, after a long teaching day, stopped at a local bakery to pick up a few dinner rolls as a treat for her community of three...

No sooner had I got out of the car than three young children came up to me, pleading for something to eat. The oldest was probably seven and the other two, a little boy and a little girl, four or five. The oldest spoke for all three when he said, "We are so hungry." I looked around, expecting to see an adult lurking in a corner or behind a post, but I did not see anyone. In Nairobi it is not unusual for impoverished parents to send their children out to beg. We all know how impossible it is to ignore a hungry child. Expecting to be beaten if they return with empty hands, the children are often extremely insistent. These three were well-mannered and soft-spoken. They made known their need and waited politely, probably hoping against hope that I would not simply walk away.

Many other shoppers hurried passed us, furtively glancing our way. I smiled at the children and told them to wait there, that I would be right back. I had intended to purchase one packet of six rolls. Instead I bought two. I gave one packet to the oldest boy, telling him to be sure to share the rolls with his little sister and brother. As I walked to the car, I looked back and watched a drama unfold. The seven-year-old had ripped open the bag and was placing two rolls in his siblings' hands, "Two for you and two for you." And then, as if on cue, all three practically inhaled the rolls. They could not eat them fast enough.

Reflecting on this story, Sr. Claudette writes: "sometimes Jesus soothed an aching heart by the mere touch of his hand. Always he was genuinely outraged by the dehumanizing situations confronting him. Time and again, he reinstated the marginalized into society."

Catholic social tradition advocates an economy that guarantees the human dignity of all members of society and the well-being of God's creation. In the past few decades, however, the global economy, which the U.S. has played an important role in shaping, has provided tremendous benefits for the world's wealthiest people with little tricking down to others.

Claudette continues her reflection, "an election year offers unique opportunities to raise the general consciousness regarding the fate of so many of our sisters and brothers in this country and everywhere. The spiraling disintegration of supportive social structures leaves million at risk..."

Read policy recommendations on how the U.S. could better ensure a fair and sustainable global economy in [Loving our neighbors in a shrinking world](#), a resource developed by Maryknoll missionaries who witness the global impact of U.S. political and economic decisions. Through this resource, Maryknoll missionaries encourage voters in the 2008 elections to scrutinize candidates' policy proposals through the lens of those who, both in the U.S. and overseas, lack basic necessities, endure the scourge of racism, live with gender-based discrimination or feel the immediate impact of climate change.