

# JPIC REPORT



A publication of the OMI Justice and Peace/Integrity of Creation Office

The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere.

In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction.

- Pope Benedict XVI

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## From the Director:

On June 29th, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, the long anticipated papal encyclical on financial and other social issues was released in Rome. The encyclical was welcomed across the world as an important contribution to the debate on issues from globalization to ecology and development. One of the central themes however was a reflection on the current global financial crisis and some specific guidance on the issues that need to be addressed if such crises are to be prevented in the future. The encyclical is keenly aware of the many people who have been seriously impacted by the meltdown as well as of the lapses in judgment and regulatory enforcement that allowed it to occur.

One of the vexing issues addressed by Pope Benedict is the contribution that financial markets can make to economic growth and development, and what if any role the government should have in regulating these markets. The encyclical states clearly that *“The Church has always held that economic action is not to be regarded*

*as something opposed to society”* (36)

For many, the intrusiveness of the government into the working of the free market is anathema and should be tolerated only as a last resort. For them, the market that is least regulated functions best and balances ultimately the supply and demand of goods and services locally, regionally and globally.

For many others the recent crisis clearly demonstrates what happens when an unfettered market is allowed to operate without due attention to common good and the needs of the society in which it operates. To them, appropriate government regulation requires transparency and accountability, as well as reliable accounting and monitoring. The encyclical also clearly recognizes these priorities when it points out that the *“social doctrine of the Church has unceasingly highlighted the importance of distributive justice and social justice for the market economy, not only because it belongs within a broader social and political context, but also because*

*of the wider network of relations within which it operates.”* (35) The need to review and remodel ways in which governments operate *“so as to enable them, perhaps through new forms of engagement, to address the challenges of today’s world”* (24) is also emphasized.

Both debates about the efficacy of markets in producing both economic growth and prosperity and the responsibility of governments to promote the common good are frequently in tension and have often been considered in Catholic Social Teaching. This encyclical reminds us that all financial instruments *“can be used badly when those at the helm are motivated by purely selfish ends”*. The encyclical discourages scandalous speculation, while it supports experimentation that advances true development. It also points to the need for increased integration of regulatory authority at a global level if an international financial system and financial markets are to serve the needs of people and protect the exhaustible resources of the earth.

**The OMI Justice and Peace/ Integrity of Creation Office** coordinates the advocacy efforts of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate on behalf of the interests of the poor and abandoned in the U.S. and in the more than 65 countries where the Oblates are in mission. These efforts include serving as a resource for province membership, supporting the community organizing efforts of the Oblates in the United States, and coordinating the Corporate Responsibility Program to insist on just practices and policies by corporations in their worldwide operations. Our work also includes advocacy with the United States government and other international institutions on a variety of justice and peace issues.

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## News and Happenings

### ***Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops***

The Second Synod for Africa which takes place in October 4- 25, 2009 in Rome will have a visible Oblate presence with the confirmed participation of three Oblate Bishops from South Africa. The theme is "The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace." The Catholic Task Force on Africa in Washington, DC, of which the Oblate JPIC Office is a member, has launched a campaign called "Yes Africa Matters." The campaign hopes to raise more awareness about the Second African Synod and will serve as a one-stop site to US Catholics with information and ways to get involved in US/Africa Catholic advocacy issues.



### ***Father Dwight Completes Pro-Life Walk Across America***

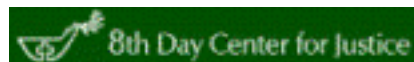
Fr. Dwight Hoeberchts, OMI finished a massive pro-life walk across America with students from colleges and universities across the country. He was the only priest on the walk.

Father Dwight started "the Southern Walk" in Los Angeles on Friday, May 22nd and finished the journey at the US Capitol in Washington, DC on August 15th. Back in his North-East Vocations Office, he feels "incredibly blessed to have had this experience."

The walk was organized by Crossroads, which was "started in response to the late John Paul II's call to the youth of America at the World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado to 'build a Culture of Life'" said Jim Nolan, president of Crossroads. "He challenged the youth of America and the world to 'Be not afraid'."

Read Fr. Hoeberchts' blog at <http://fatherdwightcrossroads.blogspot.com>

Learn about Crossroads at [www.crossroadswalk.org](http://www.crossroadswalk.org)



### ***8th Day Center for Justice Celebrates 35 Years!!***

The 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Justice in Chicago, a Catholic Faith-based NGO for Social Change, is celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! The Oblates are Member Friends of the Center. If you are in Chicago on September 27<sup>th</sup>, consider joining their celebration: **Sowing Seeds, Transforming Tomorrow**. Visit their website to reserve a ticket: [www.8thdaycenter.org](http://www.8thdaycenter.org)

### ***2010 Ecumenical Advocacy Days - A Place to Call Home: Immigrants, Refugees and Displaced Peoples***

Set for March 19 - 22, 2010, the theme for this year's ecumenical conference focuses on movement of people. Jesus had no place to lay his head. Neither do tens of millions of migrants, refugees and displaced persons. Be part of an action weekend addressing this global injustice. Join hundreds of faith-based advocates in taking action on legislation that will welcome immigrants, protect refugees, and prevent displacement for millions. [Learn more at: http://advocacydays.org](http://advocacydays.org)

## Resources

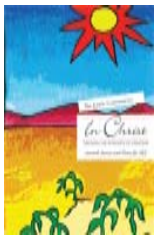
### New from the JPIC Office!

Updated brochures on ecological issues from the Oblate JPIC Office are available in English and Spanish on-line at [www.omiusajpic.org](http://www.omiusajpic.org)

Topics include:

- ♦ Earth Friendly Products
- ♦ Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- ♦ Focus on Food
- ♦ Hints for Saving Water in Your Yard
- ♦ A Look at Fair Trade

Oblates requiring printed brochures can request copies from the US Oblate JPIC Office. Please email Mary O'Herron at: [moherron@omiusa.org](mailto:moherron@omiusa.org)



### **The Earth Community: Through the Integrity of Creation towards Justice and Peace for ALL**

Based on the See, Judge, Act model, this booklet from the JPIC Commission, UISG/USG in Rome is designed as a study guide for religious congregations on pressing environmental issues affecting people and the planet.

The first section (See) gives an overview of the state of the planet; the second (Judge) presents theological, scriptural and ethical reflections; the final part (Act) offers a series of practical suggestions for changing personal and communal behavior and ways to work for appropriate national and international legal frameworks that ensure a sustainable future for the Earth Community. Finally, the booklet offers resources, accounts of experiences, a prayer service and some questions for you and your community to evaluate your progress.

The information presented is clear and useful. The second section is inspiring and the suggestions for action suitably balanced between the simple and those requiring more effort. This is a good resource for individuals as well as groups. It can be downloaded at:

[http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN\\_creation](http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN_creation) where it can also be read as a wiki. It is available in English, French, Spanish and Italian.

### **Human Trafficking Resources:**

#### **Lives For Sale – A Documentary on Immigration and Human Trafficking** – 58 minutes.

*A Production of Maryknoll and Lightfoot Films in Association with Faith & Values Media. It is funded in part by the Catholic Communication Campaign.*

This CD gives poignant background on the arduous journey made by many immigrants when they try to cross the border between the US and Mexico. It tells the story of two women, struggling to make ends meet in their home countries, who are convinced they can find a better life in the US. They are tricked into prostitution and held captive in different parts of the US. They are told that if they try to escape, the US police and immigration people will punish, kill or deport them. They are locked in their respective places, their identification papers taken from them, as are their relatives' phone numbers and photos. Happily, both are rescued.

Since people emigrate because of poor conditions in their own countries, the film highlights groups that work to provide fairly-paid jobs to enable people to remain. It also tells of efforts

to get children into school and keep them there so they will be more employable in their own countries.

Illiterate girls are often taken advantage of by unscrupulous people and 'trafficked' into some kind of slave-like situation.

The CD emphasizes the importance of making the general public aware of human trafficking in order to prevent and stop it. Many people are not aware that this is a huge problem both in the US and around the world.

#### **US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report**

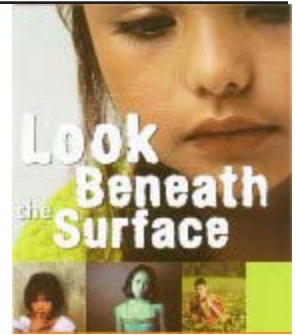
In recent years, the US Department of State has reported annually on human trafficking around the world. Recently the ninth Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report was issued. This report details what 175 countries have or haven't done to prevent the spread of human trafficking between March of 2008 and April of 2009. Traditionally, the report ranks countries into three levels based on the degree of effort spent on curbing human trafficking. Virtually every country in the world is involved in human trafficking on some level and this report shows the extent to which progress has been made for the year in combating the scourge.

To access the reports via the internet go to:

[www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt)

For all the latest information on JPIC issues, please visit our Website at:

[www.omiusajpic.org](http://www.omiusajpic.org)





## Comprehensive Immigration Reform is Possible in 2009

By: George Ngolwe

On June 25, President Barack Obama held a White House meeting on immigration reform with bipartisan congressional leaders. This is the first major step taken by the Obama Administration towards fulfilling a campaign promise to enact comprehensive immigration reform. Obama said he was committed to getting immigration reform and ready to put his political weight behind a comprehensive overhaul of the nation's immigration laws. After the meeting, the President announced that Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano would lead a working group on immigration reform that would include congressional leaders.

The government's enforcement-only immigration policy without reform has created fear in communities, separated families and has failed to address immigration causes. Enforcement-only policies such as the 287(g) agreements, which allow local law enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration laws, are being revisited by the Obama Administration to shift the focus from targeting undocumented workers to deporting illegal immigrants who have committed major drug offenses or violent crimes. Workplace raids by federal agencies have left deep emotional scars on families, especially when children were separated from their parents and left without word at schools or daycare.

Previous attempts to pass immigration reform failed because vocal opponents complained about unsecured borders. Senator Chuck Schumer, chairman of the Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee, now argues that the demands of securing the bor-



ders have been met. He points to the hiring of 20,000 border patrol agents, and argues that Congress must begin working on a legalization process for the twelve million undocumented immigrants in the country. Senator Schumer asked Border Enforcement officials if border security efforts since 2006 have been successful in "significantly lowering" illegal immigration and making the borders "exponentially more secure." All three witnesses answered yes.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), in a sign of solidarity with immigrants, continues to call for immigration reform. In June, Cardinal Francis George, OMI, USCCB President, in his speech to the annual spring meeting, called on President Barack Obama and congressional leaders to work together to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation before the end of the year. Earlier in the year, the Bishops called on the new administration to stop the immigrant raids because they were splitting families.

The Missionary Oblates JPIC office remains committed to advocating for

comprehensive immigration reform. We believe the status quo calls for reform. Through our education and advocacy, we work to demonstrate solidarity with all immigrants. We believe that reform must reflect America's best values of compassion, respect for human rights, and an awareness of the contribution migrants make to the U.S. economy. We invite you to join in solidarity and support for immigration reform by calling on the Obama Administration and the 111th Congress to pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform in 2009 that would include the following goals:

1. Make family unity and reunification a cornerstone of the U.S. immigration system.
2. Address the status of undocumented workers currently living in the United States.
3. Recognize that the root causes of migration lie in economic inequities and environmental degradation in migrants' home countries.
4. Improve conditions in detention centers for immigrants.



## Congressional Updates

### Oppose the Proposed “Double Fence” Border Amendment



The 700 mile fence along the entire Southwest border authorized by the Secure Fence Act (2006) is funded through the Homeland Security Appropriations spending bill. As of July 2009, official numbers indicate that 331 miles of pedestrian fencing and 302 miles of vehicle barriers have been completed.

In the week of July 6-10, the US Senate was considering amendments to the \$42.9 billion appropriations bill for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Unfortunately, the Senate adopted several enforcement-only immigration amendments. The most disturbing border fence amendment was offered by Senator Jim De Mint (R-SC) which requires completion of at least 700 miles of double fencing along the Southwest border by December 2010. De Mint Amendment 1399 passed 54–44, with 21 Democrats and 33 Republicans supporting the proposal. It will be considered by the full House/Senate conference committee

before going to President Obama to be signed into law.

The Senate approved this amendment despite public concerns expressed by both environmentalists and local leaders that the border fence is harming the environment and unfairly targeting low-income landowners.

Faith-based groups like the U.S. Bishops Conference’s *Justice for Immigrants* and migrant advocate organizations also oppose this amendment. The approval of the De Mint border fence amendment demonstrates that Congress still regards immigration reform as an enforcement-only proposition. If the De Mint double layer fence amendment becomes law, the border wall will have a new mandate, leading to greater delay in securing comprehensive immigration reform. Legislators said they needed to secure the US-Mexico border before enacting comprehensive immigration reform. The new mandate will also increase border fence costs for taxpayers.

What is next in terms of action on the De Mint Amendment? **We need your help as this bill goes to the House-Senate conference committee to resolve differences.** The House bill does not contain this amendment, which means it can be taken up in conference and dismissed or further amended. Therefore, before this bill goes to President Obama, please call your Member of Congress and urge him/her to tell Congressional leadership to strip the De Mint double fence amendment from the DHS appropriations bill. Let them know that only Comprehensive Immigration Reform will serve to repair the broken immigration system.

### Stop Vulture Funds Act

The US JPIC Office, with Jubilee USA, is working for passage of a Bill to prevent predatory ‘Vulture Fund’ activity. ‘Vulture fund’ is a name given to an investment firm, often a hedge fund, that buys up the debt of a company or country in default for pennies on the dollar. Once creditor countries forgive the debts owed them by an impoverished country, the Vulture Fund sues the debtor country in US or European courts. As the value of the country’s remaining debt rises, the Vulture Fund often recovers up to ten times the purchase price of the debt it holds.

Debt forgiveness, designed to fund health and education programs for the poor, thus winds up flowing to wealthy investors. The legislation introduced this summer in the House of Representatives seeks to curb this predatory practice. **Ask your Congressional Representative to co-sponsor H.R. 2932 - Stop Vulture Funds Act.**

### Climate Bill

Narrow passage of the American Clean Energy and Security (ACES) Act in the House at the end of June, means the action is in the Senate to produce a similar cap-and-trade climate bill. Religious groups are asking the Senate to strengthen the bill’s funding for international adaptation. **Adaptation funding recognizes the responsibility of industrialized countries, which created the problem, to aid those disproportionately affected by climate change.** The faith community is also advocating for measures that recognize the needs of climate-induced migrants. Environmental refugees are a growing concern as more people around the world are forced to leave their homes due to environmental changes.

## Mission at the Heart of Creation

By: Patti Radle

*Patti Radle is a member of the OMI US JPIC Committee. She attended the SEDOS/JPIC Seminar in Assisi, Italy from May 12-16 on behalf of the US JPIC Committee. There were 230 people in attendance representing 82 congregations and 57 countries. The theme of the conference was "Mission at the Heart of Creation".*

On the first evening of the seminar, through the energy and creative presentation of Fr. Sean McDonagh, SSC, we flew through the 13.7 billion-year "Story of the Universe: Our Story" in an hour and a half. The story was illustrated from a scientific view-point based on the "big-bang" theory. His placement of humans in this story seemed to leave the participants a bit overwhelmed with theological/philosophical questions and reflections. Imagine a library of 30 books, each book having 450 pages, each page representing a million years; we, as we know ourselves today as humans, are the last word of the last paragraph of the last page of the last volume. What is our destiny? What does the future hold for us?

In the days that followed, as a follow-on to McDonagh's presentation, Denis Edwards, Senior Lecturer in Theology at Flinders University School of Theology, Adelaide, Australia, led us through reflections on 'Ecology and Jesus Christ', 'Eucharist and Ecology', and 'Final Redemption of All Things'. Edwards worked to deepen our awareness of our connectedness to all creation. He spoke of our Eucharistic offering at Mass, reminding us that there on the "diskos" we offer ALL of creation. Edwards animated the

connection between the story of creation and the Eucharist. Many expressed a greater consciousness of, or an awakening to, the explicit wording in the Eucharistic prayers that emphasize the relationship of us and Christ to all creation. Edwards spoke pointedly of the life of Christ on Earth as the embryonic stage of redemption of all creation. He said that our future has a direct relationship to the understanding we have of our relationship with creation and our ecological behavior.

seminar had served to enliven in them a sense of spiritual and physical responsibility to the environment. Others spoke of the steps that their congregations have been taking to educate others or to do something about their "congregational carbon foot print". Some talked about the action their congregations had taken through political entities such as the United Nations. One congregation wants to raise funds to finance solar energy for their missionary projects; another has an extensive ecology



*Participants from various African countries prepare a liturgical dance for the final Eucharistic celebration*

Along with the major presentations by Dennis Edwards, the participants met in small groups and shared personal insights on the lectures. They expressed ways in which they and their congregations were living out the transformation into ecological awareness, and steps they saw that they, or their congregation, needed to take to continue the transformation. Many participants felt that the

education program for elementary school children. As congregational representatives shared, I couldn't help but think about the work of Darrell Rupiper, OMI, and that of the Oblates' Ecological Center in Godfrey, Illinois and feel that the US Province of Oblates has set good examples for other congregations and communities to consider imitating.





Fr. Camille Piche, OMI Lacombe, Director of General Services of JPIC, and Gertrude Rompere, JPIC Canada, joined Patti at the Domus Pacis Conference Center in Assisi

### Next Steps...

In considering the question of “what’s next for yourself and for your congregation in the light of what you have learned here”, **a well-received suggestion was that congregations use the topic for their next chapter meeting.** It was also suggested that congregations make sure that the issues of ecology and the ways in which these relate to the Christian mission be studied and related in formation. Again, with the formation center and its proximity to the Ecological Center in Godfrey, the Oblates set a great example!

Many also admitted that this seminar served as the beginning of a transformation of life-style and that their intention was to continue the transformation process.

On behalf of the U.S. Province for OMI, at an open session, I was able to present the DVD on the Center for Ecological Study in Godfrey, Illinois, to about 45 participants. It was well received and several people asked for a copy of the DVD.

I also made a small presentation of the draft of the US Province Land Ethic. There was not so much feedback to the resolution itself, but people were grateful that we were sharing the concept and liked the idea of having a land ethic. Members of the group shared stories of some of the challenges they

expect to face regarding property. At this session, Camille Piche, OMI, shared the wonderful story of the trust created for Zac Ste Anne in Canada, which people saw as an example of a way to be creative about protecting land.

I left the seminar feeling that what had happened was very important on a global level. Two hundred and thirty congregational leaders had broadened their understanding of the importance of the human relationship and union with all of creation - God’s creation. In the light of our faith, this union with God’s creation demands that we live out the responsibility of caring for ALL of creation.

While the lectures took us to a deep understanding of our relationship to the universe in all of its history, the multi-lingual celebrations of the liturgy, the prayer services, and the meals shared together were an enriching reminder of the power in our diversity to work together creatively as a loving community.

### Resources on Faith and Ecology:

*Ecology at the Heart of Faith*, Denis Edwards (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006). Edwards offers “a partial sketch of how ecological conversion can find inspiration from within the traditions of Christian faith.” Based on a God-centered (not human-centered) teaching of the bible, he explores an ecological theology that honors and respects all creatures. The book, or specific chapters could be used by small groups, families or educators.

*Climate Change: A Challenge to All of Us*, Sean McDonagh (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2006) This looks at the complex issue of human-induced climate change and injects a faith perspective. McDonagh examines the origins and consequences of global warming, considers various responses to the problem, reviews possible solutions and discusses the response of the churches.

*The Death of Life: The Horror of Extinction*, Sean McDonagh (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2004). McDonagh argues that political, economic and religious leaders need to take decisive action if some 11,000 species are not to become extinct in the next 50-100 years. The ‘most important role’ that the churches can play, he writes, is to ‘articulate a competent theology of creation’. This can no longer be based solely on religious texts, but ‘needs to be grounded in scientific knowledge.’

The SEDOS (Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission) website, [www.sedosmission.org/site](http://www.sedosmission.org/site) offers links to other mission and JPIC-related websites as well as a library of interesting articles.

## Sri Lankan Tamils Face an Uncertain Future

By: *Christina C. Herman*

The 25-year-long conflict between the Sri Lanka government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ended in unspeakable bloodshed in the third week of May. Some twenty thousand Tamils were estimated to have perished in the so-called “No-Fire” Zone from January to the end of May, 2009. There are no firm estimates of Sri Lanka Army casualties, but they are said to have been significant.

Subjected to daily shelling by the Sri Lankan Army and forced to stay by an increasingly desperate rebel force, the civilians caught between the two armies suffered all the horrors of war. On May 20, members of the LTTE leadership came forward with white flags in a previously agreed surrender, but were reportedly massacred by the awaiting Army.

Several Oblate priests stayed until the end in the “No-Fire Zone” to minister to their people. Those who survived

the fierce, daily bombardment were able to escape when the LTTE decided to ‘silence their guns’ on Monday, May 18. Rev. Fr. Mariampillai T. Sarathjeevan died tragically during the final evacuation. Fr. Sara, as he was known, had cared for the wounded, buried the dead and given spiritual support to those around him during the months of intense fighting. Illness, along with a lack of food, water and medicine coupled with a horrific journey out of the war zone led to the heart attack that killed him.

The end of the fighting did not mean the end of misery for the predominantly ethnic Tamils trapped in the war zone. Thousands disappeared at screening checkpoints set up by the Army. With no proper registration system in place, there is no record of what happened to these people. The rest, over 300,000 men, women and children, many of whom were malnourished and severely

traumatized, have been placed in refugee camps controlled by the Army, in which paramilitary groups operate freely. Two oblates, Fr. Edmund Reginald Saviripillai, OMI and Fr. Alfred Vijayakamalan, OMI, along with four diocesan priests, several nuns, and hundreds of Hindu priests were among those imprisoned.

In the first few weeks in the camps, the military warned people that it had captured computers containing the names of people associated with the LTTE. They announced over loudspeakers that anyone with a connection with the LTTE needed to come forward, or the authorities “would not guarantee their continued safety.” Given the LTTE’s system of compulsory service by at least one person per family, this meant that thousands lined up to be taken away to “rehabilitation” camps. No public information on their subsequent treatment is available, although the ICRC is said to have access to the camps.

At the time of this writing, some 280,000-300,000 civilians – including pregnant women and families - continue to be held in camps throughout the north in violation of international law governing freedom of movement for refugees. Some have been released. In July, Fr. Augustine Confucius, OMI, a young oblate priest, was released from a camp in Pulmoddai on the east coast, where there were serious shortages of food and other basic supplies. A number of elderly people have been transferred to relatives and friends. Most recently, on August 27<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Alfred, OMI, the four diocesan priests, two nuns and 177 Hindu priests and



*Tamil refugees line up for food and relief items at a camp in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka*



their families were released. Fr. Reggie remains, with the military obdurate about his release.

The government continues to impose severe restrictions on access to the camps by humanitarian organizations, the media, and independent monitors, leaving the inhabitants vulnerable to abuse by the military, as well as from paramilitary groups from a breakaway faction of the LTTE. Observers believe the government is trying to prevent the refugees from sharing information about just what happened in the No-Fire Zone. Reports of disappearances from the camps, particularly of young people, are of great concern. Aid workers are not allowed to talk with the refugees freely and there is no independent agency able to monitor the situation.

Conditions are grim for the tens of thousands of people who have been forced to remain in the over-crowded camps. Food, water, medical supplies and personnel, as well as other basic supplies, continue to be in very short supply. Many of the refugees suffered serious injuries and emotional trauma in the war zone, yet are forced to live in over-crowded tents. The monsoon rains have started early, flooding large areas, and making the soft ground of the recently cleared jungle treacherously muddy and uninhabitable. Pro-government Tamil leader Dharmalingam Siddharthan



*Flooding in the camps from the Monsoon rains*

described conditions in the camps as “a living hell” after a recent visit.

A climate of fear is preventing honest conversation about what is happening currently in the camps as well as about what happened in the No-Fire Zone. Because of prohibitions on communication within the camps, it has been very difficult for even family members to find one another, stay in touch with one another or communicate regularly with relatives.

While some legitimate concerns about de-mining remain, Government plans for the release and resettlement of refugees in the north continue to be postponed, despite the serious and immediate health and humanitarian threats posed by the monsoon season.

A legitimate concern among the Tamil community is the creation of a large, permanent military presence in the Vanni. Tamils fear the ‘Sinhalization’ of the North, leading to the loss of their land, places of worship and dilution of their culture. The government plans to expand the military from

200,000 to 300,000 and is building large camps in the north for soldiers and their families.

The government of Sri Lanka is riding high with its victory over the LTTE. The relief felt by the populace in the south by the ending of the war is understandable, given the fear generated by LTTE suicide bombers and the length of the civil conflict. Yet, there continues to be a real need to address the serious and legitimate underlying

grievances of the Tamil population that led to the insurgency in the first place.

The twin problems of extra-judicial killings and impunity remain serious concerns of the international community. Longstanding proposals for the devolution of power in the North and the East have been given little consideration by the present government. Power sharing is considered essential for genuine local development and democracy to take root.

Unless meaningful efforts are made to promote equitable resettlement of the displaced population and to allow genuine representation of Tamils in the local and national political process, it is widely feared that the chance for reconciliation will slip away, and the seeds of future conflict will be sown.



*Many children were killed or injured in the war zone*

***The Oblate JPIC Office continues to monitor the situation in Sri Lanka closely. We are in regular communication with Congressional leaders and senior State Department officials.***

## VIVAT Members Actively Represented in the UN IP Forum *By: Daniel LeBlanc, OMI*



VIVAT International members were present this year, from May 18 to 29, at the 8<sup>th</sup> annual session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, from the New York office accompanied Fathers Seamus Finn, OMI, (USA JPIC coordinator for the Oblates) and Joseph Gomes, OMI, JPIC Coordinator, Bangladesh, and a delegation from Bangladesh. The delegation, led by Sanjeeb Drong, was interesting for being comprised of different faiths as well as different peoples. Raja Devashish Roy, Gawtom Chakma, Flora Bably Talang, Babul Nokrek, Rabindranath Soren, and Mrinal Kanti Tripura represented the Bengali, Chakma, Garo, Khasi, Santal and Tripura peoples. The members were from the Catholic, Hindu and Buddhist faith traditions. There was great coordination and collaboration among the delegation and their relations, already good, were strengthened by their common experience in New York.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues this year dealt with a number of issues. Primary among these was follow-up to recommendations made to the Economic and Social Council

(ECOSOC) and eventually to the General Assembly (GA) of the UN in previous years. The main issues reviewed were: economic and social development, especially questions relating to extractive industries; Indigenous peoples' rights and corporate social responsibility; Indigenous women, especially urban Indigenous women and migration; the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples; Human Rights, including the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and fundamental freedoms. There was time for dialogue with several United Nations agencies and planning for

next year's Forum. More information can be found at:

[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session\\_eighth.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_eighth.html)

Those at VIVAT International are deeply committed to working with Indigenous Peoples, as it is a priority of many of the members of our Congregations. They are eager to hear from anyone working on indigenous issues, especially from those interested in participating in the next Forum in May 2010. Avenues of funding can be investigated if need be. Please contact Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, at [dlkomi@yahoo.com](mailto:dlkomi@yahoo.com)



*L to R: Fr. Joseph Gomes, OMI (Bengali - OMI-JPIC Coordinator in Bangladesh), Babul Nokrek (Garo), Flora Bably Talang (Khasi), Mrinal Kanti Tripura (Tripura), Rabindranath Soren (Santal), Daniel LeBlanc, OMI (OMI and VIVAT International UN representative)*

– **Missing in the picture** – Sanjeeb Drong (Secretary General of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum), Raja Devashish Roy (Chakma Circle Chief), Gawtom Chakma, and Fr. Seamus Finn (US OMI-JPIC Coordinator).



## At the United Nations

### Oblates Attend VIVAT Trainings in Latin America, More Seminars Planned

VIVAT is an organization of eight congregations founded to promote collaboration with the UN on issues of peace, respect for human rights, and socio-economic and ecological well-being. **The Oblate order is officially recognized as an NGO by the Department of Public Information (DPI) of the UN. As an Associate Member of VIVAT, it has official standing with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the UN.**

VIVAT has been holding trainings for regional representatives of the eight congregations, with one held last July in Bolivia, for the six southernmost countries of Latin America. Another was held in Brazil in August 2008. Members of all eight Congregations from around the world also met at the time of the World Social Forum in January of '09.

VIVAT is planning seminars for next year, 2010, in Africa as well as in India and North America.

For more information, visit the VIVAT website: [www.vivatinternational.org](http://www.vivatinternational.org)

## In Remembrance: Thomas Berry, CP - Eco-theologian, Linguist, Philosopher, Priest



Fr. Thomas Berry, CP with the Oblate Conference of the US (OCUS) JPIC Committee under the great red oak at the Riverdale Center in New York in November 1991  
L to R: Rufus Whitley, OMI, Seamus Finn, OMI; Tom Berry, CP; Bob Wright, OMI; Darrell Rupiper, OMI; Armand Matthew, OMI and John Poole

**T**homas Berry, eco-theologian, linguist, philosopher and teacher, died on June 1, 2009 at the age of 94. Born to the Appalachian hills, he became a Catholic priest of the Passionist order and then a renowned writer on ecology, cosmology, and religion.

Tom Berry was an important source of inspiration for the ecological work developed by the Oblates, the Columbans, and other Catholic congregations. In his own words, "without the soaring birds, the great forests, the sounds and coloration of the insects, the free-flowing streams, the flowering fields, the sight of the clouds by day and the stars at night, we become impoverished in all that makes us human"

Reflecting on the church's role in a time of ecological crisis, Berry said, "The devastation that is presently taking

place through the industrial-technological exploitation of the Earth is already so great that future generations are ... condemned not only to live amid the ruins of the infrastructures of industrial society, but also amid the ruins of the natural world itself."

"...Presently the church has a unique opportunity to place its vast authority, its energies, its educational resources, and its spiritual disciplines in a creative context, one that can assist in renewing the Earth as a bio-spiritual planet. ...

**The renewal of religion in the future will depend on our appreciation of the natural world as the locus for the meaning of the divine and the human.** ... The universe itself is the primary divine revelation. The splendor and the beauty of the natural world in all its variety must be preserved if any worthy idea of the divine is to survive in the human community."



## Climate in Our Hands

By: Peter Hughes, SSC

One of the problems with the issue of Climate Change is TMI - too much information. Most of us are in no way competent to follow, far less judge, the complex processes of the various scientific disciplines involved. We therefore have to take things on trust.

The most useful starting point is that the vast majority of the world's scientific community supports the view that climate change is accelerated by the human contribution to increased greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions produced by industrial processes, vehicle exhausts and other human activities are forming an insulating layer in the atmosphere, leading to rising temperatures, the melting of ice in polar regions and the raising of ocean temperatures.

All this leads to rising ocean levels and flooding in coastal areas, as well as more extreme weather, changing climate patterns and drought. The Vatican is amongst the bodies now acknowledging this. We would have to be very sceptical indeed not to be

very concerned about the implications for all of us of climate change.

... some 182 million people in sub-Saharan Africa alone could die of disease directly attributable to climate change by the end of the century.

Throughout history people and other species have had to adapt to climate change or die. What is different now is the speed and the scale of change. There is mounting evidence that impacts of climate change will be faster and even more severe than those projected by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just two years ago. If we allow these worst case scenarios to become a reality, climate change could reach devastating levels by 2050. That is within the life time of well over a billion of today's young people.

As usual, the poor, who are least responsible for this, are the very ones who will be first and most affected.

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has identified 100 countries most vulnerable to climate change, and the vast majority are low-income. The IIED warns of chronic famine and



*Flooding in Bangladesh*

forced migration of tens of millions of people, such as those in Africa's and Asia's coastal areas and river deltas. According to Christian Aid, some 182 million people in sub-Saharan Africa alone could die of disease directly attributable to climate change by the end of the century. In addition, many millions more throughout the world face death and devastation due to climate-induced floods, famine, drought and conflict.

As Christians we have a special responsibility not only for our planet but for the masses of poor people who live on it. We believe that we are interconnected with all human society and with the natural world, with responsibility to act as good stewards of God's creation. Climate change undermines possibilities for sustainable development and the justice that JPIC activists have struggled for over decades.



*Drought in Southern Africa*

The need to act now is urgent. The more serious consequences of the way human society has developed will be visited upon our children and grandchildren. Christians are called to be prophetic: to speak the truth to power and to live prophetically, embodying a lifestyle which does not exploit people or the environment. We should each be prepared to embrace the challenge and the joy of living more simply.

An extremely important milestone on the road to stopping the advancement of climate change will take place in Copenhagen in December 2009 at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change. This is part of a series of UN meetings which trace their origin to the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 and aim to coordinate international action on climate change. The Copenhagen gathering will thrash out a successor to the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. 15,000 officials will attend Copenhagen, joined by governments and heads of state. The future of our

planet depends what



ar- This title was reprinted, with permission, from Vocation for Justice, a publication of the Missionary Society of St. Columban. For more information, contact the UK Columban Faith & Justice team at:

happens there.

## Eco-Tips: Ideas for Reducing Unwanted Mail

*It takes 17 trees to make a ton of paper. That means nearly 100 million trees get used for junk mail every year in the U.S. Reducing junk mail gets clutter out of your mailbox, frees up your time, and helps protect the environment. Let's keep the trees in the forest, and get the junk mail out of your life. Take these simple steps to save both!*

### Unwanted Mail:

Use any postage-paid reply card or order blank and mark in large, bold letters "take my name off your mailing list"



Use any 800-Number listed for the company or organization to request being taken off their list.



The Junk Mail Reduction Campaign, a partnership of 110 San Francisco Bay Area cities & counties, has a great junk mail kit available as a pdf. Go to: [www.stopjunkmail.org/home.htm](http://www.stopjunkmail.org/home.htm)

### Wanted Mail:

On the reply card or order blank, write: "Keep my name on your list, but don't rent or sell it to others."

On duplicate mailings, send all the mailing labels and write "Stop duplicates and merge these labels"

### Charities:

Before making donations, check: [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org) to see if a charity is well-run, along with other particulars. This website also provides information on how to get off mailing lists and about whether an organization sells its lists.

### Other Resources:

Check out this Montgomery County, MD website - [www.mcrecycles.org](http://www.mcrecycles.org) - that offers a brochure about reducing mail. It provides addresses of places to which one can write to be removed from direct marketing, telemarketing lists and credit card solicitation lists.

*It may take you a little time to do all of this but you will save trees and the energy involved in the paper production process, AND you will have less junk in your mailbox!*

## Oblates Engage Mining Companies on Behalf of Local Communities

The Oblates have engaged successfully in dialog with Newmont Mining Corporation in coordination with ICCR members Christian Brothers Investment Services, Catholic Health East, Tri-State Coalition of Responsible Investing, Catholic Healthcare West, and The Fetzer Institute. A 2007 shareholder resolution led to a commitment by the company to understand the root causes of community conflict in areas where it operates.

A report released in March 2009, "Community Relationships Review Global Summary Report," included an extensive review of policies and practices regarding the company's relationships with a number of local communities across the globe, including aspects of potential conflict and opposition. Newmont Mining is the second largest producer of gold in the world. The reports are available on the company's website at: [www.beyondthemine.com/2008/?pid=470](http://www.beyondthemine.com/2008/?pid=470)

The report, conducted by an independent panel with the help of an advisory board of stakeholders, revealed that the company must manage community relationships more effectively and encouraged the development of a comprehensive management plan for community relations, assigning accountability to local managers for implementing policies, conducting regular social impact and risk assessments, and managing community concerns before conflict arises.

Report findings were informed by interviews conducted with more than 250 stakeholders in 5 countries and

an analysis of Newmont's guidelines in order to craft a set of detailed recommendations for the company moving forward.

The initial shareholder resolution that precipitated the report highlighted instances of community resistance to Newmont's operations in Peru, Indonesia, Nevada, and Ghana because of problems such as the company's mining waste disposal, the potential for water pollution, cyanide use, development on Indigenous land, and impacts on sacred sites. Conflicts

of this type have the potential to generate lawsuits and negative press coverage, and cause shut-downs of company operations.

*The Oblates, as shareholders, can facilitate access by affected communities to corporate management, as evidenced in this excerpt from a letter from Maria Lya Ramos who is with The Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala. The Oblates made possible the group's presence at the May 2009 AGM of Goldcorp, a mining company operating in Guatemala.*

### **Pope Benedict XVI on Ethics based economics:**

*In these excerpts from the recent Papal Encyclical, Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict has articulated an ethical vision for the economy. This vision underlies the work of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.*

"45. Efforts are needed — and it is essential to say this — not only to create "ethical" sectors or segments of the economy or the world of finance, but to ensure that the whole economy — the whole of finance — is ethical, not merely by virtue of an external label, but by its respect for requirements intrinsic to its very nature. The Church's social teaching is quite clear on the subject, recalling that the economy, in all its branches, constitutes a sector of human activity."

"65. However, this must not obscure the fact that the entire financial system has to be aimed at sustaining true development. Above all, the intention to do good must not be considered incompatible with the effective capacity to produce goods. Financiers must rediscover the genuinely ethical foundation of their activity, so as not to abuse the sophisticated instruments which can serve to betray the interests of savers. Right intention, transparency, and the search for positive results are mutually compatible and must never be detached from one another."

"Both the regulation of the financial sector, so as to safeguard weaker parties and discourage scandalous speculation, and experimentation with new forms of finance, designed to support development projects, are positive experiences that should be further explored and encouraged, highlighting *the responsibility of the investor.*"



Excerpt from Ramos' letter:

"... We had a powerful presence at the Goldcorp shareholders' meeting last Friday and our colleague from Guatemala, Aniseto Lopez, was able to enter and make a strong declaration about the mine without a hitch. Truth be told, we dominated the meeting - with 8 strong interventions about Goldcorp's environmental and human rights damages in Guatemala, Honduras and British Columbia (from members of the Nak'azdil First Nation) — and the need for the company to adopt the practice not just of community consultation, but gaining consent - **free prior and informed consent.**"

"Goldcorp's new CEO, Charles Jeannes, to his credit, was very well briefed and responded in detail - but after an hour of statement after statement, he was exhausted. The company put up a great show about corporate social responsibility and even flew in a woman from the mine-region in Guatemala (San Miguel Ixtahuacan) to give a 20 minute speech about her personal growth and community accomplishments with the help of Goldcorp. (Funnily - Aniseto knew this woman, and expressed her presence as another sign of community divisions precipitated by the presence of Goldcorp). We have a long way to go with this company, but see this as a small step forward. ..."



### **PADRE LORENZO ROSEBAUGH, OMI** **May 16, 1935 - May 18, 2009**

Larry Rosebaugh OMI, a stalwart witness and actor for justice, the promoter of peace and friend of the earth was killed close to Playa Grande, Guatemala in May. His quiet and powerful presence in places like Duluth, Milwaukee, Chicago, Godfrey IL, Recife Brazil, El

Salvador, and Guatemala was rooted in his desire to follow Jesus, especially in the journey of the poor. In his autobiography, "To Wisdom Through Failure" ([www.epica.org](http://www.epica.org)) he carefully documented many of the people and experiences along his journey where the mystery of God's presence touched his heart and called forth a courageous response. We will miss him dearly!

### **Oblate JPIC Committee Members Fighting Construction of a Nuclear Plant in San Antonio, Texas**

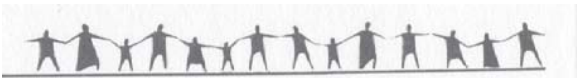
Patti Radle and Fr. Bob Wright (both US JPIC Committee members) have been working to prevent San Antonio from deciding to invest in two nuclear reactors in Bay City, Texas. They have joined others in an *ad hoc* committee called Energia Mia (My Energy). This is a group composed of individuals and environmental groups which believe that construction of the reactors will pose dangerous environmental threats, the most severe being the production of toxic nuclear waste; that it will offer a real threat to the water supply due to the large amount of water it will consume; and will monopolize the resources needed for investment in alternative green and renewable energy (solar, geothermal, and wind). The City Public Service Energy Company (CPS Energy) that is considering the nuclear investment is owned by the City of San Antonio (CoSA).



The Mayor is reported to have an open mind on the issue, and has listened to community concerns. He has reduced his target for investment in the project from 40% to 20%, and is continuing to study the issue. Energia Mia wants this figure to drop to 0% additional investment (the city already is a partner in two nuclear reactors). Patti was one of the speakers at the initial press conference of the anti-nuclear group, and Bob sent a powerful letter to his City Council representative and to the mayor letting them know that he will be actively involved in a referendum to have the people vote if the council does not turn down this investment. Patti Radle is in regular dialogue with her council representative and has given him a copy of a chapter of the book *Climate Change: A Challenge to All of Us* by Sean McDonagh, SSC. Chapter 5 of that book is a strong critique of nuclear power. As Patti served together with Mayor Castro when they were both City Council members, she has continued to be in dialogue with him, as well.

*Thanks to both Patti Radle and Bob Wright for this update.*

# OMI JPIC OFFICE



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Please visit our website at  
[www.omiusajpic.org](http://www.omiusajpic.org)

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The right to food, like the right to water, has an important place within the pursuit of other rights, beginning with the fundamental right to life. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a public conscience that considers food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination.

- Pope Benedict XVI



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*- Oblate Rule*

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