



“Let us remember there is a creative force in this universe working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil...a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Martin Luther King, Jr .

Inside this issue:

News & Happenings	2
JPIC Opportunity	2
Justice and Peace resources for parishes and communities	3
Corporate Responsibility Article	4
Reflections on the School of the Americas	6
Bulletin from Bangladesh	8
Opposing the Juvenile Death Penalty	10
Update on the General Administration JPIC Service	11
Genetically Modified Organisms in Zambia, an Oblate Perspective	12
Legislative and Advocacy Update	14

From the Director

We closed out 2002 with a remarkable settlement between the ten largest financial institutions in the country and government regulators, a nation preparing for war and unprecedented year of crisis within the Church.

In times like these, we can be grateful that the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching is available for prayer, reflection and guidance for action on the many perplexing events and decisions that lie before us. Two central themes in Catholic Social Teaching are the relationship between church and state and the relationship between the church and society.

As an example of the first theme, last September, Bishop Wilton Gregory, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in a letter to president Bush, recognized that there are no easy answers, but offered the following advice, *“We conclude, based on the facts that*

are known to us, that a preemptive, unilateral use of force is difficult to justify at this time.” By applying the criteria of a just war and the strong presumption against the use of military force in Catholic teaching, this specific application of the teaching was made as a contribution to the public policy debate. On other occasions, the bishops have offered the insights of Catholic teaching on issues of abortion, death penalty, human cloning and welfare reform.

In the church and society arena, Catholic Social Teaching has continuously sought to apply the Gospel to the numerous challenges and events, which are part of the daily fabric of society. One way is shaping the regulation of social services provided by both the government and the private sector. Another hallmark of this tradition is the church efforts through the years to provide direct services through Catholic charities, schools, hospi-

tals and nursing homes as well as efforts to respond to the needs of people who are homeless, poor, immigrants or imprisoned.

More recently, in an effort to respond to the growing influence of private corporations on all aspects of public and community life, the Catholic Social Teaching tradition encourages Catholics to ensure that their funds invested in these corporations are used responsibly. *“As part owners, they must cooperate in shaping the policies of those companies through dialogue with management, through votes at corporate meetings, through the introduction of resolutions and through participation in investment decisions.”* (U.S. Catholic Bishops, Economic Justice for All).

Our Catholic Social Teaching tradition is rich indeed. May this richness continue to be a source of light and grace during the coming year.

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.

U.S. JPIC Committee

Rev. John Cox, OMI
 Rev. Sal DeGeorge, OMI
 Rev. Séamus Finn, OMI
 Rev. Maurice Lange, OMI
 Rev. Darrell Rupiper, OMI
 Rev. Thomas Rush, OMI
 Rev. David Ullrich, OMI
 Rev. Bob Wright, OMI

JPIC Staff

Rev. Séamus Finn, OMI
Director
 Rebecca Phares
Associate Director
 Mary O'Herron
Associate for GA JPIC Service and Corporate Responsibility
 Laurette Moore
Office Assistant



JPIC Report is a publication of the OMI Justice and Peace/Integrity of Creation Office
 391 Michigan Avenue NE
 Washington, DC 20017
 Tel: 202.281.1608
 Fax: 202.636.9444
www.omiusa.org/jus-peace.htm

News and Happenings

Join in Celebrating Haiti Solidarity Week

Haiti Solidarity Week will take place from March 2-9, 2003 to educate people in the US about the current situation in Haiti. You are invited to plan an event educating people, or collect humanitarian supplies for Haiti in a symbolic act intended to bring attention to the Bush Administration's withholding of over \$500 million in humanitarian aid from Haiti. Another way to mark this week is to attend the **Haiti Solidarity Week First**

Annual Conference, which will take place at Howard University in Washington, DC, during the Solidarity Week. This Solidarity Week is sponsored by **Haiti Reborn**, and more information on the Conference, as well as lists of needed items and shipping location are available on their website (www.haitireborn.org) or by contacting Eugenia at (301)699-0042.

Voices for Peace

Now is a time when our leaders are deciding whether or not our nation will go to war. The US

Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued **Statement on Iraq** on November 13, 2002 urging that all of us work for peace. Contact the JPIC office for a copy or see <http://www.usccb.org/bishops/iraq.htm>. Resources are available for those who oppose a possible war with Iraq by contacting **Pax Christi** at 814-453-4955 or going to their web site: www.paxchristiusa.org.

You can also:

- ◆ Sign the Iraq Pledge of Resistance at: www.peacepledge.org
- ◆ Sign a petition against a war in Iraq at: www.moveon.org.

JPIC SPECIAL

The world is hurting. Not only can we make a difference, we do make a difference, healing or hurting, by our actions or inaction.

Bring the JPIC dimension of the Oblate Charism to the grassroots in our Oblate ministry sites! Help is available!

"If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito." Betty Reese

Interested in finding out more? Contact Darrell Rupiper OMI at drupiper2000@hotmail.com or the JPIC office.



Some Resources for Integrating JPIC issues into Parish and Community life:

The **Catholic Campaign for Human Development**, which works to end poverty and injustice in the United States, offers a ***Novena for Justice and Peace*** from its "*Faith and Human Development Series*" that encourages those who pray the novena to discern what God may be calling them to in working for justice in our world. Available from the US Catholic Conference. Call 800-235-8722 or visit the Bishops' internet site at www.nccbuscc.org.

Bearing Witness to the Gospel of Life: In the Face of the Death Penalty in the United States is a small booklet about the biblical roots of opposition to the death penalty. It is published by the **Franciscan Friars, Holy Name Province**. Copies can be obtained by calling 212-967-6300.

The **Office of Social Justice** of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis has assembled an excellent website on Catholic Social Teaching. Included are teaching resources, useful quotes, and very effective graphic presentations of major themes of the Catholic Social Teachings. We encourage you to check it out! www.osjspm.org/cst.

The **Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection**, which is a project of the **Zambia-Malawi Province** of the Society of Jesus, offers a web site through which you can connect directly to their projects. You can also learn about civil society in those countries, Jubilee-Zambia, and the daily reality of life in Zambia. This is a unique resource you can find at: <http://www.jctr.org.zm/>.

Bread for the World offers many tools which can be resources as you seek to respond to millions of people who are hungry every day. Your parish can become a *Covenant Church* which means making a commitment to integrating hunger concerns into the life of your congregation. For more information contact church.info@bread.org or call toll-free 1-800-82-BREAD.

The Education for Justice Web Site is an exciting new resource to promote Catholic social teaching from the Center of Concern. It offers social justice curricula, lectionary reflections, prayers and prayer services, and much more including both domestic and international issues. You can take an introductory tour at www.educationforjustice.org.

The Inheritance Project is an initiative of the **Florida Catholic Conference** which brings attention to the need for environmental stewardship as the seventh principle of Catholic Social Teaching. A *statewide gathering will be held from February 21-22, 2003 in the Central Florida area*. For more information, call Julie Greene, Project Coordinator, at 407-277-7266 or InheritProject@aol.com.

Computer and Cell Phone Recycling: To find a list of groups that recycle electronics or are looking for donations, check the E.P.A.'s Web site: www.epa.gov, or the site of the National Recycling Coalition at www.nrc-recycle.org. Cell Phones can be recycled by groups like Donate a Phone at www.donateaphone.org, and CollectiveGood at www.collectivegood.com.

US Response to Global AIDS: Tragically Inadequate

by Séamus Finn, OMI

During the closing days of the Advent season, as we prepared to celebrate the birth of Christ, The New York Times and The Washington Post presented editorials assessing the response of the global community and the United States to the AIDS pandemic. The Post editorial entitled “Denial at Home” in its opening line stated “The Aids pandemic, which kills nearly six people per minute, is probably the most underestimated enemy of all time. In country after country, people have ignored the warnings until the virus has infected a 10th of the adult population or more. But this serial denial is not limited to the poor countries where most of the dying happens. It extends to rich countries such as this one.”

In a similar vein, the Times opined “Politicians lament the tragedy of babies with AIDS, but their concern has so far not produced one red cent of new money. And, shamefully, on the last day of the Congressional session, Senate Republicans killed a bill agreed on in both the House and Senate that would have provided \$4 billion over two years to

fight global AIDS. Administration officials and members of Congress argue that there are other things to spend money on. None are more urgent”.

The lack of funding for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS that was set up by the United Nations to coordinate the response to the pandemic continues to cripple the Fund’s ability to respond to numerous requests. The spread of the crisis to places like China and India and other Asian countries portends a scenario of suffering, devastation of family life and destruction of communities. When one thinks of the estimate of more than \$100 billion cost of carrying out the planned invasion of Iraq, the \$7 trillion which investors have lost in the stock market since 2000 or the \$1.3 trillion that we spend on our own health care, the annually projected \$10 billion budget of this Fund is indeed very small in comparison.

While magazines like The Economist clearly assert that the funding to respond to the pandemic must come from governments in developing countries so that pharmaceutical

companies are not expected to forfeit the protections and incentives for research which the patent system affords them, concerned investors continue to press the private sector to participate in the effort to alleviate the suffering and devastation which the pandemic is causing.

Seeking pledges from companies that they will not allow patent protection to impede access to medicines for HIV/AIDS in impoverished countries and that they will increase the levels of donated medicines to address the pandemic and the opportunistic infectious diseases which accompany HIV/AIDS are two requests that religious investors and others have made.

The religious community and other non-governmental organizations are pressing their concerns on two fronts. In Washington, we worked up to the last hours of the last session of the 107th Congress to get the U.S. portion of the necessary funding included and appropriated. On the corporate side, resolutions have been filed on this issue with eight pharmaceutical companies and

with at least seven multinational corporations that have significant presence in Africa. These resolutions concentrate on the pricing of medicines for treatment of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria and the area of patenting or intellectual property rights. The former focuses on the “global pricing system” which many pharmaceutical companies employ before they are willing to offer price reductions on a country-by-country basis.

The patent issue is one that was strenuously debated at meetings of the World Trade Organizations meeting last year in Doha and was again considered at the recent Trade Related Intellectual Property Services Council meeting in Geneva. Here the issue continues to be the agreement on a mechanism whereby countries can declare medical emergencies and not face legal claims in the courts. Another area of pressure on pharmaceutical companies concerns partnerships with public and private clinics and hospitals, with local NGO’s and with other private corporations that can assist in delivery of medicines, training and treatment. Companies are

also being asked to assure that joint public partnerships and partnerships with private organizations focus on the most vulnerable sectors of society, and the

companies' pricing policies ensure that products are developed as part of a Joint Public Private Initiatives (JPPI). This effort is ongoing and

advocates would like to see the scale of these programs multiplied.

A final area being pressed with the pharmaceutical

companies is the level of investment in research and development for vaccines and medicines that address infectious diseases most prevalent in the poor and developing countries. We have specifically asked the companies to forego patent rights in developing countries, for drugs for infectious diseases, developed under JPPIs. We have also encouraged companies to develop creative approaches to funding for research & development for diseases prevalent in developing countries, and medicines for their treatment.

The scale of the response, as the editorials above have clearly stated, is minuscule and needs a concerted government and private sector response in the months and years ahead. 40 million people in Africa alone are infected with HIV. Four million people need treatment TODAY, and after all our meetings and debates only 40,000 are being treated. Catholic Social Teaching urges us to be advocates for multiplying the needed response to the needs of the men and women of our time both in the public and private sector. This is an issue that is clear and begging for our dedication, generosity and advocacy. ❖

FAIR TRADE PURCHASING POWER

Listings of Fair Trade coffee & chocolate sources

Global Exchange (www.globalexchange.org) (415) 255-7296
 TransFairUSA (www.fairtradecertified.org) (510) 663-5260
 Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (www.fairtrade.net)

Listings of retailers and companies that follow fair trade principles

Co-op America (www.coopamerica.org)
 Fair Trade Federation (www.fairtradefederation.org)
 Fair Trade Resource Network (www.fairtraderesource.org)
 SERRV (www.serrv.org)
 10,000 Villages (www.villages.ca)
 International Federation for Alternative Trade (www.ifat.org)

Organize a Fair Trade Day!

Educate your parish community, school group, or community group through a fair trade expo.

Equal Exchange offers Fair Trade coffee, tea, and cocoa (www.equalexchange.org)

SERRV sells fairly-trade crafts, coffee, & chocolate (www.serrv.org)

CRISPAZ has a Fair Trade craft fundraising program (www.crispaz.org)

Support local and national Fair Trade campaigns!

Global Exchange (www.globalexchange.org/cocoa)
 (www.globalexchange.org/coffee) fairtrade@globalexchange.org,
 415-575-5538

Oxfam America (www.oxfamamerica.org/coffee) jjacoby@oxfamamerica.org

Fair Trade Resource Network (www.fairtraderesource.org)
info@fairtraderesource.org

Oxfam International (www.oxfam.org)

Reflections on the School of the Americas

by *Leo LeBlanc, OMI*

Some members of the **Oblate Novitiate** and the “Awareness Seekers” peace and justice group traveled to Georgia to demonstrate for the closing of the U.S. Army “School of the Americas” (SOA), now renamed the “Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation” (WHISC) and located at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia. **Larry Rosebaugh, OMI**, Chad Glendinning, Ana Rodriguez and I boarded a bus in St. Louis, Missouri at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, November 15 for an overnight ride with many others to Georgia, arriving at 8:00 a.m.

After an orientation session in a downtown theater, we drove to Ft. Benning where we gathered with some 10,000 other demonstrators for a peaceful and prayerful call to close this “School of Assassins,” as many call it, because they train Latin American soldiers, many of whom belong to unjust regimes that oppress the majority of poor peasants, and many of whom were found to be members of anonymous “death squads.”

After a legal scuffle, the city of Columbus failed in



Larry Rosebaugh, OMI, Chad Glendinning, Ana Rodriguez and Leo LeBlanc, OMI at the gates of the SOA

court to ban the demonstration, but was allowed to check every person for weapons with hand-held metal detectors. Among the thousands present were people of all ages, races, religions, and affiliations and of many nationalities. There were many religious men and women, college students and staff members, entire families, Buddhist monks, Moslems, representatives of Protestant Churches and colleges, Jews, “Veterans for Peace,” missionaries, Asians, Canadians and Latin Americans. I met a man over 90 years old, and a

woman with her little baby - all here to say: “Close the School of the Americas. Stop training killers,” or as one song says it: “No más, no more, shout the hills of El Salvador, echo the voices of the world, no más, no more...”

Near the entrance to Ft. Benning, the SOA Watch Committee set up a stage where many speakers and musicians animated the immense group of visitors. We heard from Catholic religious and Protestant ministers, union leaders, justice and peace groups, Buddhist and Muslim peacemakers and Latin

Americans who witnessed the assassinations of loved ones or who were themselves tortured and survived. Many of their oppressors graduated from this school. It is understandable why union representatives attended the protest.

In 1996 the Pentagon was forced to release training manuals used at the SOA, and these manuals spoke of unions as enemy targets. They advocated interrogation techniques such as torture, execution and blackmail - crimes in the U.S. that we taught Latin American soldiers to

commit! According to the manuals, these techniques should be used on those who (1) do “union organizing or recruiting,” (2) pass out “propaganda in favor of the interests of the workers, (3) sympathize with demonstrators or strikers,” and (4) make “accusations that the government has failed to meet the basic needs of the people.”

At 3:00 p.m. a “Puppet Pageant” (cf. photo) marched through the crowd to the stage area, singing and dancing to the drumbeat of pots, pans and tin plates - music and dance of hope as part of the protest at the training camp of such oppressors as the head of Salvadoran death squads, Claude D’Aubuisson, Panamanian General Manuel Noriega, dictator General Efraim Rios Montt of Guatemala who exterminated hundreds of Mayan villages and persecuted the Catholic Church, Byron Lima Estrada, head of the infamous D-2 Intelligence Agency of Guatemala, accused of ordering the assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi, 16 of the 21 soldiers indicted for killing the six Jesuits and two women in El Salvador, and so many more... In the last 25 years, there were 200,000 dead or disap-

peared Guatemalans, 75,000 Salvadorans and in Columbia 300,000 disappeared as well as 2,000,000 displaced persons. Many of those responsible for these crimes were trained at Ft. Benning.

Sunday morning was first



At the gates of the School of the Americas or WHISC, thousands gather each year to call for its closing. Many carry crosses bearing the names of some of those who died at the hands of its graduates.

filled with music, prayer and speeches. One speaker mentioned how our country supported General Agustin Pinochet in his overthrow of the elected government of Chile... until he ordered the assassination of thousands of opponents, including Americans in Chile and Chileans in the U.S.

At 10:45 a.m. the “solemn funeral procession” began

to move toward the gate, ten people to a row, many holding crosses with the names of victims on them, while people on stage spoke or sang into microphones in the form of a litany the names of victims. After each name, we all responded, “Presente!”. Next came a procession,

If we blindly support all the policies and programs of our government, we forfeit our title as disciples of Jesus Christ.

His life, teaching and death laid great emphasis on seeking and speaking truth, justice, love and peace. Though it is easier to judge the past than to foresee the future, if we live in the present with a Christian spirit, we learn to “read the signs of the times,” to speak and act for truth, justice and peace, and we dare point out and oppose whatever threatens these Christian fundamentals.

That is why some of us went to Ft. Benning and why so many others are working to close this “School of Assassins.” There is a campaign afoot to send a million postcards or letters to our Representative and Senators asking them to support the House bill HR 1810 to close the School of the Americas. All Oblates and our friends are invited to support this campaign. ❖

We have included stamped copies of the above-mentioned postcards with this mailing. For more ways to get involved, contact the SOA Watch organization or see www.soaw.org.

Bulletin from Bangladesh

Regular readers of this Update will remember from previous issues the issues of the ecoparks and the plight of indigenous people in Bangladesh. As many of you already know, the Bangladeshi government plans to install eco-parks on the traditional land that the Khasia

and Garo tribal people have occupied and cultivated for centuries. The hundreds of indigenous families who will be displaced and whose livelihoods will be destroyed by these parks were not consulted before this action was taken. Responding to this action,

the Khasis and Garos organized a campaign of peaceful resistance against the eco-parks. Currently the project has been postponed. We learned from Joseph Gomes, OMI, an advocate on behalf of the indigenous people of Bangladesh, in the last JPIC report that many

attacks on Khasi and Garo communities have occurred and that Muslim assailants are cutting down the betel plants and big trees from which these groups have made their living.

We recently received word that, in the name of stopping terrorists in Bangladesh, the Army has arrested more than two thousand people. While those arrested are primarily Muslim, some Khasi and Garo people have been rounded up as well, due to false accusations by Bengali Muslims. So far, twelve people have died in army custody. A trusted advocate has advised Khasi and Garo people not to go outside the hilly area where they live. Below are two other updates on the situation in Bangladesh. ❖



World Indigenous Day Protest Rally for the Traditional Land Rights of Indigenous People, August 9, 2002

From a letter by Bejoy D'Cruze, OMI, Delegation Superior in Bangladesh:

Fr. Joseph [Gomes, OMI] is tirelessly working for the rights of our tribal people. On the 9th of August 2002 "Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum" celebrated the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. Thousands of people came from all over Bangladesh. They started the day at the foot of the Language Movement Monument, Dhaka where people of all walks of life organize gatherings and meetings for demanding their rights or protesting against any injustice done to them. On this memorable day they had inaugural talks delivered by tribal leaders, Fr. Richard Timm and others. Then they had a colourful rally

where thousands of people joined. This time their demand was to recognize the Traditional Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the afternoon they had discussion and cultural function. In this afternoon session a tribal minister from the Government was invited; UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative in Bangladesh, Diplomats from Foreign Missions, Tribal leaders, Professors from Dhaka University, lawyers and human rights activists delivered speeches and showed their concern for the rights of the minority tribals. Fr. Joseph alone brought about 300 people from Sylhet Region.



Khasi Indigenous women from Bangladesh arrange Betel leaves. Collecting Betel leaves is a major way in which they earn money. Betel production has been hampered as Muslim assailants, who Khasis suspect have the support of the government, cut down Betel plants.



On World Indigenous People's day, August 9, 2002, thousands gathered for a protest rally and for cultural performances

Greetings from Geneva: An update from Joseph Gomes, OMI

I am now attending the 8th Session of UN Working Group of Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva.

The meeting will continue until 13 December 2002. Mr. Sanjeeb Drong, a indigenous leader and journalist is with me.

Many indigenous delegates from all over the world are attending the meeting. I will make a intervention on

behalf of our indigenous peoples, Khasi and Garos.

I want to highlight the recent violation of human rights on Khasis and emphasise the land rights of indigenous peoples.

Séamus Finn, OMI will be traveling to Bangladesh in the coming weeks to learn more about this troubling situation first hand.

Opposing the Juvenile Death Penalty

by Robert Allanach, OMI

Less than 36 hours before Alexander Williams was scheduled to die by lethal injection for a brutal robbery, kidnapping, rape and murder he committed when he was 17, the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles held a clemency hearing. After listening to several groups, including the victim's family, the National Mental Health Association and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ), the Board of Pardons and Paroles ordered a five-day stay of William's execution to allow itself more time to deliberate. Within five days the Board commuted his death sentence to one of life in prison.

Some posit that Alexander Williams should have been executed at 7 p.m. on February 20, 2002. He wasn't! Today Williams sits idle in an 8-by-10 foot cell at the Georgia State Prison. He will call this place home for the rest of his life.

What drove this 17-year-old to commit such heinous crimes? He suffered from schizophrenia made more volatile by his youthful age. Recent research by the National Academy of the Sciences indicates that the portion of the brain that controls and suppresses

impulses, and is critical to sound judgment and decision-making, is not fully developed in youth. Young people have difficulty thinking through consequences under stress and managing powerful impulses without adult guidance. The U.S. Supreme Court decision in its 1982 ruling seems to agree with this research. In its decision *Eddings v. Oklahoma*, the Court wrote as part of its decision that juveniles "deserve less punishment because they have less capacity to control their conduct and to think in long-range terms than adults."

Such knowledge overrides the argument of adult punishment for "adult-like crime." Youth like Williams cannot be viewed as acting with a level of moral culpability the same as that that characterizes adults. David Doi, Executive Director, and Linda Hayes, former CJJ National Chair (1999) testified at Williams' clemency hearing in Atlanta. It was important that CJJ assist in saving Alexander William's life. CJJ has for more than a decade opposed the execution of any individual convicted of an offense committed before age 18.

Although 38 states have the death penalty for adults, since its reinstatement in 1976, only seven states have imposed capital punishment on minors. Indeed, recently Texas made preparations to execute two minors within the same month. Those seven states join the undistinguished company of Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as the only places in the world that still execute children. In the last decade, the United States has executed more juvenile offenders than all these nations combined. Indeed, recently three U.S. Su-

preme Court Justices publicly questioned this policy. Such a policy while inhumane is also prohibited by the Geneva Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. CJJ decries capital punishment for youthful offenders as contrary to the most basic principles of juvenile court law. I believe—as do the majority of Americans (Hart Poll, 2000)—that every child is capable of redemption and deserves a chance to make positive changes. ❖

Robert Allanach, OMI serves as a Consultant for the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ on the Death Penalty for Juvenile Offenders:

In many circumstances, we treat our young people as if they are in need of our concern and protection. We have laws, curfews and age limits because we know they do not yet have a fully developed sense of right and wrong, nor can they truly comprehend the consequences of their actions. Although it's an understandable gut reaction to look at a youth who has committed a horrible and senseless act of violence and say, 'We are going to give you the punishment you deserve-death.' But, as a society, we are challenged to ask ourselves. "How did we cease to protect him and keep him from this result?"

Helen Prejean, CSJ is the author of *Dead Man Walking*.

An Update on the OMI General Administration JPIC Service

by *Mary O'Herron*

In the last issue of this report, mention was made of the new General Administration Service for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. A little background: After the 1998 Chapter, the General Council asked **Fr. Oswald Firth, OMI**, to review and evaluate the history of JPIC in the Congregation and to recommend pathways of action to bring new life to this area. As a result, at its Plenary Session in the spring of 2001, the Council agreed to establish a new Service for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. In the summer of 2001, **Oswald Firth, OMI**, **Rufus Whitley, OMI** and **Séamus Finn, OMI** drafted a work plan that included a mission statement and objectives for the new Service. The General Council approved the plan in the fall of 2001.

Service Objectives:

The primary objective of the Service is to act as a pro-active agent. Action in favor of justice is at the heart of the Service and should pervade all its efforts. The Service will respond to the immediate challenges rising from the ministry of Oblates and will focus, systematically and

institutionally, on Oblate priority issues.

Secondary objectives are:
Collaboration – in some instances, the Service will network with local and international organiza-

Support – highlight, recognize and encourage Oblate efforts in promoting JPIC around the world by increasing awareness of and being in solidarity with them.

Mission Statement

The Service of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Oblate Congregation fosters through its members, associates, partners, and institutional structures an active presence where decisions are made affecting the poor (Rule 9a). The Service also encourages and collaborates with appropriate Oblate ministries on behalf of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.



tions in the promotion of JPIC. In other instances, the service will rely on the efforts of and be supportive to initiatives by other religious congregations and appropriate Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's).

To coordinate the JPIC Service, the General Council appointed an initial Board of Directors consisting of **Rufus Whitley, OMI**, **Oswald Firth, OMI**, and **Séamus Finn, OMI**. It was decided that the Service would have a presence in Rome and in

Washington, DC. **Fr. Eliseo "Jun" Mercado, OMI**, of the Philippine Province was appointed as the Director of the Service, effective June 1, 2003. He was born in the Philippines in 1948, is a former President of Notre Dame University of Cotabato, author of several books on Missiology, and an exponent and sought-after practitioner of reconciliation and mediation methods. His office will be in Rome.

In Jan 2002, **Séamus Finn, OMI**, was appointed as the Associate Director and operates from the U.S. Province's JPIC Office in Washington, DC. This office updates Congregation superiors about four times a year on issues of interest and the work of Oblates throughout the Congregation for justice, peace and integrity of creation.

This office also works with multinational corporations in the U.S. and OIP portfolios by filing resolutions and engaging in dialogues with management in order to address their policies and practices that are an affront to human dignity and destructive to the environment. ❖

Zambia in a Disaster: Genetically Modified Organisms

by Singini Nacidze, OMI

I grow poison on my farm, feed it to my family and sell it to unsuspecting consumers in the U.S. and around the world. That's what the president of Zambia seems to think. As 3 million people in his country face starvation, Levy Mwanawasa has let some 15 million metric tons of donated corn sit untouched in storage because some of it is genetically modified.

John Reifsteck

That is part of an appeal of an American farmer to Africa to accept "donations" of genetically modified corn which appeared in the September 25, 2002 edition of the Chicago Tribune. Alongside the commentary was a picture of a Zambian woman in Mumpansha gathering corn from the ground on a scene of an accident where a truck carrying grain spilled its load.

What an appeal to emotions I thought! Indeed the scene is devastating. It shows the effects of hunger in Zambia, one of the countries in Africa refusing "donations" of genetically modified corn. I read the commentary by John Reifsteck, a farmer in the

USA, with great interest. For the months of July till mid September, 2002 I had an opportunity to be on holiday visiting my home country Zambia which is one of the countries affected by the shortage of corn, the staple food of the Zambian people. We all know that the debate on genetically modified foods has become a major topic of debate on the radio, on television and in the print media.

Across the sea on the continent of North America the debate on genetically modified corn is contentious, with a different tone. Let me give you the picture of what Reifsteck had to say about genetically modified corn which our country has refused to accept. The farmer informs president Mwanawasa that Americans have been growing and eating biotech crops for years-and that about one third of all the corn grown in the United States has



S.E. Finke

been genetically modified, mostly to resist pests and reduce sprays.

The farmer further suggests that biotech crops have survived tough regulatory scrutiny in the United states. The farmer further appeals to us Africans, that biotechnology is a matter of life and death. Instead of a "poison," it is an antidote to the terrible problem of

hunger. The people of Southern Africa simply need to be fed and biotech crops are safe and economical way of helping out.

The farmer concludes his appeal by saying that, "Africans deserve something other than a perverse, anti-scientific philosophy that declares, "Better dead than fed." Interesting reading, I must say again.

So what is the big deal about GM corn. Why should the president say No to GM corn? Well, is he out of his mind? How does he expect to feed three million people who are likely to die? Are there any alternatives to feeding the people?

I may be asking more questions than offering answers at the moment. Accepting genetically modified corn to feed the starving Zambians may appear to be a simple matter at first sight. The simple solution for one outside Zambia will be, we give you GM corn, your people eat, and they do not die of starvation. Everyone is happy, no lives lost. What about that, Mr. President?

The question of GM corn goes beyond feeding the

people who are starving. Yes it is true that North Americans have been growing and eating biotech crops for years. Well and good. The difference between people living in the USA and Zambia is that the former has a choice to choose what they want to eat.

So why should Zambians refuse GM corn when the American people in their “best intentions” are trying to save them from starvation? For Africans, it is time that we have come to a realization that we can make our own informed decisions on what we should eat and not eat and no one from the outside can force that on us. A hungry mouth can have no choice on what to eat and in most cases anything can be shoved into the mouths of

the hungry. This time the leaders and people of Africa have said wait a minute. Let us look at some of the implications of genetically engineered corn on our people.

Kasisi Agriculture and Training Centre and the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection concisely articulate the issue. The concern is primarily on the harmful effects GM corn has on humans, animals or on the environment.

As much as it is not clear on the negative effects the GM foods may have on humans and the environment, findings of some farmers, on the negative effects that GM corn has had on their animal herds gives us clues on what could happen to human beings as well. As much as

we Africans need to be fed, we have the duty to protect that which is sacred to our lives, our traditionally grown corn. It is a known fact that agriculture biotechnology has resulted in increases of herbicide use, dominance of corporate monopoly over food production as well as potential environmental problems.

It is time that Zambia and other countries in Africa command freedom and choice of what is good for its people. We Africans can make our own decisions when it concerns our lives, as we stand on our philosophy, “We live till we die.”❖

Singini Nacidze, OMI, hails from Zambia and is currently studying theology at Chicago Theological Union. He lives in community with other Oblates at the Oblate House of Theology in Chicago.

30th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade: Thousands to gather in Washington, DC

This annual series of events promises to attract more people this year than ever. The following are some of the events planned:

The National Prayer Vigil for Life

January 21-22, 2003 at the The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

The National March for Life,

January 22, Begins at noon with a rally at the Washington Monument, ends with a march to the Capitol.

For more information on these events and others, as well as resources for use with parishes, see www.usccb.org/prolife



Each year on January 22nd – the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade – people pause to recognize the date in some way. Some speak out, some march, some reach out, some educate, some just reflect. Many pray.

Legislative and Advocacy Update

Immigration

Thanks to all of you who sent in the postcards included in the last JPIC Report as part of the “Reward Work” campaign calling for an earned legalization of immigrants who have lived and worked in our communities for several years.

Oblates and others from around the country sent a total of over 1200 cards to the JPIC office in Washington, allowing us to do our part in a campaign which garnered over 1,000,000 postcards. Especially helpful in the Oblate postcard effort was **John Cox, OMI**.

The presentation of the postcards made a major media splash and had an impact on congress. During this event Representative Dick Gephardt (D-IN) introduced a piece of legislation (**HR 5600**) which would fairly regularize the status of many immigrants currently living in the United States.

Those who filled in post cards or are in favor of changing the legal status of contributing members of our communities who are immigrants are encouraged

to call your representative and ask him or her to co-sponsor and support **HR 5600**. (Bill numbers listed may be changing soon).

More information on issues related to immigration can be found at: www.immigrationforum.org

School of the Americas

HR 1820 (which will receive a new bill number in this legislative session) called for the closure of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (School of the Americas) and the establishment of a joint congressional task force to assess US training of Latin America military still needs more co-sponsors. Currently there are 112 co-sponsors.

To find out if your congressman is a co-sponsor of this legislation, or to learn the latest about the struggle to close the SOA, go to www.soaw.org.

Landmines

On September 13th the U.S. Senate passed **S. 1777**, the “**The**

International Disability and Victims of Landmines, Civil Strife and Warfare Assistance Act of 2002” by unanimous consent. This bill was co-sponsored by Senators Hilary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Sam Brownback (R-KS) and will expand the ability of USAID to provide international disability and victim assistance for survivors of landmines. Pressure is needed on Representatives to support the House version of this bill: H.R. 3169 IH.

Eighty percent of landmine victims are civilians and one-third of those victims are children. Only ten percent have access to proper medical care and rehabilitation. In the developing world there are few medical supplies, little sanitation or clean water, and a scarcity of surgeons, physical therapists and psychologists. With hundreds of thousands of landmine survivors worldwide, their needs are great.

The Senate passage of this bill is a significant step toward enabling victims of landmine, war and civil strife to reclaim their lives and take their place as

proud and equal citizens who are born free with dignity and rights.

You can help by visiting the web site of the US Campaign to Ban Landmines and using the materials there to pressure your representative to vote in favor of HR 3169.

For landmine news and advocacy opportunities: www.banminesusa.org

Debt Relief

The **Debt Relief Enhancement Act Of 2002**, failed to pass the House at the end of this congressional year. The legislation would have provided another \$1 billion in debt relief for countries already in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC).

This would have been accomplished by saying that countries should not spend more than 10% of revenue on debt service, or for countries with a severe health crisis, like the AIDS pandemic, should not spend more than 5%.

For more information on debt relief efforts, contact Jubilee Network USA: www.jubileeusa.org.

JustFAITH

A Formation Strategy for Expanding and Promoting Parish Social Ministry

An Overview:

Catholic Charities USA offers an exciting opportunity for parishes and dioceses interested in expanding and promoting social ministry: JustFaith. JustFaith is an extended justice education/formation program that provides an opportunity for parishioners to study and be formed by the justice tradition articulated by the Scriptures, the Church's historical witness, and Catholic social teaching.

JustFaith is a conversion-based process that seeks to integrate personal spirituality and social ministry. The aim of JustFaith is to empower participants to develop a passion and thirst for Justice and to express this passion in concrete acts of parish social ministry.

The Program:

Engaging in the Church's social mission is without argument one of the most challenging messages of our Gospel Tradition. JustFaith is a process that recognizes the complexity of the call to compassion and provides a wide range of compelling resources to communicate this tradition. The difficult call to bring justice to a broken world deserves a preparation that honors the profundity of the task.

JustFaith is a process. Over the course of seven to eight months, participants meet weekly for readings, videos, lecture, discussion, prayer, retreats, and hands-on experiences in justice education. Participants are exposed not only to a substantive and demanding course of study but are also afforded the privilege of becoming community with other participants and sharing a journey of faith and compassion that is both life-giving and challenging.

JustFaith can be – and typically is – facilitated by parishioners, meaning it does not create

For More Information:

Office of JustFaith
7406 Greenlawn Rd.
Louisville, Kentucky 40222
www.justfaith.org

Jack Jezreel, Director
Phone: 502-429-0865
E-mail: jack@justfaith.org

Chris Breau,
Assistant Director
Phone: 502-243-9287
E-mail: chris@justfaith.org



OMI JPIC OFFICE



FOR MORE JPIC NEWS AND
ACTION ALERTS
VISIT WWW.OMIUSA.ORG



Printed on Recycled Paper



**“Peace is not the
product of terror or fear.**

**Peace is not
the silence of cemeteries.**

**Peace is not
the silent result
of violent repression.**

**Peace is the generous,
tranquil contribution
of all to the good of all.**

**Peace is dynamism.
Peace is generosity.
It is right and it is duty.”**

Archbishop Oscar Romero



OMI JPIC OFFICE



UNITED STATES PROVINCE
MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE
391 MICHIGAN AVENUE, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20017

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, DC
PERMIT NO. 1749

*“Preach the Gospel. Use words if necessary.”
St. Francis of Assisi*