



The mystery of the poor is this: That they are Jesus, and what you do for them you do for Him. It is the only way we have of knowing and believing in our love. The mystery of poverty is that by sharing in it, making ourselves poor in giving to others, we increase our knowledge of and belief in love.

Dorothy Day

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From the Director

One of the events which is included in the scriptures during the Christmas season is the flight into Egypt wherein Joseph takes Mary and the new born child out of the reach of a vengeful and fear filled Herod. We are told then that the scourge of Herod had its way as his soldiers went into to all the villages and murdered the male newborns and Rachel weeps and laments. After a time the scriptures tell us that Jesus and his parents returned to Nazareth to create a home.

In the waning moments of the congressional session in December the House of Representatives opened the legislative consideration of immigration that promises to be a very active and heated debate. It seems that we come to this debate as a country about every ten years and that debate is most certainly driven by the context in which we find ourselves. This time it will be no different as the rush to mask our own insecurity and fear is expressed in the cry to

“gain control over our borders”.

Many of us can easily recall the flows of European immigrants who came to the United States over the years and we readily document and celebrate the contributions and gifts that they have made to the country. We are less well acquainted with the new immigrants who have come from Latin America, eastern Europe, Asia and Africa who have settled here. We are often less likely to be able to acknowledge their contributions or to appreciate their struggle.

I have often reflected on the emigration experience of my family and tried to revisit the stories, the emotions and the sacrifices which formed part of that journey. We were fortunate in many ways; the choice was freely made, there were family and neighbors to bless us on our way and others to welcome us with open arms and to help us with the many adjustments to our new surroundings. Many factors come into the contemporary debate

on immigration which are very new and need to be explored. Others elements however, have been part of nearly every previous consideration of this issue. When immigrants look very different from us, come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and speak different languages than those with which we are familiar our sense of hospitality is tested.

The medieval drama entitled “The Play of Herod” ends with the sending of one to comfort the weeping Rachel but we know that she refuses to be comforted. No happy ending here. No Christmas lite with lots of sugar and over in a day. It ends with the singing of a Te Deum: “We praise you, God, we confess you as Lord,” the great chant of praise. It is sung by Mary and Joseph while they process throughout the audience and they are joined in procession and song by the angels and the animals, by the kings and the shepherds, by Rachel and the lamenting parents of

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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

The Oblate JPIC Office wishes to congratulate Singini Nacidze, OMI

on the publication of his first newsletter of the Justice and Peace office in Zambia. We hope that this is the first of many fine publications to come.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice

will take place from March 10-13, 2006. Tracks will include Latin America, Jubilee/Economic Justice, Africa and others. Participants will learn more about the issues of the day, receive training on advocacy, and then meet with their congressional representatives. This ecumenical gathering attracted 900 participants last year. The Oblate JPIC Office has been a sponsor of this event since its inception and we highly encourage you to participate. Please visit www.advocacydays.org for more details.

SOA Spring Gathering

From April 23-25, 2006, participants in the SOA Watch movement will gather in Washington, DC for meetings and a rally. You are invited to join

them. For more information, please see www.soaw.org.

Carl Kabat, OMI Arrested in an act of Resistance

Carl Kabat, OMI, did a Nonviolent Public Resistance to Evil action at the state sanctioned murder on October 25, 2005 in Bonne Terre, MO.

He was arrested by the Bonne Terre Police Department and charged with trespassing, as he attempted to walk to the front door of the institution



carrying a lighted candle and two signs around his neck. In front was a sign pleading "Stop the Murder" and on his back hung from his neck was another sign saying

"Thou shall NOT KILL
- IN PRISON
- IN WAR
- IN CRIME
OR ANYTIME"

He appeared in St. Francis County Municipal Circuit Court at 118 E. School St. Bonne Terre, MO on December 14th at 1:30pm.

In the early morning of Dec. 2, 2005, Kenneth Lee Boyd became the 1,000th person executed in the United States since the resumption of executions in the United States in 1977.

Several hundred people from around the country and North Carolina gathered at Raleigh's Central Prison Thursday night, Dec. 1, to protest Boyd's execution. Many others protested in cities around the country.

Global Network Against Weapons in Space

NASA plans to launch 24 pounds of highly toxic plutonium on a *New Horizons* mission to the planet Pluto. To express your disapproval of this plan, please write to Michael Griffin, NASA Administrator, 300 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20546. For more information and talking points please go to www.space4peace.org.

Religious Task Force Closes Its Doors

We want to express our appreciation for more than

Armand Mathew Coordinates Another Successful Kids Voting USA in Brownsville



Armand Mathew, OMI, Executive Director, Kids Voting USA/Brownsville, presiding at public ceremony at Homer Hanna High School, Brownsville, Texas, Thursday, November 3, 2005, at which Brownsville Mayor Eddie Treviño, Jr., proclaimed the Thursday before the first Monday of November of every year Kids Voting/ Brownsville Day. Seated at left: Brownsville Mayor Eddie Treviño, Jr.; Dr. Rita Hernandez, Assistant Superintendent, Brownsville Independent School District.

twenty years of service of the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico (RTFCAM), which recently closed its doors. The Oblate JPIC office sponsored several efforts, conferences and gatherings jointly with the RTFCAM, which was founded at the request of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Those of us here at the Oblate JPIC Office are grateful for all the careful organizing work and information gathering done by this organization over the years. Their web site,

www.rtfcam.org will likely continue to exist.

More Black Americans Live With Pollution

An Associated Press analysis of a little-known government research project shows that black Americans are 79 percent more likely than whites to live in neighborhoods where industrial pollution is suspected of posing the greatest health danger. For more information, please go to <http://www.truthout.org/>.

Change the World with Your Wallet

The JPIC Office and others spend a fair amount of effort trying to change aspects of corporations' operations. This may be enhanced by any and all of us.

A website, www.idealswork.com, uses the premise that corporations will change when customers demand change. To this end, this site offers potential buyers of a wide variety of items information how various

brands stack up on environmental and social issues.

Katrina Information Network: Real Relief, A Just Recovery, and Nothing Less

A group of those impacted by Hurricane Katrina have banded together with other concerned citizens to advocate for a just hurricane relief process. For more information or to help, please visit www.katrinaaction.org.

Global Trade and the Common Good

Andrew Small, OMI

*Reprinted from
America Magazine*

If you are anxious about the future of the Church's mission, global trade made be the last place you would look for insight. You may want to think again. Ask yourself why Willie Sutton robbed banks. If economics is the engine room of globalization, then international trade rules determine how the engine works. It has worked well for a select few, so far. If you are reading this, you can probably count yourself among them. This is unsustainable, as well as unjust. There will be chance to change this at a meeting of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 148 member-nations in Hong Kong this December. Unfortunately, not enough people think it has anything to do with the Church's mission.

Communism & Capitalism

Addressing Members of the US Congress and Catholic bishops from almost every country in the Hemisphere recently, Chicago's Cardinal Francis George, OMI recognized the significance of global trade. The Vice-

market capitalism. Under communism, the Cardinal said, people were promised social justice in exchange for personal liberty; an internal contradiction that led to communism's demise. Similar contradictions are present in free-market capitalism, he said. Capi-

the human person. The Cardinal's insight comes at an important stage in global trade. The US Congress recently experienced a bruising battle over passage of the US-Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Meanwhile, the US, the European Union

and other major trading nations are engaged in a game of brinkmanship in the run-up to the Sixth Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong. At the Fourth Ministerial in Seattle in 1999 the WTO was accused of doing little to narrow the gap between rich and poor – a charge recently supported by the World Bank. At the



The delegation from the Holy See, Andrew Small, OMI is second from the left

President of the US Bishops' Conference recalled the legacy of Pope John Paul II and his struggle against totalitarianism, warning that the false promises that brought down communism could also bring down the current system of free-

talism promises that if we accept inequality long enough then, in the end, there will be more wealth for everyone. While there is evidence this may be true, the cost to the poor is too great. Worse still, both systems are built on a distorted understanding of

Fifth Ministerial Meeting in Cancún in 2003, a coalition of developing countries drew a line in the sand and demanded a better deal on global agriculture. The World Bank estimates that poor countries are losing \$200 billion every year in

agricultural trade alone because of prohibitive trade rules. Hong Kong could be the moment that unlocks that potential. Trade veterans observe that previous trade “rounds” experience similar make or break moments. But Cardinal George has pointed to a fundamental flaw in current efforts to liberalize global trade. While economic globalization has its own logic, it does not have its own ethic. Trade agreements are moral documents. Without a moral framework, the logic of greater economic integration will fail to respond to the needs of all, especially the most vulnerable.

And that, sooner or later, will be its undoing.

Doha and the Post-September 11 World

It was precisely this danger that motivated WTO ministers in Doha, Qatar in November 2001, to announce a “Development” Round of trade

negotiations. Meeting just two months after September 11, trade leaders recognized the failure of free trade to work for the poor, acknowledging that most trade – 70 per cent – takes place exclusively between rich countries. Unable to access markets because of prohibitive tariffs or highly subsidized

Work Program.” Currently, eighty percent of the world’s population only generates a quarter of all international trade. Some countries are doing well, but the poorest – and those most in need of help – are actually losing ground. For example, in 1990, Africa produced 3.1 percent of global

the losers. Pope John Paul called for the globalization of solidarity.

Market Access and Tariff Rates

Recently, President Bush has called on developed countries to lower their tariffs on imports from developing countries. This would allow developing

countries to sell their goods in lucrative markets. But be careful of the smoke and mirror. WTO members bind themselves to a maximum tariff rate for certain imports, while in practice the actual or applied rate is much lower. For example the US bound tariff on a certain good

is 50 per cent. The applied tariff rate is only 8 per cent. Cutting the bound tariff by 50 percent would have no impact the applied level. Only by cutting its applied level (by actually reducing the bound level by 80 percent or more) will US, EU and others afford poor

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competitive products, poor countries found themselves locked out of the global market. The Doha Declaration aimed to change this, saying: “The majority of WTO members are developing countries. We seek to place their needs and interests at the heart of the

exports. But by 2001, sub-Saharan Africa’s share of exports shrank to 2.4 percent. Trade yields winners and losers, as we are often told. But what happens when the same people win, and the same people lose? Surely, it’s incumbent on the winners to compensate

An Ecological Vocation

Maurice Lange, OMI

“The idea of an ‘ecological vocation’ has become an urgent moral responsibility in today’s world.”

—Pope John Paul II,
August 25, 2002

I grew up with a deep love for the out-of-doors, even in my first 10 years of life in San Antonio. Nature was my faithful companion, my friend, my confidante. As a child, it evoked spiritual gifts like *wonder* and *awe* from my interior depths. Perhaps it was the big backyard full of cats and dogs and pecan trees that I reveled in. Maybe it was the chance to escape the city each weekend and go to either set of grandparent’s farm and gather eggs, ride horseback, feed the cattle. Back again at home, it could have been the opportunities I had to play ball, do yardwork, harvest pecans. Again out in the country, my brother teaching me how to fish and hunt surely had an influence. It was the natural world of south Texas and my Earthy family that initially evoked my “*ecological vocation*”.

As a child, it was *difficult* for me not to be outside. Like any other

kid, during the school day I longed for recess so as to be out running around the playground. My mom attempted to teach me how to play the piano in the afternoons after school—since this could not be done effectively outside, my interest and desire were less than ardent! I longed to be in that backyard—who would want to waste a perfectly good afternoon?! I would cry and cry when my Dad went with his buddies on hunting trips and not take me along because I was too young.

I eventually grew in age and hopefully wisdom—and my love for nature matured. In college I studied biology, toxicology, botany and ecology. The hands-on research I did monitoring the effects of urban sprawl on a white-tail deer population was especially meaningful. I came away with an initial degree: a BA in Environmental Studies.

After my novitiate year in Illinois spent on 255 acres of bluffs, woods, pastures and a striking view of the Mississippi River, I returned to Texas to study theology. The pastoral preparation was very good. But I do not recall any reference made

whatsoever to the natural world when we were pondering the God of our studies.

Eventually, with a second degree under my belt, I was ordained and sent to work in parishes as an associate pastor. The ministry was fine but I felt somewhat schizoid: I had studied no connection to the seemingly disparate fields of nature and God. And such a connection was not formally coming on its own.

It was not very long into the 1990’s, however, that I began hearing about “*eco-theology*” and “*eco-spirituality*”. I thought, “Wow, somebody is putting these two worlds together!” I yearned to immerse myself within this deeper sense of unity.

Some years later I was privileged to be able to travel to the Northeast to spend time at places like *Spiritearth* and *Genesis Farm*. There my perceptions were broadened and deepened in ways I could not have anticipated. Pondering the story of the Universe, sitting with the icon of Earth taken from Space, learning how to live within a *bioregion*, being befriended and nourished by organic farming—all of this was pure grace.

Flowing from these new connections was my discernment into a new Oblate ministry: an *ecological* ministry. I did not have to look very far into our Oblate documents to feel supported within this new calling. The 1997 Oblate “*Vade Mecum on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*” stated that ecology is a full-fledged part of the preaching of the Gospel!

Out of this dimension of our Oblate life, through much discernment and deliberation by members of the Oblate province, and by way of Divine Providence—the *Oblate Ecological Initiative* was born in December, 2001. Based in Godfrey, Illinois, this ministry has two components: 1) the promoting of eco-awareness and spirituality by way of an Ecological Learning Center; and 2) a small-scale, sustainable approach to agriculture through a Community Supported Garden. Both of these components (and the resulting ecological consciousness being engendered) have grown tremendously through the years. I have seen ecological vocations being nourished and awakened here!



Maurice Lange, OMI greets children as they help in the garden

My sense of connections continues to be evoked: I am currently interested in exploring the usage of fair-trade coffee, hybrid cars, solar ovens, composting toilets, safe cleansers, recycling and reusing. I especially enjoy being part of our learning center staff offering Earth Literacy and other programs and retreats here.

Why? Because of the call issued by Fr. Thomas Berry, CP and others: to a *mutually enhancing* human-Earth relationship. As a people and as individuals we can not

continue to take and take from the Earth and not give back. Any psychologist would label such one-sidedness as a dysfunction. I don't want to live that way. Instead, the work towards being "mutually enhancing" allures my creatureliness and deepens my Christianity.

Seeing the signs of these ecological times, I do experience sadness, grief and (at times) rage. I work to balance and incorporate these with prayer and contemplation. Sitting with and acting from the urgency, the signs

of the times and the prayer — these three are inherent in the papal quote at the beginning of this article. Yes, an *ecological vocation* is what I have been diagnosed with! I caught it from many others. I do hope mine is contagious!

And after all these years and since my childhood...I still have a dog. My immediate space is no longer surrounded by meaning-filled Texas pecan trees...but by Illinois walnuts. A backyard is now as big as one perceives it to be. The natural world still, and now a

broadened sense of an Earthy family continue to evoke my "ecological vocation".

*Contact Maurice at the Oblate Ecological Initiative, 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035 618-466-5004
lange@omiusa.org
www.lavistacsa.org.*

He'd be happy to send you a quarterly eco-newsletter called "La Vista Visions" and/or a schedule of upcoming events.

Healing Prayers

Mary O'Herron

A bumper sticker I spotted recently read:

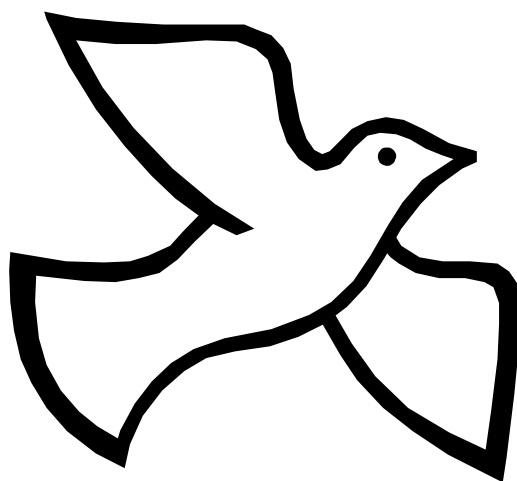
*Angry?
Need A Weapon?
Pray the Rosary!*

After reading the first two lines, I was gearing up to read an advertisement for a gun store or support for the NRA. I was surprised and pleased at "Pray the Rosary" because my experience shows that prayer works. At least I have seen its fruits over and over in my life on small, personal matters.

But how does this relate to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation when there is such a vast number of issues and needs in the world? Huge things like peace on earth, global warming, weapon proliferation, prejudice, violence, greedy CEO's, pandemic illnesses, human trafficking – to name a few. It is easy to lose hope and think "even when I pray bad stuff continues to happen".

Can prayer make a dent in any of these issues?

Taking a page from Tom Singer, OMI, who suggests the "salami" approach (Cut it up and eat just a bit at a time; don't try to swallow it all in one bite.) to big issues in life, when I came across a chapter in a book "The Healing Light" by Agnes Sanford that addresses this concern, I figured I had struck gold. She believes that we often try to pray



for things that are too big for us to deal with and suggests that we take a small segment of a larger issue and pray for that. Peace on earth is too big; peace in the heart of some hurting leader may bear more visible fruit.

She suggests asking God to help find issues to pray for that are particularly meaningful to us and then seek some small aspect to bring to prayer.

In addition, she suggests making some kind atonement. "And if we want to open the very flood-gates of power... we can use any grief that our enemies have caused us as an act of atonement."¹ She admits that this is hard, but she also shows that when we do, God's love "flows into us and makes it possible". By doing this we sometimes see the fruit of our prayer and become encouraged to pray more.

On a slightly different tack, I once asked Séamus Finn, OMI, how he keeps from getting despondent when there are so many overwhelming issues to deal with. He responded that he does what he can and gives the rest to God. This prayer also brings concerns into perspective and somehow enables God to bring more peace and justice into the hurting places of this world. ❖

¹ Agnes Sanford: *The Healing Light*, Ballantine Books, NY. © 1947 Macalester Park Publishing Co. Revised Edition 1972. Page 169.

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countries better market access.

A second problem comes from the fact that developed country tariffs tend to be highest (they spike) on the products that poor people and poor countries produce: agriculture commodities and garments, footwear and food products. So Bangladesh with a per capita income of \$370 pays more tariffs to the US on its exports than does France which has per capita income of \$24,000. France pays less even though the United States actually imports 15 times the amount of French goods than Bangladeshi goods. In addition, the more "value" that poor countries add to a product, the greater the barrier to developed country markets. Poor countries can sell peanuts, but God help them if they try and sell peanut butter.

Agricultural Subsidies

Since Doha was launched in 2001, the struggle to link trade with development has also zeroed in on the need to dismantle the current agricultural subsidy regime in rich countries who continue to spend hundreds of billions subsidizing agriculture production

annually. What originated in the US as a system of farmer protection in the wake of the Great Depression so that the country's food producers would not be exposed to excessive risk, has become a form of corporate welfare in urgent need of reform. Trade distorting subsidies, such as government loans promoting US exports violate WTO rules. In testimony before Congress on the likely impact of CAFTA on the rural communities of Central America, Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini of San Marcos, Guatemala, said: "Guatemalan farmers can compete with farmers in the United States, but they cannot compete with the US Treasury." WTO members continue to negotiate. It is unfair to separate WTO members into sheep and goats. Developing countries have their own commitments to make around tariff reduction, anti-corruption and good governance measures. But Church teaching urges a special preference for the poor, and reminds those who have much, that much will be asked in return. If Doha is to succeed and deliver results for the world's poor, protect working families and community life, then WTO members need to agree to the following:

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Environmental Stewardship: Building Projects

Rebecca Phares

One element of the "Environmental Resolution" passed by the U.S. Province reads: "Environmental assessments of building enable communities to transform properties into examples of good ecological demonstration and cost efficiency, through implementing technologies and programs that are environmentally benign."

In the interest of following up on whether or not this aspect of the resolution had come to fruition, I recently spoke with Br. Paul Hoemke, OMI regarding the ways environmental stewardship has been undertaken in the context of some of the larger Oblate building projects.

I learned that there are many efforts to make sure that Oblate buildings are as environmentally friendly as reasonably possible. For instance, in the new building at 391 Michigan Avenue in Washington, DC, air conditioning with no chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) has been chosen and environmentally friendly refrigerant will be used.

Glass windows are triple glazed so as to be energy efficient and reduce noise pollution. Roofing material of the highest standards has been chosen in order to maintain the building



envelope. Creating a building envelope means assembling exterior partitions of a building that enclose conditioned spaces, through which thermal energy may not be transferred to or from the exterior, unconditioned spaces, or the ground.

There is a need to balance energy efficiency with cost efficiency, of course. Some environmentally friendly choices were cost prohibitive, but where possible, the most energy efficient choices were made.

All construction is

undertaken with an eye towards making the most environmentally friendly choices balanced with budget considerations. At Immaculata Retreat Center in Willimantic, Connecticut

some of the same choices are being made.

In Chicago, a water heater with a flue damper control was chosen to conserve heat. The property will also use a water heater which does not have a standing pilot, which saves energy.

Br. Hoemeke believes that it is important to make

pastors aware of the possible environmentally friendly choices, many of which save money as well. Many resources and support are available at the local level to assist any community interested in pursuing these opportunities. ❖

Please contact the JPIC Office if you need any reference or assistance.

Brother Hoemeke is also happy to respond to e-mails or phone calls regarding building and facilities choices.

School of the Americas Vigil 2005

Rebecca Phares

On November 19, I, along with 20,000 other concerned citizens, made my way to the gates of the School of the Americas at Ft. Benning, Georgia, which was renamed the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC) in the year 2000. The crowd at this annual vigil has grown in recent years, from 18,000 in 2004 and 16,000 the year before. This protest has occurred since 1990, and has been written about in various issues of this publication by the many Oblates who have attended, especially Leo LeBlanc, OMI, who was one of the first protesters at the School.

The high energy level, the diversity of ages and the unity of purpose make this event one that thousands of people travel long distances to attend each year. This year its message is even more relevant: we have all seen the images of torture at Abu Ghraib. This gathering was the coming together of tens of thousands to say "No more torture training. No more killings. Not in our names."

For my family, this was a bit of a reunion as my mother prepared to cross the line and risk arrest at the School of the Americas this year. While she had risked arrest several years ago with thousands of others only to be quickly

Maryknoll sister and later as a Witness for Peace. A number of my dear friends were killed by SOA graduates. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated "disappeared",

regarding US policy. I have written letters to the editor and opinion pieces for the press in order to educate policy makers and the general public about the impact of US policy on the people of Latin America. It has been my privilege to

bring thousands of people to Latin America to see for themselves the impact of US policy on our brothers and sisters in Latin America. I have helped found a number of human rights organizations ... in order to educate the US people about the impact of US policy in Latin America and to help them to take action to change these policies. Now, I feel called to take nonviolent action to say no to these policies with creative action."

Forty others crossed and risked long-term prison time with her.

This year marked the 25th anniversary of the death of the four churchwomen in El Salvador. Graduates of the School of the Americas were involved in their murder. One of the women killed, Sr. Maura Clarke, MM, was a close friend of my mother's from her time as a Maryknoll



One of the forty individuals who, in acts of civil disobedience, crossed under the fence at Fort Benning

processed and released, we knew that this year would be different. This year she crossed with the knowledge that her action would likely bring her 3-6 months in federal prison. Why had she chosen to undertake this action? In her own words: "For the past 40 years, I have lived in or visited Latin America, first as a

massacred and forced to become refugees by those trained at the SOA/WHINSEC.

"I believe that we must find a way to say NO to these policies that lead to such suffering and death in Latin America. Over the years, I have written hundreds of letters to Congress and have met with US Senators and US Representatives

missioner in Nicaragua in the early 1960s, and Maura's memory was another reason she crossed the line this year.

Several elements explicitly remembered the churchwomen this year – a puppet presentation showed their story and told of how they continue to inspire others. Several beautiful prayer cards had been produced in their memory and were distributed to attendees. Also, a full-color display was created with their stories which was attached to the chain link fence lining the demonstration site.

Various annual elements of this gathering continued this year. On Saturday the more festive, protest-like gathering occurred with political speeches and artistic performances while on Sunday the solemn

funeral procession took place.

Another annual event, the Ignatian family teach-in and mass took place under a tent by the river. It is estimated that several thousand attended this gathering, including students from Jesuit high schools and

game of hurry up and wait as many assembled reporters snapped pictures and conducted interviews and final swigs of water were taken. My mother, and three other women, carried white roses in remembrance of the churchwomen. And then a flurry of activity. The time had come. We all

Based on past sentences, she expects to spend 3-6 months in prison. We will all miss her while she's gone and admire her strong commitment to seeing justice done.

Hopefully, this will be the year they close down the School, but if not, I hope you'll consider being

part of the assembled at the gates of Fort Benning next year.

Rebecca Phares has worked for the Oblate JPIC Office since July of 2002 and is privi-



On November 19 and 20, more than 20,000 people gathered to protest in front of the gates of Fort Benning Georgia, where the School of the Americas/WHISC is housed

colleges all over the country.

Finally, on Sunday we gathered with a sense of anticipation under the assigned banner as my mother waited to be shown where she would cross under the fence which marked the entrance to Fort Benning. It was a

quickly made our way over to the fence. Television cameras interviewed my mother and before we knew it they were under the fence. And it was done. My mother spent a tough night in prison, was released the next day and will return to Georgia in January to face trial and sentencing.

leged to have two parents who dedicate much of their time to working for justice and peace and closing the School of the Americas. Her father, Robert, is an attorney who represents many of the prisoners of conscience while they are in prison.

Faith Consistent Investing

Séamus P. Finn, OMI

More and more religious institutions and organizations are considering how their fixed and liquid assets are congruent with their beliefs and values. This has opened up opportunities for conversation and reflection on a number of different levels as they seek to articulate in very practical and quantifiable ways deeply held beliefs that are more readily expressed as general principles and concepts. Reports of the imprisonment of a union leader, contamination of local ground-water supplies, disregard for the rights and safety of

workers or the manufacture of products with life destructing capabilities can often be brought to their attention with a request for solidarity in addressing the role of

specific corporations in these instances.

For religious communities Faith Consistent Investing parallels in many ways the Social Responsible Investment focus of other investment institutions and

attention,. Included in this sector are mining and exploring for minerals, oil and gas. Reports from our OMI colleagues and collaborators in the field which surfaced from Guatemala, Peru and Bolivia

nies are busy exploring for new sources and developing new technologies. Activities in both of these areas can and do raise significant concerns for the local communities where they are taking place.

Whereas in the past these activities often took place in remote areas that were far outside the purvey of any effective monitoring agencies and much of the damage that resulted from various excavating activities or remnants only became evident years later; today local communities have grown much more adept at alerting their communications networks and contacting their colleagues internationally.

Besides issues about the destruction of villages and sacred sites, environmental and wildlife issues are of concern. Questions about the transparency of the contracts that have been signed and the



organizations including mutual funds. Over the past year the OMI/FCI program, for instance has responded to a number of new requests in the extractive sector that were brought to our

have focused our attention more closely on specific issues that this sector presents.

The thirst for cheap energy continues to grow across the world and in response, compa-

beneficiaries of any payments made for the natural resources that are mined are also raised. In some instances the national government has retained complete control over compensation and the local or regional communities are unfairly excluded. Further issues can arise when the value of specific commodities is likely to change significantly over the life of a contract.

Through the active ownership of shares in some of the corporations involved we have been able to address some concerns directly with management and sometimes with the board of directors. We have also been able to put the issues raised by local communities about specific activities on the agenda and requested a review of company policies and practices in these areas. The issue of securing free prior and informed consent from local communities, for instance, has been presented by World Bank as a model for companies in the extractive sector to follow in their negotiations with local communities. Letting management

know that this and other issues are a concern for shareholders is one of the ways that faith

consistent investing can make an important contribution to the resolution of differ-

ences between companies and local communities.

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1. Developed countries radically cut farm subsidies that depress agricultural markets (WTO speak: cut domestic support).

2. Developed countries open their markets to developing country products (WTO speak: increase market access).

3. Developing countries retain the flexibility to use pro-poor and pro-development policies, which includes the ability to protect vulnerable farmers or sectors that are important for food security and livelihoods (WTO speak: allow meaningful 'special and differential treatment')

The Hong Kong meeting may represent the last chance of setting this trade round on track and restoring the development focus to the project. But it will require more focus not just from political leaders, but from all those committed to solidarity with the poor. Recent statements by President Bush at the (Group of 8) G-8 meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland and more recently, at the UN Summit in New York may indicate a new political will to bear down on Doha.

Meanwhile, leaders in the US Congress are warning the President against going the extra mile and making the commitments to reduce distorting trade subsidies. This is troubling. Domestic special interests cannot be allowed to prevail over a global agreement that would unlock the capacity for the poor to help themselves and be less dependent on traditional foreign aid.

As happened during the Catholic Debt Relief Campaign, the Congress needs to know that people of faith are behind reform of global trade rules in a way that prioritizes the needs of the least among us.

Cardinal George has shown that no system of laws can accept inequity as a means to an end. Justice cannot be traded for wealth. The coming weeks will determine if the Church will have a voice in shaping the world of tomorrow. When people of faith mobilize, they can achieve a great deal.

Upon his return from Hong Kong, the Oblate JPIC Office asked Fr. Small update us on how things went: Despite disappointment voiced on

all sides of the negotiations, the final outcome of the recent Meeting of the World Trade Organization in Hong Kong contained some positive elements. This is encouraging, for several reasons. First, the Ministerial Declaration signed by the 150 WTO Members reaffirmed the vitality of the global trading system itself. Global trade has rules that should be respected by the countries both great and small and predatory or isolationist economies are not welcome in tomorrow's world. Second, it showed the growing capacity of the world's poorer and smaller economies to negotiate as a group and to make a significant contribution to the trade talks. Gains to the poorest countries may not come as fast as needed or desired. But the hegemony of current major trading nations is on notice that Hong Kong served.

Behind the complicated negotiations and the maneuvering of the different Members, some important themes stand out. Agriculture was top of the agenda for poorer countries, mainly their

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need to gain access to rich countries. Meanwhile, rich countries argued (mainly among themselves) about plans to stop subsidizing their own producers in a way that distorts trade and inhibits exports from poor countries. In the final hours of the Conference, Europe agreed to phase out its export subsidies by 2013 a move that allowed a certain flexibility to advance the negotiations on manufacturing access to potentially lucrative emerging economies.

While the big ticket items of market access and domestic farm supports saw no major advance for now, the least developed countries were offered a “package” of measures designed to help build trade capacity and lift their export levels. This included increased “Aid for Trade” as well as duty-free-quota-free access for *most* exports from LDCs (the exceptions to this may all but neutralize any supposed benefits).

From the Church’s perspective, the example of negotiation and consensus among a member-driven international organization such as the WTO is welcome. And that global economic rules are edged more towards

the needs of the most vulnerable is also a good sign that the poor are not abandoned. At least two cautions remain. The WTO cannot become the main locus for a bi-annual discussion of the world’s woes just because it deals with issues of utmost importance. Other forms of international cooperation need to be equally as effective and member-driven as the WTO. Second, markets and their masters generally give little attention to the fabric and texture of peoples’ lives and their cultures, seeing them, perhaps, as useful or curious side-shows in the large economic scheme of things. Culture is not a commodity, but there should be other ways to protect culture as much as the WTO protects intellectual property rights.

As the global trading system increases in importance, and trade reshapes our world according to a model that prizes efficiency, then it should accept the more intense scrutiny and offer reasonable responses to the rational questions that are asked of it: either in Ministerial meetings or on the streets outside. ❖

Legislative and Advocacy Updates

Help is Needed to Build Congressional Support for Strong Foreign Assistance Funding in FY 2007

Catholic Relief Services has asked that you voice your support for increasing funds that fight poverty in developing countries. A strong FY ‘07 International Affairs budget request by the President is essential to getting the most help for those who are poor around the world. Now is the time to voice your support for increasing the Foreign Operations budget, which includes such items as the Global HIV/AIDS and Millennium Challenge Account.

Please contact your Senators and Representative and ask them to support the DeWine-Feinstein-Smith-Durbin letter (for Senators) or Leach-Berman-Weller-Harman (for Representatives). Catholic Relief Services’ Grassroots Action Center has more information: www.catholicrelief.org/actioncenter.cfm.

Immigration bill may be debated soon

Past issues of this journal have focused on an immigration bill which

would allow for a legal means of entry and eventually would permit immigrants to become citizens if they choose to. It is likely that this bill will be debated in the House of Representatives in the next several months.

This bill represents a viable alternative for undocumented people crossing into and living in the United States. Please let your representatives know that you are in favor of comprehensive immigration reform such as that offered by this bill, which has received bill number H.R.2330.IH in the House and S.1033.IS in the Senate.

Anti-Immigrant Bill Passed by House of Representatives, Soon to be Considered by Senate

In late December, the US House of Representatives passed HR 4437 (The Border and Immigration Enforcement Act of 2005) which would require employers to verify employees’ immigration status through a database which has, thus-far, proven to be quite flawed. It also includes vague language which would criminalize regular contact with



The JPIC Committee, pictured here, met in October 2005 in Tijuana.

undocumented immigrants, which could include contact with social workers and pastors. Additionally, it would make the mere presence of undocumented immigrants in the United States a federal crime. Currently, presence in the US is a civil crime. This bill does not include any provisions to create additional legal avenues for those who would like to be in the United States legally. This bill is expected to be introduced in the Senate soon, and the Oblate JPIC Office will circulate an action alert regarding the bill at that time. Please e-

mail rebecca@omiusa.org if you would like to be included on the Oblate Action Network list and are not currently receiving those alerts.

Support Debt Forgiveness!

In 2005 we saw world leaders take a step towards alleviating global poverty by canceling 100% of the debts of 18 impoverished countries to the IMF and World Bank. Urge your congressional representatives to support the JUBILEE Act (HR 1130), that would require the US Congress to

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Bethlehem and they are even joined by the soldiers and their victims and by Herod himself.

The stories of migrants whether permanent or temporary, whether chosen or forced are filled with experiences that are both joyful and painful. They lend themselves to no easy sociological or economic

analysis and the countless lives that are woven into each story bear some of the fullness and brokenness that characterized the flight into Egypt. We hope that for people of faith, especially those fresh from the celebration of the Christmas season will bring that story to the immigration debate during the coming year.

support even broader cancellation for more countries and without compelling countries to implement harmful economic conditions. Please

go to www.jubileeusa.org for more information on this legislation, debt cancellation, and sample letters and e-mails regarding the JUBILEE Act.

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Please visit our new website at
www.omiusajpic.org



We are called to assist the
Earth to heal her wounds
and in the process heal our
own - indeed to embrace
the whole creation in all its
diversity, beauty
and wonder. This will
happen if we see the need
to revive our sense of
belonging to a larger family
of life

Wangari Maathai



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