



The real question is not so much where will we be in the year 2050, but where would we like the world to be in 2050. By that time, I want to see a world free from poverty. This means there will not be a single human being on this planet who may be described as a poor person or who is unable to meet his or her basic needs....Poverty does not belong in civilized society. Its proper place is in a museum.

Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank

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From the Director

The long slow wet lingering days of the Easter Season have ever so haltingly given way to summertime here in Washington. For three weekends in June I had the privilege of presiding at the Sunday liturgies which marked the feasts of Pentecost, the Trinity and the Body and the Blood of Christ in our liturgical calendar, at St Michael's community in Brattleboro Vermont.

Our gatherings, where we were fed at the table of the Word and Eucharist, were at once an experience of the depth and the beauty of God's loving embrace and an invitation for us to journey beyond the familiar and the secure into a covenantal community which is rooted in self-giving love. Not now a table for the chosen few but a banquet for the many.

I ponder the significance of these celebrations twenty one months into the "War on Terror", where we are bombarded by announcements of the next battle trophy but find

no metaphor or liturgy or leaders that help us as a people to risk a self-emptying love that will nourish communion and celebrate diversity.

Who will answer the invitation to community? Where will we find the faith and the courage to respond in these turbulent times? Safety and security at home is promised as long as we shop and build higher walls, install more alarms and remain ever vigilant towards the stranger in our midst. Respect and admiration abroad are to be won at the end of a bayonet, through the threat of overwhelming force, and the pledge of upright intention.

Ours is to continue to approach the Lord's table where we are reminded and indeed tempted to set a place at our tables for the uninvited guests. Ours is to build up a coalition of the willing that will be willing to risk entertaining strangers in the hope that we can sink deeper into the mystery of who God's is. Ours is to



be stretched and frightened in the midst of complexity in the sure and certain confidence that we will be directed towards the truth.

This sacred banquet continues to be the table which contradicts all others. The invitations go beyond creed and tribe and feeling to gather the scattered, diverse expressions of the divine image across the globe and yes to dare us to set an empty place for the uninvited guest at all of our tables. What a radical notion, what an awful challenge, what a scary proposition! May we find mentors and companions, nourishment and wisdom for this journey we make in faith with pilgrims from all the faith traditions seek the peace and communion that is rooted in justice and celebrates diversity.

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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JPIC Report is a publication of the OMI Justice and Peace/Integrity of Creation Office
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News and Resources

OMI Community Organizing Conference Planned

From September 15-17 Oblates will gather in Belleville, IL to address the topic of community organizing. This gathering will draw upon the experience of those present in order to inform future organizing work. The meeting will also serve to increase the awareness of other Oblates about this aspect of priestly ministry. A special effort will be made to include younger Oblates.

International Vigil for Peace: September 21

Pax Cristi USA has brought to our attention that on the International Day of Peace, September 21, 24-hour Peace Vigils will be held. Last year was the first time the UN commemorated it on the set date of Sept. 21st. The goal of this event is to bring attention to the need for peace and to have the entire world observe a day of peace and nonviolence. Many groups have gotten together to promote the spiritual dimensions of this and to encourage people to hold

interfaith vigils in their areas. More detailed information can be found at this website: <http://www.idpvigil.com>.

Annual Journey to the School of the Americas

SOA Watch will once again host its annual vigil and direct action at the gates of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation/SOA from November 21-23. For the past twelve years people have been gathering at the gates of Fort Benning, GA, to stand in solidarity with the people of



The Novices meet with Rebecca Phares of the JPIC Office. This May the Novices spent a month volunteering in placements around the DC area. They worked with hospice patients, impoverished youth, the homeless and several other populations. The Oblate JPIC Office helped to get them started in finding good placements.

Latin America and to speak out against the SOA.

Thousands are expected to converge from November 21-23. *For more information about the vigil action and/or to receive a November organizing packet, please contact SOA Watch at 202-234-3440 or visit www.soaw.org.*

Resources Available about Foreign Debt Forgiveness

Jubilee USA Network has produced an Education and Action Packet which you can order by going to their web site: www.jubileeusa.org or by calling them at 202-783-3566. Soon they will have a powerpoint presentation on debt at their web site, so keep visiting. Also at their web site are many resources specifically for faith communities and information on how to become a Jubilee Congregation.

Victories, Challenges ahead in movement to end Death Penalty

Following the monumental decision of Illinois to declare a moratorium, the state of Maryland decided to do the same in May of 2002. In North Carolina, due to a broad-based, grassroots effort, a bill to

enact a moratorium on the death penalty passed the Senate and is in the House of Representatives as this bulletin goes to press. Efforts are currently afoot in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and even in Texas. *To learn more or to become active on this issue, visit www.moratorium2000.org.*

Conference about Debt and Global Realities Planned

The Religious Working Group on the IMF and World Bank is planning a conference to be entitled "Faith in Practice: Connecting the Dots for Global Economic Justice" which will be held September 18 & 19 in Washington, DC. Are you challenged by how to connect all of the dots on the map of Global Economic Justice and then educate and mobilize your faith community? The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, through debt and structural adjustment programs, have influenced most other Global Economic Justice issues. Come learn and discuss with peers about how to make connections from our faith to the global economy. The

JPIC Staff have been involved in the planning of this conference since its inception and would love to see many of you there. *For more information please be in touch with Seamus Finn, OMI or Rebecca Phares.*

Border Pilgrimage Organizing Packet Available

Driven by poverty and hopes of economic security, millions of people risk their lives to cross the U.S.-Mexico border. Since 1996, more than 2,200 of these hopefuls have lost their lives in this attempt. Many others live along the border, lured by the U.S. maquilas, and face increasing militarization of the border, environmental injustice, and racism. In conjunction with the 2003 pilgrimage along the U.S.-Mexico border, the **Border Working Group** prepared a packet that includes: essays on the complexities of border life, excerpts from Scriptures that voice concern for the migrant, faith-based statements that encourage

welcoming migrants, advocacy tools, and additional sources of information. *The entire packet is available for download at www.rtfcam.org. Or in hard copy from: the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico / 3053 4th St, NE / Washington, DC 20017, or call (202) 529-0441.*

Spanish and English Popular Education Resources

Popular education resources on globalization and trade as well as popular education techniques are now available from the **Ecumenical Program in Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA)**. Many resources are available both in English and Spanish. One, called "**Ten Plagues of Globalization**" in English and "**10 Plagas de la Globalización Neoliberal**" in Spanish, explains many of the impacts of globalization in engaging and vivid terms and drawings. Another is titled "**Free Trade...Free Rein for Transnational Corporations**" and is available in Spanish and English. *For more details on how to order these resources, please go to www.epica.org.*



Socially Responsible Investing and the AIDS Pandemic

Séamus P. Finn, OMI

The turmoil of the past year in the corporate sector has upended the plans of many investors, employees and retirees. From the indictment of Martha Stewart to horrendous stories of retirement plans and accounts completely destroyed, to reports of astronomical salaries, bonuses and stock options for CEO's, the confidence of many especially in the investment community has been seriously rattled. It remains anyone's guess when the Dow Jones will get back to the 10,000 mark

For many this was a very painful wake up call and for others especially those in the Social Responsible Investment community, it has renewed their commitment to the exercise of a more active exercise of their rights as shareholders and their responsibilities as fiduciaries. (SRI pursues its objectives in three ways: screening, exercise of shareholder rights and alternative invest-

ments). The US Congress also weighed in with the Sarbanes/Oxley legislation which coming on the heels of the USA Patriot Act has increased the due diligence responsibilities of management, members of the boards of directors and committees, of all corporations. The Securities and Exchange Commission has also added additional transparency requirements for mutual fund managers.

The global settlement between ten companies from the financial sector and federal and state enforcement officials which amounted to \$1.4 billion alone in the financial side of the agreement, was initiated in December of 2002 was finally signed in April 2003. It is currently under review by a federal judge who is responsible for assuring that the rights of all parties to the settlement are protected. Both the penalty and the additional provisions of the settlement were in-



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A Rwandan child orphaned by AIDS with his grandmother. Unfortunately, in Africa now, over 11 million children have lost at least one parent to AIDS.

tended to restore confidence in the independence of the reports issued by stock analysts.

One of the high priority issues for the SRI community over the past two years has been the AIDS pandemic. In recent weeks President bush's trip to Africa has put the devastation of AIDS pandemic back on the front pages for at least a few days. The depth

of this devastation is clearly stated in the following editorial:

"Nearly 30 million Africans are now infected with the virus that causes AIDS. Almost 60 percent of the infected adults are women. More than 3 million African children are also infected, and more than 11 million have lost parents to the disease. Cash-starved health systems cannot cope.

Four million H.I.V. and AIDS sufferers in Africa need treatment, but only 50,000 currently get it.” (NY Times editorial 7/12/2003)

Religious investors working through the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility have engaged 12 U.S. and European

pharmaceutical companies as well as 8 multinationals with a significant presence in sub-Saharan Africa about their response to the people whose lives have been shattered by the disease. The issues on the agenda included; increased donations of medicines that can be used in the treatment

on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria and opportunistic infections, financial donations to the Global Aids Fund, relaxing the enforcement of patent rights in developing countries, provision of anti-retroviral for employees and their dependents, radical reductions in the cost

of medicines in poorest countries and support for increasing the contribution of rich country governments to address the pandemic. To date the responses from the private corporate sector have been encouraging but still not adequate to the scale of the pandemic. The amount of medicines donated to sub-Saharan African countries and local and NGO's needs to be increased. Further price reduction for anti-retroviral medicines and greater flexibility in the enforcement of patents and the production of generics needs to be demonstrated.

Efforts by faith-based investors will continue throughout the coming months to achieve these objectives while also expanding the scope of the effort to include other regions of the world that are experiencing the devastating impact of the pandemic. Individual shareholders or mutual fund investors can participate in this effort by voting their proxies and writing to the managers of any funds in which they participate to promote these goals. ❖

Alcoa meeting with Shareholders

Quilin Bouzi, OMI

In response to the commitment made in 1996 by then Alcoa CEO and former U.S. Treasury Secretary, Paul O'Neill, shareholders met with representatives of the company about their Mexican operation in April of this year. This dialogue is in addition to a much broader conversation on the global conduct of the corporations which is being pursued with meetings twice a year over a three-year period. After this meeting, Alcoa Fugikura (AFL) announced on May 13th that it continues to pursue the restructuring plan in Mexico (Ciudad Acuna, Torreon and Piedras Negras) which was announced in January though most of the affected workers would receive re-training and compensation during the temporary layoff which will result. (Editors note)

Porfirio Garcia, O.M.I. and I, had the opportunity of going to the Alcoa meeting concerning their Mexican operations on March 31st, 2003. The meeting was held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in San Antonio. What they wanted to accomplish at the meeting was to revisit the comments that had been made by Robert Alexander, president of Alcoa and the concern of shareholder's about payment of a sustainable living wage.

Copies of recent correspondence and press reports and research on this issue were reviewed. Some areas showed progress while others had made very little or may not have made progress at all. Regretfully all the reviews were being made in the absence of the workers

who were present at the 1996 annual meeting of the company and at subsequent meetings of this type. The workers did not feel comfortable to be present at that meeting.

One of the other issues that was raised at the meeting was the concern from the shareholders about the continued downsizing of the company. The shareholders group pressured Alcoa to continue to enhance their efforts to improve respect of workers' rights because of their mutual concern for safeguarding human dignity and in the long term interest of the company's reputation. The mood of the dialogue was cordial yet challenging and carried out in a climate of mutual respect.

Mexico: Over 200 Women Killed in Ciudad Juárez

Erika Abigail Loera Varela (16) reportedly was last seen on December 20, 2002 on Avenida de la Raza in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. On January 8, 2003, Esmeralda Juárez (26) left her work at a stall in Carranza market in central Ciudad Juárez and has not been seen since. Esmeralda is a student at the same information technology academy in the city from which, between 2001 and 2002, three young women also went missing only to be later found murdered and sexually assaulted.

Since 1993, over 200 women have been killed in Juárez. Many of the victims were raped and mutilated. To date, no one has been held accountable for the crimes.

In 1998 the National Commission of Human Rights (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos) issued a recommendation to the authorities requiring thorough and effective investigations to clarify the circumstances of the murders of women in Juárez, asking for all those responsible to be brought to justice, and for public officials who had failed in their duty to investigate these cases to also be

investigated and punished. According to Amnesty International, however, the authorities have failed to comply.

Mexican authorities periodically have detained suspects in the murders. Although these detentions have been heralded by the authorities as the solution to the cases, they have failed to stop the killings and have been marred by irregularities and reports of abuse, undermining the

transparent and effective if confidence in the judicial system is to be built and the pattern of murders ended. A pattern of such terrible murders demands a fully integrated response from all relevant state and federal institutions to demonstrate that such crimes cannot and will not be tolerated.

Many of the women killed or “disappeared” in Ciudad Juárez were migrants, lived in

Many of the women killed or “disappeared” in Ciudad Juárez were migrants, lived in marginalized communities, often with no support structure, and worked in maquiladoras. These cases highlight the link between economic globalization and violence against women.

confidence of the relatives of the victims and the community.

Amnesty International and many other Mexican and international organizations insist that the Mexican authorities, both at a state and a federal level, have an obligation to carry out thorough, impartial and prompt investigations into these patterns of violence against women, to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice, and to take appropriate measures to prevent similar cases from happening again. These measures must be

marginalized communities, often with no support structure, and worked in maquiladoras. These cases highlight the link between economic globalization and violence against women. While globalization has created economic opportunities for women in some areas, increased poverty and the casualization of labor have led thousands of women to migrate in search of work, often in situations where they are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violence, and where they are denied access to

effective protection by the criminal justice system.

Faith in action:

Write to the ambassador from Mexico, urging him to ensure that authorities conduct an immediate, thorough, transparent and impartial investigation into the matter. Insist that these women deserve justice, as do all the women living and working in and around Juárez – that Mexican officials, both at the state and federal level, have an obligation to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice, and to take appropriate measures to prevent similar cases from happening:

His Excellency Juan Jose Bremer Martino, Embassy of Mexico, 1911 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; tel: (202) 728-1600; fax: (202) 833-4320 mexembusa@sre.gob.mx

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US Mexico Border: A Pilgrimage for Hope and Life

Rebecca Phares

During late October and early November of this year a pilgrimage will take place along the US/Mexico Border. On October 27, pilgrims will set out from Brownsville and from San Diego to journey towards El Paso. Along the way they will participate in public events with local community groups, visit cemeteries where undocumented immigrants lie in unmarked graves, and in El Paso will participate in a celebration with a local musical group, and learn more about the issues related to the tragic phenomena of border deaths, as well as some of the economic issues that cause people to journey to the north. The Pilgrimage will end on the Day of the Dead as we join the El Paso community in what has become a tradition: a bi-national mass on the border celebrated by three local bishops.

You are invited to participate as a pilgrim for part or all of the journey, join us for the weekend of celebration, seminars, and the border mass, or offer hospitality and/or plan

events if the pilgrimage is passing through your town.

The pilgrims will make this journey to draw attention to the migrant deaths that have occurred along the US/Mexico Border (over 2000 since 1998) as a

to several government reports (such as one by the General Accounting Office which came out in August of 2001) this policy has been completely ineffective in decreasing the number of undocumented migrants, which begs the question, "Why

economies to legalize their status.

This pilgrimage is sponsored by the Oblate JPIC Office along with the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, Medical Mission Sisters, Columban Fathers Justice and Peace Office, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Maryknoll Border Team, Church World Service, and many others. Along the way they will participate in public events with local community groups, visit cemeteries where undocumented immigrants lie in unmarked graves, and in El Paso will participate in a celebration with a local musical group, and learn more about the issues related to the tragic phenomena of border deaths, as well as some of the economic issues that cause people to journey to the north.

For more information on how to get involved, please contact me, Rebecca Phares at 202-281-1608 or e-mail me at Rebecca@omiusa.org. You can also call West Cosgrove of the Maryknoll Border Team at 915-543-6771. I hope to see many there! ❖



This photo (by Andrew Weir) is of a woman at a commemoration at the Tijuana/San Diego border of those who have died attempting to cross the border.

result of a deterrence-based border patrol strategy put into place in the mid nineties. For those of you who live near the border, you are all too familiar with the increase in the number of agents and the strength of fences in the border cities, and with the subsequent increase in the number of immigrants who pass through dangerous desert and mountain areas, many of whom die in the process. According

has our government not chosen another strategy when thousands have died as a result of this ineffective one?"

This pilgrimage will call for the creation of more legal ways for people to enter and thus avoid the dangerous trek through the desert or mountains. It will also call for a way for undocumented migrants who have contributed to our communities and

Update on Parish Organizing: Heaven and Earth

Darrell Rupiper, OMI

"The impending death of half the living species is being met with casual indifference." A shocking reality! Father Thomas Berry goes on to say: "In the twentieth century the glory of the human has become the desolation of the Earth. The desolation of the Earth is becoming the destiny of the human."

The devastation being unleashed against our home, the Earth, is unparalleled in human history. In an effort to nudge congregants out of this 'casual indifference' vis-a-vis our present peril I find myself echoing the words of an ancient, the same words that we repeat at every Eucharistic cel-

ebration. Full-throatedly Isaiah proclaims: "Heaven and Earth are full of Your glory!"

In our harried, hurried and consumer-filled lives the glory goes unnoticed as we trash our Mother, the Earth. It is my belief that

it is more difficult to wantonly destroy that which is noticed, known and appreciated. In fact noticing 'the glory', one

might well become proactive in its defense and preservation. That is my hope and mission.



In each of the parishes that I have visited an on-going group has coalesced to do their part in saving our planet. Both

pastors and associates have been more than pleasantly surprised at the response of their people. Pope John Paul II said

that we humans have not been stewards of the Earth but despots. He said we have come to the edge of an abyss and each has a moral responsibility to turn back.

My three-year assignment has just begun. I would be pleased to get an invitation to your ministry site for three weeks during which time I would echo and elaborate on those praise-filled words: "Heaven and Earth are full of your glory."❖

For more information on bringing Fr. Darrell Rupiper, OMI to your parish, please contact him at drupiper2000@hotmail.com.

Religious Leaders help bring justice for workers at Peterbilt

Peterbilt workers in Madison, Tennessee, returned to the factory on July 1 after winning a tough battle to get owners back to the bargaining table. In November of 2002, 750 workers of the Peterbilt truck assembly plant were locked out by the company's owner, PACCAR, who refused to negotiate with them. The workers were members of the United Auto Workers Local 1832, and after the lockout occurred, the full force of the national UAW was brought to bear. In addition, religious and civil forces joined together to call for PACCAR to return to the table.

Over 100 religious leaders wrote a letter urging the board of directors of PACCAR to end the lockout and negotiate a fair contract with the

Peterbilt workers. They wrote, in part that "The lock-out has touched the lives of so many families and individuals in the local community. It has caused hardship and pain...From an ethical and moral perspective we believe that ending the lock-out and negotiation a fair contract would be a sign of PACCAR's commitment to the common good of the whole community."

This situation reached a positive outcome in late June of 2003 when Peterbilt workers accepted a new contract. However, unfortunately, due to a decline in heavy truck sales, only 250 will return to work. Five-hundred union members were given notice of a lay off a week before the lock-out occurred.

Br. Maxmillian Mwakacheya, OMI Visits from Zambia

Mary O'Herron

In late June, **Brother Maxmillian Mwakacheya, OMI**, visited the JPIC Office and told of Oblate efforts in Zambia. He was visiting after a six-month sabbatical in San Antonio where he took courses in human development and theology. He gave a brief history and description of the Oblate presence in Zambia.

In western Zambia, the Oblates are in four areas: Lukulu, Limulunga, Mongu and Kalabo. Each parish cares for a central area and up to 75 outlying areas. Efforts include a nutrition center, evangelization, and economic

development. The Oblates also help with basic home care for those who are terminally ill by distributing medicine and food.

Since Zambia has been plagued with a severe drought for about ten years and about 20% of those between 15 and 49 are HIV positive or have

AIDS, death is a frequent visitor. As a result, there are many orphans needing care. Malaria is also a major killer. The parishes help with education, and where grandparents are

to return to their home areas. Also, Oblates help care for Angolan refugees until they can be moved to refugee camps for more permanent assistance.

When Bro. Maxmillian

diocese, the station will make an effort to evangelize people and educate them on their civil rights. It will also broadcast things that are going on in the various parishes. In remote areas where most people do not have radios, the Oblates will provide central areas where people will be able to gather to listen.

Another area of Zambia with Oblate presence is Lusaka. New endeavors there include Mary Immaculate Parish and Our Lady's Hospice for people dying of AIDS. At the moment, the training center section of the hospice is

giving courses in palliative care for a wide range of health workers, caregivers and family members of patients.❖

More information and resources can be found by contacting the Africa Faith and Justice Network. Their web site is at afjn.cua.edu.



Br. Maxmillian Mwakacheya and Mary O'Herron talk in the Oblate JPIC Office. Br. Mwakacheya gave a presentation about the projects in which the Oblates are involved in Zambia to the entire JPIC Office program staff.

not able, other forms of assistance.

The war in neighboring Angola has caused additional difficulties in the area. Some Zambians near Angola have been displaced, and about 300 of these have been cared for by Oblates for about six months until it was safe

returns to Zambia, he will work with **Fr. Freeborn, Kimbombwe, OMI**, on a new radio station being set up by the Oblates in the Diocese of Mongu that is headed by Bishop Paul Duffy, OMI. He hopes that the station will be operating by December. Working hand-in-hand with the

Indigenous Rights Threatened in Bangladesh

Rebecca Phares

In May of 2003, the Oblate JPIC Office received a visit from Sanjeeb Drong, President of the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum. Sanjeeb shared his compelling story with our office, telling us of the ongoing struggle of his tribe, the Garos, to continue living on the lands they had occupied for centuries. Sanjeeb works closely with the Oblates in Bangladesh so that the indigenous people of Bangladesh may have land rights and other rights. The Oblates in Bangladesh work with the Khasi tribals primarily, but also with some Garos. The Khasis are to the east of Dhaka and the Garos are to the North.

While Sanjeeb was in Washington, the Oblate JPIC office arranged meetings with the State Department, the US Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Relief Services, and several other organizations. Catholic News Service (CNS) interviewed Sanjeeb and

wrote an article about the issues of Bangladesh' Indigenous people which was published in several diocesan newspapers as well as on their web site and that of America magazine.

Steven Steele of CNS quoted Sanjeeb as saying: "The tribal people of Bangladesh are in danger of

continually and their human rights have been violated." Indigenous people make up only 3% of the population, and most indigenous people are Christian, making them a double minority in a country created as a home for Muslims of predominantly Bengali ancestry.

people in Bangladesh are not well known.

During his visit, Sanjeeb shared stories about the possible "eco-park" which threatens the Garo peoples' tribal lands. It was with great sadness that we learned that the construction of the Modhupur Forest National Park has

resumed. A 61,000-foot brick wall is 1/4 completed and would encircle 4700 indigenous people living in 5 villages. According to an alert sent from Bangladesh, in 2002 a committee for Indigenous People's Land Rights and Environment Protection, Modhupur Forest, was formed.

The local people held a huge rally on June 3, 2003 at Jalchatra, Modhupur Forest where 5000 people gathered to protest. They called for the official ending of the park project and for a sincere

dialog with government officials. They also requested settlement of ownership disputes with respect to traditional lands of tribal people and demanded that all false court cases regarding them be



Sanjeeb Drong, Director of the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum, visited Washington, DC in May of 2003. The JPIC Office was able to arrange for meetings with the State Department, Catholic Relief Services, and several other offices in the area.

losing their ancestral lands unless the government offers them special protection. The mostly Catholic indigenous people, who reside along the northeastern and eastern border with India, have been harassed con-

The population continues to consist primarily of Bengali Muslims, and faces the challenges of tremendous population density as well as significant poverty, and, often the issues surrounding indigenous

dropped immediately.

In order to consult with the Oblates and the indigenous population they serve, Seamus Finn, OMI visited Bangladesh in January. He received a warm welcome in many indigenous villages served by the Oblates, and came back to our offices in Washington, DC with a wealth of information on how we can best support the justice oriented work that the Oblates are doing.

All of us greatly enjoyed Sanjeeb's visit, and were inspired by his witness of courage in the face of many obstacles to defending the rights of indigenous people in Bangladesh. ❖

For more information on this case, and to access an action alert regarding this situation which suggests policy makers to write to and what types of letters might make the most difference, please go to the Oblate JPIC website by clicking on our link at the www.omiusa.org site.

Peace Negotiations Continue in Sri Lanka

The efforts to move towards a peace agreement between the Tamil Tigers and the government of Sri Lanka continue with a few bumps on the road during the last couple of months. Work persists on securing donations to address some of the many poverty and development issues, which have resulted from the prolonged period of war. It is hoped that as the two sides with the support of members of the international community and international organizations will be able to continue to make progress towards a peace agreement.

Meanwhile members of local civil society continue their efforts to actively participate in the debate about concerning the future direction of their country as evidenced in the following editorial.

“While city ladies still seem to be occupied mainly in chatter about fashions, teledramas or the latest gossip, it was heartening to see a large group of village women including representatives of fisher folk plantation workers and farmers challenging the World Bank on its ‘poverty reduction strategy’ programme in Sri Lanka.

Last Tuesday representatives of more than one hundred women’s groups met the World Bank chief here to tell him bluntly that the WB in consultation with some market- society economists had no right to impose poverty reduction strategies without getting a grass roots experience perspective from the poor people themselves.

The women’s group said they had studied the WB document on poverty reduction and believed that most of the proposals would create more poor people and make the poor poorer. The women say they see no effective strategy or process of reducing poverty in Sri Lanka included in the World Bank programme and instead it would further increase the burden on the poor. They say it is their view that it will have an adverse impact on the poor and working people of all sectors of society and that the poor rural and urban women will be specially victimized by the harmful results of the proposed strategy and programmes as a whole.

Adequate discussion has not been held in the preparation of this strategy with any of the people’s organizations and their participation has not been obtained, the women complained, urging that a wide dialogue should take place with the participation of the people of Sri Lanka and particularly with the alliance to protect national resources and human rights, which comprises scores of grass roots groups representing vital sectors like farmers, fisher folk, plantation workers, small scale producers, industrial workers and trade unions. While the main players or victims- millions of poor people- have been left out the strategy was compiled by the government, representatives of the World Bank, other international financial institutions and the private sector.

The women’s groups point out that the total debt estimated in the World Bank programme of June 2002 is US \$ 6095 million which is equivalent to about Rs. 590,000 million. Thus, the per capita debt of Rs 83,000 would increase by another Rs. 32,000 and the total per capita debt would add up to Rs. 115,000. This is a burden of debt that the average citizen can not bear. They say various taxes and tax reforms have been included for the purpose of strengthening the financial situation of the Government. What is intended here is to provide concessions to the private sector to encourage investment in the country. These tax burdens arising out of the concessions as well as other burdens have been transferred to the ordinary people. This cannot be accepted as a plan for reducing poverty, they say.” (Editorial, Daily Mirror May 12 2003)

Time to Ratify UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

Séamus P. Finn, OMI

In the months leading up to the conclusion of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous people (1995 – 2004) efforts to further advance the approval of the draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will continue. In solidarity with Indigenous peoples everywhere and in solidarity with the work of many Oblate brothers and colleagues we should lend our voices and commitment to the effort to ratify this Declaration. Included in these efforts could be the Observance of the International Day of World's Indigenous People on 9 August each year.

It took nearly the entire history of the League of Nations and the United Nations for the voices of indigenous to arrive in any official capacity at a U.N. meeting. The earliest efforts for recognition were spearheaded by Cayuga Chief Deskaheh who approached the League of Nations in 1923 as the representative of the Six Nations of the Iroquois. After many other representatives of indigenous peoples and their colleagues promoted recognition ECOSOC finally established the Working group on Indigenous



Seamus Finn, OMI visited Bangladesh in late January of 2003 to consult with the Oblates and those working with tribal peoples whose land rights are under assault. In this photo, he is receiving a warm welcome from the residents of an indigenous community.

Populations in 1982

The work of Oblate missionaries in many countries throughout the congregation has included efforts to reach out to indigenous peoples, to appreciate their customs and to support their efforts to preserve and protect their culture, language and way of life. This has included making special efforts to carefully integrate their religious customs and traditions into the liturgy of the church where appropriate and to be supportive of their aspirations to self-

determination and recognition in the community of nations.

Over the last two years Oblates and their colleagues in Bangladesh have contacted us as they have tried to divert the strenuous efforts of the government to take over control of the lands of the Ksasis and Garo peoples with whom the Oblates work. Both of these tribes are predominantly Christian in the midst of an overwhelmingly Muslim population and their homelands predate the establishment of the nations

of India and Bangladesh. However due to the lack of any formal land titling process and the numerous changes in civil authority over the past 50 years alone, it is next to impossible to convince the authorities about the legitimacy of the ownership of the land which has been occupied by members of these tribes for hundreds of years.

During my recent visit to Bangladesh I had the opportunity to visit with the Oblates and some of the

other religious communities who have an active presence there. It is within the struggle of this very poor nation of more than 130 million people that the tribal peoples have sought to protect and defend their rights. We visited the site where the government had already marked out the boundaries for a new eco-park and formally unveiled the dedication markers. In February the word from the government was that the project had been suspended but now we have been informed that the government has included funding for work to continue in the latest budget that has been proposed.

At each stop on my visit, members of the local communities with garlands of beautiful fresh flowers, songs and food, welcomed me. We talked about their fears about the park and the threat, which it poses to their land ownership, their traditions and way of life. They had hoped that by uniting with other villages and with members of the other 43 indigenous tribal

the past twelve months to allow them to meet government officials and to speak in their own name. They have also had the opportunity to meet with representatives at the World Bank, colleagues from other religious communities and traditions and some mem-

bers of the expatriate Bengali community in the Washington area.

In his address to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues in 2002, Joseph Gomes OMI offered the following caution about the develop-

ment activities which are promoted on behalf of indigenous; "Traditional development activities undertaken by the government and non-governmental organizations do not bring fruitful benefit to indigenous peoples. Many time indigenous peoples have to face

eviction from their ancestral lands and territories without consent. Even the government does not consult with indigenous peoples prior to their development planning."

Recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples including the protection of their claims to ancestral lands will continue to challenge



Joseph Gomes, OMI works closely with indigenous leaders to advocate for the respect of their rights. He is pictured here with a muslim woman in a Garo village.

groups in Bangladesh they would be able to get the government officials to change their minds. They also hoped that by connecting with other indigenous groups in Asia and throughout the world by participating in the UN forum they would be able to garner the support of other members of the global community.

In our meeting with officials at the U.S. embassy in Dhaka and in subsequent meetings at the State Department and Congress here in Washington our office continues to keep the issues of indigenous rights in Bangladesh to their attention. We have been fortunate to be able to welcome both Joseph Gomes OMI and Sanjeeb Drong over

individual countries and the international community. For people of faith it goes to the heart of what we believe and who we believe that God is for us. In our experience of the hospitality of God that we are invited to extend that hospitality in our own communities and in the public places that we espouse in various arenas where we live and work. ❖

Legislative and Advocacy Update

Debt Relief

For the first time since the year 2000, legislation for deeper debt relief has passed the US Congress, largely due to the response of citizens who called and wrote their representatives.

The legislation is just a small step towards the goal of complete debt cancellation for impoverished countries. However, the legislation would double the amount of debt relief for currently eligible poor countries...if the legislation is implemented.

In order for deeper debt relief to be a reality, our Treasury Department must negotiate the terms with other rich countries and with the IMF and World Bank.

A campaign is currently underway to flood the Treasury with cards. To take part, send postcards of the place you are from, or any other card, to the Secretary of the Treasury, Daniel Snow at: Treasury Secretary Snow 1500 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

Washington, D.C. 20220

Write messages on the card such as: Debt cancellation is needed to build global stability

through poverty reduction.

I look forward to your active efforts to negotiate for deeper debt cancellation at the upcoming World Bank and IMF meetings this fall.

Sincerely,

*be found at:
www.jubileeUSA.org.*

US funding to fight AIDS

On May 15, the Senate passed U.S. Leadership Against AIDS, TB and Malaria (H.R. 1298). Although many activists

over the next five years to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria abroad.

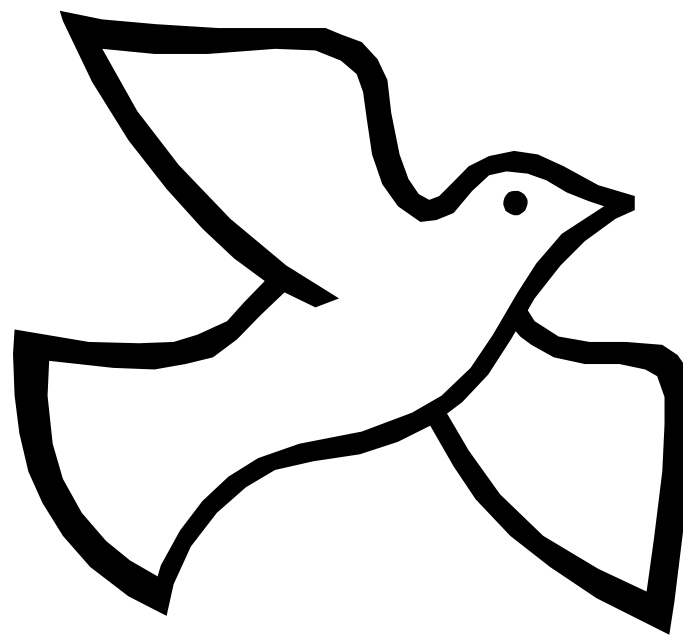
Of critical concern to several AIDS activists is that the total U.S. contribution could be lower than the \$3 billion the bill suggests because of several provisions.

Call Senate and House appropriators and ask that they appropriate \$3.5 billion to fight global AIDS, TB and Malaria now for real, on the ground programs of which at least \$1.75 billion is for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria without taking away precious resources from other development and humanitarian programs.

*For more information please go to the Church World Service Advocacy on Aids website at:
http://www.churchworldservice.org/Educ_Advo/hiv.html*

School of the Americas

HR 1258 called for the closure of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (School of the Americas) and the establishment of a joint congressional task



Full name
Full address

Please e-mail Mara Vanderslice of Jubilee USA Networks at mara@jubileeusa.org to let her know how many postcards you or your group have sent.

More information on this campaign or issues related to debt relief can

praise it, while others express disappointment in some of its provisions, all wonder if it will be fully funded at the levels indicated in the bill.

The legislation is meant to put flesh on the president's State of the Union announcement of a U.S. contribution of \$15 billion (\$10 billion of which would be new money)

One Oblate's Summer Experience Enriches Understanding of JPIC Issues

I, George Kombe Ngolwe OMI, join the Oblate Justice and Peace Office in Washington DC for summer 2003 as an Intern. I am a scholastic from the Oblate House of Theology in Chicago and a full time masters student of Theology at the Catholic Theological Union (CTU).

Originally, I am from Zambia and belong to the Oblate Delegation of Zambia. I have been in Chicago since January 2003. I did part of my formation and studies in South Africa from 1999 until I came to the United States.

I had a one-year internship of pastoral experience in Lukulu, Western Province of Zambia in 2001. It was during that year that my passion for Justice and peace issues blossomed. I worked with refugees from wartorn Angola and mobilized civic education with local parish Justice and Peace groups. I



George Kombe Ngolwe, OMI, a Scholastic from Zambia will be working with the Oblate JPIC Office for two months this summer. We are very happy to have him with us.

experienced massive poverty of the people in the area and directly saw the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I bring that lived experience to the Justice and Peace Office.

As for the objectives for the summer, I wish to have

an experience of Oblate ministry in matters relating to Justice and Peace issues, an educative awareness of social and economic issues, especially HIV/AIDS and Debts. I wish to engage in collaborative ministry with other faith groups in matters of Justice and peace.

I also work with the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN). I am currently residing at the Oblate community of 391 Michigan Ave. NW, Washington DC. I look forward to a positive experience this summer. ❖

force to assess US training of Latin America military still needs more co-sponsors. Currently there are 80 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.

Healthcare in Haiti

Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, has many challenges to its development. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus have proposed **H. Con. Res.**

382 which would create a "Health Marshall Plan" for Haiti. According to the sponsors of the bill, "the current policy is contributing to the continued attrition of the quality of life of Haiti's people, which, if left unchanged could lead to horrendous outcomes for the Western Hemisphere's

poorest people." If this bill passed it could significantly improve health in Haiti.

For a sample letter on this issue, and more information on the "Let Haiti Live" campaign, please go to: <http://haitireborn.org/campaigns/lhl/>.

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Land is the generation point of existence
It is a living place
Made up of sky, clouds, river,
trees, the wind, the sand,
and the spirit there - it is my own country...
It is a living entity.
It belongs to me.
I belong to the Land,
I rest in it,
I come from there.

*Bill Nedji, Elder
Northern Territory, Australia*



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