

JPIC REPORT



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

"I will mourn the loss of thousands of precious lives, but I will not rejoice in the death of one, not even an enemy. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

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From the Director:

In the midst of the Easter season, as we celebrate and experience the abundance of life offered to us through the Risen Christ, the debate around the world is more about austerity than plenty. The impact of the near financial meltdown continues to be felt. It is estimated to have destroyed more than 15 trillion dollars in wealth and to have cost governments more than 5 trillion to stop the hemorrhaging and stimulate growth.

One of the outcomes is a keen political attention to budgets, revenues and expenditures at all levels, a focus on drastic cuts in services and talk about default and bankruptcy. Any conversation about services expected from government must eventually focus on how the revenue to pay for these different services is raised. Those who live in small towns or jurisdictions are quite often much closer to this process -- and to the reality of the different choices that must be made.

As we continue to participate in this conversation at different levels it is important to bear in mind the basic principles of our faith tradition that is available as a guide to our reflections and decisions. The tradition is neither libertarian nor collectivist in its teaching about government, but clearly supports a form of limited government that guarantees the public order and promotes the common good. It is equally forthright on the need for government to evaluate the impact of any of its policies on the poor and the marginalized.

On the revenue side, the teaching advances principles and criteria concerning the progressive or regressive nature of taxes and fees and the responsibility of individuals, corporations and organizations to complete their obligations in a timely fashion. A newly activated coalition called FACT, which Oblate JPIC has joined, has been created to contribute to the discussion about account-

ability and transparency. In a letter to the US Senate and House tax writing committees, the Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency coalition (FACT) states; "At a time when countries around the world face budget crises, economies continue to bleed massive amounts of revenue due to secrecy in the financial system which facilitates corruption, tax evasion and money laundering. Shell corporations, anonymous trusts and bank secrecy, both in the United States and abroad, make it easy for criminals, terrorists, government officials and even otherwise legitimate multinational companies to hide their money and difficult for law enforcement and tax authorities to do their jobs."

The FACT campaign is deserving of our attention and support as the debate on austerity and debt continues in local communities, states and in Congress during the coming months.

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 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 Faith Responsible Investment 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 & Happenings

A numbers of Oblates and non-Oblate visitors have briefed the JPIC office and our colleagues in the past several months:

Fr. Paul Dass OMI (India) visited the JPIC office during his orientation to the U.S. province. Fr. Paul talked about problems of access to clean water, the Oblate ministry to end human trafficking and support for tribal peoples in India. Visit the OMIJPIC YouTube Channel, for our upcoming video interview with Fr. Paul where he talks about Oblate social justice work. Learn more at www.omiindia.org



Fr. Joe Phiri OMI (Zambia) has joined the Oblate community in Washington, DC while he pursues graduate studies at Loyola University of Maryland. Fr. Phiri is also now part of the team at the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN), a coalition supported by the Oblates, where he is focusing on HIV/AIDS advocacy.

Fr. Peter Henriot S.J. (Zambia), Director of the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection in Lusaka and former director of the Center of Concern in the US, visited the JPIC Office in March where he gave a briefing to members of the Catholic Task Force on Africa. He discussed next steps in implementing recommendations from the 2009 Synod for Africa held in Rome which he attended.

Watch OMI JPIC Videos on YouTube

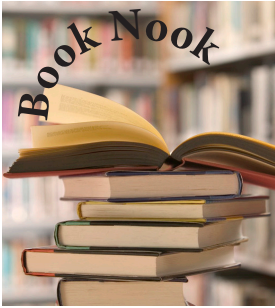


Watch: *Behind the Green*, about the Khasi and Garo Indigenous Peoples of Bangladesh newly available on YouTube, as well as interviews of Oblates and others produced by George Ngolwe, JPIC Advocacy Associate. Listen to the **interview with Bill Antone, OMI** in which he talks about his experience with immigrant families and their struggles. Subscribe to our channel (www.youtube.com/user/OMIJPIC) to be alerted to new videos, and let us know what you think! Email George Ngolwe at gngolwe@omiusa.org

Oblate JPIC Pursues Faith Responsible Investing

The Oblate JPIC staff has been deeply engaged in corporate dialogs and the filing of shareholder resolutions with major corporations on a range of issues affecting the poor which are written about elsewhere in this newsletter. These include financial reform, executive compensation, foreclosure prevention, immigration, supply chain sustainability and security, free prior and informed consent in international mining operations, water access and sustainability, HIV-AIDS and access to affordable medicines and the development and adoption of human rights policies.

Resources



The Freedom of True Love: Memoirs of a Veteran Missionary to the United States of America by Father Frank Wagner, O.M.I.

Reviewed by Mary O'Herron

Fr. Wagner, OMI, was born in February of 1932 in the tiny rural town of Scheller, Illinois. He grew up on a farm with isolation and poverty as his family's companions. In his memoir, he conveys a deep appreciation for the gifts given him by both his family and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

He tells of his call to priesthood, and his decision to join the Oblates, detailing some of his concerns and joys following that path. His deep faith in God and prayer are visible throughout his writing.

As a priest, he started off as a high school teacher, later to become a principal, and then pastor to a variety of parishes in the US.

His brother Arthur was born with cerebral palsy. He explained that "While his condition was a challenge to my parents, who often admitted embarrassment, he was never hidden or shielded from others, but was encouraged to play with his siblings and cousins just as we were encouraged to play with him and we learned to appreciate him for the patience he taught us and to love him despite his affliction. To this day, he is one of the most important people in my life. ... Without even realizing he's doing it, Arthur

continues to bring out the best in the people whose lives he touches...."

Fr. Frank's affection for Vatican II and what it hoped to bring to the Church and the world is evident, along with his concern about the need for a new evangelization for Catholics. In this light, he worked for three years in TV and produced a series called Journey in Faith, which was aired on several channels.

Throughout the book, he stops to explain lessons learned from the challenges and joys he encountered. The following quotes convey some of these bits of wisdom:

"As I understand it, genuine holiness of life means, essentially, that we are to live a life in which we are whole, or wholesome. In other words, it is a healthy way of living that should be joyful as well as peaceful."

"The issue of social justice has always been one of the driving motivators of my life...I am a believer and strong lover of the Bible, which is God's revelation to us of His love for us and His desire that we love each other as an extension of our love for Him."

"...the willingness on the part of any leader to listen to the people who are being served is foundational for any success. Whether in the home, the parish, or the government, good relationships must abound and no relationship can exist unless there is listening.

"As a nation, our level of maturity has seemingly failed to develop beyond merely loving those who love us, which will not accomplish the sort of peace-loving world dreamt of by Isaiah, Jesus and Martin Luther King, Jr.

He refers to teachers as "perhaps the most important civil servants found in a free society"

On Immigration:

"Problems of immigration are as old as the history of the human race on this planet. How we constructively deal with these problems will determine our future as a country. ... This issue, I believe, challenges us to apply moral principles that are God-given as far as rights are concerned. ... All people have the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

On Abortion:

"And while I am an strong advocate for life (that is, a strong opponent of abortion), I think we must be understanding and very slow to judge those who are faced with this issue and who honestly make the best decision they can, even if it is in direct opposition to our positions. I write this because, as an imitator of Christ, I believe that the perfection of human love is compassion, to which God calls us through the imperfections of the world."

Available at www.Amazon.com and www.xlibris.com

Audio-Visual Resources:

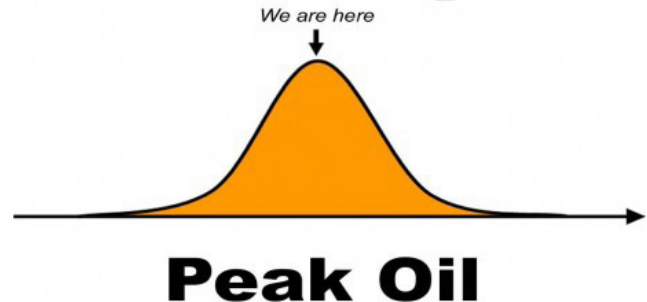
Peak Oil

Our economy is deeply dependent on oil – for transportation, fertilizers, plastics, and more. Peak oil is the point of maximum production, after which production begins to decline, and oil becomes more expensive to extract. Experts say this point was reached for the US in the 1970's. What happens when we hit peak oil production globally? The following videos offer some possibilities:

A Crude Awakening - The Oil Crash (2007); an award-winning documentary film about the end of cheap oil and implications for our economy; Available from Amazon (\$9.00); Netflix (streaming); YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlVNyJFBCxc&feature=related

The End of Suburbia; This DVD explores the American Way of Life and its prospects as we approach an era in which demand for fossil fuels outstrips supply; Available on Amazon for \$22+shipping; Netflix (streaming); Segmented on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3uvzcY2Xug&feature=related

Wake up!!!



Imagination & Perseverance Change the World: Turn Your Plastic into Oil! - A five-minute video of a Japanese inventor's brilliant machine that can be used at home to convert plastic back into oil. Is this the solution to the great Pacific Garbage Patch? Watch at www.flixxy.com/convert-plastic-to-oil.htm

Escape from Suburbia, the sequel to *End of Suburbia*; a look at some possible alternatives to suburbia; Available on Amazon for \$18+postage; Netflix (streaming); For two trailers for this film:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2y9BbNjLAY
www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4xEsBy2rIw



**MOBILIZING FAITH-BASED OPPOSITION
TO AMERICA'S DEATH PENALTY**
 SPONSORED BY PEOPLE OF FAITH AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

Domestic Human Right Update:

Victory! Illinois Repeals the Death Penalty

On March 9, 2011 Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed into law a bill that abolished the death penalty in the state. The legislation comes after effective advocacy by a persistent coalition of faith and community groups. It also follows a shocking history of death penalty cases in Illinois where twenty men sentenced to death were exonerated and released from the state's death row after 1987. Since 1973, 138 people have been exonerated and released from death rows across the United States, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Since November of last year, the Oblate JPIC office has been providing advocacy resources and action alerts to Oblate communities in Illinois to support their efforts to abolish the death penalty. *Please contact us if you are interested in getting involved in a campaign in your state.*

Email: George Ngolwe at gngolwe@omiusa.org

Support Grows for Global Moratorium on Death Penalty

In December 2010, the United Nations General Assembly took a significant step when members approved a new resolution in favor of a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty. The motion passed with 108 countries in favor, 36 abstentions and 41 opposed. The United States joined Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India, and China in voting against a death penalty resolution. This non-binding resolution recognizes the decisions made by an increasing number of countries to establish a moratorium on executions. Get involved at:

www.worldcoalition.org

Kairos Campaign:

Faith groups launch new anti-death penalty campaign

Religious communities from a variety of national denominations in the United States have been at the forefront of the movement to end the death penalty here. In November 2010, religious and community leaders launched a new initiative called the Kairos Campaign. The aim of the campaign is to get the death penalty squarely on the agendas of religious bodies, provide coordination among faith communities, and provide advocacy resources to take concrete action in coordination with death penalty abolition groups at the state level.

Learn more at:

www.kairoscampaign.org



Congressional Update Immigration Reform

It is unlikely that the 112th Congress will act this year to address the broken U.S. immigration system, even as more communities across the nation call for comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

Today, the federal government is spending more money than ever on border and immigration enforcement. The broken immigration system encourages both law-breaking and wasteful spending. Congress would save taxpayers billions of dollars and inject trillions into the economy if they were to pass comprehensive immigration reform.

President Obama continues to express support for comprehensive immigration reform. However his administration's record breaking, immigration 'enforcement-only' measures are a concern to numerous faith groups and immigrant rights leaders who want reform now.

In the House of Representatives, there have been hearings and bills introduced that unfortunately have been both partisan and controversial. Some of the Immigration Bills in the 112th Congress range from H.R. 43: To Amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to Eliminate the Diversity Immigrant Program, to H.R. 140: Birthright

Citizenship Act of 2011 and H.R. 282: To Require Federal Contractors to Participate in the E-Verify Program.

In January 2011, the House Subcommittee on Immigration Policy and Enforcement, chaired by Elton Gallegly (R-CA) held a hearing called "ICE Worksite Enforcement - Up to the Job?" In this hearing, Republican members of the Subcommittee complained that ICE was not conducting enough worksite raids of the kind that has devastated families and communities.

On February 10, Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration Policy and Enforcement held a hearing on "Electronic Employment Verification (E-Verify) - Preserving Jobs for American Workers." Coadjutor Archbishop of Los Angeles Jose Gomez, and Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration submitted a letter calling for immigration reform first before enforcement measures, and a stop to worksite raids.

Fixing the broken immigration system is now up to us. Members of Congress - Representatives and Senators - need to hear from their constituents. They need to hear that we care about the issue and that passing comprehensive immigration reform is both the right and the fiscally sound thing to do.

To become involved, or for more information about Oblate JPIC office work on Immigration reform, visit our website or send a request to:

gngolwe@omiusa.org

Why We Need to Say “No” to Nuclear Energy

By Robert Wright, OMI

With nuclear energy, the basic question is whether you would prefer to have a nuclear facility next door to your home or whether you would prefer possibly to have to pay a bit more for cleaner energy. Most arguments in favor of nuclear energy say that it is clean and one of the most economical alternatives. Both arguments are demonstrably and dangerously false.

The fact that nuclear energy is very dangerous to health should be the determining moral argument. This life-threatening dimension has been given more consideration after the tragic situation now unfolding in Japan. But it should not take a Japanese disaster make us aware of this fact. Nuclear radiation is deadly and endures for hundreds of years in nuclear waste, the safe storage of which remains a serious problem. In addition, the regular operation of nuclear plants is not as radiation-free as the industry alleges.

It has been shown that the nuclear industry lies to the public, and continually downplays problems associated with the technology. TEPCO, the Tokyo Electric Power Company, that owns and runs the crippled Fukushima plants, has so demonstrably failed to report the changing conditions at those plants - promptly and honestly - that it has lost whatever confidence the Japanese people formerly placed in it. The reality has always been worse than reported, until they were forced to admit it. And the industry is not above changing the rules of the game in its favor. Before the Japanese

disaster, the industry said that workers at the plants could “safely” be exposed to 100 millisieverts of radiation. In the days following the plant breakdowns, that maximum was raised to 250 millisieverts. But workers exposed to radiation greater than 170 millisieverts suffered severe radiation burns that, if more than skin deep, result in death.

Our U.S. nuclear plants are not as “safe” as alleged, either. The spent nuclear fuel remains in holding ponds on site, with no place to go. After more than twenty years, no local community has accepted a national storage facility as safe. Yet, at present, a site in Andrews County, Texas, originally promoted and approved as a low-level nuclear waste site - and only for Texas and Vermont - is aggressively pushing to become a national disposal site, right on top of the major Ogallala aquifer that provides water for most of the U.S. central plains.

The South Texas Nuclear Project

Safety ‘incidents’ (occasional breakdowns and radioactive emissions) have gone unreported to the public by Industry, or reports have been falsified. We are concerned about this because south Texas has been considering an increase of its nuclear power. The Japanese company, TEPCO, is a partner with Toshiba and NRG Energy in the proposed expansion of the South Texas Nuclear Project. One of their U.S. partners, Stone and Webster, is the group that reportedly supplied a false safety report for a nuclear plant in the Northeast that was

forced for safety reasons 20 years ago to be dismantled. On March 24 of this year, stirred by the Japanese disaster, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission declared that nuclear plant operators in the United States have failed to report certain equipment defects that could create safety risks. It acknowledged that reporting guidelines for the industry are “contradictory and unclear.”

But even if we were to find a way around the difficult health and safety issues associated with nuclear power, there are still tough questions to be asked about the economic viability of nuclear energy. **Why is it that private investors are unwilling to shoulder the burden for nuclear power today?** All proposals for new nuclear plants in the United States, including the two new reactors in the South Texas Nuclear Project, have been unable to raise enough private capital and are highly dependent on government-guaranteed loans for billions of dollars. If the projects fail either to come on line or to operate safely, taxpayers will wind up footing the bill.

To make matters worse, the huge cost of building nuclear plants is continually promoted as being much less than is actually the case. A year ago, officials at CPS Energy, the San Antonio publicly owned energy company, purposefully misled the public about the actual costs that the city would incur if it were to partner with NRG Energy in the proposed new reactor project. **Outside experts repeatedly argued that project costs would be much higher than those publicized, but CPS Energy only**

admitted to this when worried nuclear investors themselves spilled the beans about actual projected costs. The revelation of that duplicity led to the city's refusal to invest further, but this was only after it had already spent over \$400 million. Amazingly, the city still pledged that politically, it would support the project, and has continued to do so, in return for retaining a very small ownership interest and \$80 million if the federal loan guarantees are approved.

Nuclear Project is now trying to get federal permission to extend the approved lifespan of their two currently operating nuclear reactors beyond the time limits generally considered "safer." Even if this extension is granted, and, please God, no major disasters result from this calculated greater risk as have occurred with the older reactors in Japan, the enormous expense of decommissioning these sites remains an economic factor ignored in the public debate by the nuclear

more numerous modular reactors. Brilliant idea: spread dangerous nuclear activity – and its waste – to many more locations, closer to many more people.

At this point, whom do you trust to vouch for the safety, "clean" energy, and economic advantage of nuclear reactors? If you still trust groups like Tokyo Electric Power Company, Stone and Webster, NRG Energy, and the nuclear lobby at CPS Energy with your lives and pocket books, certainly you will not object to building the new nuclear reactors next to your home. That would save on transmission costs, and having such a safe and economical, assured steady supply of electricity for businesses and homes right in your neighborhood would certainly increase your property values. On the other hand, you might prefer investing your community's health and resources into wind, solar, geothermal, and other renewable energy sources.

Enormous amounts of water are needed to keep nuclear reactors safe...

This past February, after word leaked out of Austin about a similar proposal there, it was publicly revealed that the nuclear lobby was trying to get San Antonio to reinvest in the two new plants, or at least to make a several-decade purchase agreement for nuclear power from the plants. Other electric utilities that were approached, such as Austin's, rejected the offer, but the San Antonio politicians said they were willing to consider the power-purchase agreement. Once again, costs projected by the nuclear lobby for buying this nuclear power are possibly only half of what the real costs will be, according to outside experts. If these experts are right again, and the nuclear lobby and CPS Energy wrong again, the economics of nuclear power becomes very debatable. And that is without even considering what most nuclear promoters never mention: the astronomical costs of trying to clean up and dispose of a nuclear plant once its life-span has finished, a matter of only a few decades.

Not surprisingly, the South Texas

lobby. And seldom do we hear of the enormous amounts of water that have to be guaranteed to keep the reactors operating and "cooled down." Lack of adequate water is a critical problem in South Texas, and one that will only intensify.

Along with the Japanese disaster, talk about promoting nuclear energy has been "suspended indefinitely" – at least, until the public is lulled to sleep again, one is tempted to think. Italy and Germany have declared against any further expansion of nuclear energy in their countries. Japan itself has just announced it is abandoning its plans to build more nuclear reactors, turning rather to renewable energy alternatives. In the U.S., however, the nuclear lobby is unrelenting. Proposals for government loan guarantees for the nuclear industry continue to be promoted, supported by President Obama. Nuclear advocates, being more public about the economic challenges, but continuing to ignore the major moral issue of health endangerment, are now proposing the building of much smaller, but

Bob Wright OMI, Patti Radle, and Linda Gibler OP (associate dean at OST) are members of an anti-nuclear "green" coalition in San Antonio that has been at the forefront of demonstrations and discussions with the local energy company and city leaders. The group has been pressing for much greater investment in and use of renewable energy alternatives – wind, solar, geothermal – along with energy conservation.

For good sources on nuclear energy issues and action alerts, see Nuclear Information and Resource Service (www.nirs.org) and Physicians for Social Responsibility (www.psr.org)



A panoramic view of the Mississippi River looking up-river at sunset from the Oblate Novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois. Photo by [unintelligible]

Eco-Tips:

Of the more than 84,000 chemicals registered in the US, only 200 have been tested, with five banned by the EPA, a result of legislation passed in 1976 that grandfathered in all chemicals in use at that time. Under current law, the EPA can only call for safety testing of a chemical used in products once there is evidence that it may be dangerous.

These chemicals pervade American life. They are found in building materials, food, drink, household cleaners, toys, paints, varnishes, plastics, clothing, rugs, cars, electronics, fragrances, appliances, soaps, and on and on. Ninety-six percent of all manufactured goods are touched in some way by chemistry.

One problematic chemical in common use is triclosan.

If you use liquid antibacterial soap in your kitchen or bathroom, it likely contains *Triclosan*. It is also com-

monly found in dishwashing detergents, shaving gels, toothpastes, clothing and even children's toys. It was originally designed as a surgical scrub for people in the medical field, but is now used in pesticides and a variety of consumer products to ward off pathogens. The FDA has been reevaluating the safety of this chemical additive, based on recent studies that indicate it can cause endocrine disruption in the body, may disrupt thyroid function and leads to the emergence of drug-resistant "super" bacteria.

Wastewater treatment does not remove the chemical entirely. Triclosan ends up in lakes, rivers and water sources, where it is highly toxic to aquatic life.

How to avoid triclosan:

1. Forgo antibacterial soap. The American Medical Association says not to use it at home.
2. Watch for the antibacterial

chemicals triclosan and triclocarban (triclosan's chemical cousin) in personal care products. Read ingredient labels.

3. Avoid "antibacterial" products. Triclosan is used in everyday products like toothbrushes, toys, and cutting boards that may be labeled "antibacterial" "fights germs" "protection against mold" or that make claims such as "odor-fighting" or "keeps food fresher, longer."

Learn more from the Environmental Working Group, www.ewg.org

Another good resource is the [Investor Environmental Health Network \(IEHN\)](http://InvestorEnvironmentalHealthNetwork.org), a member of the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility \(ICCR\)](http://InterfaithCenteronCorporateResponsibility.org) in which Oblate JPIC is active. IEHN encourages companies to adopt policies to reduce and eliminate toxic chemicals in their products.



Photoshop image using 10 different pictures was created by Rusty Gardiner, OMI Novice from Lacombe Province, Canada.

Save Money and the Environment: Use Non-Toxic Household Cleaning Supplies

The Oblate-sponsored La Vista Ecological Learning Center in Godfrey, Illinois has been offering workshops on non-toxic cleaners for the home. Our thanks go to Crystal Stevens, one of the two farmers at the La Vista CSA farm, for these recipes.

All Purpose Cleaner

½ cup pure soap in a gallon of water
¼ cup lemon juice

Drain Opener

½ cup baking soda
½ cup vinegar
Warm water to rinse

Drain Cleaner

1 cup baking soda followed by 3 cups boiling water

Stain Remover

1 tsp. vegetable-oil based soap
¼ cup vinegar
½ cup water

Dusting Spray

1 teaspoon olive oil
½ cup white vinegar

Glass Cleaner

½ cup white vinegar
1 gallon water

Soft Scrub

Mix about a cup of baking soda with liquid soap. This is easy to rinse off.

Scouring Powder

Sprinkle baking soda on whatever needs cleaning, scrub and rinse.

Mold cleaner

Mix 1 part hydrogen peroxide (3%) with 2 parts water in spray bottle. Spray onto affected area. Wait at least an hour and rinse.

Fabric Softener

¼ cup white vinegar added to last rinse cycle

Silver Polish

Baking soda and water made into a paste. Wipe onto area to be polished, rinse and polish dry.

Oven Cleaner

Sprinkle baking soda on bottom of the oven, spray with water to dampen and let sit overnight. Or, use ¾ cup baking soda, ¼ cup salt, ¼ cup water. Make into a paste and smear onto oven surfaces. Let sit overnight. Wipe off.

Arm and Hammer Oven Cleaner has been declared non-toxic by Consumers Union.

Go to www.omiusajpic.org for additional tips. Search under non-toxic cleaners.

One Thread in the Province JPIC Ministry: Mary Immaculate, Pacoima, CA

“Action on behalf of justice, peace and the integrity of creation is an integral part of evangelization.”

This deceptively simple statement is found in Rule 9a of the Constitutions and Rules of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. I suppose the word “integral” is the game-changer. I feel challenged, as do so many others in parish ministry in which evangelization is front and center, to find ways to make the concerns of justice, peace and integrity of creation, if not always central, at least an *integral* part of what we do. To be sure, it would be much easier to leave JPIC ministry for another day.

Thus begins our Constitutions and Rules:

“The call of Jesus Christ, heard within the Church through people’s need for salvation, draws us together as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.”

Oblates are drawn together by listening to the call of Jesus heard through the cry of the people in their most profound need. And this is a need we share with them. Recently on Ash Wednesday, literally *thousands of people* lined up to receive the sign of ashes at Mary Immaculate church in Pacoima, California, where I minister, along with my brother Oblates, Porfirio Garcia and Jack Curran. Thankfully teams of dozens of our lay persons led prayer services and distributed ashes on the half hour from 7 in the morning till 10 at night.

Where do all of these people come from? (I ask myself!) At times, in the



conversations of us regular churchgoers, a touch of self-righteousness creeps in. We say: these are just the usual “Ash Wednesday folk” we have to put up with. When I take my turn to place ashes on foreheads,

I meet one-by-one a little new-born carried tenderly by her macho father, a tattooed gang member, immigrants from rural Mexico, indigenous Guatemalans, a teenager in Gothic, proud yet harried parents surrounded by their little children, a young soldier back from Afghanistan, the elderly, as well as the deaf, blind and lame still with us 2000 years after Jesus walked among us. The crowd represents both our neighborhood and our church community. Rather than grumble about the presence of so many who usually do not come to church, I am very happy to see them, even though I worry a bit that they are “sheep” without a much of a “shepherd”.

In order to make ministry on behalf of justice, peace and the integrity

of creation an integral part of our evangelization, I need to pay attention to what is going on in their lives. There are four areas which we, as a parish, have identified as important areas for involvement: *Immigration Policy Reform, Community Organizing, engagement with the Catholic Legislative Network and environmental awareness and action.*

Stand with Immigrants

An integral part of our efforts to evangelize at Mary Immaculate is to act on behalf of justice for immigrants. My brother Oblates, Antonio Ponce, Jack Curran and Porfirio García, recently joined me and 2000 other people as we enthusiastically and peacefully marched two miles down Van Nuys Boulevard in Pacoima, CA, calling for a reform of the immigration laws. The march was organized at our parish under the auspices of the Justice for Immigrants Coalition. Its slogan was “No Human Being is Illegal”. Leading the march were young Hispanic military veterans carrying the American flag followed by a group

The Harsh Reality for Immigrant Families:

Among the most marginalized in this country are those without proper immigration documentation. They live in the shadows. They are officially known as “illegal aliens”. Many insist on calling undocumented persons “illegals” and refuse to accept them as immigrants, despite official church teaching. Some of these people have been living in this country for many years, even decades. Some have arrived more recently. Above all, they are hungry for work and are busy raising families. Meanwhile, they are second-class non-citizens, poorly paid, living from month to month, if not from week to week. They are without a driver’s license or valid social security number, renting garages converted into family dwellings, without health insurance or access to a doctor. Some of their children were brought to this country at very young ages, and yet are not able to go onto higher education because they are “illegal”. Some families are absent a father, as he has been deported back to his native country, or is being held in jail by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Many detainees have no lawyer to advise them.

At the same time, it has been proven that Hispanic immigrants contribute greatly to this country in more ways than they are given credit for, and also assimilate into the culture and English language just as quickly as the German, Italian or Japanese immigrants that came before them.

of bright-eyed children waving little flags of some of the many countries that make up our nation. My brother Oblates Pat Thompson and Stan Zowada have been especially supportive of these efforts.

More recently, we have stood with undocumented immigrants by staging a street protest during a LAPD DUI checkpoint. These are regularly staged throughout the city. Over the years the checkpoints have begun to double as events where the vehicles of sober, yet undocumented and thus unlicensed drivers are impounded. Heavy fines are imposed, and many simply abandon their vehicles. This only deepens the poverty of an already poor family. Soon after our protest, the Los Angeles Chief of Police ordered a reversal of this policy, which now makes it more difficult for his officers to impound vehicles. Our community is

celebrating this victory, which has left anti-immigrant activists unhappy.

Community Organizing

Mary Immaculate parish is a member of “OneLA”, an IAF (Industrial Areas Foundation) community-organizing group with more than 60 church/synagogue and civic member-institutions throughout greater Los Angeles. This gives the parish a “voice” with which to advocate for the poor. Through community organizing, the people in our parish are taking on leadership roles in two areas in particular, *foreclosure prevention and public school reform*.

Foreclosure Prevention:

For many years, the representatives of financial institutions have been complicit in luring members of our parish into taking out mortgages they could ill afford. As we know,

By William Antone, OMI

these institutions were instrumental in the near meltdown of the financial system, were rescued by U.S. taxpayers, continue to reap handsome rewards in compensation and were found innocent of any wrongdoing. When the housing bubble burst, these same banks began to foreclose on these struggling families, brushing them aside without an ounce of consideration.

The parish joined with other communities and, with the help of OneLA, proposed to the commercial banks a program of *mortgage principal reduction* in order to save families from foreclosure. Oblate ICCR shareholder resolutions directed at the major banks raised complementary concerns. Since the large commercial banks have been very slow to respond to this proposal and have continued to toss homeowners overboard, the parish organized a public action in which a large group of account-holders descended *at the same time* upon a bank, withdrew their money and closed their accounts, an event covered by local television. At the same time, we have been teaching parishioners about the advantages of large local credit union banks. People have been opening accounts with credit unions - essentially going around the system that has failed them. Fr. Pat Thompson has joined me in strategizing with the parish on this.

Public School Reform

The Los Angeles Unified School District has imposed - from the top down - an excessively competitive

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and complex model for wholesale public school reform. Many reforms have been imposed suddenly, without any real discussion. For all practical purposes parents have been excluded from the process, not to mention local teachers, principals and administrators. Rather than the robust centers of community life they ought to be, our public schools have been injected with widespread fear, confusion, ideology, politics and disruption. We have had several meetings at the parish with parents, teachers and local school administrators in order to build a relationship with our nearby public schools. The outreach has been well received. We are now planning “parent academies” in order to train parents to participate in their local schools and have a voice in the systemic reform that is taking place.

Catholic Legislative Network

As part of our parish justice ministry, we recently celebrated “Life and Dignity Sunday”, inviting our people to join the Catholic Legislative Network, which monitors pending state legislation and sends out email alerts to our parishioners whenever there is something being proposed which affects the fundamental values of human life and dignity. Among the many issues brought forward and monitored by the CLN are the following: **care for the earth, consistent life, economic justice, family life, marriage, restorative justice, etc.** More than 2000 parishioners are part of the CLN. Many others participate in the neighboring Oblate parishes of Santa Rosa and St. Ferdinand. The participation of

the people in the CLN is part of an overall education on the value and dignity of human life in all its stages.

Integrity of Creation

Our parish Social Justice Committee has an “Ecology” sub-committee. Thanks to Darrell Rupiper’s *Eco-mission* some years ago, these people continue to promote awareness of the environment and of our inter-relatedness with the Earth and all of Creation. We belong to the Creation Sustainability Committee of the Archdiocese and are currently planning some educational pieces for the parish community. Each week the parish bulletin features a practical tip on conservation and ecology. We have successfully eliminated the use and consumption of water in plastic bottles on parish property, and are currently improving our recycling procedures.


*The National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) estimates that the average American uses 1.5 gallons of bottled water per day. That's 547 gallons per year. At \$1.50 per gallon, that's \$820.50 per year. Tap water costs about \$0.001 per gallon. Source: NSF.

JPIC work across the US

As a member of the province JPIC committee for the past six years, I have grown to see many Oblate connections between our parish work and that of the larger Oblate JPIC effort which the Washington, DC JPIC office and the JPIC Committee have done much to support and guide. These efforts are a force to be reckoned with as we attempt to work out of the unique vision of St. Eugene. In his Lenten sermon, Eugene asks the poor of Aix-en-Provence: “And

who are you in the eyes of God?”

We can see the JPIC connections in this province with Oblates and their collaborators in Houston, Laredo, Eagle Pass, Brownsville, Miami, Minnesota, Kenai, Lowell, Tijuana, Buffalo, Sarita, New Orleans, San Antonio, Godfrey and Belleville. I risk not naming some connection. Certainly the work of our brother Oblates in Washington, DC at the JPIC office, with the USCCB, and in New York at the U.N., as well as the unique contribution of George McLean, founder of the Center for the Study of Culture and Values, incarnate the continuation of Rule 9a which states that *some Oblates should be “present where decisions affecting the future of the poor are being made”*. The work of ICCR, by bringing to the attention of corporations, the impact of their activities on the poor, has been an important aspect of the work for justice. These many ministries throughout the Province, carried out by many Oblates and those associated with us, re-enact the Samaritan’s detour on his way to Jericho, calling us to respond with compassion to Christ among us, whether in our church pews, or on the street. Finally, the specific pro-life ministry of many Oblates provides a prophetic principle which motivates us in our quest to see that Jesus *is* the justice (*sedeq*) of God as well as the first born of all Creation.

The JPIC efforts at Mary Immaculate Parish in Pacoima make up one thread of a much broader fabric in our Province, and beyond. We pray that actions on behalf of justice, peace and the integrity of creation will continue to be integral to and enliven our missionary work.



UN Update

One of the important issues affecting the poor on which Oblates focus at the UN level is HIV-AIDS. This year, the President of the Economic and Social Council is Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe of Zambia. He is doing excellent work as President and is opening more and more doors for NGO participation. Some of us from the Financing for Development (FFD) NGO Committee had the opportunity to work closely with him last year, when he was co-chair of the General Assembly's "Open-ended Ad hoc Working Group on the Financial Crisis."

NGO representatives, such as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and VIVAT International, take a special interest in how HIV/AIDS affects the lives of those living in poverty, and especially in Zambia where the Oblates are very active. There are 33.5 million people globally living with HIV, of whom 22.5 million live in sub-Saharan Africa.

Fr. Joseph Phiri OMI, one of our Zambian Oblates, is now living in Washington. He has already taken an active interest in helping to see what better actions can be taken to assist people living with HIV and Aids. In April, Fr. Phiri participated in a stakeholder forum at the UN held in preparation for the 2011 High Level Meeting on AIDS. He

will represent the Oblates and VIVAT at the High Level meeting on June 8-10, bringing new ideas and suggestions to the meeting.

This is just one aspect of our work at the UN. There are many more areas of engagement. Our influence grows to the extent that we have Oblates and lay people working with us to carry stories to UN officials about what is actually happening to people on the ground.

Please contact Daniel LeBlanc (dleblanc@yahoo.com) if you are interested in connecting with the UN work, or have information to share.

More information on HIV-AIDS and the UN can be found at:

www.unaids.org



Support Unemployed Workers!

Interfaith Worker Justice's new [Faith Advocates for Jobs](#) campaign plans to organize 1,000 local congregation-based or interfaith support committees to assist the unemployed and their families in communities across the country.

Get your congregation involved! Contact Rev. Paul Sherry, the campaign's coordinator, at:

psberry@iwj.org or 202-525-3055

Sri Lanka Oblates Promote Peace and Reconciliation

By Christina Herman

"Investigation (of war crimes) will not help or do us any good... It will only further aggravate the (ethnic) polarization. What we need now is building peace between the two communities." - Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo)

"It is our contention that truth, justice, accountability together with care and reparation for victims are essential ingredients for progress, development of a post war Sri Lanka, along with a longer term political solution that addresses grievances of Tamil community that led to the birth of the LTTE and full scale war." (from a statement signed by 25 Christian leaders, including three Oblates, calling for the public release of a UN report on the end of the civil war)

Sri Lanka remains a polarized society, one that is reflected in these radically divergent statements from Sri Lankan Christian leaders. Everyone wants peace, but the question is, how can lasting peace be attained?

The Oblate Center for Peace and Reconciliation in Jaffna contends that the way forward must be non-violent. Last February, the Centre hosted Fr. Joseph Sayer, the Director of Misereor (the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation) who learned about current conditions in the north as well as the work of CPR. It is believed he was instrumental in spurring a visit in March by Cardinal Ranjith and the Congress of Religions from Colombo. This was the first such visit in recent years, and was closely monitored by the military at a high level.

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Greens of Guadalupe Carry on Work of Fr. Darrell Rupiper, OMI By Birdie Torres

In an effort to carry on the environmental message delivered by the late Father Darrell Rupiper, OMI, The Greens of Guadalupe, a group of like-minded individuals, have taken on the mission to protect, conserve, and foster respect for earth's natural resources. We work to educate and guide others, hoping to create and preserve a healthy environment for future generations. The Greens are an environmentalist group within Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Laredo, Texas.

In celebration of our 4th anniversary, the Greens of Guadalupe conducted a cleanup in the neighborhood around the church on March 26. We usually clean up about three blocks in the area; we would do more but several of the volunteers are children and their safety is a priority.

This is the second annual cleanup for the Greens and our efforts do not end there. During the four years

of our existence the Greens have worked to understand the plight of "Mother Earth" and the steps humans can take to conserve the environment.

Now, after gathering much valuable information and tips on Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling, the Greens have developed an interactive presentation that targets young and old alike. As we learn new things, we add to the presentation, so it is a living thing. We have thus far taken our presentation to the students of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School and to parents of the CCD students in our parish and they have been very receptive.

The Greens of Guadalupe have just



Enthusiastic members of the Greens of Guadalupe and volunteers at the 1st Annual Neighborhood Cleanup in Laredo, Texas (April 2010)

received permission from the Bishop to take our presentation to ten other parishes in Laredo. If that is successful, we may get permission to take it to the rest of the diocese. The hope is that through this, other groups can learn the message, adopt the mission and continue the work that Father Rupiper initiated.

Berta "Birdie" Torres is the dynamic Chairperson of the Greens of Guadalupe - editor's note.

(Sri Lanka, continued from p. 13)

While many avoided attending and speaking out at the meetings due to fear of reprisals, a few religious leaders did relate the fears, insecurities and problems faced by the people in Jaffna. Prior to this discussion with the Cardinal and the others, CPR organized field visits to explain the situation of the people in the Muslim areas and the High Security Zones in Jaffna. The north remains heavily militarized two years after the traumatic end of the civil war.

Tamils, particularly in the North and East, are living in fear and

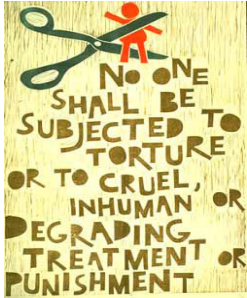
struggle with ruined infrastructure. Thousands remain in government camps, unable to return to their homes. Those who have returned are eager to remake their lives, but the war destroyed homes, schools, shops and roads. Life is difficult. Disappearances in the North and East continue with no investigation by the government. This impunity makes it dangerous for anyone to speak out about current conditions.

A recently issued UN report on the bloody end of the war between the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) and govern-

ment forces has made it clear that war crimes were likely committed on both sides. Further investigation is warranted, yet the government has vigorously rejected the report.

The root causes of the war must be addressed to avoid future conflict. An atmosphere of mutual respect and the opportunity for full participation in equitable economic, social and cultural development is essential for peace and stability. The Oblates are working hard to create the conditions needed to move forward into this future.

Churches Work to End Torture



June 26th is **United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture**. Several years ago, religious and human rights organizations in the United States declared the month of June to be Torture Awareness Month as a way to provide greater visibility to this issue and provide an opportunity for coordinated actions across the country.

This June, NRCAT (National Religious Campaign Against Torture), of which the Oblate JPIC Office is a member, is encouraging congregations and religious organizations to focus on the need for accountability for U.S.-sponsored torture since September 11, 2001. NRCAT has been calling for a **nonpartisan Commission of Inquiry** to be appointed by the President and/or the Congress. Learning from the past is the best way to build a torture-free future. NRCAT has also **called upon the Attorney General to appoint a Special Prosecutor** to investigate the use of torture.

NRCAT has some great resources for congregations at different stages of engagement with this issue. See below for two of these. Visit the NRCAT website for sample sermons, prayers, study guides and more: www.nrcat.org; click on Torture Awareness Month – June, or call them at 202-547-1920

Repairing the Brokenness: A Faithful Response to U.S.-Sponsored Torture is a new, 10 minute video that includes perspectives from several faith leaders about repentance, redemption and healing the soul of our nation from the brokenness resulting from the use of torture. Video and Discussion Guide are available from the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) website for free download; order a DVD for \$5.00. Go to: www.nrcat.org/repair

Ending U.S.-Sponsored Torture Forever; 20-minute video and use one of the seven discussion guides developed for people of faith to help educate people in your congregation and community on this issue. The text for the video is available in Spanish. Visit: www.nrcat.org and click on Torture Awareness Month – June.



Faith- Based Community Organizing Resources

In February, the JPIC Office distributed faith-inspired community organizing booklets to ten Oblates active in this work in the United States. Armand Matthew, OMI wrote this praise for the materials:

“Community organizing is a moral, legal, legitimate tool for a community to help deal with significant quality-of-life issues. It is also the most accessible, cost-efficient and effective means of giving the poor and the powerless a voice in public discourse and action. That is why it is a central part of my daily work and pastoral ministry, both at the University and throughout Brownsville, a predominantly poor and politically-challenged community. And that, in turn, is why I am so grateful to JPIC for sending us the three booklets on community organizing: *Reflecting With Scripture On Community Organizing*, *Effective Organizing For Congregational Renewal*, and *Action Creates Public Life*. In a unique and wonderful way, these booklets (especially *Reflecting With Scripture On Community Organizing*) enhance the understanding and practice of community organizing. I will always have them close at hand for regular, frequent and enlightening reference.”

If you are an Oblate interested in a copy, the office still has a few left. Please contact Mary O’Herron in the JPIC Office; maryoh@omiusajpic.org; 202-529-4505; OMI JPIC, 391 Michigan Ave., NW Washington, DC 20017. Also available directly from ACTA Publications in Chicago; www.actapublications.com/ or 1-800-397-2282

A Priest's Reflections on the 2011 World Social Forum

By Walter Butor, OMI

Along with Fr. Antonio Ponce, O.M.I. and Ms. Patti Raddle, I represented the Oblates at the 2011 World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal in January - an enriching and eye opening experience.

One of the characteristics of the Oblates is our desire to get things done and it can be hard when it feels as though little is changing. The slow progress on the MDGs can feel like this - nice words with little impact. The WSF felt rather like this, at least at the beginning, which was quite disorganized. Creative chaos I think some call it. But, as the week progressed, the sessions became more organized, and there were some very interesting discussions.

There was a talk on the land grabbing issue in Africa that called for action. Greenpeace - an effective international campaigning organization - gave a presentation about the exploitation by Asian and European fishing fleets of the fisheries in Senegal at the expense of the local fisherman. And, there was much more. These sessions reassured me that indeed concrete actions are beginning, which give us reason for hope.



Overall, the WSF provided a platform of expression for many people who would otherwise be silenced. They were empowered to speak out about injustices they were experiencing. For me this was one of the most hopeful aspects of the Forum: the voiceless being given a voice.

The Forum officially began on Sunday Feb. 6 with a mass concelebrated by Cardinal Theodore-Adrien Sarr and the other two Bishops of Senegal along with many of the priests attending



the Forum. The church was filled to capacity. With three different choirs performing, and all of the attendees participating fully, it was quite a celebration. The Cardinal gave a wonderful homily about the WSF as being light and salt for our world.

In the United States, February 6 was Super Bowl Sunday. I love football, and my hometown team, the Pittsburgh Steelers, was playing. I tried everything I could think of to see the game, but nothing worked



Mass at the cathedral in Dakar

out. In my mind I was already celebrating a victory and imagining a super bowl parade. But instead, I participated in an even better parade.

The WSF began with a march through the city of Dakar. It was an unbelievable show. The entire march was some four miles long, and took four hours to complete. Thousands of people were marching through the streets, singing, dancing, protesting and celebrating.

Three major roads in the capital city were shut down all afternoon for this event, and it seemed as if the whole city turned out. Children were everywhere, even on the rooftops, witnessing this display of solidarity. Every group presenting at the Forum paraded through the streets with their banners.

I have never seen such a scene before, and it was a sure sign of hope that people can come together peacefully to express their views. For me, this genuinely summed up the hope and aspirations of this World Social Forum.