

JPIC REPORT



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

From the Director:

Let us be renewed by God's mercy ... and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.

- Pope Francis

Inside this issue:

From the Director	1
News & Happenings	2
Resources: Books	3
Parish Resources	4
My Place in the Immensity of Creation	5
Growing Food for the City	6-7
Fast For Families Travels Across the US	8-9
The Joy of the Gospel	10-11
Trade Agreements Back on the Table in the US	12
JPIC Network News	13
Climate Change Consensus	14
Vatican Urges Action	15
Words Shape our Worldview	16

The seemingly endless winter season and the transition to more spring-like weather have kept many observers off balance this year. Surprise snowstorms, polar vortex conditions mixed with intermittent sunshine and plenty of rain has kept even the best of gardeners guessing.

The transitus across the Lent-Passover-Triduum-Easter liturgical season has found us wrestling with events tragic and mysterious, challenging and life giving. Our pilgrim nature is always looking toward a destination, while at the same time we revisit old places and narratives to recall the reason for the hope that is in us, and to rekindle the faith that has been our fuel.

Civil war in Syria grinds on with countless thousands dead or injured and living in refugee camps. Peace making in the Middle East has hit some rough sailing and we wonder about all the resources, prayers and energy that

have been trained on such an elusive goal. I wonder about all the refugees and all the refugee camps and all the workers who are charged to protect them.

Instability in the Sudan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Mali tests the resolve and resources of global and regional institutions and the relief capacity of many organizations. The memory of past atrocities and violence still haunts the region.

The winter Olympics and the Paralympics brought Sochi, the Black Sea and the surrounding mountain venues to our attention. The thrill of victory and record-breaking accomplishment were showcased alongside disappointment and heart-break.

The demonstration of athletic prowess and deep resolve had not faded from the screen when the Ukraine imploded and Crimea became again part of Russia. Were the ghosts of former alliances and borders still looking for a

resting place?

With the eyes of the world transfixed by the reality of a jumbo jet disappearing from the Asian sky we wondered about our inability to find its final resting place. Weeks afterwards, the failure of transmitters, and sonar, and telescopes, and multiple pieces of sophisticated technology to bring closure to families and friends and neighbors almost defies analysis.

The solemn entrance into the celebration of the sacred times of Holy Week and Passover were punctuated by the news of a sinking ferry with hundreds of school kids aboard off the coast of South Korea. Such a heavy yoke of pain upon those who died and those who mourn.

I pondered many of these events as I sat in the cathedral in Siracusa, Sicily and I listened to the Singing of the Exultet during the Easter vigil. The ancient Greeks, the Roman and the apostle Paul left their

Continued on page 4

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 acting as a resource for province membership, supporting the community organizing efforts of Oblates in the United States, and coordinating the Faith Responsible Investment Program to insist on just practices and policies by corporations in their global operations. We also advocate with the U.S. government and other international institutions on a variety of justice and peace issues.

U.S. JPIC Committee

James Brobst, OMI
Walter Butor, OMI
Stephen Conserva, OMI
Lucino Cruz, OMI
Karl Davis, OMI
Séamus Finn, OMI
Salvador Gonzalez, OMI
Gary Huelsmann
Antonio Ponce, OMI
Patti Radle

JPIC Staff

Rev. Séamus Finn, OMI
Director

Antonio Ponce, OMI
JPIC Team

Christina C. Herman
*Associate Director;
Newsletter Editor*

Mary O'Herron
*Associate for GAJPIC Service
and Corporate Responsibility*

George Kombe Ngolwe
Advocacy Associate

JPIC Report is a publication of the OMI Justice and Peace/Integrity of Creation Office
391 Michigan Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20017

Tel: 202.529-4505

Fax: 202.529-4572

www.omiusajpic.org

News & Happenings

Kennedy Katongo Appointed International JPIC Coordinator in Rome



We would like to extend our congratulations to Fr. Kennedy Katongo, OMI (Zambia) on his appointment to the post of JPIC Coordinator of the General Service for JPIC ministry of the congregation in Rome. Fr. Kennedy is well known to the US JPIC Office, having spent a summer with us doing research for his Master's thesis on the international debt and the preying of "vulture funds" on poor, indebted countries. Kennedy also completed his theological studies at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio TX with a MA in theology.

We take this opportunity to wish Fr. Camille Piché, OMI (Canada) bon voyage as he moves into his new ministry, and want to thank him for his commitment and dedicated work over the past seven years in that position. Much was done during his tenure to develop Oblate JPIC work internationally, to connect with numerous units in the congregation by visiting them for extended periods and to identify issues of priority for their local mission; Issues such as the tremendous violations of human rights that took place especially in places like Sri Lanka, protecting and advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly as they were threatened by the extractives industry, and supporting the awakening and deepening of a spirituality to sustain the commitment of those active in JPIC ministry.

AFL-CIO "Eyes on the Prize Award – Community Leader"



Patti Radle received the Community Leader Award for her unyielding commitment to social justice, civil rights, and worker rights. She is currently a member of the San Antonio School Board and served on the San Antonio City Council from 2003-2007. Patti was recently awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Theology from the Oblate School of Theology. She has also served, with her husband, as the Volunteer Director of Inner City Development since 1972, and while on the City Council, helped to develop Haven For Hope, a compassionate residential and service facility for those facing homelessness. Patti is a long-standing and committed member of the Oblate JPIC Committee.

Exploring the Sacred Universe

Join La Vista Ecological Learning Center's "Exploring the Sacred Universe" Earth Literacy Program from August 3–10, 2014.

See the reflection on page 5 for details about the program.

To Register: Call 618-466-5004 or email: info@lavistaelc.org;

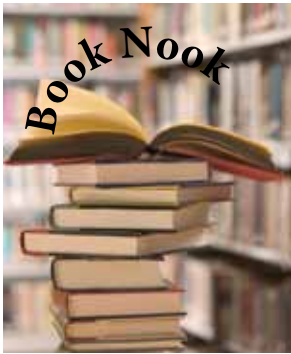
Write: Ecological Learning Center, 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035

Cost: \$550 for the week; Scholarships are available.

Please visit the La Vista website for more information: www.lavistaelc.org/earthlit.php



Resources



Soil and Sacrament: A Spiritual Memoir of Food and Faith

By Fred Bahnson

Soil and Sacrament is a powerful, personal story of how growing and sharing food pulls us closer to God.

In his search for a deep relationship with God, Fred Bahnson finished Divinity School and turned to the land, starting a faith-based community garden in rural North Carolina. In addition to growing real food, the community was designed to feed his own spiritual hunger.

Soil and Sacrament is Bahnson's exploration of how we ground spirituality in the soil, tying that concern with the host of social and political issues related to food production. How we eat has a significant impact on how we live, and this book considers not only issues of raising food holistically (with an emphasis on permaculture and organic gardening), but also the cost to communities when food production is industrialized. It is the norm today for food items to be shipped around the world, with luxury products like coffee grown sometimes to the detriment of local economies,

and land farmed traditionally, given over to the production of export crops.

Through his journeys to four different faith communities—Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, and Jewish—Bahnson explores the connections between spiritual nourishment and the way we feed our bodies. All the people Bahnson visits, prays with, and works with, share a clear understanding that the work they do with their hands to grow and produce food is an extension of their devotion to God and commitment to living a spiritual life.

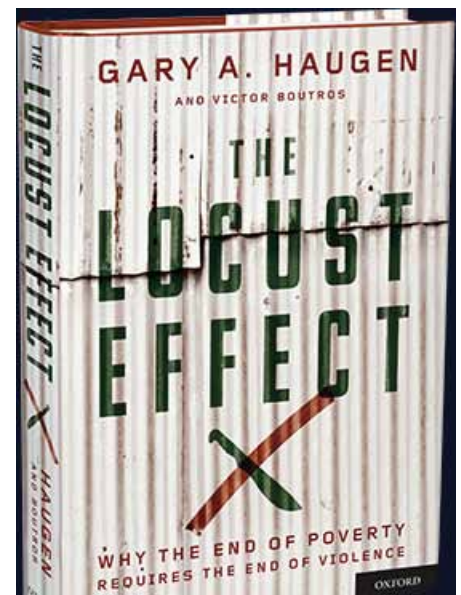
Bahnson's style as a writer is simple yet elegant, so rural and urban settings alike come alive in his narrative. He also knows his history, and weaves in figures from the tradition like the Desert Fathers and Mothers and Saint Benedict, to show that seeking God's blessing through a proactive relationship with the land has always been closely connected with the search for union with God through prayer.

The Locust Effect

By: Gary Haugen and Victor Boutros

Global poverty usually brings to mind hunger, disease, homelessness. Few of us think of violence. But beneath the surface of the poorest communities in the developing world is a hidden epidemic of everyday violence—of rape, forced labor, illegal detention, land theft, police abuse, and more - that is undermining our best efforts to assist the poor.

Gary Haugen and Victor Boutros's book, *The Locust Effect*, offers a searing account of the way pervasive violence drags down efforts to escape poverty, undermines economic development, and reduces the effectiveness of international public health efforts. As corrupt and dysfunctional justice systems allow the locusts of predatory violence to descend upon the poor, the ravaging plague lays waste to programs of income generation, disease prevention, education for girls and other assistance to the poor. And tragically, none of these aid programs can stop the violence.



Resources (cont.)

The Locust Effect (cont.)

The graphic real-world stories - set in locales ranging from Peru to India to Nigeria - offer a gripping journey into the vast, hidden underworld of everyday violence where justice is really only available to those with money. But the book also holds out hope, recalling that justice systems in developed countries were once just as corrupt and brutal; and explores a practical path for reforming antiquated judicial systems in order to protect the poorest.

Sweeping in scope and filled with unforgettable stories, *The Locust Effect* forces us to rethink our understanding of the causes of poverty, and to become aware of what it will take to make the poor safe enough to prosper.

The book was published in 2014 by Oxford University Press and is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Amazon UK; Visit www.thelocusteffect.com/the-book for more information.

Parish Resources



Gospel Living

Gospel Living, www.gospelliving.org is a great resource for parish formation ministry. Gospel living is not a program, but an entire approach to being parish. Some of the resources include Catholic Social Justice themes on occupation and dignity of work, money, food and environment. The Gospel Living approach is built around discipleship and daily life.

“Our faith informs the way we work, what we buy, what we do with our money, our relationship with the poor and vulnerable, how we act

as citizens and neighbors, how we use our time, how we invite others to experience Christ.” - *Gospel Living*, www.gospelliving.org

From the Director (cont.)

footprints there. They were followed by the Byzantine conquerors who were defeated by the Arabs/Muslims in the ninth Century. Their rule continued until the Norman conquest in the 11th Century. The martyrdom of St Lucy is captured in a painting by Caravaggio in Siracusa and St. Agatha who was martyred in 251AD under Roman persecution is remembered in the cathedral that bears her name in Catania.

May the light that shines through these Easter days bring, renew your hope, guide your steps and strengthen our pilgrim hearts in the days and weeks ahead. May the canonizations of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II be a source of inspiration and guidance for people across the world.



Saint Agatha Cathedral in Catania, Italy

My Place in the Immensity of Creation

By: Santy Sandoval

The following reflection was penned by Santy Sandoval who attended the Oblate Ecological Initiative's Exploring the Sacred Universe Earth Literacy Program last summer. She was sent by her Oblate parish Santa Rosa in Pacoima, California. Santy's descriptive words are offered as an invitation for other Oblates to attend and/or to sponsor someone from your ministry. For more information and to register for the program, please see the entry on page 2.

"My experience at the Earth Literacy Program held at La Vista Ecological Learning Center in Godfrey, Illinois, was awakening and transformative. Meeting people from different places, cultures, traditions, and ideas made the program and our participation rich and full of surprises. The first day I learned about the universe and my place as a human being in the immensity of all creation. I thought that the whole story of creation ended millions of years ago, but I humbly learned that creation is still evolving, expanding, and continuing to bring forth new life. This has changed my perspective of life itself.

La Vista in itself is a place of revelation and encounter with nature. It reminded me of my hometown in Santa Ana, El Salvador, where my mother, my sister and I used to visit my grandfather on his little farm. My grandfather used to grow all kinds of vegetables. Everything was so green and vital - the colorful flowers, the clean smell of the fresh air, the richness of the soil, the birds singing. I loved being in touch with nature. La Vista brought back those memories and made me feel at home. It really helped me to get in touch with my whole being all over again.

I learned to pray with my whole body, soul, and spirit integrating the four directions; north, south, east, and west. I also have integrated into my prayer the four elements; fire, water, air and soil. It was very emotional to experience the energy and the intrinsic relationship of all that is around us.

I want to thank all the participants and presenters who made this program a reality. It was so powerful. I am grateful to the Oblates for giving me this opportunity to learn and to participate in this wonderful and important program that has transformed my life and my point of view of life itself. May God continue to bless us all in this new journey of service, love and care for the whole universe, and especially to our mother Earth."



Santy Sandoval (right) joined farmer Crystal Moore Stevens, in a presentation during the Earth Literacy course.

Growing Food for the City

By: Fr. Seamus P Finn, OMI

The third season of vegetable gardening at the Oblate House in Washington, DC was inaugurated on April 5th. The occasion brought together the lead gardeners, Gail Taylor and Zachari Curtis, with volunteers, neighbors, supporters of urban gardening in DC, members of the local oblate community and DC Councilman David Grosso. Also in attendance were: Black Belt Justice Center, DC Greens, Green Girls Go, Dreaming Out Loud, the Green Scheme, Damien Ministries.

The project was initiated three years ago with the support of the local oblate community and the province administration, and has delivered a variety of rich and wholesome vegetables in the first two years of operation. The land was used primarily for recreational purposes over the nearly one hundred years that the oblates have owned the property. Initial soil testing completed over two years ago indicated that it needed a number of different nutrients to make it suitable for local vegetable production.



Participants from local NGOs involved in urban gardening or provision of services to the community.



Tomatoes from last season's crop.

The project is one of a number of neighborhood vegetable initiatives established by people who are committed to making fresh and nutritious vegetables available to families across the District. These efforts have included the use of private land, public islands surrounded by local intersecting streets, and public lots that have been remained idle for a number of years.

Councilman David Grosso has introduced the DC Urban Farming and Food Security Act to make more urban vegetable gardening initiatives possible.

This legislation will provide access to city lots and tax incentives designed to make the business model more attractive to entrepreneurs, with the result that healthy, locally grown vegetables would be more accessible to District residents. All of the groups attending the April 15th event are committed to mobilizing support for the legislation.

This project is consistent with the commitment that the US Province of the Missionary Oblates made more than 10 years ago to search out practical ways to realize the ecological di-

mension of their religious vocations as encouraged by Pope John Paul II in 1991. This effort includes a deepening awareness of our interdependence with all of creation, especially the earth, as well as a greater attentiveness to the integrity of creation as the second book of revelation.



Three-Part Harmony farmer Gail Taylor and DC City Councilor David Grosso visiting the garden at the Oblate headquarters in Washington, DC.



Fr. Seamus Finn, OMI and US Provincial Bill Antone, OMI at the celebration of the Oblate Garden's third year. Both have strongly supported using the land for urban farming.

This commitment has been realized in the decade-old Oblate Ecological Initiative (www.lavistaelc.org), which has both a learning and community supported garden component and is located at the Oblate novitiate in Godfrey IL. This commitment has also been realized in the land use policy adopted by the oblates, concrete initiatives on recycling and earth-friendly practices, as well as in the efforts that have been made in earth friendly and faith consistent investing and building.

“Fast for Families” Travels Across America for Immigration Reform

By: George K. Ngolwe and Fr. Jose Antonio Ponce, OMI

In response to the lack of immigration reform in the U.S. Congress, immigrant rights and faith leaders launched a “Fast for Families Across America” campaign. The campaign has travelled to 76 congressional districts to build constituent momentum for reform, and to engage Members of Congress in their home districts.

The purpose of the Fast for Families bus tour was to escalate the level of urgency to end the moral crisis that has resulted from the current immigration system. Through actions, fasting and prayers, the Fast for Families has made visible the reality that the current broken immigration system has a harsh effect on hard working families.



Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI joins ecumenical leaders at the immigration reform rally in Washington, DC on April 9th in Washington, DC. The Reverend John L. McCullough, President and CEO of Church World Service is at the podium. To the left of Fr. Ponce is Sandy Sorensen, director of the United Church of Christ Washington Office, and on his right is The Rev. Michael Livingston, National Policy Director and Director of the Washington DC Office, Interfaith Worker Justice.



Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI from the JPIC Office was joined at the April 9th rally by Fr. Miguel Fritz, OMI, Oblate General Councilor for Latin America in Rome.

The tour shed light on the crisis of family separation in the wake of a record number of deportations, and lifted up the importance of immigration reform that would maintain intact families. The economic benefit from legalizing 11 million previously undocumented immigrants living in the United States would be substantial.

The Fast for Families bus tour is a follow up to the Fast for Families action call in the fall of 2013, which saw hundreds of people - religious and community leaders, Members of Congress and Obama Administration officials - visiting the Fast for Families tent on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. People went in support of the five immigration advocates who fasted for 30 days.

Fast for Families Across America took place in two phases. The first phase began on January 27th, and ended on February 21st. During this phase, immigrant rights groups and fasters made fly-in stops in more than 60 congressional districts to raise awareness about the urgency for action on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform.

The second phase began on February 24th with two buses departing from California. The fasters used two routes, a northern bus route and one to the south. The tour took the two buses to 76 U.S. cities in all. The final destination was Washington, D.C. where the buses converged on April 9th.

The Missionary Oblates JPIC staff participated in planning meetings and collaborated with other organizations during the entire bus tour. We provided bus tour event information to local Oblate community and parishes, and invited local communities to express solidarity for comprehensive immigration reform through their own actions, prayers and fasting during Lent.

The moral urgency for comprehensive reform has not gone away. If you would like to become more involved, please visit the Oblate JPIC website, www.omiusajpic.org for suggested actions and advocacy resources.

More information about Fast for Families, please visit: www.fast4families.org

By: James Reinke

in the dialogue between God and his people . . . The preacher must know the heart of his community, in order to realize where its desire for God is alive and ardent, as well as where that dialogue, once loving, has been thwarted and is now barren". He reminds us that "the people of God, by the constant inner working of the Holy Spirit, is constantly evangelizing itself". The preacher is called to be at the service of the spirit's movement - offering words that are not just moralistic or doctrinaire, nor exegetical meditations, but ones that contribute to the Lord's dialogue with his people. This calls for one to speak from the heart and offer words that can build up our identity -- "This Christian identity, as the baptismal embrace which the father gave us when we were little ones, makes us desire, as prodigal children - and favorite children in Mary - yet another embrace, that of the merciful father who awaits us in glory." This



preaching is paradigmatic of our role as evangelizers.

He offers suggestions for preparing the homily, both very specific steps and resources to use; and the broader way of sacramental life, familiarity with the Scriptures, and personal accompaniment on the way. All contribute to our instrumental role of evangelization.

Evangelizing requires discernment. Both chapters 2 and 4 offer guidelines for this evangelical discernment -- "pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come". The title of Chapter 2 indicates we are living during a "Crisis of Communal Commitment". Francis summons a new commitment to scrutinizing the signs of the times -- a "grave responsibility" for "choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil". In chapter 1, he wrote: "I want to emphasize that what I am trying to express here has a programmatic significance and important consequences." Consequently, chapter 2 names specific behaviors and beliefs to say No to: an economy of exclusion; the new idolatry of money; a financial system that rules rather than serves; and inequality that spawns violence.

Another section identifies "Temptations Faced by Pastoral Workers". Unfortunately, an "administrative church" exists - one that manages its domain, content with a limited reach, but able to bask in some self-righteousness. Francis writes: "This practical relativism consists

in acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, setting goals as if others did not exist, working as if people who have not received the gospel did not exist."

There is great divergence between an "administrative church" and the pope's "dream" of a "missionary option". He calls for an "ecclesial conversion" of every aspect of the church: individuals; parishes; other movements and associations; diocese; bishops; and the papacy. All have the "grave responsibility" to apply these guidelines to ecclesial discernment.

Chapter 4, "The Social Dimension of Evangelization", adds significant elements to this discernment. He writes: "The kerygma has a clear social content: at the very heart of the gospel is life in community and engagement with others." This has "... an immediate moral implication centered on charity." Jesus is resurrected and the kingdom of God is already present and growing in our midst. Francis emphasizes that the social teaching of the new evangelization is marked by two characteristics: a preferential option for the poor that includes them in society; and work for peace. He states that these two concerns will "shape the future of humanity".

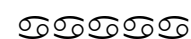
Francis thoroughly explores and explicates the necessity for all Christians to "include" the poor. This is not about charity, or helping - it is about relationships in the One who became poor for our sakes. Francis wants "a church which is poor and

for the poor". This is not merely about "doing" for "them", rather our actions and relationships stem from "loving attentiveness" and "true love is always contemplative". He offers a profound homily on who the poor are for the church -- adding "If anyone feels offended by my words . . . I am interested only in helping those who are in thrall to an individualistic, indifferent and self-centered mentality to be freed from those unworthy chains...."

He offers four guidelines for the dialogue that can build peace. These contribute to the dialogue between God and the people, and to peace for our world. Ecumenical dialogue is one part and a necessity so that the scandal of our disunity does not further impede peace.

Chapter 5 can be summarized briefly: "How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction."

Francis' words offer the best conclusion. He has written a homily on evangelization that reflects a lifetime of prayer, practice, struggle, failure and success. I have provided both a structure for reading the document and some hint, through Francis' quotes, of what he is addressing. There is so much more there to read, ponder, and pray over.



James Reinke is a longtime friend of the Oblates who lives with his wife Barbara in Duluth, MN.

Trade Agreements Back on the Table in the United States *By: Fr. Seamus P. Finn, OMI*

In recent months regional trade agreements have returned to the Washington agenda. We have just marked the 20th anniversary of NAFTA, and critics and supporters have been publishing avidly. The priority topics include jobs, economic opportunity and growth, winners and losers, impacts on specific industry sectors, environmental impacts and community disruption or enrichment.

The 20th anniversary event thus presents a good opportunity to revisit some of the basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching and considerations that should be taken into account in these agreements. The foundational themes of CST that include human dignity, solidarity, care of creation and option for the poor constitute an important part of this conversation alongside some of the more strategic considerations about the differences between bilateral and regional trade agreements and agreements concluded at the World Trade Organization.

Two recent statements from the Holy See can be added to the resources available for consideration vis-à-vis the specific trade agreements currently under consideration in the US. In his apostolic exhortation of *Evangelii Gaudium* in 2013, Pope Francis offers a clear challenge to those who argue that eventually, all will benefit from greater freedom in trade, less restriction on the movement of capital and the usurpation of certain sovereign prerogatives and rights. In the exhortation we

read; "some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system." (#54)

In the statement offered by Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See at the 9th Session of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in December 2013, the following caution is offered about both bilateral and regional agreements; "The number of such agreements has increased exponentially during the last 15

years. Currently there is a clear tendency to further enlarge these RTAs to form mega-regional trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Certainly, the enlargement of regional trade agreements is a step towards further trade liberalization but we have to bear in mind that these agreements inevitably threaten the desirability to reach an agreement on a truly multilateral basis. In fact, by entering a regional trade agreement a country reduces the incentives to extend its efforts on trade liberalization at a multilateral level. Most importantly, we know that only the multilateral system is a clear, equitable system that provides effective guarantees for small and poor countries that tend to be penalized in a Regional Trade Agreement where it is asymmetric.

Public Citizen reported in 2014 on the impact of NAFTA after 20 years:

"Real wages in Mexico have fallen below pre-NAFTA levels. Despite promises that NAFTA would benefit Mexican consumers by granting access to cheaper imported products, the cost of basic consumer goods in Mexico has risen to seven times the pre-NAFTA level, while the minimum wage stands at only four times the pre-NAFTA level."

"An increase in subsidized U.S. corn exports during NAFTA's first decade destroyed the livelihoods of more than one million Mexican campesino farmers and about 1.4 million additional Mexican workers whose livelihoods depended on agriculture. ... The mass dislocation exacerbated the widespread instability and violence of Mexico's spiraling drug war."

One consequence was a doubling of Mexican immigration to the US.

"Rather than creating the promised 170,000 jobs per year, NAFTA has contributed to an enormous new U.S. trade deficit with Mexico and Canada, which had already equated to an estimated net loss of one million U.S. jobs by 2004."

Among the most damaging concessions developing countries make in regional and bilateral agreements are those enhancing the monopolies on life-saving medicines, which reduce access and affordability and those that provide excessive legal

rights to foreign investors, limiting the policy space for nations to promote sustainable and inclusive development."

These important themes and reflections are a rich resource to be add-

ed to the ongoing debate on trade agreements, alongside the ample data-driven research. There is a great deal at stake in the outcomes of these negotiations for the well-being of all, especially for the poor and for the earth.

JPIC Network News

The Greens of Guadalupe at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church Laredo, Texas are to be applauded for winning "The Green Community Award" by Keep Laredo Beautiful and CW (Laredo's green TV station). Parishioners started the movement in March 2007 after the late Fr. Darrell Rupiper OMI preached a workshop on integrity of creation.

As part of his training period, Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI attended a symposium hosted by American University, Washington College of Law in early April called "Poverty in the New Gilded Age: Inequality in America". Speakers focused on the roots of inequality in the US today, and the reasons for its continued expansion, as the middle class steadily erodes. Changes in government policies, such as deregulation, privatization and public divestment were noted as contributing factors.

Mary O'Herron and George Ngolwe handle proxy voting on behalf of the Missionary Oblates. Before each annual shareholder meeting, owners of stock in a company receive information about the issues to be voted on at the meeting. Proxy voting is another way of expressing solidarity with the poor by adding a voice on critical issues such as executive compensation, financial practices and risk, or the social and environmental impacts of a company that can negatively affect communities.

The Oblate parish of Saint Patrick, in Lowell MA remains active with the Merrimack Valley Project, which has more than 30 member groups, including congregations, local unions, and community-based organizations. The OMI US Province through the JPIC office has been an active supporter of MVP for over twenty years. MVP addresses social challenges faced by the community, and has helped to fight plant closings in the area, worked to develop financial literacy to help people stay in their homes, and has addressed the explosive growth of temporary jobs in the region. For more information visit: www.merrimackvalleyproject.org

Fr. Seamus Finn, OMI was invited to help organize and participate in a face-to-face gathering between mining CEO's and representatives of the church community at the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in Rome in September 2013. This project continues to unfold as new faith leaders and mining company representatives are invited to the table in 2014.

These conversations are intended to initiate a process in which participants can deepen their understanding of the impact of the industry on communities where they operate, and the essential contributions that the industry makes to the industrial and consumer products we all use. It is also meant to be a forum to address more constructively the negative impacts and challenges faced by communities and the industry. Opportunities for visits to mining sites and local communities are being organized, with the hope that new insights will emerge.

Christina Herman spoke at the Ecumenical Advocacy Days Conference last March in Washington, DC. She examined the reasons for expected increases in drug and medical device prices if the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership Trade Agreement (TPP) is adopted by Congress. The JPIC Office dialogs with major pharmaceutical companies on pricing and access to medicines issues, focusing on availability to the poor. Christina has also been engaged in dialogs with multinational food & beverage corporations on their water use and respect for the UN Human Right to Water.

Climate Change Consensus

By: Christina C. Herman

The consensus on climate science is increasingly unequivocal -- global climate change is happening and man-made greenhouse gas emissions are a crucial factor. The implications of climate change for our planet are profound and wide-ranging, with expected impacts on biodiversity, water resources, public health and agriculture.

– The Coca Cola Company



Mega-heat waves in 2010 in Europe and Russia were estimated to have caused up to 50,000 heat-related deaths. This “will become the normal,” according to climate scientist Rosina Bierbaum, a review editor of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, speaking in January at the UN. Food production in key regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia could drop by as much as 50%, she said. Accelerated melting of the Greenland and Antarctica ice sheets will cause sea levels to rise by 1 to 2 feet, putting Miami and Mumbai, India, as well as many other low-lying cities, at enormous risk.

New reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have emphasized that most global warming is man-made and the effects of the greenhouse gases already in the

atmosphere will linger for centuries. The group of top scientists have said that global warming poses a growing threat to the health, economic prospects, and food and water sources of billions of people, and urged swift action to counter the effects of carbon emissions.

The latest report for policymakers issued in March says the effects of warming are being felt everywhere. “Over the coming decades, climate change will have mostly negative impacts,” said Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), citing cities, ecosystems and water supplies as being among the areas at risk. He added, “The poor and vulnerable will be most affected.”

The IPCC reports emphasize the need for quick action to reduce GHG emissions. Droughts, floods, hotter (and colder) weather, along

with rising sea levels, are expected consequences of changing climactic patterns. The recent bitter cold spells in the US were linked to the slowing of the jet stream that travels across the upper United States from west to east. As the jet stream slowed, it became ‘wobbly,’ allowing the cold arctic air to press down into regions much farther south than normally experienced.

Action taken now will save money and reduce the risk of uncontrollable climate changes, a reality increasingly understood by business. “Unless we act dramatically and quickly, science tells us our climate and our way of life are literally in jeopardy,” U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said in a recent statement. “Denial of the science is malpractice. ... There are those who say we can’t afford to act. But waiting is truly unaffordable. The costs of inaction are catastrophic.”

The Oblate JPIC Office engages numerous multinational corporations on issues related to climate change. We talk with large oil and gas companies like Chevron and Exxon Mobil about setting GHG emissions targets. With food and beverage companies like Coca Cola, Campbell’s Soup and General Mills, the discussion revolves around the interplay of climate change and water issues, as well as overall energy reduction and the use of renewables. Issues related to natural gas fracking have become an important focus of dialogs with energy companies, in particular, maintaining the integrity of the local water supply, and minimizing damaging methane emissions. In all of our dialogs, done in coordination with other members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), we work to convey the concerns of affected communities. We are increasingly hearing that expected rains are arriving late, and drought conditions are affecting local food supplies.

The Vatican Urges Action to Prevent Runaway Climate Change



A working group of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, one of the oldest scientific institutes in the world, issued a sobering report in 2011 on the impacts for humankind resulting from climate change. In their declaration, the working group calls, “on all people and nations to recognize the serious and potentially irreversible impacts of global warming caused by the anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, and by changes in forests, wetlands, grasslands, and other land uses.” The report noted that **the cost of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing reforestation, cutting air pollutants and helping poor regions adapt to climate change "pales in comparison to the price the world will pay if we fail to act now."**

The working group recommends three measures to reduce the threat of climate change and its impacts:

1. “Reduce worldwide carbon dioxide emissions without delay, using all means possible to meet ambitious international global warming targets and ensure the long-term stability of the climate system. All nations must focus on a rapid transition to renewable energy sources and other strategies to reduce CO₂ emissions. Nations should also avoid removal of carbon sinks by stopping deforestation, and should strength-

en carbon sinks by reforestation of degraded lands. They also need to develop and deploy technologies that draw down excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. These actions must be accomplished within a few decades.

2. “Reduce the concentrations of warming air pollutants (dark soot, methane, lower atmosphere ozone, and hydrofluorocarbons) by as much as 50%, to slow climate change during this century while preventing millions of premature deaths from respiratory disease and millions of tons of crop damages every year.”

3. “Prepare to adapt to the climatic changes, both chronic and abrupt, that society will be unable to mitigate. In particular, we call for a global capacity building initiative to assess the natural and social impacts of climate change in mountain systems and related watersheds.”

What does this mean for us?

We need to move beyond plastic vs. paper, and focus our energy on installing solar systems for our homes and parish hall roofs, changing our transportation habits (walk, bike, use public transportation when possible), encouraging local food production (join a CSA, develop community gardens), and talking to neighbors, parishioners and anyone who will listen about this most urgent of challenges.



Unilever, the world's third-largest consumer goods company, has taken strong action to reduce its GHG emissions throughout its value chain.

“Climate change is a serious global issue. Extreme weather patterns, water scarcity and their impact on agriculture are affecting people everywhere, with developing countries likely to be among the most vulnerable.”

“[It] has a significant impact on our business. The sourcing of our agricultural raw materials will be affected by changes in weather patterns; our business and our consumers will be affected by increases in energy and food prices and extreme weather events will displace communities.” ... Moving closer to clear and binding global reduction targets helps to provide a level playing field for business and the certainty required to encourage investment in long-term solutions to the climate challenge.”

“We have continued to advocate for ambitious public policy to address climate change and to incentivise the transition to a low carbon economy.”

- Unilever

Words Shape Our Worldview

By: Paulette Zimmerman, SSND

Recently someone mentioned how often – and how unconsciously – gun/violence language is part of our vocabulary: we use bullets to make a list; if we’re correct about something, we’re on target; if we try something, we take a shot at it. Even the Big Bang, originally a dismissive term, suggests a gun shot or explosion, unworthy of our sacred cosmic origin, which is better expressed as the Great Radiance or First Flaring Forth.

Language both shapes and reveals attitudes. In the present ecological crisis, we need to be especially aware of our “Earth language.” Our home planet is usually referred to as the earth (no capital letter) even though we never say the Venus or the Mars. Earth deserves the same respect.

We also refer to natural resources as if abundant ecosystems and beautiful life-forms, having evolved through millions of years, were merely for human use, as if a forest were only timber, instead of an interconnected web of life. Such utilitarian language reinforces the notion of a hierarchy with humans at the top and also the degrading depiction of humans as mere consumers. It seems we stopped being citizens and never named our true identity: planetary and cosmic beings, a unique species among the other members of the Earth community, with the task of creating, healing, celebrating, and loving. In *A New Climate for Theology*, theologian Sallie McFague asserts, “Our task is to

awaken to and acknowledge who we are: we are reflections of the divine, as is all creation.” In short, we are not consumers and everything else resources.

A phrase of questionable value is global warming, which may sound pleasant on cold days in northern regions; on the other hand, the scientific and neutral climate change lacks feeling and the suggestion of the extreme and destructive weather events caused by it. Climate crisis may be off-putting but not overstated.

A misleading term is the environment, as if all but human beings are part of the scenery, a mere backdrop with which we have no connection. It might be helpful to talk about protecting the planet, respecting all life-forms, and preserving intact ecosystems. Miriam Therese MacGillis says that we are not to be environmentalists, but ecologists, those who listen to the voices of our oikos, the household of Earth, and also speak on her behalf.

Miriam also cautions against the word creation because it’s an abstraction. We are challenged to think and speak in the concrete about other life-forms, bioregions, ecosystems, rivers, trees, plants, mammals, marine life, and birds. Only then are we likely to translate “respecting all creation” into specific actions.

The current trend often includes putting a monetary value on other-than-human Nature to justify protective measures. If money

is our primary value, we need to show how much Nature helps the economy; indeed, bees, butterflies, and other pollinators do provide millions of dollars in services; rivers clean impurities; oceans yield seemingly endless bounty; trees and deep-rooted plant systems prevent soil erosion. The terminology includes ecosystem services and a green economy with little understanding that the human economy is a subset of Earth’s economy; that is, humans must fit into Earth’s way of “managing the household.”

Recently Audubon magazine had a special *Why Birds Matter* issue. Authors offered various reasons, but the essay “Beyond Measure” captured the essential message about the value of birds: “Their intrinsic worth is incalculable – they matter because they matter. Every [single] one of them.” This makes creation concrete and applies to every individual of every species.

A gift of our Christian tradition is a language of sacredness: we speak of sacrament as a sign of inner grace and the presence of the divine. A manifestation of Ultimate Mystery, fragile and beloved Earth – and every being within the web of life – is sacred just because it is.

Sister Paulette Zimmerman, SSND is a coordinator of the Shalom/Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation network of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. We are grateful for permission to use her article, which appeared in La Vista Visions, a publication of the Oblate Ecological Initiative.