

# JPIC REPORT



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

"A healthy soul must do two things for us. First, it must put some fire in our veins, keep us energized, vibrant, living with zest and full of hope as we sense that life is, ultimately beautiful and worth living ... Second, a healthy soul has to keep us fixed together. It has to continually give us a sense of who we are, where we came from, where we are going, and what sense there is in all of this." *Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, President, Oblate School of Theology*

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## From the Director: Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI

### Meeting Christ on the Way

During a recent Sunday liturgy we reflected upon that passage of the Gospel of Saint Luke, which says that Jesus with his disciples and a large crowd was heading to a town called Nain. On his way, he encounters a large crowd of people accompanying a mother on her way to bury her only son. Some commentators suggest that with this text, among other things, Saint Luke wants to highlight how important it was for Jesus to be close to people and show compassion, especially to those experiencing difficult situations in their lives, in this case a widow who lost her only son (Luke 7: 11-17).

Jesus stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" Lk 7:14-15

Luke tells us that Jesus, feeling the woman's pain, approaches the coffin and touches it. He then approaches and comforts the mother. "Do not weep," he tells her. Moreover, without being asked he restores her son to life and returns him to her. Those present, in awe and fear, exclaimed that this "was the work of a great prophet and a sign that God himself was visiting His people."

Jesus teaches about God's love and mercy for everyone, especially those who suffer, not only by talking about it but by showing it. "This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus's entire life (...). He works these signs, especially in favor of

sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering. They are meant to teach mercy. Everything in him (Jesus) speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion," Pope Francis reminds us in *Misericordiae Vultus* #8.

Reflecting on this passage in Luke's Gospel what strikes me the most is how Jesus reacts to a dire situation: he stops and contemplates what is happening, touches the coffin and brings the boy back to life. He then takes him back to his mother and comforts her. This tells us how deeply Jesus gets involved with the widow's situation.

### Examples to Follow

Jesus' response to the woman's suffering and his compassion serves as an example and invitation for how we should relate and treat one another, especially those experiencing difficult times. Our society today seems slanted towards individualism and indifference. We are constantly bombarded with stories of violence, racism, hatred and suffering. The temptation then becomes great to accept these as a normal part of life so we become passive. The need to continue working for a more just and compassionate society is great and urgent. Jesus is, of course, our most tangible role model and inspiration. Right in our communities there are also inspiring examples of compassion and dedication. Each time I visit parishes,

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The OMI Justice, 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.

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## News & Happenings...

### Bro. Lester Antonio Zapata, OMI, 2016 JPIC Intern



Bro. Antonio was born in Leon, Nicaragua in 1985. He obtained his primary and secondary education at a Catholic school run by the Lasallian Brothers, where he was very active in youth ministry. Bro. Antonio moved to California in 2006, learned English and earned an Associate Degree in Computer Science from Los Angeles Mission College. He then joined the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 2010. He went on to Tijuana, Mexico to study philosophy and upon completion was sent to Godfrey, Illinois to do his novitiate. He professed his first vows in 2015 and is studying at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He is spending this summer with the JPIC office in Washington, DC learning about justice and peace

### Deaglan McKillop, 2016 JPIC Intern



Deaglan hails from Liverpool, England and recently interned at JPIC for two weeks. He is a law student at the University of Liverpool. Before attending university Deaglan took a year off to do some volunteer work. He spent two months in South Africa working at Little Eden, a community offering care to adults and children with disabilities. In 2015 Deaglan interned at the Pontifical Mission Societies in New York under Fr. Andrew Small, OMI. For this summer 2016 he interned both at Oblate JPIC in Washington, DC and again at Pontifical Mission Societies in New York.



Three Oblate JPIC Interns (left-to-right) Sr. Nathanael from Korea, Mr. Deaglan from the UK and Bro. Antonio from San Antonio, TX, attending the Rural America Summit on June 29 on Capitol Hill.

## The Oblate Mission in the Private Sector

By: Fr. Seamus Finn, OMI

Oblates and many other faith-based congregations and institutions have made, as a pillar of their missionary vision and commitment, engagement with corporations and institutions. As they have recognized the power and influence that corporations exercise in society they have chosen to take seriously their responsibility to be active owners of their financial assets wherever they are invested. This priority has been advanced in a variety of ways over the last fifty years, but most especially through engaging those responsible for directing and managing the thousands of corporations that have been established.

**BANKS:** At a roundtable on sustainable banking that was held at the Whitley Theological Center at Oblate School of Theology in early April, the CEO of New Resources Bank, Vincent Sicilian asked the other participants if they knew where their money sleeps. The question caught me off guard, but upon reflection I realized that it provides a practical pathway into one of the pressing financial questions that conscientious depositors, investors and customers face when considering the reputation of the banks they do business with.



In reality, like the 2010 movie *Wall St 2*, also known as “Money Never Sleeps” suggests, we all realize that our money, whether deposited in banks or invested in corporations, never sleeps in the 21st century financial system. From the very moment that it is deposited or invested, we know that it is put to work in various transactions and endeavors and that if it sleeps for any length of time longer than a quick nap, it is not benefitting the institution that holds it or the projects that might benefit from its deployment. Monitoring the journey of our money while it rests in other hands can make a real difference in terms of how it is deployed to build sustainable communities and facilitate access to credit for those who need it in many different communities.

**OTHER ENGAGEMENTS:** The engagement with banks

and other companies in the financial services sector by faith-based members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) continues. The group of shareholders participated in projects, discussions and meetings with a number of large U.S. banks and joined with our Canadian colleagues as they worked to address executive compensation in major Canadian banks.

Ethics and culture framed our discussions with major U.S. banks as we pressed them to continue to reflect and analyze the roots and impacts of the near collapse of the financial system in 2007, and to share with investors how and what their institution learned from the near catastrophe. We also invited them to identify the specific changes in their culture, behavior and awareness that have resulted from this reflection process.

The highlight of previous years was the distribution and discussion of a report entitled “How we do Business – The Report” by JPMorgan Chase, which included chapters on their corporate culture, control environment, relationship with regulators and stakeholders and commitment to customers. At the end of March, Bank of America published their report, which was entitled “How we live our purpose,” where they reflected on their decisions made during the Global Financial Crisis of 2007/08, reported on changes that have been adopted to correct some of the gaps in existing policy, and supervision that may have contributed to the crisis. They also detailed the new initiatives that have been undertaken to improve the ethics and culture of the institution.

Discussions of a similar nature are being conducted with Wells Fargo and Citibank. Citibank invested considerable time and resources in a consultation with two renowned ethicists and are in the midst of developing an educational and training program for their employees and representatives. We continue also to collaborate with colleagues working on Canadian banks and with a broad coalition that is focused on UK banks.

**COCOA IN WEST AFRICA:** A globally coordinated initiative was expanded in 2015 to address the issues of sustainable farming, child labor and improving the livelihoods of cocoa farmers in the cocoa industry, especially in West Africa. The countries involved were Ghana, Liberia, Cote D’Ivoire and Nigeria.



## From the Director *(continued from p. 1)*

schools, retreat houses, mission centers or meet with leaders of organizations, I witness first-hand all the great ministry and work they do to bring about a more just and compassionate society. Some do this by developing and implementing remarkable projects, others by performing simple but concrete actions. Many examples come to mind but I would like to share one in particular.

### Serving and Loving God's People

At an Oblate parish I recently visited, volunteers take turns every night bringing food and supplies to homeless men and women living on the streets. During my visit, I had the opportunity to meet some of these volunteers and accompany them for a few nights. Many had been doing this ministry for several years. I also got to know some of the homeless people. This is how I met eight-year old Juan, a volunteer, and Michelle, a homeless person. Like other nights, our group of about 10 people, Juan and his parents included, headed to the streets to meet and feed the homeless. As we walked along the sidewalks of the already dark downtown, we greeted and distributed food and other "goodies" to people already waiting for us. While some distributed sandwiches, bottled water and cookies, others chatted and prayed with them. At the end of our visit we stopped by a bench where Michelle, a relatively young, tall

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, naked and clothed me  
Mt 25

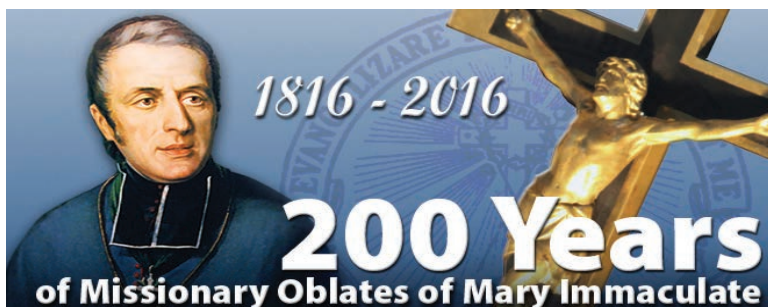
African-American woman was sitting. Like the others, she welcomed us with a friendly smile. After exchanging greetings, we offered her some food. She accepted by nodding her head. A member of the group prayed with her for a few moments. For his part, Juan, who had been quiet up to this point, spontaneously and very fraternally held out his arms to Michelle and gave her a big hug. Only a few words

and a friendly smile were exchanged between them. But the reaction this generated in Michelle was very heartwarming: her face lit up and her eyes sparkled. I would say that Juan's simple but sincere gesture was perhaps the best gift Michelle received that night. I would add that this was a very practical way for Juan to show what it means to be compassionate and merciful.

Saint Luke in 7: 11-17 continues to remind us of the importance of showing compassion towards people we encounter along the way who are wounded and in need of comforting. Certainly, the example of volunteers like Juan who dedicate their time to meet, talk and help others can inspire us to be equally concerned about other people's needs. In this Holy Year of Mercy, Pope Francis especially invites us to open ourselves to others with a compassionate heart when he says: "Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism! MV#15.



Compiled from JPIC Climate Change Resource 2016



## Standing Together for U.S. Immigration Reform

By: George K. Ngolwe

The Missionary Oblates JPIC Office, in coalition with diverse faith organizations in the United States, continues to speak to the moral dimensions of U.S. immigration policy and recommend reforms that uphold the dignity and rights of each person. A high priority for us is mobilizing and engaging more people of faith, including Oblates to help build support for immigration reform policies and promote a culture of welcome toward immigrants.

Very alarming to faith and human rights organizations is the increase in U.S. federal spending for immigration enforcement-only programs. The federal budget for border militarization has seen a massive increase. Internal immigration enforcement spending has skyrocketed at the expense of taxpayers. These enforcement programs create fear of deportation and detention among immigrant families and in communities.

For the next Congress and the new U.S. President, there is a better alternative to immigration enforcement. Oblates JPIC and many faith groups believe in programs that support the dignity of immigrants. Moving forward to 2017, the U.S. Congress and the next White House Administration should:

- Find savings by ceasing cooperation with the enforcement of state anti-immigrant laws that encourage racial targeting and force an anti-immigrant lens on local police.
- Increase funds for the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties specifically to empower the office to proactively protect undocumented immigrants against labor violations and other perpetrators seeking to exploit them.
- Revamp trade policies to address poverty as one of the causes of migration, including poverty reduction and job-creation projects that target migrant-sending countries, especially in rural zones, where poverty is concentrated.
- Provide robust funding for programs that prevent human trafficking incidents, educate communities, and serve survivors of trafficking and torture.
- Increase funding for community-based alternatives to detention programs that are both more humane and fiscally responsible.

- Protect two pending legislations: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) and allow a vote on Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

### Delayed Justice for Millions of Immigrants

On June 23 the Missionary Oblates Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office (JPIC) expressed deep disappointment in the split decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of United States v. Texas that blocked temporary relief for immigrant families by halting the expansion of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and implementation of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA). The original DACA program is unaffected by the Supreme Court ruling.

*"It is very sad indeed to see that this process is caught up in partisan politics and what continued inaction will mean for immigrant families," said U.S. Missionary Oblates Provincial Fr. Bill Antone, OMI.*

The Supreme Court in a 4-4 tie blocked President Obama's immigration plan for "deferred action for parents of Americans," which would have deferred deportation and provided work permits for the millions of undocumented parents of children who are U.S. citizens. This means the decision by a lower court upholding the preliminary injunction against these immigration relief measures will stand.

*"It is very sad indeed to see that this process is caught up in partisan politics and what continued inaction will mean for immigrant families," said U.S. Missionary Oblates Provincial Fr. Bill Antone, OMI.*

*"These decisions open the door to serious injustices in which talented young immigrants who have grown up in the U.S. and their precious parents and families are torn apart by deportation simply to satisfy short-sighted political interests," Fr. Bill added.*

*Feedback from 2016 JPIC Winter Report Reader:*

*"Thank you for sharing this excellent publication."*

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## Canada: OMI Lacombe's Fall Symposiums Inspired by Laudato Si'

By: Bro. Leonardo Rigo, OMI

The Congregation of the Oblates of Mary the Immaculate (OMI) Lacombe Canada Justice, Peace and Integrity for Creation (JPIC) Office is at the heart of the Oblate Charism - one heart, one spirit, one mission. The JPIC Office works together with church and civil society in a spirit of mutual support, trust and encouragement to bring about a life-giving society underpinned by values of fairness, compassion, respect and justice. In such a society, infused by the joy of the gospel, we shall indeed see the face of God.

This year, the work of JPIC OMI Lacombe Canada is shaped by Pope Francis' encyclical letter Laudato Si', which is an inspiration and instrument for all humankind. We, as people of justice and mercy, must proclaim this document to all of our allies and the people that we work with. Laudato Si' is a document that each one of us, working on justice issues, need to share and utilize to dialogue with those who turn a blind eye to corporate interests and greed.

To further discussion on Laudato Si', JPIC OMI Lacombe is very excited about their four upcoming symposiums this fall across the Lacombe Province, facilitated in partnership with Saint Paul University and the Oblate Districts. These symposiums will explore how Laudato Si' interconnects with JPIC OMI Lacombe Canada's three focal areas of work: justice for Aboriginal people; Canadian mining and extractive industries; and ecological justice, care for creation and climate change.

### OMI Lacombe Canada 2016 Fall Workshops:

*"Bringing into dialogue Native ways of Life and the teachings of Pope Francis about our Common Home: the Mother Earth/Creation"* aims to explore how Laudato Si' can guide us in our journey towards reconciliation with creation and Aboriginal people in Canada. Speakers and panelists will share about their experience of Oblate life, the teachings of Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si' and its connection with Indigenous Spirituality, and challenges to Aboriginal identity (including: addictions, suicide, incarceration, missing and murdered Indigenous men and women). This symposium will also include smudging, Indigenous teachings water, Aboriginal drummers and a sun dance.

**Date: Saturday, September 24, 2016**

Where: Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Aboriginal Catholic Parish, 548 Home Street, Winnipeg, MB

*"Care for Our Common Home as Long as the Rivers Flow"* will demonstrate and explore how all people who live in Canada are "Treaty People", that is, we are all affected by treaties, by the border lines of our land and the rivers that flow within these regions. The speakers will explore Indigenous teachings on land and water in the context of Laudato Si'. Participants will work towards understanding what actions can be taken by individuals and communities, in response to the ecological issues raised.

**Date: Saturday, October 22nd, 2016**

Where: Cathedral of the Holy Family, 123 Nelson Road, Saskatoon, SK



(Left to Right): Ben Chalmers, VP of Mining Association of Canada; Bro. Leonardo Rego OMI, Director of JPIC OMI Lacombe Canada and Oblate in Residence at St Paul University; Joy Kennedy, Consultant for the Council of Churches; Fr. Séamus Finn, Chair of Interfaith Centre on Corporate Social Responsibility at the November 2015 Symposium "Mining We Need to Talk" at Saint Paul University

*"Ecology, the Current Economy and Laudato Si'"* intends to investigate the challenges and tensions between our economic policies and our social responsibility to care for our common home. The speakers and panelists will share about their experiences in working with government, academics, not-for-profit organizations and Indigenous groups to move forward in our understanding of where we are at, and how do we respond.

**Date: Saturday, October 29th, 2016**

Where: St. Albert Parish Hall, 7 St. Vital Avenue, St. Albert, AB



## OMI Lacombe Workshops

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Mining in developing countries, and Canada's involvement and support of the mining industry remains an ongoing issue for Canadians. As a follow-up to their 2015 symposium, JPIC OMI Lacombe Canada will host:

*"Mining: We Must Continue to Talk" which will delve deeper into how the mining industry is shaping the future of our planet.* Speakers will uncover how Laudato Si' could inform and shape our policies on mining extraction by incorporating the spirit of the common good. Participants will be encouraged to synthesize their learnings from the day, and formulate concrete actions of response to the challenges presented.

**Date: Friday, November 18th, 2016**

Where: Saint Paul University, 223 Main Street, Ottawa, Ontario

In our Call for Justice, we are also reaching out beyond our borders, facilitating two workshops in collaboration with the Canadian Religious Conference at the World Forum on Theology of Liberation in the Context of the World Social Forum in Montreal, QC, August 8-11, 2016. Our first workshop, *"Theology of Liberation a Gift to the World"* will explore how Basic Christian Communities, popular movements, religious orders and ecumenical communities have adopted and practiced the Theology of Liberation in innovative ways as part of their daily living and in their work to empower the poor. Our second workshop, *"Theology and Liberation Sharing experiences of empowering the poor in Canada and beyond the borders"*, will explore how the Oblates of Mary the Immaculate have been involved in empowering the poor throughout the world for the past 200 years.

We are in a year of justice and mercy. The work of JPIC OMI Lacombe Canada is for all those that believe and assume the challenges of the joys of the gospel.

## Springtime Education and Celebration at La Vista

By: Sr. Maxine Pohlman, SSND

Springtime is always a productive season for ministries involved with care for our common home. Earth just seems to cry out for attention as people, animals and flowers emerge from winter hibernation. At La Vista Ecological Learning Center in Godfrey, Illinois, it has been a particularly eventful time providing ways to educate and celebrate.

Our Spring Equinox Celebration centered on our evolving Pollinator Garden. Participants made seed "tombs", enclosing native plant seeds in clay and tossing them into the garden where the spring rains will decompose the clay, depositing the seeds in the waiting soil. They also made some to take with them, so they could plant natives easily at home or in their neighborhoods. Jack Lau, OMI, demonstrated how to make "butterfly puddles" which will provide minerals butterflies need in addition to nectar. He created shallow troughs and filled them with sand. Compost and water will be added in time. Our Garden will be a full-service stopover for pollinators!



Harvesting greens at La Vista

The Missionary Oblates Woods Nature Preserve, a sixteen acre area on the Novitiate land, is an awesome place to absorb the essence of springtime. Since invasive honeysuckle was removed last year, many lovely native wildflowers were able to grow, delighting participants during our Wildflower Walk in April. After we enjoyed the Preserve we spent time maintaining the area by pulling newly sprouting honeysuckle. In the spirit of Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si' this was a good opportunity to experience "intimacy" with the natural world as well as to take

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## FEATURED PARTNER: Corporate Intrusions on Africa's Land and Crops

By: Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP, Executive Director, Africa Faith & Justice Network

In recent months, the Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN) has mobilized many organizations to join forces and address a great challenge facing African communities: the threat of takeover of their land, seeds and water sources. Corporations with deep pockets are grabbing large chunks of land across Africa for pennies, displacing local communities, genetically modifying and taking ownership of communally owned seeds, and using up and polluting the water supply. Some communities face the danger of losing their crop diversity and ecological system to single genetically modified (GMO) plants from these corporations.



A cross section of participants at the conference (Photo: AFJN)

AFJN has also found that some African community leaders, without fully understanding the implications of these corporate deals, are embracing these quick fixes as the best, if not only solution to solving their community's food demands, not realizing these quick fixes pose a great danger to the economy and crop diversity, and stifle local development initiatives.

### The Nigerian Biosafety Act of April 2015

From May 23-26, 2016 participants from around Nigeria, neighboring Burkina Faso and from diverse religious communities, academia, civil society and faith-based organizations gathered in Nigeria's capital Abuja to discuss the issue of just governance with a focus on the 2015 Nigerian Biosafety Act. The meeting also focused on genetically modified plants and implications for

Nigeria and Africa's economy, ecological system and our common home, the earth.

Legal experts at the conference indicated that the process surrounding the development and signing of the Biosafety Act was shrouded in secrecy; that it was influenced by multinational corporations and signed into law in April 2015 by former Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan just weeks before his departure from office. The Biosafety Act, which gives Monsanto sweeping concessions over some of Nigeria's crops, is seen as a corporate takeover of the staple foods of local communities, basically selling out the basis of the community's livelihood, and giving a multinational corporation monopoly over people's God given fundamental right to seed.

### A Large Presence of Women Religious

Present at the gathering in Abuja were thirty-six priests who serve as justice and peace coordinators, heads of farm units and an impressive number of women religious totaling sixty-two and representing thirty congregations.

Their presence prompted Nigeria's Minister of State for the Environment, Ibrahim Usman Jibril to remark during his keynote address that it was the first time in his long career as a civil servant to see "so many women of God" participating in a gathering addressing issues with strong social and political overtones.



A cross section of women religious at the conference (Photo: AFJN)

### Just Governance vs Foreign Aid Impact

What also became clear to meeting participants was



## Corporate Intrusions *(continued from p. 8)* OMI JPIC 2016 Sign-on Letters



Nigeria's Minister of State for the Environment (seated) with the Director General of the National Biosafety Management Agency (Photo: AFJN)

that there is a fundamental problem besetting African countries. It is the problem of governance, manifested in the signing of Nigeria's Biosafety Act. Those entrusted with leadership regularly fail to work for the common good and welfare of their citizens. Rather than invest in the necessary infrastructure that supports local initiatives and ensure equitable distribution of state resources, many African leaders eagerly import and embrace ready-made solutions from abroad. They then impose these on their communities. The result is a systematic strangling and destruction of local development initiatives and the economy. This creates a dependent mentality within the community making them believe that salvation always lies abroad.

The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) has been an Oblate partner for over 23 years. AFJN works closely with Catholic missionary congregations and numerous Africa-focused coalitions to advocate for U.S. economic and political policies that will benefit Africa's poor majority, facilitate an end to armed conflict, establish equitable trade and investment with Africa and promote sustainable development.

*Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP, is a member of the Order of Preachers; Dominican Province of St. Joseph the Worker (Nigeria-Ghana) and Executive Director of the Africa Faith & Justice Network.*

As part of our advocacy efforts, the JPIC office periodically joins in solidarity with other organizations to promote social justice efforts in the political and corporate arenas. Sign-on letters we have supported so far in 2016 include:

### January

*Keep Places of Worship Free of Immigrant Raids*  
JPIC added its voice to a call from faith-based groups to the Obama Administration for an end to immigration raids and assurance that these raids not occur at sensitive locations, including places of worship.

### February

#### *Federal Budget Priorities*

Letter to Congress addressing the need for investment in repairing or replacing dilapidated schools serving Native American children along with a proposal to reallocate redundant and wasteful spending in the Pentagon budget for this purpose.

### March

#### *Obama Cuba Trip*

Letter to President Obama from faith leaders expressing support for his trip to Cuba and urging him to include Cuban faith leaders in his activities to promote religious freedom in Cuba.

### April

#### *Corporate Transparency Bill*

Letter to Congress in support of a bill being introduced that would take aim at a lack of corporate transparency in the US.

#### *Rana Plaza Anniversary*

A group of 139 ICCR members with over \$3 trillion assets under management issued a statement calling on companies sourcing in the Bangladesh garment sector to address the persistent systemic issues which continue to put workers at risk and to pose material, financial, and reputational risk to companies and their investors.

### May

#### *End Shell Company Secrecy*

OIP Investment Trust joined 22 investors managing over \$505 in assets signing on to a letter calling on Congress to end Shell Company secrecy.

#### *Religious Working Group on Extractives Industries*

Letter to Secretary of State Kerry expressing concern over the murders of activists Berta Caceres and Nelson Garcia in Honduras and urging the State Department to discuss how to best use its influence in Honduras and other countries around the world that are violating faith-based principles on extractives industries.

## Zambia: JPIC Conversation with Zambia Oblate Delegation Superior

By: Rev. Fr. Freeborn Kibombwe, OMI

**O**n a recent trip to Washington, D.C., Oblate Zambia Delegation Superior, Fr. Freeborn Kibombwe, OMI spoke with OMI JPIC about their recent activities. OMI Zambia has existed in Zambia for nearly 30 years and today works in three missions: Kalabo. Lukulu in Mongu Diocese, Shangombo/Livingstone Diocese, and Mary Immaculate parish in Lusaka. The OMI Zambia Delegation's main apostolate is missionary work and the reason the Oblates came to Zambia in the early 1980s.



Oblate Delegation Superior Rev. Fr. Freeborn Kibombwe, OMI

Contributing to the work of OMI Zambia early on was the late Bishop Paul Francis Duffy, OMI, first Bishop of Mongu, Zambia who in the words of Fr. Freeborn was a 'game-changer'. Bishop Duffy was one of four Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate who traveled to Zambia and settled in Lukulu and Lusaka. He was a very beloved patriarch and a strong voice for the poor; he passed away in 2011.

Fr. Terence Kasonde Chota, OMI, is currently heading the Justice and Peace work, said Fr. Freeborn. The goal is to have someone in that position full time. Fr. Terrence is being relocated to Zambia's capital Lusaka for that purpose.

OMI Zambia organized some major events in the past year, Fr. Freeborn said. In May 2015 their diocese partnered on a Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation conference: *The Role of a Prophetic Voice of Consecrated Life in Zambia and the Region*. Religious from both Anglophone and Francophone Africa attended, including the countries of Lesotho, Namibia and Cameroun. Also present was Fr. Kennedy Katongo, OMI, Director of the Missionary Oblates' global Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office in Rome, for what Fr. Freeborn described as a 'wonderfully done' event. The program's highlight was a tour of the Energy Regulation Board (ERB), one of the country's most technologically and environmentally user-friendly buildings, which depends on solar for power, lighting and even geysers. The group also toured Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) where Fr. Freeborn said they were shown aerial photos of Zambia from 20 years ago. Compared to present-day photos, these images reveal an alarming transformation of the Zambian landscape

since independence. At the conference's conclusion four Oblates were selected to oversee a committee and follow up on the strong recommendations put forward.

In June 2015 Oblate Radio Liseli in Mongu, Zambia marked 10 years in its mission of Spreading the Light of Christ in the Western Province of Zambia, Mongu Diocese. One way the radio station carries out its mission is through educational programs facilitated by young people from surrounding communities and schools. Radio Liseli reaches thousands of listeners in Mongu, the capital city of the Western Province, and plans to expand to even more distant villages. On marking the station's anniversary Fr. Freeborn noted that, "Given the lack of infrastructure and the distances in the Western Province, Radio Liseli has been able to be a wonderful bridge of communication for thousands of listeners beginning in Mongu and striving to reach the most distant villages."

Fr. Freeborn also mentioned a recent article he wrote on how the country's media agencies, including Catholic media can facilitate discussions about the environment. He cited a few ways, like encouraging people to report on uncollected garbage and educating residents on health issues that can arise from having garbage dumps in close proximity to living areas. He said the media are 'mouthpieces' that can either build or destroy justice, peace and integrity of creation. He referenced the powerful example of the Rwandan Genocide in 1984, when the media was accused of inciting the Hutu ethnic group to commit violence against the Tutsis, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Rwandans.

Looking to the future, Fr. Freeborn said the OMI Zambia JPIC office plans to organize two conferences for high school and university/college students. The aim is to build awareness within this generation, to get them to understand and support practical issues that directly affect their community, for example sanitation issues like garbage collection and littering.

A key area OMI Zambia gives strong attention to is the country's mining sector. They try to serve as a political watchdog and be a voice for voiceless residents affected by mining activities, said Fr. Freeborn. The country is a major producer of minerals such as copper and cobalt.

Also in OMI Zambia's future plans, he said, are paralegal trainings for Oblates that will allow them to officially stand in courts and discuss a case. In Zambia trained paralegals can offer legal advice and give assistance with court cases.

## Immigration *(continued from p. 5)*



*Photo courtesy of Bro. Lester Antonio Zapata, OMI*

We join with other faith communities, religious leaders and immigrant rights groups in expressing this disappointment. Several faith based organizations joined in filing an amicus brief with the Supreme Court in support of temporary relief and deferred action for millions of undocumented families.

### Background on DACA and DAPA

In November 2014 President Obama issued an executive order on immigration relief programs for millions of immigrants. Some of the key provisions of the directive were the expansion of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and introduction on Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA). In the short time it was implemented, DACA has helped millions of undocumented youth succeed in accessing better education and career opportunities.

These two initiatives, DAPA and DACA, would defer the deportations of millions of undocumented immigrants living in the United States. If fully implemented, these immigration orders would protect and keep families together especially undocumented immigrants with close family ties to U.S. citizens/residents who do not pose a safety or security threat. In the long run, only the U.S. Congress can pass laws to reform the current immigration system and resolve the situation of undocumented status for millions of immigrants in the United States.

*George Kombe Ngolwe is Associate Director of the OMI JPIC office in Washington, D.C.*

## Springtime @ LaVista *(continued from p. 7)*



a concrete action to care for our Common Home.

La Vista's booth at the annual Alton/Godfrey Earth Day Festival was staffed by volunteers for whom recycling is a way of life. Our educational activity involved testing participants' knowledge of how long it takes certain items to decompose in a landfill by placing them on a "timeline" which went from 2 months (newspaper) to forever (Styrofoam). Passersby stopped to test their recycling intelligence, and everyone walked away with a deeper appreciation of the importance of keeping waste out of landfills whenever possible.

We were pleased that some members of the JPIC committee who happened to be in town for a meeting visited our booth.

If you have been enticed by our activities and inspired by *Laudato Si'* and would like to become more "Earth literate", please join us for our "Exploring the Sacred Universe Earth Literacy Program" from **October 19 – 23, 2016**. The priests and novices will be participants and we would enjoy having others become part of our learning community. For more information, visit [www.lavistaelc.org](http://www.lavistaelc.org) or give us a call at 619-466-5004.

*In our effort to support the environment we now have an electronic version of the JPIC Report. To change how you receive the newsletter or to update your address or subscription preferences, please contact*

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## Bangladesh: Fr. Joseph Gomes, OMI, and Mr. Sanjeeb Drong, General-Secretary of the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum Visit OMI JPIC

Sanjeeb started the conversation by stating the reason for their U.S. visit. It was to attend the 15th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held in New York City in mid May. They also scheduled a visit to Washington, D.C. to brief officials at the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Agriculture on the state of indigenous rights in Bangladesh.

At the U.S. State Department the delegation established renewed contact with the Bangladesh Desk Officer and briefed staff on the state of indigenous peoples rights. At the U.S. Department of Agriculture they discussed the importance of agriculture to indigenous communities and capacity building.

### Collaboration with Oblates

Sanjeeb has for many years worked closely with the Oblate JPIC office in Bangladesh, where Fr. Joseph Gomes, OMI, is the current JPIC Director. Missionary Oblates arrived in Bangladesh in 1971 to establish missions that serve poor people. Oblates are working in three districts in the northeastern part of the country, called Greater Sylhet, involved with four parishes providing pastoral care, education, health and social justice to local indigenous people.

Overall indigenous people in Bangladesh do not feel secure, said Sanjeeb. Numbering about 3 million today, they are 2% of the population and very diverse. Within these communities are 54 different traditions, many languages and distinct cultures. Ninety percent of Bangladeshis are Muslim, roughly 10% are Hindu and less than 1% are Christians. Many indigenous people are Christians. Although historically the victims of oppression and discrimination, Bangladesh does not officially recognize indigenous rights or bestow special protection on them, refusing to even categorize them as 'indigenous.' They are instead called 'tribes,' 'minor races' or 'ethnic sects,' said Sanjeeb.

A key issue faced by indigenous people in Bangladesh today is land grabbing. Anecdotal information shows that indigenous people have lost up to 90% of their ancestral lands. In some places whole villages have

changed ownership. Indigenous lands are snatched up for ecotourism, tea production, in one case to establish a military base, and in other cases to relocate non-indigenous populations, including Muslims. Tensions between Muslims and indigenous communities are very high in some areas as the government relocates more and more Muslims on former indigenous lands. Sanjeeb



(From left to right): Mr. Sanjeeb Drong, Rowena Gono, Oblate JPIC, Fr. Joseph Gomes, OMI, Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI, Oblate JPIC

explained that to indigenous people's disadvantage, the government only recognizes proof of land ownership and up to date payment on taxes. Because some indigenous families have lived on their land for generations, many younger generation indigenous people cannot provide the required documents.



(From left to right): Fr. Joseph Gomes, OMI, and Mr. Sanjeeb Drong with Basilica of the National Shrine in background

*(continued on p. 14)*

## United Nations: Report from Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

By: Sr. Nathanael Lee, LSHF

A major part of my two-year internship with the Justice and Peace ministry at Missionary Oblates - US Province is understanding the workings of the United Nations. For my local congregation back in Seoul, Korea, the UN is considered beyond our scope of work. It is a distant institution and far away from our daily apostolate life. I can hear colleagues from my Order, Little Servants of the Holy Family saying, "Why in the world would a Catholic Sister need to go to the United Nations?" Needless to say, my colleagues are always ready to serve the poor and keen on caring for those most abandoned right in our neighborhood. We as an Order have no problem with a 'so-called' grassroots level approach to human problems.



Sr. Nathanael Lee in UN General Assembly Hall

Before this recent visit to the United Nations, my knowledge of indigenous people was confined to images from the 1986 British film 'Mission' and 1990 American film 'Dances with Wolves'. From my perspective they both present a stereotypical view of indigenous people. South Korea ethnically is a pretty homogenous society, so I have very little knowledge of indigenous issues. It may be surprising to some people to know that this was the first time I heard about "rights" for Indigenous people. I was not only ignorant as a global citizen, but I also had a narrow perception of the concept of minority. So recently participating in the UN Indigenous Forum simultaneously exposed me to two new things: the UN system and the issue of indigenous rights.

The 15th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues took place in New York City from May 9-20, 2016. I was amazed to see a large number of indigenous people proudly wearing their traditional attire in the General Assembly hall and raising their voice. Their stories were equally fascinating and agonizing - homicide, massacres, evacuation, and displacement, etc. These were stories I never hear about through the mainstream media. I wondered "why", considering a resolution on the rights of indigenous peoples was declared and adopted by the UN in 2007. For me, the UN was the perfect place to begin absorbing this totally new subject matter. I was learning by listening to real indigenous people in their own voices, reading through official conference documents, and participating in side-events.

Here in Washington, D.C., through the Oblate JPIC office, I have learned how to approach global and national issues that begin at the grassroots level. The link from grassroots to national then international promotes a "no one left behind" strategy. It is like the Good Shepherd who goes after one-lost sheep until he finds it among the hundred. (Cf. Luke 15:4) In my case, 'a woman religious from a small local congregation goes to the United Nations' sounds unrealistic somehow at the beginning. Having said that, I am confident now about persuading my Little Servants of the Holy Family Sisters on just how appropriate it is for us to engage with the UN, on behalf of voiceless people in desperate need. It was a tremendous privilege to participate in the 15th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. I am grateful to VIVAT International, an accredited member of the UN, for bringing me as part of their delegation. I appreciate all people who strive and search for one lost sheep until they find it.

*Sister Nathanael Lee, LSHF is Oblate JPIC's 2015 – 2017 Intern / Fellow. She is from South Korea and a member of the Little Servants of the Holy Family.*

*Feedback from 2016 JPIC Winter Report Reader:*

"This recent edition was the best I've seen - and read thru cover to cover. It was most interesting and informative.

Congrats!"



## Bangladesh *(continued from p. 12)*

In 2008 the government of Bangladesh recognized the issue of indigenous land rights but progress and resolution on ownership issues have been slow. The state of indigenous people overall compared to everyone else is grim. They are the poorest of the poor, in health, education and the protection of women. Indigenous women are vulnerable and face double discrimination. Many become the victim of assault. The picture is just as grim for indigenous youth who experience higher rates of substance abuse and suicide compared to the general population. The overall livelihood, language and culture of the region are rapidly changing, said Sanjeeb. Many indigenous people are moving to the cities and becoming disconnected from their culture. Farming, traditionally their key livelihood, is diminishing. Indigenous people are slowly losing their identity, he added.

Sanjeeb did share on some areas where there have been modest gains. For example in the country's education sector the national education policy makes provisions for instruction in six indigenous languages for young children from pre primary to grade 6.

As Sanjeeb reflected on the overall state of indigenous people in Bangladesh, he expressed that "whatever is gone is gone, but there needs to be a firm move to protect what is left 'so we don't lose anything else.'"

Another positive development has been the establishment of an official land commission. But human rights groups in the country are asking for more channels of protection, including the establishment of an independent National Human Rights Commission, a Parliamentary Caucus representing indigenous people and an awareness-raising campaign to promote respect for the rights and culture of all ethnic groups. They are also asking the government to invest in capacity-building for indigenous people who greatly lack the needed skills and resources to compete for jobs. Yet another positive development is an 'affirmative action' provision in college and university admission in leaning in favor of indigenous students.

Sanjeeb outlined a few of the requests they have presented to the Bangladeshi government. Because Bangladesh has ratified the International Labor Organization Convention (ILO) 107 regarding the protection of indigenous people, they are asking the government to institute national laws related to the convention. As a nation greatly affected by



Fr. Joseph Gomes, OMI, at Oblate JPIC offices in Washington, D.C.

climate change, Bangladesh is very vocal on these issues in the international arena. Rain and drought conditions resulting in the loss of land, force people to move to cities causing overcrowding. Sanjeeb said the government should provide support for mitigating the effects of climate change, which disproportionately affect indigenous people.

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate has been in Bangladesh for over 40 years. Today there are 26 Oblates working in four dioceses to promote the rights of Bangladesh's indigenous people, providing education and medical services to the poor under sometimes very risky conditions. The Oblates JPIC office has received death threats and been subject to attacks for their advocacy work on behalf of indigenous people. In 2010 Sanjeeb sustained bodily injuries when he was physically attacked by assailants.

*Mr. Sanjeeb Drong is General Secretary at Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum and collaborates with Oblate Fr. Joseph Gomes, OMI, of the Sylhet diocese, in northeastern Bangladesh on indigenous issues.*



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## Happy Summer Solstice!

With so much sun following so much rain in May, the bounty in our fields was so incredible we did not have enough time to harvest all of the vegetables!

I have not experienced this kind of overwhelming abundance at the garden ever. It was a combination of so much rain in May, the accumulation of building good soil since 2012, plus a rock star farm crew! It has been amazing to see how our community of mini-farmers has grown over the years, and this year it is especially relevant since the team of dependable and depended-upon volunteers started 6 weeks before the staff. I have not mentioned them enough, so I want to take a moment to give a shout out to our regular folks: Alyssa, Lauren, Jon, Mia, Jane Claire, Sonal, Melanee, Susan, Cristina, Kenny, Paige, Fabio, John, Grace, Ruth and of course Laura, Sache and Vida.

The spring season was a little disheartening. It was too hot with no rainfall in April, followed by the too cold combined with a 'too much rain' month of May. Such extreme weather has caused my stomach to drop deep into the always full rain barrel.

I manage a yoga studio part time and I often make puns about the importance of being a flexible farmer! April and May of this year have proven that need more than any other. It seemed like the sunniest days always fell on our days off, and I felt compelled to work a few Sundays to take advantage of that sunshine.

June was an incredibly busy month for us: we were in full swing at the Petworth Farmer's Market (northwest Washington, D.C.). Our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) was going strong on Thursday nights, I was at the end of a 7-day a week watering schedule with our seedling nursery, the garlic harvest required a couple of full days, and yet June was also the last planting month of the spring/summer season.

The flip side of a busy June means we're all taking a breather in July! Our staff is taking consecutive vacations in July and August, and I have plans to visit with my husband's family in Germany.

Our farm exists because of our rich network and community. Just to mention a few: the Community Farming Alliance is a farmer co-op I co-founded in 2013. The co-op goes to the farmers market together and shares a table. Having farming partners who are there selling our produce, while I manage workdays at the farm is a huge blessing! The farming partners

*By: Gail Taylor, Three Part Harmony Farm*

expand our CSA so we can include eggs, mushrooms, honey, and medicinal herbs. One of our co-op members, the Black Dirt Farm Collective (on Maryland's eastern shore ) hosts an annual Afro Ecology training that I will participate in again this year. I bring produce from our farm to help feed the participants who camp out at Black Dirt and participate in workshops. I also hosted a lunch of my "sisterhood" from the EcoHermanas group. We are women who connect our work and communities to the earth in a lot of different ways. It is an Eco Hermana (Caryl) who painted the mural that we will soon put on the fence along 4th street adjacent to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The community supports the farm in many ways. We are still benefiting from the crowdfunding campaign we had last year that allowed us to purchase an irrigation system that we ended up using in April, two months earlier than normal. The biggest infrastructure improvement, however, was the purchase of a walk-in cooler at the CSA pick up site in



JPIC Staff Meghan, Sr. Lee and Rowena with 3-Part Harmony Staff Laura

northeast D.C. The cooler is used by all members of the co-op so we can all share cooler space efficiently. The Catholic Workers have a key so they can pick up produce weekly. We went from only donating the amount of produce that fits on my bicycle trailer, to being able to donate literally everything that is left over.

We are so fortunate to be growing in this beautiful, sacred space. The blessing of the garden is that it is so accessible, so volunteers can ride bikes or take public transportation to get to us. Everyone who works for three hours harvests their own vegetables at the end- that kind of work exchange is a very important thing to me to give people of various income levels access to the produce. I am writing a grant to fund a podcast that visitors can download on their phones to guide them on a tour when they visit and we don't have time to show them around. I'll be sure to let you all know when that's available!

## Guatemala: Waiting for Justice for Padre Lorenzo

(originally published on OMIWORLD.ORG)

“F or most of his life as an Oblate priest, Father Lorenzo ROSEBAUGH was a living and radical witness to non-violence and concern for the poor. On May 18, 2009, he was shot and killed by two men attempting to steal the van in which he and 4 other Oblates were traveling. The bullets that killed Lorenzo passed through his body and wounded another Oblate in the van, Father Jean Claude NGOMA NDEWES (originally from Congo) who was hospitalized but not in a life-threatening condition. The would-be robbers escaped without taking the vehicle.” (OMI Information, June 2009)



Seven years later, Father José SANTIAGO writes: As of May 18, it has been 7 years since his (P. Lorenzo) murder: a death that has gone unpunished and ignored. As Oblates, we are fighting for justice. They had in hand the evidence needed for judgment: they had the fatal bullet, the rifle and the owner of the rifle... The police captured three men, two adults and a youth. They could prove that one of them was “the owner of the rifle; what could not be proven was whether the owner had fired the rifle.” That was the conclusion of the judges. And since they could prove nothing, the men were set free.

Padre Lorenzo is another victim of the violence plaguing Guatemala. Lorenzo worked 6 years in Ixcán as a missionary, and after a few years in the city, had decided, in agreement with the now Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, that he would return to the U.S.; he had already experienced a lot of violence. He wanted to celebrate his birthday in Ixcán and say goodbye to the people, some friends, before leaving the country. He could not do that; his death came first. Maybe God wanted him to stay with the poor and suffering people of Guatemala. His remains rest in the Hermano Pedro cemetery in Mexco. Thanks Lorenzo for your witness of life and prayer.

On May 18, Masses were offered in Playa Grande and at Santa Cecilia parish. (from *Ser un Misionero Hoy*)

### Poem: Rice & Beans by Patti Radle

After they reported  
That Father Lorenzo had been killed  
And after I read his book,  
I ate more rice and beans.  
At the center of his greatest work  
There was always rice and beans.  
Be it Guatemala or El Salvador  
There was always rice and beans.  
At 5:00 a.m. with field workers  
They ate their rice and beans.  
Returning back at the end of the day  
There was still more rice and beans.  
Living with those who lived in the street  
He shared their rice and beans.  
With prostitutes and drunkards  
He prepared the rice and beans.  
Through his priestly ordination  
And the pot of rice and beans  
He erased every border  
With a serving of rice and beans  
So tangible, so real,  
I'm connected through this means  
To him, the struggles and a simpler world  
When eating rice and beans.

*Patti Radle is based in San Antonio, TX. She is an educator and community activist engaged in issues of poverty and a longtime JPIC Committee member.*