



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

“No, it’s not that I think I’m a prophet,” he said. “It’s that you and I are a prophetic people. Everyone baptized has recieved a share in Christ’s prophetic mission. Because it is God’s work, we don’t fear the prophetic mission God has entrusted to us.

Archbishop Oscar Romero

From the Director: A Message for a New Year

The beginning of the New Year saw this town dressing up for the presidential inauguration. Two days later thousand gathered, from all over the country, to march and pray in support of life. The 109th Congress is already two weeks old with proposals for the reform of a core intergenerational social contract, Social Security, at the top of the agenda. A debate about immigration legislation is also likely to occur.

The waning days of the 2004 brought the horror of death and destruction to thousands in Asia, many of them living in areas where Oblates, colleagues and friends work and ministry. St Stephen’s day brought the death of a dear friend Robert Moosbrugger, OMI, a strong supporter of many of the programs and projects which are part of our JPIC ministry. Let me say it once again he will be sorely missed!

On the development front, the cancellation of debt for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries gained some significant traction in the fall and is on the

agenda at a number of meetings this spring. Finally, there appears to a consensus around the 100% cancellation of multi-lateral debt (money owed to the World Bank, IMF and other regional banks). Now the debate is focused on how this can be paid for. Sale of a small portion of IMF gold is one proposal that is being considered.

In September representatives will gather at the United Nations to evaluate what progress has been made toward the achievement of the Millennium Development in the past five years. These goals, which were set at the Millennium Assembly, represent specific commitments that countries made to halve extreme poverty and hunger, reduce child mortality, promote gender equality, improve access to primary education, improve maternal health, ensure environmental sustainability and combat HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria.

Following through on commitments frequently preoccupies us when we review our New Year

commitments or our Lenten resolutions. We all strive to stay on course when we are confronted with the challenges that change and conversion present to us. Following through on pledges at a national level, we are told, is no less easy. This topic has been brought up a number of times in recent weeks when pledges of help, made by governments, for the victims of the Tsunami have been reviewed.

Hopefully, during 2005, some real progress will be made to relieve the great burden that debt has imposed on so many in the world’s poorest countries and the MDG commitment review will strengthen our resolve to show progress towards the goals we have set. On the home front, as a people of faith, we can draw strength from the teaching of the scriptures and Catholic Social Teaching as we seek to enrich the public debate on important social issues drawing guidance and strength from such foundational principles as the dignity of human life, solidarity and common good.

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The OMI Justice and Peace/Integrity of Creation Office coordinates the advocacy efforts of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate on behalf of the interests of the poor and abandoned in the U.S. and in the more than 65 countries where the Oblates are in mission. These efforts include serving as a resource for province membership, supporting the community organizing efforts of the Oblates in the United States, and coordinating the Corporate Responsibility Program to insist on just practices and policies by corporations in their worldwide operations. Our work also includes advocacy with the United States government and other international institutions on a variety of justice and peace issues.

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News and Advocacy

New Oblate JPIC Website!

The Oblate JPIC Office has recently put together a new web site. You can find it at www.omiusajpic.org. Look for lots of new information in the coming weeks and months. On the web site you can find an archive for past newsletter issues, an overview of our work, and many other items.

Bangladesh Video and Updated Environmental Brochures Still Available

Brochures continue to be available on several environmental issues. We will be happy to send you copies of either the brochures or the resolution if you e-mail Mary O'Herron at maryoh@omiusa.org

The brochures include:

Earth-Friendly Products

– Encourages the use of products that will make our environment healthier and gives leads on how to do this;

Organic Eating – Gives rationale for eating organic food and ideas on ways to

do so;

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

– Promotes these practices by giving reasons for and ways of doing them;

Gardens Alive: Hints for Saving Water in the Garden

– Gives procedures for using less water in gardens.

A Look at Fair Trade

– Explains the benefits and criteria for Fair Trade and gives websites.

A limited number of videos and DVDs on Bangladeshi Indigenous People who work closely with Oblates are also available.

Bread for the World:



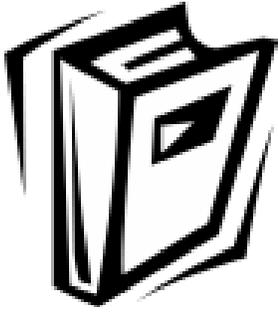
2005 Campaign

Each year, as part of Bread for the World's Offering of Letters campaign, tens of thousands of people of faith write letters to persuade members of Congress to meet their responsibilities to the most vulnerable among us. The scriptures command us to do nothing less. For more

than 20 years, our Offerings of Letters have convinced our nation's leaders to adopt policies that make available to millions of hungry people the tools they need to feed themselves and their families.

This year's campaign - Make Hunger History - seeks to rekindle our nation's commitment to the achievable, accepted goal of ending hunger in the United States. Nationwide, anti-hunger organizations and advocates are joining together to call on our leaders to make real progress toward the stated goal of cutting food insecurity in half by 2010 and to commit to ending hunger by 2015.

The president, members of Congress, state and local officials, and community-based activists — each has an important role to play in seeing this goal through. As a constituent with the power to make your voice heard, you too have a role: writing and encouraging others to write letters to members of Congress reminding them that hunger is unacceptable in our prosperous nation. You can find more information on how to get involved by going to www.breadfortheworld.org.



Reading Recommendations

Howard French, in **A Continent for the Taking: the Tragedy and Hope of Africa**, explores through his own personal experience the rich heritage and traditions that pre-date any colonial presence in Africa as he mourns the devastation and suffering which continues to unfold on the continent today. That sorrow is compounded in the awareness of how many of the early civilizations, cultures and architectural achievements of the peoples of Africa during the first millennium have been ignored or forgotten. The book

focuses on the Great Lakes region and West Africa and offers a chilling commentary on the “civilizing” and benevolent missions of foreign intervention both in the colonial period up through today. Its courtship by both sides during the cold war served to introduce huge supplies of both small and sophisticated arms that only served to entrench oppressive leaders and fuel numerous destructive conflicts. While despairing of the political posturing of recent U.S. administrations and the ever increasing corporate interests that seek to explore the oil, gas and mineral rich resources of the region, French dares to hope of a brighter future for Africa that is designed by Africans and supported by her friends and admirers.

In, **What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America**, Thomas Franks, traces the revolutionary change which has taken place in the political landscape of the state of Kansas and identifies the major players and influences on this change. Most interestingly he details the paramount role of religious belief in this process and particularly the power of the religious right. A core issue which is explored is how the defense and promotion of values based on belief continue to trump economic interests and how their promoters frequently give a pass to political leaders who compromise the “values” agenda that they run on, when they are confronted with other priorities in legislative assemblies at both state and national levels.

The promise alone, however remote, according to Franks, of that elusive society free from stem cell research, same sex marriage and abortion, supporting school prayer and creationism has often become the sole criteria for selecting leaders. This perspective prevails even though many of those same leaders fail to support policies that protect the rights of workers that seek to restrict the destructive influence of mass media on family values that demand accountability from corrupt corporate leaders or protect the environment. Frank’s book clearly points to the importance of reconstituting the public square, wherein the full airing of public policy challenges can be informed by both critical analysis and the wisdom and richness of faith traditions, not only in Kansas but in many other communities.

What We Owe Iraq by Noah Feldman explores, in tightly reasoned logic, the responsibility which falls to the United States and other members of the coalition of the willing from their invasion of Iraq. He goes beyond many of the other considerations about nation building when he argues that this amounts to a moral promise and an exercise in promise keeping. The reality of the consequences which the invasion caused is only occasionally seen on the TV news. Most of these accounts are stories of the of soldiers, police and innocent civilians being killed or wounded.

The immensity of the post-invasion challenge however which confronts thousands of Iraqi on a daily basis as they seek to build communities and institutions is one which should attract the attention of our moral compass on a regular basis. In the closing chapter of the short book Feldman writes, “That the British abandoned their nation-building project in Iraq knowing full well that it was not completed had much to do with the subsequent miseries suffered by Iraqis—and that is an ethical burden too heavy for any nation builder to bear”. This reminder certainly deserves to be considered when any proposals to retreat from the mission in which our government is currently involved are tabled.

The Ginapalad Taka Experience: An Oblate JPIC Report from the Phillipines

It literally means "I bless you." GINAPALAD TA KA is an acronym based on the first two letters of the 7 *barangays* of Pikit, which declared themselves Space for Peace communities last November 29, 2004. The seven villages are **Ginatilan, Nalapaan, Panicupan, Ladtingan, Dalengaoen, Takepan and Kalakakan**, all conflict-affected communities inhabited by Muslims, Christians and Lumads.

It was the culmination of a long process that included two separate negotiations with the Philippine military and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Central committee conducted by the *barangay* captains and the supporting NGOs.

The day began with children of GINAPALAD TA KA with small flags who marched to the Takepan National High School where the program was held. The highway was decorated with streamers and banners. The sound of *agong* filled the air.

The highlight of the event was the reading of the declaration by the secretary of GINAPALAD TA KA and the symbolic signing by all the parties con-

cerned. The declaration, which was a product of group discussions in all 40 *sitios* (communities), carried an appeal to all the armed parties of the conflict in Mindanao to respect and support the local initiative of the people to rebuild their war-ravaged communities.



Rev. Roberto Layson, OMI

"We recognize and respect the declaration", Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles of the Philippine government's Office on the Peace Process said in her statement of support to the crowd of 3,000 people gathered to celebrate this event. Noteworthy among the many civil, religious, and military authorities present were representatives from the International Monitoring Team, the United States Institute of Peace, and various local and international NGOs that have been active in
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Letter to the Editor Regarding Torture: We must not be complicit

Editor:

The infamous memos of Alberto Gonzales, U.S. Attorney General designate. The horror and outrage of Abu Ghraib. A Red Cross report of torture at Guantánamo. And now protests to nations with appalling human rights records provoke this response: "Well, we're just following the rule of Guantánamo. We're just doing what the Americans are doing."

Let's be done with euphemisms. It's not "tantamount to torture." It's torture. It's not "abuse of detainees." It's torture. It's not "facilitating interrogation." It's torture. And it's a betrayal of our national identity, a betrayal of our highest ideals, a betrayal of everything America stands for. It has to stop, now, and it is up to us to stop it.

I have an obligation here. So do you. So does every American. In this context of torture, every citizen of the United States, regardless of religious or political

persuasion, is under the same moral imperative, the same patriotic imperative, the same political imperative.

So why not begin now to mount a nationwide letter writing/email campaign? Why not now, TODAY, a letter or email to each of the following: The President, the Vice President, our two U.S. Senators, our U.S. Representative, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the U.S. Attorney General? Encourage everyone you know, including children, to do the same. It is high time that we call all of them to account. And woe to us if we don't.

Please keep two things in mind:

1. For the triumph of evil, it is necessary only that good women and men do nothing.
2. To say or do nothing in the face of evil is to be complicit in that evil.

*Armand Mathew, OMI
Brownsville*

*This letter is re-printed
from the Brownsville
Herald.*

Groups gather to strategize at the border: National efforts emerge



Among those who gathered were Rev. Bill Antone, OMI (far right) and Rebecca Phares (center row, center) who represented the Oblates.

In January, representatives from several faith-based groups met to strategize jointly on border and immigration issues.

Attendees received reports from various areas of the border. Those in Arizona told of the efforts of over 500 volunteers who travelled to assist those in need in the desert last summer as part of an effort called “No More

Deaths.” Some also engaged in a march across the desert over the course of a week. Similar efforts will occur this summer as well after a March kick-off conference.

They decided to work towards establishing a network of migrant welcoming centers and forming a national border network. Rather than focus on establishing new cen-

ters, this effort would, at first, attempt to link existing migrant welcoming efforts. A national border network would seek to raise the national profile of this issue. Many emphasized that while border policy is set nationally, local municipalities and groups pay the price for decisions often

made without their consultation.

In addition to the Oblates, other groups who attended were the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, various Maryknoll Lay Missioners, No More Deaths, Religious Task Force On Central America and Mexico, and the American Friends Service Committee, among others.

Corporate Responsibility Report: January 2005

Rev. Seamus P. Finn OMI

As the year 2004 draws to a close, activity in the Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) community and specifically in the work of faith based investors continues to grow. Working with the United Nations and with a growing international network of SRI investors, the opportunities for effective collaboration have been tremendous.

In the past year we were invited by corporations to work with them to develop a system of sustained compliance with their codes of ethics and practice (including UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Core labor standards of the International Labor Organization) in the factories from which they source parts and products particularly in China. An interim report on this project will be available on our website www.omiusajpic.org before the end of January, and a segment of it can be found on page 14 of this publication.

We have used our ownership position with a number of oil, gas and mineral extractive corporations to address their activities in various countries especially the impact of their mining on local communities. This includes the contracts



signed with national governments, their relationship with the military and with local security forces and the long term impact of their presence on health and safety and on the local environment.

We have also responded to invitations from concerned investors in Korea, New

Zealand, Australia, Scandinavia, Brazil and Europe. Many of these groups are interested in learning from and about faith-based investors from other countries and in collaborating with them. Already one collaborative project to address two Korean

companies is underway with faith-based investors in Korea. Work with a broader global interfaith group to address the social and environmental responsibilities of corporations at a global level continues apace and will hopefully witness some new milestones in the coming year!

The issue of divestment from companies doing business with the government of Israel is on the radar for a number of religious organizations. This is one of many tools being considered to respond to the continuing divisive struggle which is taking place between the Israelis and Palestinians. This would mirror the approach which many religious groups and other organizations took during the campaign to end apartheid rule in South Africa.

Issues Receiving Highest Percentage of Votes for 2003/2004:

HIV Reporting;
Coca Cola 97.93%,
Merck 13.63%;
Emissions Reduction reporting;
Apache 37.08%,
Anadarko 31.39%,
Marathon Oil 27.01%;
Sustainability Reporting;
Yum Brands 32.92%,
Cooper Industries 29.39%,
Wal-Mart 14.16%;
Global Code of Conduct;
Delphi Automotive 20.25%,

List of Resolutions Filed by the Oblates for 2004 – 2005

Company	Issue
Apple Computer	Vendor Code of Conduct
Bank of America	Derivatives
Boeing	Ethical Criteria for Military Contracts
ChevronTexaco	Report Renewable Energy
Citigroup	Derivatives
General Electric	Sustainability Report
Home Depot	Equal Opportunity/Diversity Report
J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.	Micro financing
Johnson & Johnson	HIV Reporting
Kraft	Report G Engineered Products
Merck	HIV Reporting
Pfizer	HIV Reporting
Time Warner	Corporate Governance
TJX Companies, Inc	Vendor Standards

Issues being discussed in Dialogues with Corporate Management

Company	Issue	Action
* Federated Dept. Stores	Vendor Standards	Applying ILO core standards in Carpet industry
* Ford	Global Standards	Applying Ford Code of Conduct globally
* LG Electronics	Labor Standards	Inquiry on Labor Standards/Korea
* Lilly	HIV Reporting	Response of the company to HIV/AIDS crisis
* Samsung Corporation	Labor Standards	First engagement with a Korean Company
Amer. International Group	Global Warming – Insurance	
Coverage on risk from global warming		
Anheuser Busch	GMO Report	Letter on Genetically Engineered Rice
Coca Cola	Global Standards	Human Rights. Water Usage
ConocoPhillips	Global Warming	Emission Standards
Dow Chemical	GMO – Report	Letter on Genetically Modified Organisms
Emerson	Global Standards	Code of Conduct Compliance
Freddie Mac	Predatory Lending	Compliance with targets for Affordable Housing
GlaxoSmithKline	HIV Reporting	Response of the company to HIV/AIDS crisis
Great Lakes Chemical	Global Warming	Emissions from Manufacturing
Hewlett Packard	Labor Standards	Reporting on Code of Conduct
McDonald's	Vendor Standards	China supply Chain monitoring
Procter & Gamble	Human Rights	Core ILO Standards
Target	Vendor Standards	Code of Conduct Compliance
United Technologies	Global Warming	Emissions from Manufacturing

Letters of Inquiry about company policies on genetically engineered rice have been sent to the following companies: Anheuser Busch, Dow, Kraft, Nestle, PepsiCo and Safeway

Celebrating the Earth

Darrell Rupiper, OMI

A friend sent me a picture of the face of Jesus looking at our beautiful blue Earth described by one astronaut as looking like a giant Christmas tree ornament turning slowly in space or by another astronaut as a huge sapphire jewel glistening in the sunlight as if embedded in the darkness of space.

Jesus' eyes are tear-filled, a few streaming down His face.

Words from scripture often used in tracts came to mind: "God so loved the world that He gave His only son etc..." Steeped in my anthropomorphic mode of thinking, my mind did a switch, substituting the word 'world' with the word 'people'. Recently I learned

that the Greek word for world is cosmos. "God so loved the cosmos..."

I have also learned that much of the damage we are inflicting on the Earth causing Jesus to be tearful derives from our narrowly focusing on the human species instead of on the entire cosmos which God

so loves. We must come to see ourselves as only one species in a beautifully complex web of relationships.

Fr. Thomas Berry puts it succinctly: "In the 20th century the glory of the human has become the desolation of the Earth. The desolation of the Earth

We are constantly being assaulted with bad news coming from reliable scientific research. Within the last two weeks reports state that 32.5 percent of the known species of amphibians are 'globally threatened', 23 percent of mammal species and 12 percent of bird species. In

happening to our co-habitants will happen to our species as well.

A distraught Fr. Berry said: "The impending death of half the world's species is being met with casual indifference."

Part of the indifference may be due to a lack of awareness. Allow me to

quote Fr. David Toolan, S.J., former associate editor of AMERICA magazine: "...by the late 1970s when it became apparent that the environmental movement was no passing fad, American corporations took to the offensive with political lobbying, public relations campaigns, punitive litigation, and research studies, all of it designed to refute or discredit the claims of environmentalists and regulatory agencies. In 1990

corporate anti-environmental political lobbying and public relations efforts in the United States were estimated to amount to \$500 million annually." (from his book "At Home in the Cosmos")

Back to Fr. Berry: "This failure of Christians to assume their responsibil-



Manobo children in the Phillipines plant welcoming trees for visitors. The school teaches children the importance of sustainable development in addition to maintaining a more traditional curriculum.

is becoming the destiny of the human."

He goes on to say: "All human institutions, professions, programs and activities must now be judged primarily by the extent to which they inhibit, ignore or foster a mutually-enhancing human-Earth relationship."

2003 alone an additional 3,300 species were added to the list of 15,589 species already on the endangered list.

The canary taken into the mines served the miners well in warning them about their environment. Will we heed the warnings? We must realize that what is

ity for the fate of the earth is perhaps their greatest single failure in the total course of Christian history.”

Lester R. Brown who authors the annual “State of the World” report said we are living as if we have no children or grandchildren.

Pope John Paul II sounded the alarm more than fourteen years ago when he stated that the human species has come to the edge of an abyss. If we continue, we will perish.

He asked each of us to find our ecological vocation stating that it is an urgent moral issue. (I am convinced it is sinful not to recycle.) Our ecological vocation can be defined as a lifestyle and behavior that mutually enhances our human-Earth relationship.

As our magnificent spaceship continues its 43,000 mph trip into the darkness of space we know that some few are riding in first-class while billions are confined to the cargo hold. The cries of those with AIDS, the victims of war, hurricanes, famine, draught, abortions, floods, etc, pierce the skies and our God cries.

(We in Chicago number

approximately 2.7 million people. We consume as much of the Earth’s goods as the people of Bangladesh whose population numbers 97 million. Much of what we consume is imported from all over

salvation contingent on going out and taking care of those struggling to live, it seems that personal salvation is being sought through an inwardness that is characterized by piety and little acts of kindness

but neglecting the important ones.”

She was, of course, referring to the need to save our planet. If we were all in a boat with humanity’s many needy ones would we wonder whom to care for first if we discovered that the boat sprung a leak? Our mother Earth is mortally wounded.

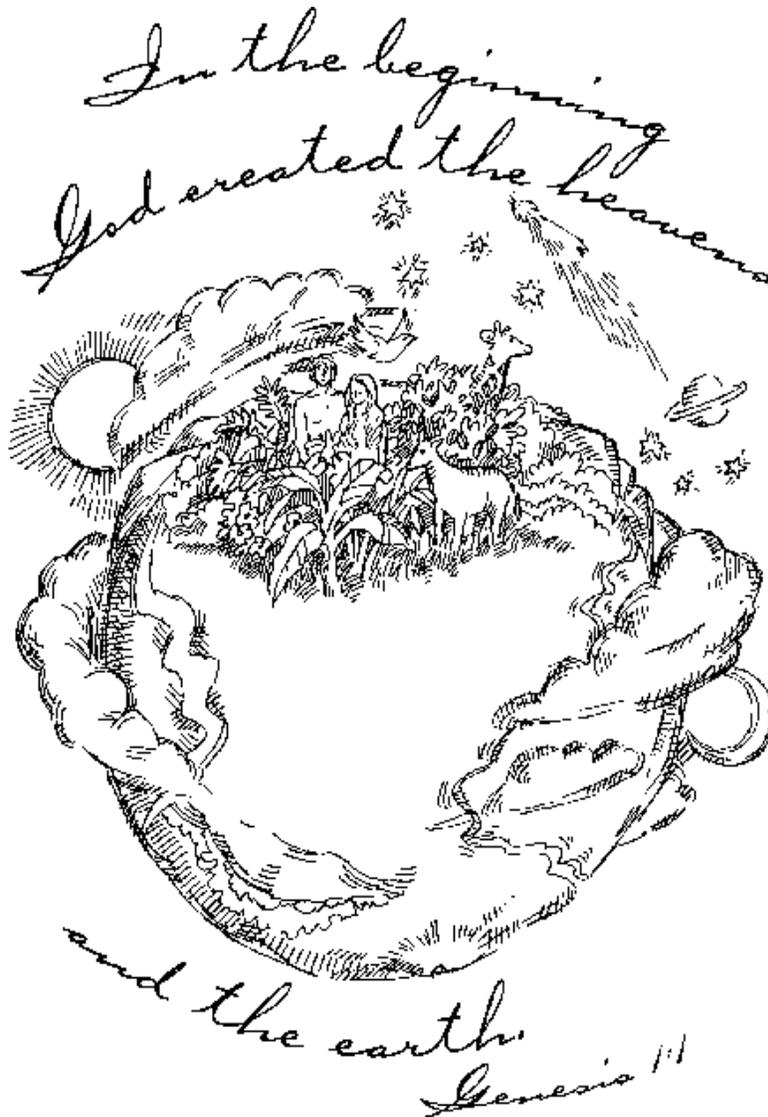
Jesus came that we might have life and have it in abundance. The paradise that God has given to us is being quickly turned from a wonderland into a wasteland. As followers of Jesus we must be creative in making life-nurturing choices.

It is our Holy Father who said that our voracious appetite for consumer goods, our self-centered desires for immediate gratification and our failure to appreciate creation as the primary manifestation of our God are the main causes for the destruction of our own home.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He whom we declare as King of the Universe weeps today as He sees all that was declared by the Creator as good is being trashed.

Caring for the Earth must become an individual and collective priority.

❖



the world.) Self-storage places became the fastest growing business in the U.S. last year according to Brian Swimme.

Although Jesus made our

rather than the doing of justice and acts of mercy.

Paraphrasing Sr. Miriam Therese Mc Gillis, OP: “The world is full of good people doing good things

Report on Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation's Conference

Mary O'Herron

The Sixth Annual Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation's Conference took place in Washington, DC, in October 2004. Its theme was "Christians in the Holy Land: Rooted in Bonds of Peace," and it focused on the lives of Christians in Palestine.

Conditions for Christians in the Holy Land continue to be bleak. Most Christians have emigrated from Palestine, and those who remain struggle daily to meet basic human needs.

Curfews, lasting days and even weeks, along with numerous checkpoints, make travel to work, schools, doctors, shops dangerous and difficult. Children are not being educated, babies are born on the way to the hospital, and people spend hours getting to work if they are lucky enough to have a job. There is consistent fear that homes, farms, olive groves and other sources of income will be demolished.

Israel continues to build an 8-meter high, over 300-mile-long wall. It is being built on Palestinian land causing much separation and hardship. For instance,

the wall has gates every four miles, so if a family's farm has been divided by the wall with the house inside and some of the fields outside, people will have to walk as much as four miles just to begin to work the farm – that is if they can get past numerous checkpoints.

Besides delineating the

result of being hurt by others then the perpetrator has been successful. Living the way Jesus told us – loving our enemies as well as those we like — is very difficult. Christians in the Holy Land are being called in a very real way to live this. The support of each other trying to do the same

touched before peace comes, but once attitudes change and people care for one another, then peace will be possible.

In addition, we need to be better run. Non-profit groups are often long on good will and passion but not noted for their efficiency. He cited Jesus who told his disciples that they are as sheep among wolves — that they should try, and if they were accepted, continue.

Where they were not accepted, Jesus said to move on — "shake the dust from your feet." Also, it is important to keep focused on the goal of bringing peace into the Holy Land and not get sidetracked. It is important to check where they were

having the most impact and then place time, energy and resources there. What we are trying to bring into the world, deserves to be done efficiently.



A destroyed building in Beit Jala, a Christian Palestinian town

problems, presenters told of what the different Christian religions are doing there to improve life.

One form of emerging peace is that Christian groups are moving closer as they focus on the teachings of Jesus and the resulting common values rather than their differences.

A theme running through the conference was: if people behave worse as a

thing is critical.

One speaker gave some ideas for changing things. First of all, inspiring others involves changing ourselves. We must be what we want others to be. He told a story about Ghandi who said he couldn't tell a child to not eat sweets until he himself had stopped.

Changing attitudes is critical. Hearts need to be

For more information on this issue, please visit www.hcef.org or contact Mary O'Herron.

Haiti: An Update on the Situation

Seamus Finn, OMI

During a trip to Haiti in October 2004 I had the opportunity to meet with a number of representatives from relief agencies, church officials, clergy and laity active on the local level, human rights observers and representatives of the US government.

The outbreak of unrest in Port au Prince which began in late September and continued throughout our visit, made travel throughout the city very difficult. Travel plans had to be revised every morning and adjusted often depending on the areas of the city where the chimeres (Aristide supporters) and other gangs were operating on any given day.

The UN mission which was not yet fully staffed in October has shown increased staffing in recent months and they have demonstrated the capacity to operate outside the Port au Prince metropolitan area. As of December 31st the UN uniformed presence was more than 7,000. Some additional forces did arrive during our stay. The UN presence has a mandate to establish secure and stable environment in the country, to support the constitutional process including the organization and monitor

municipal, parliamentary and presidential elections to promote and protect human rights especially women and children.

Much hope was being placed in the organization of free and fair elections which are planned for November 2005 though it was recognized that it was an ambitious goal to conduct elections at all levels at the same time. A number of the groups that we met with expressed confidence in the UN presence and in the special envoy Juan Gabriel Valdes, a Chilean diplomat who were responsible for organizing the elections. It remains to be seen whether or not campaigning and elections can be conducted in a fair and transparent manner given the past levels of hostility and significant presence of small arms by different and competing organizations and parties.

Few expressed support for a return of President Aristide at this time and would prefer to go forward with the selection of new leaders in November 2005 in the hope that the country can be given a fresh start. The emergence of new leaders in different political parties and movements at all levels was deemed

essential for the establishment of a stable and reliable political process. The challenges inherent in the transition from movement type organization to a political party continue to confront a number of groups.

Confidence in the transitional government was not high and the powerful influence of the US government was unwelcome for most. Our conversations with the US ambassador and others demonstrated sensitivity to this reality and he was hopeful that the prominent leadership of the UN in the political process would balance some of the mistrust.

The fact that a more robust presence by the UN mission has evolved since October will hopefully sustain and support the hard work and courage which many have demonstrated in trying to build a better future for so many of Haiti's suffering poor.

If you would like to become more involved, contact us or visit www.quixote.org/hr.

Continued from Page 4 promoting the peace movement in Mindanao.

Father Roberto LAYSON, who has been the driving force behind the "Space for Peace" movement, says, "There are two wars in Mindanao. One is between the government and the MILF, which is often fought in the battlefields. The other is the unseen war going on in the hearts of the people of Mindanao, be they Muslims, Christians or Lumads. The GINAPALAD TA KA initiative is meant to address this unseen war by repairing the relationship of people and instilling respect for one another despite religious and cultural differences."

The GINAPALAD TA KA, says Layson, is a grassroots peace initiative on the horizontal level that aims to support the peace talks between the government and the MILF at the vertical level. Initiatives like the GINAPALAD TA KA are not the final answer to the Mindanao conflict. That lies in the hands of the government and the MILF who are searching for a political solution at the negotiating table. *The Oblate priest received the Pax Christi International Peace Award in 2002 for promoting peace and justice in war-torn Mindanao.*

Africa Faith and Justice Annual Conference: A Report on the Sudan

Marjorie Kambala

Oh Lord, how long before you listen, before you save us from violence? Why do you make me see such trouble? -The Lord gave me this answer “Write down clearly on tablets what I reveal to you, so that it can be read at a glance. Put it in writing because it is not yet time for it to come true. But the time is coming quickly, and what I show you will come true. It may seem slow in coming, but wait for it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed. Habakkuk. 1:2-3; 2: 2-4

The AFJN annual conference was held in Louisville, Kentucky October 2nd-3rd 2004, under the theme “Africa: the cost of War and the Hope for Peace.” Members analyzed and articulated contentious issues surrounding, the conflict in Darfur, and Sudan as a whole. Workshop sessions explored prevailing conditions, policy options and prospects for more effective coordination on Liberia’s peace process, waters potential for conflict, privatization of water and American policy on the war on terror in relation to democracy in Africa. The depth of the talks invoked a passion for finding ways and means of restoring

dignity, justice and peace.

Top on the agenda was Darfur -the worst humanitarian crisis facing the world today. Bishop Macram Max Gassis, MCCI the keynote speaker gave a synopsis of the deteriorating humanitarian conditions of peoples of sub-Saharan origin. Passing pictures of maimed and deceased victims around room, he noted with great anguish the government-sponsored atrocities that are responsible for thousands of genocidal killings, rape and slavery and the displacement of 1.2 million people.

The conflict in Sudan is complex and goes back a long way. It is founded on a national identity crisis; the rift between North and South is widened by the issue of self-perception, of not just being different but also the implications of being different. The implications cultivate an environ-



Bishop Gassis speaks to an AFJN audience

ment of segregation; the divide is based on ethnic, religious and racial differences. Sudanese of Arab origin, mainly Muslim, perceive themselves as being more superior to their Christian brothers and sisters of sub-Saharan origin in the South. Through the years, the cause of the South’s struggle has varied from secession to inclusion. Today, the Sudanese of Sub-Saharan origin in Darfur cry out for inclusion in the Government of Khartoum’s power structure, for laws that protect them from ethnic and religious oppression, and a share in the country’s resources.

In response to the South’s

rebellion, the Sudanese Government called in the Janjaweed militia to counter the uprising in the South. Hence the alliance between the Sudanese Government and the Jangaweed militia has greatly undermined the Government of Sudan’s capacity to reign-in the latter. And the levels of violence continue to escalate as the Janjaweed militias engage in dehumanizing acts of ethnic cleansing such as slavery, murder and rape against peoples of sub-Saharan origin.

Calling on international intervention, Bishop Gassis questioned the meaning of sovereignty, “when a

sovereign government is responsible for racial and religious divide; promotes human rights abuse; and allows power and wealth to be held by a few superior people who will not share the sovereign nations' resources fairly among it's people." A sovereign state should stand for all it's peoples and protect them from unjust treatment, he said. He emphasized the need for the UN to set up a timeline that would address disarmament issues and draw up a schedule for peace talks.

In his closing remarks, Bishop Gassis prayed that his country would one day "accept diversity" because accommodating diversity would enrich the country and be a source of strength. He urged the participants to pray for the dying, persecuted, tortured and displaced. Reminding us of the journey after the Crucifixion, that, like the disciples we may call on the Lord, asking, "Stay with us oh Lord", and that prayer should lead us to action.

Standing in solidarity with the suffering peoples of Sudan, AFJN members passed a Resolution on Darfur, urging "the US Government, the United Nations and the International Community to exert their full influence to halt

categorically and immediately the genocidal killings, rapes, slavery and other forms of violence and abuse of fundamental human rights inflicted upon the peoples of Sub-Saharan origin in the Darfur region of Sudan".

Bishop Macram Max Gassis of the Diocese of El Obeid in Sudan has been speaking out against human rights abuse in his country. As the only Arab-speaking member of the Bishop's Conference, he acted as liaison between Catholic Bishops and the Government of Sudan until he was placed under criminal indictment by authorities for criticizing Sudan's human rights records. In 1990, while visiting the US for medical treatment, he learned that the Sudanese Government had barred his return. Bishop Gassis now has a base in Kenya and continues to bring hope and help to his people through his advocacy for human rights for the people of Sudan.

From the Catholic Task Force on Africa:

Sudanese Crisis

The year 2004 ended on a paradoxically positive note, as the Government of Sudan and the Rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A)

signed a final north and south peace deal for the peoples of Sudan. Details of the permanent cease-fire and accord should offer a blue print that will end the 21 years of civil war.

The final peace agreement, signed on 9th January 2005, announces the setting up of a power sharing transitional Govt., with a semi-autonomous State, in Southern Sudan under the leadership of Garang, SPLM leader. The protocols also stipulate a 50/50 share of Sudan's oil wealth between the North and South.

However, the question still remains as to what impact the recently signed peace deal will have on the conflict in Darfur, the worst man-made humanitarian crisis of our time. Darfur remains high on the radar because the historical peace deal does not include JEM, Darfur's rebel group, or any other rebel groups as parties to the cease-fire and peace accords. The rebel group JEM and the Govt. of Sudan have failed to comply to their own cease-fire agreements.

Speaking at his monthly briefing, Mr. Jan Pronk, UN's special representative on Sudan said, "the armed groups have been re-

arming and the conflict spreading outside Darfur. Large quantities of arms have been carried into Darfur in defiance of the Security Council decision taken in July. December saw a build-up of arms, attacks of positions, including air attacks, raids on small towns and villages, increased banditry, more looting."

Therefore CTFA continues to monitor the escalation of violence and human rights abuses. CTFA, by way of a sign-on letter, called on the US Govt. to support the African Union's deployment of a peacekeeping force.

Democratic Republic Of Congo

CTFA continues to monitor the fragile peace process in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. An increased number of UN peacekeepers have been deployed to the region; however there have been talks that Rwanda's military have crossed over into DRC- a violation of the current tripartite deal. No action has been taken thus far by CTFA. Advisers on the current situation are Fr. Jean Bosco and Fr. Jean Claude.

**More info at:
www.afjn.cua.edu**

Project Kaleidoscope Takes Steps Towards Justice for Workers

McDonald's Corporation (McDonald's), The Walt Disney Company (Disney) and a group of faith-based, socially responsible and institutional investors whose work focuses on labor rights, are working on a unique project to determine how factory-based compliance with corporate codes of conduct can be improved and sustained over time.

The project, named Project Kaleidoscope, was launched as part of an ongoing effort by both companies to improve the effectiveness of their labor standards compliance programs. The companies and investors (the "Working Group") are developing a new compliance approach at 10 factories in China that produce toys, footwear and apparel. This approach seeks, among other things, to develop factory-based systems that can further pinpoint the source of recurring compliance issues with the objective of resolving and preventing them from recurring. The broader project objective is to identify effective practices that can be applied across different industries, geographic regions and socio-economic and regulatory systems. The

factories' performance will be evaluated according to a common set of project employment and workplace standards, including such things as compliance with standards relating to wages, working hours, workplace safety, child labor, and a

premise that a successfully implemented internal factory compliance system will enhance the ability of factories to correct problems as they occur, while also creating a culture of compliance.

A project imperative has



range of other labor standards identified by the Working Group based on commonly accepted principles.

The project is testing the

been the engagement of various stakeholders to take advantage of broad perspectives and engender a sense of shared accountability. The Working Group is collaborating with local civil

society organizations (CSOs) in China, supply chain organizations, including individual factories, as well as external and internal social compliance monitors to develop practical compliance methods, including assessment, training, education and communication tools. The systems approach is designed to include factory management, supervisors and workers as participants in the on-going work of sustained compliance.

The central premises of Project Kaleidoscope include:

- Sustained compliance is possible
- The factories themselves must become part of the system responsible for compliance
- A new inclusive approach to compliance will enable timely corrective action

This report provides an interim snapshot of the project goals, key participants, and the progress to date on testing a model for sustaining compliance with established labor standards. The Working Group will issue a more detailed public report upon completion of the project, which is expected to be in late 2005.

Legislative and Advocacy Update

Anti-Immigration Measures are back on the Agenda

Rep. Sensenbrenner (R-Wi) recently introduced a bill which would waive environmental requirements for a proposed fence along the US/Mexico Border. This could obviously hurt the environment, as well as continuing border policies that are expensive, lead to deaths on the desert, and don't stop people from entering the United States, but simply send them to

cross in more deserted areas.

This bill would also make it less likely that immigrants would be able receive drivers' licenses by denying states that offer such licenses some kinds of federal funding. This would undermine security efforts as it would make it less likely that immigrants could be identified, if need be. The bill number is HR418 and immigrant rights groups have requested calls in opposition of this bill. It is likely that

these provisions will be added to a defense supplemental soon.

Jubilee Act Soon to be Reintroduced

This congressional session, JubileeUSA will again introduce the Jubilee Act which would cancel the debts owed by indebted, impoverished countries. To learn more on this act, debt issued in general, or to learn how your congregation can become a Jubilee congregation, please visit www.jubileeusa.org.

SOA Watch Legislative Advocacy Days

From February 21-22, students, people of faith and activists will come to Washington, DC in order to lobby for the passage of a bill to close the School of the Americas/Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHISC) If you would like to join them, please go to the SOA Watch web site at www.soaw.org. They can help with housing arrangements and will do lobby training as well.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice: "Make All Things New"

From March 11-14 members of many different denominations will gather to learn more about and advocate on issues ranging from economic justice to human rights in Latin America and Africa to US/Mexico border issues. All participants will choose a track and learn more about one particular area of interest as well as joining the larger group (which topped 500 last year) for plenary sessions. For more information, please visit www.advocacydays.org.



Several Oblates participated in the World Social Forum in Brazil in January. Pictured are Guillermo Reinhard, OMI along with Elei Borges Goncanes and Ana Sueli F. da Silva at Porto Alegre.

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In Franklin Roosevelt's last inaugural address in 1945, when victory in World War II was close at hand, he was determined to broaden for others the understanding of the role America must play in the world. "We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace, that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away ... We have learned that we must live as men, not as ostriches, nor as dogs in the manger. We have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community. We have learned the simple truth, as Emerson said, that 'the only way to have a friend is to be one.' We can gain no lasting peace if we approach it with suspicion and mistrust or with fear."



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