

JPIC REPORT



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

Only a profound change in our way of living – our values and attitudes – can bring new life to our world.

- Sr. Dorothy Stang

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From the Director:

During 2008 we will mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One of the areas covered in the declaration is human labor and the rights of workers.

The encyclical letter of Leo XIII *Rerum Novarum* is often referred to as the first of a number of documents that constitute the body of Catholic Social Teaching which addresses specific pressing social issues and questions. The conditions of work and the rights of workers formed the central theme of this encyclical and it contributed significantly to the enumeration of different rights and principles that have come to be accepted internationally. Wages, working conditions, working hours, rest and leisure are part of the UNDHR articles.

The International Labor Organization, a tripartite body with representatives of employers, workers,

and governments from 175 countries, supported by the UN declaration, has clearly enunciated the four “core” labor standards, concerning forced labor, child labor, equal opportunity and non-discrimination as well as freedom of association and right to collective bargaining that have achieved “consensus” internationally.

It is easy for many of us to take for granted the rights around work that are enumerated in the UN declaration and to forget the principles laid down so clearly in *Rerum Novarum*. Yet working conditions and the rights of workers connect to each of our lives in many different ways. From the food we eat, to the clothes we wear, to the products we rely on in our work and in our homes; all have come in touch with human labor to some extent. Yet the reality faced by workers around the world is often one of harsh conditions and unjust pay. For these

reasons, the rights of workers and their working conditions are an important part of our conversations with global corporations.

Two additional realities need to be considered today: workers in the service industry and migrants. There are reportedly three million people working in the call centers of New Delhi for a daily salary of \$7. They work at night to be available for our calls from the US during daylight hours. Also in today’s labor force is the large number of workers that are classified as migrants, estimated to be nearly 150 million worldwide. Migrant workers are present in most countries of the world and in many places, the services they provide are considered essential. They sent some US\$300 billion to their families in developing countries during 2006, typically US\$100, US\$200 or US\$300 at a time, through more than 1.5 billion

(cont. on p. 3)

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 co-ordinating 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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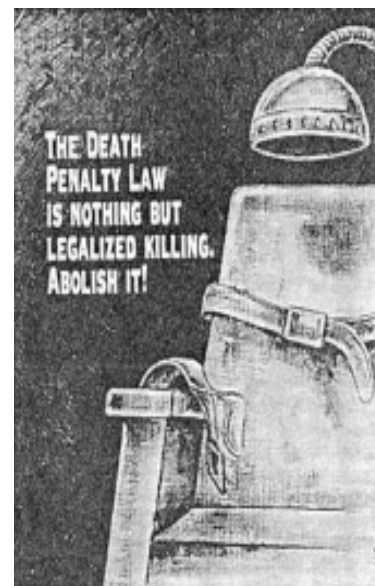
News and Happenings

Death Penalty Update

Campaign to End the Death Penalty:

New Jersey is the first U.S. state to abolish the death penalty in 40 years. Following a recommendation from the New Jersey Death Penalty Study Commission recommending abolition of the death penalty, a bill was passed in the Senate and the General Assembly to abolish the death penalty in favor of life imprisonment without parole. New Jersey, Governor Jon S. Corzine (D) signed the bill into law in on Dec. 17th, 2007.

(Please see p. 5 for more death penalty news and resources)



A Convention for the Common Good

July 11–13, 2008

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Join representatives of faith communities, social justice advocates and others inspired by Catholic Social Teaching to chart a new vision for our country, one based on a concern for the common good. Help build a platform that addresses many of the pressing social justice issues of the day – health care, poverty, economic justice, immigration, global warming and promoting a culture of life. Come to hear religious leaders, elected officials, and representatives of the social justice community discuss their vision of the common good.

Conveners:



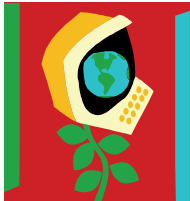
For more information: www.commongoodconvention.org



New JPIC Website on the way!

We are re-doing the US Oblate JPIC website, and plan to launch it sometime in April. It will not only have a new look, but will be completely re-organized. In addition to new content, the site will have several new features: a **Story section** where people can post stories related to JPIC issues, a **Spanish-language** version of the site, a new **Action Alert template** and a **Member-only section for Oblates** – for purposes of planning and position development. We will send an announcement out through our Action Alert email list once the system is up and running! The address will be the same: www.omiusajpic.org

Web-Based Parish Resources



Bring Liberty to the Captives!

Slavery is increasing in the United States

and around the world. While most people think slavery is a thing of the past, the reality is that there are more people enslaved now than ever before – over 27 million. The term Human Trafficking is used to describe modern slavery because of the mobility of both victims and perpetrators. Because of this mobility, it has never been easier or cheaper to own a slave.

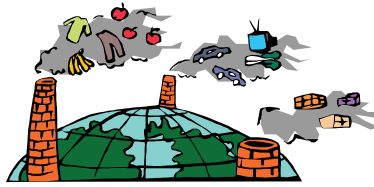
The Sisters of the Divine Savior (Salvatorian Sisters) have crafted a wonderful resource for parishes to use in combating today's slavery: *Breaking the Snares*.

Breaking the Snares is a comprehensive packet of items for parishes to use in working against this scourge. It can be found at www.scceast.org/socialjustice/Parish_Packet.pdf or Google **Breaking the Snares**. Email: stoptraffick@aol.com

Contents:

- Outlines of homilies to accompany liturgical readings.
- Scriptural motivation for action
- Suggested activities
- English and Spanish information
- Bulletin announcements
- Tips to identify possible victims
- Lists of videos and other resources

This website will **save hours of effort** with so many resources in one place. Many thanks to the Salvatorian Sisters!



The Story of Stuff

From its extraction through sale, use and disposal, all of the stuff in our lives affects communities at home and abroad, yet most of this is hidden from view. *The Story of Stuff* is a 20-minute film, released on-line in December 2007. It is a fast-paced, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns. “*The Story of Stuff* exposes the connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues, and calls us together to create a more sustainable and just world. It’ll teach you something, it’ll make you laugh, and it just may change the way you look at all the stuff in your life forever.”

You can find further information and suggestions for how to make a difference on the film’s website, www.storyofstuff.com. Hundreds of organizations working to change the wasteful and toxic-ridden cycle of the materials economy are featured on the site as resources. Additional information, a footnoted script, a suggested reading list and ideas for educational activities and discussion topics for local screenings are also available on the site.

“My goal in making *The Story of Stuff* was to encourage people to have ... [the difficult conversation needed about the fundamental changes required in our energy, transportation and agricultural systems], to begin thinking and talking about these

complicated issues. Our current ways of making, using and throwing away stuff is largely based on unsustainable and unjust systems yet, as a society, we’ve got this big collective blind spot about talking about this. Let’s raise the issues, let’s ask the hard questions, let’s get it on the table and examine it and debate it and figure out together how to move forward towards solutions.” (Quote from Annie Leonard, writer of *The Story of Stuff*).

BABY WALKER

Web Sites on Consumerism:

The New Road Map Foundation,
www.newroadmap.org

Adbusters (anti-consumerist magazine), www.adbusters.org

The Center for a New American Dream, www.newdream.org

The Simple Living Network,
www.simpleliving.net

Co-Op America,
www.coopamerica.org



From the Director, (cont. from p. 1)

separate financial transactions. These funds are used primarily to meet immediate family needs (consumption), but a good portion is also available for savings and credit mobilization.

The 60th anniversary year is a good time for us to reflect again on the rights and principles of workers that are grounded in the UNDHR and to search for ways to protect and safeguard the millions of workers on whom we all rely.

Oblates Say No to the US/Mexico Border Wall

John Lasseigne, OMI

Texas Oblates living along the United States-Mexican border have become leaders in the fight to block construction of a border fence or wall.

Late in 2006 the Congress and President Bush approved the Secure Fence Act, which called for the construction of a fence at least two layers thick along 670 miles of the southern border.

The law's passage capped a year of furious debate over the nation's immigration policy. Everyone agreed that the current policy was broken. But inflammatory media reports and polarized public opinion made compromise on substantive reforms impossible.

In the midst of the turmoil, Washington politicians could agree on only one proposal: build a wall. Many Democrats, including presidential hopefuls Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, voted with almost all the Republicans to pass the act. At last leaders could tell their constituents that they had done something to solve the immigration problem.

Everyone seemed satisfied, except for those who live along the border.

Texas became a center of opposition. Unlike in other states, Texas border property is mostly in private hands. Some people still hold land granted to their ancestors centuries ago by Spanish royalty. Property owners' pride runs deep,



and so does resentment against those meddling with their rights.

Other residents view the wall as a threat to the region's increasing prosperity. Long one of the poorest areas of the country, the Texas border has seen its unemployment rate drop sharply in recent years. Many people credit NAFTA and the international commerce it spawned. Locals fear that Mexico would see the wall as a snub and begin looking elsewhere for trading partners.

Other border Texans worry about the humanitarian and environmental effects of the wall. The wall would threaten the lives both of human immigrants and of rare birds and mammals.

The controversy has made some strange bedfellows. Business leaders have joined forces with environmentalists, religious leaders, and community organizers. Cars all along the border sport bumper stickers saying "No Border Wall."

Texas Oblates have been at the forefront of the controversy. Fr. Roy Snipes, OMI, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Mission, was disturbed to learn that the La Lomita chapel, a religious landmark, would be left on the south or "Mexican" side of the wall. Snipes has spoken against the wall at several large gatherings. He has also taken reporters to the chapel and the riverfront area to understand better the wall's effects.

"It would be a terrible symbol," Snipes said, "a symbol of hostility and paranoia. That chapel and this Catholic community have been here all these years, from the Civil War to the Iraqi War, and we've never been so fearful that we had to hide behind a wall."

The priest has also given hospitality to protesters like Jay Castro. Late last year Castro walked all the way from Del Rio to Brownsville, many hundreds of miles, to highlight the

wall's folly. While he was in Mission, Fr. Snipes allowed Castro to stay on church property

Fr. John Lasseigne, OMI, and Fr. Jerry McGovern, OMI, accompanied about 15 of their parishioners from St. John the Baptist Parish in San Juan to an anti-border wall rally in December 2007.

The rally was held at a local convention center. While the rally took place on one side of the center, the Department of Homeland Security was on the other side, taking comments from the public about the environmental impact of the wall. Both priests also gave testimony at the hearing.

Many Catholic parishes, including Oblate parishes, have participated in petition drives. Valley Interfaith, a community organization, has collected thousands of signatures on its petition insisting that tax dollars be spent on families, not walls.

Such protests and lawsuits brought by landowners and environmentalists have served to delay the wall's construction. Intended for completion in 2008, the wall is behind schedule. As of March 2008, less than 20 miles of the 670 had been installed according to the law's specifications. The completed section of the fence is in Arizona.

Many predict that the wall will be delayed even further and will become, like the budget deficit and the Iraqi War, a problem inherited by the next president. For people like the Missionary Oblates of South Texas, that would be a welcome outcome indeed.



Congressional Updates

Border and Immigration

In the 2008 State of the Union, President Bush spoke of the need for comprehensive immigration reform as the best way to secure the border. The federal budget request for immigration enforcement for Fiscal Year 2009 is \$442.4 million. This would be used for hiring and equipping 2,200 border patrol agents with a goal of having 20,000 agents by the end of 2009. An additional \$775 million will be requested by a Secure the Border Initiative for the installation of technology to monitor the border. The amount for construction of the actual border fence has not been released.

Harsh immigration legislation and raids have increased in some parts of the country. In the 110th Congress, an enforcement-only bill, H.R. 4088, termed the **SAVE Act** was introduced by Representatives Heath Shuler (D-NC) and Tom Tancredo (R-CO), with cosponsors from both parties. The SAVE Act does not address the need for legalization of undocumented immigrants and ignores the problem posed by separation of family members. The SAVE Act is a misguided policy response. The majority of Americans oppose any use of federal dollars to round up and deport 12 million undocumented immigrants.

Leading 2008 presidential candidates support comprehensive immigration

reform but differ on what should be prioritized in reforming immigration policy. Senator McCain has shifted his position to favor militarized border enforcement first to satisfy potential anti-immigrant voters.

Stand up for Immigrants:

www.newsanctuarymovement.org



At the United Nations

U.N. Moratorium on the Death Penalty

The United Nations General Assembly endorsed a call for a worldwide moratorium on executions. One hundred and four member States favored the Resolution, 54 voted against it, and 29 members abstained. Despite its nonbinding language, the Resolution carries moral authority in the international dialogue on the death penalty. The United States voted against the resolution and kept a low profile during the moratorium debate. Roughly 90 percent of all known worldwide executions took place in six countries: Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, China, Sudan and the USA, according to Amnesty International.

Website Resources:

The High Cost of the Death Penalty

www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/ click on Costs

The Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty

www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/deathpenalty/

U.S. Agricultural Subsidies: Reform Needed

Devin Watkins

Growing up on a small cotton farm in west Texas, I never paid attention to how much the government and its agricultural policy influenced my life. It wasn't until I went off to college at Texas A&M University to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in Agribusiness that I truly began to understand the realities of government subsidies for agriculture and the positive and negative effects they have on both foreign and domestic producers. The attempt to explain these subsidies may get rather complicated and difficult to understand, but I hope the implications for all involved will be clear.

For those who aren't familiar with this subject, included in the budget of the United States government is an allocation of funds set aside for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for distribution to farmers. For most food and fiber crops like corn and cotton, these government subsidies come in the form of direct payments, counter-cyclical payments (CCP), and loan-deficiency payments (LDP). Direct payments are received by farmers according solely to a set amount of acres for the tract of land (section) being farmed; i.e. a fixed sum per section of land regardless of amount produced. Loan-deficiency payments are paid out on a per unit produced basis with a set price per unit. For example, a cotton farmer is guaranteed 52 cents per pound of cotton produced and the payment makes up the difference between that



The Watkin's Family Farm in Midkiff, Texas

price and the market price. The counter-cyclical payment is based on the target price minus the current market price for that product, a set amount of acres for each section, and a set amount of product for each section of land. For example, if the target price for cotton is 72 cents per pound and the current market price is 52 cents, a cotton farm with a set acreage of 100 acres and a production rate of 350 pounds per acre will receive \$7000 ($\$0.20 \times 350 \times 100$). As the actual market price nears the target market price, the amount of money paid out per unit of product decreases.

While it may seem that the farmer is raking in the cash, in actual practice each farmer is paid based on an historical amount of production that for most farms, was set sometime in the 1970's. In my experience, these set amounts are only a fraction of current production for many farmers. This is mainly because production methods have improved drastically since the 1970's. My reasons for

explaining this complicated system of subsidies is two-fold: I wanted to provide a factual basis for further study into this matter and also to show that there is nothing simple about the farm subsidies program. With only a cursory look, it might seem that the government is throwing money at the farmer, but in reality there are many rules and restrictions that each farmer must follow to the letter in order to receive anything from the government.

Subsidies Under Fire

The subsidies that the U.S. government provides to farmers have come under heavy fire in the last few years. In 2005, Brazil sued the US in the World Trade Organization (WTO) for implementing trade distorting policies and won. Many cotton producing countries believe the money from the American government for cotton subsidies encourages overproduction, thus causing the price to fall because of surplus supply. It is true that the loan-deficiency payments are tied to

production and that by artificially boosting the price, production is increased above what it would normally be. However, the WTO allows a certain amount of money to be spent in what they call “trade distorting policies” and the money spent on LDP’s is well below the amount allowed. The tricky part comes when counter-cyclical payments are taken into consideration. They are only minimally tied to production because they are paid out based on historical yields and the WTO does not actually place them in the “trade distorting policies” box. On the other hand, direct payments are not tied to production at all and subsequently, do not artificially increase production. However, direct payments actually work to the producer’s disadvantage in some cases because they indirectly cause the input prices of farm equipment and supplies like fertilizer and chemicals to rise. This occurs because the equipment suppliers know that producers are receiving money and that they can charge a higher price for equipment and producers will still purchase that equipment. So while the direct payment seems like a good deal, it indirectly causes operating costs and capital expenses to increase.

Impact on Farmers Overseas

I have been explaining the effects of these subsidies on American farmers; however, the effect on foreign producers is much more difficult to define. America produces 19% of the world’s cotton supply and the WTO has said definitively that the LDP payment is a trade distorting

policy. What this means is that by artificially raising the price the producer receives for his cotton, American farmers produce more than they would at a lower price; this causes supply to increase forcing the world market price of cotton to decrease. This lower price means that foreign producers receive less for their cotton than they would if the subsidy were not in place. Recent research has suggested that complete elimination of these cotton subsidies could increase the world market price for cotton by 6-14%. With an average price around \$0.569 for 2007, a 6-14% increase would translate to increases of \$0.034 and \$0.08 respectively. However, this scenario would mean the complete elimination of government help to American farmers, and there is debate about how long these calculated increases in price would last due to the many variables that determine world price. I would also argue that the intent of the subsidies program is not to hurt foreign producers. Their purpose is to help America’s family farmers, and the hurt caused to foreign producers is an indirect effect.

If subsidies were to be discontinued there would be many effects on American producers. By taking away the direct payment, the prices of equipment and input supplies could conceivably decrease, but by how much is not certain. The question would be whether the cost decrease would outweigh the revenue lost. Because profit margins for commodities are relatively low at the production level, volume is the one of the main determinates of a producer’s bottom line. Given this, if

revenues were to fall after the elimination of subsidies, many smaller producers would likely go out of business. Larger producers would be more likely to hang on and would be more inclined to grow even larger. This could conceivably give rise to an increase in corporate farms with production volumes on a massive scale. Summed up, all of this means that there would be many changes that would affect the family farmer, and there could be a substantial change to the demographics of rural America.

The subsidies that the US government pays to producers of commodity crops have many effects on individual foreign and domestic producers and on the world agricultural system as a whole. On the positive side, these subsidies contribute to the growth and development of American agriculture and to the financial well-being of domestic family farms. However, these same subsidies create several negative effects. World market prices are decreased because of overproduction, causing financial damage to foreign producers, and domestic input prices are artificially inflated. It is for these reasons that the farm bill should be reformed to decrease the negative effects on both domestic and foreign producers. However, America’s family farmers produce a necessary element in our national economy and our day-to-day sustenance depends on their contributions. It is important that we not abandon them but rather, we must continue to support them in their need.

Devin Watkins is an Oblate Pre-novice in Buffalo, NY

Bold Justice Underway in South Florida

Christina Herman

Only one of the nine Broward County Commissioners showed up to face a crowd of 1500 Bold Justice members filling the pews of St. Mark's Church in Cooper City, Florida. The demand of the religious activists: affordable rental housing and health care for impoverished county residents. The Commissioners who didn't come received hundreds of phone calls the next day. BOLD Justice (Broward Organized Leaders Doing Justice), the recently formed interfaith community organization in South Florida responsible for the meeting, has since met with seven of the nine Commissioners. A Commission workshop on housing is planned for April 15.

The Catholic, Protestant and Jewish faith communities making up the political pressure organization hope to move local officials to focus on the needs of poor people. Through house meetings as well as larger community meetings, members of Bold Justice have organized and developed strategies to hold local officials accountable and make political structures work for the disenfranchised. Their emphasis is on winning long-term change to address specific community problems.

Roughly 12% of the population of Broward County is under the poverty line and two of their most pressing needs are affordable housing and health care. These two priority issues were identified during the year-long organizing process that culminated in the establishment of BOLD Justice. A community organizer trained by the

DART Center, Andy Lee, was hired to guide this process.

The first major gathering of Bold Justice last February focused on holding the Broward County Commissioners accountable to a promise they made three years ago to build 15,600 affordable rental housing units. **Fr. Alex Roque, OMI**, pastor of St. Stephen's Parish in Miramar and a lead organizer of the effort, said that 4,200 of those units are desperately needed now. With one room apartments in the area costing \$1000/month and up, over 42,000 residents are forced to use half of their salary just to pay the rent.

What is the benefit to local congregations of involvement in an organization like BOLD Justice? Apart from the joy of putting faith into action, congregations benefit from leadership skill development, strengthened relationships among congregants, and the development of relationships across religious, racial and economic boundaries.



DART (Direct Action Research and Training Center) began in Florida in 1977 as a response to the needs of Senior Citizens. A few years later, the group responded to the riots sparked by racism within the Miami police department and Miami Courts with an organizing drive within the African-American community. The organization's success led to calls for expansion.



John Cox, OMI, pastor of the parishes of St. Francis Xavier and Holy Redeemer in Miami, is active in another DART-affiliated community organization in Florida: PACT – People Acting for Community Together. PACT is focusing on the quality of education in Miami-Dade Public schools, comprehensive immigration reform, and access to health care. PACT's Spring Action Assembly will focus on the issues of drugs and gun violence.

DART now operates in six states and offers two five-day orientation workshops, and annual Clergy Conference, an Advanced Leader Training Institute, and provides regular local training workshops. The DART Organizers Institute, a paid field school, was launched in 2001 to identify and train professional community organizers. The process includes a seven month national recruitment search, a two month interview process, and a four month intensive initial training followed by two years of on-going advanced training and professional organizer development.

For more information, or to find out how your congregation can become involved, please visit the DART website at: www.thedartcenter.org/

Faith Consistent Investing

Seamus P. Finn, OMI and Christina C. Herman

The JPIC Office has engaged a record number of companies this year on a diversity of issues. These ranged from access to capital in underserved communities to access to medicines in poor countries. Working in coordination with other faith-based institutional investors belonging to the **Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility**, the office filed twenty-one resolutions and is engaging in eighteen dialogues – for a total of thirty-nine actions with pharmaceutical, mining, financial, computer, manufacturing, energy, retail, meat-packing and beverage corporations.

Our engagements have generally been positive and fruitful. We focus on trying to get companies to ‘do the right thing’ by including social and environmental realities in our discussions and emphasizing the impact of companies’ decisions and policies on the poor.

Here are some highlights of corporate engagement during recent months:



Access to Capital:

The meltdown in the credit market, which originated in the subprime mortgage implosion and spread through the structured securities sector like a wildfire, has made work on access to capital particularly timely. We have met with **Merrill Lynch, Citigroup, Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase** on their roles in the crisis. Two core

issues were raised in these meetings; 1) the risk management policies and structure of the corporation 2) responsible evaluation of new tools and products introduced into the financial system especially regarding their impact on liquidity and instability.

The provision of responsible and prudent credit to underserved communities and individuals through microfinance and other instruments, both in the U.S. and throughout the world, has been deemed a reliable tool in promoting human development and building community. Pressing the formal financial sector to participate responsibly in these activities by making a positive contribution to this effort remains a priority for the OMI faith consistent investing program.



Mining and Indigenous Peoples

Global appetite for fossil fuel energy continues to increase exponentially. While some of this growth can be reduced through conservation and energy alternatives, reductions are not expected to be significant. New and expanded incursions by the extractives sector in Latin America, Africa and Asia have led to numerous protests and requests for help from adversely affected local communities. We receive information from colleagues in these communities, and

local community and religious leaders have been coming to Washington in search of both allies and hope.

In this sector, the JPIC Office has engaged **Newmont Mining, Freeport McMoran, Barrick Gold, Alcoa, Apache, Chevron and Halliburton**. “Free, Prior and Informed Consent” is not a catchy slogan, but is essential to the well-being of indigenous communities so often living in areas where minerals, oil and natural gas abounds. Mining and energy extraction are intensely polluting, but are attractive to poor country governments desperate for cash, especially foreign exchange.

A recent dialog with mining giant **Newmont Mining Corporation** led to the company agreeing to report on the impact of their presence on local communities and subsequently to adopt appropriate policies to address any findings in the report. The preliminary report is due in May of 2008 and a full report should come out in December of this year.

The recent acquisition of Phelps Dodge by **Freeport Mc Moran** has placed the numerous issues related to mining in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** front and center in our conversation with that company. We have followed closely the impact of their presence in West Papua for the last ten years and look forward to working with the company in integrating the measures and policies adopted in West Papua to their newly assumed operations in the Tenke Fungurume project in the DRC.

(continued on page 14)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Document to Defend

Daniel LeBlanc, OMI

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the unanimous adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). That noble declaration has come under serious threat, as demonstrated by the military crackdowns last autumn in Myanmar, (formerly Burma) and Pakistan. In the United States, the current debate over waterboarding reveals just how far we have moved from universal recognition of those rights.

The introduction to a children's edition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights published by the UN conveys clearly the amazing process that took place:

One day, a large number of people gathered together. They came from different places and they were quite different from one another.

Some were men and some were women. Their skin, their hair and their eyes were different colors, their bodies and faces were different shapes.

They came from rich countries and poor countries, from hot places and cold places. Some came from kingdoms and some came from republics. They spoke many different languages. They worshipped different gods.

Some of the countries they represented had just come out of a terrible war that had left many cities destroyed and an enormous number of people killed. Many people had lost their homes and families.

American Catholic Declaration of Human Rights

"In January, 1947, a committee made up of U.S. Catholic laity and bishops appointed by the "National Catholic Welfare Conference" (the national agency of the American Catholic Bishops) issued nothing less than a "Declaration of Human Rights," almost two years before the United Nations proclaimed its "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" in December, 1948. In fact, the American Catholic Declaration was handed over to the "Committee on Human Rights of the United Nations," the chair of which was Eleanor Roosevelt. A comparison of the "American Catholic Declaration" (which with 50 articles is more detailed than the UN Declaration with 30 articles) and that of the United Nations reveals amazing similarities, some passages of the latter being even verbatim that of the former. The Catholic document speaks of human "personal dignity....being endowed with certain natural, inalienable rights....The unity of the human race under God is not broken by geographical distance or by diversity of civilization, culture and economy..."

(From a lecture by Prof. Leonard Swidler of Temple University in Philadelphia on the 30th March 2006 which describes a Catholic precursor-cument to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, p. 4; see also footnote 2)

Many people had been hurt or killed because of their religion, their race or their political opinions.

What brought those people together was their wish that there should be no more war; that nobody should ever be hurt again and that people who hadn't done any harm should never be punished again.

So, all together, they wrote a document. In this document they tried to make a list of the rights that every human being has, and that everyone else should respect.

This document is called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹

The Declaration of Human Rights, with its close Catholic antecedent, has both significance and challenge for us.

In the UN Charter drafted in San Francisco in 1945, the essential principles of human rights were woven into the text, beginning with the opening Preamble.

The Human Rights Commission, along with the Commission for the Status of Women, were the first two such bodies set up by the newly formed United Nations. Their task of drafting a Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a mammoth intercultural effort.

At its first sitting, in January 1947, Eleanor Roosevelt was unanimously elected Chair of the Drafting Committee. Other members included: a Filipino journalist, a Canadian UN civil servant who had written a first draft, an Indian woman, a Russian, a Chilean leftist, a Chinese philosopher, a French legal genius and a Lebanese

philosopher. Eleanor led the group through months of long discussion and debate. Their work was crowned by the unanimous adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the 10th of December 1948.

Soon afterwards the small window of opportunity which had favoured collaboration among the greater powers of the time, especially between the US and the USSR, slammed shut with the onslaught of the “Cold War.” It is hard to imagine the member-states of the United Nations today adopting such a document.

“One of the most basic assumptions of the founders of the UN and the framers of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was that the root causes of atrocities and armed conflict are frequently to be found in poverty and discrimination . . . These ideas found expression in the Declaration’s insistence on the link between freedom and social security and on the relation of both to peace.”³

On the negative side of the ledger, many came to dismiss the Commission for Human Rights because it became so politicized. Governments fell to the temptation of making deals (e.g., ‘I’ll cover you, if you cover me’) which did not promote the protection of human rights. The Commission was changed in 2006 to a Human Rights Council with clearer accountability to all nations under the UN General Assembly. The new body is still trying to free itself of ‘old tendencies’ and to move beyond the unproductive tactic adopted by a few countries of ‘naming and shaming’ others. But on

the positive side, thanks primarily to the efforts of civil society in my view, a culture of human rights has been built up over the years and most countries **do** want to be seen as honouring human rights. The Human Rights Council will have a new mechanism in 2008 to require a ‘peer review’ of all countries, beginning with members themselves.



The role of civil society in holding governments’ feet to the fire is essential. And we know that all must begin with their own governments, the United States not excepted. No circumstances justify the suspension of respect for human rights. As the President of the UN General Assembly recently stated at a briefing with NGOs representing civil society, “Although people can exist without states, states cannot exist without people.” A vigilant citizenry - and I would add, an informed citizenry - is the only guarantee of freedom.

Eleanor Roosevelt often remarked about documents expressing ideals: “[They] carry no weight unless the people know them, unless the people understand them, unless the people demand that they be lived.”⁴ In

remarks made at the UN in 1973, she stated:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in, the school of college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works.⁵

Mary Glendon in her study of the drafting of the Declaration entitled *A World Made New*, writes of how future generations will assess current ‘stewardship’ of the legacy of the Declaration’s framers:

How we measure up will depend in part on today’s leaders, especially those who chart the course of the world’s one remaining superpower. But what will be decisive is whether or not sufficient numbers of women and men in ‘small places, close to home’ can imagine, and then begin to live the reality of freedom, solidarity and peace.⁶

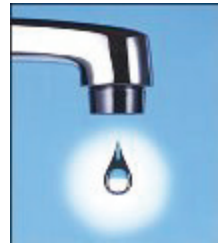
I am at the UN because the Oblates of Mary Immaculate decided to have a presence at the UN. By extension, you – as part of the larger Oblate Family – are at the UN. We all share a responsibility to use this presence to make the vision - of nations united for a better world for all - a reality. We need to remind our governments, as is said in the Preamble of the UN Charter, that:

(cont. on p. 13)

Think Outside the Bottle: Drink Tap Water, NOT Bottled Water

The message is clear: Bottled water is “good” water, as opposed to that nasty, unsafe stuff that comes out of the tap. But in most cases tap water adheres to stricter purity standards than bottled water, whose source—far from a mountain spring—can be wells underneath industrial facilities. Indeed, 40 percent of bottled water began life as, well, tap water.

(E/The Environmental Magazine, Sept/Oct 2003)



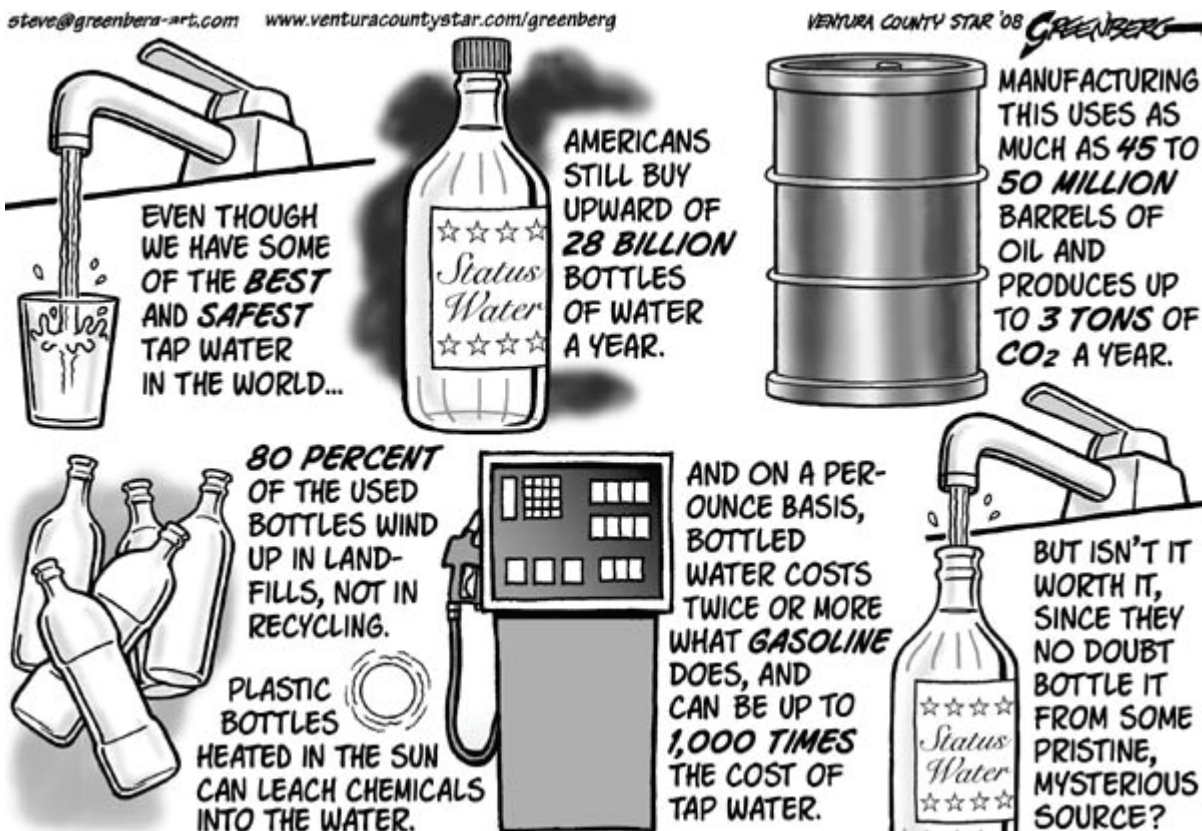
Did you know?

- Seventy-four percent of Americans drink bottled water, and one in five drinks only bottled water.
- It takes 2,000 years for one plastic bottle to breakdown in a landfill. Each year more than 4 billion pounds of PET plastic bottles end up in landfills or as roadside litter.
- Worldwide, consumers spent \$100 billion on bottled water in 2005. Bottled water, per ounce, costs twice or more than Gasoline!
- Up to 40% of bottled water comes from the same source as tap water, but is sold back to consumers at hundreds of times the cost. Producing bottles to meet Americans' demand for bottled water required more than 17 million barrels of oil last year – enough fuel for more than 1 million U.S. cars for a year - and generated more than 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide.

Thanks to: Think Outside the Bottle Campaign

TAKE THE THINK OUTSIDE THE BOTTLE PLEDGE

For more information, and to take the pledge, visit: www.thinkoutsidethebottle.org/



Tears of Joy!

Darrell Rupiper, OMI

Martha Martinez stood looking at Fr. Darrell Rupiper, OMI as tears rolled down her face. Then, she gave him a hug and said: "I never thought I would live to see the day when stewardship and environmental issues would be addressed from the pulpit."

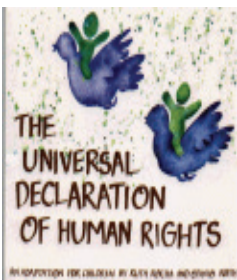
This unforgettable encounter after a Mass at St. Eugene's parish in Brownsville, Texas has led to a very successful recycling effort in the area.

Marta, who runs a recycling center, proceeded to place large recycling containers - free of charge - at several churches following the Eco-Missions preached by Fr. Darrell.

More recently, with the supportive presence of parishioners from St. Joseph's parish, the city commissioners were pressured to sign on to a recycling contract with Marta for the entire city of Brownsville.



With victory comes celebration! Marta, Fr. Darrell, the mayor of Brownsville and supporters rode in a parade celebrating "El Charro" Days in the Rio Grande Valley. Their vehicle: a float sponsored by the ESD Recycling Center.



(Universal Declaration of Human Rights..., continued from p. 11)

We, the peoples of the United Nations, are determined . . . to reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small . . .

These are life-time commitments challenging each of us to believe that we can make a difference in our world, making it a home for all peoples: the poor and the rich, the seemingly powerless as well as the powerful.

Footnotes to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Document to Defend:

1. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, an Adaptation for by Children. Ruth Rocha and Otavio Roth. UN Publications, 1989
2. See further references in his note no. 15: "A Declaration of Human Rights. A Statement Just Drafted by a Committee Appointed by the National Catholic Welfare Conference," *The Catholic Action*, XXIX (February 1947), pp. 4f. & 17; and "A Declaration of Rights. Drafted by a Committee Appointed by the National Catholic Welfare Conference," *The Catholic Mind*, XLV, Nr. 1012 (April 1947), pp. 193-196. A German translation appeared in "Eine Charta der Menschenrechte. Eine Denkschrift der Katholiken Amerikas," *Die Furche*, 8 (February 1947), pp. 4f. Both the original American and a German translation as well as an interesting analysis can be found in Gertraud Putz, *Christentum und Menschenrechte* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 1991), pp. 322-330, 388-397.
3. Mary Ann Glendon. *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2001, p. 238.
4. Eleanor Roosevelt, "Making Human Rights Come Alive," in Allida Black, ed., Brooklyn: Carlson, 1995, 559.
5. Quoted in Joseph Lash, Eleanor: *The Years Alone*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1972, p. 81.
6. Glendon, op. cit., p. 241.

Faith Consistent Investing (continued from p. 9):

Wal-Mart:



For more than 15 years, from a time when **Wal-Mart** was much smaller than it is now, ICCR members have worked hard to address important issues with the company. These conversations have revolved around the just and fair treatment of their own employees, their impact on local communities, the conditions in the factories from which their suppliers source product for their stores, and more recently, issues related to their entry into the grocery business.

A speech in January 2008 in Kansas City by Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott detailed his vision for the company as follows: “In the next three years, we would like to build a very different system. We believe that there should be one framework of social and environmental standards for all major global retailers. And there should be one third party auditing system for everyone. This will ensure improvement can occur across the board on a level playing field.”

We believe that our regular engagement with the company, alongside other faith based and socially responsible investors in the ICCR community, continues to push the company to the point of both setting and implementing higher social

and environmental standards. For a company of Wal-Mart’s size and extension this commitment is fraught with great challenges as well as opportunities. We are hopeful that our work with them in 2008 will make measurable improvements for all their stakeholders.

Health as a Human Right:

Picking up on guidelines being developed by UN Special Rapporteur Paul Hunt on **health as a human right**, the Oblates co-filed resolutions with two pharmaceutical companies, **Abbott Laboratories** and **Johnson & Johnson**, and engaged in dialog with five others, including **Merck**, **Pfizer** and **Schering Plough**. In conjunction with other institutional faith-based investors, we called on the pharmaceutical industry to address the serious problem of lack of R&D in neglected diseases, as well as the high prices of new drugs. Responding to pressure, many companies are making their compound libraries available to researchers working on neglected diseases, with a promise to license any compounds found to be useful. This was estimated by one company to be worth over \$22 million.

Fundamental problems with the industry remain, however, with only an estimated 11 percent of the drugs approved from 1981 to 2003 being new formulations – meaning that 80 percent were re-formulations of existing drugs tweaked to enable them to qualify for patent extension. This practice, termed “ever-greening”



is a constant complaint of health activists around the world.

Global Warming:

The JPIC Office began work on global warming issues this



year, co-filing resolutions with two energy companies, **Chevron** and **El Paso Corporation**, on the issue of **CO2 emissions reductions** in their operations. Chevron, which challenged the ICCR Resolution at the SEC, but lost, has agreed to meet with ICCR members in April. El Paso Corp., which supplies roughly one-fourth of the nation’s natural gas through an extensive network of inter-state pipelines, has been working to reduce leakage from these pipelines through enhanced technology. A constructive dialog on emissions resulted in the withdrawal of the Resolution. This is a preferred outcome which heralds the development of a positive relationship with a company that, over time, can yield steady change.

Water Conservation:

In another new area for the Oblates, we joined an



established dialog between the **Hormel Corporation** and ICCR members. The discussions ranged across an array of issues related to **environmental sustainability**, from over-use of antibiotics on the supplier

(continued on next page)

Oblate Ecological Work in the High Andes

Daniel LeBlanc, OMI

In late February, I attended a week-long international Seminar/Workshop in Cochabamba, Bolivia for Oblates and laity ministering to Indigenous Peoples. Just three hours away by bus in the high Andes is the mining area of Oruro where Oblates have worked for 50 years. Despite the billions of dollars that have flowed from tin and silver mines over the centuries, the people of Oruro remain among the poorest of the poor.



Brother Bilberto Pauwels, OMI

Brother Gilberto Pauwels, OMI, who served as my host in Oruro, has been working in this area for many years. In 1995 he organized a team of people to work on the themes of mining, environment and education and established CEPA (Centro de Ecologia

y Pueblos Andinos - Center of Ecology and Andean Peoples). The team at the center monitors the effects of mining on communities, publishes a bi-weekly bulletin, and is deeply involved in education, especially at the High School and University levels. An important part of their outreach is helping teachers to incorporate an awareness of sound environmental practices into their teaching. CEPA's environmental monitoring collects the data needed to insure that the mine complies with Bolivian environmental laws and is a good corporate citizen. This information is also used to educate people, especially the target student population, about the dangers posed by mining to animals, plants, and human health, from mining-related air and water contaminants.

Recently, CEPA purchased a piece of property close to town (some 65 hectares) and is creating a new center for formation, ecology, intercultural and interreligious action. "Tambo CEPA Chuzekery", as it is called, is adjacent to a mine owned by the Inti Raymi Mining Company which is a subsidiary of US-based Newmont

Mining Corp. The CEPA center and land is designed to be a protected area and a demonstration to the surrounding community that there are other options available to them if they choose not to open new mines or when the current mines are closed.

The CEPA site currently contains some rustic buildings for educational activities, three greenhouses for vegetable and cactus production and a reforestation project. Students can come to participate in day-long or weekend workshops and experience ecologically sound practices "in situ". The region is arid, but has underground sources of water. Using traditional and modern technology - windmills and solar energy - water is pumped to the surface and used to irrigate recently planted trees. Fruits and vegetables provide meals for participants. The expectation is that these experiences will encourage young people to work together for change, generating hope for the future.

See p.9 for more information on Oblate work with Newmont Mining Corp. For information on CEPA, see their website at www.omi-usajpic.org

(continued from previous page)

farms, to water use and protection. This multi-national meat-packing corporation, headquartered in the upper-Mid-West, began looking at sustainability issues in a comprehensive way largely due to the prodding of faith-based institutional investors, and is making important changes in many areas, from data collection and reporting, to investing in 'green' plants.



Coca Cola Corporation has been criticized for over-use of water in India, where there have also been concerns about pesticide residue in some of its products. A recent dialog with the company in New York resulted in a withdrawal of the stockholder resolution focusing on potential environmental and public health impacts of its operations in India, when the company agreed to its terms. Coca Cola is sensitive to the increasing scarcity of clean water globally, at the same time that it remains interested in international expansion.

For more information on Faith Consistent Investing check out **Issues** on our website: www.omi-usajpic.org

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Please visit our website at
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Hope sends us dancing
around dark
corners, trusting in a
common tomorrow
we cannot see.

- Joan Chittister, OSB



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