

COORDINATOR'S CORNER



Why Do We Kill People To Teach That Killing People Is Wrong?

The Congregation of Sisters of Saint Agnes (CSA) takes a corporate stance against the death penalty! In earlier documents, CSA has stated its stance of nonviolence. This time individuals “voted” overwhelmingly against the death penalty and each member can now speak on this issue on behalf of the congregation. Needless to say, CSA does not stand alone, as the U.S. bishops have expressed their opposition to the death penalty over 20 years. Pope John Paul II spoke eloquently and often against it too. This issue is of particular importance in Wisconsin where a referendum will appear on the November 7, 2006, ballot.

CSA has a folder of materials including a CD of a Powerpoint presentation and accompanying text that is available upon request and can be used with small or large groups. Contact Susan Ledesma at (920) 907-2316 or sledesma@csasisters.org to get a free copy.

Beginning with this issue, you will find updates from a newly formed Justice, Peace and Ecology Committee Latin America (JPEC-LA). The hope is that JPEC-LA and JPEC-US can work together on important global issues.

With this issue, we conclude the reflections on the Earth Charter. If you would like continuous updates, go to www.earthcharter.org.

S. Judy Smits shares with us her reflections on a conference she attended called Politics and Spirituality.

In recent months, CSA has received many new resources for our library, especially DVDs. Page 7 lists some of them. You can use them for your own education or share them in a group. Return postage is your only cost.

The insert “Shopping for Justice” is something to keep handy whenever you need to purchase gifts, but especially for your Christmas purchases.

—S. Stella Storch, OP

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S. Stella Storch, OP

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JustPeace is now accepting submissions in prose and poetry via fax, e-mail or mail. *JustPeace* is available on our web site in Spanish and English.

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Inside:

- The Earth Charter..... p 2
- Politics and Spirituality...p 4
- Opening Roads of Hope.....p 5
- Apostolic Vicariate of Bluefields.....p 6
- New Acquisitions.....p 7

Don't Forget to Vote - November 7, 2006

The Earth Charter



*This issue of JustPeace concludes the reflections on Principles of the Earth Charter. I hope these articles have whet your appetite to learn more about this important document. I thank each of our contributors for their thoughtful and often passionate reflections. They are all members of the Justice, Peace and Ecology Committee (JPEC). A copy of the Earth Charter can be found at www.earthcharter.org as well as a book called *Toward a Sustainable World: The Earth Charter In Action*.*

This book is a collection of thematic and descriptive essays inspired by the Earth Charter. The book is organized by the structure of the Earth Charter and demonstrates the rich diversity of its uses, principle by principle. It points toward the many possibilities for future utilization to work across faith traditions, nations, and generations, and the northern and southern hemispheres.

Think of the Earth Charter (2000) as a companion to the United Nations Charter (1945) and spread both as widely as possible. ~ S. Stella Storch, OP

Principle 10

a. Promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations.

b. Enhance the intellectual, financial, technical, and social resources of developing nations, and relieve them of onerous international debt.

c. Ensure that all trade supports sustainable resource use, environmental protection, and progressive labor standards.

d. Require multinational corporations and international financial organizations to act transparently in the public good, and hold them accountable for the consequences of their activities.

Accepting another without regard for race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, political views or other such factors is not easy. When we come face to face with someone who is “different” from us, we can easily discount them. Too often fear dictates our belief about our behavior toward anyone who fails to match up to ourselves. It seems our nation at this time in history is driven by fear, and that makes many of us deny those who are different.

This principle of the Earth Charter reminds us that we need to support the rights of all peoples. In the Old Testament, the moral standard of a nation was its care and support of the most vulnerable of its citizens. When the widows and orphans had sufficient clothing, food and shelter, the nation was blessed by Yahweh. As a society, we have a moral obligation to care for the unfortunate. The deplorable scenes which television brought into our homes after Hurricane Katrina are proof that the United States is a long way from non-discrimination against the poor. Even now, months after the catastrophe, the plight of the people of New Orleans is not much better. When we measure a

nation’s “success” by the wealthiest among its citizens, rather than the plight of the weakest, we have lost sight of that biblical imperative.

As a nation, we are learning to respect the wisdom and traditions of indigenous people. We have much yet to learn about them, in order to grow in deeper respect.

The basis of this principle in the Charter is the recognition and value of each group of people, so that no group dominates another. Oppression and domination are contrary to the intent of God’s will for us. Injustice anywhere diminishes justice everywhere.

The Earth Charter challenges us to respect all so that all are free to develop into the persons and societies they are meant to be. Discrimination prevents individuals and societies from being more than they are and can be. When anyone is oppressed, we all suffer its effects.

— S. Patrice Rog, CSA

Principle 11

Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.

a. Secure the human rights of women and girls and end all violence against them.

b. Promote the active participation of women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life as full and equal, decision makers, leaders, and beneficiaries.

c. Strengthen families and ensure the safety and loving nurture of all family members.

Continued on page 3

The Earth Charter/ *Continued*

It has been a quarter of a century since the beginning of the women's movement, with huge changes for women and society. Still, the issues brought forth in principle 11 are shockingly very much huge issues. Trafficking of young girls, female circumcision, denial of education for girls, degradation of women's bodies—the list goes on.

Spreading the word and educating people on these and other issues is so valuable since the perceptions are often totally wrong—perceptions that all is going in the right direction and that with time it will all get fixed. And young women are often unaware of the struggles that have produced the right to vote, the opening of the professions to women, and the improvements in the work environment.

A new book Getting Even by Evelyn Murphy describes the widening wage gap for women. The prevalent perception is that women's wages are nearly even with men; but her research shows a plateau was reached and now the gap is increasing. Why is this important to our Earth Charter principles? Ms. Murphy illustrates the impact on “better medical treatment, child care, housing, food, retirement savings that women could have afforded if they were paid as well as men.”

It is certainly heartening to learn about the election of women to head their country's governments in Chile, Liberia and Germany in the hope that women's issues will get appropriate attention. Meanwhile women, and the men who care about them, can learn a lot about individual efforts to improve their wages from this book—just one thread in the effort to gain gender equality and equity. —*Eunice Brennan, Justice, Peace and Ecology Committee Member*

Principle 12

Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

a. Eliminate discrimination in all its forms, such as that based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, and national, ethnic, or social origin.

Quoting from Genesis, the story of creation, “God looked at everything that was made and found it very good.” We need only to look around for proof of the diversity in the world—plants, animals, humans—microscopic in size and as large as the whales or the giant sequoias; and in every size and color

that one can imagine. It is important that we celebrate diversity every day, strengthening our belief that all life is sacred.

Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes the dignity of the human person. But there are many “barriers to successful cross-cultural relations,” as outlined by Richard Bucher in his book, Diversity Consciousness.

1. We have limited ability to process information from our senses, resulting in limited perceptions, which may not reflect complete reality. We then may focus on our assumptions, perceiving what we want to perceive in understanding others. How people perceive matters can differ greatly among cultures.

2. We often assume that our way of thinking and acting is superior to any other, which may cause us to devalue or ignore differences.

3. Stereotyping is a way in which we put individuals into boxes, using a personal experience with a person, or comments or news we may have heard about a certain group of people who may be different. When we stereotype individuals we lose the ability to learn from them or to relate to them effectively.

4. Prejudice is an opinion which is often irrational, inflexible, and formed with a lack of knowledge. Often prejudices are the result of stereotyping. We need to be aware of our own prejudices—our discomfort being with or talking to those who are different.

5. Prejudice plus power is a barrier that we all must pay attention to. People in power have the ability to influence and control others; therefore they can affect many people with their prejudices. Certainly, being knowledgeable and aware of world events and our government and foreign industry policies is a responsibility of each one of us.

6. Discrimination is defined as the unequal treatment of people on the basis of their group. It is treatment of individuals based on race, age, gender, social class, disability, or any other dimension of diversity.

It is important for each of us to be aware and to acknowledge our own diversity barriers. These often are insidiously hidden underneath many layers of ideas and lack of understanding and knowledge of cultural differences. Dealing with our own discriminatory and social barriers and speaking out about those we identify in our daily environment can be a calling for each of us. All people have the right to be seen and treated as individuals.

b. Affirm the right of indigenous peoples to their spirituality, knowledge, lands and resources and to their related practice of sustainable livelihoods.

We recognize that all creation is sacred and that there is an interconnectedness of all creation. It is important for us to be

Continued on page 5

POLITICS AND SPIRITUALITY

By Judy Smits, CSA

In January I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend a conference titled *Politics and Spirituality – Seeking a Public Integrity*. The conference was held in Washington, D.C. and attended by 1700 people. The presenters were Rev. Richard Rohr, of Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, NM; Rev. Jim Wallis of Sojourners; and author, Ann Lamont. Following are some of the images and ideas shared at this inspiring event.

The opening session began with a procession of people carrying icons of people who witnessed to gospel values in their own time and place. These included Dorothy Day, Sojourner Truth, Oscar Romero, Ety Hillesum and Martin Luther King. This “cloud of witnesses” looked out from the serene eyes of the icon to encourage conference attendees in their desire to make a difference at this time in human history.

Richard Rohr invited us to reflect on the story of Moses and his encounter with God at the burning bush. God’s concern was for the people suffering in slavery. Moses had to be convinced that not only did he need to be concerned, but that there was something he could do about it. Slavery is a paradigm of the human situation when we cannot imagine an alternative to the status quo. But within the community of faith, an alternative not only can be imagined but can become reality.

We have a choice between hope and cynicism. If we are believers we are hopeful, believing that things can change for the better. Faith leads to hope which leads to actions which lead to change. Social change comes from a movement and it comes slowly. It took more than 30 years and 9 votes to finally end slavery. The “altar call” which is such an integral part of evangelical worship was invented by Rev. Charles Finney, a staunch abolitionist, who used it to sign people up to join the struggle. Poverty is the new slavery. We have to get to the point where the majority of the people will no longer accept extreme poverty.

Jim Wallis shared about meeting a young man in Sing Sing Prison. The man said, “All of us here in this prison are from the same four or five neighborhoods. It’s like we get on a train at nine years old and the train ends up in Sing Sing. When I get out I want to stop that train!” When faced with overwhelming problems we think the odds are against us but that is why they call it faith.

Through archeology we learn that the prophets arose in Palestine during times of the greatest disparity between the wealthy and the poor. Today, some CEO’s make 600 times more than the average worker! We have to get away from

the politics of blame and fear. The country is hungry for serious discourse that goes deeper. We need an agenda that is worthy of our lives.

Superficiality is killing us. Spirituality is the tether that can ground us in the freedom and grace that rises above political correctness. We have to be able to hold the tensions between the left and the right, the masculine and feminine, the human and the divine. This is the cross. It doesn’t sell because it feels like powerlessness. True spirituality is always about “letting go.”

One of the poisons of modern life is individualism. Community with its emphasis on soul is the antidote to this poison. Only in togetherness are we the glory of God. In community we can let go of the over emphasis on ego and the need to differentiate ourselves from others. We are free to enter into the dance between outer authority and inner authority. As our eyes are opened to the ways we are like the other, we enter the transforming fire, the path we are to take manifests itself.

Jim Wallis shared that he had a first conversion at six when he “accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior” and a second conversion at the age of 14 when he turned his back on religion. At the time, Detroit, his home town, was in the throes of the civil rights movement and the anti Viet Nam War demonstrations. He had gotten involved with a black church in the inner city and in getting to know the people and their struggle he developed some questions which he brought to the elders of his church. He was told that Christianity had nothing to do with racism, poverty or war, that these are political and faith is personal!

True, God is personal and calls us into relationship. But God is also a public God. The prophets remind us that God is concerned about the plight of the poor, the widow and orphan. God speaks to kings, to rulers, and calls them to act justly toward the lowly. When Martin Luther King, Jr. became involved with the Montgomery bus boycott he didn’t really understand what he was getting into. When his home, his life and the lives of his family were threatened, his faith in Jesus had to get personal if he was going to be able to stay the course.

Lisa Sullivan was a young black woman with a PhD from Yale who worked at Sojourners. She had such fire and passion for the work that she became the hope of the Sojourner community. When she became ill and eventually died, the community was devastated. But the members recalled that when she heard complaints about a lack of leadership whether in church or country she would respond, “Don’t you understand, we are the ones we’ve been waiting for!”

Continued on page 5

OPENING ROADS OF HOPE...

By S. Colette Hartman

CSA's Committee of Justice, Peace and Ecology - Latin America (JPEC-LA) is determined to walk with children, adolescents, men and women living in situations of outright violation of human rights to discover paths that will bring hope and peace in their lives. Prayer, reflection, action and a passion to seek the truth are needed to keep us firm in our mission.

We believe this year has been significant for the committee in the sense that we have had the opportunity to develop more intensely our own personal formation from the perspective of ethic and spiritual values through contact with groups and individuals who are veterans in defense of the abused. Most of us have had contact with the "victims" of the maquiladoras (Nicaragua has 64 sweat shops) owned by foreigners who have the fame of treating their employees (especially young women) as a work tool but not as a human being. The workers are exploited and once their "life" is exhausted they are fired or simply sent away without receiving the remuneration that was promised. There is evidence that the maquiladoras produce destruction of environment, physical and sexual abuse and contamination of water in the area.

Committee members who work in the rural areas have given accounts of how foreigners have been given permission to explore small farmers' areas, tearing up land that has been seeded in search of minerals or petroleum. The invaders offer to build a one-room school or provide equipment for a baseball team as compensation.

Rosita, Siuna, Bonanza were areas of tropical forestry, plants and dozens of bird species. Hundreds of the birds have been exported so that now the many species are almost extinct. In the last eight years lumber trucks hauled tons and tons of mahogany, pine and other precious wood to the north without any problem.

No replanting has been done so that when you fly over the area it appears like a desert.

The CAFTA (Free trade) was officially opened in May. Many groups made efforts to protest the entrance until further study could be made but to no avail. One heard repeated often: "We are a colony of the US and must accept what that government wants."

Some of us were in contact with a group of social workers and professors from California who questioned the new 8 million dollar U.S. embassy that is being built. They said it looks more like a CIA office that probably will have control of all Central America. It is true that US ambassadors in the last 10 years have publicly intervened in Nicaragua. We have presidential elections in November and the embassy has periodically presented U.S. Congressmen to speak with candidates and even invited mayors from different departments to Washington and offered financial aid for their area if they voted for the U.S. candidate.

(To be continued)

S. Colette Hartman, CSA, works in CANTERA in Managua, Nicaragua.

The Earth Charter /Continued from page 3

aware of the impacts of our country's policies. Many in Central and South America in particular have been killed or displaced as a direct result of U.S.A. policies. The U.S.A. has supported aerial fumigation which, along with destroying illegitimate crops, also destroys large quantities of food crops used by the local people. We need to dialog with native peoples to understand and support their struggles.

c. Honor and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfill their essential role in creating sustainable societies.

Engagement of young people through workshops, real-life experiences and educational opportunities is crucial in creating a society where bodily health, spiritual well-being, human dignity and the rights of all people are upheld. We can be mentors and advocates and help to inspire our young friends individually as they pursue their projects and activities.

d. Protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and spiritual significance.

Wisconsin is a place with many Native American burial mounds. We can be advocates for respect and preservation of these holy places if development issues occur.

—Sybil Teehan, CSA Associate

Politics /Continued from page 4

As part of the closing session we were invited to turn to the people on our right and on our left and say, "You are the one we've been waiting for!" The conference ended with a procession from the hotel to the steps of The Capital and a prayer service asking for guidance and mercy for our country and its leaders.

Judith Smits, CSA, works for the Service Center for Catholic Social Services in Mobile, Alabama.

Apostolic Vicariate of Bluefields - Santa Rosa de Lima Parish (United Hearts for Health Project)

(This is another article on the Holy Family Parish, Fond du Lac, WI, sister parish relationship with Sta. Rosita Parish in Nicaragua.)

The church has made another important milestone in the project of Christ. It is love, brotherliness/sisterliness and solidarity with the people. The noble Christian inspiration of our brothers and sisters to the north with the poor of our land is manifested through the blessed work emanating from the heart of the congregation of the Holy Family Parish with the people of Rosita, Autonomous Region of North Atlantic of Nicaragua, through a sister parish program with the Santa Rosa Parish of this locality. When the hearts are united for a noble social cause there is evidence of the presence of the Spirit of God in the ardent hopes of the poor.

Two years ago (February of 2004) the health program began, being directed to the rural communities of Rosita, giving honor to the organization that collected resources to help the poor. Said program was called United Hearts for Health. With much enthusiasm there was taken to the communities not only partial solutions to immediate problems, but also tools of knowledge to overcome the dramatic conditions in which are seen immersed forever thousands of families of low economic resources which are concentrated in the most remote mountains of Rosita in the North Atlantic of Nicaragua.

This beginning process is a great challenge but, of course, with great expectations that live in the hopes of the persons integrated in this great labor but above all in the heart of its optimistic beneficiaries who participate in the construction of a culture of life more healthful for all.

The municipality of Rosita has 57 communities of which 17 are at a distance and in a condition of high risk for not counting with the least conditions of health services and health education. Starting from the reality of the unmistakable visibility, the program of United Hearts for Health proposed the following priorities: Include in the program the farthest communities and those of difficult access which are components of the project.

Health Education

Health education includes preparation of community health leaders, promoters of oral health, and directors of community organizations and encounters with exchange of knowledge and experience in the use and management of natural medicine.

Medical supply chests for community participation

In the middle of 2004, the initial phase began with contact visits, meetings and community assemblies for the

presentation of the proposed community medical supply chests. During 2004 and 2005, leadership preparation was given to the community board of directors and health leaders, and included permanent accompaniment of the activities promoted by the community leaders. In this process the community was united in the active decision-making related to the medical chests twenty-five applications for medical chests were received of which 10 received their supplies. God willing, in the year 2006 there will be supplies given to 10 more communities.

The objective of the medical supply chests is to facilitate access to medicines for the farthest rural communities and to adjust to the economic capabilities of the poorest families. The sale of medicine has the purpose of covering expenses for the upkeep of the supplies.

Recovery and promotion of natural medicine

Along with the promotion of natural medicine is the encouragement of the initiative of community and family gardens where there are agents of natural medicine. There have been two fairs where promoters of community health have offered medicines they have made.

There is also a municipal garden of natural medicines where there are encounters for interchange of knowledge and experiences among community agents and where the majority of the plants whose curative powers are known and shared by and among the participants. During 2005 there were reported 6,740 consultations and attention given to patients by agents of natural medicine in the municipality of Rosita where the majority of those present were from the rural communities.

Community segue

This continuing community activity is carried out with the intent of monitoring the work of the leaders through community interviews, of identifying the strengths and weaknesses so as to offer the support that would help the community and its leaders as a useful tool for the objective consolidation of its plans of participative action in the different communities.

For the year 2005 there are many expectations of amplifying the coverage of primary health for the communities. We have the certainty of counting on the powerful divine partnership and the human support necessary for the development of activities oriented to better the conditions of health at least in the communities more difficult to reach. Again we thank the good Samaritans of the world who unite with the struggle against adversities that affect the development of the people who lack opportunities and conditions worthy of every human being.

Ernesto Aguirre Vargas, from the Vicariate of Bluefields Health Program, works in collaboration with the local Public Health Ministry.



The 43-minute documentary film *Conviction* tells the story of three Dominican Sisters who took the proliferation of nuclear arms in this country personally. For these three Sisters bringing attention to the atrocities of nuclear weapons was a sacred act - they trespassed on federal property, made a mockery of our national

defense, went to jail for their beliefs. They broke the law. The justice system convicted them of sabotage. *Conviction* delves into all the contradictions and explores a system that would have three nuns marked as terrorists. The DVD can be ordered through www.ztsp.org or Zero to Sixty Productions, P.O. Box 1027 Boulder, CO 80306 or (720) 252-7939.



Sudan: Remembering, Responding and Rebuilding is CD-ROM produced by the Catholic Relief Services and can be used as a resource tool for education and advocacy on Sudan.

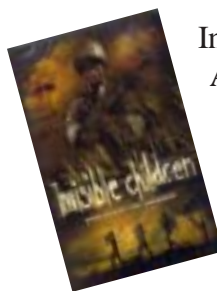
The country is struggling to recover from a separate civil war that lasted 22 years, the longest continuous war on the African continent. Through

advocacy, this serves to encourage U.S. policy makers to continue to provide humanitarian support for the affected Sudanese and work to resolve the conflicts. To order, go to www.crs.org or write Catholic Relief Services, 209 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.



Fields of Mudan is a 23-minute thesis film from the Florida State University Graduate Film Conservatory in Tallahassee, Florida, on trafficking young girls for sexual exploitation. Mudan is a very young Asian girl who wakes up with other girls in a brothel and actu-

ally witnesses a customer make his choice from amongst other very young girls. She finds sympathy in another young girl but the bonds of friendship cannot stop the bleak future that awaits them as the time of their innocence runs out. To order, call Kathy Barber at (850)645-4840 or email her at kbarber@film.fsu.edu



In 2003, three young Americans traveled to Africa in search of a story. What they found were children becoming weapons and victims at the same time. *Invisible Children* exposes the effects of a 20 year-long war on the children of North Uganda where children live in fear of

abduction by rebel soldiers and are being forced to fight as part of a violent army. The abducted children sleep in the floors of hospitals because they feel safe there. They are forever running from a system that robs them of their childhood that they don't even cry anymore because of fear. To order, write Invisible Children, 1810 Gillespie Way, Ste 205, El Cajon, CA 92020 or call (619) 562-2799. <http://www.invisiblechildren.com>



In the decades of the 1970-90s, tens of thousands of U.S. citizens traveled to Central America. It was their first time outside the borders of the U.S. What they saw and experienced left a permanent mark. Drawn from interviews with hundreds of these solidarity activists, *Like Grains of Wheat*, by Margaret Swedish and Marie Dennis,

offers their stories—"stories that still inspire, that point to a new and better way of living faithfully in the context of our broken world." To order, visit www.orbisbooks.com or call (800)258-5838.



Stolen Childhoods is a feature length documentary on global child labor. The story is told in the words of laboring children, their parents, and the people working daily to help them. 241 million children, under the age of 14, labor at the bottom of the global economy.

Filmed in seven countries—Brazil, United States, India, Kenya, Nepal, Mexico and Indonesia—*Stolen Childhoods* examines the cost of child labor to the global community, probes the causes of this complex phenomenon and recommends actions that can be taken to eliminate this gross human rights violation in our lifetime.



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Just Around the **CORNER**

1997 - 2006 United Nations Decade for Eradication of Poverty

**2001 - 2010 International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence
for the Children of the World**

September

- 4 Labor Day
- 8 The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 10 Grandparents Day
- 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- 21 St. Matthew
International Day of Peace
- 23 Autumnal equinox
Rosh Hashanah
- 24 First Day of Ramadan

October

- 1 Respect Life Sunday
- 2 Yom Kippur
The Guardian Angels
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary
- 4 St. Francis of Assisi
- 7 Sukkot
- 9 Columbus Day
- 18 St. Luke
- 24 UN Day

- 28 Sts. Simon and Jude
- 29 Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 31 Halloween

November

- 1 All Saints
- 2 All Souls
- 7 Election Day
- 10 Veterans Day (observed)
- 21 Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 23 Thanksgiving
- 26 Our Lord Jesus Christ the King

*** *Reminder* ***

Remember to pray for peace every Tuesday at 8:30 pm.