



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

A bi-monthly newsletter of information on international justice and peace issues

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Promoting nonviolence with the Catholic Church

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns was an organizer and participant in the second international meeting on nonviolence hosted by Pax Christi International and the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in Rome in April 2019.

Approximately 80 activists, bishops, theologians, peace practitioners, and faith leaders took part in a two-day workshop entitled “Path of Nonviolence: Towards a Culture of Peace” in Rome on April 4 and 5. Participants came from Mexico, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Colombia, Honduras, Brazil, Canada, the United States, Uganda, South Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Palestine, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Fiji, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy. The purpose of the workshop was to carry on the dialogue that had begun at the first conference on nonviolence hosted by Pax Christi International and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in Rome in 2016.

Cardinal Peter Turkson from Ghana and the Prefect of the Dicastery, gave the keynote address on the nonviolence of Jesus, examining his mind, meekness, and humility. Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, moderated the workshop’s first session, in which the participants, many of whom live and work in communities wracked by violence, reflected on the signs of the times and proposed pathways of nonviolence.

The workshop represented tremendous progress for Pax Christi International’s Catholic Nonviolence initiative (CNI), of which MOGC is a founding member, which was launched after the first Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference in Rome in April of 2016. It was the culmination of a more than two-year process in which MOGC and the partner organizations comprising CNI brought together nearly one hundred voices of veteran practitioners of active nonviolence to share their spirituality as well as their practices through a structure of five roundtables meeting around the world. The roundtables gathered best thinkings on a foundational theology of nonviolence and the nonviolent example of Jesus in the Gospels and produced a new moral framework of nonviolence and just peace, recommendations on the integration of nonviolence into the life of the Catholic Church and a people’s encyclical on the power of active nonviolence.

The workshop’s participants raised the importance of encounter and conversion, favorite themes of Pope Francis, and delivered numerous impassioned pleas for an encyclical on Gospel nonviolence from the pope. They also repeatedly spoke of their individual and personal experiences and practices of active nonviolence as

the root of their understandings of Scripture and their call for action by the Church.

In a joint press release issued immediately following the workshop, Monsignor Bruno Marie Duffé from France and Secretary of the Dicastery said, “Our conversations on nonviolence and peace filled our hearts and minds with a consideration of the dignity of each person – young people, women and men, people who are impoverished, citizens and leaders. Nonviolence and peace call us to receive and to give, to gather and to hope.”

Marie Dennis, Co-president of Pax Christi International, added: “Pax Christi International deeply appreciates the support and participation of the Dicastery in this workshop, which has been a significant and positive step in the work of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. We are touched by the interventions from all the participants, who reiterated the importance of nonviolence rooted in respect, patience, and spiritual strength.”

Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, Illinois, was not able to attend but expressed his support for the workshop in a letter addressed to attendees in which he wrote of the collective call “to take a clear stand for active nonviolence and against all forms of violence...(including) the structures and global systems that dehumanize our brothers and sisters, robbing them of their God-given dignity...” He “[invited] us to boldly integrate Gospel nonviolence at every level of the Church...(and to) initiate a global conversation on nonviolence - within the Church, with people of other faiths, and with the larger world - on how to respond to the monumental crises of our time with the vision and strategies of active nonviolence.”

In a recent article in the National Catholic Reporter, 'Vatican's second conference on nonviolence renews hope for encyclical, Joshua J. McElwee wrote that ample material was provided for a possible encyclical or teaching document “on the power of nonviolence to bring about social change...(and to) reexamine the Catholic Church’s teachings on war.” The workshop represents a hopeful step in the recommitment of the Catholic Church to the transformational promise and salvific centrality of Gospel Nonviolence – a step that is urgently needed and whose time has come.§

Unnecessary trade

A new multimedia project by Local Futures highlights the variety of illogical and unnecessary trade deals that prop up the global economy and harm local environments and small-scale businesses and farmers.

While there are dozens of multilateral and hundreds of bilateral trade agreements already in existence, countries around the world continue to spend millions of dollars to negotiate more such agreements. At a time of worsening climate change and dwindling sources of cheap energy, working to expand the global trade system is a questionable use of time and resources and a new report by Local Futures reaffirms this fact by highlighting the more “insane” parts of trade.

“Just how insane is trade these days?” is the title of a new short film and fact sheet produced by Local Futures, a nonprofit organization best known for their award-winning film “The Economics of Happiness” and publishers of a variety of books, films and other “education for action tools” to raise awareness about the need to shift trade away from dependence on global monopolies, and toward decentralized, regional economies. This new project shows that there is a good deal of unnecessary trade that props up the global economy.

For example, California exports nearly the same amount of almonds and cherries that it imports, and Britain and Australia exchanged 20 tons of bottled water with each other in 2007. Also, “Mexican calves fed American corn are exported to the United States, where they are butchered for meat, which is then sold in Mexico,” and “African-grown coffee is often packed in India, Canadian prawns are processed in Iceland, and Bolivian nuts are packed in Italy.”

All of this unnecessary transportation has an effect on local environments and climate change. Most freight ships use bunker fuel, the heaviest and most toxic fuel available that emits large amounts of sulfur, particulate matter and greenhouse gases nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide. Globally, shipping accounts for three to four percent of carbon dioxide each year – more than the UK, Canada or Brazil – and the International Marine Organization projects it to grow to 17 percent by 2050.

As ports tend to be located near low-income and minority-majority neighborhoods, it is these people who are most affected by the sulfur and air particulates released by ships as well as trucks being loaded and unloaded, contributing to an estimated 60,000 premature deaths worldwide and costs up to \$330b per year from heart and lung diseases.

There are some solutions. Initiatives to make cargo ships cleaner are advancing. Beginning in 2020, the International Maritime Organization will require that

freighters use low-sulfur fuels that will reduce many ships’ emissions by up to 90 percent. Other simple measures such as reducing boat speed and using sails have helped improve efficiency as well.

Yet making international trade cleaner on the margins will not be enough, we must also reduce long-distance trade by removing the many perverse incentives that encourage it. Fossil fuel subsidies, estimated at five trillion dollars annually, make international shipping artificially cheaper. If transporters had to pay the full costs of their fuel, they would reduce their global networks and find ways to produce closer to the point of sale.

The fact sheet produced by Local Futures describes the import/export tax rebates that some countries offer to encourage unnecessary trade. The largest is from China. “China’s value-added tax (VAT) allows businesses to claim tax rebates by exporting their products, while other businesses can then re-import those same products to claim rebates of their own.” The result? “[I]n most years since 2005, China has imported more from itself than from the United States – despite being the U.S.’s third-largest export market.”

Trade agreements strengthen global corporations against small-scale businesses and farmers, maintaining the differences in pay and regulations that allows international production lines to be profitable. Global corporations profit by exploiting workers in low-wage countries where health and safety regulations are scarce.

International finance is another area that favors international trade over local, as corporations are able to take advantage of tax paradises that charge low or zero taxes. The NGO New Rules for Global Finance has a number of recommendations based on successful experiences in the Global South for removing these unfair advantages for global corporations.

Instead of subsidizing international trade, governments should encourage local production and consumption. As Missouri University studies have shown, “food grown in the local community is less likely to be disrupted by transportation issues, large scale food-borne illness outbreaks, weather, and high fuel costs.” The New Economy Coalition, of which the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a member, contains many examples of businesses and initiatives working to strengthen local economies. §

Faith in action: Explore “Just how insane is trade these days?” at <https://www.localfutures.org/>

Supreme Court rules World Bank can be sued

A historic Supreme Court decision declares international organizations like the World Bank Group can be sued in U.S. courts.

On February 27, the fisherfolk community of Mundra, India won a precedent-setting victory against the World Bank and other multilateral development banks when U.S. Supreme Court decided 7 to 1 that these international institutions based in Washington, D.C. are not immune to lawsuits for their operations in other countries.

In *Jam v. IFC* (Budha Ismail Jam, et al. v. International Finance Corporation), the court ruled against the World Bank arm that lends to the private sector – the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The IFC has co-financed numerous projects found to be detrimental to the communities and the environment, including some covered in previous Newsnotes articles.

In this case, farmers and fisherfolk in Mundra (Gujarat State) lost their livelihoods from the toxic effects of the IFC-funded coal-fired power plant, the Tatra Mundra Ultra Mega Power Project India. It is a part of a larger project to meet the country's energy needs. The plan included the construction of additional coal-based thermal stations. The IFC classified it as a Category A project, which means it is high risk and has the potential to have significant, irreversible social and environmental impacts. The project cost is roughly \$4.14 billion, of which the IFC contributed \$450 million.

The Mundra community initially appealed to the IFC directly through the Compliance Advisory Ombudsman (CAO), the independent accountability mechanism. The CAO ruled in favor of the community but the IFC did not treat the outcomes seriously. As a last resort, represented by Earth Rights International, the Mundra community sued the IFC in the U.S. courts.

The community repeatedly lost their lower court cases and appeals processes. The courts ruled that the IFC was immune to lawsuits as an international entity.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit heard the final case. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, the newest Supreme Court Justice, was on the appeals court at the time. While Mundra lost that case, Judge Nina Pillard suggested that the case was inherently biased towards the IFC and that they should take it to the Supreme Court, which they did.

Earth Rights International argued that the IFC did

not have full immunity from U.S. law. The IFC argued that they enjoyed immunity as an international institution under the 1945 International Organization Immunity Act. Since the act's passage, restrictions have been put on foreign institutions, such as embassies, and they can end up in U.S. courts.

The Supreme Court ultimately decided that the IFC had to follow the same restricted parameters as other international entities. The IFC argued that this would lead to international organizations like the IFC being named as defendants in mass tort and class action lawsuits in the United States and that would be too costly for the IFC. Justice John Roberts, the head of the Supreme Court opined that it was unlikely that the IFC would be flooded with lawsuits. Justice Kavanaugh re-

used himself since he has served on the appeals court. Justice Stephen Breyer was the sole dissenting opinion in the case.

In the short term, this decision will allow for the community's lawsuit to be re-adjudicated in the lower courts. But it also won't improve or resolve the damage already done and ongoing suffering in Mundra.

This decision will allow for another case to go forward, Juana

Doe et al v. IFC, in which Earth Rights International is suing the IFC for financing Honduran palm oil company Dinant's projects in the country's Bajo Aguán valley, which it began funding in 2009. Linked to the project are the murders of more than 100 farmers and the displacement of many more to make way for palm cultivation. Others say they have experienced torture, threats, and other violence by public and private security forces. The violence continues unabated.

The IFC followed the CAO's recommendation to create a "lessons learned" document but justice remains elusive for farmers in the Bajo Aguán valley in Honduras.

Read more about the Mundra case and Juana Doe case on the Earth Rights International website at www.earthrights.org. Watch a short video about the community's victory here on Youtube at <http://bit.ly/TataMundraVideo> §



Climate action in a parish: Let there be solar light

The Diocese of Arlington's Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish offers its experience of installing solar panels as a template for other churches to follow.

A Catholic church in northern Virginia has brought new meaning to the phrase from Genesis "Let there be light." Our Lady Queen of Peace (OLQP) Catholic Church in Arlington recently completed a 319 panel (95kw) solar installation on three of its buildings, providing electricity for approximately 48 percent of parish needs. During their 25-year life cycle, the panels are expected to reduce carbon emissions equal to taking 195 cars off the road and planting 31,000 trees. Best of all, this has been done at no cost to the parish.

Installing solar panels has been a longtime goal of the pastor, Spiritan Father Tim Hickey, who, along with the Integrity of Creation Committee, has been "greening" the parish for the past five years. Inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and concerned with the rise of the earth's temperature, they have studied Church teachings and taken steps to put words into action.

The parish has banned plastic bottles from campus, purchased reusable dishes for parish functions, and planted an organic garden to support the food pantry ministry. During a recent major facilities renovation, the parish was sure to use sustainable materials, installing energy efficient HVAC, ecofriendly insulation, energy saving appliances, LED lights, bamboo flooring, and carpeting made from recycled plastic bottles. As Fr. Hickey noted, "We have worked hard to make environmentally conscious decisions."

The culmination of "going green" was the installation of solar panels. But where would the resources to achieve this come from? To solve this challenge, an innovative deal was struck among four entities: the diocesan building authorities, a local solar installer, the electric utility, and a generous parishioner.

Here's how it worked: The installation cost (\$235,000) was financed by a parishioner who created a dedicated LLC for the project. This LLC was able to benefit from a 30 percent federal tax credit and depreciation allowances from its taxable income. While continuing to pay the regular price for electrical consumption, the parish "sells" the electricity generated by the solar panels to the utility at a favorable rate, as negotiated in a power purchase agreement.

The parish then uses the proceeds from the sales to pay back the investor over eight years. In addition, OLQP expects to net about \$3000 annually from the power produced. "This is a good deal for both parties,"

says Luc Dewulf, a parishioner who is very involved in the project, "and we are honoring God's creation as well. Saving money and saving the earth is always a good idea."

Besides producing solar energy, OLQP meets its electricity needs by contracting with Arcadia Power for energy produced by wind power as the parish works toward the goal of 100 percent renewable energy consumption.

Unique to OLQP's installation is a blue cross-shaped design on the main solar array. A first in the United States, and perhaps in the world, the cross is created by a new colored film technology which allows for custom designs to be created on the panels. "Google maps will show our church with a cross on it," remarked Luc Dewulf. (See photos of the panels at <http://bit.ly/BlueCrossSolar>)

Concern for the planet was at the heart of the church's effort to get solar panels up and running says Fr. Hickey. "The people who are most hurt by climate change are the poorest in the world. We are trying to put the pope's encyclical into action and putting solar panels on the roof is a very visible sign of that commitment."

By developing a template for transitioning to solar energy, OLQP has already inspired and assisted other parishes to start the process. Although states have different processes and regulations, power purchase agreements like that of OLQP can be arranged with a single investor or a group of investors.

Reducing carbon emissions is essential to a healthy planet. Imagine the impact of even 10 percent of Catholic churches around the world switching to solar power. Wouldn't it be great to see thousands of crosses appearing on Google Earth! Let there be light – solar light!§

Faith in action: For more information about the solar panels at Our Lady Queen of Peace, contact Bill Larme, OLQP Integrity of Creation Committee Co-Chair at blarme@msn.com.

For renewable energy project development and management services, consult Catholic Energies (<https://www.catholicenergies.org/>), a program of the Catholic Climate Covenant.

Or, if you are in the Northern Virginia, Washington D.C. and Maryland area, contact Ipsun Solar (<https://www.ipsunsolar.com/>), the company used by OLQP to install their solar electric system.

Climate change: Urgency grows at UN

The United Nations is stepping up high-level events to urge member states to take action to address climate change.

Since 195 countries signed the Paris climate agreement in 2015, whereby each nation committed itself to determine, plan, and regularly report on efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has concluded that insufficient action has occurred and that targets set for 2030 will not be reached. To generate a sense of urgency that will lead to action, the UN scheduled high-level conferences in Nairobi, Kenya, and at the General Assembly in New York, in March of this year.

Several national delegations have spoken of the unprecedented weather events taking place globally right now, most notably the small island developing states (SIDS) of the Pacific and Caribbean, which have been either inundated by king tides caused by sea level rise or devastated by Category 5 hurricanes. At the General Assembly High Level event in New York on March 28-29 this year, a number of delegations mentioned Cyclone Idai, regarded as one of the worst natural disasters in the history of southern Africa, which as of late March had left more than 1,000 people dead and thousands more missing in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi.

Alexander van der Bellen, President of Austria, related that 2018 was the hottest year on record in Austria, heat that was causing glaciers to melt and desertification to spread to parts of Austria. So alarming are these phenomena that tens of thousands of youth marched to the president's office in Vienna on March 15 to demand immediate action on climate change. Millions more in cities around the world joined the Youth Climate March where the alarm and anger of a younger generation at older people who have not, in their view, taken climate change seriously enough, was expressed repeatedly on signs and in speeches.

More high-level events dealing with climate change are scheduled for this year: in Bonn, Germany, in late June, and again at the United Nations in New York, in September, and finally at the Conference of Parties (COP25) in Santiago, Chile, in December. Chile's Minister of Environment, Carolina Schmidt, while inviting members to the conference in Santiago, reminded all at the General Assembly high-level event in New York in March of three ambitions urgently needed now: Ambition in Implementation, Ambition for Action, and Ambition for Change. Many delegates reiterated her sentiments, stating that the time for rhetoric is over and now is the time for action.

Also at the General Assembly event in March, President Janos Ader of Hungary stated that he had met with six professors from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston to discuss the interface of climate change and water, and he quoted them as saying: "We are under-estimating the reality of climate change." He pointed out that since the Rio climate summit in 1992, the world's population has increased by 3.5 times but fossil fuel energy use has increased ten times. At this rate, we will not only be unable to stay below a 2 degree temperature rise but will go well beyond it. He quoted Abraham Lincoln: "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

President Borut Pahor of Slovenia added that the window of opportunity is closing rapidly and that we must reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Thus, all countries must substantially raise their climate targets for 2030 and 2040.

Technological solutions to mitigate some climate change exist but, for mitigation and adaptation to succeed, several countries called for vastly increased financial assistance to developing countries, to the tune of \$100 billion by the year 2020. The representative of France said that Europe will cooperate in this, but the Philippines' delegate said pointedly that certain rich countries must accept their responsibility; otherwise climate change will take its inevitable course.

In June of 2017, the Trump Administration announced that it would withdraw from the agreement on November 5, 2020, just days after the next presidential election and, in fact, the Trump Administration has already put in place many policies contrary to the agreement. Many states, cities, businesses and other civil entities in the U.S. have acted independently to transform their energy systems from fossil fuels to renewable energy. However, the global community is waiting to see if the U.S. government will get on board with the rest of the world. §

Faith in action: Thank you to everyone who responded to our email alert to ask the House to pass HR 9 to keep the U.S. in the Paris climate agreement. The bill passed in the House on May 2. To sign up to receive our email alerts, go to <http://bit.ly/MOGCAalerts>

Add your name to endorse the "Faith Principles for the Green New Deal" <http://bit.ly/FaithPrinciplesGND>

UN conference on women takes on gender inequality

Maryknoll Sister Marvie Misolas reports on the 63rd UN conference on women.

The achievements of women were celebrated around the world on International Women's Day on March 8 with this year's theme, "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change." The same theme was adopted for the 63rd UN Conference of the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW63), held in New York over the course of 11 days, starting on March 11.

Approximately 10,000 people from around the world came to the annual UN conference on women to share and learn ways to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, in the areas of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure.

One of the keynote speakers, Kiara Nirghin, a student from drought-stricken South Africa who famously won the 2016 Google Science Fair at age 16 for her use of orange peels and avocados to invent a super-absorbent material that retains water in the soil, spoke about the importance of supportive family and economic and education opportunities in her career in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). She urged governments to prioritize and step up STEM education for girls to break down barriers and close gaps in gender equality.

Education is a tool to end gender inequality and an example of sustainable infrastructure. Tragically, 60 million girls still lack access to education.

UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka spoke about the power and potential of women as innovators. "Women are not simply consumers of prescribed solutions—they also design solutions for the whole of society." By intentionally including women in innovation, we ensure that solutions are appropriate.

On March 12, President of the General Assembly Maria Fernanda Espinosa hosted a high-level event on 'Women in Power' to identify barriers that hinder women's political participation and leadership, and to share best practices that can accelerate women's empowerment in this area. Espinosa shared some disturbing statistics: "90 percent of heads of state and government are men, as are 76 percent of members of parliament. The vast majority of countries have never been governed by a woman: this is the same in all regions of the world."

If this trend continues, Espinosa said, it will take 107 years to reach parity. "But what makes the situation even more serious is that, only 4 years ago, in 2015, the projection was that this gap would be closed in 30 years. We are clearly facing a regression and this event today

is the key to revert the situation."

Women in power tend to promote economic stability, institutional strength and reform of laws. Women have a central role in solving conflicts and consolidating peace, Espinosa said. "In fact, when women participate in a peace negotiation, the possibilities for it to last more than fifteen years increases 35 percent," she noted.

Women also have a vital role to play in social protection systems. According to International Labor Union's Christine Behrendt, "there are still 4 billion people on the planet or 55 percent, who are not covered by any kind of social protection." Conferencees discussed a variety of solutions, including universal basic income, microfinance, universal social pension.

Member states committed to 10 recommendations:

- Invest in social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure to support the productivity of women's work, including in the informal economy;
- Ensure that women's access to social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure is not undermined by budget cuts and austerity measures;
- Build on multilateral commitments to gender equality, to strengthen access to social protection, public services and infrastructure for all women and girls;
- Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work by ensuring access to social protection for unpaid caregivers of all ages;
- Scale up investment in quality public care services that are affordable and gender-responsive;
- Identify and remove barriers to women's and girls' access to public services;
- Guarantee the availability of safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation, including for menstrual hygiene, in homes, schools, refugee camps and other public places;
- Ensure that transport policies and planning are sustainable, accessible, affordable, safe and gender-responsive, and adaptable to be used by persons with disabilities and older persons;
- Promote the full and equal participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in policy dialogues and decision-making relating to social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure;
- Strongly condemn the impunity and lack of accountability rooted in historical and structural inequality that accompanies pervasive violence against women. §

Guatemala: My time with a migrant caravan

Sr. Dee Smith, MM, reflects on spending Holy Week with people traveling as a migrant caravan.

At the beginning of Holy Week, I found myself standing on a bridge that links the southern coast of Mexico with Guatemala, handing out care packages and offering emotional support to hundreds of adults and children who had left behind all they had in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

Their Way of the Cross wasn't just a Good Friday event. It had started two weeks earlier when their journey out of poverty, violence and desperation had begun.

Last October, when the first large caravan of migrants passed through Guatemala on its way north, it was met by an outpouring of generosity. Television crews were stationed at strategic points along the route: shelters and houses of hospitality, emergency medical stations, towns that offered food and water to the exhausted travelers. It looked like the triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, banners waving, words of encouragement and free rides on more than a donkey's back. Smiles and hope for a better future.

This time around, the scene was different. A UN agency asked me if the hospice project where I work would accompany this caravan. Why us? I asked. Because many people at the border weren't interested in helping this time around, the UN worker told me. Many people were saying "No!"

When I told the team at the hospice center about the UN's request for our help, they said a resounding "Yes! They are our brothers and sisters." The UN asked us to store the personal hygiene kits and bottles of water and to offer counseling and emotional accompaniment and care during the journey. The team had no problem giving up the first three days of Holy Week for this extra work and various members stood with me in the blazing sun each day, handing out the supplies, listening to stories, and giving a gentle hug and smile to whoever needed one.

We assisted 1,080 people in those three days, plus their small children and babies. But that is only the numbers. The reality of what we had witnessed hit us after we had finished. Many of us commented on the single mothers escaping violence, abuse, and despair in their home countries, carefully carrying babies in their arms and clinging onto a small child's hand as they struggled to juggle bags, flipflops, and water they had received.

One woman told me she was from Honduras and she was traveling with her three children. Her husband had been shot dead by a gang a month ago, for not paying extortion money on time. Now the gang was coming after her, demanding its share of her income from the shop she and her husband ran. She was tired, her face the expression of exhaustion and resignation. I asked myself "Is this how Mary felt as they took her son away, led by soldiers to certain death?"

This woman's resurrection moment is some time far off in the future – maybe after she has passed through Mexico, crossed the border into the United States, moved into detention and maybe allowed to stay. Her hope lay in surviving her Way of the Cross, her Calvary and protecting her children.



Our team took care to engage as many of the people as we could, asking them to take care, to carry information about their rights if sexually assaulted and to pick up supplies from our medical stand. We explained the need for them to move in groups for safety, to not be fooled by anyone offering "opportunities to earn good money" as they pass through towns where drugs are the biggest money earner. We cautioned parents of small children about human trafficking and organ harvesting, problems that are very real in this part of the world.

I thought of Jesus on his way to his fate, telling the women of Jerusalem not to weep for him but for themselves. The weeping is for what we

have become as humans, needing to tell one another that evil lurks around every corner and children are sometimes regarded as a commodity to be traded.

Every person we met, almost without exception, said a heartfelt thank you for our presence and support. Are these the people Donald Trump calls thieves and rapists, murderers and job snatchers? Are they not the innocent victims of corrupt government leaders, societies that don't care and people who have lost a sense of caring for one another?

I don't know if our presence had much impact on the people we served, but their presence had a life changing impact on me. §

Tanzania turns away private investment in agriculture

Tanzania plans to end the investment program within the SAGCOT initiative, a high-profile public private partnership, due to concerns for smallholder farmers' land rights and economic security.

An article in Africa Confidential on March 22 entitled "Farming gamble fails" reports that the president of Tanzania, John Magufuli, has canceled the \$47 million Matching Grant Fund (MGF), backed by a World Bank loan guarantee of \$70 million, within the SAGCOT (Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania) initiative. A pet project of Magufuli's predecessor, Jakaya Kikwete, who had promoted a private sector business model of agricultural development, SAGCOT was designed to attract long-term private investment and stimulate growth in the country's agricultural sector to ensure the socio-economic development of smallholder farmers.

Without these funds, it appears that the government will no longer match private investment in the agriculture sector with public funds out of fear that smallholder farmers would be sidelined by this type of agribusiness and that it would benefit only private international investors. Africa Confidential comments that the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) political party still harbors strong sentiments for government control of agriculture and quotes the former leader of MGF, Thomas Herlehy, as saying "The government does not want to make matching grants to private sector agribusinesses."

Africa Confidential describes SAGCOT as "an ambitious public private partnership designed to attract global agribusiness investors to a huge swathe of Tanzania's most fertile land," a total of 350,000 hectares that would purportedly create 420,000 jobs and annual revenues of \$1.2 billion by 2030. Some of the multinational giants involved since it was established in 2010 are Monsanto, Yara International, the Bill Gates Foundation, and AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa). The use of the word 'Green' does not refer to eco-friendly agriculture but to chemical-dependent farming.

Maryknoll Father Ken Thesing, who represents the Religious Superiors of International Religious Orders headquartered in Rome to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and who worked in Tanzania promoting smallholder agricultural development, commented: "There are probably some (PPPs) run by USAID or small private entrepreneurs with or without a proclaimed 'common good' intention that are working well and getting small-scale food producers to succeed in increasing food production and making more money for their families without being overwhelmed by debts.

"But my problem is I see so many projects where local farmers become connected to a larger scheme that has a plantation and looks to get farmers in the area to sign contracts in order to produce the same crops on their own land and sell them to the factory. The local farmers usually end up getting into debt with the high cost of inputs that are part of the 'out-grower' contract and end up bankrupt, losing their land and livelihood. I would be interested to see if there are some real success stories with PPPs."

In 2013, the FAO published an appraisal of four PPPs in the agricultural sector in Tanzania that appeared to be operating with some success despite decreasing public sector investments and a private sector that fails to make up the difference.

The four projects evaluated were in tea and sugar research and extension services, financial credit for agro-dealers, and privatization of a project in the government-managed Sao Hill Forest to provide timber products for the East Africa region. As of 2013, the first three projects had succeeded in increasing production through investments in the capacity and business knowledge of the producers. The Sao Hill Forest Project could not be fully evaluated as the project was still new. However, the availability of tree seedlings and the extension services already showed some positive effects.

It should be noted that these four projects were modest in scope and did not include partnering with large multinational corporations, such as Monsanto. Thus, it can be concluded that PPPs can benefit developing countries but that they must be critically evaluated. Indeed, the FAO cautioned in 2016 that large-scale investments can result in land-grabbing, with the potential for displacement of smallholder farmers.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns published a report in 2012 that shares principles outlined by faith groups and allied organizations that give PPPs the best chance of success in reducing hunger and poverty and strengthening the human rights to food and water. The paper concludes that PPPs as tools for pro-poor economic development are best suited to countries where existing legal frameworks protect the legitimate role of government to set national development policies and protect the common good. (Read "Public-private partnerships: Working together to reduce global hunger" online at <http://bit.ly/MOGCPPPReport>.) §

A tale of two Sudans

The people of both Sudan and South Sudan are experiencing grave uncertainties about the possibilities of freedom, democracy and peace.

When the price of bread increased 300 percent in December 2018, the people of the city of Atbara took to the streets of this midsized town in Sudan. The energy of their protests spread throughout the country and grew into a nationwide movement that brought down the government of Omar al-Bashir on April 11.

Bashir had taken power over Sudan in a military coup in 1989. He has been indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for his role in directing crimes against humanity including rape and torture, war crimes, and genocide that allegedly occurred in the Darfur region during his three decades of rule. He is currently being held in Kober prison in Sudan and the country's military says it will not extradite him to the ICC. Bashir will be tried in Sudan.

The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) has led the peaceful uprising, calling for freedom, democracy, and peace. Numerous religious and ethnic groups have united in ongoing peaceful demonstrations. The protesters demand a transitional civilian council to lead the country, with limited military representation and an interim Cabinet to oversee the drafting of a new constitution. The Military Transitional Council insists it will maintain power over a civilian Prime Minister and Cabinet until elections are held.

Before the coup, the SPA encouraged members of all faiths to join the protests. Sudan's constitution guarantees religious freedom, but Islamic law is the state religion. They were often harassed and restricted by the National Intelligence Service. The day after the coup, during Friday prayers for Muslims, Christians stood arm-in-arm to protect Muslims from the security forces while they were praying.

Women have played a prominent role in the uprising. Referred to as *kandakas*, the queens of ancient Sudan, one woman has emerged as the face of the movement. Alaa Salah, a Sudanese student and protestor, has become known as the "Woman in White" or "Lady Liberty" of Sudan after a local photographer captured her dancing on the top of a car in the capital of Khartoum while surrounded by a sea of protestors, with her arm raised in the air, finger pointed toward the sky and singing a Sudanese poem about how silence kills. The photo has since gone viral on Twitter.

Salah has told reporters she rejects this notoriety and that the Sudanese people, especially those who have

died, been injured or detained, are the true icon of the revolution. The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) has voiced their support, calling for equal citizenship, equal access to resources, the removal of laws that discriminate against women and platforms in the transitional government to develop family law based on the rights of women and children.

Bashir was a guarantor for the peace agreement in Sudan's southern neighbor, South Sudan, brokered in 2018, to end the civil war that began in 2015. The agreement stipulates that a unity government would be formed in South Sudan by President Salva Kiir and former first Vice President Riek Machar by May 12, 2019. In April, both Kiir and Machar were invited to the Vatican for a two-day spiritual retreat meant to foster peace. At the end of the retreat, Pope Francis begged the men to set aside their differences and bring peace to South Sudan. "I am asking you as a brother to stay in peace. I am asking you with my heart, let us go forward," the pope said. Breaking papal protocol, he knelt and kissed their feet in a humble gesture of respect.

However, Machar has stated that he is unable to form a unity government by this date and threatened to pull out of the accord entirely. He demands a six-month extension.

Increasingly, it appears that this agreement addresses issues important to a limited number of warlords and even fails in that sphere. The border between Sudan and South Sudan has benefited from mutual trade for two years and a weakened government in Sudan will not be able to stop this. The mass demonstrations in Sudan are absent in South Sudan, where people have even more reason to demonstrate. The South Sudanese function at the level of survival and the secret service is greatly feared and ruthless. Losing Bashir as a guarantor of the revitalized peace agreement seems irrelevant.

The International Governmental Agency on Drought (IGAD) Special Envoy to South Sudan has called for a meeting of the leadership of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan in Addis Abba, Ethiopia on May 2-3 to find a way forward. Meanwhile, there is serious concern that South Sudan could return to civil war. §

Faith in action: Read and share a recent blogpost of Maryknoll Lay Missioner Gabe Hurrish in South Sudan <http://bit.ly/MKLMblog>

Israel/Palestine: New election, new suffering

The reelection of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel widens gaps in the path to peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

For those who support a peaceful resolution between Palestine and Israel that restores human rights and agency to Palestinians, the reelection of Benjamin Netanyahu for a fifth term as prime minister of Israel on April 9 does not inspire hope. It was Netanyahu's narrowest victory to date, likely in part due to looming corruption charges, but also dwindling support from right-wing nationalists within his party who believe Netanyahu's policies with regard to Palestinians do not go far enough to restrict their rights and confiscate land for the State of Israel.

Going into the final days before the election the race was tight. Knowing he needed the support of the right wing in order to win, he made a last-minute declaration that he intends to annex illegal settlements in the West Bank in his next term as prime minister. Many believe that Netanyahu's personal beliefs about Palestinians are not as right-wing as his actions might suggest and dismissed his promise of annexation as campaign fodder—which does not preclude the possibility of his following through with the promise.

Annexation of the West Bank settlements would be no surprise, given their deliberate planning and development since 1967. Today at least 400,000 Israelis live in the West Bank along with 2.9 million Palestinians, and an additional 212,000 Israelis live in East Jerusalem—territory that Israel has already effectively annexed.

Hanan Ashrawi, senior official of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, called the promise of West Bank annexation “the end of any chances of peace”, a sentiment shared many times over as conditions have deteriorated for Palestinians over time. Past failed peace negotiations have always included compromise by land swap, so further entrenchment in the West Bank to change the “facts on the ground” only increases Israel's bargaining chips in future land swap negotiations. With over 200 illegal settlements already established, maps of the West Bank already look like swiss cheese.

In 2017, President Trump took away another of the Palestinians' bargaining chips in recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocating the U.S. embassy—a blatant move in favor of Israel over Palestinians, who will still have to try to negotiate for East Jerusalem as their future state capital while Israel has had it handed to them by the U.S.

President Trump has repeatedly shown strong favor of Israel over its neighbors and in contravention of

international law, most recently when he officially recognized the Golan Heights, land captured from Syria in the 1967 war, as Israeli territory. In a show of gratitude Netanyahu responded with a tweet on Easter announcing that he intends to name an illegal settlement community in the Golan Heights after President Trump.

The U.S.'s support for Israel's sovereignty over occupied territory does not carry the force of law, but to date international law has been entirely ineffectual in protecting the Palestinians, and the support of the U.S. has protected Israel from having to respond to the condemnation of the international community over the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians.

Israel may annex the West Bank, but “we will stay there,” says Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki said of the West Bank. “The international community has to deal with us.”

2019 marks ten years since another plea was made to the international community, by a group of Palestinian Christian leaders who published a document called *A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering*, also known as the Kairos Document. It was a cry to Christians around the world to understand the suffering of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

Every year, Kairos Palestine posts an Easter Alert, inviting Christians to reflect in solidarity with Palestinians. This year's Easter Alert laments that the situation is “even worse 10 years later” than in 2009 when the authors felt they had “reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people.”

Yet there must always be hope, and it can be found in reflecting on the meaning of Easter to Christians around the world, including those in Palestine: “...let us remember that the journey to the cross does not end on Friday....Sunday will inevitably come! It will be a day of resurrection gladness; a day in which we remember that truth will overcome injustice; light will overcome oppression and discrimination. And because we believe in life and resurrection, we commit even stronger to work tirelessly to make this a reality. Amen.” §

Faith in action: Kairos Palestine invites individuals and organizations to sign on to their petition to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories, to be delivered to Israeli embassies around the world on May 15. <http://bit.ly/KairosPetition>

Resources

- 1) **Easter Season Reflections on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** by members of RUN (Religious at the United Nations) <http://bit.ly/RUNEasterReflections>
- 2) **Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso testified before Congress** on April 10. Bishop Seitz described the El Paso community's response assisting asylum-seeking families and offered recommendations to address root causes of migration and protect immigrant children and families. Read the bishop's testimony <http://bit.ly/BishopSeitz04102019>
- 3) **Court orders Central American Minor Parole Program to reopen** and allow thousands of children living in dangerous conditions in Central America to safely reunite with their parents in the U.S. <http://bit.ly/CAMPP>
- 4) **New report by ICAN and Pax: "Producing mass destruction: Private companies and the nuclear weapons industry"** shows which 28 private companies are involved in building nuclear weapons. By investing in these companies, financial institutions and others are in effect facilitating the build-up of nuclear forces. <http://bit.ly/2Y8koS9>
- 5) **New report from Eurodad: "Flawed conditions: The impact of the World Bank's conditionality on developing countries"** <http://bit.ly/EurodadReport>
- 6) **Webinar recording of "Spirituality & a Culture of Peace."** by Pax Christi USA. Jacqueline Haessly, PhD explains how to bring the spirituality of nonviolence into every facet of life and teaches how to embrace and embody a culture of peace. Please share in your classrooms, with your parishes, Pax Christi USA groups, family, and friends. Recording available at <http://bit.ly/PaxChristiUSAWebinar>
- 7) **5-minute video of Religions for Peace Leaders calling for climate action** to protect the earth <http://bit.ly/ClimateActionVideo>
- 8) **Frequently requested statistics on U.S. immigration** <http://bit.ly/USImmigrationStats>
- 9) **Churches for Middle East Peace statement** on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's promise to annex land <http://bit.ly/CMEP04252019>
- 10) **Webinar recording of "Catholic Social Teaching and the Green New Deal"** by the Catholic Climate Covenant <http://bit.ly/CSTGND>
- 11) **TedTalk "Can we prevent nuclear war?"** Dr. Ira Helfand, Co-president of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and steering committee member of ICAN, Recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, discusses the threat to human survival posed by nuclear weapons and what we can do to eliminate this threat. <http://bit.ly/PreventNuclearWar>
- 12) **Book recommendation: "The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming"** by David Wallace-Wells. Published by Tim Duggan Books, New York, 2019. The author himself admits this book is alarmist, but he also points out that since humans have caused the problem we have the capacity to solve the impending disaster of climate change. He lists a number of extreme weather events in the last two or three years that give proof that climate change is happening now and not something in the nebulous future. We must act now and in the final chapter he recommends a number of actions that we can take. This is a readable book and hopefully many will read it and realize that there is no time to wait. <http://bit.ly/2Wh9t8c>
- 13) **Book recommendation: "Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future"** by Mary Robinson. Published by Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, 2018. Robinson, a former President of Ireland, a UN Special Envoy on Climate Change, and a member of the group known as the Elders, which advocates for concerted, international action to combat global warming and climate change, has written an enjoyable book that is part travelogue, part sober narrative about disturbing things happening to nature and people, and part a stirring call to action. At only 144 pages, one can read this book in a weekend. <http://bit.ly/2IWzR3Z>