



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

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

**November-December 2019**

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# The Death of Robert Mugabe

*Sr. Janice McLaughlin, MM, describes her first-hand experience with the Zimbabwean leader, Robert Mugabe, who died on September 6 at the age of 95.*

I first met Robert Mugabe in 1978 in Maputo, Mozambique. I had been deported from what was then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) the previous year after spending three weeks in detention for my work with the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. Mugabe spoke to me about the type of society he envisioned for a liberated Zimbabwe, comparing the socialism that ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) espoused to the life of the early Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles. He also promised that a ZANU government would not seize the property and institutions of the Catholic Church as the liberation party in Mozambique had done. He assured me that the Church had nothing to fear in a liberated Zimbabwe and was grateful for the support that the guerrillas were receiving from rural Catholic missions.

I was charmed by his words as well as by his scholarly and dapper appearance. I had heard from priests in Rhodesia that he had attended a Marist Brothers school next to his home in Kutama, about an hour outside of Harare, and had taught in Catholic schools in the Gweru Diocese before he left to teach in Ghana.

He returned to Rhodesia in the early 1960s with his wife, Sally Hayfron, who was from a prominent Ghanaian family and converted to marry him. She became a devout Catholic and an active supporter of Zimbabwe's struggle for liberation. Many feel that she was a moderating influence on her husband, giving him sound and helpful guidance and advice.

Mugabe was arrested in 1964 and spent the next ten years in prison. I learned that in prison he adopted a routine of daily exercise, meditation and study that he maintained throughout his long life. He gained several degrees while in prison and gave lessons to others. I was told that he neither smoke nor drank alcohol and I saw that he was well read and interested in world issues. He also had a keen interest in theology and scripture, assisting the priests who celebrated Mass in the prison each day.

Mugabe's speeches to the ZANU staff in Maputo on the anniversary of various liberation heroes' deaths were full of moral imperatives and references to

scripture. He could have been a priest giving a homily to an attentive congregation. His conciliatory speech to the country after winning the elections in 1980 was in the same mold and convinced people, both within and outside Zimbabwe, that he was a man who could be trusted.

I interviewed Robert Mugabe for various publications for several years before and after Independence. He always received me graciously and gave thoughtful and thought-provoking replies. After the first decade of Independence, however, I never met him again and I found it difficult to reconcile the person that I had known with the angry and vindictive person that I saw in the news. I wondered how a person who was so intelligent,

who had promoted reconciliation between the races and championed education and health care for all, could allow corruption to flourish and could sanction the destruction and violence that characterized much of his long reign in power.

I used to think that he was not aware of the violence that was unleashed in Matabeleland in the few years after Independence and had not given the orders to deploy the Fifth Brigade. Subsequent accounts, however, clearly indicate that he knew and approved of the brutal tactics that were used by the

army on civilians and that would be used again in 2008 after a bruising election campaign in which the opposition won enough votes to necessitate a run-off. I chaired a human rights group at the time that provided treatment to the victims of military violence and saw for myself the horrific brutality that was meted out on people who were suspected of having voted for the opposition.

While Robert Mugabe is being declared a hero by his successor and by many regional leaders, I doubt if his own people will be so forgiving - nor will I. A man who had raised such high hopes for peace, reconciliation and development in 1980 has instead left a legacy of violence, poverty, corruption, hunger and hopelessness. §



# Chile: Massive Protests Over Inequality

*Protests in Chile over a spike in transportation costs reflect deeper problems with rising economic inequality.*

On October 6, the Ministry of Transport and Communication in Santiago, Chile, announced a 3.5 percent metro fare hike, bringing the cost to \$1.16 per ticket, more than double the price of the fares in Buenos Aires, Argentina or Lima, Peru. Beginning on October 11, students in Chile began protesting the new price by jumping metro turnstiles and taking over stations.

The government's response to the protests exacerbated the situation. Referencing the protesters, President Sebastián Piñera said that Chile was "at war with a powerful, relentless enemy." Government officials made tone-deaf comments such as suggesting people simply leave earlier for work to avoid higher prices of rush-hour transportation, which angered the middle class.

The size of the protests grew by the day, with members of the middle class, unions, and other groups joining the students in the streets. Protestors began looting and burning grocery stores and metro stations and vandalized a Cathedral in Valparaíso. For the first time since the dictator Augusto Pinochet left office in 1990, the presidential administration ordered the military into the streets and imposed a nightly curfew.

At least 20 people have died, mostly from the fires set during protests, although five people were killed by security forces. At least 1500 people have been arrested. Former Chilean president and current UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has sent a delegation to Chile to investigate human rights abuses related to the arrests, deaths, and injuries of civilians.

The protests are ultimately about general economic inequality and distrust in institutions in Chile, including the Catholic Church in the wake of the abuse scandal. The minimum wage in Chile is \$413 a month and the cost of living is high, with prices for food, transportation, healthcare and other living expenses closer to those in the United States. While Chile has the strongest economy in Latin America, it has the highest economic inequality among the countries participating in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

These protests are happening just days before finance ministers were scheduled to arrive in Chile for the Summit Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and weeks before Chile was to host the United Nations COP25 climate conference to make further progress on the Paris agreement. On October 30, the Chilean government announced that it would no longer host either the APEC or the COP25 gathering, a last minute decision

which has been met with worldwide astonishment.

Both the OECD and APEC are international bodies where nations collaborate on trade and economic policies, particularly free trade and other neoliberal economic policies. Some people point to the neoliberal reforms that started during the dictatorship as one major factor in the rising inequality today. But the economic model established under the dictatorship has continued through both right- and left-leaning presidential administrations.

Chile is currently experiencing an economic slowdown, especially with the decline in copper mining production. Chile is the world's largest producer of copper and this industry accounts for ten percent of the country's GDP. When President Piñera came into office in March 2018, he announced plans to instate economic austerity measures to rein in government spending and stem the rising debt related to stagnation in the copper industry. The 2020 budget, revealed on September 27, proposes more belt-tightening measures and the lowest government spending increase in a decade.

This month, protests against economic austerity measures also occurred in Argentina and Ecuador, Chile's neighboring countries. Ecuador also declared a state of "exception," or emergency, in response to the protests. Ecuadorean security forces imposed a nightly curfew, used tear gas, rubber bullets and even live bullets on protesters resulting in deaths, injuries and arrests.

Argentina just held a presidential election that acted as a referendum on the austerity measures that were put in place under center-right President Mauricio Macri. Citizens voted against austerity measures in electing center-left candidate Alberto Fernández.

Civil society groups have framed this moment as a social-political crisis not seen since Chile returned to a democracy in 1990. Chilean civil society has called for nonviolent protests, for the government to call off the state of emergency and pull the military from the streets, and for all sides to engage in dialogue to create a new social compact. Following a protest by over one million people in the streets of Santiago on October 25, President Piñera asked his entire cabinet to step down and called off the state of emergency. He also proposed increases to the minimum wage and pensions. For some protesters, these measures are not enough. It is still unclear how these tensions will be resolved. §

## Bolivian Elections Spark Unrest

*Dan Moriarty, an MOGC staff member and former Maryknoll Lay Missioner who lived in Bolivia for 17 years, discusses the unrest in Bolivia following the October presidential election.*

Protests and unrest erupted across Bolivia following the presidential election on October 20. Incumbent Evo Morales appears to have won an unprecedented fourth term as president, avoiding a runoff election by a fraction of a percent. Protesters accuse the government of electoral fraud and reject Morales's increasingly authoritarian populism. An indefinite, general strike concentrated in urban centers has lasted a week as of this writing.

Morales received 47.08 percent of the vote, 10.57 percent ahead of second-place candidate Carlos Mesa. In doing so, Morales avoided a runoff election by a portion of a percent, according to election law.

Irregularities in vote counting led to widespread allegations of fraud, although official observers have found no clear evidence of tampering. Official election-count websites were trending toward a runoff hours after polls closed, when, at 7:30pm, with over 80 percent of votes counted, the transmission went dark with no explanation from officials. Twenty-four hours later, transmission of the count resumed, with 95 percent counted and Morales edging toward avoiding a runoff. The Organization of American States, the European Union, and the Catholic Church all expressed alarm and called for greater transparency on the part of the government. The vice president of the electoral board and other election officials resigned. Morales has accused protesters of not wanting to wait until rural votes – which typically support the president – were counted. But Morales himself declared victory on the night of October 20, long before all votes were registered.

Tensions had been rising in Bolivia in anticipation of the elections. The Bolivian constitution allows the president only two terms (Morales's first term took place before the constitution went into effect in 2009). Voters in a 2016 referendum rejected a proposed change to the constitution that would have allowed Morales to run again. His Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party then sued, saying that term limits were a violation of Morales's human rights, citing international laws guaranteeing the right to political participation. A constitutional tribunal of judges appointed by the MAS agreed, rendering constitutional term limits inoperative. For many Bolivians protesting today, the fact that Morales was on the ballot at all is proof enough of fraud.

After Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, was first elected in 2005 with an unprecedented simple

majority, the opposition was largely led by right-wing oligarchs and was marked by racism and violence. Support for Morales increased to well over 60 percent over several years, as his "Process of Change" political program delivered steady economic growth and reforms, including the new constitution, leading to greater inclusion for Bolivia's historically excluded indigenous majority.

In later years, however, Morales has lost support, especially in urban areas, but also among rural peasants, miners, and other laborers. Human rights and land defenders have been targeted by government forces, most notably in 2011, when indigenous marchers protesting plans to build a highway through their territory were brutally attacked by national police at Chaparina.

Morales has built the Bolivian economy primarily on extractive industries such as natural gas and mining – and, increasingly, on debt – and made numerous concessions to powerful agro-industrial interests, with devastating effects on the environment. Peasant groups who oppose such policies, appealing to indigenous traditions of living in harmony with the Pachamama (Mother Earth), are dismissed as tools of imperialist foreign NGOs.

Morales has attacked, dismissed, and maligned anyone who has opposed him, even from within his own movement. Echoing the language of populists around the world, Morales blamed his defeat in the 2016 referendum on "fake news." Using increasingly messianic language to describe Morales, his vice president and others in the MAS repeatedly tell peasants, "Only Evo can save you," warning that other politicians will strip away their rights.

Recently, indigenous and left-leaning protesters, many of whom initially supported Morales, find themselves in the uneasy position of sharing the streets with groups singing racist chants and supporting right-wing opposition candidates. Morales has sought to exploit this complexity, accusing all protesters of staging a coup motivated by racism and a desire to return to the neoliberalism and military dictatorships of the past. At the president's urging, his supporters have taken to the streets, clashing violently with protesters and threatening to cut the flow of water and food to cities to end the strike.

It is unclear how the crisis will be resolved, but the struggle for Bolivian democracy is far from over. §

# Climate Change and the Oceans

*The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a report in September that details the climate's dramatic impact on the oceans.*

In his monumental study published in 1998 titled “Something New Under the Sun,” social historian J. R. McNeill wrote that one thousand years ago people believed that rivers were too large to be polluted; then, two hundred years ago, it was lakes; and in the 20th century, oceans. It seems we were wrong on all accounts. A new report by UN climate scientists says the world’s oceans have warmed unabatedly since 1970, with profound consequences for our ecosystems and people. Climate change, the report’s authors say, makes our oceans “poised to unleash misery on a global scale.”

The Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, issued by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), names environmental degradation and threats to ocean marine systems that have been documented before – the destruction of coral reefs and mangrove forests; waste, plastic, and chemical pollution; ingestion of micro-plastics by sea life; sea level rise; and overfishing and reduction in fish stocks – and goes on to better quantify these problems and name them as imminent dangers to economic and human well-being.

Sixty million people are engaged in the fishing industry worldwide and one-third of fish stocks are being fished at unsustainable levels, the report says. According to recent data, fifty percent of coral reefs, which sustain great quantities of marine life, have been lost since 1870. Some marine species, such as shrimp and mollusks, are in danger of complete collapse. Despite drastic declines in fish stocks, some nations are ignoring warnings and have increased subsidies for fishing practices that decimate marine life.

Concerns about sea level rise are a major topic of the report. Sea levels are projected to rise between one and two feet by the end of this century, even if temperature rise is limited to less than two degrees Celsius. There are 65 million people living on the Small Island Developing States and another 680 million people in low-lying coastal areas. All will be severely impacted by rising sea levels and many are already experiencing climatic events nearly annually that previously occurred only every hundred years, such as Category Five hurricanes.

The report also examines the cryosphere, or the polar and high mountain regions of the globe. Summer sea ice in the Arctic is diminishing rapidly each year, with serious feedback consequences. Without ice to

reflect sunlight back into the atmosphere, the ocean absorbs even more heat, resulting in even less ice over the coming year. The report predicts that by 2030 there will be no summer ice in the Arctic Ocean, a permanent condition. These changes alone have the potential to increase sea level by several meters in a few centuries.

Four million people live in the Arctic regions. Many will have to move to other areas to escape the rising waters, possibly weakening their ties to traditional cultural and economic practices. Marine mammals and other sea life in the Arctic will also suffer from loss of sea ice.

The report also documents the rapid loss of glacial mass. Regions with small glaciers are expected to lose 80 percent of current ice mass by 2100. Many glaciers will disappear by then regardless of future greenhouse gas emissions; already much of the Andes and the Alps have lost their glaciers. Massive glacial loss in the Himalayas will have untold catastrophic effects on the livelihoods of people in densely populated Asian countries.

The report highlights some actions that can help mitigate these scenarios: shifting to renewable energy and transportation alternatives; utilizing nature-based forms of coastal and flood plain buffers; and increasing funding to enable vulnerable communities to adapt to climate related disruptions.

Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry wrote about the report and the urgent need to face the climate crisis in an op-ed published in the Boston Globe on October 21. “You don’t have to be a scientist or a government leader to understand that time is running out,” Kerry wrote. The former secretary in the Obama administration was a key player in the writing of the landmark Paris climate agreement, a global accord that President Donald Trump is working hard to dismantle.

“We can still change our course,” Kerry goes on to say. “One way is through a scientifically proven, cost-effective way for world leaders to help conserve the ocean and provide resilience to climate change: create marine protected areas to serve as great ‘parks’ in the sea, free from industrial extractive activity.” He acknowledges commitments governments have already made to protect the oceans but, based on this latest UN report, Kerry concludes, “Important accomplishments as they are, world leaders need to deliver more bold actions.”§

# Calls for Action at the UN General Assembly

*The United Nations General Assembly met in September, focusing on sustainable development goals and climate change.*

The 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly occurred September 23-27, bringing together representatives from member countries to discuss the issues of poverty reduction, inequality, violent conflict, and the climate emergency, among others. Meetings of officials included one on universal health coverage, the UN Climate Action Summit, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit. Member states reviewed previous agreements and took stock of their nations' progress in addressing these issues, noting successful strategies and identifying gaps.

Although the discussions allowed for some optimism, the data presented on SDGs demonstrates that states are lagging in the implementation of these development goals set for 2030. Likewise, at the Climate Action Summit, it was clear that states are far behind in implementing their goals to reduce emissions in order to keep the global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the goal set in the Paris climate agreement in order to limit the worst effects of climate change. Sr. Marvie Misolas, MM, who represents the Maryknoll Sisters at the UN in New York, noticed the limited space for non-governmental and civil society participation in the summits, which she believes speaks to the continuing decline in their ability to participate in high-level UN gatherings. She also noted that the private sector continues to team up with governments to help implement the SDGs.

For the first time, a landmark agreement was reached at the September 23rd High-Level Meeting on Health Care in which world leaders pledged to help all people gain access to health services. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General at World Health Organization (WHO) said, "The world has 11 years left to make good on its sustainable development goals. Universal health coverage is key to ensuring that happens." The WHO and eleven organizations will launch a *Global Action Plan for health and wellbeing for all*. The plan seeks to provide more streamlined support to countries to help deliver universal health coverage and achieve the health-related SDG targets. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation welcomed the decision, stating, "Universal health coverage is a political choice: today world leaders have signaled their readiness to make that choice."

Youth played a big part in the Climate Summits. On September 21, the UN Secretary General António Guterres held a forum with young climate activists

and listened to the voices of youth representatives from various countries. Greta Thunberg, a 16-year old Swedish climate activist, spoke strongly to heads of states about their failure to act on the climate crisis and protect the future of youth. "The eyes of all future generations are upon you," she told them. "If you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you." She led the young people in a worldwide School Strike for Climate Action on September 20. The youth called on the member states to take the following actions, among others: treat the climate crisis as an emergency, hold major carbon emitters responsible, include women and girls, prioritize climate education, and include youth in discussion and decision-making.

Representatives from several countries announced ambitious and innovative plans to reduce and mitigate climate change. The representatives from China and New Zealand announced plans to work together to significantly reduce their emissions through "nature-based solutions," or actions that work with nature to prevent and adapt to climate change. The French ambassador announced that France will no longer partner in trade agreements with countries whose policies do not align with the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. The German representative said that Germany is committed to be carbon neutral by 2050. Leaders also pledged to increase their contributions to the Green Climate Fund to assist developing countries with adaptation and mitigation. A coalition of 87 companies with combined capital of US\$2 trillion committed to significantly reduce their emissions. Participants from the finance sector also agreed to direct their portfolios toward carbon-neutral investments. Finally, preparation began for the COP25 gathering, which will focus on protecting oceans from the effects of climate change.

On this 74th Anniversary of the United Nations, the Secretary General António Guterres reflects, "We are working for fair globalization and bold climate action. We are pushing for human rights and gender equality – and saying 'no' to hatred of any kind. And we are striving to maintain peace – while bringing life-saving aid to millions caught up in armed conflict." The UN gatherings in September reflected this vision of hope but also highlighted the significant work that is yet to be done. §

## Hong Kong Cardinal Calls for Nonviolence

*Cardinal John Tong of Hong Kong named Gandhi and Mandela as peaceful examples for pro-democracy protesters to follow in a speech broadcast on local radio on October 12. The following excerpt is from an article published by the Union of Catholic Asian News (UCANNews) on October 22, 2019.*

As protests continue in Hong Kong for democracy and freedom, Cardinal John Tong has called on people in the China-administered territory to emulate world leaders who advocated nonviolent resistance.

In a speech broadcast on Radio Television Hong Kong, the cardinal projected India's Mahatma Gandhi and South Africa's Nelson Mandela as examples of peaceful resistance.

People should not feel "despair or bear hatred to anyone even though their demands are not answered, because such negative feelings can breed violence, which cannot solve any problems," Cardinal Tong said.

He said the peaceful movements against tyrannies led by Gandhi and Mandela won the approval of the

world because of their insistence on peaceful means.

"To rebuild harmony, giving a concrete response to the demands of the people is the real way. The priority today is to restore trust between the government and people so that the precious harmony in society can appear again," he said in his speech reported by diocesan publication Sunday Examiner.

Demonstrations began in March to protest an amendment to a law aiming to allow authorities to extradite fugitives wanted in Taiwan and mainland China. Protesters believe such laws aim to choke the administrative freedom of Hong Kong and bring it increasingly under Chinese authority. §

**Faith in action:** Read the rest of the article from UCANNews at <http://bit.ly/HongKongBishop>.

## Bishops Comment on Crisis in Haiti

*An office within the Haitian Bishops conference has commented on the emerging crisis in Haiti.*

The political and economic situation in Haiti has deteriorated into a crisis, with increasing gas, food, and transportation shortages and frequent civilian protests calling for the president, Jovenel Moïse, to step down.

Several Catholic news sources have reported on statements by the Haitian Bishops conference condemning the widespread corruption and economic collapse in the country. According to Crux Now and the Catholic Register in Canada, the justice and peace commission of the Haitian Bishops' conference wrote in an open letter, "Our country is shamefully trapped in corruption at the highest level of society. Unabated corruption has become an endemic evil... [which] seriously undermines, both from an ethical and economic point of view, the development of our country."

The justice and peace commission described the situation: "[Haitians are] unemployed people in a place where there are no jobs, or exploited without access to a fair wage, a people who lack the means to pay for the education of their children, a people without access to health care because of high costs...The people get no justice..." The commission ultimately stated that "a change in head of state is crucial as is a change in the way the authorities govern the country."

Maryknoll Affiliate Renate Schneider, a longtime

resident of Haiti, has also written about the deteriorating conditions in the country: "We had a medical delegation of surgeons coming...and had to cancel, because there is no gas, no oxygen, and no nitrous oxide for anesthesia...everywhere you look, people are suffering. Stores [in my town] are empty, because goods are not coming from Port au Prince...I have never seen anything like it. Even when [former president] Aristide fell it was not like this."

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Sami Scott is in Haiti working on a project to stimulate the local economy in Gros Morne, despite the economic collapse. With the Religious of Jesus and Mary community, she has helped bring 1,000 hens to the town, which provide employment and a steady supply of food for the community. §

**Faith in action:** Read about the bishops' commission statement at <http://bit.ly/HaitiBishops>. Read a blog post about conditions in Haiti by Renate Schneider at <http://bit.ly/RenateHaiti>. Read about the work of Maryknoll Missioner Sami Scott in Gros Morne, Haiti at <http://bit.ly/Hensarehere>.

# Sudan and South Sudan: History and Future

*Dr. Susan Nagele, a Maryknoll Missioner who worked in East Africa for 33 years, explores the history and governance of the Republics of Sudan and South Sudan.*

Reviewing the history of Sudan and South Sudan can shed light on the problems facing these closely tied and conflict-ridden countries.

Sudan was a collection of small kingdoms until 1820 when Egypt conquered the territory. The Egyptians unified and controlled the north, but the south was full of swamps and disease. This area remained fragmented, difficult to access, and vulnerable to slave traders. In 1882, the British invaded Egypt and afterward jointly ruled Sudan with the Egyptians.

The Republic of Sudan was granted independence in 1956. The new government soon reneged on an agreement to set up a federal system between the north and south of the country. This ignited civil war as southerners demanded more representation, regional autonomy and, for some, complete separation. Except for an eleven-year cease fire, fighting continued until 2005 when a peace agreement was ratified to guide development in the south. That agreement culminated in a national referendum in January 2011 in which 98.8 percent of the population in the south voted to secede from the north.

The Republic of South Sudan was inaugurated on July 9, 2011. The world's newest nation began with little infrastructure, devastation from 45 years of war, and jubilation. Almost all citizens were hopeful that a new day was dawning.

In December 2013, South Sudanese President Salva Kiir claimed that a faction of the army loyal to Vice President Riek Machar had attempted a coup d'état that was quickly suppressed. This sparked the South Sudan civil war that continued intermittently until September 2018 when a peace agreement was signed. This war was far more complicated than a conflict between these two men. Several powerful groups have been suppressing other groups and excluding them from mediation efforts. For the past six years, 200,000 displaced people have been living in protected sites secured by the United Nations. Additionally, two million people are refugees in Uganda and Sudan.

The peace agreement requires Kiir and Machar to form a transitional government by November 12, 2019. They must agree on the number and boundaries of sub-national states and unify the army. While faith-based groups are praying and working for peace, few people are relocating from exile. There are reports of South Sudanese men returning from Uganda to join a rebel

group. But the goal of reintegration of all combatants into one united army with a common purpose is far off.

Meanwhile, Sudan also suffers from division and violence. Former president Omar al-Bashir was removed in April 2019. A transitional government was formed in September after eight months of peaceful civilian protests, which were guided by Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia and the 2019 Nobel Peace Laureate.

Abdulla Hamdok, the new Prime Minister of Sudan, made his first official visit to Juba, capital of South Sudan, in September, where he spoke about the importance of integrating trade, allowing visa-free access and offering dual citizenship between the two countries. Hamdok's trip coincided with his country granting permission for the World Food Programme to visit the Nuba Mountains region for the first time in nine years. The people of the Nuba mountains have been subjected to a campaign of aerial bombardment since 2011 after fighting broke out between Khartoum and Nuba rebels.

Peace in both countries is hindered by corruption. A major source of corruption is the oil industry, which provides 95 percent of revenue for South Sudan. Several countries, including Russia, South Africa and China, have invested in this sector. Dar Petroleum is the largest exporter of oil from South Sudan and has funded the lavish lifestyles of government officials and provided direct support to militias linked to mass atrocities. Its largest shareholder is the China National Petroleum Corporation.

Tens of thousands of people in Sudan accomplished a nonviolent change of government this year in a pro-democracy movement worthy of worldwide praise and U.S. support. Thousands continue to rally in several cities calling for the former leader's party to be dissolved and senior members brought to court while the transitional government prepares for democratic elections in just over three years.

Civilians in South Sudan have even more reason to protest but are in survival mode. In a recent Time magazine article, Bishop Edward Hiiboro Kussala of the Yambio-Tombura diocese suggested a path forward: "Most of the people who are fighting are in the government and they have the weapons, so to initiate the process of justice, first we need to stop the war, organize the government, and then gradually the people can have the security to be able to speak out."§

## Supreme Court to Decide Fate for Dreamers

*Ilse Cruz, an undocumented college student from Florida, writes about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) cases set to come before the Supreme Court on November 12.*

I'm an undocumented college student and my fate will be decided by the Supreme Court. The court is scheduled to hear oral arguments in cases regarding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program on November 12. Two years ago, the Trump Administration ended the program that protects me from deportation.

The DACA program was created in 2012 to allow young, undocumented immigrants who came to the United States before the age of 16 to legally live and work in the United States. I had to complete an application process, pass a background check, provide biometric information, and pay a \$495 fee to be eligible to earn a renewable two-year work permit and have my deportation deferred.

When DACA ended in 2017, the government threw 700,000 people's lives into chaos, including mine. Groups around the country were quick to sue the government against the termination of the program. Courts in California, New York, and Washington, D.C ruled that the way in which the Trump administration terminated the program was unlawful. Thanks to these decisions, DACA renewals remain open, but the uncer-

tainty around the program's termination has negatively impacted millions of people, not just Dreamers, but also our families, neighbors, and co-workers.

Every one of us is living court-case-to-court-case, unsure if we will be able to stay with our loved ones and continue to contribute to our families and communities. Many Dreamers are now parents of U.S citizen children, have U.S-citizen spouses, or have family members who rely on them for support.

There is bipartisan support for legislation protecting Dreamers. The House passed H.R.6, the Dream and Promise Act, in June, but the Senate has been unable to pass any sort of legislation to protect DACA recipients.

On November 12, the Supreme Court will consider not whether DACA is constitutional, but rather whether the way the Trump administration terminated the program was unlawful. A ruling is expected by June 2020. The lives of 700,000 Dreamers are in limbo once again. §

**Faith in action:** Read the amicus brief that the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and 127 religious organizations filed in the Supreme Court, challenging the Trump Administration's termination of DACA.

## Amazon Synod Concludes in Rome

*The Special Assembly of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region took place in Rome in October on the theme, "Amazonia: new paths for the Church and for an integral ecology."*

The Synod on the Amazon concluded in Rome on October 27 after three weeks of meetings. The 185 voting members of the Synod released a 33-page final document that calls for the Church to see and act in new ways and to be an "ally" of the peoples of the Amazon.

"The hopeful energy in Rome during the Synod on the Amazon was extremely high," said Susan Gunn, Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. "Like the participants in the Synod, Maryknoll missionaries, through their lived experiences, are acutely aware of the wisdom indigenous cultures have to offer and the exploitation and suffering these communities experience to satisfy the consumption demands of the Global North. We live in a world out of balance and headed toward self-destruction – unless we change course now."

The final document's main proposals to Pope Francis include: allow for the priestly ordination of

married men in the region to address a lack of sacramental ministry, reopen the study commission on ordination of women as deacons, adopt a definition of ecological sin as "a sin against future generations that manifest itself in acts and habits of pollution and destruction of the environmental harmony," and divest the Church in the Amazon from extractive industries that cause socio-ecological harm to the earth and indigenous communities.

These proposals will be weighed by Pope Francis, among others. Speaking off the cuff to Synod participants, Pope Francis also promised to reconvene the commission to study the possibility of women deacons in the Church.

**Faith in action:** Learn more about the Synod on the Amazon and the final document from the Synod at <http://bit.ly/ResourcesSynod>. §

## What is at Stake in the Amazon

*Flávio José Rocha, a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in Brazil, highlights the great responsibility of stewarding the Amazon's precious ecosystem. This article was first published by the Maryknoll Lay Missioners.*

Water is often viewed in isolation from land. This separation is a result of a mentality that sees things as disconnected. But science has shown the great importance of forests for maintaining rain cycles—not only in the Amazon region, but throughout the Earth. If the forest is gone, it will affect the water cycle and a whole ecosystem of rivers and lakes in a region.

Some 20 percent of all the water in the ocean that comes from rivers originates in the Amazon river. As water has become a huge issue on the whole planet, who in their right mind would think that destroying the Amazon is a good idea?

It is as simple as this: No forests, no water.

Scientists have also shown that human presence, through the migration of ancient indigenous people, was important for developing biodiversity in the Amazon forest. The problem is not having humans living in the forest, but how and why they live there.

Most of the Amazon forest is in Brazil, and some of it is being deforested by multinational corporations either directly or indirectly. Some of those lumber companies outsource this job to Brazilian companies, so their names do not appear if there is an investigation or the media denounces the illegal logging in that area.

Many communities have been affected by the lumber activity because they make their living by extracting rubber from the rubber trees. But without trees, there are no jobs for those families and they end up migrating to cities to live in shanty towns. Overexploitation of natural resources forces people to leave behind not only their land but also their traditional ways of living in the forest, which were developed over generations.

Another threat to the Amazon region is the presence of mining companies. Multinationals have been exploiting minerals, especially in the state of Pará, and have caused damage to different communities by polluting their rivers and their lands. The chemicals tossed into the rivers would take decades to dissolve, even if there were a clean-up now, which is not the case.

Large dam projects, such as the Belo Monte Dam,

have also interrupted the natural course of certain rivers, while evicting thousands of people from their homes. Many of the families affected have only church groups to advocate for them. Some of the dams interrupt entire ecosystems, putting some fish species at risk of extinction.

The Amazon Synod, which took place from October 6 to 27 in Rome, was an important moment to highlight the Amazon region's many problems, including the current fires there. It was also an opportunity to show to the world why people like Chico Mendes and Sister Dorothy Stang were in love with the Amazon and its people. It is such a sacred place with so many diverse species and indigenous groups that for these reasons alone, it is worth preserving.

With their limited knowledge, politicians who have the power to make decisions often do not understand the sacred nature of the Amazon and our duty to preserve it. On the other hand, some environmentalists advocate for a complete isolation of the forest with no human presence, which is another mistake.

What is necessary is not for the Amazon to become a sanctuary which no people will approach. We must come to understand the way in which indigenous Amazonian communities live in harmony

with the ecosystem and promote that way while offering them what science can provide, without any imposition.

People across the globe, especially in the northern hemisphere, can help preserve the forest in the South. One way would be to make sure that companies that have their headquarters there and do business in the Amazon are acting with respect for that ecosystem and the communities who live in that region. Another is participating in their parishes and faith-sharing groups to reflect on the outcomes of the Amazon Synod.

The ecological conversion that is required today, Pope Francis writes in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, “also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings.”§



## Journey for Justice in El Paso

*Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns participated in a teach-in and action in El Paso, Texas, on the themes of immigration, anti-racism, and Catholicism in the borderlands.*

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) joined Catholic migrant advocates and scholars from across the United States in El Paso, Texas, October 11-13 for a teach-in, *Jornada por la Justicia* (Journey to Justice), organized by the Hope Border Institute and the Latinx Catholic Leadership Coalition, on the themes of immigration, identity, anti-racism, Catholicism, and the borderlands. Latinx and Indigenous speakers shared their stories and culture and presented theory and strategies for promoting justice rooted in their experience as Chicanos and migrants. At a closing liturgy, Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso released a pastoral letter on immigration, racism, and violence.

For MOGC and colleagues from a coalition of Washington, D.C.-based Catholic groups, the action marked the culmination of a Catholic Days of Action campaign which has included actions in Washington, D.C. and in Newark, New Jersey. In El Paso, Latinx Catholics living in the borderlands welcomed the DC coalition to join a weekend of witness rooted in the mission values of solidarity, encounter, and accompaniment, inviting participants to walk with asylum seekers from Mexico into the United States.

On Saturday afternoon, one group from the teach-in held a “Jericho walk” in which they sang and prayed through the streets of El Paso. Another group crossed the border bridge into Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to visit migrant families camped in the streets waiting for U.S. authorities to receive their asylum requests. Returning to the U.S. side, the group blessed the bridge with holy water, symbolically reclaiming it as a bridge of unity and connection between the two countries, as opposed to the place of division and violence that it has become.

A smaller contingent from the teach-in remained on the Mexico side, meeting with a group of fifteen Mexican asylum seekers, including teenagers and small children, who had been camping in the streets of Juarez for weeks. Under U.S. and international law, asylum seekers must be allowed to wait in the U.S. while their claims are evaluated, but under the Trump Administration’s “Remain in Mexico” policy, they are stopped on the bridge before stepping across the borderline, issued a number, and required to wait in Mexico until their case can be heard – a system called “metering” that exposes migrants to danger, especially in the case of Mexicans forced to wait in the same country from which they are fleeing persecution. The group from the teach-in walked

with the asylum seekers as they crossed the bridge once again. This time, the asylum seekers were permitted to enter the U.S. and were processed by Customs and Border Patrol agents.

The fate of those fifteen asylum seekers remains uncertain. They would be interviewed to determine if they have a credible fear of returning to Mexico, after which they might be deported, split up and/or detained, or released to a shelter in El Paso. Waiting for a hearing and final decision could take months or years. In 2018, approximately 85 percent of asylum requests by Mexicans were denied. Aware of the risk the families still faced, the group that had accompanied them gathered for a prayer outside, and returned to the teach-in, celebrating that the families were finally in the US, but knowing their struggles would continue.

Throughout the weekend, participants were keenly aware of the horrific violence El Paso had faced just two months earlier, on August 3, when a white supremacist gunman traveled there to kill migrants and Mexicans at the Cielo Vista Walmart. People told stories of where they were when the news broke, of survivors and the twenty-two people who died. It was with awareness of the racism and violence directed at Latinx and migrant communities, and of the sorrow, trauma, and fear inflicted on the people of El Paso, that Bishop Seitz presided at a bilingual celebration of the Eucharist to close the gathering. At the end of the Mass, he released his pastoral letter, “Night Will Be No More.”

Bishop Seitz’s letter has been praised for addressing white supremacy and racist violence more explicitly than have previous bishops’ statements. He names these as sinful and draws a direct line through history, from European colonialism and U.S. expansionism, through slavery and the exploitation of migrant labor, to the xenophobia and hatred that plague our hearts and institutions today and which are reflected even in the rhetoric of “our highest elected officials.” He upholds Latin American faith traditions, such as devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, as models for identifying Christ in the other and bringing hope and dignity to the excluded. Finally, he calls on the Church to recognize the prophetic leadership of Latinx men and women – a message that resonated easily with participants in the Latinx-led teach-in and action in El Paso. §

## Resources

- 1) Read a statement from the Catholic bishops of Zimbabwe on the **death of former president Robert Mugabe**: <http://bit.ly/BishopsZimbabwe>
- 2) Read a statement from the South African Bishops Commission on the **recent outcry against gender-based violence in South Africa**: <http://bit.ly/BishopsSouthAfrica>
- 3) Read about the **final document** produced at the **Synod on the Amazon** in October: <http://bit.ly/FinalSynodDoc>
- 4) Plan now to attend **Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD)** in Washington, D.C., **April 24 – 27**. The theme is “Imagine! God’s Earth and People Restored.” More information is available at [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org), or contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.
- 5) Read this statement from 42 organizations in Central America, Mexico, and the United States on **how the migration crisis affects Central Americans**: <http://bit.ly/MigrationCentAm>
- 6) Learn about the ongoing **crisis in Haiti** from the Quixote Center : <http://bit.ly/QuixoteHaiti>
- 7) Read Maryknoll Affiliate Renate Schneider’s report on the **current conditions in her town in Haiti**: <http://bit.ly/RenateHaiti>
- 8) Join the **Back from the Brink campaign**, a grassroots effort to abolish nuclear weapons through action at the local level: <http://bit.ly/brinkwebinar>
- 9) Download “**Search for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land**,” a five-week curriculum on peace and politics in the Holy Land from Churches for Middle East Peace: <http://bit.ly/PeaceHolyLand>
- 10) Read the speech given by **Honduran defenders of the environment** as they accepted the **Letelier-Moffit Award for Human Rights** in Washington D.C: <http://bit.ly/LMaward2019>
- 11) Watch a new 8-minute video, “**What if we Nuke a City?**” by Kurzgesagt and the ICRC on the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear attack: <http://bit.ly/2J3F2xt>
- 12) Read the **Canadian bishops’ statement** calling on the government of Canada to **sign the nuclear ban treaty**: <http://bit.ly/CanadianBishopsNukes>
- 13) Read “**Night Will Be No More**,” the latest pastoral letter by Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso on the intersecting issues of race, gun violence, racially motivated attacks on Latinos in the United States, and the ongoing militarization of the border. Stay tuned for a small group study guide: <https://www.hopeborder.org/nightwillbenomore>
- 14) Read about **Maryknoll Lay Missioner Sami Scott’s** income-generating project with hens in Gros Morne, Haiti: <http://bit.ly/Hensarehere>
- 15) Order a copy of **Pax Christi USA’s Advent 2019 booklet, “The Time to Be Awake”**: Daily reflections on the Advent Lectionary readings with questions for contemplation or discussion: <http://paxchristiusa.3dcartstores.com/>
- 16) Read this short, spiritual reflection on **integral ecology** from the Canadian relief agency, Development and Peace: <http://bit.ly/DPIntegralEcology>
- 17) Read an amicus brief filed in the Supreme Court by 127 religious organizations, including MOGC, in **support of the DACA program**: <http://bit.ly/amicusbriefDACA>.
- 18) Find more resources on the **Synod on the Amazon, including interviews with indigenous women** about their opinions on the Synod by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Kathy Bond: <http://bit.ly/ResourcesSynod>
- 19) Join us online on **December 1** to pray for those **living with HIV and AIDS** and for those whose lives were cut short due to HIV or AIDS. Add your name and the time when you wish to pray on December 1 to the list: <http://bit.ly/AidsDay2019>