

US. Catholic Mission Association

Mission Update Newsletter - Autumn 2000

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Encuentro 2000: Many Faces in God's House

On July 6-9th in Los Angeles, participants in Encuentro 2000 experienced firsthand the beauty and majesty that live in our universal Church. The celebration of the body of Christ in its cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity was the focus of the gathering. It provided an opportunity for people to share their stories and faith traditions to create and foster communion, solidarity, and mission. Over 5,000 participants attested to its global dimensions in magnificent daily liturgies celebrating both our oneness and our multiple, unique contributions. The result was, in the vernacular of the day, truly awesome.

Unlike watching a performance by a native group on a set stage, the entire convention became the stage itself for this expression of universality. Representatives in native dress from around the world intermingled with others, speaking different tongues, singing songs, and sharing multilingual liturgies. Encircling the general session hall were small chapels celebrating God and the saints in every image and likeness from Vietnam, Tonga, Tobago, Somalia, Poland, the Philippines, Hawaii, Bolivia, the Caribbean, India, and North America, to name but a few.

Recalling the Spanish influence in many American countries, Encuentro 2000 opened with a rousing mariachi band processing to the front of the hall, holding high a huge painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of all the Americas. The painting was positioned on the main stage, in a place of special honor. Throughout the meeting, participants petitioned Our Lady for her intercession and guidance. Touching a serious note, Native American Ms. Georgiana Sanchez reminded the assembly that the city of Los Angeles was built over the tombs of her ancestors. She concluded her remarks by singing a Chumash Indian song learned from her brother: "The tide comes in, the tide goes out, and God, like the ocean, abides."

The tone for the entire conference was set by Archbishop Francois X. Nguyen Van Thuan, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City. With whimsical humor, he described the "differentness" of Jesus by listing some of his human failings: "He is so forgetful. He not only forgives everything, he forgets everything! And he's no good at mathematics either. To him, one sheep equals ninety-nine." The archbishop went on to describe his nine years of solitary confinement in Vietnam, recounting how he made friends with one of the guards who enabled him to get two small shards of wood to make a cross and, later, a piece of electrical wire to make a chain so he could hang the cross around his neck. At first the guard was vehemently opposed, so the bishop smilingly reminded him, "But it is all right, because we are friends!" The bishop wears this same cross as his pectoral cross, and his example reminds us what can be accomplished when we insist that "we are friends!"

Eighty-eight bishops attended this conference, 82 from the United States. Citing the dire need for amnesty for workers in California, Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, was both vigorous and vocal in support of granting amnesty to immigrants on not only moral grounds but also economic grounds. In March of this year, he issued a joint statement with Bishop DiMarzio, chair of the Committee on Migration of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, in which they promised to work together to fundamentally reform U.S. immigration policy. The cardinal also made a statement supporting the commitment of community groups, religious leaders, union leaders, and elected officials to advocate for change in immigration laws. Throughout the conference, there was an urgent call for all U.S. bishops to join Cardinal Mahony in the appeal for

amnesty and to mobilize around this issue.

As the conference neared its end, a picture emerged of the status of the Church in the U.S. The Church consists of many layers in a pyramid, each having different needs and different talents. Near the base of the pyramid are the empowered poor--empowered because they have come together and know their own needs. At the apex are the empowered rich, whose responsibility it is to listen to the needs of the poor and be their voice. It is not the responsibility of the empowered rich to determine what those needs are. They are only to act always as a voice for the voiceless. Only the empowered poor can best identify their own needs. Only they can write their own agenda. In fact, it is by this means that they actually validate their own status.

Encuentro 2000 was an Olympian event visually, musically, and spiritually. From drums to Irish harp, from Tagalog to Haitian French, the enormous spectrum of a universal Church unfolded, speaking in tongues as each person prayed the Lord's Prayer in his or her own native language.

As to its future, Archbishop Nguyen observed: "I dream of a Church that has no other thought than of a suffering people. I have a dream that leaves me no peace." Encuentro 2000 was a model of what our Church really is if and when we remember that "we are friends!"

Written by Ms. Anne Balzhiser, Office Manager, National Conference of Catechetical Leadership

Africa Grassroots Response Initiative

The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) has launched an important new project called the Africa Grassroots Response Initiative (GRI). With support from Catholic Relief Services, the Jesuit Office of International Ministries, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Sisters of the Holy Child, it aims to establish an interactive electronic communication network with select justice & peace, NGO and civil society groups in Africa. The network will channel information back and forth between Africa, North America and Europe that GRI partners will use for their respective advocacy efforts on economic justice issues.

Larry Goodwin just returned from visiting six African countries, and the Africa-Europe Faith & Justice Network (AEFJN) in Brussels and London. He writes, "On the 6-week trip I met with 56 people from 44 different social justice organizations to generate involvement in the GRI project. I discussed the project with regional and diocesan Justice and Peace offices, grassroots NGOs and coalitions, and labor, environmental and civil society groups. The response was consistently positive, based on a keen mutual sense that we have to connect with each other much more effectively to have the kind of impact we want on international economic policies affecting Africa.

The idea for the GRI project originated in the work AFJN was doing to oppose the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, the U.S. trade bill that Congress passed earlier this year. As the Clinton Administration mustered support for the bill among the African diplomatic corps in Washington, D.C., AFJN and others in the faith-based advocacy community realized that our links with African grassroots organizations on this issue were weak. We knew we had to forge better ties if we were to bring a vigorous alternative African voice to the debate about the ever-growing importance of U.S. trade policy and the unsettling effects of economic globalization on Africa's poor majority. We also knew that we must be able to communicate with each other quickly and regularly to assure timely coordination of information and action. Establishing an electronic network using email and a dedicated Web site seemed the most viable approach.

At the same time, the GRI partners made it clear that the network must be focused and well-managed. It cannot be just a steady stream of email on myriad topics. AFJN will oversee the network's content and communication flow as the initiative gets underway. In collaboration with U.S. coalition partners and AEFJN, we also hope that through GRI we can bring African grassroots leaders to the U.S. to speak directly to policy makers about their concerns. As we refine our agenda with GRI partners, we will identify areas of concentration for information and advocacy." AFJN will keep USCMA posted on these latest developments in the initiative very soon. They also can be found on the AFJN Web site - www.afjn.cua.edu. The crucial and exciting part is that AFJN's actions will contain significantly more African input. This will give African grassroots groups a stronger platform in the U.S., bring more depth to AFJN's work with other advocacy coalitions and enhance the impact on Capital Hill. GRI is a tool for working with African social justice groups in a more concerted and cohesive way. That is one of its most important and positive aspects.

Update on the Religious Working Group on the World Bank and IMF

Broken Promises: A Statement of the Religious Working Group on the World Bank and IMF on the Occasion of the World Bank and IMF Annual Meetings in Prague.

Repeatedly, people of faith have articulated a harsh critique of the far reaching economic policy changes required of poor countries to qualify for debt cancellation or new loans. We have consistently brought this concern about the negative impact of structural adjustment programs to the debate about debt and Jubilee. A recent statement coordinated by the Religious Working Group on the WB and IMF, *A Moral Assessment of Progress Toward Jubilee: From Structural Adjustment to Just Economic Relationships*, was signed by over 2000 religious leaders from around the world and more than 100 religious institutions, many of them representing large international communities.

In the past year we have closely followed implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process. When it was launched, we were told in repeated meetings with IMF and World Bank officials that under the new formulation, poverty reduction would in every instance take precedence over economic policy reform; decisions would be made in a public and authentically participatory manner; assessment of the social and environmental impact of policy reforms would be an integral part of decision-making about the suitability of any such reforms prior to and during implementation; and countries emerging from overwhelming debt would not be held to a rigid model of economic life, but would be able to adapt economic policy decisions to their specific social, cultural, economic and environmental contexts.

To date, with the exception of Uganda where grassroots community involvement has been strong, very few visible steps have been taken in any of these areas. Adjustment programs that have deepened unemployment, lowered wages and job security, destroyed small businesses, undermined food security, increased the burdens on women and undercut governments' ability to protect the environment continue. Cancellation of debt, even for severely impoverished countries, is still held hostage to policy reform that systemically undercuts efforts to eradicate poverty. Furthermore, key documents in the process are not available to the public. Unjust and overwhelming debt is being addressed in a process ultimately controlled by the international financial institutions and a few powerful countries rather than by the people most burdened by the poverty we seek to eradicate.

We call attention to the terrible reality that 19,000* children die each day as a result of the debt. In view of this we are extremely disappointed that commitments repeatedly made about the priority of poverty reduction in the debt cancellation process have not been honored. We believe that the kind of participatory process proposed last year offered some hope of ending structural adjustment programs and other destructive conditionalities imposed by creditors. Clearly, this has not happened. Again, we

call for a swift, just, public and truly participatory process of debt cancellation that is unencumbered by conditions that exacerbate poverty and environmental destruction.

(*Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 1997, pages 92-93.)

STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY IN KENYA

We the Catholic Bishops, being mindful of our pastoral duty and being seriously troubled in heart by recent events such as the murder of Fr. John Anthony Kaiser and the frequent deaths of people due to insecurity, appeal to all people of good will to examine consciences both individually and collectively about the future of this country. We urge all people to ask the Lord to give hope to a people floundering in the darkness of despair. People have lost confidence in the forces of law and order and the judicial system and do not have any hope of solutions to recent serious crimes. We appeal to President Moi and the Government to consider the present attitude of the people and take immediate positive steps to restore the confidence of the people.

The death of Fr. Kaiser raises many questions but the most important is "why did it happen?" There are many important aspects, which led to his elimination. The forces of those who are from the present disarray in the realm of law, the impunity with which crimes are committed, when injustice is rewarded and the poor are enslaved by unemployment, lack of health care, sheer tribalism, political intolerance etc. As an act of atonement the Government should return evicted people to the land from which they were illegally expelled and land which has been grabbed be returned.

Threats of dire consequences against clergy and poor people if they speak out on injustices such as land grabbing, child abuse, extortion, shoddy workmanship, lack of health care are the order of the day. We appeal for an immediate stop to these continuous threats and that those who persist in making them be effectively stopped by suitable reprimands and demotions.

The Catholic Bishops are seriously concerned with the proliferation of guns and the spreading of small groups of thugs. It is the legal duty of the government to protect its citizens. It is not proper to have vigilante groups or other groups of hooliganism to provide insecurity. It is necessary to outlaw the possession of arms.

There has been a breakdown of any code of ethics in the country. The code has been replaced by a culture of greed and corruption. The rule of law must be restored and protected from corruption. People must have confidence in the organs of the State.

Recent events in the coffee, tea and sugar industry do not leave much room for hope for the alleviation of poverty. Unnecessary imports of sugar are running down the agricultural sector. Unprepared retrenchment in the Civil Service, unprepared transfer of teachers and burning of markets should not be symbols of modern Kenya. The Bishops appeal for fair treatment of all regardless of their social status.

The Church, in a spirit of reconciliation, wishes to appeal for a new beginning, where all people will be cherished, where the illiterate will be taught, where the poor and children will be protected from the power of corruption, where people will be proud to be citizens of this great country, where indecency, dishonesty, power hunger, doublespeak will be things of the past.

The murder of Fr. Kaiser must be treated within the context of mass injustice and grinding poverty which makes a mockery of our National Anthem "Justice be our shield and protector" and where the constitution assures that all Kenyans enjoy equal rights, has become empty words.

The Bishops invoke the blessings of God on our land and ask that the President, the Government, the Civil Service and all people respond to the call for immediate and practical renewal in the country.

Rt. Rev. John Njue, Chairman - Kenya Episcopal Conference, September 13, 2000

CCTS Celebrating 20 Years of Mission Service

This September, The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Cross Cultural Training Services, is celebrating twenty years of mission service! To commemorate the grace of this anniversary, a gathering of persons who have been integrated into CCTS for the past twenty years will take place at Maryknoll, New York on September 15th and 16th. On the 16th, Anthony Gittins, CSSP gave the keynote address. There was time for remembering, personal reflections, sharing of experiences and an Eucharistic celebration of thanksgiving followed by a barbecue.

In response to a 1978 Maryknoll chapter call, The Center for Mission Studies (which was later renamed Cross Cultural Training Services) was designed. Jim Noonan MM, Superior General at that time recalls: CMS was started because of Maryknoll's desire to respond to our U.S. Church as it sent out new missionaries and welcomed home those who had served in other cultures and nations. CMS was headed by Frank McGourn, MM from 1979-1985 and Robert Jalbert, MM from 1985 until CMS was renamed Cross-Cultural Training Services in 1988 with Ed Bergeron, MM as CCTS coordinator. In 1991, Kathryn Pierce, IHM who had been part of the original CMS team and with CCTS throughout the years, took over from Ed as the coordinator of CCTS.

Affirming the joint efforts of Maryknoll's outreach to the US Church, CCTS has been recently incorporated into the Mission Promotion Department. CCTS continues to:

- * offer a well tested Discernment/Preparation Program biannually with over a thousand missionaries having participated throughout the years and

- * provide consultations with leaders of lay and religious groups in planning and implementing workshops on culture, cultural diversity; and offering skills for living and working in inter-cultural environments.

In response to the current mission needs, CCTS presently offers acculturation workshops for foreign born, newly arrived pastoral agents of the Archdiocese of New York, Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey and seminarians at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago.

Jim Noonan further affirms CCTS and its responses to the evolving mission needs:

CCTS has fulfilled its original vision way beyond expectations. From the beginning it has been excellent in its ability to be creative in finding new ways to be of service to our US Church in its mission out-reach. CCTS networking with others in mission has been very impressive.

A trio of dedicated women make up the present team. They are the human power behind the many endeavors flowing from Cross-Cultural Training Services and each brings her own uniqueness and wealth of cross-cultural experience to the fabric of the colorful personality of CCTS. They are: Kathryn Pierce, IHM, Coordinator; Betsey Guest Administrative Assistant; and Therese McDonough, MMM, Co-coordinator. The team acknowledges with gratitude the many persons who have been woven into CCTS throughout these many years.

Book Review

The Chair of Saint Peter: A History of the Papacy.

By William J. La Due.

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999. 374 pp. Hardback. \$35.

For a one-volume history of the papacy, this work by an expert on canon law is unequalled. Whereas recent books (e.g., *Lives of the Popes* by Richard McBrien) focus on individual popes, this work traces the historical development of the papacy as such, starting from the New Testament and ending with John Paul II. What it has succeeded to show well is that the papacy has not been a monolithic institution. Rather it has evolved from various forms to the present absolutist model. The last chapter, which deals with the installation of the absolutist model from Pius IX to the current pontiff, is of special interest.

The book's narrative is lively, its style clear, and its judgment fair. As the author puts it, "[s]ince the papal office is one of the more important functions in the development of Christian culture, it does not need a heated defense, nor does it deserve a negative polemic." It is hoped that a book like this will contribute to the emergence of a participative exercise of papal authority which will be more at the service of church unity.

Review by, Peter C. Phan, The Warren-Blanding Professor of Religion and Culture, Catholic University

RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

Christinity In China: Growing on Holy Ground

Date: November 10-12, 2000

Location: Historic Harper's Ferry, WV

Keynote Speaker: Nicholas Standaert, SJ - Chinese Studies Dept. Catholic University at Leuven, Belgium

Cultural Evening and Public Address by: Dr. Paul Rule, Director of Religious Studies, University of Latrobe, Australia

Biblical Reflections on Theme: Sr. Maria Ko, SDB, Instituto Auxilium, Rome, Italy

Lectures, Topical Workshops, Panel Discussions

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The Eastern Fellowship

Date: November 3-4, 2000

Location: Maryknoll Sisters, Ossining, NY

"Mission and Eastern and Central Europe Today"

Presenting will be Dr. Anne-Marie Kool - Director of the Protestant Center for Mission Studies in Budapest, Hungary; Dr. Peter Kuzmic - President of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek,

Croatia; and Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky - Ecumenical Officer of the Orthodox Church in America. There will also be worship, the sharing of perspectives of Graduate Students and others involved in mission and mission studies and lots of chances for socializing.

Cost: \$42.00 for the package plan rate for 3 meals and lodging and \$10.00 for Eastern Fellowship membership and registration fees.

For more information please contact:

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