



Mission Update

United States
Catholic Mission Association

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West African Peace-Building Consultation

“Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called children of God”

At a time when the world’s attention was on the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the religious leaders of the Mano River Basin countries of West Africa came to the US to alert our attention to the war happening in West Africa. As a result, the Continuing Committee on Common Witness, of which USCMA is an integral part, in collaboration with the Church World Service, responded to their request to help the Mano River Basin set up an international consultation that would effectively promote the role of religious leaders in consolidating peace.

On January 23-25, 2006, a historic international consultation with the theme “Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called children of God,” happened at the Corina Hotel in Monrovia, Liberia. It was attended by more than 70 religious leaders from the Christian, Muslim and Baha’i faiths from all over West Africa. The participants could not have agreed more on the timeliness and importance of the consultation. Liberia had just elected their president, the first woman elected president in the whole African continent. While Sierra Leone and Liberia are experiencing a relative peace, much work is needed to consolidate the peace gained. There was a clear sense, too, that peace in the Mano River Basin can only be achieved if all the nations surrounding commit themselves towards working collaboratively.

Why a Peace Consultation?

Since the 1980’s, West Africans in the Mano River sub-region have experienced armed insurgency that has spread across borders, plaguing the region country-by-country. Civil war erupted in Liberia in 1989, followed by an 11-year civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone. Most recently, unrest has broken out in Côte d’Ivoire.

Liberia has suffered through 14 years of conflict – civil war, the forced recruitment of children into both military and rebel groups, amputations on men, women, and children by the warring sides, frequent changes in the government leadership, and many broken ceasefires. The 1989-1996 civil war devastated the country’s economy and infrastructure. Since 1996, conflicts between government and rebel factions have not allowed Liberia to recover. With a population of more than three million, approximately 80 percent of Liberians live below the poverty level. Some 200,000 Liberian refugees are now living in neighboring countries. In Sierra Leone, civil war between the government



US Delegates: Sr. Roseanne Rustemeyer, Anthony Filippino, Rev. Bill Dyer, Rev. Bill Headley, Rita Tams Redfield, Rev. Michael Montoya, Moses Ole Sakuda, and Rev. John McCullough

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WE PRAY...

**FOR CATHOLICS IN THE
WORLD: MAY THEY GROW IN
MISSION AWARENESS AND
OFFER MISSIONARY WORK
SUPPORT AND
COLLABORATION.**

- Holy Father’s Prayer Intention

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FROM THE DIRECTOR
MICHAEL MONTOYA, MJ

“A journey of hope and promise” --This is how Pope Benedict XVI described the partnership that exists between the Catholic faith and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in his February 14, 2006 letter to Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council in Promoting Christian Unity, for the occasion of the ninth general assembly of the Geneva-based WCC held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This issue of Mission Update highlights part of that journey of hope and promise – a response to USCMA’s mandate to work ecumenically.

The story that brought us around the table in the Peace Consultation in Liberia is part of our on-going journey with the National Council of Churches through the Church World Service and Witness (CWSW). Together, we form the Continuing Committee on Common Witness (CCCW).

Started by a conversation in 1985 which led to a series of consultations, CCCW calls on the churches in the U.S.A. to “a renewed commitment to common witness in the name of Jesus Christ.” In the consultation held in Simpsonwood, Georgia in April 1994, CCCW pledged to work collaboratively on four “concrete acts of common witness;” namely, Ecumenical Missionary Orientation, Ecumenical Mission Education, a Communication Network, and a new CWSW-USCMA Relationship (developing and strengthening ties). May this journey of hope and promise lead us to the fulfillment of God’s reign!

For our Periodic Paper, I invite you to read the letter exchange between a theologian and a mission practitioner. The issues raised by the letter exchange highlights further both the ecumenical and interfaith aspects of mission as it is concretely lived, challenged, and transformed. Let us reflect with them on the issues raised and be open to the mission perspectives being brought about.

The USCMA 25th Anniversary Annual Conference on October 1-3, 2006 at Notre Dame, IN is shaping up to be a very exciting one. The title of our conference is: “Celebrating and Integrating Our Mission Perspectives: Short Term, Long Term, On Whose Terms?” More details will be given as we come closer to the event.

Meantime, please do mark your calendars and plan to join us on this wonderful event. This is OUR celebration!

May your Lenten observance lead to a blessed Easter!

From the President of the Board -
Mary McGlone, CSJ

Dear Friends in USCMA,

This is one of the first newsletters we are sending out since Rev. Michael Montoya, our new Executive Director has taken the helm of the Association. It is a great time to be welcoming new leadership, as we are on the brink of celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Association.

Please join me in welcoming new board members Rev. Bill Morell, OMI, Rev. Mr. Mickey Friesen, Ms. Rachel Tomas Morgan, and Dr. Andrew Thompson. Also, welcome Sr. Michael Theresa Brauer, SND de N, the new administrative assistant at our office in Washington.

In these 25 years, our mission vision has grown and changed immensely. Probably the most radical change has been the new role of the laity in mission activity both at home and abroad. Between the short and long term missionary volunteers and the growth of solidarity fostered by sister parishes and dioceses, the People of God are more and more active in fleshing out the teaching that “To say Church is to say mission.” As an Association, and with the help of the Board, we are grappling with how we can best serve the new actors involved in mission today and, of course, welcome them into the U.S. Catholic Mission Association.

You will soon be hearing more about our 2006 conference, “*Celebrating and Integrating Our Mission Perspectives: Short Term, Long Term, On Whose Terms?*” For the moment, I’ll tell you that we are building on the best dimensions of our last conference to explore our current experience. Together with keynote addresses and panel presentations, small group discussions will draw forth the wisdom of every participant. So, mark your calendars to be at the University of Notre Dame, October 1-3, 2006 and celebrate our 25 years of growth in mission.

Now, I invite you to delve into this issue of Mission Update with its news and reflections on the West African Consultation and the fine and challenging reflection by Edmund Chia on the dynamics of dialogue in mission.

With you in hope for the future of our share in Jesus’ mission,

Mary M. McGlone, CSJ
 President, USCMA

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and the Revolutionary United Front has caused tens of thousands of deaths since 1991. More than two million people – more than a third of the entire population – are displaced, many living as refugees outside of the country’s borders. Although the May 2002 national elections provided a new government for Sierra Leone, the country’s economy is still faltering. Where 68 percent of the population lives in poverty, the future success of Sierra Leone’s economy is dependant upon the continuation of efforts toward domestic peace.



Although one of Africa’s most successful nations (thanks in part to close ties

to France; cocoa, coffee, and palm oil production and export; and foreign investments), Côte d’Ivoire found itself in the midst of political mayhem after a military coup in 1999 – the first in the country’s history. After three years of political struggle, another – albeit failed – attempted coup was launched in 2002. Today, the country’s central government has yet to establish control over the rebel-claimed northern regions and several thousand West African and French troops remain in the area to keep the peace. Rebel fighting has driven out national and foreign workers to nearby countries, hindering the nation’s economy.

This sustained conflict has engulfed the region in a devastating humanitarian crisis. Fighters are crossing borders to serve as mercenaries in neighboring conflicts. Millions of people have been displaced within and across borders, stressing neighboring countries including Guinea and The Gambia. Local infrastructure has collapsed in much of the region, permitting some of the worst human rights atrocities in recent history. Of particular concern is the increased production of small arms and light weapons in the region and illicit weapons exchanges and purchases.



Sr. Roseanne Rustemeyer signing the final communique.

Signs of Hope

The obstacles to peace in the region seem nearly insurmountable. Yet, the faith communities across West Africa are rising to the challenge as they work to bring parties to peace talks, de-mobilize and re-integrate ex-combatants (including child soldiers), and advocate for reconciliation, human rights, and new systems of good governance.

In order to transform the contexts nationally and regionally, the religious communities representing different faith communities have

undertaken needs assessments of various constituencies to ascertain which interventions are warranted. Subsequently, strategic action plans will be initiated to effect envisioned societal/contextual changes.

It is apparent that all religious leaders representing all faith communities have to remain constructively engaged to transform the local and regional contexts as they are in a strong position to inspire and implement conflict transformation. Their moral authority, strength, credibility, and capacity as religious leaders, accentuated by their access to various constituencies, enables them to mobilize not only their adherents, but all participants in the local, regional, and international contexts.

In practical terms, this means that where Christian denominations and Councils have unilaterally engaged local partners in initiatives throughout the world, now those local and international practitioners have to explore opportunities for working alongside Inter-Religious Councils involving Muslims and other faith communities for the common good.



What Next?

The passion and commitment with which the participants have engaged in the discussion was almost palpable. Theirs are the stories of millions of people - wounded, broken, killed. But theirs too, is the hope and the promise, firmly rooted in their faith traditions, that prove a lasting peace can be achieved!

It was clear to the participants that while peace in the Region is not simply achieved by conferences and consultations, they are nonetheless important. This particular consultation has provided a well needed venue for them to come together to reassess their roles as religious leaders, regardless of faith traditions, in promoting and consolidating peace in the Region. It was also a time for them to publicly commit to and be empowered by other people’s commitment to continue working together as a Region, armed with the hope and promise of each one’s faith tradition. Together as a Region, they call on us to journey with them!



USCMA delegates in a briefing with Moses Sakuda of Church World Service

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER U.S. DELEGATES TO THE WEST AFRICAN PEACE CONSULTATION

There is a larger community of dedicated, faith-guided peace builders in West Africa than I knew about! It was a real learning and hope-filled experience to meet some of them and hear of their efforts at the “Conference on Peace Consolidation in the Mano River Basin.” (Monrovia, Liberia, 23-25 January 2006)

As a member of the delegates from USCMA, I represented Catholic Relief Services at the Conference. Peace-building is one of our Agency’s priorities. Though our humanitarian efforts in the 99 countries where we serve are always based on “need and not creed,” local Catholic Churches are our typical — but not exclusive — partners. We have a keen awareness of the actions for peace which flow from these faith-based sources. This Conference introduced me to a vast range of other indigenous ecumenical and inter-religious peace-building individuals and groups. It was powerful to hear them give testimony to what they have done for reconciliation in their countries and to see their courage and determination to press on to a yet fuller peace in the Mano River Basin.

Hats off to Church World Service and United States Catholic Mission Association for their tireless collaborative work for peace! They enabled this important gathering with our African colleagues. And, they assembled a focused and experienced U.S. ecumenical delegation to participate. I was pleased to be part of it.

Peace,

Bill Headley, CSSp
Counselor to the President
Catholic Relief Services

What an exciting time to be in Liberia! It has been a week since the inauguration of Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as president of Liberia, the first woman to serve in this position in Africa. The streets are bustling with people, unlike a few years ago when the streets were virtually empty. Businesses are open; some schools are in session; hotels are full of people remaining after the inaugural celebration, United Nations personnel, NGO representatives and business associates.

In the midst of this excitement, people seem to be realistic. They know they have begun a new day but also know that to maintain a peaceful existence many things must change. Education, jobs and restoration of the infrastructure are sorely needed, and ways must be found to deal with conflict by listening and learning to continue to work together when disagreement occurs.

John McCullough spoke of an African saying, “If you walk alone you will tire quickly but if we walk together we will walk far.” The realities of these are evident in the voices of the faith communities represented at this conference. Through their united efforts and many risks, much was contributed toward the establishment of peace in the region. They move forward with a sense of empowerment which will carry them far on this journey.

Rita Redfield
CWS Board of Directors
Representative of Episcopal Church USA



Participants on a short break.



Rev. John McCullough
and Rev. Michael
Montoya

Periodic Paper #1

Spring 2006

New Evangelization: A Pastoral Problem

The following is the text of two letters sent by the author, Dr. Edmund Chia, of a letter from a missionary. The name and place were changed. Both question and advice are relevant everywhere. Dr. Edmund Chia, a Malaysian of Chinese descent, is a Professor of Doctrinal Theology at Catholic Theologica l Union.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Brother Edmund,

Hope and pray that you are in good health and rejoicing in the many blessings that you receive from the Lord of Life. Brother, do you remember me? I am Gertrude, a missionary Sister working in Baboo. Some time ago I wrote to you asking for help. As I mentioned, my congregation has started a process of reflection on evangelization and I asked for your help in finding a way on how to go about in the reflection within our Baboo context and the reality of the province.

Today, I would like to ask you for an advice: Brother, could you please give me/us some advice on how to start/do first evangelization among people who practice Traditional Religions? Our question as missionaries here in this new place is how to start a new way/method of evangelization among the Baboan people. Up to this date, three Sisters are living in a rented house in the village among the people, they are learning the language, the culture, the history, customs... of the people. We have been there creating friendly relationships with local authorities and helping the people in their urgent needs. Alphabetization programs for children and adults were started two years ago and perhaps within a few more months a formal kindergarten for the children will be opened. With the help and guidance of local authorities we have contributed to provide clean water and spring protections in remote areas.

By now the Baboan people are friendly and they know that we are there for them. There are many villages and the elders of one of these villages have come to ask us

specifically to learn about our religion. How to start, from where to start? Which method to use to convey the Good News to a people who are illiterate? Is it advisable to use an interpreter since none of the Sisters know the language very well yet?

HOW CAN WE PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS IN THIS LAND AND THIS REALITY?

There are also some other challenges that we are facing: Ecumenism and Dialogue with Orthodox, Protestant and Muslims is difficult. Their members are moving very fast in preaching and converting people. This pressure us to do the same. However, our choice was to go slowly, learn the language, learn the ways of the people... prepare the way for the Lord. How can we proclaim the Good News in this land and this reality?

I hope that I am clear in what I am asking from you. Thank you for the time you will take to help us out. May the Lord of Life and Love bless you in your ministry.
Sincerely,
Gertrude

Dear Sister Gertrude,

Many thanks for your letter and for sharing with me your local context and especially the tension experienced in exercising your evangelizing mission. I must warn, however, that I am not really in a position to give advice, since I don't know what exactly is happening on the ground. Besides, my counseling background reminds me that the client normally knows what needs to be done. They are merely seeking validation for decisions they have more or less already made. In other words, I believe you already have the

answers. So, at best, I will share with you some reflections based on the information you shared with me and my own personal experiences in other contexts of religious pluralism. Then, I would encourage you to reflect on them, taking into account your own prior reflections and the reflections you and your sisters have been making over the years. Let me illustrate why I think you already have the answers.

**YOU ARE THERE
TO DIALOGUE
WITH THE
PEOPLE, AND TO
LEARN FROM
THEM AS WELL AS
SHARE WITH
THEM.**

You make mention about what persons of other religions are doing. You suggest that they are moving very fast in preaching and converting people. I get a sense you seem to disapprove of what they are doing. But, you further add that there is some sort of pressure on you and your Sisters to do the same. I guess the one reflection I would like to offer here is the Golden Rule: do not onto others what you don't want done onto you. Besides, if you already seem to have a distaste for what persons of other religions and Christian denominations are doing, would you yourself do the same? Wouldn't you be stooping to a level which your gut-feeling (i.e. conscience) seem to suggest is not appropriate and even wrong? I guess that could be another definition for sin.

You then suggest that your preferred method is to go slowly. I can appreciate what you mean here but I wonder if the peoples whom you are serving, the Baboan, could appreciate that. I guess the question I would raise in this matter is, go slowly, and then, what? What are you going slowly towards? What do you see as the ultimate aim of your mission amongst the Baboan? You suggest it is to prepare the way for the Lord. By that, do you mean it is to convert them to Christianity? If that's the case, why are you doing it slowly? Is it so you will be more successful in your attempts to win them over without them realizing it? There is a popular anecdote about putting a frog in a pot of hot water. The frog immediately leaps out of the pot. However, if we put the frog in the pot filled with cold water and then slowly warm the water, the frog will not even realize that it is being boiled to be cooked! I suppose the ethics of conversion is a question which

must be discussed here. Again, the golden rule would be a valuable guide. Would you welcome missionaries of other religions to work in your own community if you knew their ultimate goal is the conversion of your Sisters and siblings to their own religions or Christian denominations?

Now, I suspect that what I am implying may seem radical and/or nonsensical for missionaries whose professed aim is the salvation of souls and the planting of churches. This is especially so for those who operate out of a theology which believes that salvation can only be effected through Christianity or the Catholic Church. On the basis of such a theology the only logical response is an enthusiastic sense of mission with the sole purpose of saving all those poor pagans and unbelievers from the fires of hell and bring them to the truth which is Christ and which is accessible only through the Catholic Church. To be sure, Catholics are not the only ones who make such claims. Most other religions have believers who are equally emphatic in such exclusivistic claims. It is not surprising then that competition amongst religion is rife. Each religion will wave its flag as if they are the only ones who possess God. God, as it were, becomes a commodity which is offered and the best sales-persons (missionaries) are those who can sell God most (or save the most souls).

**DIALOGUE
IS
MISSION.**

This, of course, is what can be called the colonial model of mission. Like the colonialists whose primary purpose was the plunder of the lands and resources of the colonies, the missionaries aim is also to plunder the souls of those whom they have come to serve. Believing they have a superior culture, faith and religion, the missionaries then venture into mission territories to conquer all for Christ. Success, therefore, is measured in terms of the number of baptisms and the number of churches built. The persons whom they serve are merely objects of Christian conversion. In some instances, the end justifies the means and hence we witness plentiful examples of less than ethical means employed to lure and to entice the pagans and unbelievers to Church functions. One can think of the numerous accusations of what in Asia we call rice Christians, where church attendees are literally offered a bag of rice to take home with them after the service.

What is the alternative, then? I would suggest, Sister, that you already know what that is as you are already practicing it. You make mention of your Sisters learning from the peoples: their language, their ways, their culture, their history. You also make mention of your Sisters living with the people (as one among them), in a rented house (not having your own palatial residence surrounded by barbed wires and divorced from the peoples). I see this as precisely the new way/method of evangelization which you refer to. It could also be referred to as the dialogue model of mission. You are there to dialogue with the people, to learn from them as well as to share with them. You do not go there because you are better or have a superior culture or religion. Rather, you go there because you believe building relationships and bridges across cultures and religions are inherent to living as Christians in pluralistic contexts.

**YOU START BY
ACKNOWLEDGING
THE BEAUTY
AND WORTH OF
THEIR CULTURE
AND RELIGION.**

Dialogue IS mission. It is sufficient justification for your missionary existence. You don't need any hidden motives for engaging in dialogue with them. Your participation in this dialogue of life ought to be fulfilling and enriching enough. I am sure there is much that the Baboan people learn from your Sisters and there is also much that your Sisters are learning from them. This is the mutual enrichment which the Vatican's 1991 document Dialogue and Proclamation speaks about. In fact, the document defines dialogue as all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. I would therefore invite you to consider, also, how you would respond when the Baboan elders ask you to specifically teach them about your religion. You ask: "How to start, from where to start?" My suggestion is: ask them (the Baboan) to also teach you about their religion. That would be a very good start. You start with respect. You communicate to them that your religion is one of respect. You start by establishing your reverence for what they believe in. You communicate to them that God is already with them. You start by acknowledging the beauty and worth

of their culture and religion. You communicate to them that your religion is not one which aims to annihilate their religion, but one which seeks after truth and beauty no matter where and how that is expressed. Only then do you begin to share with them your own beliefs and traditions. That way, you teach them about Christianity while they in turn teach you about the Traditional Religions.

There is much, I am convinced, that they will be able to learn to enhance their lives as they learn more about the central and core message of Christ. At the same time, there is much that your Sisters can also gain and which could be life-transforming as they learn more about the Traditional Religions. As Christians, we do know quite a bit about what God has done for the world and for humanity through Christ and through the Church. However, it would do us well to discover more about what God has done for the world and for humanity through the other religions, including the Traditional Religions. Refusing to be open to what God has done through other religious traditions is tantamount to idolatry. Idolatry, as you know, is often defined as attempting to capture the whole of God in an object, such as a stone or an image. Likewise, attempting to capture the whole of God in one single religion, even if it be Christianity, is similar to idolatry.

**BUILDING
RELATIONSHIPS AND
BRIDGES ACROSS
CULTURES AND
RELIGIONS IS
INHERENT TO LIVING
AS CHRISTIANS IN
PLURALISTIC
CONTEXTS**

The next question, as you have also asked, is how do we then proclaim the Good News in such a context. While you specifically asked that question, you have also answered it on your own. You make mention of your Sisters building relationships and helping the people in their urgent needs. You make mention of alphabetization programs, kindergarten, providing clean water, etc. I see all these as variations of the Good News which Jesus came to preach, as pronounced in the manifesto which he read from the

scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Luke 4 records Jesus saying that he was sent to set the captives free, to be good news to the poor, to bring sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free. I therefore suggest that in all your good works for others you are already proclaiming the Good News loud and clear. Moreover, people tend to listen more attentively to concrete acts of service and love than to loud words and preachy messages. One can only think of Mother Teresa's example. This new method of evangelization would, therefore, be one of giving (giving until it hurts, in the words of Mother Teresa) without thinking of the benefits one would reap. In other words it is a giving which is free and unconditional and with no concern for returns and rewards. The returns and rewards I am alluding to is the eventual conversion of the peoples you give to. The colonial model of mission would expect such returns, without which they wouldn't have come to serve the peoples. It is as if in return for their money and service, they expect the people to give of their souls, expressed by the desire for baptism.

Now, such a detached and unconditional attitude towards mission might make you look like a fool. Others, especially those who are competing for the souls of the Baboan people, would consider your Sisters stupid and naive for not wanting to convert the people. Your superiors might also ask you why there are few conversions even after all the time, energies, resources and money spent on the village. Your Sisters may think of

themselves as failures for not being able to bring about more baptisms. While other Christians may be celebrating the triumph of larger membership and building bigger churches, your community might have to live humbly, realizing that you are merely in the service of building God's Kingdom and not your own, or the Church's. Be consoled, however, that if you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you (Jn. 15: 19). Moreover, it is not those who call Lord, Lord who will attain God's Kingdom, but those who do the will of God. In this regard, Matthew 25 is clear and unambiguous as to who will earn a place in God's Kingdom: when I was hungry, you gave me to eat,... when I could not read, you began alphabetization programmes,... when my children had no schools, you gave them kindergartens,... when my people did not have clean water, you worked with the local authorities for spring protections.

Such is the new method of evangelization, Sister. I wish you and your Sisters well.

Sincerely,
Bro. Edmund

Ref.: Text from the Author. Sent by e-mail for SEDOS. (edchia@pc.jaring.my).

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Mission and Pizza

Fathers Chao Peng Gao (Raphael) and Wen xi Zhang (Joseph) spoke recently at the first Mission and Pizza since our move to Trinity University. The two spoke about recent events in China and the world that have had an impact on the Church in China.

China presents an ambiguous and confusing picture to the world. One part of the picture shows the positive: its growing economy; it being the world's most populated country; being chosen as the site of the 2008 Olympics; its highly developed technology. An equally valid part of the picture China points to more negative aspects: lack of full religious freedom; lack of diplomatic relations between China and the Vatican; the different communities of the registered Church and un-registered Church.

Fathers Raphael and Joseph used recent events to shed light on some of the complexity that is China. The death of Pope John Paul II brought world leaders together as no other event had. From all over the world leaders went to the Vatican to pay their respects. But not from China. However, the Chinese people mourned him and tried to watch the funeral Mass through satellite channels.

Chinese intellectuals hold Pope Benedict XVI in high esteem. Since his book "Introduction to Christianity" was published in the 1970s he has been seen in China as a progressive scholar.

Since June 2005, three new Bishops appointed by the Vatican in China, were approved by the government. According to Fr. Joseph appointing "new bishops in China is the most difficult issue to deal with between China and Vatican. Now . . . there is some new progress."

A fourth event, although not positive, was certainly significant. Four Chinese Bishops had been invited to participate in the Bishops' Synod in October 2005. However, the Chinese government would not allow them to travel. These four Bishops represented the entire Chinese Catholic Church – registered and un-registered.

During her life-time Mother Teresa had requested to build orphanages and hospitals in China. Unfortunately, her hope was unfulfilled. However, recently the Mother Superior of the congregation was invited to discuss the possibility of the Missionaries of Charity developing these services. Cardinals McCarrick of Washington, DC and Mahoney of Los Angeles visited China and held high-level talks with the government. It is hoped that these visits will help the Chinese government know more about the universal Church.

visits will help the Chinese government know more about the universal Church.

The beatings of religious sisters in Xi An as well as priests and seminarians in Tian Jin showed the conflict between the local government officials and the Church communities because of the thorny issue of Church properties. It also shows that Church communities need to be protected in society by the laws regarding religion.

A final positive note is the nomination of Cardinal Joseph Zen of Hong Kong. His long history of work for social justice, human rights and democracy has been recognized by his nomination by Pope Benedict.

Directors of Lay Sending Groups Meet

Directors of seven international lay sending groups met February 8-9, 2006 at Maryknoll for their Spring Meeting. Since 1995 Directors have met to explore common issues. These meetings originally took place during the annual Collaborative Formation Gatherings for candidates allowing only limited time for the Directors to complete their work. For the last two years, however, they have come together for an extended time, renaming themselves DIGS (Directors of International Groups)!

Topics which were discussed included: improving communication among Directors; educating the Church about the role of the laity; collaboration in the areas of orientation, fundraising, and educating/improving relationships with sponsoring religious congregations. There will be a major follow-up focused on a media campaign for the laity and collaborative fundraising.

Several East-Coast lay groups have been participating in collaborative orientation programs. Mercy Volunteers International and Good Shepherd Volunteers use the Maryknoll International Service Orientation during July. Franciscan Mission Service, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, and Society of African Missions' Lay Missionaries participate in the annual Collaborative Formation Gathering in the fall. The Comboni Lay Missioners and Maryknoll Lay Missioners have also collaborated in orientation.

USCMA and Catholic Network of Volunteer Service have agreed to post on their websites resources for Directors. CNVS has already created a List-Serve to facilitate discussions among Directors.

Texas Mission Conference

With the theme, "A Theology of Mission in the 21st Century," the annual Texas Mission Conference attracted over 70 people during the weekend of January 27-29, 2006 in Ft. Worth. Roger Schroeder, SVD, was the keynote speaker throughout the weekend on the topic, "What Model of Mission for Today?" Using the book he co-authored with Steve Bevans, SVD, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* as his basis, Schroeder talked about three models of mission for the 21st century. Small groups explored these different mission models/theologies in lively discussion groups. Schroeder concluded with a talk on "Prophetic Dialogue: a Mission Theology for Today."

Fr. Roger, a theologian, expert on the Theology of Mission, and professor at Catholic Theological Union, gave the participants much to think about and discuss further with their colleagues in mission.

The Texas Mission Council, sponsor of the annual Conference, is the only such statewide Mission Council in the country. More information about the Council as well as the Power Point presentation of Fr. Roger's talk, is available on their website <http://texasmissioncouncil.org>

Poetry from Mission Congress

The following two poems were presented at the closing session of Mission Congress 2005 as the Conclusions of the Sagewood Home Community/Dialogue Group.

alas amarillo-negros

black-yellow, yellow-black
butterflies flip and flit
and procreate new relations

butterflies wed red-brown birth
with black-soul earth and lift the people
over the wall, the cactus and sand

they help us forget our fear and remember
the dead and innocently spread
las semillas del cambio

we are young, we fly free,
we look for things to do,
spirits to lift, lives well-lived

our wings link mission
to mission, rainbow to vision,
baptism to all who wander

our feelers are up
for the coloring of
the story of the new colonia

*jen este cuento, Nuestra colonia nueva
es un jardin te mariposas que
florece en la compasión y la paz!*

by Jay Gilchrist

Butterfly Poem

**Butterfly Butterfly
Why are you cold
I feel the wind sand and stone
Needles of the cactus plants
Blown to safety among the bald**

**Butterfly Butterfly
Why so high
The wall is so big
Can I get over or die**

**Butterfly Butterfly
What do you see
Bodies falling for liberty
From Twin Towers – from the wall
From airplanes from radar stalls**

**Butterfly Butterfly
Why so much hope
I met people at the Mission Congress
Who threw me a rope**

**Speaking out the truth in charity
Bringing light to violence and abuse
Go home now and have no excuse**

**Butterfly Butterfly
Listen to me- I was
Once a caterpillar longing for my cocoon
Along came an acorn
And almost squashed me
I squiggled and squirmed
Was told I had germs
But nothing was going to stop me**

**I cried out to the Sun
Are you the One to
Hear me – It's within
Yourself – Rise up
And come**

**Butterfly Butterfly
Why so still
I bow before the Blessed
Sacrament as in a trance
To lead the young and
Old together into a dance**

**A dance of life
Without strife
Abandon to the Father
& one to the Son
In the Spirit Uniting**

by Sr. Margaret Anne Meyer, MMM

Ecumenical Advocacy Days

Over 900 people from all parts of the United States gathered in Washington, DC March 10-13 for Ecumenical Advocacy Days. For several years now Christians, from many denominations have participated in these days of learning and advocacy. Participants chose to follow one of eight different tracks including Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East, Global Security, Eco-Justice, Jubilee and Economic Justice, and Domestic USA. In plenary sessions and small workshops, people heard from experts on topics as varied as an "Overview of Human Rights Abuses in the Philippines" to "Debt 101: An African Case Study" to "Enhancing Global Security by Eliminating Torture."

Speakers from all parts of the globe explained the impact on their countries and people of policy issues being dealt with in the US Congress, the UN or international financial institutions. Some of these include immigration reform bills, US funding for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.

The learnings from the formal sessions prepared participants for their Lobby Day on Capitol Hill when people met with their Senators and/or Representatives to advocate for their positions on the different issues.

The Catholic participants gathered together on two different occasions during Advocacy Days for prayer, networking and a discussion on Catholic Faith and Politics. USCMA collaborates with several of the sponsoring groups of Ecumenical Advocacy Days.

Catholic Task Force on Africa

In an attempt to encourage Catholics to be in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Africa, the Catholic Task Force on Africa, of which USCMA is a member, has developed a Resource Guide, "Walking with the Peoples of Africa." While this Resource Guide is meant to accompany the US Catholic Bishops' Statement, "A Call to Solidarity with Africa," each of the one-page issue statements can stand on its own. Topics cover a range of issues including, Global Trade and Africa, Buying Fair Trade Goods, Debt Cancellation, Stock Ownership as Mission, Hunger and Food Security, Forgotten Health Crises: Malaria and Tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS. Another section focuses on Conflict Transformation in Africa that includes pages on Genocide in Darfur, Recovery in Mano River Countries, Children and Insurgency in Northern Uganda and The Bleeding Heart of Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo.

The most important part of the Guide is the Action Steps. Some of these are specific to the different topics while others are general that can apply to any issue. These Steps are listed in sections that can be done by an individual or as part of a larger group. They range from praying with and for the people of Africa to personal behavior changes to specific advocacy actions with Congress. The "How To's" of lobbying are included for people who are newcomers to advocacy work. A map of the continent of Africa as well as two prayers for Africa complete the Resource Guide.

This Guide is available on the Catholic Task Force on Africa website www.afjn.org/cfta

RESOURCES & UP-COMING EVENTS

Overseas Ministries Study Center

April 3-7 The Family in Mission
 April 17-20 Christian Approaches to World Religions
 May 1-5 Isaiah 40-55: God's Mission, God's Servant
 May 8-12 Personal Renewal in the Missionary Community
 490 Prospect Street
 New Haven, CT 06511
 Telephone: 203-624-6672, x 315
 Email: study@OMSC.org

World Mission Institute

April 20-21, 2006
 "The Challenges and Possibilities of the Multi-Cultural Congregation/Parish"
 Lutheran School of Theology
 Chicago, IL
 Telephone: 773-753-2564
 Email: ecgm@ctu.edu
 Web Site: www.ccgministries.com

Maryknoll Mission Institute

May 21-26 Living Contemplatively
 June 11-16 Serving God's People

June 18-23 Oue Original Fire
 June 25-30 Mark's Story of Jesus
 Maryknoll Sisters Center
 Ossining, NY
 Telephone: 914-941-7575
 Email: missinst@mksisters.org

Orientation Days to the UN

May 17-19, 2006
 June 26-28, 2006 (focus on Global Spirituality and the UN)
 Church Center, 777 UN Plaza, NY City
 Contact: Lucianne Siers, OP
 Telephone: 201-333-2454
 Email: LSiers6720@aol.com

Spirituality in the 21st Century

April 23-29, 2006
 Prairiewoods
 Hiawatha, IA
 Telephone: 319-395-6700
 Email: ecospirit@prairiewoods.org
 Website: www.prairiewoods.org

ORBIS BOOKS RECEIVED AT USCMA

A SELECTION OF BOOKS PUBLISHED BY ORBIS BOOKS, MARYKNOLL, NEW YORK

Mission and Catechesis, Alexandre de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth

Century Vietnam, Peter Phan, Paperback edition, 2005.

Brother Roger of Taizé, Essential Writings, Selected by Marcello Fidanzi, 2006

Dorothy Soelle, Essential Writings, Selected by Dianne Oliver, 2006

Ecofeminism in Latin America, Mary Judith Ress, 2006

On Your Mark: Reading Mark in the Shadow of the Cross, Megan McKenna, 2006

Orders and Ministry, Leadership in the World Church, Kenan B. Osborne, O.F.M., 2006.

The Lord is My Shepherd, Leonardo Boff, 2006

The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia, William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen,
 Patrick F. O'Connell, 2002

There is a Season, Joan Chittister, Art by John August Swanson, 2006.

Save the Dates!



**Celebrating and Integrating Our Mission Perspectives:
Short Term, Long Term, On Whose Terms?**

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