



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

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Earth and the challenge of contemporary Christology

The following is taken from a presentation given by Sr. Ann Braudis, MM at the 2009 Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C.

Scientifically speaking, on the subatomic level, a pattern of relationships binds all things together. This is the deepest and most central knowledge we have of the universe. Religious people wonder if this data has any meaning or application for life.

Emerging theology suggests that God's self manifestation in Christ is this pattern of relationality. In other words, Christ is the connecting design of the Universe. There is a beautiful foundation for this in Colossians: Christ is "before all things," and "in Him all things hold together." These are elegant and poetic words describing a mystery, but they also provide a way to interpret scientific data so that it can touch us in the quick of our being.

Christ is the integrating power and force in the stars, in the planets, in the beauty of the earth and in every manifestation of life. Indeed, Christ is the integrity of creation. The bond that is Christ is always bringing forth new possibilities. Or, in the overarching drama of evolution, Christ is the force that lures everything forward into the future.

Through the lens of evolution one sees that an irreversible sense of becoming pervades the mystery of creation. Everything presses forward to become more than it was. From a scientific perspective it is astonishing to consider the progressive development of matter towards life. From a religious or spiritual perspective one is left in awe before God's work that allowed life to forge its way into being through non-living forms. It is even more astonishing that consciousness emerged in living things and more amazing still that in human beings, self-reflective consciousness, or awareness of oneself as a thinking being, came forth. The consciousness continues to unfold as we speak. Each moment brings new possibilities of depth and transformation.

Today a vast new era of consciousness is opening, characterized by a sense of global integration. Whereas previously, knowledge was eagerly pursued in separate categories and disciplines, now a growing desire exists to understand how everything fits together -- to see how science and religion dovetail to create a grand sense of God's work of creation.

The moral implications of this new awareness are seen in the impetus to assume responsibility for

maintaining the life and health of our planet. In the public arena, the stimulus package recently passed by Congress contains 15 times the amount of money ever previously allocated for green projects. Some have even said that the stimulus package may as well have been written with green ink!

Some theologians say that the challenge before us now is to find ways to bring Jesus forward into the new era -- to take what we know of Jesus and allow it to manifest new depths of meaning. I mentioned relationality and examined it in terms of Christ as the central unifying pattern binding all creation together. One can also look at Jesus' human life in terms of relationality. You could say that Jesus lives the pattern of relationality from within. It is the one generic quality that radiates through all his interactions with other people. It is expressed through his presence to others; through compassion, acceptance, comprehension, understanding, justice, inclusivity and through liberating truth. Everything in his life is directed toward relating with the other. Nothing, not even cruelty and death, breaks this pattern. (See *Christ in Evolution* by Delia Ilio, Orbis Books)

By continually opening out of consciousness, humanity has come to the edge of integrated global awareness fed through powerful networks of knowledge. Yet, each generation of people must do its best to understand the meaning of life with the knowledge available in its own time. In other words, faith must make sense even while mystery is acknowledged. The code one lives by cannot fail to synchronize with other major pieces of knowledge and understanding. Otherwise, it will fail to support the complexity of modern life. Today Christians can look at their faith tradition and deeply value what has been nourishing from the past while finding a new level of vigor supported by contemporary insights.

Fire to life

Bolivia, in times past, as
Day surrendered to the night
High upon a mountain slope
Llamas in a pack aligned
Facing west in graceful pose
Eyes upon the fading sun
Drawn, no doubt, by beauty's lure.

And I, in whom spirit knows
Llama, setting sun and Source,
Contemplate the holy One
Fountainhead of all that is
Womb forever pouring fourth
Fire to life, life to spirit
Blessed be, Oh blessed be!

Sr. Ann Braudis, MM

N. Korea: Have we gone back to the future?

The more things change in North Korea, the more things remain the same. After conducting a nuclear test in 2006, the country agreed to abandon its nuclear program in return for oil shipments. Last year North Korea imploded the cooling tower at its Yongbyon nuclear plant and agreed to verification measures, and the Bush administration removed the country from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. However, after its April 5 rocket launch over Japan – and the worldwide denunciation that followed – North Korea kicked out nuclear inspectors and pledged to rebuild its nuclear program.

The math is clear. In 1998 North Korea launched a missile over Japan that splashed down after flying about 820 miles, demonstrating a potential weapons delivery system. Tokyo is 800 miles from Pyongyang, and Seoul a mere 121 miles. The missile launch in April this year was purportedly aimed at putting a communications satellite into orbit. However, some observers believe the effort, which apparently ended in failure, was actually a test to see if U.S. shores were within reach of North Korea missiles.

Six-party talks began in 2003 among North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the U.S. in an effort to end North Korea's nuclear program. Irrate at the international outcry after its April missile launch, however, North Korea withdrew from the talks. While analysts disagree over the rationale for the April 5 launching, the potential fall-out is worrisome. By setting its neighbors on edge, North Korea could be fueling an Asian arms race besides inviting punitive measures.

South Korea said it might reconsider its commitment not to build long-range missiles. It is a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which bars the export of technology for missiles able to carry nuclear warheads further than 300 kilometers (186 miles). The MTCR does not bar development of longer-range missiles, but South Korea had agreed to a U.S. request not to do so.

South Korea also said it was considering joining the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative, in which nearly 100 countries are committed to putting an end to trafficking in weapons of mass destruction and related technology. The step would make it more difficult for North Korea to ship missiles and components to other countries.

While Japan's Peace Constitution restricts the use of its armed forces to defense, North Korea's recent action could strengthen the position of those calling for a change in the charter. Japan has already sent hundreds of troops to Iraq in a non-combat role, and it continues to support U.S. forces in Afghanistan with a refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. Recently it dispatched two naval ships to help battle pirates off the Somali coast.

China, which probably has the most influence with North Korea, does not want another nuclear-armed neighbor, but it has been reluctant to criticize the regime. North Korea's trade deficit with China reportedly exceeded \$1 billion last year. China might also be wary of creating more instability in North Korea following concerns about the health of its leader, Kim Jong-il, who some reports say suffered a stroke last year.

Assessing the aims of North Korea's "Dear Leader" seems beyond the ken of Western observers. With the prestige a nuclear arsenal lends his regime, Kim might seem unlikely to exchange it for heating oil. Yet, even in better economic times nuclear weapons and a large standing army (North Korea has the world's fourth largest) consume financial resources badly needed for food, housing, industry and other sectors. The foreign policy of Kim's wealthy Asian neighbor Japan – and two Latin American countries – might give him food for thought.

Japan's Peace Constitution, adopted in 1947, provides in Article 9 that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes."

Costa Rica adopted a Constitution two years later that states in Article 12, "The Army as a permanent institution is abolished."

Bolivia adopted a new Constitution this year whose Article 10 declares that it "promotes a culture of peace and the right to peace ... rejects any war of aggression as a way of settling disputes between states, and ... prohibits the installation of foreign military bases on [its] soil." For the first time, President Evo Morales said Jan. 29, "basic services, water, electricity, telephone are now a human right ... a public service, not a private business."

Such human progress augurs well for a future full of hope for countries on every continent – including, in time, North Korea.

Philippines: Mining enriches few, impoverishes many

A new study says the decline and loss of Philippine forests, fisheries and now mineral resources has seriously decreased food production. In their study "Philippines: Mining or Food," Robert Goodland and Clive Wicks say the Philippines, once a major rice exporter, is now the world's largest rice importer. They demonstrate the overlap of mining locations with indigenous ancestral domains, watersheds and areas of environmental importance – all critical for Philippine agriculture and food security. The complete report and a summary can be found at <http://www.piplinks.org/miningorfood>.

Goodland and Wicks say deforestation from the 1950s to the 1980s affected rainfall and the water supply, leading to a decline in rice production. Much of the country's fisheries were subsequently lost due to poor management practices. The loss of forests and fisheries denied the poor – comprising perhaps half the population – two avenues to a sustainable livelihood.

"Despite these warnings," the authors say, "the large-scale mining that is now proposed for the Philippines threatens to wreak further havoc ... There is strong evidence from areas in which mining has already taken place ... that the extraction process damages rice production, often permanently."

While the government presents mining as a means of lifting the country out of poverty, the study indicates mining creates relatively fewer jobs than agriculture, fisheries or tourism – about 0.4 percent of total employment – and says mines normally have a lifespan of just 10-20 years. The study notes that "(i)n most cases, the ore is exported unprocessed, just as unprocessed logs were exported during the massive deforestation of a few decades ago."

Goodland and Wicks wrote their report based on a February 2008 visit to mines on the islands of Mindoro and Mindanao. Goodland discussed the report April 7 at a presentation in Washington, D.C.

He said 26 Philippine families benefit the most from mining. As the report states, "Mining profits accrue primarily to mining corporations, most of which are based outside the country; some go to the government, but little trickles down to poor Filipinos. Thus profits are privatized by companies while the costs are externalized to communities."

A representative of the Philippine Embassy said the country's Mineral Action Plan of 2004 sets high

standards for the mining industry and includes strict provisions to protect the environment and indigenous people's rights.

However, Goodland said the problem is a lack of enforcement. As the study says, "While the Philippines may appear to have some of the best laws in the world to protect the environment, human rights and Indigenous Peoples, their application is unacceptably poor. Many countries without such good legislation have far better practical protection for their people and environment."

The study cites a number of negative factors that can affect the outcome of mining operations. "Mining ... is especially precarious in areas of high rainfall (more than three meters per year); seismically active areas; steep slopes downstream of deforestation; and densely populated areas," it says. "These conditions are common in the Philippines."

The study also reports frequent conflict between the Philippine armed forces and members of local communities protesting mining. "This leads to further human rights abuses and undermines the constitutional position of the military as protector of the rights of Filipino citizens rather than multinational interests," the study says.

Goodland and Wicks address recommendations to the government, mining companies, people affected by mining and others. Their primary recommendation is that the Philippine government declare a moratorium on new mining development. They also recommend a review of existing mining projects "to determine if they impact on food producing capacity, afford adequate protection to the environment and respect existing legal provisions and rights, including the requirement to obtain Indigenous Peoples' Free and Prior Informed Consent."

The Catholic church in the Philippines will likely use the report to bolster similar arguments. Iloilo Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, criticized mining companies late last year that had "systematically engaged in the rape of Mother Earth and left a legacy of impoverished communities and environmental [despoliation]." The archbishop said the Church wanted a moratorium on mining until "the government and the mining companies learn to uphold the right of the indigenous peoples, compensate the affected communities for past damages, and ensure responsible mining practices."

Papua: Returned nationalist calls for dialogue

A Papuan nationalist leader who returned to his ancestral homeland after more than 40 years in exile called for dialogue between “neighbors” when he met with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Nicolaas Jouwe, 85, met with Yudhoyono during a March visit. Like Jouwe, many native Papuans believe a 1969 referendum that joined Papua with Indonesia was unfair. Many scholars and some of the UN personnel who monitored the so-called Act of Free Choice agree it was rigged. This story is based on the April West Papua Report and a briefing on autonomy posted by the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN) at www.etan.org.

Jouwe was elected in 1961 to the first New Guinea Council, an embryonic parliament in what was then a Dutch colony. He became a key leader in the Papuan independence movement, and he designed the Morning Star flag that still represents Papuan aspirations for independence. Jouwe was active in a nonviolent campaign for international recognition of Papuans’ right to self-determination.

However, ETAN says U.S. Cold War strategy led the Kennedy administration to support Indonesia’s claim to the territory. A U.S.-brokered agreement in 1963 delivered Papua to Indonesia, and ETAN says Papuans’ feeling that they were denied their right to self-determination lies at the root of the continuing conflict.

Jouwe and other independence leaders of his generation preached nonviolence, international diplomacy and dialogue, and Jouwe reiterated those ideas during his March visit with Yudhoyono. He called once more for dialogue since “Indonesia remains our big neighbor,” adding, “Even if we have to talk a thousand times, it is better than violence.”

Yudhoyono described the meeting as an “encounter of heart and mind,” but it was unclear if he wanted further dialogue. He apparently hoped Jouwe would express support for Papuan integration with Indonesia. But Jouwe, on his first visit to Papua since Indonesia took control in 1963, told reporters he still considered Papua to be an independent country.

The visit was dominated by what came to be known as “the pincident.” Jouwe arrived wearing a Papuan flag lapel pin. At a news conference in Jakarta, Indonesian Ambassador to the Netherlands Yunus Habibie pressed Jouwe to pin an Indonesian

flag to his lapel. Jouwe declined, repeating the need for dialogue between “neighbors.” The government seemed to take a dim view of that perspective. Four Dutch journalists covering Jouwe’s visit were deported, even though they held appropriate visas.

In 2001 then-President Megawati Sukarnoputri issued an Autonomy Bill for Papua, but its implementation has not gone smoothly. A bill drafted by various members of Papuan society had proposed autonomy rather than outright independence, calling for control of the police, protection of human rights, a Papuan bicameral legislature, local political parties and local control of economic development. In its response, however, the national parliament rejected most of the elements that would have ensured more local autonomy.

Yudhoyono later issued a decree on the Acceleration of Development of Papua, increasing the funding for ministers directly involved in developing the territory. Octavianus Mote, then studying in Yale’s Genocide Studies Program, wrote that the problem was not the incompetence of the provincial government officials or a lack of development funds. Rather, he said, “the main problem is that [the Indonesian government] is reluctant to let go [of] its decision-making power and authority to the provincial government authorities...”

Mote said Papuans felt a solution of the issue was unlikely without genuine dialogue between Indonesia and Papua, facilitated by a neutral third party, “as it is obvious that Indonesia ... is not capable and not willing to resolve the conflict.” He said the international community should put pressure on Indonesia to implement a fair degree of autonomy for the Papuan people.

He also said Papuans are branded as “subversive separatists” when they cite the transition from Dutch colonial rule to Indonesian colonial rule as the root of the conflict between Papua and Indonesia. But he said the accusation is unfair and warned it could become a self-fulfilling prophecy if Indonesia did not end its accusations, intimidation and terrorism in Papua.

In reality, Mote said, the Papua issue “cannot and will not be resolved by throwing a lot of money to the Papuans, by bribing the Papuans, by improving the socio-economic conditions of the Papuans without genuinely treating them as equals within the Republic of Indonesia.”

Brazil: Domestic violence continues despite law

The following article is written by Maryknoll lay misisoner Joanne Blaney, who has lived and worked in Brazil for many years.

In August 2006, Brazil passed Federal Law 11340, known as the Maria da Penha law, to deal with domestic violence. Until that time, domestic violence was handled as a “minor offense” in Brazil. A 2005 World Health Organization study indicated that violence against women is accepted as “normal” in Brazil.

Maria da Penha Fernandes, a bio-pharmacist, suffered years of violence perpetrated by her husband, university professor Marco Antonio Viveiros. On May 29, 1983, Viveiros shot his wife while she was sleeping and, as a result of the attack, Maria da Penha, then 38 and mother of three children, sustained serious injuries including permanent paraplegia. Two weeks after she returned from the hospital, Viveiros attempted to kill Maria by electrocution.

The state of Ceará’s public prosecutor filed charges against Viveiros; eight years later, he was found guilty and sentenced to 19 years in prison. He appealed the sentence, and despite being condemned twice in a jury trial, he was free for 18 years. In 2001, the case was heard by the Organization of American States (OAS) Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, the first time the OAS accepted a case in which domestic violence is treated as a crime. The Commission determined that the “failure to prosecute and convict the perpetrator ... is an indication that the Brazilian state condones the violence suffered by Maria de Penha ...”

This ruling recognized Brazil’s responsibility under international law to take effective action in prosecuting and convicting perpetrators of domestic violence. The Commission said that government inaction in these cases creates a climate conducive to violence and indicated Brazil’s accountability in its role in perpetuating violence against women by allowing batterers to act with impunity.

The Maria da Penha Law of Domestic and Family Violence was signed into law in August 2006. It is the first official codification of domestic violence crimes in Brazil and provides for more rigorous punishments for those convicted of such crimes. It also creates special courts in all states to preside over these cases. The law recognizes specific forms of domestic violence: physical, psychological,

sexual, patrimonial, and moral. The law increases the maximum sentence from one to three years, and also provides for treatment centers for abusers and other measures ranging from removing the abuser from the home, to banning them from the proximity of the women and children attacked.

In evaluating the new law, Rep. Sandra Rosado, coordinator of the Women’s Group of the Federal Congress, states that “advances have been made in the struggle to combat violence against women with this new law. The challenge is to implement the law in all Brazilian states.” A study by the São Paulo Catholic University in 2008 indicated that only two percent of criminal complaints for domestic violence against women lead to conviction of the aggressor. UN Special Rapporteur Leandro Despouy noted a tendency to blame the victims of these offenses. According to government statistics and NGO workers, the majority of criminal complaints regarding domestic violence were suspended inconclusively. In the first six months of 2008, 300 women were killed in domestic disputes and 24,000 denunciations of physical abuse and torture were registered.

In practice, domestic violence continues to be tolerated and treated as a “private matter.” Data collected in 2007 by the Special Secretariat for Policies on Women indicates that a woman is beaten every 15 seconds in Brazil. According to the latest research (2008) of the Perseu Abramo Foundation, 43 percent of Brazilian women suffer from domestic violence and 70 percent of the aggressors in these cases are husbands, boyfriends or ex-partners of the victims. “Home” continues to be the most dangerous place for women in Brazil.

There is still resistance in implementation of the law, according to the National Council of Justice’s study released in March 2009. Monica de Mello, a lawyer and public prosecutor, states that “[p]art of this resistance is the difficulty that is still present in our society to recognize that violence against women needs to be a priority. This law demands a cultural and educational change and a rupture of the discriminatory model against women that permeates the justice system. To do this, it is necessary to have financial investment and training of professionals at every level (police stations, justice, health and educational systems).”

According to Fatima da Silva, a lawyer who has worked with victims of domestic violence for the

past 12 years and participates in the municipal and state forums against violence, domestic violence has worsened in the past three years. A national study by the Brazilian Institute for Research and Statistics (IBOPE) in February 2009 confirms her statement. Da Silva's experience reflects what many others working with victims of domestic violence indicate as current problems: general misinformation about the law in the police stations that deal with domestic violence, resistance by the state and judiciary to create the special courts for domestic violence issues, lack of treatment centers for the aggressors and violence prevention education programs. According to

da Silva, "It is incredibly frustrating to work in this area. The law is wonderful and a great advancement on paper but it remains to be implemented....Until that time, we continue to deal with the horrific effects of this violence in the lives of women, children and society." Maria da Penha agrees: "I think the legislation is positive in every aspect, but there are many places where the law is not in effect and the women continue without the necessary structures for the law to function. In many places, they lack police stations and resources for attending women, and this is a major omission."

Haiti: U.S. administration pledges to relieve debt

The Jubilee USA Network, of which the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is an active member, enthusiastically welcomed the announcement by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that the U.S. would pledge \$20 million to cover Haiti's 2009 debt payments to its multilateral creditors as part of an over \$50 million aid package to the country.

Haiti currently sends \$1.6 million to the World Bank every month while thousands of Haitians starve and funding shortages threaten the nation's stability.

"Today's announcement is a victory for the people of Haiti. The U.S. pledge to cover Haiti's debt service obligations will free \$20 million for basic infrastructure, healthcare, and education and will help Haiti to recover from last year's devastating storms. We are especially grateful for the leadership shown by the Treasury and State departments in achieving this commitment." said Kristin Sundell, deputy director of the Jubilee USA Network, a coalition of faith-based, development, human rights and community organizations working for debt relief for impoverished countries.

"This is change that Haitians can believe in," said Brian Concannon Jr., Director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti. "It provides much-needed tangible support while righting a historical wrong by removing the burden of Haiti's unjust and unbearable multilateral debt."



Photo of Haitian boy by Joe Towle, MM, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

In February, a bipartisan group of 72 U.S. representatives called on World Bank President Robert Zoellick to immediately suspend all scheduled debt repayments from Haiti and grant complete debt cancellation to the impoverished nation. The letter was circulated by Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA).

Haiti is projected to complete the IMF's Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative by July.

Completion of the program will result in the permanent cancellation of a substantial portion of Haiti's debt to the United States, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank. Haiti was improperly left out of the original HIPC for political reasons. The country was accepted into the program in 2006, but its efforts to catch up have been hindered by economic policy conditions imposed by the IMF and a string of natural disasters, economic shocks and political unrest.

In April, Haitian President René Préal appealed to Secretary Clinton for immediate financial assistance, describing a \$100 million budget gap that he said could throw Haiti into anarchy.

The U.S. pledge of \$20 million in debt relief is a substantial step toward filling the budget gap, but the date by which Haiti is projected to complete the HIPC program and receive permanent debt cancellation has already been pushed back a number of times by the IMF. Haiti's debt must still be cancelled outright without further delays.

Mexico: Drug related violence spirals near border

Recent violence in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, fueled by brutal battles for turf control between drug cartels, have made international headlines. Gang-related slayings more than doubled in 2008 from the previous year, to over 1,600, with eight police officers and numerous government officials killed. In the wake of the organized criminal activity, a wave of copy-cat extortion threats in December fomented a generalized sense of panic in the populace.

In response, the Mexican government has sent more than 10,000 soldiers and federal agents to patrol Juárez's streets. Dressed in camouflage, often wearing masks, and carrying automatic weapons, they stage raids, detain suspects and search travelers at the airport and border crossings, assuming unprecedented law enforcement duties.

Maryknoll lay missionaries who live in Juárez report the now-common sight of military convoys driving up and down the streets, six or seven soldiers standing in the back with machine guns pointed out. Recently four or five squads of soldiers posted themselves within the short distance of the missionaries' block, each squad using a high-technology sensing system to detect drugs. Other soldiers stand guard with machine guns. Unfortunately, these ongoing efforts are mostly for show and have brought an increase in claims of human rights abuses including detention and torture at the hands of these troops.

The economic costs have been high as well. In March, Mayor José Reyes Ferriz announced the suspension of all development projects due to the cost of housing the soldiers and the federal police assigned to Juárez. Although the federal government pays the soldiers' salaries, the local government has been required to pay for their food and lodging. With 50 percent of youth in Juárez between 13 and 19 years old neither studying nor working, the cuts to social development are a travesty.

Sadly, most U.S. news coverage has focused on the grisly nature of the killings and has served as a platform for those who would like to militarize the border. Story after story highlights a threat of spillover violence. Some even raise the idea of a U.S. military presence inside Mexico. A document entitled "Joint Operating Environment 2008" by the Virginia-based U.S. Joint Forces Command raised concern for a potential failed state of Mexico. The

study states, "Two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico. The Mexican possibility may seem less likely, but the government, its politicians, police and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by criminal gangs and drug cartels."

At the request of Mexican President Felipe Calderón, the U.S. has responded with the three-year Merida Initiative, or the "Regional Security Cooperation Initiative," which was signed into law by President Bush in June 2008. As much as \$116.5 million has been allocated for the Mexican Armed Forces—about 30 percent of the total, including the purchase of Bell helicopters for the Mexican army (at \$13 million each, with training, maintenance, and special equipment), and CASA 235 maritime patrol planes (at \$50 million each, with maintenance) for the Mexican navy. In the category of "International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement" \$48 million is designated to Mexico. To strengthen the "Rule of Law," \$112 million is allocated to the Mexican Attorney General's Office and the criminal justice system. This money is earmarked for software and training in case-tracking and centralizing data. The U.S. government allots \$37 million of the packet to itself for administrative costs.

It is important to recognize how this initiative alters the U.S.-Mexico relationship. In viewing economic and social development as a security issue, it results in the militarization of Mexican society. Despite the Merida Initiative's stated objective of strengthening the Mexican court system, many cases of military abuses are being investigated and tried in the military jurisdiction. The unwillingness to expose military personnel to oversight by civilian courts undermines trust and accountability at a societal level. As the cases of human rights abuses mount, many people question the underlying strategy of the Merida Initiative which calls for a traditional battle approach rather than an improvement in civilian security agencies. Many question the use of the military to provide internal security. The most violent of the cartels' henchmen are former soldiers, some trained by the U.S. military. A sign at the Human Rights Center Paso del Norte reads, "It is much easier to militarize the civil than to civilize the military."

Zimbabwe: Slow next steps

Zimbabwe has entered another phase, one of problematic unity between President Mugabe and his rival, Morgan Tsvangirai, where the hope for change and the movement toward a painful rebuilding is overshadowed by a regime that has strangled any movement for the good of the people or the land. The following article is based on a report by Maryknoll Sister Fran Kobets, living in Zimbabwe

While there is some evidence of change in Zimbabwe -- and some are hoping that by July 2010, a new Constitution will be in place -- overall, it is a wait and see situation there. The sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by other countries that were mainly directed at corrupt leaders, their external bank accounts and education benefits for their children, are still in place as there is no evidence of political progress. And the reality created by ZANU-PF now facing the unity government is bleak:

Life expectancy for men is 37 years; for women, 34. Government health services have largely collapsed, although some district hospitals show improvements in consultations and counseling. HIV/AIDS, cholera, anthrax, poor nutrition and lack of hygiene have all contributed to the generally poor health and high mortality rate of the population. HIV symptoms are more evident among children, especially orphans. Waterborne diseases are rampant. Doctors Without Borders identified unsafe water as the main source of current health problems, but recognizes that no government structure is in place to handle the situation. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been asked to help build a safe water system. HIV and AIDS infection has increased in the center of the country as gold panning communities use or buy women and children.

As of March 2, US\$1 equaled one trillion zim dollars. While the unemployment rate was over 80 percent, the salaries of those who were employed could not be paid. Vouchers were briefly provided for families of six or more. At that point, the inflation rate was 250 million percent, the zim dollar ceased to exist and suddenly the U.S. dollar, the South African rand, and the Botswana pula took over as currency. Bank accounts are in zim dollars and, as there is no zim currency, accounts are frozen. Now, only cash in foreign currency is used. No checks are written. The government has no money. There are no services. Yet, there is a concentration of money

at the very top. The governor of the reserve bank raised the amount of foreign exchange that people could carry out of the country to US\$250,000 and the amount that could be deducted from foreign exchange accounts in the banks to US\$5,000 per day.

Thanks to dollarization, the inflation rate has dropped, and as of mid-April, devaluation was -3.1 percent. The reserve bank has no cash for people to withdraw, but local banks encourage opening foreign currency accounts to decentralize and put money into the pipeline. The bottom line is that there is no cash flow in the system. Whoever goes to South Africa to get goods brings them back, sets up shop, makes the profit, then turns around and takes the money back to South Africa to buy other goods, etc. It is a vicious cycle.

Agriculture is still the backbone of the country, but despite good rains, there has been little production. As empty shelves are stocked with goods (mainly unaffordable for the majority of people), the crime rate, including armed robberies, has escalated. Previous black market vendors have turned to crime. Where cultivation has taken place on local farmsteads and seeds were available there have been good harvests and enough maize produced to get through to October 2010, but poultry, and especially dairy and beef production, will take a long time to recover. The new government has tried to provide some basic maize meal and has welcomed outside agencies to assist in food relief.

Public education has collapsed. Schools function with stress and a minimum of teaching; fees are high. Teachers strike for salaries. Many do not teach; rather, they tutor privately and are paid by parents. Students are still waiting for the results of last year's (2008) exams that have not been marked.

Finally, recent reports from Sokwanele (3/30/09) and other sources report that prisoners are "suffering untold horrors in Zimbabwe's jails." They are being "held in hell-holes, condemned to slow starvation and possible death from nutrition-related illnesses" and a vast array of other diseases resulting from unhygienic conditions. Yet, they are prevented from begging for food from passers-by; they cannot forage from wild berries in the bush; and they can't rummage through garbage cans for waste. "Zimbabwe's prisons constitute a unique and especially cruel form of torture that has both physical and psychological impact" on prisoners.

Africa: Climate change and gender

A recent essay by Anene Ejikeme highlights two interconnected aspects of climate change that have gendered consequences: conflict and water scarcity. The following is excerpted from a longer article in AfricaFiles, April 2009. For the full article with footnotes, please see <http://www.africafiles.org>.

While scholars and commentators disagree on whether Darfur is a genocide or not, almost all agree that a critical element in the struggle is access to resources. ... In a report issued in June 2007 the UN Environment Program declared desertification Sudan's greatest challenge. Desertification was blamed on climate change and human activities. [Furthermore, between 1990 and 2005,] the loss of forest cover ... in Darfur was an astounding 33 percent. ...

In his classic 1989 work *Famine that kills*, Alex de Waal argued that while "experts" believed that Darfur had excellent access to water and that it was this oversupply that led to "overfarming" and "overgrazing," the Darfuri themselves felt that they were undersupplied with water. De Waal noted that "[d]uring the drought [of 1984/5] many hand-dug wells ran dry, often for the first time ever...." It was no doubt the women who undertook the task of procuring water....

An increased and onerous work load is not the only challenge women face in conflict situations. The reports about the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war in Darfur are well-known. According to some relief workers most of the women who managed to make it to refugee camps have been victims of rape....

In her autobiography, the young Sudanese medical doctor Halima Bashir recounts the horror of having to operate on young girls who had been gang-raped in a rural clinic without adequate painkillers and other medical supplies. She writes, "At no stage in my years of study had I been taught how to deal with eight-year-old victims of gang rape in a rural clinic without enough sutures to go around." Dr. Bashir herself was subject to gang-rape by the Janjaweed.

Even when women escape from the conflict and arrive at a refugee camp, the hardships are far from over. As refugees, women face some burdens which are unique to them. In the context of refugee camps, which are often fragile environments themselves –

politically, ecologically, economically, and socially – women find themselves facing new challenges as well as all the old ones. It is women who again take up the lion's share of looking after the young, the elderly and the sick. It is women who must provide the food, water and fuel for the family. Even when there are international peacekeepers, this may offer little or no protection, as the rape trials of UN peacekeepers in Congo should remind us....

Climate change brings droughts and floods, heat waves and cold fronts, more frequent and powerful tropical storms, and loss of permafrost. Floods and rising temperatures bring disease, from the diarrheal diseases which attend floods to the spread of malaria-bearing mosquitoes into new areas. Although desertification is the most severe challenge confronting Sudan, floods are common. The cycle of drought (or severe aridity) and floods is one we seem to be seeing more frequently all across the continent. In 2008, large parts of Africa – from Ghana and other parts of West Africa to large swathes of southern Africa – suffered debilitating floods after long droughts. This year, the pattern appears to be repeating in parts of southern Africa. While experts forecast that Bangladesh could have as many as 30 million climate refugees by 2030, one can only wonder what the numbers for Africa may be. Africa, with a significantly smaller population than Asia, has almost as many refugees as Asia and the Pacific region combined. It is unclear how many of Africa's refugees are climate refugees....

When a woman is forced to spend five to six hours a day procuring water for the use of her family it means that she will have to cut down on other obligations and pursuits. A girl child who spends hours each day gathering water for the family has little or no time left to go to school or train for an occupation. The same is true if a girl must spend countless hours procuring firewood. In the conflict situations, as in Darfur, we have seen that women face especial burdens, namely, the increased difficulties of procuring basic necessities, and (the threat of) rape. If climate change brings greater resource scarcity and more conflicts, it is not hard to see that this spells more hardships for millions of African women, already struggling to provide basic necessities for themselves and their families.

Madagascar: Another military coup

After three months of persistent civil strife that caused 180 deaths, Madagascar's President Marc Ravalomanana stepped down from power on March 17 and ceded authority to the nation's military leaders. Instead, Vice-Admiral Hyppolite Ramaroson installed Andry Rajoelina, Ravalomanana's chief rival, as the new president. This move was condemned by the African Union (AU), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the international community. Despite this, Rajoelina was inaugurated president on March 21 and chose Monja Roindefos as his prime minister. On that same day the U.S., Madagascar's main trading partner, suspended all but humanitarian aid and put on hold a five-year poverty reduction grant program. Norway, another major donor, also suspended aid. On March 30, SADC suspended Madagascar and in conjunction with the AU and the United Nations threatened further action unless legitimate rule is reinstated.

This coup follows a recent disturbing pattern of military coups in other parts of Africa, namely Mauritania, Guinea and Guinea Bissau. Furthermore, Madagascar has had a history of change of government by military overthrow since it became independent in 1960. Jean Ping, the AU's top executive, said that "we want constitutional order to continue. Otherwise, it's a coup. But we are following the situation." Ravalomanana went to Swaziland, where he is at present.

After the winds of democratic change blew into Africa in the early 1990s, it appeared that Madagascar's leaders had agreed to end military intervention in political affairs. However, the disputed election in December 2001 between long-time autocratic ruler Didier Ratsiraka and Ravalomanana, then mayor of the country's capital Antananarivo, ended with the latter declaring himself president in February 2002. Ratsiraka proclaimed martial law and set up a rival capital in Toamasina on the east coast. In April 2002, after a recount, the high constitutional court declared Ravalomanana president, and several months later Ratsiraka fled to France.

In the December 2006 election, Ravalomanana won reelection with 55 percent of the vote. However, an uneasy truce remained between the two groups. Rajoelina, the newly installed president, is the scion of a wealthy minority which has controlled Madagascar's politics for several decades, whereas

Ravalomanana hails originally from the poor class. However, he became wealthy through his entrepreneurial investments, especially his agribusiness firm.

The powers behind the coup, according to an Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) report (March 23), were Rajoelina's father, former president Ratsiraka, and Ratsiraka's nephew Roland Ratsiraka, the former mayor of Toamasina. It was actually only a small segment of the military that gave support to Rajoelina, indicating divisions within the military. Rajoelina is 34 years old, too young to legally be president according to the constitution, which requires a minimum age of 40. A one-time radio disc jockey and media magnate, he was elected mayor of Antananarivo in 2007.

Referring to himself as interim president, Rajoelina had originally promised elections in 24 months, as well as a new constitution, which will presumably lower the minimum age for presidency. At the end of a two-day conference to discuss the nation's political future, Rajoelina announced on April 3 that elections would be held in October 2010. Adding to the international pressure for return to constitutional rule, Ravalomanana announced on April 15 that he will return to Madagascar under the protection of the 13-member SADC, which considers him still the legitimate president of the country. The actual date of his return has not yet been announced. He has called for elections by the end of this year.

Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world, about 85 percent the size of Texas, with a population of just over 20 million. Despite a number of agricultural and mineral resources, plus great tourist potential with its beaches and an array of animal species unique to the island, it remains a very poor country. Seventy percent of the population lives below the poverty line. An ethnic equation also has to be reckoned with: the majority Melina are descended from the Indonesian settlers of the seventh century, while the Cotiers are of mixed African, Malayo-Indonesian, and Arab ancestry.

Despite being handily elected just over two years ago, public discontent with Ravalomanana had risen dramatically by last year for several reasons. Food prices had soared, the high poverty level persisted, and a severe drought plagued the southern part of the island. His growing wealth from his food empire disturbed many people. The purchase of a \$60 million presidential jet and the leasing of over

one million hectares of agricultural land to South Korea's Daewoo Logistics to grow food solely for consumption in South Korea also greatly raised the level of anger aimed at him.

This year's political tussle began at the end of 2008, when Ravalomanana shut Rajoelina's independent television and radio stations, ushering in a series of weekly protests that grew increasingly violent. Between January 18-20, two major cyclones hit Madagascar, further exacerbating the country's humanitarian crises. The final nail in the coffin was the military response to protest in Antananarivo in February, when Ravalomanana removed Rajoelina as mayor. On February 7 thousands of Rajoelina's supporters poured into the streets setting fire to a number of buildings, actions in which scores of people were killed. Two days later, called "Black Monday" in Madagascar's newspapers, soldiers opened fire on the protesters, killing 28. This incident led to the military's withdrawal of support of President Ravalomanana, who was blamed for giving the order to fire. Just over a month later he was overthrown.

Whether Rajoelina will be able to continue in power with so much international disapproval is uncertain. Nor is it clear what policy changes, if any, he will introduce. His patron Ratsiraka had been a socialist in the 1970s and 1980s and had nationalized banks, insurance companies and all mineral resources. In the 1990s, he and his rival Albert Zafy, who was president from 1993 to 1997, changed the nation's ideological position and adopted free-market policies, especially opening the country to investment in export processing zones. In all of Africa, Madagascar has been known as having the lowest salaries for those working in the export zones. Ravalomanana made the country even more open to foreign investment by encouraging agribusiness ventures and allowing Rio Tinto, the world's fourth largest titanium deposits. The U.S. had strongly endorsed Ravalomanana's move to free-market reforms.

Rajoelina is himself a wealthy entrepreneur and



has given no indication of interfering with the export processing zones, the tourist industry, nor Rio Tinto's investments. However, his first action was to cancel the deal with Daewoo Logistics, which he had heavily criticized last year. He has also promised to:

- sell Air Force One, the expensive jet Ravalomanana bought
- lift people out of poverty (though there is no specific plan how to do this)
- bring food prices down (once again, no details)
- not be a food entrepreneur himself, like his predecessor
- arrest Ravalomanana for high treason
- and, as mentioned above, change the constitution and have elections by October 2010.

In the meantime, Madagascar has to deal with another humanitarian crisis. A third cyclone, called "Jade," struck on April 6 in the north and made its destructive way down the east coast of the island. Combined with all the other problems, aid agencies estimate that 2.5 million people will need assistance in the urban areas, with an additional 880,000 in the drought-affected south. \$35.7 million is being sought to provide humanitarian aid. In addition, the government is dependent on \$600 million in official development aid (ODA) that represents 75 percent of its annual budget. Much of that has now been frozen. So dire is the budgetary impasse that the government may not be able to pay government workers' salaries in May.

Bruno Maes, the UNICEF representative in Madagascar, says, "The nutrition situation is already precarious, both in the capital and in the south. We believe that the situation will worsen, and that up to a quarter million children are currently at risk of disease and malnutrition. Diarrhea, or a small change in the quality or amount of food, could push already weakened children into a life-threatening situation of severe malnutrition."

According to *Foreign Policy in Focus*, there are also concerns about the environment. "Ravalomanana was one of the Third World's strongest leaders in sustainable development. Rajoelina must act quickly if he is to continue his predecessor's work with environmental conservation. Already militia-loggers have returned to the country's northeast forests to cut down precious and protected ebony and rosewood trees. Africa's crown jewel of environmental protection is now at risk."

Sudan: Israel airstrikes reported

A March 27 article in the Los Angeles Times reported that a Sudanese official said that hundreds of people were killed early this year when foreign warplanes bombed three convoys smuggling African migrants through Sudan along with weapons that apparently were destined for the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert hinted at his air force's possible involvement in the attacks. They came after Israel ended a 22-day assault on Gaza without fully achieving one of its aims: to choke off Hamas' weapons supply.

"Israeli officials have said that the militant Islamic group is seeking more powerful weapons than the crude Kassam rockets and Grad missiles it fires at Israeli towns.

"An Israeli role in the bombings, if confirmed, would underscore the Jewish state's determination to strike far beyond its borders to protect its security. It also would be seen as a warning to Hamas' most powerful patron, Iran, which Israel alleges is developing a nuclear weapon.



"The bombings brought a new layer of tragedy to Sudan, a country in the grip of an armed insurgency. The victims were migrants from Sudan, Ethiopia and other African countries seeking a better life in Israel or Europe, and young men and boys working as porters and drivers for the smugglers.

"Fatih Mahmoud Awad, a spokesman for Sudan's Transport Ministry, said as many as 800 people died in the attacks in January and early February. He said each convoy had more than a dozen vehicles.

"The Associated Press quoted a Sudanese Foreign Ministry official, Ali Youssef, as saying there were conflicting reports of the number of casualties....

"The attacks were not reported in the country's newspapers, suggesting that the government was embarrassed to acknowledge that its sovereignty and air space could be violated so easily....

"CBS News reported ...that Israel carried out the bombing in January. The network said Israel had learned of plans to move weapons north through Sudan to Egypt, then across the Sinai and through tunnels into Gaza Salah Bardawil, a senior Hamas

official, denied that the vehicles hit were bearing weapons for Gaza.

"Thirty-nine people in the 17-truck convoy were killed, CBS said. Awad, the Transport Ministry spokesman, put the death toll at 14. Reuters news agency said two warplanes hit the convoy in a desert region northwest of Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast.

"Awad said 17 people were killed three weeks later in a second strike. The third attack caused many of the smuggled weapons to explode and was by far the deadliest, he said. The weapons were 'modern and expensive-looking,' he said, and 'were headed for Gaza probably.'

"Israel's military refused to confirm or deny a role in any of the bombings. But Olmert, speaking at an academic conference, said: 'We operate everywhere we can hit terror infrastructure -- in close places and in places farther away. Wherever we can hit terror infrastructure, we hit them and we hit them in a way that increases deterrence....'

"Experts said Israeli warplanes had the range to fly the 1,680-mile round trip to Sudan. Before ending the Gaza assault Jan. 18, Israel secured pledges from the United States and other Western nations to share intelligence on arms smuggling into Gaza and cooperate in blocking it.

"Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, a former Israeli army chief of staff, said Israel would have needed such help to locate smuggling convoys in Sudan. Israeli officials say some Gaza-bound weapons move by sea from Iran to Yemen and others are purchased in Sudan's flourishing arms market. Both routes converge over land through Sudan into Egypt and are used for smuggling migrants as well as weapons.

"Reva Bhalla, a Washington-based analyst with the private intelligence firm Stratfor, said Iran pays for the weapons and often sends agents of Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia, to buy them in Sudan and to hire the smugglers.

"Sudanese official Awad blamed the government for neglecting eastern Sudan, driving youths into the smuggling trade. Those killed 'were boys, many 12 or 13 years old, looking to earn some money,' he said.

"After the attacks, relatives and tribesmen began searching for loved ones, he said. 'We missed our people and started investigating. We eventually found the wreckage.'"

ICC: Would trial of Sudan's Bashir bring justice?

Two months after a warrant was issued for the arrest of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, opinion remains divided over its potential long-term effects. Observers question if the warrant, issued March 4 by the International Criminal Court (ICC), might make peace more difficult in Darfur, or even endanger the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended Sudan's two-decade civil war. Meanwhile, no one has yet been held accountable for the ongoing violence in Darfur, and Bashir, who came to power by force in 1989, won a statement of support at a recent Arab League summit in Qatar.

The warrant accuses Bashir of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, extermination and rape. The ICC's chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, alleges Bashir tried to destroy the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups in Darfur. Ocampo asserts the crimes were so broad as to have required "the mobilization of the whole state apparatus, including the armed forces, the intelligence services, the diplomatic and public information bureaucracies, and the justice system."

Putting Bashir on trial could be difficult. The ICC asked states including signatories to the Rome Statute, which created the court, to help arrest him. Within weeks after his indictment, however, Bashir traveled freely to Egypt, Eritrea, Libya and Qatar, none of which is among the 108 members of the court. In Qatar the Arab League declared in a joint statement, "We stress our solidarity with Sudan and our rejection of the ICC decision."

In contrast, the Arab Coalition for Darfur, without naming Bashir, declared, "There should be no immunity for those who have committed crimes." The coalition, formed in May 2008, comprises human rights groups from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Mauritania, Kuwait, Libya, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen.

Human rights groups say more than 300,000 civilians have died in Darfur since 2003 in violence unleashed by Sudanese government forces and government-backed Janjaweed militias. Another two million Darfuris have been rendered homeless. Whether Bashir is criminally responsible is for the ICC to determine, but his actions have been consistent. Hours after the indictment was handed down, he expelled 13 international aid groups from Dar-

fur. The groups provided food and medicine to more than a million people, and cutting off their efforts put hundreds of thousands of lives at risk.

This is the first time the ICC has issued an arrest warrant for a sitting head of state. However, Bashir is the third Sudanese national for whom the court has issued an arrest warrant. Since May 2007 warrants have been outstanding for Sudan's Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs Ahmed Harun, and Janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb. The government of Sudan has refused to hand over the suspects.

The UN Security Council has the authority to defer an investigation or prosecution for one year. Both the Arab League and the African Union are seeking such a deferral to maintain the fragile peace process in Sudan. However, the U.S. administration has indicated it is opposed to a 12-month delay.

Fighting in Darfur intensified earlier this year between the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese government. In February JEM and the government signed an agreement that could pave the way for more substantial peace talks. However, some expressed concern over those prospects after the ICC issued its arrest warrant for Bashir and JEM promised to work with the ICC.

Nonetheless, human rights groups maintain the ICC is following the right course. Julia Fromholz of Human Rights First said, "The international community must follow through on its commitment to ensure accountability for Darfuri victims, as a sustainable peace is impossible without justice."

In another ICC-related development, 26 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have urged the Obama administration to complete its review of the ICC as soon as possible. In an April 16 letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the NGOs asked the U.S. to participate in the ICC Review Conference next year, to be held in Uganda; and to reinstate the U.S. signature on the Rome Statute.

President Bill Clinton signed the Rome Statute in 2001, but President George W. Bush withdrew the U.S. signature the following year. The U.S. Senate never ratified the treaty. In their April letter to Hillary Clinton, NGOs noted, "The United States is now in the odd and unsustainable position of strongly endorsing the most important action that the ICC has ever taken while evading any commitment to support or participate in it as an institution."

Nuclear weapons: Shift in U.S. policy

President Barack Obama has begun a dramatic shift in U.S. nuclear weapons policy. Speaking on April 5 in Prague, Czech Republic, Obama said, "Just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st. And as a nuclear power - as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon - the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it. So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."

Four days earlier President Obama met with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. In a joint statement they acknowledged their obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) to work towards nuclear disarmament and engage the other nuclear weapons states in arms control efforts. As a first step they directed negotiators to begin talks on a bi-lateral strategic arms control treaty to be concluded by the end of the year. The new agreement would replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II (START II) which expires in December 2009.

Prior to START I, Russia and the United States each deployed over 10,000 nuclear warheads. Today each country deploys 2,000-3,000. A new agreement would reduce these numbers and maintain the verification procedures which are necessary for each party to have confidence that the other is complying with the treaty.

The two leaders also pledged their commitment to a verifiable treaty to end the production of fissile materials – the ingredients of a nuclear bomb. Such a treaty is critical for preventing governments and terrorist groups from developing nuclear weapons.

In addition, they support the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT would prohibit nuclear tests, hindering countries from enhancing existing arsenals or developing warheads in the first place.

The CTBT was signed by President Clinton in 1996. The U.S. Senate refused to ratify it in 1999. At that time, two main objections existed. First, there was limited capacity to detect cheating. Second, some lawmakers wondered if the U.S. could have confidence in the reliability of the arsenal without periodic tests. Neither objection is valid today.

Because of advances in monitoring technology, we have a high degree of certainty that tests anywhere in the world would be detected. In fact, the CTBT International Monitoring System detected the low-yield test by North Korea in 2006.

The reliability question should not stand in the way of ratification either. In 2002 the National Academy of Sciences concluded that the improved Stockpile Stewardship Program is capable of maintaining the safety and reliability of the arsenal without nuclear testing. In 2006 the National Nuclear Security Administration released results from studies completed by the nuclear laboratories. They determined that warheads' nuclear cores remain sound for at least 85 years.

The CTBT has been signed by 177 countries and ratified by 138, including Russia. Many analysts believe that if the U.S. ratifies it, other hold-out countries will follow the lead. President Obama has committed to "immediately and aggressively pursue ratification," and tasked Vice President Joe Biden with shepherding the treaty through the Senate.

Despite these positive steps, many challenges exist. North Korea recently kicked out the international inspectors monitoring its nuclear activities. Iran continues to enrich uranium, moving closer to producing weapons grade material. The Obama administration will join with European nations, Russia and China in negotiations with Iran, but an agreement will be hard to reach. Finally, some analysts fear the government in Pakistan could collapse due to internal unrest. This would raise serious concerns about the command and control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and could threaten stability in the region and beyond.

Getting to zero nuclear weapons will not be easy, but it is possible. People of peace worked hard during the Bush years to defeat development of new nuclear weapons, including mini-nukes and the bunker buster. Now, that energy and activism is needed to convince the congress to support presidential initiatives to reduce the nuclear danger.

Faith in action:

Contact your senator and urge them to support U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Please visit the Friends Committee on National Legislation's website for more information: www.fcnl.org/nuclear/.

Food security: Policies must include consultation

On April 15, British newspapers reported that 1,500 Indian farmers, driven by heavy debt and crop failure, committed “mass suicide.” While not occurring in a single incident on a single day, the article lifts up the fact that in India suicides among farmers are on the rise. This trend underscores serious problems with economic and development schemes implemented without consultation of impacted populations. Leaders in the U.S. should consider these issues critically since S. 384, the Global Food Security Act of 2009 passed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, promotes some of the technologies that have failed in India.

Last year falling water levels caused crops to fail in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh. The drought was unbearable for many farmers already in debt due to previous crop losses. Many of Chhattisgarh’s 1,593 farmers who killed themselves within the past year did so by drinking the pesticides that they had bought for their crops. Bharatendu Prakash, of the Organic Farming Association of India, was quoted as saying, “Farmers’ suicides are increasing due to a vicious circle created by money lenders. They lure farmers to take money but when the crops fail, they are left with no option other than death.”

In November 2008 a London Daily Mail article linked India’s farmer suicides to genetically modified (GM) technologies. The reporter, Andrew Malone, was following up on the fact that Prince Charles had called the issue of GM a “global moral question.” Prince Charles spoke via video link to a conference in Delhi condemning “the truly appalling and tragic rate of small farmer suicides in India, stemming ... from the failure of many GM crop varieties.”

Malone traveled to Maharashtra, one of India’s cotton producing states located in the “suicide belt,” and found that Indian government authorities promoted GM seeds thinking that the new technologies would help boost India’s economy. In two years, areas of India planted with GM seeds doubled, but rather than providing bumper crops, “GM pest-proof ‘breeds’ of cotton have been devastated by bollworms, a voracious parasite” and farmers were not told that “these seeds require double the amount of water. This has proved a matter of life and death.”

Malone quotes the brother of one suicide victim who said his brother “was strangled by these

magic seeds. They sell us the seeds, saying they will not need expensive pesticides but they do. We have to buy the same seeds from the same company every year. It is killing us...”

Shifts in weather patterns and lowering water tables, like those experienced in India, are expected to increase globally as the world witnesses the real impact of rising global green house gas emissions. As part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process, countries are discussing both the need to lower emissions and make preparations to adapt to the adverse impact of global warming. While these discussions take place companies that promote GM technologies are trying to position themselves as a key part of the solution.

On April 1, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously passed the Global Food Security Act of 2009. While there are many positive aspects to the bill, including naming a food security “czar” and increasing funding, it will rewrite the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act to include “research on biotechnological advances appropriate to local ecological conditions, including genetically modified technology.” Many food security activists fear that this will pressure countries that have formally banned genetically modified crops to adopt them.

Farmers in India and African countries are some of the most vulnerable people on earth, weathering economic downturn, food price volatility shocks and coping with changes in land productivity brought on by global warming. Farmers themselves must be consulted in the process of designing agricultural research and technology that is affordable and causes the least amount of environmental damage.

The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development study concluded in 2008 found that small-scale farmers and agro-ecological methods provide the way forward to avert the current food crisis and meet the needs of local communities. (See *NewsNotes* March-April 2009) Likewise, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) released a report focused on African farming that concluded “organic agriculture can increase agricultural productivity and can raise incomes with low-cost, locally available and appropriate technologies, without causing environmental damage.”

Special series: Ecological economics, part 3

In part two of this series we examined the concept of uneconomic growth, or “illth,” that takes place when the costs of using up natural resources are greater than the benefits from the new product built with those resources. In this article, we look specifically at the little understood, yet extremely important, concept of exponential growth, which is when something grows at a constant rate over time, for example a bank account that receives fixed interest or world population. Few people truly grasp the profound importance of this concept when we talk about the economy today. As Dr. Albert Bartlett, University of Colorado physics professor, said, “The greatest shortcoming of the human race is our inability to understand the exponential function.”

Growth is usually expressed by a percentage of increase per year, for example, a bank account that grows at two percent annually, etc. Yet a steady growth rate is misleading because, unlike the rate of change, that usually stays more or less constant, the amount of growth at a given rate of change per unit of time is not constant at all, but increases more and more with time. If you were to graph anything that grows at a constant rate, it would look like a hockey stick lying on the ground, with a long horizontal line of apparently slow growth that at a certain point turns upward rapidly into an almost vertical line where the amount of increase grows incredibly

quickly in a short period of time. A few examples will help to understand this “speeding up” factor:

One way to think of exponential growth is to consider that the interval of time needed for the item which you are measuring to increase by a certain amount shrinks as time passes, even though the rate of change remains constant. Consider world population, which has been growing at about a one percent annual rate: Around the year 1804, Earth’s population hit one billion for the first time. That number doubled in 123 years (around the year 1927). By 1959, only 32 years later, the population had grown another billion, and 15 years later (around 1974), the population hit four billion. By 1987, another billion was added, and 12 years later (1999), the population was six billion. The Census Bureau estimates Earth’s population will reach seven billion in February 2012.

Another example is monetary growth in the United States. It took over 300 years (from 1492-1973) for the U.S. (including the colonial period) to create its first \$1 trillion in wealth. (It’s unclear if this number includes the buying, selling and use of slaves.) The value of everything that was ever created in the U.S. and the colonies that preceded it – every road, building, automobile, etc. – before 1973 added up to \$1 trillion. According to Chris Martenson of chrismartenson.com, in the fall of 2008, the most recent \$1 trillion that the U.S. made took only 18 weeks to create. Where will this end? When \$1 trillion is created in 18 days? 18 hours? 18 minutes? Knowing that this “wealth” creation also represents the consumption of natural resources, it is clear that this exponential growth cannot continue for long.

Another way to think about exponential growth is to think of the amount that is added growing larger with each new time period. An example would be the legendary story of the king who wanted to reward his mathematician for inventing the game of chess. The mathematician said, “My needs are modest. Please take my new chess board and on the first square, place one grain of wheat. On the next square, double the one to make two. On the next square, double the two to make four. Just keep dou-

The rule of 70

An easy math trick called “the rule of 70” uses the growth rate to estimate how quickly something will double in size. By dividing 70 by the growth rate you estimate the doubling time. For example, world population, which has grown at a rate of about one percent per year, would double in size in 70 years (70 divided by one). Global use of oil has been growing at a three percent rate, meaning we double the amount of oil we use every 23 years (70 divided by three). Next time you are listening to the news and hear about something growing at a certain rate, use this formula in order to have a better idea of how soon it will double in size. While China’s recent economic growth rate of 10 percent doesn’t mean much to most, knowing that this means the Chinese economy will double in size in only seven years is much more meaningful.

bling till you've doubled for every square. That will be an adequate payment." We can guess the king thought, "This foolish man. I was ready to give him a real reward; all he asked for was just a few grains of wheat." Yet this simple doubling of grains 64 times over would result in an amount of grain larger than the entire world could produce. Just in the last square alone the king would have to place 184,467,440,737,095,000 grains. And this is equal to the sum of all the previous 63 squares added together.

One final example that may more clearly show how rapidly things increase on the vertical end of an exponential graph comes from Martenson's Crash Course. Imagine that Fenway Park in Boston is sealed off to be able to hold water. You start to drop water onto the pitcher's mound. In the first minute, you place one drop. Double that each minute, so in two minutes, you'd place two drops, in three minutes placing four drops, then eight drops, etc. Now imagine you are on the highest bleacher chained to the fence. If they started to place water drops at noon, at what time would the park still be 93 percent empty? It would be only seven percent filled at 12:44 p.m. At what time would the park be full of

water? An hour later? A day? A week? No, it would be full at 12:49 p.m. In fact, only one minute before you are drowned by the water, the park is still only 50 percent full! While watching the water level slowly rise to only halfway, you would probably not panic, but that would leave you only one minute to escape before being drowned.

This is the power of compounding, of exponential growth. On the MOGC website, a graph shows the dramatic growth in population, carbon dioxide concentration, water use, species extinction and other areas. How much longer can these lines continue to rise before we reach the limits of Earth? We will have to rapidly decrease our use of resources before we run out of them completely. And clearly this expectation that growth will solve the problem of poverty is unrealistic. Rather, we need to focus on better distribution. Keep these facts in mind as politicians throughout the world strive to get the economy growing as fast as possible once again.

Good websites that treat exponential growth in interesting ways: www.otherwise.com/population/exponent.html; raju.varghese.org/articles/powers2.html; and www.chrismartenson.com - chapters 3 and 4 of the Crash Course.

Special series: Corporations in U.S., part 3

In the second part of this series, we learned about the seminal 1886 case when a court reporter misrepresented a Supreme Court decision and created the impression that corporations were considered persons under the 14th Amendment. Since that case, the courts have granted rights to corporations that were never envisioned by the writers of the Constitution.

From the late 1800s into the early 1900s, corporations, wanting more freedom to expand into other areas of business, buy other corporations, etc., began fiercely lobbying the states to change the requirements in their charters. New Jersey was the first state to capitulate, granting corporations the right to own equity in other corporations in 1889. This set off a "race to the bottom" as states rushed to be more "business friendly" in order to attract corporate charters. In 1896, New Jersey passed its General Incorporation Law, which removed restrictions on a corporation's size and market share, put time limits on charters, reduced shareholder powers and

permitted all kinds of mergers of corporations. New Jersey's results were remarkable: By 1901, New Jersey was home to 71 percent of all U.S. corporations with assets of more than \$25 million and its legislature struggled to spend the surplus revenue brought in from these corporations.

In 1899, Delaware won the "race" by passing its General Incorporation Law that basically allowed corporations to write their own rules of governance. Today, Delaware, where nearly 60 percent of all Fortune 500 companies are incorporated, remains the most popular state for corporations.

One result of the states' new laws was a huge consolidation of corporate power. From 1895 to 1904, nearly 1,800 companies were consolidated into 137 megacorporations or trusts leaving U.S. Steel with 63 percent of the steel market, International Harvester with 85 percent of the agricultural tools market, etc.

Troubled by this concentration of control, Congress, with only one dissenting vote, passed the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1890, designed to prevent

monopolies or cartels that disrupt interstate commerce. It did not, however, have the hoped-for effect. Ironically, one of the earliest uses of the Act was in 1894 to break up not a corporation, but a union. The Pullman Palace Car Company won an injunction against the American Railway Union to stop a strike, arguing that the strike disrupted interstate commerce. The Antitrust Act was used more than 4,000 times before 1930 to break up strikes. Before the Great Depression, only Theodore Roosevelt, who ruptured 40 large corporations, and William Taft, who divided the Standard Oil trust into 33 companies and broke up American Tobacco, used the Act for its original purpose.

In 1905, the landmark case *Lochner v. New York* involved a state law mandating a 60-hour work week in baking establishments. The court determined that this law violated the corporation's "liberty of contract" that was implied in the due process clause of the 14th Amendment. The majority opinion wrote that this was an "unreasonable, unnecessary and arbitrary interference with the right and liberty of the individual to contract." The case established substantive due process for corporations that was then used in the following decades to overturn more than 200 recently passed Progressive era statutes, such as child labor laws, maximum work week laws, safety standards, workers' compensation, etc.

Corporations were further strengthened in 1893 when the Supreme Court allowed the Union River Logging Railroad the right to due process, granted in the Fifth Amendment. With this new privilege, corporate lawyers could challenge, and the Supreme Court could overturn, democratically legislated laws that either originated at the federal or

at the state level, where most progressive laws were being passed.

The right against undue search and seizure protected by the Fourth Amendment was granted to corporations by the Court in 1906 in the *Hale v. Henkel* case. A corporate representative refused to turn over documents claiming Fifth Amendment rights from incriminating himself. The Court decided that the witness would not be incriminating himself but the corporation he worked for, and so must turn over the documents. Yet the Court then went on to determine that the corporation's Fourth Amendment rights had been broken by forcing the turn over of documents. Access to Fourth Amendment protections have been used by corporations repeatedly ever since to avoid a variety of government regulations.

In a few short decades from the 1880s-1920s, corporations had gone from the limited public service tools originally imagined in the Constitution to enormous and incredibly influential entities with human rights. Entities that were designed to be carefully controlled by government had now become too big to control.

The result was the roaring 1920s when corporations operated almost completely unchecked and workers were denied the ability to organize and fight for their needs. The lack of controls led to the corporate excesses that created the conditions for crash that led to the Great Depression. In the next article, we will explore the strengthening of corporate controls after the Depression and the campaign of corporations to loosen those same controls in the following decades.

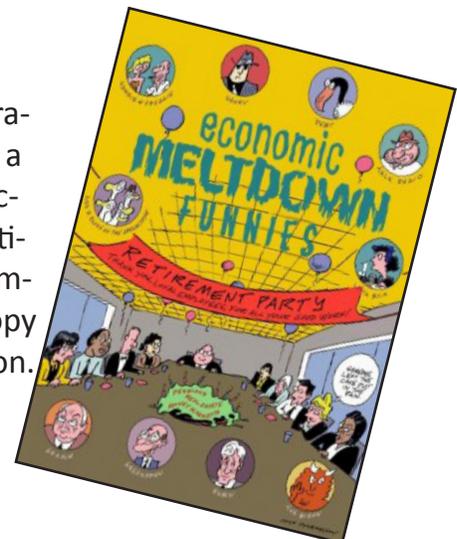
For a good article on corporations and the bill of rights, see: http://www.reclaimdemocracy.org/personhood/mayer_personalizing.html.

Economic Meltdown Funnies

Written by Chuck Collins and Nick Thorkelson, with illustrations by Thorkelson, this 16-page web-based resource is a useful primer on the economic crisis, presented in comic-book style. Co-produced by Jobs with Justice and the Institute for Policy Studies/Program on Inequality and the Common Good. With registration, you can download a free copy of the PDF version; hard copies are available for a donation.

All information is available on the website:

<http://economicmeltdownfunnies.org/>.



HIV/AIDS: Update on access to medicines

The Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and NGOs who focus on access to medicines give the grim details: In low/middle income countries, only 31 percent of those with HIV or AIDS who need medications receive them; for every two people on medication, five are newly infected. Only 33 percent of HIV-infected pregnant women receive treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission. And yet, reports from Maryknoll missionaries who work with people with HIV and AIDS give proof to the power of access to medicines: Children who were emaciated and dying who start treatment and months later are energetically playing, going to school, smiling; mothers who survive the birth of their children to bear and raise their infants (who do not contract the virus); adults who do not die but return to jobs or to care giving or volunteer to help others, to celebrate with their families and communities.

Unfortunately, AIDS medicines are still out of reach for 69 percent of those who need them in poor countries; children are less likely to receive antiretroviral drugs.

While many factors severely complicate the access to these drugs, such as high cost, lack of health care infrastructure and personnel, inaccessibility of rural areas, lack of nutrition and clean water and limited national budgets, the fact remains that AIDS medicines are still too expensive to be available to the majority of poor people in low and middle income countries. In many cases where they are available, only the first line medications are accessible; if a person becomes resistant, the second line and third treatment are more expensive than the older drugs, and hence unavailable. In addition, some medicine must be available for the life of the person living with AIDS.

Major advances have been made in the development of the medicines, and tiered pricing has brought down cost in many countries: 1) The manufacture and availability of generics has been a major benefit in Brazil, India, South Africa and Thailand. 2) Direct negotiations between UNAIDS and other organizations and pharmaceutical companies has resulted in lower prices of specific medicines over the years. 3) Some countries have been encouraged to use the rights afforded them through the international trade rules and flexibilities in TRIPS (trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights).

These solutions, in some cases models for successful access programs, are temporary at best and ultimately unsustainable in a health situation and in countries that do not have adequate prevention strategies. UNAIDS reports that the sustainability of HIV treatment requires more affordable second and third line therapies. Many would say that sustainability requires countries' ability to make use of the TRIPS flexibilities and the development and encouragement of generics pharmaceutical industries.

Some recent developments:

- In 2008, UNITAID, an international drug purchase facility, proposed a voluntary Patent Pool that could help make AIDS medicines more affordable. Different patent-holders would make their patents available to others; generic manufacturers could access patents in said pool to manufacture or improve on medicines, paying royalties to the patent holder. This system would help to reduce the cost of medicines as well as accelerate the availability of lower priced new medicines.
- February 2009: GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) promised to cut the prices on all of its medicines in the poorest 52 countries and introduce a patent pool for dozens of compounds and invest 20 percent of its profits (from those medicines) to develop health infrastructure in those countries. While this is an excellent example for all pharmaceutical companies, these plans do not include middle income countries (where medicines are still too costly for the majority of those who need them), nor does the patent pool include AIDS medicines; the prices will still be too high for the majority who need them.
- April 2009: In surprise news, GSK and Pfizer announced a merger of their HIV and AIDS operations into a new company, permitting them to develop new fixed-dose combinations using existing and new medicines, cut costs to improved productivity and share the development of new drugs. One goal of this effort is to develop drugs to overcome resistance to HIV in combination pills. There has been little public response to this news to date; however, new products (still in development) are unlikely until 2013, and there is no indication that they will impact those persons living with AIDS in poor countries.
- April 2009: UNITAID and the Clinton HIV/

AIDS Initiative announced a bulk-purchase deal with generic-drug makers. The reduced prices on AIDS drugs will be available in 70 developing countries and to Global Fund recipients (through their Voluntary Procurement scheme). This is the fourth such price reduction since 2006.

While all of these efforts have positive impacts for access to AIDS medicines (especially the proposal for patent pooling) and the research and development of desperately needed new medicines, they still remain stop-gap measures for the access to medicines by people in low and medium income

countries, and they are not sustainable measures.

Advocacy must continue for: 1. generic production, sales and distribution of AIDS medicines; 2. price reductions for less toxic first line ARV combinations and diagnostics; 3. development of pediatric formulations (and systematic inclusion of pediatric studies in the development of ARV formulations); 4. support for countries' use of TRIPS safeguards such as compulsory licenses and the creation of pro-public health patent laws; and 5. development of drugs, pediatric formulations and diagnostics for resource poor settings.

Torture: Declassified memos and next steps

On April 17, key memos drawn up by Bush administration advisors, which meticulously contend a legal argument for the use of torture of people classified as enemy combatants, were declassified and publicized. This disclosure comes as human rights advocates continue to call for restored legal rights for all detainees at the Guantanamo and Bagram military prisons, a just detention policy in line with international law and movement toward full disclosure and accountability of U.S. procedures. By confronting past wrongs and evaluating how such wrongs were set in motion, it's possible to obtain necessary legislation and restore proper constitutional roles of the government's branches and departments.

Publication of the memos brought sharp criticism from former CIA director Michael Hayden and former Vice President Dick Cheney, who has suggested that valuable intelligence was collected using "enhanced interrogations techniques." However, one memo reveals that, in some cases, the most critical information was gathered before severe methods (such as waterboarding) were used, or, in other cases, traditional interrogation methods were never attempted before escalating to extreme methods.

When questioned, President Obama has responded that it is the role of Attorney General Eric Holder to decide whether legal grounds exist to prosecute Bush administration officials who formulated the decisions that enabled torture to occur. The Department of Justice, charged to handle legal matters, is obliged to remain impartial to the politics of the White House or Congress. Pursuing justice is the department's constitutional mandate, not a political game that offers advantage to one party.

The president has also stated his opposition to prosecuting CIA operatives who were following the Bush administration's guidelines. This recommendation for impunity, before a full accounting has taken place, seems unwise and premature. The Convention Against Torture (ratified by the U.S. in 1994), the Geneva Convention, and the Charter of the International Tribunal at Nuremberg state that orders from a superior do not justify the use of torture. Precipitous impunity risks leaving matters unresolved, forgoing our commitment to comply with international law, and could send dangerous signals to perpetrators of torture around the world.

Some have suggested that the release of the memos might damage the confidence of CIA operatives and undercut the success of future CIA operations. However, though the CIA may gather intelligence in a covert manner, it does not have license to operate outside of U.S. law. If the agency believed it did have such license, CIA officials would not have pursued authorization of enhanced interrogation techniques. If morale is indeed hurt, its rehabilitation could come from the clarification that the department is built to aid and not undermine U.S. law and its accordance with international law.

Faith in action:

June is Torture Awareness Month; the work to put torture and unlawful, indefinite detention behind us still continues. Consider joining the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (www.tassc.org) throughout the month as they rally, vigil, fast, and speak truth to power about the imperative for accountability.

Resources

- 1) **“Remaining awake through a great revolution,” Pax Christi USA’s national conference:** This year’s gathering will be held **July 16-19**, in Chicago at the Wyndham O’Hare Hotel. Speakers include Maryknoll Fr. Miguel d’Escoto, president of the 63rd Session of the UN General Assembly; Claudette Werleigh, Secretary General of Pax Christi International; Kathy Kelly, founder of Voices in the Wilderness/Voices for Creative Nonviolence; and Bishop Leroy Matthiesen, this year’s recipient of the Teacher of Peace Award. Contact PCUSA for more information: www.paxchristiusa.org, or call 814-453-4955.
- 2) **Delegations to Latin America:** SOA Watch and the Marin Task Force on the Americas will sponsor three delegations to Latin America in 2009: Venezuela, June 17-26; Bolivia, August 14-24; and Chile, October 8-18. Check with SOA Watch for more information: www.soaw.org (see link for delegations in right side menu) or call 202-234-3440.
- 3) **Viva la cause: The story of César Chávez and a great movement for social justice:** Free for schools, this DVD and guide share Chávez’s life and his legacy with young adults. “Viva La Causa” focuses on one of the seminal events in the march for human rights: the grape strike and boycott led by Chávez and Dolores Huerta in the 1960s. The 39-minute DVD shows how thousands of people from across the nation joined in a struggle for justice for the most exploited people in our country — the workers who put food on our tables. The kit includes a teacher’s guide with standards-based lesson plans. It meets content standards for social studies and language arts, grades 7-12. Go to the Teaching Tolerance website for more information: http://www.tolerance.org/teach/resources/viva_lacausa.jsp
- 4) **Listening to Earth: Faith and action in a time of global climate change:** How do we connect our responsibility to address global climate change with our work for justice and peace? What does care for creation have to do with our call to follow Christ? How can we renew community through prayer, study and action? This five-session resource from Pax Christi USA, “Listening to Earth,” features stories of environmental injustice and the hope that inspired grassroots solutions for change. Each session includes stories, small and large group discussions, prayers, and suggestions for action. NOTE: This is a PDF download. Go to www.paxchristiusa.org for more information about purchasing and prices.
- 5) **The St. Francis pledge to care for creation and the poor:** Presented by the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change. The people most affected by the impact of climate change are the world’s poorest. As Catholics, our faith demands prudent action; this pledge is a small step toward responding in a faith-filled way. Those who sign the pledge promise to: 1) pray and reflect on the duty to care for God’s creation and protect poor and vulnerable people; 2) learn about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change; 3) assess how we contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.; 4) act to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change; and 5) advocate for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable. To sign the pledge and learn more about the coalition, contact: Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, P.O. Box 60205, Washington, D.C. 20039; (301) 322-1180; www.catholicclimate-covenant.org; email: info@catholicsandclimatechange.org
- 6) **Promote social justice in your diocesan paper:** Catholic News Service (CNS) columnist Tony Magliano writes a biweekly syndicated social justice and peace column which addresses issues from the perspective of Catholic social teaching. Unfortunately, many diocesan newspaper editors choose not to regularly publish his columns. Help change that by contacting your diocesan newspaper editor and urging her or him to regularly publish Magliano’s CNS column. Explain that his justice and peace column is a much needed and highly useful instrument in helping average Catholics understand and apply the richness of Catholic social teaching to the problems facing our nation and world.