



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

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

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## Laudato Si' and evolutionary consciousness

Maryknoll Sister Ann Braudis writes about the aspects of the encyclical of Pope Francis that are in harmony with evolutionary consciousness. Sister Ann holds a doctorate in Applied Cosmic Anthropology from the Asian Social Institute, Philippines, and a Master's degree in Creation Spirituality from Naropa University, Colorado.

Most of the commentary on Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* is from the standpoint of its subtitle "Care for our Common Home" and the timeliness of its publication, just weeks before the Paris Climate Talks. Beyond climate change, *Laudato Si'* is comprehensive in its description of the environmental breakdown facing the planet. It is honest and transparent in its exhortations and has been hailed as a watershed document. Moreover, it is of highest importance that one of the world's most significant religious figures stepped before humanity in the exercise of moral leadership on behalf of the entire community of life in this time of undeniable peril.

Apart from its content, the value of this document lies in its harmony with evolutionary consciousness, currently at the edge of visionary perception. Even though the pope is faithful to his role as religious teacher and spiritual guide within a long tradition, he writes largely from understandings, described below, that are newly emerging and aligned with a new way of more fully understanding life.

First and foremost, Pope Francis is informed by truth teachings that include not only Scripture and accumulated spiritual insight, but now also results of scientific research. This is fundamental to the document's potential for challenging the world to co-create a better future.

Another understanding expressed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* that many readers have noted is the value placed on an inclusive character. "I wish to address every person living on this planet," Pope Francis writes. He calls on everyone to engage in dialogue for the well-being of the planet. He seeks spiritual articulation beyond the confines of Catholicism and refers to our Judeo-Christian tradition when naming compelling moral reasons for caring for the Earth. Even as his embrace is large and his compassionate understanding profound, the pope is straight-forward in calling for the exercise of nobility in the pursuit of moral rectitude and the common good. He achieves inclusivity while avoiding relativism.

Pope Francis writes from yet another understanding that is newly emerging: a shifting worldview. "A strategy for real change calls for rethinking processes in their entirety, for it is not enough to include a few super-

ficial ecological considerations while failing to question the logic which underlies present-day culture," the pope writes. "A healthy politics needs to be able to take up this challenge."

Throughout the encyclical, Pope Francis uses the keyword "integral." "What is needed is a politics, which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling different aspects of the [environmental] crisis." He continually refers to the whole of human civilization. He highlights the positive achievements within worldviews that are otherwise strongly critiqued for being overly materialistic, shortsighted, and environmentally unsustainable. This indicates a fundamental attitude of respect in dialogue with opposing actors.

Finally, Pope Francis expresses an understanding of the qualities of truth, beauty, and goodness, as expressions of the longings of the human heart, where the human spirit and consciousness are ceaselessly touched by and yearn for the Infinite and from which cultural change flows. Evolutionary consciousness also holds these qualities as central to spiritual experience and sees them as dynamic forces, which drive the development of consciousness and cultural change.

In reference to truth, as mentioned above, Pope Francis includes scientific material. He refers to it as a dynamic force or energy exchange whereby the world reveals itself as intelligible yet in need of study in order for people to comprehend and discern its meaning for our lives. "In the universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationships and participation," the pope writes. This is a profound observation; its meaning can only be revealed through deepest reflection and committed study.

Pope Francis quotes the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who, in the following statement, captures both beauty and goodness as dynamic forces that exchange energy: "I express myself in expressing the world; in my effort to decipher the sacredness of the world, I explore my own." In conclusion, the pope writes, "At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the Universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude."§



## Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference

*For many months Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns worked with other Catholic organizations and religious communities in planning a landmark Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference, hosted in Rome by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International April 11-13, 2016.*

Over the course of three days in Rome more than 80 Catholic peace practitioners – religious and laity, bishops and theologians from around the world – listened intently to the lived experiences of those responding nonviolently to war and conflict in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Palestine, Croatia, Burundi and Colombia. They reflected on the Gospel call to follow Jesus’ way of unconditional love, nonviolence, and peace.

A creative process that allowed each participant to share his or her experience shaped the two and half day gathering. In four sessions, a small group would sit in a circular “fishbowl” formation; each person would speak for a few minutes. Other participants would be welcome to approach the circle and have a turn to respond or address the given topic. After each large session, the participants broke into seven small groups to share more deeply. This led to deep, serious, and respectful conversations.

As you can imagine, with 80 laity, religious, bishops and priests from over 35 countries, there was a rich diversity of experience in the practice of nonviolence. We heard moving testimonies of hope and struggle from a sister in Iraq, a bishop in South Sudan, a priest from Jeju Island, Korea, and a laywoman who is a leader of Kairos Palestine, to name a few. Ken Butigan, one of our facilitators, remarked that to call this a non-violent “conference” is a misnomer – it is a dialogue, a process or actually just the beginning of a process that we hope will sweep through the entire Church.

One session, “Experiences of Nonviolence” explored nonviolence as a spiritual commitment of faith and a practical strategy in violent situations and different cultural contexts. The lead reflectors were Katarina Kruhonja of Croatia, Bishop Paride Taban of South Sudan, Mairead Maguire of Ireland and Pietro Ameglio of Mexico. After powerful testimonies by these four, Maria Stephan of the US stepped into the inner circle

and shared her research on the success of nonviolent struggles compared to violent tactics in ending oppressive regimes.

Another session was on “Jesus’ way of nonviolence.” Benedictine Sister Anne McCarthy, Fr. Jamal Daibes of Palestine, and Fr. John Dear shared insights, followed by lively interventions by Bishop Luigi Bettazzi of Italy, Maryknoll Sisters Teresa Hougman and Joanne Doi, Rose Berger of Sojourners, and former Maryknoll Lay Missioner Merwyn DeMello, currently working in Afghanistan.

Participants affirmed the final outcome document, “An appeal to the Catholic Church to recommit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence,” during the final afternoon together. The full statement is on page 5 and 6 of this issue of NewsNotes and online at <http://bit.ly/PaxChristiGospel-Nonviolence>. A copy of the statement was given to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace with the understanding that Cardinal Turkson will give it to Pope Francis.

Conference participants are committed to keeping alive a conversation on the many complex issues related to the meeting and statement, and will look for ways to support the Church’s work for nonviolence – to “integrate Gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the Church through dioceses, parishes, agencies, schools, universities, seminaries, religious orders, voluntary associations, and others.”

This is just the beginning of an ongoing effort to spark a new dialogue on nonviolence in the Catholic Church with the aim of transforming a world engulfed by war and challenging the mindset that sees violence as justified or even redemptive. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, along with Pax Christi International and the other organizers of the conference, is committed to engaging with you and many others who could not be at this conference, to join in this dialogue for peace. §



*Cardinal Turkson speaks with Ken Butigan, John Dear, and Mairead Maguire at the conference.*



# Nonviolence and Just Peace Statement

*The following statement, entitled “An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence,” was affirmed by the participants of the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference held in Rome, April 11-13, 2016. The gathering was co-convened by Pax Christi International, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, UISG/USG, and many other international Catholic organizations. The statement is available online at <http://bit.ly/PaxChristiGospelNonviolence>.*

As Christians committed to a more just and peaceful world we are called to take a clear stand for creative and active nonviolence and against all forms of violence. With this conviction, and in recognition of the Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis, people from many countries gathered at the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International on April 11-13, 2016 in Rome.

Our assembly, people of God from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Oceania included lay people, theologians, members of religious congregations, priests, and bishops. Many of us live in communities experiencing violence and oppression. All of us are practitioners of justice and peace. We are grateful for the message to our conference from Pope Francis: “your thoughts on revitalizing the tools of nonviolence, and of active nonviolence in particular, will be a needed and positive contribution”.

## Looking at our world today

We live in a time of tremendous suffering, widespread trauma and fear linked to militarization, economic injustice, climate change, and a myriad of other specific forms of violence. In this context of normalized and systemic violence, those of us who stand in the Christian tradition are called to recognize the centrality of active nonviolence to the vision and message of Jesus; to the life and practice of the Catholic Church; and to our long-term vocation of healing and reconciling both people and the planet.

We rejoice in the rich concrete experiences of people engaged in work for peace around the world, many of whose stories we heard during this conference. Participants shared their experiences of courageous negotiations with armed actors in Uganda and Colombia; working to protect the Article 9, the peace clause in the Japanese Constitution; accompaniment in Palestine; and countrywide peace education in the Philippines.

They illuminate the creativity and power of non-violent practices in many different situations of potential or actual violent conflict. Recent academic research, in fact, has confirmed that nonviolent resistance strategies are twice as effective as violent ones.

The time has come for our Church to be a living

witness and to invest far greater human and financial resources in promoting a spirituality and practice of active nonviolence and in forming and training our Catholic communities in effective nonviolent practices. In all of this, Jesus is our inspiration and model.

## Jesus and nonviolence

In his own times, rife with structural violence, Jesus proclaimed a new, nonviolent order rooted in the unconditional love of God. Jesus called his disciples to love their enemies (Matthew 5: 44), which includes respecting the image of God in all persons; to offer no violent resistance to one who does evil (Matthew 5:39); to become peacemakers; to forgive and repent; and to be abundantly merciful (Matthew 5-7). Jesus embodied nonviolence by actively resisting systemic dehumanization, as when he defied the Sabbath laws to heal the man with the withered hand (Mark 3: 1-6); when he confronted the powerful at the Temple and purified it (John 2: 13-22); when he peacefully but determinedly challenged the men accusing a woman of adultery (John 8: 1-11); when on the night before he died he asked Peter to put down his sword (Matthew 26: 52).

Neither passive nor weak, Jesus’ nonviolence was the power of love in action. In vision and deed, he is the revelation and embodiment of the Nonviolent God, a truth especially illuminated in the Cross and Resurrection. He calls us to develop the virtue of nonviolent peacemaking.

Clearly, the Word of God, the witness of Jesus, should never be used to justify violence, injustice or war. We confess that the people of God have betrayed this central message of the Gospel many times, participating in wars, persecution, oppression, exploitation, and discrimination.

We believe that there is no “just war”. Too often the “just war theory” has been used to endorse rather than prevent or limit war. Suggesting that a “just war” is possible also undermines the moral imperative to develop tools and capacities for nonviolent transformation of conflict.

We need a new framework that is consistent with Gospel nonviolence. A different path is clearly unfolding in recent Catholic social teaching. Pope John XXIII wrote that war is not a suitable way to restore rights;

Pope Paul VI linked peace and development, and told the UN “no more war”; Pope John Paul II said that “war belongs to the tragic past, to history”; Pope Benedict XVI said that “loving the enemy is the nucleus of the Christian revolution”; and Pope Francis said “the true strength of the Christian is the power of truth and love, which leads to the renunciation of all violence. Faith and violence are incompatible”. He has also urged the “abolition of war”.

We propose that the Catholic Church develop and consider shifting to a Just Peace approach based on Gospel nonviolence. A Just Peace approach offers a vision and an ethic to build peace as well as to prevent, defuse, and to heal the damage of violent conflict. This ethic includes a commitment to human dignity and thriving relationships, with specific criteria, virtues, and practices to guide our actions. We recognize that peace requires justice and justice requires peacemaking.

**Living Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace**

In that spirit we commit ourselves to furthering Catholic understanding and practice of active nonviolence on the road to just peace. As would-be disciples of Jesus, challenged and inspired by stories of hope and courage in these days, we call on the Church we love to:

- continue developing Catholic social teaching on nonviolence. In particular, we call on Pope Francis to share with the world an encyclical on nonviolence and Just Peace;

- integrate Gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the Church through dioceses, parishes, agencies, schools, universities, seminaries, religious orders, voluntary associations, and others;
- promote nonviolent practices and strategies (e.g., nonviolent resistance, restorative justice, trauma healing, unarmed civilian protection, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding strategies);
- initiate a global conversation on nonviolence within the Church, with people of other faiths, and with the larger world to respond to the monumental crises of our time with the vision and strategies of nonviolence and Just Peace;
- no longer use or teach “just war theory”; continue advocating for the abolition of war and nuclear weapons;
- lift up the prophetic voice of the church to challenge unjust world powers and to support and defend those nonviolent activists whose work for peace and justice put their lives at risk.

In every age, the Holy Spirit graces the Church with the wisdom to respond to the challenges of its time. In response to what is a global epidemic of violence, which Pope Francis has labeled a “world war in installments”, we are being called to invoke, pray over, teach and take decisive action. With our communities and organizations, we look forward to continue collaborating with the Holy See and the global Church to advance Gospel nonviolence. §



*Pietro Ameglio (right) of Centro Serpaj-México talks about the daily struggle for people in violent conflicts. On the left: Mairead Maguire of Peace People, Northern Ireland.*

## Nonviolence and Just Peace: The way of Jesus

*Maryknoll Sister Teresa Hougnon attended the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference, representing the Maryknoll Sisters' peace-building team in Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya. The following is her reflection on the conference.*

As a person who believes that nonviolence is the way of Jesus and struggles to follow the nonviolent way on a daily basis, I experienced the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference as a much needed encouragement and source of hope. Meeting other practitioners, advocates, theologians, and theorists committed to nonviolent just peace gave me a greater sense of the truth in the non-violent way of Jesus and the necessity of speaking that truth as Christians to the greater Church and to the world today.

I was inspired by the experiences and convictions shared by Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate from Northern Ireland, and Bishop Paride Taban, peace mediator and founder of Kuron Peace Village in South Sudan.

I was also touched by the experience shared by Katarina Kruhonja from Croatia on becoming a person of non-violence. She described how violence brought the swift disintegration of her neighborhood.

During a prayer group meeting, Katarina asked what is 'love for enemy'? Would killing one's enemy be an act of love? Maybe. When faced with this decision, she chose to love as Jesus would, and to not kill. She continues to choose to be nonviolent, although she cannot know what she would do when faced

with defending her life or her child's life. Can any of us know what we would do in that situation? Katarina chooses to be a person of nonviolence whether the situation is violent or not.

I believe the way of nonviolence is a personal choice. To follow Jesus is to follow the way of nonviolence. Our faith begins at the level of personal experience; if not, then our participation in church or community becomes cult activity. When we work with communities seeking healing and reconciliation in Kenya, we begin by asking about the personal experience of each individual. What do I believe? What are my values? Do I live out my beliefs

and values or do I follow the crowd? What is my contribution to a healthy society? A just peace?"

As a person who embraces nonviolence, I believe my daily actions impact the world. In a world rife with violence and war, the singular act of love or hate that I do today adds or subtracts from global violence and peace. I want to increase global peace. The Nonviolence and Just Peace conference brought together similar

voices within the Catholic Church to call on our Church to amplify the way of Jesus, the way of nonviolence, in a world that desperately needs a way of peace. §



*Maryknoll Sisters Giang Nguyen, Sia Temu and Teresa Hougnon serve on the Maryknoll Sisters peace-building team in Africa. Since 2006, they have worked to facilitate relationships among culturally diverse people. They themselves are from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds. They believe in the African proverb "Peace is costly but it is worth the expense." Together, they explore peaceful means of co-existence. Photo courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters.*



## Global Migration Crisis: Faith in action

*As the global migration crisis continues, Pope Francis traveled to the Greek island of Lesbos on April 16 to meet with some of the many thousands of refugees there and returned to Rome with twelve refugees – a remarkable demonstration of social justice for world leaders grappling with welcoming refugees.*

On January 17, the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis said “Biblical revelation urges us to welcome the stranger; it tells us that in so doing, we open our doors to God, and that in the faces of other we see the face of Christ himself.” He went on to say that in the face of worldwide national debates about limits for receiving migrants, the Gospel of mercy should be what guides us “to view migrants not only on the basis of their status as regular or irregular, but above all as people whose dignity is to be protected and who are capable of contributing to progress and the general welfare.” Not one to be reticent about responding to the Gospel in action, last September Pope Francis suggested that “every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every sanctuary of Europe, take in one family.”

It was no surprise when Pope Francis announced that he would be visiting the heart of the global migration crisis – a refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos on April 16. So far this year, more than 150,000 people from the Middle East and Africa have made the harrowing journey across the Aegean Sea to Europe. More than half of those have landed on the island of Lesbos.

Tragically, at least 22,000 refugees currently stranded on Lesbos are unaccompanied minors. Over lunch at the Moria camp, Pope Francis spoke to the migrants: “We have come to call the attention of the world to this grave humanitarian crisis and to plead for its resolution....As people of faith, we wish to join our voices to speak out on your behalf....We hope that the world will heed these scenes of tragic and indeed desperate need, and respond in a way worthy of our common humanity.”

The surprise came when the pope boarded his plane to Rome, bringing twelve Syrian refugees with him. Three families, including six children, are now staying as “guests of the Vatican” in Italy, and are expected to seek asylum there. On the trip back to Rome the Pope told journalists, “All refugees are children of God” and though his act was “a drop in the ocean”, he hoped “the ocean will never be the same again.”

Among the twelve fortunate refugees is 31-year-old Hasan who, with his wife and 2-year-old son, left Damascus for myriad reasons – the final straw was when

he was called for military service. As Hasan told reporters, “I did not want to kill anyone. I’m an engineer, not a soldier. I’m interested in my work.” In Rome, he and his family are now faced with starting a new life, learning a new language, and attempting to find work in a new place far from home, with the help of the lay Catholic community organization in Rome, Sant’Egidio.

President Obama has pledged to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees in the U.S. by the end of September. This is no easy task when it typically takes 18-24 months to get through the complicated process that includes background checks and interviews by the State Department, National Counterterrorism Center, FBI and Homeland Security.

The global migration crisis – the UN estimates that there are more than 60 million displaced people around the world, the largest number since the World War II era – is, as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared, a “defining moment” for Europe and the world. Ban Ki-moon is scheduled to deliver recommendations on the issue to the UN General Assembly this month. He appointed Karen AbuZayd, a U.S. diplomat, as his Special Adviser for the “Summit

on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants,” to be held at the UN on September 19.

Pope Francis’ action on Lesbos is yet another example of the Christian message of welcoming the stranger. Francis’ first papal trip in 2013 was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, to call attention to the refugees there, the majority from Libya, and the hundreds who drowned before reaching shore. In Mexico in February, he prayed beneath a large cross erected in Juárez, in sight of the border with the United States, and then celebrated Mass nearby, where he spoke about immigrants.

“Migrants are our brothers and sisters in search of a better life, far away from poverty, hunger, exploitation and the unjust distribution of the planet’s resources which are meant to be equitably shared by all,” Pope Francis said. “Don’t we all want a better, more decent and prosperous life to share with our loved ones?”§

**Faith in action:** Send a letter to your member of Congress and governor asking them to welcome refugees: <http://bit.ly/USWelcomeRefugees>.



Helen David Brancato, BEM



## Africa: Climate change and agriculture

*The following article examines the evidence supporting Pope Francis' startling warning in Laudato Si': "the warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, especially Africa, where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming."*

Evidence for Pope Francis' moral assessment of the impact of climate change on Africa can be found in a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change entitled "Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability" (<http://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/>). Two pieces of evidence are of particular importance: mean average temperature will rise over Africa faster than the global average; and ecosystems have already been affected and are on track to be substantially impacted by climate change.

The report also notes that climate change will interact with non-climate drivers, such as the increase in pests and plant diseases and ecosystem degradation due to floods and droughts, to exacerbate vulnerability of agricultural systems. This could very likely reduce cereal crop productivity and have a strong effect on food security. Climate change could also increase the burden of existing health vulnerabilities. Coupled with other external changes, climate change may overwhelm the ability of people to cope and adapt especially if the root causes of poverty and vulnerability are not addressed.

As Pope Francis noted, there is a disproportionate impact of climate change on those least responsible for causing it. This is especially evident in Africa. While the continent is home to about 14 percent of the world's population, it produces only about 3 percent of the yearly global fossil fuel carbon emission.

The reasons for Africa's vulnerability to climate change are complex and present enormous challenges to its small-holder farmers who represent 65 percent of Africa's labor force and account for 32 percent of gross domestic product. About 95 percent of African agricultural production is highly climate sensitive because it depends exclusively on rainfall. Add to this the fact that African farmers have a weak capacity to adapt to climate change because they cannot afford measures such as crop insurance and other safety nets and it becomes clear why changes in weather patterns – whether natural, like the El Nino phenomenon, or global warming – are such a threat to food producers in Africa.

Nevertheless, agricultural GDP growth in sub-Saharan Africa has accelerated from 2.3 percent per year in the 1980s to 3.8 percent per year from 2000 to 2005. Growth has been mostly based on area expansion, but

land is scarce and many countries are facing limits to further expansion. Add the severe and widespread impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity and it becomes clear that African agriculturalists will be challenged to adopt complex adaptation measures in how they produce food. Such "transformational adaptation" could result in a fundamental change in farmers' way of life, like switching from the growing of crops to raising livestock. To make these kinds of changes, African farmers need significant financial resources, technical support, and investment in institutional capacity.

How are African nations responding to the challenges of climate change? At the Paris Climate Talks African representatives shared their "Common Africa Position" in which they say "We will reduce deforestation, desertification and pollution, promote reforestation and reduce soil erosion; improve land management; promote renewable energies; promote efficiency of energy production, consumption and recycle; and effectively implement the Kyoto Protocol." (<http://bit.ly/CommonAfricanPosition>)

They also appealed to developed countries "to provide sufficient and predictable financing to developing countries, mainly through effective use of the Green Climate Fund with US\$100 billion per year by 2020, as well as the transfer of technologies and capacity building in accordance with the relevant decisions adopted in Cancun."

On March 8, President Obama sent \$500 million to the Green Climate Fund – the first installment of a \$3 billion pledge made by the United States. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns will advocate for more installments in upcoming fiscal years. The Green Climate Fund currently supports eight projects (two in Africa) with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping vulnerable people address the impacts of climate change.

Climate change is not just an environmental issue, but also the greatest challenge to human rights of our time. It is an issue of justice and equality for the millions of people around the world who already are experiencing the devastating impacts of climate change. It is an issue for not only current but also future generations who will suffer increasingly severe loss and damage. §



## Philippines: Catholic clergy “break free from coal”

The following article about Philippine church leaders launching the global call to “break free from coal” in Quezon province, dubbed as the “coal capital” of the Philippines’ island of Luzon, was published in the *Union of Catholic Asian News (UCAN)* on April 12.

“It is immoral to burden future generations with pollution and the cost of mistaken energy choices made today,” said Archbishop Ramon Arguelles of Lipa.

Quezon province is host to several coal-fired power plants: the 735-MW plant in Pagbilao town; the 420-megawatt plant in Mauban town; and a 1,500-megawatt plant also in Mauban. A 1,200-megawatt power station is also under construction in Atimonan town.

Archbishop Arguelles said that as the Philippines prepares for this year’s national elections, Filipinos should elect leaders who “will do everything to protect Filipino families from the ravages of dirty energy and climate change.”

The prelate spoke before members of civil society groups who gathered in Lucena City for the launch of “Piglas Pilipinas,” a local counterpart of the global climate movement “Break Free from Fossil Fuels 2016.”

Father Raul Enriquez of Pagbilao said the advocacy for renewable energy and the clergy’s anti-coal stance “is deeply rooted in our yearning for the renewal and transformation of lives and communities.”

“It is time to break free from fossil fuels and hold the big polluters and the government to account to ensure a safer future for Filipinos,” said Anna Abad, climate justice campaigner for Greenpeace in Southeast Asia.

Environmental activists noted that the Philippines has committed a 70 percent emission reduction in international negotiations on climate change but continues to

build coal plants.

“We stand firm on our demand; shift to renewable energy, the time to act is now. We strongly support the call to break free from coal,” said Louise Alcalde, advocacy officer of the group Aksyon Klima.

Aaron Pedrosa, head of the energy working group of the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice, acknowledged the need to organize people on the ground “who are at the frontlines of resistance against coal.”

The event on April 12 was part of build-up activities leading to a 10,000-strong mobilization on May 4 that will call for a stop to the building of a 600-megawatt coal plant in Batangas City.

Other protest activities are also scheduled until May 15 in other countries, which include Indonesia, Nigeria, Brazil, the United



Archbishop Ramon Arguelles of Lipa leads a prayer rally against coal-fired power plants in Batangas City on March 17. (Photo by Jimmy Domingo/UCAN)

States, Germany, and Australia. §

**Faith in action:** Learn more about the “Break free from coal” campaign in the Philippines at <https://philippines.breakfree2016.org>.

In the United States, the “Break free” campaign will be held across the country May 4-15. There will be a “global wave of mass actions” targeting the world’s most dangerous fossil fuel projects, in order to keep coal, oil and gas in the ground and accelerate the just transition to 100 percent renewable energy. Learn more at <https://breakfree2016.org/>.

## Honduras: Indigenous peoples' rights

*The assassination of environmental and indigenous rights activist Berta Cáceres in Honduras on March 3 brought international condemnation and action. MOGC intern Nicholas Alexandrou contributed to this article.*

On March 10, more than 200 organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry asking him to “support an independent international investigation led by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights into Ms. [Berta] Cáceres’ murder and to urge that the Honduran government invite and fully cooperate with such an investigation. Such an independent investigation is essential given the lack of confidence in the judicial system; reigning impunity, including for cases involving human rights defenders; and the emblematic nature of this case, an independent investigation into the assassination of Berta Cáceres.”

Berta Cáceres, winner of the prestigious 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize and founder of the Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), championed efforts to protect indigenous peoples from large-scale development projects that are being advanced in Honduras without consultation of communities and without concern for the environment. She organized communities in Honduras and across the world against the unconsented extraction of natural resources and in defense of the Gualcarque River, a sacred site of the Lenca people and an essential water source, against the construction of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam. Berta Cáceres was a much-loved leader of the diverse social movements in her country. Members of Honduran civil society are united in sorrow and anger about her death—as are so many in the international community.

We received a letter in reply from Secretary Kerry on March 30. “The United States strongly condemned this heinous act and called upon the Honduran government to conduct a prompt, thorough, and transparent investigation to ensure those responsible are brought to justice,” Secretary Kerry wrote.

More than 60 members of Congress have written to Secretary Kerry to reiterate the need for an independent international investigation. Also, all three of the funders of the Agua Zarca Dam (FMO, Finnfund, and the Central-American Bank for Economic Integration) have suspended financial activities in Honduras.

Sadly, the assassination of Berta Cáceres is not exceptional given the murder rate in Honduras and the prevalence of violence against environmental and human rights activists in Central America. The environmental and human rights organization Global Witness

documented the killing of 101 environmental activists in Honduras between 2010 and 2014, making it the most dangerous country in the world for environmental activists.

During a recent panel discussion on Capitol Hill, family members of Berta Cáceres and environmental activists from Honduras accused security forces of protecting the interests of companies rather than communities by criminalizing indigenous lands through forced eviction. Many of the land conflicts between indigenous communities and security forces stem from laws passed after the coup in 2009 that granted 200 mining and 41 hydroelectric concessions which privatized ancestral land. The concessions by the government are in violation of International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 which requires governments to consult with indigenous communities in such land deals.

In an interview with the Intercept, Gustavo Castro, who was wounded during the assassination of Berta Cáceres, said that the sale of electricity and water to factories, industrial parks, infrastructure, and mines is enormously profitable for the government. “Bear in mind that one gold mine can use between 1 and 3 million liters of water every hour,” Castro said.

There remains \$750 million in financial aid for the region under appropriations from June to September. The State Department has the ability to withhold up to 50 percent of funding for individual countries, such as Honduras, if they fail to meet a set of conditions including: combating impunity and corruption, protecting human rights, and investigating and prosecuting military and police forces in civilian courts.

“It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions,” Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si’*. “They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture.”§



## Brazil: Impeachment scandal or coup?

*The following article was written by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns staff member, and returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner, Dave Kane, based in João Pessoa, Brazil.*

Brazil's corruption-tainted lower house of Congress voted on April 17 to move forward with an impeachment process against President Dilma Rousseff. While those in the movement to remove the president have named "fighting corruption" as the reason for the impeachment, there are factors that point to a political power struggle.

President Rousseff is very unpopular, with single-digit approval ratings, due to an economic crisis worsened by falling commodity prices, her poor management, and the fact that members of her political party are implicated in different corruption scandals. Rousseff has yet to be directly implicated in any of the scandals.

The charges brought against her are for different accounting tricks that many administrations (including the past four presidents and majority of governors) use to guarantee that social programs function and to cover up deficits.

This is why many call the impeachment process a coup – the selective use of an obscure law to remove a president popularly – elected less than two years ago. The politicians leading the impeachment are responding to more serious charges themselves. House leader Eduardo Cunha is currently responding in the Supreme Court for allegedly taking millions in bribes and laundering the money through an evangelical church. If Rousseff is impeached, Cunha would assume the vice presidency.

Current vice president Michel Temer also has his struggles with the law and popularity. Incredibly, he has even lower approval ratings than President Rousseff and has been implicated by a number of witnesses in the massive "Car Wash" investigation with allegations of corruption at the state-controlled oil company Petrobras, where it is alleged that executives accepted bribes in return for awarding contracts to construction firms and diverted the proceeds into political campaigns and pockets of some politicians. At the same time that Temer is facing these allegations, the Supreme Court has called on Congress to begin a process of impeachment against him as his signature authorized many of the controversial accounting tricks.

An overlooked aspect of this story is that, if not for the significant anti-corruption measures that her party implemented over the last 13 years, none of the scan-

dals that have so damaged President Rousseff's reputation would have come to light. The Workers Party is portrayed as the most corrupt party in history when in reality it has done more than any other party to limit corruption.

One lasting effect of Brazil's colonial history is endemic corruption at all levels of government and in society in general. The Alvorada Institute explains, "In Brazil, for centuries, the government did not have the necessary political will to tackle the problem because to investigate and bring to light cases of corruption often causes political crises, increasing society's perception that [corruption] is growing, even when what happens is just the opposite." This is exactly what we are witnessing today.

One of the first acts by President Luis Inácio "Lula" da Silva, founding member of the Worker Party and president of Brazil from 2003–2011, was to create the General Controller of the Union, a cabinet-level institution whose exclusive role is to combat corruption and increase transparency. The CGU has carried out surprise audits of close to 50 percent of municipal governments as well as all major federal programs and spending for the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics. More than 5,000 federal workers and politicians have been fired and/or imprisoned for corruption based on investigations of the CGU.

Even top leaders of the Workers Party have been tried, convicted and incarcerated. This never happened in the past, as parties in power used their influence to stop any investigations of their own party or allies. This change is due to another significant reform: granting autonomy to the federal police. The unencumbered federal police have imprisoned not only party leaders, but also corporate executives, something extremely rare in the past.

The dilemma confronting Brazil is how to combat widespread corruption. Autonomous investigators are finally scrutinizing a political system rife with corruption at all levels. Yet, when more than 60 percent of Congress is currently responding to charges ranging from corruption and electoral fraud to kidnapping and even murder, this has the potential for destabilizing the entire system. If successful in impeaching Rousseff, opposition forces could stop investigations. It remains to be seen if the anti-corruption reforms of recent years will survive. §

## Bolivia: Catholic bishops speak out on drug trade

*The Bolivian bishops issued a pastoral letter on drug trafficking and drug addiction in Bolivia.*

On April 7, the Bolivian bishops' conference released a pastoral letter, "Today I put before you life or death," that addresses concerns about both drug trafficking and drug addiction. (Available in Spanish at <http://bit.ly/BoliviaBishopsdrugtrade>.) The letter strongly critiques what the bishops perceive to be an inadequate response by the government on these issues. It names the complicity of state structures and public security officials in corruption and trafficking. The bishops call for President Evo Morales to join the Church in dialogue on these concerns.

According to Maryknoll Father Steve Judd, far from opening a dialogue, the Morales administration has shot back, accusing the bishops of meddling in politics and daring them to name those they accuse of complicity. Other officials and ministers followed suit and accused the Church leaders of being out of touch with the Bolivian people and indigenous culture, even though the letter affirms the value and use of coca in Andean indigenous culture. The bishops stood their ground, defending their right to make such a pronouncement on the basis of Catholic social teaching.

Tensions have been simmering between the Church and the Morales administration for some time. This statement and the government's reaction should also be seen in light of the February 27 failed referendum to allow Morales to run for a third term. He still has four years left in his second term.

The failed referendum emerged as another source of tension between Morales and the Church. On April 5, Morales awarded two outstanding and highly respected Jesuit leaders the country's highest honor, the Condor of the Andes, "in recognition of their commitment and support in the preservation of aboriginals' rights." One of them, Xavier Albo, has a long and well-earned reputation as a voice and advocate for Bolivia's indigenous peoples. At the highly publicized ceremony, Albo called for Morales to step aside and enable an early election of a new president. This caught everyone by surprise as people like Albo have been long time friendly critics of the president's administration.

There is indeed proof of government complicity in drug trafficking. The Vice Minister of the Social Defense and Controlled Substances Agency only recently admitted that there are Brazilian, Colombian, and Mexican cartels operating in the country. Former drug czar, Renee Sanabria, is serving a 15-year prison sentence after being extradited to the U.S. for cocaine smuggling.

Sanabria previously accused the Morales Administration of actively inhibiting investigations of corruption. Other police and government officials have been convicted of trafficking drugs and are noted in the letter's footnotes.

The Morales administration has made some efforts to address narcotrafficking, which the bishops acknowledged. Morales initiated the "social control" program in 2010 to reduce the overabundance in coca crops to what is needed for traditional coca use. This has reduced violence but has not been evenly enforced in the two coca growing areas of the country. President Morales was previously a leader in the coca growing union.

The statement is a powerful moral critique of the drugs issue in Bolivia, but there are shortcomings. The statement lacks a historical context on the economic factors that drive people into drug trafficking, such as the crash of the tin market, which led miners and their families to migrate to the tropical Chapare region to cultivate coca; and the implementation of World Bank structural adjustment policies (SAPs) in 1985 that privatized some industries and led to job losses. Many people entered the informal economy, which includes the illicit drug trade.

The people who are largely punished are not the corrupt officials or large scale traffickers, but rather the small scale traffickers – often mothers trying to feed their families, many of whom are indigenous. The statement fails to recognize this reality or show mercy toward the small traffickers who are economic victims, rather than criminals in need of punishment. The bishops do distinguish between small and large scale traffickers and say the punishment should fit the crime. But they do not raise the need for governmental initiatives to spur the creation of more viable economic alternatives outside of growing alternative crops that do very little for the livelihoods of non-farming communities.

The bishops also give little attention to the failure of past governments to address economic challenges, or the large prison population that grew as a result of the U.S.-influenced 1988 anti-drug law, 1008, or the influence of high international demand for cocaine.

The bishops do show great mercy for drug addicts, saying they need pastoral and human resources and treatment, not jail time. They call traffickers merchants of death. They also promote prisoner rehabilitation and integration back into society after they have served their time. In significant ways, this landmark letter from the bishops of Bolivia does address the drug crisis from a compassionate and pastoral charism. §

## Haiti: U.S. plans peanut dumping

*A coalition of faith and development organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) calling for the immediate cancellation of USDA's planned shipment of 500 metric tons of U.S. peanuts to Haiti.*

“Food dumping” is the practice of off-loading agricultural surpluses and expanding markets that has been shown to devastate the livelihoods of small farmers in the Global South, including in Haiti. In April 2010, former President Bill Clinton apologized to Haitian rice farmers for the United States’ dumping of surplus U.S. rice in Haiti and destroying their livelihoods. Haitian rice farmers could not compete with the cheaper U.S. rice. Maryknoll Sisters in Haiti worry that the U.S. government will repeat this injustice, this time with peanuts.

More than 60 U.S. and Haitian organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, have joined a letter calling for an immediate cancellation of recent plans announced by USDA to ship 500 metric tons of peanuts to Haiti under its “Stocks for Food” program. The letter is available at <http://bit.ly/USDApeanut-dumping>.

The Maryknoll Sisters in Haiti assist women and children in guaranteeing their right to nutritious and adequate food. Sister Susan Nchubiri started a cooperative farm in La Tremblay, Haiti. It is a micro-credit project for 16 single mothers – the most vulnerable in this already poor community. They have two acres for crops that they use to generate income and feed their families.

According to the letter, “When the U.S. pressed Haiti to lower its tariffs on rice, the Haitian market was flooded with rice mostly from the U.S. and the price of Haitian rice plummeted. Haitian rice farmers (who had previously produced nearly all of the country’s rice)

were left with nothing. The consequences were vast and far-reaching. Many of the farmers had to move to Port-au-Prince in search of work. Port-au-Prince became overpopulated, which, in turn, is a major reason why the earthquake in 2010 was so devastating.”

Some experts in the development in Haiti suspect that the dumping of peanuts could be even more damaging. Quoting the letter, “Ricot Jean Pierre of the Haitian Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development (PAPDA) argues that the peanut program will create an

even larger catastrophe than changes to Haitian rice tariffs and the flooding of markets with cheap, subsidized U.S. rice because the production of peanuts serves as a key livelihood strategy for hundreds of thousands of people (particularly women) and creates a great deal of wealth and activity in the rural areas. The proposed USDA peanut program could destroy that source of income for Haiti’s rural families, and could potentially set off a series of devastating consequences while also preventing the Haitian government from developing policies to support the nation’s agriculture, particularly in the peanuts sector.”

The letter says that the U.S. plan for peanut dumping is out of alignment with

USAID strategies for food security, especially more recent policies that favor locally grown food procurement. Local and regional food procurement spurs the development of local rural economies. The coalition is extremely concerned that this plan will destroy local livelihoods in a country whose economy remains fragile. The letter asks USDA and USAID to cancel their plans to ship U.S. peanuts to Haiti. §



*The devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010 killed 220,000 and displaced 1.3 million. “I had witnessed poverty in Nepal, but it was nothing compared to that of the people of Haiti, which was already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere before the earthquake,” said Maryknoll Sister Elizabeth Knoerl. Read more about the work of Maryknoll Sisters in Haiti at <http://maryknollmagazine.org/index.php/magazines/518-good-for-us-to-be-here>.*



## Climate justice: New, creative actions

*Civil society is taking new and creative action to move governments to follow through on their commitments made in the Paris climate agreement and to do more to address the urgent need to address climate change.*

As the devastating impacts of climate change mount around the world, more and more people, communities, and governments are taking action to reduce greenhouse gases and make the change from fossil fuels to renewable energy. The signing of the Paris climate agreement on April 22, is the first time the majority of the world has agreed that the Earth is in a climate crisis and that we must act now to slow global temperature rise.

The Paris agreement is significant in a number of ways. In addition to including most every country on the planet, it sets a concrete goal of “holding the global average increase in temperature to well below two degrees Celsius, and to pursu[ing] efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.” Considering that in 2015 we were already one degree above, and future increases are already guaranteed from recent emissions, this is a very ambitious goal.

Another significant aspect of the agreement is its emphasis on respecting human rights in all responses to climate change. Too often we see communities facing challenges to their human dignity and territory from mitigation projects such as hydroelectric dams, biofuels, and forest protection projects.

The issue of finance was also an important one in Paris. Participating countries agreed to assist low-income, climate-vulnerable countries with funding, reiterating their commitment of 100 billion dollars per year to the Green Climate Fund.

A significant portion of the fund will come from private donors who have just begun to step up to their responsibilities with commitments to climate financing. Credit Agricole CIB, BNP Paribas, Bank of America, and HSBC have each made significant pledges. Unfortunately, many of these banks continue to fund fossil fuel projects as well. Private investors are taking independent action and quitting their investments in fossil fuel companies through the Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign and Portfolio Decarbonization Program. Collectively, private investors have divested over four trillion dollars from fossil fuel corporations. To encourage the creation of cleaner energy, the Mission Innovation and Breakthrough Energy Coalition also made significant pledges for supporting research and development.

To encourage the U.S. to follow through on its commitment of three trillion dollars to the Green Climate Fund, many civil society groups and 120 faith leaders, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Con-

cerns, urged Congress – through letters, emails, phone calls, and lobby visits – to pass President Obama’s budget request for a first payment to the fund. On March 8 we celebrated when the State Department confirmed that the U.S. sent \$500 million to the Green Climate Fund.

Another important form of pressure on the government to take climate action is a historic lawsuit brought by 21 children against the government for violating the children’s constitutional and public trust rights by promoting the use of fossil fuels. The lawsuit, *Juliana v. the U.S.*, has the potential to fundamentally change how the government responds to climate change.

The plaintiffs are 21 youth, ages 8 to 18, represented by Our Children’s Trust, a small NGO in Oregon (*Juliana* is the name of the first plaintiff, Kelsey Juliana). The children originally sued only the U.S. government, but a judge later granted defendant status to three mammoth business associations: the American Fuel and Petroleum Manufacturers (AFPM, representing big oil, refiners and petrochemical manufacturers), American Petroleum Institute (API, representing 625 oil and natural gas companies) and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM, representing more than 14,000 manufacturing companies).

In their complaint, the children show that the government knew as early as 1965 that CO2 emissions from burning fossil fuels would cause global warming, yet continued to aid a massive increase in fossil fuel extraction. In fact, the International Monetary Fund has described the United States as the world’s top subsidizer of fossil fuels.

Similar cases are being tried in other countries. In a first victory, the Hague District Court ruled on June 24, 2015, in favor of the almost 900 plaintiffs and ordered the Dutch government to reduce the country’s carbon emissions by 25 percent below 1990 levels. Legal efforts like this are aided by the Oslo Principles on Global Climate Change Obligations which provides legal arguments within international, human rights law, national, environmental, and tort law that plaintiffs can use to process their governments.

The *Juliana v. U.S.* case passed its first hurdle on April 8 when Judge Thomas Coffin denied motions from the government and fossil fuel industry to dismiss the case. The next step will be a review of Coffin’s decision by colleague Judge Ann Aiken. §

## HIV/AIDS: UN commits to “leave no one behind”

*The commitment to ‘leave no one behind’ has been a key feature of all the discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations. This commitment includes ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2030. One key factor in meeting this goal is funding.*

Although it may seem to many that the HIV/AIDS epidemic has receded into the background, its effects continue to take a toll on people’s lives, including those of children and adolescents. In preparation for an upcoming high-level meeting on ending AIDS at the United Nations in June, civil society organizations convened a hearing on April 6 where people living with HIV/AIDS spoke about their life experiences and civil society representatives engaged in fighting the AIDS epidemic shared their concerns with representatives of the member states.

“You bring with you a wealth of experience from your daily work, and for many of you, personal insights from dealing with the disease in your own lives,” Mogens Lykketoft, Danish politician and president of the UN General Assembly, said in opening remarks. “No matter what field we are discussing, sharing such experience and listening to insights like yours, is fundamental to understanding what our priorities should be and how we can respond most effectively.”

Jürg Lauber, permanent representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and co-facilitator of the upcoming high-level meeting on ending AIDS, shared how vividly he remembers the fear, stigma, and suffering endured by his colleagues and friends living with, at risk of, and affected by HIV/AIDS. “Like so many of you in this hall I see as a great responsibility the need to make sure we do not miss the historic opportunity to deliver on the ambitious commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that is, to defeat the AIDS epidemic by 2030.” However it is clear that this ambitious goal cannot be reached without sufficient funding.

The speakers at the hearing emphasized the need to increase investment in HIV/AIDS response or risk a rise in HIV infections. Funding from national and international donors as well as governments could curtail the epidemic before its resurgence. People living with HIV need medicines, and safety from violence and stigma that create barriers that prevent them from reaching the services they need. Planning and implementation must include people living with and at risk of HIV/AIDS, their communities, and family members living with and caring for them.

The speakers at the hearing frequently repeated the phrases “Leave no one behind” and “Nothing for us without us” to express the need for inclusion, not only

in the response to the epidemic but also in the formation of laws and policies that affect people living with HIV/AIDS. “We are not passive recipients waiting for a hand-out; we are citizens contributing to the economy of our countries who deserve respect,” one speaker said. They went on to demand change and innovation in addressing the epidemic as well as a change in attitudes towards those living with HIV/AIDS. “Business as usual is not an option. We need innovation, not only in scientific research but also in the delivery of services,” another speaker said.

At the end of the hearing, the president of the General Assembly summarized the following salient points: 1) that the hearing affirmed the world’s potential to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as underscored in the SDGs; 2) that in order to reach our destination we need continued commitment and accelerated action by all; 3) the need to focus on protecting future generations from acquiring HIV; 4) on halting the spread of HIV/AIDS in vulnerable communities, especially for women and girls; 5) on tackling income inequality; and on creating platforms for mutual accountability. He also said that ending the AIDS epidemic requires that no one is left behind.

At the high-level meeting in June, member states are expected to craft a declaration and set out ambitious targets for treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, as well as the protection of human rights of those living with, at risk of, and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Maryknoll missionaries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America continue the invaluable work of providing treatment and care to people living with HIV/AIDS. More funding would enable their projects to meet not only the health needs of their clients but also deeper spiritual needs. The missionaries are Christ’s hands that bring healing and compassion to the afflicted, especially to those abandoned by family and friends because of their HIV status.

Despite facing a gargantuan problem with little funding, advances in medicine enable missionaries to now see children born with HIV/AIDS live into adulthood and help HIV positive mothers give birth to children who are free of AIDS. We are hopeful that the high-level meeting in June will define concrete actions to end AIDS and that we can work together to make it happen. §

# UN review of peacekeeping operations

*Decades of conflict have taken their toll on the efforts by the United Nations to foster peace. The following article shares the findings of three recent reviews of UN peace and security operations that are at the center of a debate in the UN General Assembly about the necessary changes needed to meet a changing world.*

Seventy years ago the United Nations was created to foster peace and stability and to promote economic prosperity and social justice for all. Today there is a shared sense that the global structures entrusted with peace and security are not keeping pace with today's more complex and interconnected world. Some critics maintain that the peace and security structures of the UN are not doing their job and that the UN bureaucracy is getting in the way of its peacekeeping efforts.

In May, the UN General Assembly will conduct a high-level thematic debate on the concerns of peace and security. The theme of this debate will be "In a New World of Risks, a New Commitment to Peace." The main purpose of this event will be to engage in a strategic reflection on current challenges to international peace and security. There will be much to discuss.

Last year the UN published three important reviews on its peace and security operations – the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (AGE), and the Global Study report on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, a resolution that reaffirmed the importance of the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for maintaining and promoting peace and security. These lengthy reviews contain valuable lessons about the challenges and difficulties of peacekeeping in the early 21st century.

These extensive reviews shed light on today's complex and complicated global world and present a detailed analysis of what the UN is doing in peacemaking programs throughout the world as well as detailed recommendations about what to do in the future. Fortunately, two scholars from the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI) have synthesized the common themes, key challenges and recommendations of these reports.

Among their findings are the following: Because the very nature of conflict has changed, it is necessary to shift towards a more people-centered resolution process open to working with new actors and recognizing in a special way the contributions women are making to peace and security. The importance of prevention and the need for a long-term focus is mentioned in all three reports. In a controversial but candid way the reports say that the privileging of the military response to violent

conflict is counterproductive.

In commenting on the NUPI synthesis, Youssef Mahmoud, the former secretary general's special representative and head of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, makes several important observations. First, the UN can no longer address interconnected global problems in "separate structural silos." Rather, as the secretary general has recommended, the UN should move from silos to synergy, from fragmentation to partnership.

Second, the NUPI report shows that there is a common concern about the increase in the use of Chapter VII mandates of the UN Charter, the provision that allows a militarized response by UN peacekeepers, to respond to violent conflicts. The reviews suggest that the UN peacekeeping programs should be tools for the advancement of peace and not military solutions to conflict.

Third, the emphasis when responding to current and emerging crises should be on preventing conflicts earlier on by addressing the many political causes of violence. Finally, the reviews recommend that the concept of "peacebuilding" be replaced by the term "sustaining peace." This concept would free peacebuilding activities from the short-term approach which would allow peacebuilders time and space to identify, engage and support local actors and national structures that would strengthen peace.

As the high-level debate on the future of UN peacemaking efforts draws near, the concept of "sustaining peace" appears to be the overarching framework that will guide the UN in these important discussions. This concept links peacemaking to the current thinking around development, especially the Sustainable Development Goal 16 which focuses on the promotion of just, peaceable and inclusive societies. Building sustainable peace involves activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and reoccurrence of conflict.

More than 50 years ago another Norwegian scholar, John Galtung, called for building a "positive peace" through activities such as inclusive dialogue, mediation, building accountable institutions, practicing good governance, promoting access to justice and gender equality. §



## UN Commission on Status of Women

*Maryknoll Sister Veronica Schweyen, who was on mission for more than forty years in Tanzania and is a volunteer with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, reports on the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in March.*

The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York over two weeks in March. Among the hundreds of representatives of member states, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited NGOs in attendance were Maryknoll Sisters Elizabeth Zwareva, Genie Natividad, Laura Guledew, Anastasia Lindawati, Jareen Aquino, Roni Schweyen, Meg Gallagher, Jean Fallon, and Maryknoll Father Jim Noonan.

The Commission on the Status of Women is the principal body at the UN exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Usually held for ten days in March, the session provides an opportunity to review progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, identify challenges, set global standards and norms and formulate policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. The session is also an opportunity for policy makers, advocates, researchers and activists to network and strategize, mobilize and plan new initiatives and actions to further the cause of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The commission addressed as its priority theme "women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development." In addition, it evaluated progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session (2013) on "the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls."

In the opening ceremony, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted that there are still four countries where not a single woman is in the parliament and eight countries without any women in the cabinet. Ban said that women around the world still experience many forms of violence, and this meeting would address ways to end gender-based violence. Ban also stated that he hoped that, due to the commission's efforts, "FGM" would stand for "finally girls matter" rather than "female genital mutilation."

In a small group presentation, Ms. Yoko Hayashi, a lawyer from Japan and chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, said the eradication of poverty must be a primary goal, since, with that, women are free to choose their own goals. A representative from Holland replied, "We're seeing the feminization of poverty. This is an area in most countries where we see that we must end violence against

women."

Discrimination and bias against women are deep-rooted problems in almost all societies. Maryknoll Sisters witness gender-based discrimination in East Africa where many families are small-scale farmers and cultural norms assign women the majority of the work in growing crops. When harvesting is done, the men typically take control of the finances and the women do not benefit from their labor. Another factor in gender-based discrimination is climate change. Women in developing countries bear the brunt of devastating impacts of climate change – extreme weather patterns, drought, erratic rainfall – since they are often pushed to the poorest land, the least water, and face the largest barriers to access to agricultural programs and services for support.

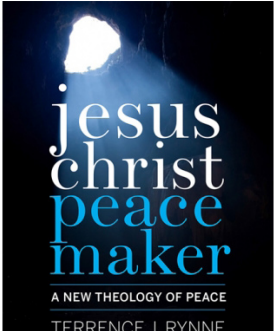
The sixtieth session of the commission came to an end with the adoption of agreed conclusions. The long list includes calls for enhancing the basis for rapid progress, including stronger laws, policies and institutions, better data and scaled-up financing. In particular, the commission named the need for laws that ensure women and girls claim their rights and can participate in policy-making on issues that directly affect their lives.

One presenter stated that women are 'agents of change' in the world yet often victims of violence because of that, as we saw in the murder of environmental and indigenous rights activist Berta Cáceres in Honduras on March 3. The extraction of resources in many places of the world breeds violence by companies and governments against indigenous peoples, especially women.

In a sobering session on gender-based violence, the presenters stated that 938 million women will experience gender-based violence this year alone. A delegate from Australia argued that the first step to end gender-based violence is through the rule of law. The Australian government is examining and changing norms that block women's development and changing laws that show women in lesser positions, such as inheritance laws.

Some countries can do much more to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission on the Status of Women is strategically placed to provide a platform for women around the world to speak for themselves and collectively amplify their voices. When we see or hear of gender inequalities, we need to continually ask at local, national, and international levels "Are women's human rights being respected?"§

## Resources

- 1) **An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence:** Read and share the statement affirmed by the participants of the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference held in Rome, April 11-13. <http://bit.ly/PaxChristiGospelNonviolence>.
- 2) **Today I put before you life or death:** Read and share this pastoral letter on the drug trade by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bolivia, released on April 7. Available in Spanish at <http://bit.ly/BoliviaBishopsdrugtrade>.
- 3) **SOLD, a film about modern-day slavery:** Watch this film in theaters across the U.S. Adapted from the best-selling novel by Patricia McCormick, SOLD tells the story of a girl who was trafficked from Nepal to a brothel in India. ECPAT-USA is partnering with the film SOLD to spread awareness about human trafficking and to raise support for our programs. For a list of screenings or to bring SOLD to your theater, visit <http://www.soldthemovie.com/screenings>.
- 4) **Jesus Christ Peacemaker:** Read this new book by Terry Rynne, published by Orbis books. Rynne details a new theology of peace that renders the just war theory near mute by making Jesus and his teachings the cornerstone of both theory and practice. Terry Rynne participated in the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome in April. He is co-president of the Sally and Terry Rynne Foundation, and the founder of Marquette University's Center for Peacemaking. Available for purchase at <http://www.orbisbooks.com>.
 
- 5) **CommonBound Network Gathering:** Join people of faith in seeking strategies for creating an inclusive economy, in Buffalo, New York, **July 8–10**. Hear from people of faith who are building the “inclusive economy” that Pope Francis and other faith leaders are calling us to embrace. Learn why this is a multi-faith movement. Share your strategies for creative change from worker-owned co-ops, local food systems, alternative currencies, affordable housing, small-scale, community-driven energy and more. Register for one day or more; fee based on sliding-scale. Learn more at <http://commonbound.org/>.
- 6) **Torture Awareness Month:** Every June, human rights and faith organizations join together to mark June 26 as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture and to raise awareness throughout the month. This June, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) invites faith communities to incorporate the color orange into worship services or other gatherings throughout the month, as a symbol of solidarity with all who endure torture: those in orange jumpsuits in Guantanamo to all those held in conditions of torture. Find resources for vigils, educational events, film screenings, petitions at <http://www.nrcat.org/torture-awareness-month-june>
- 7) **¡NO to NAFTA, NO to the TPP!:** Read and share this statement on potential harmful effects of the Trans Pacific Partnership, issued by the indigenous communities of Oaxaca, Mexico. Available at <http://bit.ly/NoNAFTANoTPP>.
- 8) **ICCR press release:** Read and share the press release by the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility on the third anniversary of Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh. <http://www.iccr.org/bangladesh-apparel-workers-still-risk-investors-say>
- 9) **Interfaith statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons:** Read and share this statement drafted by Pax, Soka Gakkai International and World Council of Churches and endorsed by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. The Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament, which was re-established by the UN soon after Pope Francis' speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2015, is tasked to “address concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions, and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.” It will operate as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly for up to 15 days in 2016 and will hold discussions from May 2–13. Read the statement at <http://bit.ly/NuclearWeaponsFaithStatement>.