



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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P.O. Box 29132 Washington, D.C. 20017-0132
Phone: (202)832-1780 Fax: (202)832-5195
ogc@maryknoll.org www.maryknollogc.org

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Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns:
Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation
<http://www.maryknollogc.org>

Maryknoll Sisters
 Maryknoll Lay Missioners
 Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Marie Dennis — Director.....mdennis@maryknoll.org
 Sr. Ann Braudis, MM.....abraudis@mksisters.org
 Judy Coode.....jcoode@maryknoll.org
 Yamileth Coreas.....ycoreas@maryknoll.org
 Sr. Rose Bernadette (Meg) Gallagher, MM.....rgallagher@mksisters.org
 David Kane, MLM.....dkane@maryknoll.org
 Rev. Jim Kofski, MM.....jkofski@maryknoll.org
 Kathy McNeely.....kmcneely@maryknoll.org
 Susan Weissert, MLM.....sweissert@mksisters.org

MOGC Washington
 P.O. Box 29132
 Washington, D.C. 20017
 (202)832-1780 phone
 (202)832-5195 fax
ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC Maryknoll NY
 P.O. Box 311
 Maryknoll, NY 10545-0311
 (914)941-7575 phone
 (914)923-0733 fax
ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC UN Office
 777 First Ave., 10th Fl.
 New York, N.Y. 10115
 (212)973-9551 phone

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Robert B. Zoellick
 President
 World Bank Group
 1818 H Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20433
www.worldbank.org

Dominique Strauss-Kahn
 Managing Director
 International Monetary Fund
 700 19th Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20431
www.imf.org

Elections 2008: The challenge of leadership

During the past year, current and former Maryknoll missionaries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, in addition to staff members of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, have reflected deeply on the impact that the U.S. elections and subsequent decisions will have on the people with whom they live and work. The following reflection, written by Marj Humphrey, a lay missionary from 1987-2007 and a member of the Maryknoll lay missionaries' board of directors, corresponds to the lectionary readings for Sunday, November 9. In looking at Genesis 28:11-18, First Corinthians 3:9-13, 16-17 and Luke 19:1-10, Marj challenges us to look closely at leadership, redemption and conversion as we live into the results of the 2008 elections.

In 1994, I had the privilege and great joy to be on the African continent on Nelson Mandela's inauguration day, a celebration of his democratic election to the presidency, and the historic end of apartheid in South Africa. In the preceding years, I had worked in East Africa and been painfully aware that over the years Africa had little to celebrate. But on this day, it was not only South Africans who rejoiced. Africans across the continent were jubilant at one of the most remarkable achievements in modern history. Against so many odds, apartheid, one of the most brutal, unjust political systems, was nonviolently dismantled, and the cornerstone of it all was the leadership of Nelson Mandela.

In prison for 27 years, with little or no hope he would ever see outside the walls, Mandela and like-minded men and women daily committed themselves to a vision. Church leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu shared the dream and provided leadership for their congregations, all toward that vision. Mandela, his colleagues and supporters never gave up hope, never gave up the struggle, and disciplined themselves to a clear vision of what they hoped to see one day. It was not leadership designed to assure themselves of power, but to liberate the poorest among them, forgive their captors and torturers, and move forward to live in peace.

This past week our own coun-

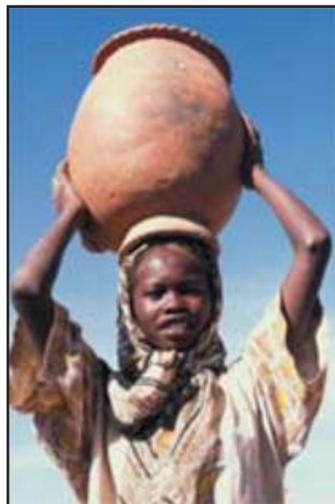
try has voted for new leadership. At the writing of this article, I do not know the election's outcome. But no matter the victor, whether we are jubilant and hopeful, or discouraged and angry, the challenge of leadership and our role in relation to our new leader remains.

As Paul tells us in Corinthians today, laying foundations depends not on destroying what is there, but on building new hope brick by brick, based on the foundation of Christ. We are God's co-workers. Our parties have been sharply divided by national security, economy, blame, charges of racism, sexism to name but a few. Can we find the good that is in each person, each place, and find a way to build and rebuild?

Today's readings provide powerful stories and words, so appropriate for this week of new beginnings in a country that has been fraught with so many problems. In Genesis, we continue a story that in modern parlance would be a story of greed, hatred and lust. Jacob, after a vivid dream in which God assures him, "Know that I am with you," awakens to exclaim, "Truly the Lord is in this spot, although I did not know it." Reading the entire story of Jacob and his brother Esau, we can be left at varying points in the story wondering who is the "good guy" and who is the "bad guy." Each brother tries to win their father's favor in order to inherit his wealth, his land, and ultimately receive his blessing as the "master" of all peoples. But this story of lies and deceit, of trying to win it all, is ultimately a story of redemption. In the end, though he made many mistakes, Jacob wins God's favor. He recognizes the holiness of the place in which he dwells, and that truly the Lord is there with him. He vows that he will return a portion of all that is given to him back to the Lord.

One of the first phrases students of Swahili learn in East Africa is the simple, but powerful phrase *Mungu yupo*: "God is here." Often, when I felt frustrated or hopeless about an inability to solve a problem, a local person would pull me up short with a gentle reminder that "God is here."

I remember so well one terrifying period of time in a remote area of Kenya called Bura Tana when large groups



of bandits, armed with weapons smuggled from Somalia, staged a series of raids on our village, night after night. One morning, after a terrifying night spent cowering under my bed, I approached a group of village women who were chatting and laughing. “Aren’t you scared?” I asked. “Yes,” they replied, “of course we are scared, but *Mungu yupo* – God is here!” “Yes,” I said, “*Mungu yupo*, but...”

My sentence was interrupted by howls of laughter – uncontrollable laughter. I asked them what I had said that was so funny. One woman looked at me and shook her head. “You said ‘*Mungu yupo*, BUT!’ There is no ‘but...’ *Mungu yupo* – God is here. That is all we have, and that is enough.”

That poor village, with no security, no assets, no barricades, and no stockpile of weapons, comes to mind today when I hear the words of Paul, reminding us that “the wisdom of the world is foolishness in the eyes of God.”

These are hard words. I think of my own “security issues,” not just fears for safety, but also my attempts to secure my future, and my belief that if I can just make enough money, invest wisely, all will be well. I will be safe and secure into the latter years of my life.

Even as I am asked by one charity to give for food for the poor, by another to provide medicines for those who are ill, by another to help provide clean water for this village, and another to give the hope of education to a child in Africa; I sometimes stop to think that perhaps I do not have enough yet in savings, in retirement, and perhaps it is best to save it for now.

Wall Street had stood as a unique monument to the falsity of those beliefs. It had become for us the “God that is here.” We were confounded in what we believed was our wisdom, and our security has been shaken to its very foundation. One day in September our monument suddenly became for us a monument to greed and corruption.

Today’s Gospel brings it all into sharp focus. Zaccheus, the “short man,” desperately wants to see Jesus, and so climbs a tree – goes out on a limb, so to speak – to see him. And it is there, rather than in the thick of the crowd, that Jesus does see him and invites him into relationship. “Today I will go to your house,” Jesus tells him. Zaccheus has been a tax collector, and, it would seem, not a totally honorable

one at that. But again, as Jesus does with each one of us, He invites him to conversion. And, the Gospel tells us, Zaccheus not only accepts, he joyfully accepts and proclaims, “Behold half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I will repay it fourfold.” And Jesus replies, “Today salvation has come to this house...”

This is a day we are invited to reflect on the words of Scripture and think about leadership, redemption, and conversion. Our own future and our global future depends upon us. We are all participants in that future. Let us take an example from the country of South Africa, a country which held a National Service of Thanksgiving after their election. Those who had suffered decades of terrible oppression, violence and poverty, stood together with their leadership and thus prayed:

“Throughout the land we stand on the threshold of a new experience of national unity. We are a people composed of many races, many languages, many religious traditions, many political parties, many cultures. We are poor and rich, women and men, young and old...”

“We acknowledge the presence of Christ among us who reconciles the world. We struggled

against one another: now we are reconciled to struggle for one another. We believed it was right to withstand one another. Now we are reconciled to understand one another... We built irreconcilable barriers between us: now we seek to build a society of reconciliation. We suffered a separateness that did not work: now we are reconciled to make togetherness work. We believed we alone held the truth: now we are reconciled in the knowledge that truth holds us...”

“We do not pretend that we have already won or we are already perfect: now we are reconciled to press on together to the fullness which lies ahead. We are reconciled to the patience and persistence that make peace; to the fairness and transparency that make justice; to the forgiveness and restitution that make harmony; to the love and reconstruction which banish poverty and discrimination; to the experience of knowing one another that makes it possible to enjoy one another; to the spiritual strength of one God, who made us of one flesh and blood and who loves us.”



Peru: Maryknoll removed from Juli diocese

Bishop Jose Maria Ortega Trinidad, who was appointed in 2006 to the Juli prelate in southern Peru, recently asked Maryknoll missionaries to leave the diocese after 65 years of service there. The following is a letter of support for Maryknoll, signed by over 1,200 people in Juli and from around the world.

The year 1943 was moving along when, invited by the bishop of Puno at that time, Mons. Salvador Herrera, some young and enthusiastic missionaries of the Maryknoll Society arrived in Puno from the United States. Right from the beginning they loved the Quechua and Aymara cultures and their people. Many learned their languages and lived in the same peasant farmer communities.

They did not come to judge the people, but to accompany them in their process of coming to know and follow Jesus. Their work was intense and progressive. They constructed countless parish complexes. They created credit cooperatives. They also started parish schools like St. John the Baptist in Puno where the children of poor farmers were received as boarders.

Their concern for local vocations led them to collaborate in the foundation of a minor seminary, San Ambrosio ... They also promoted community libraries and entrusted them to the administrative council of each community. In the same way they established community pharmacies and formed health promoters. With great determination, they set up a massive alphabetization program using the Onda Azul Radio Schools, the radio station of the Puno diocese which they themselves had created. They enthusiastically went about developing well prepared catechism lessons for the reception of the sacraments in the parishes of the different communities and cities, and in the primary schools and high schools under their charge, making sure that the indigenous people were not marginalized. A theme that ran throughout their pastoral work was the promotion of the laity - men and women.

In 1957 the Prelature of Juli was entrusted to them with the naming of Mons. Edward Fedders as the first bishop. While faced with this challenging mission, as they continued and strengthened the pastoral work undertaken, they also began to coordinate their pastoral activities with other nearby church jurisdictions such as the diocese of Puno and

the prelate of Ayaviri. Together the three created and directed the San Martin seminary in Puno. They also started the Puno Catechetical School whose program served as a model for other parts of our country and in foreign lands.

In the same way, following the guidelines of Vatican II, CELAM [Latin American Episcopal Conference] and the Peruvian Episcopal conference, they learned how to integrate the proclamation of the good news with sacramental life, human promotion and a commitment to the poorest of the poor. In 1964 the Institute of Rural Education (IER) was founded to promote agricultural techniques, a critical awareness of social and economic realities and leadership; in 1981 the Institute was attacked by the Shinning Path and other enemies of the progress of the farmers. In their desire to promote the culture of the people they served, they also set up the Institute of Aymara Studies (IDEA) in 1974.

Their identification with the Aymara men and women led them to support the farmers' right to recover their lands. Alberto Koenigschnecht, along with other bishops of the region, presented a letter to Alan Garcia Pérez, the president at that time, strongly supporting a government decree to that effect - which was finally approved by the government in 1986.

During all this time, the Maryknoll Fathers, because of their Christian faith commitment, constantly showed their solidarity with the poor and marginalized, who at some times suffered through droughts and, at others, floods; these disasters were always characterized by the indifference of the government; from the early 1980s on, they were faced with the invasion of the political violence started by the Shining Path and responded to by the armed forces, its main victims being peasants. To reflect on this delicate situation, the Maryknollers created a circle called "Justice and Peace."

Then in 1988, along with the laity of the prelate, they gave life to the Vicariate of Solidarity of the Prelature of Juli, which from that date until its "disregard" as an "ecclesial entity" in 2007, defended the life of the poorest of the poor, while helping them concretely to enjoy their rights and, at the same time, creating an overall climate of peace. In 1997 they started the University Pastoral in the National University of the Altiplano (UNA) of Puno. This university apostolate has resulted in the revi-

talization of the faith and Christian commitment of many young professionals.

These many relevant missionary activities of the Maryknoll fathers show their constant evangelical service to our entire region, for which the people are profoundly grateful. This gratitude was made evident on November 4, 2007 when Luis Butrón Castillo, mayor of Puno, gave them the order “Andean community in the grade of Uros” in a public show of appreciation. Shortly afterwards the Farmers Federation of Puno recognized them with its maximum distinction: the “Tupac Amaru” award.

That’s why it surprises, worries and even scandalizes us as citizens and believers, that the current bishop of Juli, Mons. José Maria Ortega Trinidad, a member of the society of the Holy Cross, affiliated to Opus Dei, does not want the Maryknoll fathers ... to continue in the Prelature. They have generously given their lives and their youth to this Prelature as a gift; in the same spirit, the Maryknoll society has morally and economically supported the maintenance and development of the mission during decades. Their dismissal is only one expression of

similar actions against ecclesiastical institutions and against laity of the same prelature who were fired abruptly – without their social benefits. In the same vein some other lay people are being pressured and many others are marginalized and poorly treated.

When the people were waiting for gratitude on the part of the Catholic hierarchy for the prolific apostolic contributions of our missionary brothers during these 65 years, they were ordered to leave the Prelature without any explanation.

The Maryknoll Fathers will never be far from our hearts or out of our memories and this we want to express publicly to the world and to the whole Church because we see no reason for fear or small-mindedness, looking for an easy way out or using pharisaical language. What moves us are our love and recognition for authentic missionaries like the Maryknoll Fathers. What moves us is love for the Aymara and Quechua people. In the end, what moves us is our love for Christ and His South Andean and Universal Church. And it pains us to see its history ignored or distorted.

Brazil: Maryknollers’ statement on ethanol

The following statement was written by the Maryknoll Brazil Mission Community, a collaborative effort of Catholic priests, sisters and lay people who work in various ministries with the poor and marginalized in Brazil.

We, the Maryknoll Brazil Mission Community, live in two areas that are affected by sugar cane production in Brazil. One of these areas is São Paulo, the Brazilian state that is the largest producer of sugar cane. The other is João Pessoa, a city in the northeastern coast of Brazil, where early Portuguese colonizers first brought enslaved Africans and sugar cane and built large plantations for its cultivation. The scope and history of sugar cane production, not only in our two areas but throughout many parts of Brazil, still have devastating economic and ecological consequences for the Brazilian people.

As world leaders look for energy alternatives, many are discussing the possibility of using sugar cane to make ethanol. In fact, Brazil’s president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has promoted the production and use of ethanol in Brazil and its exportation to the United States, Japan and European countries.

We find this proposed solution to the world’s energy needs problematic. While looking for fuels that reduce pollution is laudable, there are significant environmental and social justice concerns raised with the production of ethanol from sugar cane.

Ecological concerns

Current methods of sugar cane production in Brazil use up large tracts of land that are then not used for food production. Brazil is a land where food insecurity is a daily reality for a quarter of the population. The natural resources of the country need to be directed to addressing the problems of feeding its people. Ownership of these lands resides in the hands of the wealthy elite. Sugar cane is grown and harvested on land that has been cut, cleared and burned of trees and other plants. This threatens the rich biodiversity of Brazil as well as contributing to air pollution through smoke from the fires. Water sources are also threatened by the common practice of deforestation and pesticide use employed in sugar cane monocultures.

Social justice concerns

The tenant workers who plant and harvest sugar cane are cruelly exploited by their employers. Working conditions are commonly described as slavery. Workdays begin hours before dawn and last until nightfall. Payment is based on arbitrary decisions by a foreman who has incentives to underpay his workers. When workers are told that they have earned some little money, deductions are made for food, housing (often in inadequate, unsanitary conditions), rental of tools and transportation. The work itself is brutal. Workers are exposed to the heat of the sun, with only a short break for a meager lunch. The sugar cane leaves cut the arms of workers while they harvest, and fires burn beside the workers while they are clearing.

The people who often perform this work are those who are desperate to find employment in order to feed their families. At times the children of cane workers are also recruited at a young age to work in the fields. Without an opportunity to acquire a basic education necessary for other jobs, these children grow up to become adults stuck in a cycle of poverty.

Our hope

As we think about the very real problems of the United States' dependency on foreign oil, the fluctuating prices of fuel for transportation and for heat-

ing, and the impact of burning fossil fuels on global climate change, we hope that citizens and policy makers will consider the impact of monoculture and large scale farming of sugar cane on the people of Brazil.

We pose these questions for further reflection:

- U.S. society (and, increasingly, other societies) depend on the large scale production of energy. What are creative ways that we can reduce our use of energy as individuals, families, communities and whole societies?
- Many modern cities are designed to accommodate mass automobile transportation. What is keeping us from making major investments in public transportation systems that are widely accessible? How can we think creatively about re-structuring our residential and transportation needs in the future?
- Sugar cane-based ethanol raises a number of social and practical concerns about its use. Its production may cause more environmental damage than its "cleaner" burning prevents in comparison to fossil fuels. What are other energy sources and what do we need to know about their production and consumption to make informed choices about their use?

Our hope is to help all people who are concerned about the integrity of creation to make decisions so that everyone may have life in abundance.

Brazil, Argentina drop the dollar

In another sign of its dwindling influence, two of Latin America's largest economies have decided to drop the use of the U.S. dollar in their bilateral trade. During an early October visit to Brasilia, Argentine president Christina Kirchner signed an agreement with Brazilian president Luis Ignacio (Lula) da Silva creating the Payment System on Local Currency (SML). This allows trade between the countries to only use Argentine pesos and Brazilian reals without converting into dollars first.

While the long term goal is to completely remove the dollar from their trade, they will still use the dollar to set the exchange rate between the reals and pesos. The new system will especially benefit small and medium companies that will save on bank charges when converting to and from dollars.

The two countries are already important trad-

ing partners, with Argentina buying 32 percent of Brazil's exports and 19 percent of Argentine exports going to Brazil. Total trade volume between the two countries has reached US\$25 billion annually. According to Guido Mantega, Brazil's finance minister, the agreement is an initial step toward an eventual common currency for the Common Market of the Southern Cone (Mercosur) which includes Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

While the agreement was not brought on by the current financial crisis – the two countries had been negotiating this long before – it does represent an overall trend in the declining importance of the U.S. dollar as an international currency. Eight years ago, at the turn of the century, the dollar played a key role in three-fourths of international transactions. It currently serves in only two-thirds of transactions.

Zimbabwe: Power sharing deal on rocky ground

Daily life for ordinary people in Zimbabwe became even more difficult in recent weeks as the deadlock in talks between Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF and Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) continued. Market prices for basic goods climbed in response to the political climate and Zimbabwe's official annual inflation rate exceeded 231 million percent, with acute shortages of food, water, foreign currency and electricity. The UN estimates that nearly half the population will require food assistance in the first quarter of 2009.

Violence has abated to some extent but the discovery of the body of Zimbabwe Election Commission member Ignatius Mushangwe in mid-October was most disturbing. Following Zimbabwe's highly controversial presidential election runoff of June 27 and weeks of unabated violence mostly against the opposition, negotiations began, under the auspices of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and led by Thabo Mbeki, aimed at forming a common government. On September 15, Tsvangirai and his fellow MDC member Arthur Mutambara signed a power-sharing deal with Mugabe. Responses to the agreement ranged from skepticism, especially among civil society organizations, to cautious optimism from the international community, to outright triumphalism from sections of SADC, especially Mbeki.

However, the process since has lurched from one point of contention to another. At the time of this writing, MDC was calling for new elections and it appeared that the arrangement would collapse.

The following concerns were raised by civil society groups in Zimbabwe. They are summarized by Zimbabwe Watch (www.zimbabwewatch.org) and Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (www.crisiszimbabwe.org) in a document entitled *Assessment of Outcomes, Benchmarks for engagement and recommendations from Zimbabwean Civil Society* (October 12, 2008). The full document is available at www.maryknollogc.org.

Concerns about the process:

- The major part of the negotiations were conducted in secrecy, which raised questions about the integrity of



Morgan Tsvangirai

the whole process and created mistrust within the MDC and among the MDC and its major constituencies, including the labor movement.

- The process was neither inclusive nor consultative, hence fears that the deal was an elite pact that might actually have omitted some of the key issues from civil society and the broader Zimbabwean society.
- The process seemed to assume that the problems in Zimbabwe start and end with the political parties and that if ZANU-PF and MDC agreed on a common framework, the problems would be naturally resolved. However, this is not the case. Issues like the constitution, transitional justice and the economy will only be resolved conclusively through the broad involvement of other key stakeholders and players.

Concerns about the content:

- ZANU-PF literature and philosophies seem to dominate the tone of the document.
- The deal does not exclusively reflect the will of the people as expressed in elections on March 29, 2008.
- The deal does not create a transitional government with a clearly spelled out time frame to draft a new constitution and conduct fresh elections under international supervision. Instead it establishes a government of national unity whose duration will be a full five year term.



Robert Mugabe

- The deal is vague and open to various interpretations, and is not exhaustive, e.g. it does not spell out clearly which ministry will be allocated to whom, thus the process immediately stalled.
- The matter of ministries seems to have opened new negotiations which could frustrate the process and lead to a failure to adhere to the crucial timelines

set out in the deal. For example, it is incomprehensible how the parties will meet the 18-month timeline for the constitution making process if the process continues to evolve at the current pace.

- There is lack of clarity on where precisely power lies. There is a president and a prime minister whose duties overlap. It is and will be difficult to

determine who has the final say. This is a recipe for conflict and deadlocks which are already in fact quite evident, e.g. ministerial allocations.

- There is a hung parliament in that the MDC has a slight majority in the lower house (House of Assembly) and ZANU-PF has a majority in the upper house (Senate). This will lead to enormous difficulties in terms of passing bills which will be crucial to establish the priorities of the new government. The agreement does not address this.
- The nature of the new government is not clearly defined -- whether it is based on a presidential or prime ministerial/parliamentary system. This is important in trying to see where the focus of

power lies. In this instance it seems the parties came short of a French model miniature, namely a semi-presidential system with a very powerful president (which is/would be a negation of the will of the people as expressed in the March elections).

In February 2008, the Zimbabwe Peoples' Charter (see www.maryknollogc.org) proposed a comprehensive vision for the future of Zimbabwe. Signed by dozens of civil society groups, including churches, the charter laid out a vision of a healed and just Zimbabwe. Their dream remains on a very distant horizon.

Africa: Food security and neo-colonial scramble

In the 1800s, European colonial powers divided up Africa in their quest for primary agricultural and mineral commodities, referred to as the "Scramble for Africa." In post-colonial times, oil corporations have gained oil concessions in various African nations through questionable dealings with African elites, enriching the elites and leaving the vast majority in these countries desperately poor. Recently, a new scramble has begun: the attempt by food-deficit countries, primarily in the Middle East, to buy or rent hundreds of thousands of hectares of prime agricultural land in Sudan, Ethiopia, and a few other countries. In the meantime, 5.6 million Sudanese and 10 million Ethiopians are in need of food aid.

What is spurring this attempt to secure agricultural land in other countries is the global food crisis and price volatility. Saudi Arabia and other oil exporting Middle Eastern countries have decided to use their oil wealth to buy land in poorer nations, including Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan. China is also trying to buy lands abroad, but is concentrating on Kazakhstan.

In August, Andrew England reported in *The Financial Times* that "Saudi Arabia plans to set up large-scale projects overseas that will later involve the private sector in growing crops such as corn, wheat and rice. Once a country has been selected, each project could be in excess of 100,000 hectares – about ten times the size of Manhattan Island – and the majority of the crop would be exported directly to Saudi Arabia. This is not trade, but direct ship-

ment of food crops to the land-owners.

"While Saudi Arabia's plans are among the grandest, they reflect growing interest in such projects among capital-rich countries that import most of their food. The United Arab Emirates is looking into Kazakhstan and Sudan. Libya is hoping to lease farms in Ukraine, and South Korea has hinted at plans in Mongolia."

Joachim von Braun, director of the International Food Policy Research Institute, says, "This is a new trend within the global food crisis. The dominant force today is security of food supplies."

England wrote, "Alarmed by exporting countries' trade restrictions – such as India's curbs on exports of rice, Ukraine's halt to wheat shipments, and Argentina's imposition of heavy taxes on overseas sales of soya – importing countries have realized that their dependence on the international food market makes them vulnerable not only to an abrupt surge in prices but, more crucially, to an interruption in supplies. As a result, food security is at the top of the political agenda for the first time since the 1970s."

For poor countries rich in cultivable land and water but short of capital, such plans could also make a lot of sense. Lennart Bage, of the UN's International Fund for Agriculture Development in Rome, says that "land was long thought less important than oil or mineral deposits. But now fertile land with access to water has become a strategic asset."

Sudan is seeking to attract at least one billion dollars of capital for its agricultural sector from Arab and Asian investment groups. The investment minis-

try is marketing 17 large-scale projects that would cover an area of 880,000 hectares.

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is also enthusiastic. He welcomed the Saudi agriculture delegation with the following words: "We would be very eager to provide hundreds of thousands of hectares of agricultural land for investment."

The food-producing countries need to be wary of these deals, warns England. "Through secretive bilateral agreements, the investors hope to be able to bypass any potential trade restriction that the host country might impose during a crisis."

Maryknoll Father Ken Thesing, who is working with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Juba, Southern Sudan, offers further insight and caution, "In Southern Sudan we have vast tracts of land that can be very productive, without irrigation. But we need infrastructure, inputs, and expertise to positively 'harvest' the potential of the land. It is going to be a challenge to do that without Southern Sudan ending up either missing the opportunity to move ahead and use its natural advantage at this time of food shortage/crisis or ending up exploited by other 'rich' countries and entrepreneurs using the resources for their private benefit."

For some policymakers this evokes the nightmare scenario of crops being transported out of fortified farms as hungry locals look on. Jacques Diouf, director general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), says he dreads "the emergence of a neocolonial pact for the supply of raw materials with no value added for the producer countries. We are deliberating on land policy tools that we can use to counsel the governments involved. The idea is not to renounce such a potential godsend, but to avoid expropriations of small producers and speculation."

Alain Karsenty, a researcher in agronomics, claims that there will be another devastating im-



Photo by Jim Stipe

pact of the headlong rush into these agricultural schemes – deforestation. "As the price of agricultural land increases, land with forest values will lose profitability. Maintaining forests, whether for environmental purposes or for economic purposes, will be abandoned as a national objective."

In his new book, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy*, Michael T. Klare writes that we are now seeing the resurrection of a mercantilist form of global economy, similar to the colonial era of the 19th century, when national states took control of resources in colonial territories. As essential to the global economy as are corporations, the effort to lock in foreign sources of energy and strategic resources is now "statist," rather than corporate. Examples in the energy sector are President Bush's two trips to Saudi Arabia to plead for increased oil production in order to stabilize prices, and China's dealings with Sudan (also Congo and Zimbabwe). These state efforts to insure that energy, strategic metals and food will go to rich countries is further marginalizing the poor countries, where many of these resources are found. To sum up his analysis: the first quarter of the 21st century is characterized by a statist effort to lock in foreign sources of strategic resources, in a planet now running out of these resources, increasing the possibility of military confrontations between nuclear powers.

George Monbiot of the *Guardian* concludes with this harsh outlook. "None of this is to suggest that the poor nations should not sell food to the rich. To escape from famine, countries must enhance their purchasing power. This often means selling farm products and increasing their value by processing them locally. But there is nothing fair about the deals [described above]. Where once they used gunboats and sepoy, the rich nations now use checkbooks and lawyers to seize food from the hungry. The scramble for resources has begun, but in the short term, at any rate, we will hardly notice. The rich world's governments will protect themselves from the political cost of shortages, even if it means that other people must starve."

Uganda: Rebels create havoc

In recent weeks the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has committed a wave of coordinated attacks on communities in northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), abducting over 150 children and displacing as many as 50,000 people. The rebels also attacked a South Sudan military outpost. Local authorities report that the LRA is enlarging its forces and consolidating control over areas adjacent to their bases. In addition, reports indicate that the LRA may be trading arms and linking up with other militias in the region and that a new rebel group is forming in the Northern Ugandan space vacated by the LRA when they moved to the DRC.

Prospects are dim for convincing LRA leader Joseph Kony to sign the Final Peace Agreement, negotiated between the LRA and the government of Uganda after 20 years of war. The agreement was finalized in April, but several meetings between Kony and mediators since then have fallen through and he has curtailed contact with intermediaries in the past month since the renewed rebel attacks.

President Salva Kiir of South Sudan, which mediated the Juba peace talks, reportedly called recently for a definitive timetable for concluding the talks in order to allow other options for addressing the rebel threat to be pursued.

The International Criminal Court renewed its call for the arrest of LRA leaders indicted by the Court, and requested that the Congolese government provide it with information on how it is working to arrest the indictees. The Congolese army, with support from the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo (MONUC), is continuing to build up troop presence near LRA bases. However, neither force has engaged the LRA, prompting several local communities to form self-defense militias.

One year after the launch of the Ugandan government's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), implementation of the recovery plan remains slow and tangible results scarce. Yet, despite a persistent lack of basic services in areas of return, northern Ugandans continue to leave displaced persons' camps. Over 145,000 displaced persons have moved to transit sites or their original homes since May 2008.

Meanwhile, a recent report by Bill Oketch for

the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (Oct. 10, <http://www.iwpr.net/>) says that the new rebel group in Northern Uganda "may be headed by Peter Karim, who used to command a band of insurgents in Uganda's West Nile region. Since the late 1990s, Karim has been active in the Ituri area of eastern DRC, and has been affiliated with the notorious Front des Nationalistes et Intégrationnistes, FNI, a Lendu militia headed by Colonel Mathieu Ngudjolo. Ngudjolo and another Congolese rebel leader, Germaine Katanga, are awaiting prosecution by the International Criminal Court, ICC, in The Hague for an alleged joint attack on the Ituri village of Bogoro, by their respective militias, the FNI and the Patriotic Resistance Force, FRPI, on February 24, 2003. In advance of the DRC's 2006 election, Karim and his militia were reportedly offered an amnesty and positions in the Congolese army, which apparently were not accepted.

"Additionally, a 2006 United Nations report on the exploitation of natural resources in DRC identified Karim as 'one of the chief perpetrators,' and said he routinely exchanged timber and coffee from DRC for arms and ammunition. The report also identified him as a former Ugandan soldier and timber contractor in Paidha, a Ugandan town on the DRC border. In March 2007, reports surfaced that Karim had agreed to the surrender of 170 of his troops, including numerous children, to UN peacekeepers in the Ituri region, claiming that he wanted peace. Karim and his senior deputies, however, refused to hand themselves in because they were unhappy with the terms they were offered, say reports."



Faith in action:

Write to your members of Congress, urging them to ensure that the next administration develops a viable strategy to apprehend LRA leaders and stop the escalating violence, and appoints a diplomat to work regionally to ensure protection of vulnerable civilians. Congress also should introduce legislation addressing the needs for reconstruction and stabilization within northern Uganda.

For additional information contact Resolve Uganda (www.resolveuganda.org) and see Africa Files (www.africafiles.org).

Iraq: Healing needed for effective rule of law

In the closing weeks of the U.S. presidential election campaign, news of the world economic crisis overshadowed developments in the conflicts in Iraq and neighboring Afghanistan. One exception was a proposed U.S.-Iraq security agreement, intended to maintain the legal presence of U.S. troops in Iraq after Dec. 31. Ultimately, all sectors of Iraqi society will have to come together to resolve their own differences. But stubborn sectarian divisions continue to pose a threat to Iraq's democratic aspirations.

Earlier this year, much of the political discussion focused on whether to set a timeline to withdraw U.S. troops. The question largely disappeared after Iraqi President Nouri al-Maliki said in July he thought a 16-month period following the U.S. presidential inauguration January 20 “would be the right timeframe for withdrawal.”

By October, much of the news about Iraq was about draft language in the proposed security agreement. (See “Iraq: U.S., Iraqi lawmakers question security pact” in *NewsNotes*, July-August 2008). Unless the current mandate of the UN Security Council is extended – or a bilateral agreement is signed – the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq would be illegal after the UN mandate expires Dec. 31.

The draft language calls for U.S. troops to leave Iraqi cities by the end of June 2009 and to withdraw from the country altogether by 2012, unless the government asks them to stay. (As early as June 2005, a third of the 275 democratically elected members of Iraq's National Assembly asked the U.S. to set a timetable for withdrawal. Until this year, most Iraqi government officials opposed a withdrawal or even a timetable.)

One of the most controversial issues in the draft accord is that of legal jurisdiction. The Pentagon insists on having sole legal jurisdiction over U.S. troops in most foreign countries. However, the draft says U.S. soldiers can be subject to Iraqi law if they are accused of committing a major crime while outside their bases and off duty. The draft also makes private U.S. security companies and other contractors subject to Iraqi justice in criminal cases.

Another big question is whether the agreement constitutes a treaty. With the draft language the Iraqi government requests “the temporary assistance of U.S. forces for the purpose of supporting its effort to safeguard security and stability in Iraq including

cooperation in carrying out operations against al Qaeda, other terror groups and outlawed groups.”

Proponents say the proposed pact is a status of forces agreement (SOFA), which sets the rules for U.S. troops on foreign soil but does not commit those troops to the defense of Iraq. SOFAs normally do not require congressional approval. However, lawmakers including Rep. William Delahunt (D-MA) say draft language regarding U.S. military obligations makes it clear the agreement is more than a SOFA. “Of course this is a treaty,” says Delahunt. “They can call it what they want, but this section irrefutably implies a treaty.” And that would require ratification by the Senate.

Meanwhile, an Iraqi panel Oct. 3 in Washington, D.C., discussed ongoing challenges to unifying Iraq since its constitution was narrowly approved in a 2005 referendum. Panel member Feisal Istrabadi said the constitution was not a national compact since Sunnis, the second largest group at 31 percent, rejected it by a wide margin. Istrabadi, a law professor and former Iraqi ambassador to the UN, also criticized the U.S. for pushing Iraq to write its constitution before a national consensus had been reached.

A justice official on the panel said Iraq has one million security personnel, or one for every 30 persons. Raid Juhi al-Saidi, former chief investigative judge of the Iraqi High Tribunal, also said 33 judges and prosecutors had been killed from 2004-2008. “Does power lie with the military or with the rule of law?” he asked.

“Violence never again! War never again! Terrorism never again!” Pope John Paul II declared in 2002, a year before the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Pope Pius XII, too, spoke directly to Catholic social teaching when he said in 1943, “Violence has achieved only destruction, not construction.” How different an attitude from that of Donald Rumsfeld who, as defense secretary, told a news conference on Sept. 18, 2001, “We have a choice, either to change the way we live, which is unacceptable, or to change the way that they [Muslims in the Middle East] live, and we chose the latter.”

Such arrogance aside, changing our attitude toward other nations and religions could go far toward winning friends and building up peace – something akin to what this country's founders called “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind.”

Japan: Changes to constitution still possible

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who resigned in September 2007, had hoped to amend Article 9 of the country's peace constitution to remove some of the constraints on Japan's self defense forces. However, Japanese voters have been preoccupied with domestic economic issues in recent years, which contributed to Abe's abrupt departure after less than a year in office. Efforts to amend the constitution have still not been completely laid to rest. Prime Minister Taro Aso, Japan's third prime minister in less than two years, has pledged to seek a reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow Japan to exercise collective self defense missions and continue providing logistical support to the U.S. military in Afghanistan.

Article 9 provides 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" and declares that "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained." However, after addressing the UN General Assembly in September, Aso said he favored reinterpreting Article 9 to allow the country to participate in collective self-defense missions.

Under the country's Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, Japan's naval forces in the Indian Ocean have supplied fuel and water to U.S. and coalition ships in support of U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan since 2001. The law expired Nov. 1, 2007. In January it was extended for a year through a rare parliamentary maneuver, and the navy resumed its refueling activity. Approval of a bill that would extend the law for another year was expected by the end of October.

An advisory panel appointed by Abe concluded that Article 9 would allow Japan to participate in collective self-defense missions. However, Abe resigned before such an interpretation of the constitution could be put into effect.

The former prime minister had aimed for a constitutional change in five or six years. In May 2007 the Japanese Diet passed legislation to hold a national referendum on amending Article 9. However, constitutional revision is not in the immediate offing – the bill set a three-year moratorium before an actual referendum.

Pressure to amend Japan's constitution comes

from those who favor closer collaboration with the U.S. military. The Pentagon wants a stronger Japan to counter China's growing influence in Asia. Corporate industry in Japan seeks to overturn Article 9's ban on arms exports. It also wants the government to lift the cap on defense spending, which historically has been one percent of GDP. In 2005 the Japanese Federation of Economic Organizations declared, "The inability to exercise our right to collective self-defense translates into denying supportive activity to our allies, and is acting as a hindrance."

Meanwhile, Japan has been providing troops for UN peacekeeping and humanitarian operations since 1992. However, the constitution bars Japanese troops from engaging in actual combat, even in Iraq. Japan is also barred from exporting arms.

The interpretation of Japan's constitution to date has limited militarization and helped build up trusting relationships between Japan and other Asia-Pacific states. In July 2005 the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, an international non-governmental organization, praised Article 9 as "the foundation for collective security for the entire Asia Pacific region."

According to Akira Kawasaki of the Japanese peace organization Peace Boat, revisionists seek wider military integration with the U.S. even as they await constitutional change. "These short-term steps include incorporating overseas activities as a primary mission of the Self-Defense Forces, upgrading the Defense Agency to the Defense Ministry (December 2006), and establishing a panel to study ways to allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defense without touching the constitution itself (April 2007)," she wrote in *Foreign Policy in Focus* (<http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/4426>).

Meanwhile, the Global Article 9 Campaign to Abolish War (www.article-9.org/en/) was launched in 2005 to preserve Article 9 and to call for a global peace that does not rely on force. A Global Article 9 Conference to Abolish War was held last May in Japan with the support of more than 60 Japan-based civil society organizations. Some 33,000 participants from 40 countries discussed citizens' role in bringing about disarmament. They also called on other governments to adopt similar peace clauses in their own constitutions.

Besides renouncing war as a means of settling disputes, the global campaign says Article 9

also aims to reduce military spending, end violence against women, and mitigate the negative environmental impact of the military.

Bishop Michael Goro Matsuura, president of the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace, says a significant arms race is already going on in the region, “and such a constitutional change would obviously exacerbate that arms race enormously.” Catholic social teaching supports his position. The Church’s traditional “just war” theory has fallen into disrepute, and Pope Paul VI wrote in 1967, “When so many people are hungry, when so many families suffer from destitution, ... every exhausting armaments race, becomes an intolerable scandal.” (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 53)

The movement to protect Article 9 resonates worldwide. The 1999 Hague Appeal for Peace, which drew 8,000 people from 100 countries, urged that “every Parliament should adopt a resolution prohibiting their government from going to war, like the Japanese Article 9.” The 2006 Vancouver World Peace Forum “call[ed] for governments to constitutionally renounce war.”

U.S. Americans, too, have joined the movement. Aidan Delgado, a U.S. veteran of the Iraq war, spoke at the Article 9 conference last May in Japan. He became a conscientious objector after witnessing the abuses at Abu Ghraib prison. “Article 9 is international,” he said. “I have decided to walk down the same path.”

China: Privatized state firms shortchange workers

Millions of workers in China have lost their jobs with the privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that began in the late 1990s. Attempting to claim their rights, the workers have encountered obstacles from unexpected quarters: local governments and the courts, which often favor dishonest former bosses. The workers’ plight recalls similar situations in the former USSR and East Germany with the shutting down of inefficient factories, raising the question of the state’s responsibility to provide benefits and new jobs. This story is based on the research report “No Way Out: Worker Activism in China’s State-Owned Enterprise Reforms” at China Labour Bulletin (www.clb.org.hk).

The privatization plan called for closing down inefficient Chinese enterprises or merging them with more productive units. It was hoped that everyone would benefit from increased efficiency, economic growth and new job and business opportunities. However, the government’s plan lacked transparency, clear guidelines or proper auditing of company assets, which opened the door to corruption. More than 30 million workers were left without jobs and the means to support their families.

Workers seeking the back wages, pensions and other benefits owed them sometimes resorted to public protests after appeals through official channels failed. However, many local officials saw these demonstrations as a threat to “political stability” or to their own positions, and had the protests banned

or the leaders punished. Meanwhile, one union official says mass protests and strikes – numbering in the tens of thousands every year across China – have become “as common as arguments between a husband and wife.”

For example, in March 2002 Yao Fuxin led over 10,000 fellow workers in public protests against alleged management corruption in the privatization and forced closure of the Liaoyang Ferro-Alloy Factory in Liaoning province. Initially charged with “illegal assembly and demonstration,” he was later convicted of the more serious crime of “subversion of state power.” Yao is serving a seven-year prison sentence in a remote prison and is limited to only occasional visits from his family.

Laid-off workers initially turned to the government for redress. However, China’s weak complaints and petitions system failed to resolve the escalating conflicts over inadequate or non-existent redundancy payments, wages in arrears and medical and pension benefits. In fact it exacerbated them, with workers’ complaints usually ending up in the hands of the same government officials being targeted.

The courts normally offer another channel to pursue complaints of labor rights violations; most labor rights cases that go to trial end in victory for the employee. In SOE-related privatization disputes, however, the Supreme People’s Court has imposed arbitrary barriers to workers’ quest to satisfy their grievances – effectively stripping tens of millions of citizens of a constitutionally guaranteed right.

Consequently, workers often see no option but to resort to marches, strikes, sit-ins and even road or railway blockades, to call the attention of government leaders. It is a risky strategy, however, as officials often use such actions as a pretext to frame protest leaders on trumped-up criminal charges.

After protesters blocked a local railway in one labor dispute, a worker explained, “They say it’s illegal for us to blockade the railway, picket the factory entrance or appeal to the government. But when we try to do things the legal way, first by mediation and then through litigation, our case is always rejected. We couldn’t resolve matters through blockades or picketing, or even by talking with city leaders, but taking the legal route got us nowhere, either.”

The central government has accepted some responsibility for depriving workers of their rights in the SOE restructuring process, and it has implemented measures that help those who were laid off to undergo job re-training and find new employment. However, thousands of labor disputes related to SOE privatization remain unresolved.

China Labour Bulletin has called on China’s local governments to provide welfare and pension payments – and new employment, if possible – to workers who have lost their jobs due to SOE privatization. The Hong Kong-based non-governmental organization, which defends and promotes worker

rights in China, also asks the central government to remove arbitrary obstacles to workers seeking legal redress. It also urges that all citizens who have been unjustly imprisoned for fighting for workers’ rights be unconditionally freed.

Catholic social teaching insists that labor problems in a particular country or region “are not to be considered as isolated cases.” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 9) The reason is that human dignity and workers’ right to a fair wage, private property and reasonable working conditions are universal concerns. China’s experience is not unique. Labor disputes spring from what Pope John XXIII described as “the exploitation of the weak by the unscrupulous strong, who flourish, unfortunately, like cockle among the wheat, in all times and places.” (*Mater et Magistra*, n. 58)

The demands of Chinese workers are in accord with the Church’s social teaching. In a recurring theme, the Church says labor is not intended to benefit only a small wealthy or powerful class, but is meant for individual growth and for the common good. “[W]hen a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well,” wrote Pope John Paul II as he explained “the gospel of work.” This kind of growth, he added, “is of greater value than any external riches.” (*Laborem Exercens*, n. 26)

Economy: Worldwide effects of crisis

While news sources have focused primarily on the consequence of the current financial crisis on the U.S. and European economies, less attention has been paid to its effect on countries in the global South. As the saying goes, when the U.S. sneezes, the rest of the world gets the flu. While that adage is still true in many ways, a number of factors point to the possibility of a lesser effect on countries in the South. It is impossible to know what will happen in this crisis and how deep and wide the downturn will be, but this article looks at possible consequences for countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

Latin America

In the initial stages of the financial crisis in the U.S., Brazilian President Lula da Silva boasted that Brazil would not be affected by the “jazz effect” as Argentine President Cristina Kirchner has called the

crisis. Yet as the crisis grows, clearly not even the economic giant Brazil will remain free from the predicament. In the past eight years, Latin America has experienced high growth rates due in part to three factors: high commodity prices (especially minerals and metals), easy financing conditions, and increased levels of remittances sent by family members who had moved to the U.S. or Europe. The current financial crisis will have a negative effect on each of these factors: Commodity prices are falling due to decreased demand, credit worldwide has dried up, and immigrants in the North, experiencing rising unemployment, send less money home.

However, trends indicate that Latin America possibly will not be as severely affected by this crisis as it has been in the past. In recent years, Eastern Europe and Asia have been the more favored places for international investors to put their money, so there

is not as much money being pulled out by panicking investors, though there have been notable falls in Brazilian, Argentine and Mexican stock markets.

Latin America as a whole is less economically dependent on the United States than in the past. Exports to the U.S. have dropped to 40 percent of total regional exports, versus 57 percent in 2000, while trade with Asia and especially within Latin America has increased. Yet this is mostly true for larger South American economies like Brazil, Argentina and Chile. Mexico and Central American economies, still heavily linked to the U.S. economy and dependent on remittances from there, should feel stronger effects from the crisis.

Asia

Falling energy prices will favor many Asian countries as most of them import their energy sources, but it is unclear what the overall effect of the crisis will be on Asian countries. Renowned investor George Soros has predicted that the crisis will result in a transfer of power from the U.S. and European Union to Asia, especially China and India. While the U.S. and EU will suffer more deeply, he believes that Asian countries, with its increasing regional trade, will be able to use the crisis to make needed changes to their economies and avoid a large downturn. Others see a continuing dependence of Asian economies on the U.S. and Europe to buy their exports and therefore will experience a similar downturn for most of Asia. They point out that much of the rapidly increasing inter-East Asian trade is mostly from integrated production networks that produce goods for the U.S. and Europe.

China, heavily dependent on buyers in countries most affected by the crisis, will face difficulties, but the IMF still predicts nine percent growth there in 2009. Many see an opportunity for China to lower its dependence on exports and build its internal economy. With massive amounts of reserves, China has more options available than other countries.

India, for example, has fewer though still substantial financial reserves, but as a smaller part of its economy is dependent on exports, it should be less affected by the crisis than China.

Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and the Philippines, with higher poverty rates, lower growth rates and higher dependence on remittances, could face a deeper downturn that would force millions more into poverty. Recent political conflicts in

Thailand and Malaysia will most likely be intensified by a slowing economy.

Africa

Most experts believe that Africa will be relatively sheltered from the more drastic effects of the crisis as their economies are less stringently tied to the U.S. and Europe. Yet they will face increased difficulties due to indirect effects from money losses in the global North.

One of the key indirect effects will be the decrease in remittances on which some African countries are increasingly dependent. In addition, as Northern governments bail out their economies, they will probably reduce their assistance programs to Africa. Northern non-governmental organizations will also find their donations decreasing which will result in cuts in programs throughout Africa.

On the positive side, the crisis will lead Northern countries to lower their interest rates which would help relieve some of the debt burden that so many African countries face. Most will also benefit from lower prices for petroleum and food.

Ultimately, high world food prices have most affected African countries, most of which are net importers of food, and the crisis will divert needed money to other areas. Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade said the crisis means little to the average African. "Who cares if the bourgeois can no longer travel or live in comfort? The greatest menace to most Africans is hunger," he said. "The amount of investment needed to feed people and create jobs in Africa is a fraction of the money being spent on the global financial crisis."

While today's crisis represents new economic difficulties in the global South, remember that during the Depression of the 1930s, many of these countries were forced to concentrate on their internal economies as foreign money dried up, resulting in greater progress than while dominated by foreign capital. Today's crisis could result in a similar situation, allowing countries more freedom in choosing their economic policies. Southern countries notice that governments in the U.S. and Europe, when confronted with a crisis, have gone against their own advice and become heavily involved in their economies. When Southern governments establish alternative policies today they will be better able to resist demands from the North to follow neoliberal policies that they themselves do not use.

Economy: Crisis offers time for transformation

The financial meltdown and economic crisis present all of us with two tremendous challenges:

- to respond with justice and solidarity at home and abroad to the deep suffering occasioned by the loss of jobs, homes, retirement savings, and the myriad of other dreadful consequences of this failure; and
- to craft out of the ashes an economic system that works for the well-being of all people, rather than a small minority, in these and future generations and guarantees the integrity of creation.

As the economic crisis became increasingly visible to the U.S. public and the world, Bishop William F. Murphy, chairman of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, wrote to U.S. political leadership, lifting up moral principles that should help guide the search for "just and effective responses to the economic turmoil."

Bishop Murphy wrote about the human and moral dimensions of the crisis and about clear ethical considerations that "should be at the center of debate and decisions on how to move forward... Economic arrangements, structures and remedies should have as a fundamental purpose safeguarding human life and dignity. The scandalous search for excessive economic rewards even to the point of dangerous speculation that exacerbates the pain and losses of the more vulnerable are egregious examples of an economic ethic that places economic gain above all other values. This ignores the impact of economic decisions on the lives of real people as well as the ethical dimension of the choices we make and the moral responsibility we have for their effect on people."

He emphasized responsibility and accountability: "Those who directly contributed to this crisis or profited from it should not be rewarded or escape accountability for the harm they have done. Any response of government ought to seek greater responsibility, accountability and transparency in both economic and public life ...A new sense of responsibility on the part of all should include a renewal

of instruments of monitoring and correction within economic institutions and the financial industry as well as effective public regulation and protection to the extent this may be clearly necessary."

The bishop's letter also reminded the officials that "the principle of solidarity commits us to the pursuit of the common good, not the search for partisan gain or economic advantage. Protection of the vulnerable – workers, business owners, homeowners, renters, and stockholders – must be included in the commitment to protect economic institutions." And it said that "subsidiarity places a responsibility on the private actors and institutions to accept their own obligations. If they do not do so, then the larger entities, including the government, will have to step in to do what private institutions will have failed to do."



For years Maryknoll missionaries have expressed profound skepticism that benefits of globalization would accrue to the poor without significant transformation of the assumptions, goals and processes of the economic model that had been driving globalization. (See Maryknoll's statement on trade and investment at www.maryknollogc.org)

Once again in this crisis missionaries are seeing the disastrous impact on communities where they live and work around the world of decisions made in distant or disconnected places.

Catholic social teaching, and struggles throughout the history of humankind, remind us that people have the right to participate in the important decisions that affect their lives: A more just global economy must recognize that all people have the right to dignified work; that human labor takes precedence over capital; that workers have a right to a living wage; that the common good and the survival of earth are of paramount importance.

A deep restructuring of the global economy to support these and other life-sustaining values is essential. In the coming months the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns will join millions of others around the world to lift up those proposals and practices that move in this direction.

Donors, recipients discuss aid effectiveness

From September 1-5, ministers from over 100 countries, heads of donor agencies, and representatives of more than 100 civil society organizations met in Accra, Ghana, to discuss aid effectiveness: “ways in which rich nations can help developing countries and marginalized people in their fight against poverty, by making aid more transparent, accountable and results-oriented.” At the end of the week, ministers of both the developed and the developing “partner” countries signed an agreement called the Accra Agenda for Action.

The Accra conference was the third high level forum on aid effectiveness following on the 2002 Monterrey consensus; the first was held in Rome in 2003, the second in Paris in 2005.

From 2006 to 2008, consultations were held around the world, and evaluations of the implementation of the Paris Declaration were brought to Accra. One important addition from these consultations was the recognition that more actors/agents of development, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), should be included in the process.

Robert Fox (Oxfam) said, “The outcome of this conference was much better because of the active participation of civil society over the past 18 months, in which they identified a whole series of issues that were reflected in the accord.”

Donors pledged to move away from prescriptive conditions to taking into closer account partner (i.e. recipient) countries’ own aid objectives. Donors also agreed to use partner country systems as the first option to manage aid programs rather than setting up parallel structures. They committed to longer-term three to five-year aid programs and to share more information about donor funding with partner countries.

On their part, partners agreed to improve their dialogue on aid issues and to improve management of donor funds by building stronger institutions. As a result, partners expect to have more say in monitoring aid.

The five guiding principles of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Action Agenda are:

- **Ownership:** Partners will exercise effective leadership over development policies and strategies, and coordinate development outcomes.
- **Alignment:** Donors will base their overall support on partner countries’ national development strate-

gies, institutions and procedures.

- **Harmonization:** Donors’ actions will be undertaken collectively, and be more harmonized and transparent.
- **Managing for results:** Decisions will be targeted for results and resources managed accordingly.
- **Mutual accountability:** Donors and recipients will both be accountable for development results.

Although these principles are agreed on, some analysts from partner countries have reservations about certain aspects, for instance that harmonization may increase the donors’ collective power, that ownership could enable donors to deny responsibility when a project fails, that performance assessment indicators are quantitative and do not reflect civil society concerns for qualitative evaluations, that partner governments lack adequate human and technical capacity to properly review the process, that there is a power imbalance between donors and partner governments, and that partner governments will end up having to be more accountable to donors than to their own populations.

The Accra Agenda is a sincere attempt to move away from the Cold War purposes of foreign aid, but African countries remember the Cold War-era political purposes of aid: seeking compliance by friendly governments to engage in military operations, enlisting allies in the fight against terrorism, promotion of strategic or commercial interests, advancing the donor country’s culture or language, giving economic aid for ideological purposes, and continued giving of aid to corrupt, venal military rulers (the prime example being Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, the CIA’s favored anti-communism military dictator).

The United States, Europe, and now China, India and Brazil all have strategic interests in Africa in order to a) fight terrorism (U.S. especially), b) promote free-market economic policies (again primarily the U.S., but also some European countries), and c) gain access to Africa’s energy and strategic mineral resources. None of these interests are priorities for African nations, but offers of large amounts of aid to very poor countries can be quite tempting.

With regard to the connection between security interests and aid, Shastry Njeru (Midlands State University, Zimbabwe) recommends a major paradigm shift in the conceptualization of security in Africa. The former paradigm was state or national security, in which African militaries received huge amounts

of aid in order to deter invasions from neighboring countries. However, militaries in Africa have been used almost entirely against their own citizens protesting corrupt, non-democratic rule or rebel armies within national borders, with the exception of the regional war in Zaire/Congo 10 years ago. The need for militaries in Africa to deter aggression from outside is today either minimal or in fact non-existent.

State security has received disproportionate attention, and must be replaced with the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who seek security in their daily lives. The modern paradigm for security is human security. Threats to life in Africa are disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflicts, political repression, environmental hazards, and climate change. Legitimate aid to Africa should address these priorities. Unfortunately, the U.S., the UK and other European countries have made aid a major component in their fight against terrorism. As President Bush said in September 2001, "We will direct every resource at our command to the disruption of the global terror network."

Yash Tandon's new book, *Ending aid dependence* takes into account the above critiques of foreign aid, and adds that, even in financial terms, much of aid helps the donor nation as much or more than the recipient. Products and services must be bought from the donor country, which can actually cost more than if the poor nations borrowed commercially and bought freely. Technical assistance makes up almost half of all aid flows, and almost always comes from the donor country. This cost and high payments to expensive consultants, who also come from the donor country, bloat the expense, with the money actually remaining in the donor country. Often the advice from these consultants is of dubious quality and questionable utility. Also administration costs are counted as part of aid, as is money disbursed to foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the poor country.

If aid comes in the form of a grant, there is no loss to the recipient country. But if it is a loan, even a concessional loan, then the poor country is expected to pay back the whole loan, even though less than half was disbursed within the country.

Although Tandon, executive director of the South Centre (Geneva, Switzerland), does not advocate the immediate suspension of all aid, he writes that "developing countries can liberate themselves from the aid that pretends to be developmental but

is not. Exiting aid dependence should be at the top of the political agenda of all countries."

His book consists of seven steps that developing countries must take. "The most difficult step is the first – overcoming the psychology of aid dependence," he writes. "This has not only occupied the mindset of many if not most leaders in developing countries, but has also taken roots in mass psychology. This is an agenda that has to be captured by the people ... at community and grassroots levels. It also requires an enlightened and visionary leadership at national, regional and continental levels."

In his foreword to *Ending aid dependence*, Benjamin Mkapa, former president of Tanzania, urges "developing countries to formulate strategies to exit from the aid dependence bandwagon."

Mkapa points out that aid was never a strong component in the development of either India or China. They have been reliant on their own domestic savings, the development of a domestic market, the protection of local enterprises and local innovation. They engaged in the challenge of globalization and foreign competition only after ensuring that their own markets were strong enough. More recently, Brazil and Malaysia have ended their aid dependence through strong nationally oriented investment, trade and monetary policies.

Tandon mentions other resources that developing nations can use, such as remittances from nationals working abroad, putting a stop to private transfers that flow back to wealthy countries, minimizing profit transfers of multinational corporations, eliminating other forms of legal expatriation of funds from poor countries (called legal theft), doing a critical analysis of poor nations' budgets to focus on necessities of development, and cracking down severely on corruption and corporate kickbacks to political leaders.

He summarizes his argument in the following words: "The present aid and development architecture at the international level is an obstacle to the realization of the national project. Three power asymmetries – economic power, political power and knowledge power – are deeply embedded in the existing structures. It is a continuing battle for the developing countries to try and secure policy space within the constraints imposed by these asymmetrical structures."

For more information on *Ending aid dependence*, visit: <http://www.fahamu.org/publications>.

Debt: Focus on illegitimate debt grows

After a year of work, Ecuador's Comprehensive Public Credit Audit Commission recently presented its final report to President Rafael Correa. The report concludes that in the last three decades, the debt process in Ecuador benefited the financial sector and transnational corporations to the detriment of the citizens of Ecuador and holds creditors and state officials co-responsible.

The commission was created by Presidential Decree No. 472 on July 9, 2007 to audit the external and internal debt contracted by Ecuador with international banks, multilateral organizations and the bilateral creditors between 1976 and 2006. In fulfilling their mandate, members of the commission encountered archives in disarray and stored in inadequate, humid places, as well as incomplete documentation. With few exceptions, Ecuadorian Central Bank and Finance Ministry officials refused to make available to the commission the documentation necessary for the audit.

Nevertheless, the commission made important findings that confirm allegations of illegitimacy and illegality in relation to Ecuador's public debt.

Creditors, in collaboration with the government, imposed conditions that had serious economic, social, and environmental impacts. Since the 1980s, a high percentage of the national budget – up to 70 percent – was used to service the public debt, seriously shortchanging budgets for education, nutrition, health care and social programs. Only 14 percent of all the loans were invested in social projects, such as potable water, electricity, telecommunications and roadways; 86 percent of the loans were used to pay debts.

For 30 years, state officials signed whatever agreements creditors offered, violating general principles of law, international covenants and fundamental norms of domestic law. (See <http://www.ecuadorinmediato.com/noticias/88151> and www.jubileosuramericas.org)

As preparations proceed for the Financing for Development Review Conference, which will take place in Doha, Qatar in late November, debt campaigners around the world have been trying to persuade governments to include reference to illegitimate debt in the outcome document.

Norway took a giant step forward in October by proposing the following language:

External debt

42. We recognize that important challenges remain. Debt service in a considerable number of low and middle-income countries is still too high. The existing international debt resolution mechanisms, including the Paris Club, cannot guarantee equivalent treatment of all creditors and just treatment of creditors and debtors, hindering the establishment of predictable debt resolution procedures. There is concern about increasing vulture fund litigation. In addressing these situations, we need to enhance the international financial mechanisms for debt crisis prevention and resolution by finding internationally agreed solutions. These mechanisms need to be underpinned by principles that have served us well in dealing effectively with many debt problems. These include the need to ensure that debt resolution is a joint responsibility of all debtors and creditors; to recognize that furthering development is the ultimate objective of debt resolution and that debt relief should not detract from ODA [overseas development aid]; to strengthen transparency and accountability among all parties; to promote responsible lending practices, including learning from the past by looking at the legitimacy of existing claims based on how the loans were given and in which gender perspectives are taken into account; to improve debt management and national ownership of policies; and to facilitate equivalent treatment of all creditors.

46. We acknowledge the need to address all relevant issues regarding external debt problems, including through new ad-hoc forums with technical support from the BWIs [Bretton Woods Institutions] and the United Nations, to consider inter alia, a sovereign debt work-out mechanism, including assessing the legitimacy of debt, enhancing the transparency and accountability of procedures of existing mechanisms, and the possibility of crafting more permanent debt mediation or arbitration mechanisms

That such language could even be considered by nations of the world makes evident the amazing accomplishments of those working for the cancellation of unjust, overwhelming and illegitimate debt. See www.jubileousa.org.

D'Escoto's remarks on World Food Day

In June, Maryknoll Fr. Miguel d'Escoto was elected president of the United Nations' General Assembly; he began his one-year term in September. Following is the address he gave to the General Assembly on the occasion of World Food Day, celebrated this year on October 23.

Our gathering highlights our determination to take on the urgent challenge of a confluence of crises that require courageous, simultaneous and mutually reinforcing solutions. In marking World Food Day, we are dealing with the global crises of food security, climate change, energy and the global economic meltdown. We see them as inter-related problems that all require complex, long-term solutions.

Put another way, we are dealing with global problems that require sustained global governance. ... Each of these might fade from the headlines for a short period, but they all will be with us for the foreseeable future.

This meeting also highlights the fact that world leaders, not to mention the billions of people around the world who have entrusted the United Nations with their wellbeing, are turning to the United Nations for solutions. People have lost confidence in quick fixes, in narrowly based solutions, often orchestrated by the very people and institutions that have created the problems in the first place.

There is a fresh awakening to the need for global action. There is a renewed awareness that the UN, for all its shortcomings, remains our only truly representative forum that has the capacity, the expertise and the universality to address our problems with everyone's interests in mind and at heart.

Yes, we must overcome our shortcomings for sure. It has taken decades of failed development policies to realize that we must put people first, that we must listen to the voices of people most affected by the poverty that is shocking in its global dimensions. The top-down approach has enabled lopsided development and outrageous abuses. It has led to the lamentable situation where we are today.

The shameful deprivation of billions of people is inexcusable, since it is a man-made problem caused by the dominant culture's perverse logic of selfishness. It is clearly within our power to eradicate poverty, but we allow it to persist. The recent downturns, we are told by the ILO [International Labour Organization] and the FAO [Food and Ag-

riculture Organization], are tipping tens of millions more into debilitating poverty.

The welcome end of the Cold War was not without collateral damage. The values of responsibility, of dignity, compassion and solidarity were suddenly considered obsolete, the values of the losers.

Today it is becoming clear that unfettered neo-liberal policies, and the culture of aggressive individualism that they engender, contradict the values and principles of all our religious and ethical-philosophical traditions. And they clash with our innate common sense.

People are calling for an end to this culture of indifference to the welfare of others. We are seeing how these economic policies have accelerated global warming and the plunder of natural resources. We see the madness of converting crops into fuel to sustain gluttonous energy appetites. To perpetuate this culture is to continue to betray our most sacred values and principles and lead us to the most terrible consequences for people and our fragile planet.

Solutions proposed within the existing economic crisis are worsening the problems. In fact, the climatic crisis obeys the same logic as the food, energy and financial crises: the logic of policies based on short-term profits and speculation for maximum accumulation of wealth. The crises cannot be fixed one by one by technology alone. They require cross-cutting, global solutions.

Most of us here today are convinced that our problems do not have to provoke wider human tragedy. But we must overcome the moral mediocrity that keeps us from making the heroic sacrifices that the magnitude of the problems requires. We must address the underlying patterns of consumptions that are clearly unsustainable. Realism, if not our conscience, should tell us that all humanity is in the same boat and that we will all sink or sail together.

... [For] the complex problems we face, [w]e must seek solutions that transcend narrowly defined national interests and serve the good of all our peoples, nations as well as our fragile planet. We must draw on the resources and good will of all Member States to keep their promises in these trying times.

I reiterate my appeal to donor countries that, rather than reducing assistance to developing countries, they should triple the funds available to avoid prolonged human catastrophes. We are reminded today that donors have raised only \$2.2 billion of

the \$22 billion pledged this year to promote global food security alone. Let us not wait until the poor and excluded take to the streets before we meet our responsibilities.

[T]he current crises should serve to convince

us, once and for all, that profound and unavoidable changes must be made in the global economic system and in the values or, rather, anti-values driving it.

... Let us make sure that a strong UN be at the center of this transformation.

Ecology: Cosmos and the Creed

In August, Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ addressed the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men during their annual assembly. The address joined key elements of the 4th century Nicene Creed and insights from current theological reflection arising from scientific exploration. Following are a few thoughts inspired by Johnson's work along with some of the rich expressions with which she graced her address.

The creed begins by citing the central tenet of Christian faith, "We believe in one God." It goes on to affirm that the first signature act of God is to create all that exists. In beautifully crafted language Johnson lays before her audience a moving account of creation that embraces the entire gamut of existence. Underlying her work is the call to every generation to work toward understanding the ineffable work of God with ever increasing depth and scope.

The way our ancestors perceived the universe to have been fashioned shaped philosophical thought and provided the backbone for moral and ethical development. In times past, the cosmos was understood to have been created once and for all with each being separately formed by a wise creator. This way of understanding the cosmos supported the development of a body of fixed and definite norms that shaped and guided human activity and interplay.

The period in which we live today is gifted with a body of scientific knowledge that makes it possible to understand more than was ever before understood about how the universe or cosmos was formed. This provides a structure for imagining a different dynamism for capturing the way God's creative work came to be. This entails imagining the profound mystery of God's self revelation in creation becoming forever more fully manifest through the long, long journey of evolutionary unfolding. The whole of creation arises in an interdependent, sequential fashion. In this framework relationship is the central pattern and indicator of what is fun-

damentally important in human behavior: to be in right relationship, to honor all relationships.

Today, we are in awe before the realization that the cosmos is set upon an irreversible trajectory in which the indescribable holiness of the creator is always with us, and always ahead of us, luring the whole creation into the future, where God's fullness is realized in the mystery of tomorrow and in the promise of the resurrection.

Johnson notes that unpredictability marks the entire unfolding process, allowing for new forms of life and new conditions to emerge. In the emergent evolutionary universe, we should not be surprised to find divine creativity hovering very close to turbulence. This is the cosmic characteristic that nourishes hope in the newness of what lies ahead, in the unforeseen surprise.

We begin to grasp that creation is valued by God for its own sake and not exclusively for the sake of humanity. Every part of creation is important and has a role to fulfill in bringing forth what is yet to come. It is no wonder Pope John Paul II wrote, "Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation." Now the great commandment to love your neighbor as yourself extends to include all members of the life community. Our neighbor is the entire community of life, the entire universe.

This leads Johnson into theological dialogue with the gospel story of Jesus. Jesus, who was internally far ahead of his historical time, valued relationship more than the law when the law's content or practice was not supportive of life and joy. Casting the Word of God into the contemporary moment, Johnson writes, God in Christ is to be found, trying to bring about joy in the beloved creation even here, even now.

In the final section of the paper, Johnson writes eloquently of the Holy Spirit and poignantly of the Church. Finally, she concludes repeating the words, "We believe in one God."

Resources

1. **Enough for All: Seventh Annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days, March 13-16, 2009:** The theme of the 2009 annual gathering of the ecumenical Christian community, "Enough for All," will connect workshops on climate change, migration and poverty in the U.S. and around the world. Join faith-based advocates and activists in Washington, D.C., March 13-16 as we discuss the abundance of our world and how it can be allocated in a way that is fair and just for all creation. \$160 including two lunches and Sunday reception. Registration after February 13 will be \$175. Scholarships are available. Visit www.advocacydays.org, write info@advocacydays.org or call 202-386-6397 for more information. If you are interested in attending, please let the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns know: 202-832-1780, ogc@maryknoll.org.
2. **Earth Charter Initiative Handbook:** Launched in 2000, the Earth Charter has been implemented and promoted by social activists, teachers, entrepreneurs, religious leaders, international law experts, and leaders in government. This handbook has been prepared as a general guide for all those who are working with the Earth Charter around the world. It provides basic information on the origin, nature and purpose of the Earth Charter, the structure and mission of the Earth Charter Initiative (ECI), and the organization, goals and policies of ECI. In addition to the handbook, the Earth Charter International website contains much more information on how to get involved, on current Earth Charter activities and events, and on relevant reading materials. Go to www.earthcharterinaction.org to download the 72-page handbook in either English or Spanish.
3. **"Migration, My Home, My Story" video competition:** Sponsored by Justice for Immigrants, a project of the USCCB, and the Jesuit Conference. Three winners will be chosen for their creative, nonpartisan video which illustrates the migration reality in their family and/or community. It should also include some aspect(s) of Catholic social teaching on migration. 3-7 minutes in length. Creativity and video quality will be considered. First prize winners will receive a free flight, registration, and lodging for the Ignatian Family Teach-In on immigration March 14-17, 2009 in Washington, D.C. Individuals are requested to post their videos on YouTube and send the link, along with their name, school or parish affiliation, email address, phone number, and home address to jfivideo@jesuit.org no later than January 5, 2009. Individuals across the country will be invited to weigh in on the vote electronically during the week of Jan. 15-23, 2009. For more information, go to www.justiceforimmigrants.org.
4. **Christian Peace Witness for Iraq, April 29-30, 2009:** One hundred days after the start of the next administration, Christian Peace Witness for Iraq (CPWI) will hold its third annual gathering in Washington, D.C. Join us for witness, worship nonviolent action and advocacy to call on policymakers to end the war and occupation in Iraq, support a comprehensive peace process, end the policy and practice of torture and meet human needs at home. If you would like to join in the events around the CPWI, either in Washington or in your own community, check the website at www.christianpeacewitness.org. Contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns for more information about the Washington event: 202-832-1780, ogc@maryknoll.org.
5. **The Not On Our Watch Christian Companion: Biblical Reflections on the Mission to End Genocide in Darfur and Beyond:** This resource provides biblical reflections on ethical issues as well as practical guidance for action to create change in Darfur. Each chapter constitutes a weekly study session designed to guide group discussion and reflection. Each session includes a biblical passage for reflection, a lesson applying the passage to Darfur, a weekly action step, and vignettes by refugees and people from many walks of life who have awakened to the problem of genocide and become active in the Darfur movement. \$7.50. For more information, email book@darfurchristianaction.org; visit <http://darfurchristianaction.org>; or write the ENOUGH Project, 1225 Eye Street NW, Suite 307, Washington, D.C., 20005; 202-682-1611.