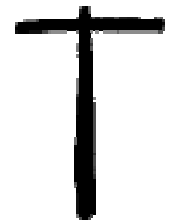


Franciscan PRAYER and PRAXIS

Justice Peace and Creation Network News



Issue 12 - March 2009

As members of the Society of St. Francis of the European Province, we are inspired by St Francis and St Clare to *compassionate action* grounded in *contemplative prayer*.

Contributions to this Newsletter come from First and Third Order members of the Society of St. Francis

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Averil Swanton elected to Board of Directors of Franciscans International

It is with delight that the JPIC Network congratulates (on behalf of the whole Province) **Averil Swanton** who has been nominated to join the Board of Directors of Franciscans International (www.franciscansinternational.org). It will involve two meetings a year either in Geneva, New York or Bangkok.

The first ever SSF/TSSF representative, she said, "I am both excited and a little overawed to be their first Anglican, and a lay woman to boot. It was Dick Bird with Dorothy Brooker who put my name forward."

Vanya Walker-Leigh, a Third Order member who is an economist and journalist based in Malta, is also a volunteer agricultural adviser to Franciscans International. She helped set the ball in motion, suggesting that a SSF/TSSF presence would be a positive way to facilitate the Catholic and Anglican Franciscan Orders working together as one family.

In the September 5th 2008 edition of FI, Vanya and Attilio Galimberti OSF wrote an article "Food for the hungry – at last?" The entire article can be found at: <http://www.franciscansinternational.org/news/article.php?id=1485>

Caroline Ugbo (Guilford) on "Understanding Islam" - Hilfield Friary retreat

The first thing to say is that if you ever have a chance to hear Chris Brewer speaking on this topic, please take that opportunity. We had three and a half days packed with information, which was so presented that it had to lead to a greater understanding. I came away stunned by the amount

I had absorbed, much of which I am still processing, but I feel that I am only at the beginning of a

journey. Luckily Chris has written a book of the same title, **Understanding Islam** (SCM Press), which I know I can refer to when I want to move forward. Chris is a trained teacher and has also studied Christian and Islamic Theology, so he can answer questions from any perspective.

He started with the Muslim theology of creation, how we were all created in Harmony with God, all Muslim (from the same root as salaam, Peace). The dignity given to man is that he has the freedom to choose to obey or to disobey and break this harmony. From the beginning there have been many revelations of God through the prophets, but the last (not the only) was the word of God to Mohammed. These words written in the Quran are the equivalent of the word of God, made incarnate in Jesus for Christians. And from this point we started to explore the different place from which the Muslims are looking at and giving obedience to the same God. So much of the message is the same but lived out from another starting point.

Covered were the Five Pillars of Islam, how the story of Islam from Abraham is demonstrated in the Hajj, the history of Muslims in relationship with other faiths, the ethical stances that govern their day to day living with their fellow human beings, and the divisions which have occurred in the *umma*, the family or brotherhood of the faith. So much of what we see is the living out of the Muslim faith, not the harmony from which they believe they have come and to which they would like to return. But Muslims and others might look at Christians and see the distortions and not what we too are trying to live out. The weekend was salutary as well as informative.

The hospitality of the Project at Hilfield was as simple and warm as ever and there was much joy in sharing both tasks and ideas.

JPIC Links Conference "Speaking truth to power" 15th - 17th May

This year not only Religious, but Associates and Third Order members are invited to this weekend of prayer, conversations, skill sharing, workshops and learning. Rev. Peter Barnett from the Pilsdon Community will be one of the speakers. Residential and non-residential available. For more information contact Br. Hugh SSF at Hilfield Friary or Nancy Adams (address at end of newsletter).

David Owen (Oxford) on "Darwin and Faith"

"Churches celebrate Darwin!" was the theme of a one-day conference here in Oxford, organised by one of our local clergy, to celebrate Charles Darwin's 200th, birthday. Several of us from the Oxford Area were there to join the 100 or so participants who had come from the churches in our Deanery on a cold snowy day to listen and confer on this very topical issue.

Is Darwin a friend or an enemy of Christianity? Has evolution undermined belief in a Creator God? Has science proved that the Biblical account of creation is untrue? Professor Keith Ward, a philosopher and theologian was the main speaker. He covered many of the issues raised by Darwin's seminal book "On the Origin of Species". Darwin argued that there is design in the universe—"generic Design", but not "specific design". The world is rational, and nature behaves according to certain clear-cut laws, eg gravity. The account of creation as found in Genesis is not a scientific account—it is to be understood, as St Augustine said, "figuratively". "Creationism" as presented largely in America is a comparatively recent idea, which opposes the theory of evolution, which most intelligent Christians accept. Most of us, including most tertiary, find that there is no conflict between our faith and evolution. Physics as a science is more open to religious and philosophical ideas than biology. Those who attack Christianity because Genesis seems to encourage mankind's domination over nature misunderstand what the Bible says. Humankind's place is that of a steward and gardener. The destruction of tropical rain forests is not the result of bad Biblical teaching, but aggressive modern technology and human greed.

Another speaker, Dr. Andy Gosler, a lecturer in Conservation Biology and a local Churchwarden, explained that there was much that we could learn from Darwin. He also showed that nature is not always subject to aggressive competition between and within species. Cooperation is as much a characteristic of nature as competition. Science and religion are two different aspects of truth, and need each other.

The Rev. Tess Ward, a local Hospital Chaplain and author of "The Celtic Wheel of the Year", led our worship, which was supplemented by readings from Hildegard of Bingen and Teilard de Chardin. This exciting day had a lot for us as Franciscans to ponder and will hopefully lead to wider discussion in our Order on Francis and Creation.

...and a brief word on Carbon footprints!

Working out our own individual **carbon footprint** was the subject of our local Group meeting recently. We were helped to do this by the husband of one of our novices, who works for "**energizeoxford**", and who is a consultant in domestic energy auditing and carbon footprinting. He took us through a series of questions on our consumption of gas and electricity, travel, food, goods and services in order to work out carbon bottom line. This was not a competitive exercise, but

simply to help us to acknowledge the way in which our own personal consumption compares say with people in Africa or Asia. It was all very revealing!

2009 International Year of Reconciliation

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation. It invites concerned Governments and international and non-governmental organizations to support reconciliation processes among all societies.

So how do we respond? In view of the multiple and convergent crises affecting the world today, the prophetic voice of the churches is sorely needed, said Fr Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, who is the president of the 63rd session of the UN general assembly. Christians need to speak out in clear prophetic language because those crises are rooted in a more fundamental moral crisis.

While truth is an obvious precondition for reconciliation, reconciliation is in turn a precondition for lasting peace, which stresses the dilemma that societies often face between justice on the one hand and peace on the other. But for many, there is no possible choice between justice and peace as the latter cannot be achieved without the former. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Inter-religious Council of Liberia are exemplary faith-based contributions to healing and reconciliation.

Churches face the challenge of reconciling societies fragmented as a result of a greed-driven global economic system. Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican's permanent observer to the UN in Geneva, has stressed the role of forgiveness - a transformative inner change of the person - in reconciliation processes. Highlighting that the word "forgiveness" is not even mentioned in the UN general assembly resolution declaring 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation, Tomasi affirmed forgiveness' critical role in reconciliation. It opens doors to possibilities that politics alone cannot reach.

What an opportunity this is for us as Franciscans worldwide! Our Anglican Communion, if it is to survive, is in serious need of reconciling processes leading us to transformation of our relationships with each other and with our world. Within our Province, the Anglican and Episcopal Churches continue to experience serious rifts around issues of sexuality and gender equality. Within our communities there are racial tensions; tensions between faith groups and tensions about issues to do with asylum and refugees.

Our challenge this year as followers of St. Francis who walked in the footsteps of Jesus, the ultimate Reconciler, is to be a reconciling presence in our homes, our churches and in our communities in an effort to restore 'right relationships' and bring about a transformation in the way we live together within our common humanity and within creation.

2001-2010 International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World

We are nearly at the end of this decade to strengthen the global movement for a culture of peace which was declared by the United Nations in its Resolution 59/143 8 years ago. At that time it invited non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and groups, educational institutions, artists and the media to support the Decade for the benefit of every child of the world.

But the reality appears to be that more children are suffering the effects of violence in the form of war than a decade ago. Innocent children are suffering around the world.

Some current examples are in the **Congo**, as reported by **Médecins Sans Frontières** www.condition-critical.org/msf-activities and in other areas of **civil conflict** as reported by the **Social Science Research Council** and **UNICEF**:

www.programs.ssrc.org/children
www.unicef.org/protection/index_armedconflict.html

World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel

The World Council of Churches invites member churches and related organizations to join a week of advocacy and action for a just peace in Palestine and Israel. Those who share the hope of justice are invited to take peaceful actions, together, to create a common international public witness.

Participants are requested to plan their activities around these points:

1. **Pray** with churches living under occupation, using a special prayer from Jerusalem.
2. **Educate** about actions that make for peace and about facts on the ground that do not, especially, settlements in occupied territory.
3. **Advocate** with political leaders using ecumenical policies that promote peace with justice.

For more helpful resources and more information:
www.worldweekforpeace.org

Changing Minds - Changing Lives

Paul Tennant (formerly Br Oswin Paul) recommends the website "**PROGRESSIO: Changing Minds - Changing Lives**" at www.progressio.org.uk - an international development charity working for justice and the eradication of poverty. It works in partnership with civil groups and governments in:

- Latin America
- Caribbean
- Africa
- Middle East
- South East Asia
- UK and Europe

Their approach combines advocacy work to secure equitable policies with the strengthening of community-based organisations that represent the interests of the poor and improve their quality of life.

"Franciscans and the Financial Crisis: What can we do to help?"

David B. Couturier, OFM has written an article for the **Franciscan Action Network** with this title. Although it is written from an American perspective, the financial crisis is being faced by people worldwide and the historical and Franciscan perspective he offers has no boundaries.

Acknowledging that "one of the greatest dangers of this current economic crisis is that people will try to face its challenges alone, he encourages the forming of "Common Security Clubs" with a simple 3 stage model for coming together which includes: i) to **learn and reflect**; ii) to provide **mutual aid and local action**; and iii) to engage in further **social action**. He then presents us with a challenge:

"Franciscans have a long history of accompanying the poor through the most difficult of economic times... (but) this crisis demands something more from us. It calls on us to address the origins of this global financial meltdown. It begs us to name the spasms of fear than an ideology of scarcity requires and replace them with a theological vision of a God-given abundance... Out God calls us into a relational economy that places a premium on compassion, not aggression as the driving force of economic relations. As Franciscans we can use our tradition to develop a more reliable and common security that will build peace, eradicate the most severe forms of poverty and protect the environment. It's time for Franciscans to gather their friends and neighbours to talk about economic challenges and concerns and to find a faithful pathway out of anxiety and greed to a more relational economy."

If you would like a copy of the full article you may download it (link below) or send a S.A.E to the JPIC Editor (address at end of Newsletter) who will send you a photocopy.

www.franciscanaction.org/Upload_Module/upload/Franciscans%20and%20the%20Financial%20Crisis_Couturier_Feb%202009.pdf

A few EVENTS - March - June 2009

Date: Saturday 28th March

Event: "**Rally to End Global Greed**"

Time and Venue: London

In the run up to the G20 meeting in London in April, organisations all over the UK are uniting. Justice and equality must be at the heart of the solution to the recession, and we must all work together to build a low carbon world!

Date: Thursday 2nd April
Event: "Globalisation and Human Dignity" with Professor Wil Derkse Obl S B
Time and Venue: Sarum College - Salisbury Cathedral Close 10 am - 4.30 pm

Date: Friday 3rd April
Event: "Faith and Politics: Europe and the United States" with Riccardo Larini & Dori Rockefeller
Time and Venue: Sarum College - Salisbury Cathedral Close 10 am - 4.30 pm

Date: Tuesday 21st April
Event: "Franciscan Spirituality for Everyone" with Brother Samuel SSF
Time and Venue: Sarum College - Salisbury Cathedral Close 10 am - 4.30 pm

Date: Friday 24th - Saturday 25th April
Event: "Peace History - lessons from the past - hope for the future"
Venue: Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1
This has been organised by the International Peace Bureau and the Movement for the Abolition of War in association with the Imperial War Museum.

Date: 15th – 17th May
Event: "JPIC Links Conf.: Speaking truth to power"
Venue: The Emmaus Centre
For more information: contact Editor at address below or Br Hugh SSF at Hilfield Friary.

Date: Saturday 30th May
Event: "Faith in Dark Places" with David Rhodes
Time and Venue: Sarum College - Salisbury Cathedral Close 10 am - 4.30 pm

UN and Ecumenical Days / Weeks

MARCH

- **International Women's Day** - March 8th and **UN Day for Women's Rights and International Peace** - http://www.unac.org/en/news_events/un_days/women1.asp
- **Mothering Sunday** - www.themothersunion.org
- **Women's World Day of Prayer** – 7th March www.worlddayofprayer.net
- **Tearfund Sunday** 2nd March - www.tearfund.org
- **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** - 21st March - <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/racial/>
- **World Water Day** - 22nd March –

- <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/>
- http://www.unesco.org/water/water_celebrations
- **World Meteorological Day** - 23rd March - <http://www.wmo.int/pages/wmd/>
- **Fairtrade Fortnight** - www.fairtrade.org.uk

APRIL

- **Save the Children Week** - www.savethechildren.org.uk
- **(UN) World Health Day** - 7th April - <http://www.who.int/world-health-day/>

MAY

- **Christian Aid Week** - 11th - 17th May www.christianaid.org.uk
- **(UN) International Day of Families** - 15th May - <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/>
- **Not for Sale Sunday** - www.notforsalesunday.org
- **(UN) International Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development** - 21st May - http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/cultural_diversity/
- **Global Day of Prayer** - 11th May www.globaldayofprayer.co.uk

JUNE

- **World Environment Day** - 5th June - <http://www.unep.org/wed/2008/english/>
- **Environment Sunday** - A Pack of Worship Resources is available from A ROCHA UK at <http://en.arochoa.org/ukconsunday/index2.html>
- **International Day of UN Peacekeepers** - 29th June

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Events and Campaigns - Calendar of upcoming events on the TSSF JPIC Website: www.jpcc-sec.org.uk

If there are JPIC events in your area that you would like to have posted on the 'Events' page of the JPIC website so that others may be made aware of them, or if there are any other issues you would like to see raised, please contact the Editor at the address below.

Please send your contributions for the next edition of the **JPIC Newsletter** before the 30th of June 2009 to:

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