

"The Justice and Peace Workers Asia-Pacific Forum is a proactive network of solidarity among women and men working with Catholic Justice and Peace organizations and affiliated groups and organizations in the region..."

A Silent Moment

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A Silent Moment

Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in me a wonder at the wisdom and power of Your Father and ours.
Receive my prayer as part of my service of the Lord
who enlists me in God's own work for justice.

Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in me a hunger for peace: peace in the world,
peace in my home, peace in myself.

Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in me a joy responsive to the Father's joy.
I seek His will so I can serve with gladness, singing and love.

Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in me the joy and love and peace
it is right to bring to the manger of my Lord.
Raise in me, too,
sober reverence for the God who acted there,
hearty gratitude for the life begun there,
and spirited resolution to serve the Father and Son.

I pray in the name of Jesus Christ,
whose advent I hail.

Amen

~ The Catholic Doors

<http://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/english2/p00788.htm>

What's going on in Asia

Hong Kong

"Gifts from Angels" - Concern for the Economically Exploited

The Hong Kong Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs (HKCCLA) and the Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Catholic Diocese (HKJP) will join hands in the activity "Gifts from Angels" to show concern for the grassroots cleaners who are suffering because of low wages.

On 15 December 2007, the 2 commissions together with 30 volunteers will visit cleaners who live in Lower Wong Tai Sin Estate, a public housing estate. These cleaners face wage exploitation and barely earn enough to sustain basic living. To express gratitude and respect to the labourers in the festive season the commissions will hand out plastic gloves, which can act as protective gear in the cleaners' daily work.

Sources: HKJP, HKCCLA

HKJP Commemorates "unofficial" Bishop

The suspicious death of Bishop John Han Dingxiang, who has spent more than 20 years of his life in prison, came as a surprise and rang the alarm of religious freedom in China again. HKJP has organized a memorial service and a signature campaign after his death. The Commission stresses that there are still many Catholics, especially religious priests, facing persecution in mainland China.

HKJP organized a Mass on 2 November, All Souls Day, to commemorate the bishop of the underground Church who died on 9 September 2007 while in detention. Nearly 200 people attended the liturgy at St. Bonaventure Church in Hong Kong. A 20-minute video of Bishop Han, made around Easter 2005, was screened. One layperson, Mable Ng Yuet-mui observed that "Many people would not know or believe such things (persecution) happen, as they are clouded by China's economic prosperity.... The video gave me a real picture of an unofficial bishop's situation."

The Commission has also collected signatures to request the Chinese authorities to explain the sudden death of Bishop Han and to lift measures that violate religious freedom and freedom of assembly. According to L'Osservatore Romano, the official Vatican daily, only hours after his death, Bishop Han's body was cremated and his ashes buried without any religious rite. The faithful were not able to pay their last respects and the bishop's tomb was under surveillance. In view of this, HKJP requests the Chinese government to lift the surveillance at the tomb, enabling his relatives and friends to pay respects and; allow his close members to arrange memorial service for the bishop as well as to choose the bishop's burial place.

According to the United States based Cardinal Kung Foundation, Bishop Han was confined to an apartment of a police unit for 2 years until September 2005, when he was secretly moved to an unknown location until his death.

Sources: HKJP, Sunday Examiner

Workshop on Christian Management Ethics

On 2 December 2007, HKCCLA invited Christian employers and Professor Dennis McCann, visiting professor with Hong Kong Baptist University who has rich experience in business ethics and religious ethics, to share how business executives can balance business growth and Christian faith.

The organizer hoped to provide insight for Christian executives, who face severe dilemma between company's profit and employees' benefits: on one hand, the fierce market competition seems to command "profit above all", yet the teaching of Jesus commands the faithful to love one another.

Through case studies and sharing, the workshop aimed to equip Christian executives with applicable principles from Catholic Social Teachings to face the challenges of the business world.

Source: HKCCLA

India

Vatican's message to Hindus on the Feast of Diwali

Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue sent a greeting to all Hindus of the world at their most important feast, Diwali (feast of the light), calling for urgent attention and priority of education of believers of different religious traditions in developing good relations.

The message reminds both Hindu and Christian communities of the importance of giving good formation to their believers, first in knowing the full dimensions and depths of their own religion, then, to encourage them to know other believers. It also warned that ignorance is the principal enemy in the life of believers, thus the importance of maintaining good relationship (building bonds) among different religions through dialogue, nourished by regular meetings and collaborative actions, as well as an attitude of mutual respect, was also emphasized.

It also gives a reminder that belief and freedom always goes together, insisting that there can be no coercion in religion: no one can be forced to believe and anyone who wishes to believe can be prevented from doing so.

In the conclusion and final greeting for the festival, it states the Catholic Church's willingness to collaborate with the Hindu community to promote harmony in society and peace in the world.

According to Indian Monsignor Felix Machado, undersecretary of the council for the past 14 years, this is the 13th annual Vatican letter greeting Hindus for the 3-day festival, which began this year on 9 November.

Msgr. Machado also said the Vatican hopes that bishops and parish priests in their respective dioceses and parishes in India and other countries will share this letter of good wishes to local Hindus as well as Christians. He revealed that the Council has also sent the letter to embassies of countries with sizeable Hindu populations, such as India, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Great Britain, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and USA.

Full Text of the message is available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20071105_diwali_en.html

Source: Sunday Examiner, Documentation for Action Groups in Asia (DAGA)

Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai

Archbishop Oswald Gracias, 63, of the Archdiocese of Mumbai, was appointed Cardinal by his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and formally installed at a ceremony on 24 November 2007 at the Vatican.

His Holiness reminded the newly created cardinals to aspire only in sharing of Christ passion, following the footsteps of Jesus spending his whole life for others, and emphasised that all actions should be in the spirit of service, not of dominion.

Cardinal Gracias is the fourth Cardinal of Mumbai and the tenth of India. He is presently the President of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) Latin Rite, the Chairman of CBCI Commission for Social Communications, as well as the President of Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Mumbai.

Sources: AsiaNews, Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI)

Activities of the NCJPD

In the past few months, the National Commission for Justice, Peace and Development (NCJPD) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India has been busy in organizing and conducting animation programmes at the national, regional and local levels.

In July, the Commission conducted Training of Trainers (TOT) programme on the Rights Based Approach (RBA) for the 7 states in the North East Region, where situations of conflicts are related to economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights. There were 28 participants from various dioceses and religious congregations from the region. Another RBA training was held in Chennai in August for the empowerment of women. Thirty-five participants from the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (DMI) and the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (MMI) participated, were motivated by their experience to use the RBA, and some volunteered to translate the training manual into local languages for wider use. Both these trainings were conducted by NCJPD Executive Secretary Fr. Nithiya Sagayam and Advocacy Officer/Hotline Extension Worker, Mr. Antony Arulraj, as a follow-up of the previous RBA Trainings in 2004 and 2006 which were jointly organized by NCJPD, Asian

Center for the Progress of Peoples (ACPP) and Human Rights Council of Australia (HRCA).

The Christians of the Raigarh district have felt the adverse effect of various factions and fundamentalist elements on welfare of the poor and needy, as well as people's apathy towards the minority in the State of Chhattisgarh. Thus, the Most Rev. Paul Toppo, Bishop of Raigarh, invited Fr. Nithiya to give a 2-day animation to priests, religious and laity of the diocese on Peace-building initiatives in August. Fr. Nithiya spoke on welfare of all (Sarvodaya) through welfare of the least (Antyodaya) and on conflict transformation. Others, such as police commissioner and officials, deputy collector and Muslim and Hindu leaders and journalists also spoke on the duty of every citizen to work for welfare of all. As a result of the workshop, an Inter-religious Peace Committee was formed in the district.

Another important involvement of the NCJPD was on Right to Food. Apart from the Justice Sunday Message on "Freedom from Hunger" and related activities, the Commission also launched a nation-wide lobbying and campaigning on Public Distribution System (PDS) and Below Poverty Line (BPL) to raise public awareness of rights and privileges over Fair Price Shops (FPS) and to give special focus to vulnerable groups like tribals, dalits and slum and rural dwellers. This campaign started in Delhi region on 3 October, with an orientation programme for the 4 dioceses under Delhi region, led by Fr. Nithiya, Fr. James and Fr. Dominic Bosco. There were around 30 self-help group animators who participated and committed to involve in giving similar training in their respective dioceses.

Source: NCJPD

South Asian Colloquium on Justice, Peace and Development

The National Commission for Justice, Peace and Development (NCJPD) of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of India (CBCI) organized the first South Asian Colloquium of the Commissions for Justice and Peace at the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC), Bangalore on 16-19 September 2007. The aim is to reflect on specific concerns of the sub-region, that do not find sufficient attention at the continental level, such as discrimination based on caste and ethnicity, oppression of women, extreme poverty minority status of Christianity, and the ill effects of globalization and growing militarization.

The Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Lopez Quintana inaugurated the Colloquium, highlighting the need to play a prophetic role in human rights situation and peace-building in the society, while the closing address by Cardinal Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Seventy participants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India, including 14 bishops, and lay and religious directors of Regional Forum, Theologians and social activists discussed about effects of globalization, its relevance to the Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in South Asia and structures of sin today, as well as discrimination and

women, and came up with country-wide action plans. In a statement, the participants expressed their resolve to be committed to respond to the discrimination of dalits, tribals, backward castes and children and women.

Participants acknowledged that CST provides a lot of scope for justice and peace work, but it was observed that not much have been implemented and that it has been hidden from the laity. Thus, a strategy should be planned to ensure that lay people are introduced to CST and talk up the implementation.

It is also the responsibility of all to ensure the setting up and functioning of JPDC cells at National Conferences, regional Forums, Diocese and Parishes.

Three issues were identified by the NCJPD to deal with urgently:

1. The Church should play a proactive role to ensure dalit Christians get their constitutional rights in India, and set a trend for similar process in other countries. The Church should address the issue of tribals who are alienated, displaced from their life sources and live in poverty to ensure they are living in dignity as children of God.
2. The Church should also ensure a 50% affirmative action to women within the structures of the Church to become a model to the society and state.
3. The Church should play a proactive role in addressing issues of religious and linguistic minorities and ensure their constitutional rights.

A South Asian Forum was initiated from this Colloquium to take up specific issues at the South Asian level, The Chairman of NCJPD Bishop Yvon Ambrose assured the participants that this network will continue to address the issues effectively through various mechanisms in building a just and peaceful society.

During the Colloquium, the NCJPD also released an Interactive training manual on the RBA in a CD. It contains International Bill of Rights and various Human Rights documents, exercises as well as a Special talk, "God is Weeping" delivered by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the World Social Forum in Nairobi (Which the JPDC Delegation attended in January 2007). The parts on human rights in the CD has been jointly prepared by the Australian Human Rights Council and the Asian Center for Progress of Peoples (ACPP).

Proceedings and the CD-ROM are available from the Commission (e-mail: jpdcommission@gmail.com)

Source: NCJPD

Japan

On-line Resource on Article 9

In the course of a joint Australia-Japan workshop entitled "Searching for Equitability and Peace in the Post 9-11 world: exploring alternatives for Australia and Japan", the question of Article 9 of Japan's constitution came up frequently and discussed in depth. The organizer, Nanzan University, thus issued a paper entitled "Some

considerations regarding Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution”.

Three aspects were discussed in the paper, namely 1) Article 9 and the Asia-Pacific Region, 2) Constitutional Change and the Integration of Japanese Forces into the US Military Machine, and 3) The Real Foundations for a Sustainable Peace. In the first aspect, the discussion has suggested that there is a significant degree of tension between Japan and its Asian neighbours, and that this tension derives in part from Japan’s own actions. Nevertheless, Japan’s pacifist constitution has acted as a brake on the tension. Second part of the paper demonstrated that a constitutional change would result in greater dependence on the United States. It is contrary to certain belief that the constitutional change could be a means of gaining independence from the United States. The real foundations for a sustainable peace, proposed in the last section of the paper, can be achieved by placing less emphasis on closer alignment with the US and more on developing multiple relationships of mutuality and fairness as middle powers.

Based on the above discussion, the workshop concluded that Japanese security can only be achieved by the establishment of a sustainable order in East Asia. Such can be promoted by developing multi-level relationships between countries, including cultural exchange programs, joint civil society activities, etc. The workshop has reaffirmed that Article 9 and a commitment to promote similar articles in the constitutions of other countries would send a powerful message of peaceful intent.

To view the discussion paper, please go to: <http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/ISE/ajworkshop/>

Source: Local source

Pakistan

Pakistan Catholic Bishops Call for End of Emergency

On 23 November 2007, the Pakistan Catholic Bishops’ Conference (PCBC), on behalf of the 1.5 million Catholics in the country, issued a press statement condemning the imposition of emergency and other related measures authorized by President Pervez Musharraf.

The Bishops observed with deep concern that the situation after the imposition of emergency on 3 November has worried Pakistanis, at home and abroad, about the stability and peaceful transition of democracy. The Bishops expressed their shock and condemnation over the attack on civil society for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

PCBC believes that in order to achieve stable and meaningful democracy in the country, the government should make effort to reconcile with political parties. The bishops deem the role of civil society is as important: members of the civil society must be allowed to play their respective roles in building consensus so as to bring about a peaceful inter-religious country.

Their requests were echoed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, who wrote to Dr. Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State asking her to consider PCBC’s recommendation in formulating policy toward Pakistan.

Source: The National Commission of Justice and Peace

Overview of Emergency Situation

At the time of the imposition of emergency in Pakistan on 3 November, the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) issued an overview of the situation to help the network understand the situation better, for appropriate actions.

The report spells out the background and effects of the emergency, emphasising on the uncertainty of the period, and the fact that it was signed by the Chief of Army staff, and the implications of the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) on basic human rights. There was also an analysis of the situation after emergency was imposed, including implications on the independence of Judiciary, “clean up” of the civil society, curbs on media, deployment of forces and response for the international community.

It concludes by re-iterating the local needs on the situation: continued public and international support for the resistance movement of judges and civil society, unhindered parliamentary elections and re-opening of all TV channels.

Full document, as well as updates are available upon request. Please contact ncjp@wol.net.pk.

Source: National Commission for Justice and Peace

Philippines

JPICC-AMRSP condemns Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Association of the Major Religious Superiors (JPICC-AMRSP) in the Philippines, in support of the Magkaisa Junk JPEPA Coalition, issued a statement to condemn Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA).

The statement criticized the national government has acted secretly, with undue haste and no public hearings and documents, before the treaty was transmitted to the Senate in 2006, insisting that JPEPA was an executive agreement. “These were clear signs that this treaty is nothing but a bad and immoral deal” it added. The statement also urged the Senators to perform their constitutional duty to reject the treaty.

JPICC-AMRSP pointed out several points where the “agreement” contradicts the Church’s fundamental teachings.

Please visit

<http://junkjpepa.blogspot.com/2007/10/jpicc-amrsp-solidarity-statement.html> for the full text of the statement.

Source: JPICC-AMRSP, Magkaisa Junk JPEPA Coalition

Thailand

Message on the Human Rights Day of the Catholic Church in Thailand

The Human Rights Day of the Catholic Church in Thailand is celebrated every year in November to raise awareness of Christians on the value and equal dignity of fellow human being according to the teaching of the Gospel, so that they will take part in the promotion of human rights and peace in society. This year it is on 18 November with the theme “Christians and Election”.

In his message, the Chairperson of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) Bishop Philip Banchong Chaiyara invited all Thai Catholics to fulfil their duty in building a just and democratic society, particularly in the general elections on 23 December 2007.

The message cited the celebration of the 80th birthday of His Majesty King Bhumiphol Adyayadej of Thailand in December, and general election at the 75th anniversary of Thai democracy on 23 December, as a meaningful opportunity for all Christians to fulfil their sacred duty of political participation, particularly to “mutually recover political and social unity” again.

The Bishop cited the virtues of democracy (participation) and relevant Church’s teachings (politics as a way to foster understanding and practise of political ethics and virtues and respect of human dignity, based on respect of human life, virtues and ultimate truth) to express the important role of Christians in building a mutual recovery and common development of a democratic system. It is further emphasized that life in democratic system depends on active participation of all parties, thus Thai Christians are repeatedly called to take part in this major political activity. It is a sacred duty that requires rational judgment, conscience and responsibility to elect good, moral, capable and sacrificing people for the good of all.

To conclude the message, all Christians are invited to pray together for God’s blessing on success of the general election and without violence, and for honesty and justice for democratic society of the country, that all may take part in the plan of salvation of the Kingdom of God forever.

The full statement is available at the CCJP web site: <http://www.jpThai.org/english/content/view/28/14/>

Source: CCJP Thailand

Issues of Concern/Events

Fighting the Scourge of Human Trafficking

On the 200th anniversary of the U.K.’s abolition of the slave trade, which led to the end of the transatlantic trafficking of human beings, women religious from 26 countries gathered to fight a new form of enslavement. The U.S. Embassy to the Holy See and the Italian Union of Major Superiors co-sponsored a five-day seminar in Rome titled “Building a Network: The Prophetic Role of Women Religious in the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons.” All continents were represented at the congress held on 15-20 October, which launched the International Network of Religious Against Trafficking in Persons (INRATIP),

dedicated to strengthening the global fight against sexual, labor and organ trafficking.

The United Nations Population Fund estimates that between 700,000 and 2 million women are trafficked annually across international borders.

Sources: One Spirit, Zenit

Holy See: New Forms of Poverty Have Appeared

The fight to eradicate poverty needs both economic and social policies, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See’s permanent observer to the United Nations said. Economic policies cannot be separated from social policies, otherwise, neither one nor the other will reach its respective goal.

New forms of poverty have appeared alongside more traditional ones, mainly characterized by wide income differences. The dearth of means among the weaker sectors of society has led to the loss of social relationships and networks needed to maintain personal integrity and dignity. The case of the elderly left on their own, the uninsured sick people, migrants unable to find work, women and children suffering from family breakdown, are some examples of people in precarious situations.

Source: One Spirit, Zenit

Justice and Peace Resources

Social Justice Sunday Statement and Materials

This year’s Social Justice Sunday Statement: “Who Is My Neighbour? Australia’s role as a global citizen,” deals with global issues of justice, development and peace.

Every person has a calling to be a good citizen, contributing to the life of the nation. Every nation is part of the international community, responsible for the global common good. So a nation is a global citizen, just as a person is, and nations and individual citizens have responsibilities beyond their national borders. What we do increasingly affects what happens to other people and their world. Actions and events outside our borders increasingly affect our lives at home.

The Statement is a call for Australians to act more in the interests of their neighbours who do not share their prosperity and security. It is an invitation to reconsider the way we live and act as individuals and as a nation; to ask whether our primary consideration should be our own increasing prosperity and security, regardless of the situation of our neighbours. The Statement is also a call to Christians to follow the way of Jesus in our globalised world with more hope and more heart; to work confidently to build the Church as the people of God and to view even the most alien Samaritan as our neighbour.

The Statement can be downloaded in full at: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/>

Sources: The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC)

ACPP/Pax Christi Campaign for Bethlehem

For the eighth consecutive year, people in Bethlehem will celebrate the birth of Christ in difficult climate. Nonetheless, many individuals and groups persist on searching for non-violent ways to voice their rights and work for a peaceful and just future.

Pax Christi International's partners in Palestine – the Arab Educational Institute, Library on Wheels for Non-violence and Peace, the Centre for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation and Wi'am Center jointly initiated a campaign, Christmas Peace and Justice Wishes and Prayers for Bethlehem 2007, to bring hope to the people in Bethlehem.

Messages collected will be printed and handed out as personal messages, educational materials (at schools), in the context of interfaith prayers and in the newly established peace house of the Arab Educational Institute opposite the Wall at Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem.

This campaign is supported by ACPP. Please visit <http://www.acpp.org/jpc/campaigns/sa071122.html> for details.

Sources: ACPP, Pax Christi

JPW Exchange Corner

Update on the next JPW Networking meeting

The JPW Co-organizing Team is pleased to announce that the next networking meeting of the Justice and Peace Workers (JPW) Asia-Pacific Forum will be held in the Philippines in mid-May 2008. The JPICC-AMRSP has agreed to host it in view of the importance of such gathering and international solidarity to the issues in the country. Discussions on the details and contents are on-going and will be confirmed in due time.

Meanwhile, the challenge of raising funds for the airfare for participants to travel to Manila, as well as local expenses for the meeting, continues. Suggestions on names and contact details of potential supporters, well as any financial contributions from individuals are most welcome. For details please contact hotline@acpp.org - your message will be forwarded to the JPW 2008 Co-organizing Team.

Source: ACPP

Philippine Fact Finding Mission

The widespread extra-judicial killings have caught wide attention, including the United Nations, European Union and private investors from the United States. The Asian Center for the Progress of Peoples (ACPP), took the opportunity of the second Hong Kong Fact Finding Mission organized by the Hong Kong Coalition for the Advancement of Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines, to further understand the local situation.

One of objectives of the mission is to understand the reasons and the development of extra-judicial killings after the first fact finding mission in 2006. During the 7-day mission, participants interviewed family members of

victims of extra-judicial killings and officials of various government departments responsible for the investigations of the rampant situation. Instead of conducting proper investigation, such as making use of forensic evidence, it was observed that investigative personnel favours the numbers game, i.e. playing down the numbers by varying criterion. This situation was echoed by the victims' families.

Beside the grim situation evolving around killings and forced disappearances, the mission was able to get grips of other sorts of human rights violations. In Tondo, the infamous urban poor community in Manila, villagers live amid fear due to urban militarization. The mission met with teenage girls who experienced torture earlier this year in Tondo. Another exposure at Southville Relocation Site exposed the lack of accountability that runs deep in different levels of the government structure. Despite local villagers' effort to convey their discontent towards the lack of water supply, electricity and health facilities to the local mayor, they are not welcomed and were criticized by police for causing unnecessary trouble.

Yet there is a beam of light cast by the Supreme Court after the writ of amparo took effect in late October 2007. Upon receiving complaints from families, the court can issue orders directing a public official from violating or threatening the life, liberty and security of another. These orders can be in form of temporary protection orders, inspection orders, production orders or witness protection orders.

The writ proved to be effective as some victims of forced abduction and disappearances and persons who were illegally detained were released from the custody of the security forces.

Source: ACPP

ACPP's Christmas Message 2007

Every year, ACPP sends a Christmas message to all Urgent Appeals (UA) recipients and supporters to thank them for their continued support of Hotline Asia. This year, the message is about living out our commitment according to Populorum Progressio.

A video interview on "sowing the seeds of Peace" is also available to see some fruits of a recent training programme.

Both message and video are available at the ACPP web site www.acpp.org or by sending your address to hotline@acpp.org.

We wish you a ...
Merry Christmas
and New Year
Filled with Justice and Peace

This Bulletin is distributed by ACPP-Hotline-Asia (www.acpp.org) on behalf of the JP Workers network in Asia. Please send your feedback or comment to hotline@acpp.org.