

J/P Alert

CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN *JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE*

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CMSM:

- *assists major superiors in their role as leaders;*
- *promotes dialogue and collaboration with the conference of bishops and other major groups in church and society;*
- *provides a corporate influence in church and society.*

March 2005

JP Directors Gathering Scheduled to Meet with House Leaders

The Justice and Peace Directors Gathering scheduled for March 14 and 15 will have the opportunity to meet with two House leaders to talk about the priorities and concerns of the Religious Institutes in the U.S. The last election focused attention on the role that people of faith played in addressing certain value issues, but a broader discussion of Catholic concerns needs to point out to our elected leaders that Catholics are not single-issue voters and that the needs of the poor, migrants and refugees, workers, those lacking adequate healthcare, and such are also important issues. At the same time other political leaders must realize that Catholics are keenly concerned about life issues along a broad continuum.

To foster this dialogue the JP Coordinators will have the opportunity to meet with Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) who is coordinating the House Democrat's efforts to work with the Catholic community to understand our concerns and open Democrats to greater awareness of particular "Catholic" issues. The Coordinators will also have the opportunity to meet with Rep Chris Smith (R-NJ) the chair of the House International Relations

Subcommittee on Africa and Human Rights and one of the leading pro-life members of Congress, yet deeply concerned about other important issues, to address the need for Republicans to be open to other "Catholic" issues.

Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, murdered in Brazil

The February 12 murder of Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, was headline news in papers around the United States. Her death shocked many people. She was a tireless advocate for the small farmers of Brazil and for the protection of the environment. Her work threatened the large corporations that were destroying the forests and the livelihoods of Brazilian farmers in the region in which she worked.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people among whom she worked and her religious community. In this year when we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the martyrdom of Oscar Romero and the four U.S. Church Women, Sr. Dorothy Stang joins the many people of Latin America who have sacrificed their lives for the work of justice, human rights, and the integrity of creation.

A Cloud of Witnesses The Murder of Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN

A statement of sympathy and solidarity to the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, our Sister and Brother Religious of Brazil, and the Church and people of Brazil from the Conference of Major Superiors of Men - February 16, 2005

This year, 2005, marks the 25th anniversaries of the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero (March 24) and Jean Donovan, Sr. Ita Ford, MM, Sr. Maura Clark, MM, and Sr. Dorothy Kazel, OSU (December 2). On February 12 Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, joined the long and growing list of Latin American martyrs, witnessing to the continuing violence against those who struggle for justice amidst oppression including Brazilian activist Chico Mendez in 1988.

Sr. Dorothy was a tireless and outspoken advocate for peasants, farmers, small landowners, environmental sustainability, and human rights. For three decades she worked side by side with the poor and oppressed, recently identifying so completely with the people among whom she worked that she became a Brazilian citizen. While she has been honored and recognized for her work, she was also aware that others were threatened because she placed the needs of the poor over those seeking profit. Because of this her life was often in danger, yet she did not fear the threats of the powerful.

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men, representing the vowed brothers and priests in the United States, expresses our deepest sorrow and sympathy at Sister Dorothy's murder. She joins those who have witnessed with their lives to the injustices and violence that have plagued the people of Latin America for decades, especially the poor and powerless. Those who question the abuse of power, the oppression of people, and hold out a vision of a society where human dignity is promoted, like Sister Dorothy, threaten the stability of the powerful and are often at risk. In her life and ministry, Sr. Dorothy witnessed to the need to be in solidarity with people. In her death, Sr. Dorothy witnesses to us the consequences of living out our

commitment to Religious Life in the most dangerous of places. The Conference commends the initial reports that the Brazilian government will investigate Sr. Dorothy's murder. We urge President Lula to take a personal role in seeing that this investigation is thorough and transparent and that those responsible for Sr. Dorothy's death will be brought to justice. We also call on the U.S. government to cooperate and assist in any way to ensure that Sr. Dorothy's death is not treated routinely.

CMSM, through the Conference of Latin American Religious (CLAR), has collaborated closely with our colleagues in Latin America. As we continue to do so, we will be inspired by Sr. Dorothy's life and death; by her commitment to the poor and powerless of Brazil; by her tireless work for justice and reform; and by her witness as a religious in the world today. In her life, Sr. Dorothy walked with the oppressed and worked with them to confront their oppressors and seek change, may her death inspire us as religious to recommit ourselves to that same journey, regardless of the cost.

Legislation Introduced to Assist Haiti

Rep. Mark Foley (R-FL) introduced legislation to bring much-needed relief to Haiti. The Haitian Economic and Infrastructure Reconstruction Act (HR 611) would establish a new program within the US Agency for International Development designed to recruit and send Haitian-Americans to Haiti for up to three years in order to help rebuild the nation's economy and infrastructure as well as its education, judiciary, and healthcare systems. Participants in the program would be paid a salary and housing stipend. The bill also creates the Haiti Healthcare Assistance Program, providing grants to qualified non-governmental organizations to establish programs in Haiti related to the prevention of infectious diseases.

Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) introduced another piece of legislation to strengthen Haiti's health infrastructure. The New Partnership for Haiti Act (which does not yet have a legislative number) will provide technical assistance and resources to expand and develop Haiti's health sector through local partnerships for sanitation and water projects, use the Army Corps of Engineers for road development to major health clinics, and fight

infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, while improving healthcare infrastructure and expanding care.

In Haiti today less than 45% of the people have access to safe water and sanitation and Haiti accounts for 90% of AIDS cases in the Caribbean. Ninety percent of the population is unemployed and hundreds of thousands are of Haitians are dying from disease and hunger.

Contact your representatives and urge them to support these two important pieces of legislation that will help address some of the most serious problems facing Haiti today. You can contact the House of Representatives by calling 202-224-3121 and ask for your representative.

Congress to Earmark Assistance to Palestinians

During the State of the Union Address, President Bush announced that he would ask Congress to provide \$350 million "to support Palestinian political, economic, and security reforms." This sum is being requested from Congress in two ways. \$150 million is being requested as part of the regular 2006 foreign operations budget and \$200 million is being requested in a supplemental aid package.

The goals of this funding, as described by the Administration, will be to help finance the construction of homes in Gaza, expand education opportunities, develop the economic infrastructure for a Palestinian state, improve Palestinian social services for the poor, and help improve the flow of people and goods between Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza strip.

The President also requested \$2.5 billion in aid for Israel for fiscal year 2006. This amount represents Israel's regular annual aid package.

Beyond achieving these important goals, the aid packages also signals American investment in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In further developments, during his trip to Europe, President Bush outlined his checklist for Israel and Palestine to achieve peace. This included an insistence that Palestine get contiguous land in the West Bank, Israeli freezing settlement activity, Palestinians confront-

ing and dismantling terrorist groups, fight corruption and encourage free enterprise. In an important statement, Bush said, "A state on scattered territories will not work."

When you contact your representative, encourage them to support aid to Palestine and also to support a two-state solution including a contiguous land for the Palestinians.

DREAM Act Statement of Support

First introduced in 2001, the DREAM Act permits high school graduates who immigrated to the U.S. as minors and lived in the U.S. for at least five years, to apply for legal status. The DREAM Act also eliminates a federal provision that discourages states from providing in-state tuition to immigrant students. The spirit of the DREAM act is founded on the following two core principles:

1. Individuals who were brought to this country as children, stay out of trouble, and meet the universal requirements for high school graduation deserve to be judged according to their own character and merit, regardless of their country of birth or immigrant status. They should have equal opportunity to pursue postsecondary education, obtain legal status, and become citizens of the country they call home, the United States.
2. The federal government should not compel states to discriminate in the allocation of their own educational resources. Rather, states should be free to provide in-state tuition at their institutions of higher education, and otherwise facilitate equitable access to higher education for immigrant students.

for more information on or to support the DREAM Act, contact the National Immigration Law Center at www.nicl.org.

Stan De Boe, OSST, Editor