

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.*

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Border Pilgrimage Raises Awareness of Plight of Migrants, US Policy

U.S. immigration policies, Border Patrol practices, economic and social affects of NAFTA, and the looming possibility that CAFTA will expand the negative effects of trade policies were all issues discussed at during the Border Convocation in El Paso, TX October 31-November 2. The Convocation was the culmination of a week long Border Pilgrimage where two delegations, one beginning in San Diego, CA, the other in Brownsville, TX, traveled in solidarity with migrants and advocates along the US-Mexico border. The pilgrimage and convocation were designed to raise awareness of the problems along the border, foster networking among those groups working on the border and advocates in Washington, DC and other areas of the US, and to discuss future strategies to address the on-going crisis at the border.

Currently there are over 3 million undocumented Mexicans in the US, most of whom risked their lives crossing the desert on foot or crammed into trucks and vans to be smuggled across. Since 1985 over 4000 deaths have been documented, with well over 300 deaths reported each year since 2000. This number is low since it only reflects the number of deaths of those who can be identified as Mexican citizens. Even with this low estimate, it is still more deaths each year on the US-Mexico border than the

total number of deaths recorded during the entire history of the Berlin Wall.

People take incredible risks to cross the border seeking economic opportunities in the US, leaving behind everything they have, including families, to work in low wage jobs without any benefits, and in constant fear of Border Patrol agents and the abuse suffered at the hands of employers. During one emotional session, participants in the Convocation heard from four migrants from Central America and Mexico who spoke of their desperate attempt to provide for their families by risking their lives to come to the US, the harsh treatment they have received from Border Patrol agents, and the experience of being separated from family. One young man spoke of the many migrants who have died crossing the border, and worried that someday one of the many crosses that fill cemeteries in the US will mark his grave, but not record his name.

The Convocation ended with a Mass at the U.S.-Mexico border in New Mexico. At the Rite of Peace, hands reached through the chain-link fence as US and Mexican citizens expressed their solidarity in spite of the barriers that divide the two countries.

For more information about the Pilgrimage and Convocation visit the website for the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico www.rtfcam.org.

NETWORK has recently published a newsletter, "Human Rights for Migrants," with information, articles, resources, and liturgies focusing on the plight of migrants. It is posted on their website www.networklobby.org.

Congress Recesses, Action Needed

As Congress recesses for the holidays, this is a perfect opportunity to contact your Senators and Representatives about a number of issues that are still pending and could be acted on when they return to Washington. To find your Senators' or Representative's contact information visit the NETWORK website at www.networklobby.org.

Agricultural Jobs Act

After years of negotiations between the nation's major agricultural employers and the United Farm Workers, a compromise bill has been introduced in Congress that would give more than one-half million undocumented farm workers an opportunity to legalize their status and to assert their rights in the workplace more effectively. Farm workers perform some of the most dangerous and strenuous jobs in the country, working long hours in difficult conditions, providing the backbone of our nation's agricultural industry supplying us with the affordable food supply we have come to depend on.

Support for the bill is fragile and any change in the legislation could derail the agreement between the farm workers and growers. Therefore, legislators are being urged to support the bill as it has been introduced. While this legislation addresses one aspect of the many problems facing farm workers in the US, it is a significant first step. Contact your representative during this recess and urge him/her to support the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act (S. 1645, H.R. 3142).

School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation

The end of November is the traditional time for mobilizing people around closing the School of the Americas (SOA/WHISC). Thousands again gathered at Ft. Benning, GA, in an act of non-violent civil disobedience to draw attention to the program that has trained the officers responsible for the torture, rape, and murders of the four U.S. church women in 1980, the assassination

of Archbishop Oscar Romero; the murders of the 6 Jesuits, their housekeeper and daughter; Guatemalan Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi; Colombian Bishop Isaias Duarte; and countless millions of others. In October a federal jury in Miami deemed former Chilean army officer Armando Fernández Larios, a graduate of the School of the Americas, liable for the torture and murder of Chilean economist Winston Cabello in 1976. In 2001 Congress, after years of pressure, made only cosmetic changes by renaming the program but the reality remains the same, Latin American soldiers are taught to torture and kill and many of their targets are human rights and social justice advocates and political reformers.

Contact your Representatives and urge them to support "The Latin America Military Training Review Act of 2003," (HR 1258) and close the School of the Americas for good.

Land Mines Ban

This December marks six years since the International Mine Ban Treaty was opened for signatures. The U.S. has not ratified the treaty and there is little indication that the Administration will follow through on any commitment to sign the treaty prior to the Review Conference next year (November 29-December 3) in Nairobi, Kenya. More information about the effects of land mines and talking points can be found at the website for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines at www.icbl.org.

Resources

Water for Life: In Defense of our "Sister Water" A study guide prepared by the Ecology Working Group of the JPIC Promoters of USG and USIG in Rome. Access to water is a fundamental right that is denied to many people in the world. This publication provides information, resources, and discussion materials about the crisis of water in our world. For information about the resource contact the JPIC Promoters at www.ofm-jpic.org/agua.

Clamor for Justice/Clamor por la Justicia. A bilingual publication that presents the Catholic Church's prophetic tradition as found in papal documents and statements from the US and Latin American Bishops and other sources. Copies are \$15 and available through NETWORK (www.networklobby.org).

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