



NEWSBRIEF

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EDITORIAL. "God's mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to become merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbor and to devote ourselves to what the Church's tradition call the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. (Pope Francis Lent 2016)

In this issue of Newsbrief we are highlighting these works of mercy through our efforts to dialogue with others. We work to promote human rights and to offer suggestions and opportunities for people to better their living conditions. Also we pray in solidarity for the well being of all who live in vulnerable conditions. We listen to the voice of those who are poor and the Earth as we advocate for the common good of all.

LINKS: [Click underlined blue text to open a link or copy and paste the url on your browser window](#)

ICR AT FAO WORKING GROUP PRESENTATION ON LAUDATO SI AND AGRICULTURE



L to R: Simon Della Monaca, Jude Nnorom, CSSp; Fabio L'Amour, OSF; Ken Thesing, MM; Anne Corry, RSCJ; Teresa Dagdag, MM.

The ICR (International Congregations of Religious) at FAO Working Group led JPIC Promoters at their February 17 meeting with the theme "Food Security, Compassion and Human Rights Spirituality." According to the Committee on World Food Security of FAO, food security exists "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

The presentation was clear and engaging, although the issues were complex. A stimulating dialogue focused on

the issues related to land grabbing (<http://www.jpicro-ma.org/#!laudato-si/ccaz>). Included in the discussion were concerns about corruption in governments and the seduction of false promises. Since land, that would ordinarily be used for food sources and the livelihood from farming have been taken, the people are left without viable options for work and for nutrition.

The entire presentation centered around the context of the Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* and its references to the key connections between God, our neighbor and the earth, our common home, which included a slide presentation on "Laudato Si and Agriculture" (http://media.wix.com/ugd/e7a99a_bfb-976661f3a420098405c01c0897138.pdf). Some references for follow up include: www.fao.org; www.news.va/en/news/cardinal-turkson-humanity-a-poor-steward-of-enviro (Cardinal Peter Turkson's talk at Milan EXPO 2015 Symposium on Faith, Agriculture, Food and the Environment; www.vox.com/2015/6/24/8834413/pope-climate-change-en-cyclical (Pope Francis's climate change message about rethinking what it means to be human).

MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION: U.S. AND ITALIAN PERSPECTIVES

A meeting sponsored by Sant' Egidio and the U.S. Embassy on February 3, provided an opportunity to exchange information regarding the reception of im-



L to R: Viviana Mazza, Corriere media; Richard Stengel, Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, U.S. Dept of State; Marco Impagliazza, President of the Community of Sant'Egidio; Philip Bubbico, Deputy Minister of the Interior in Italy; Elziz Izzedin, iman of Florence and President UCCOII (Union of Islamic Communities in Italy).

migrants in Italy and the United States. Mr. Marco Impagliazza described the Sant'Egidio programs, which include socializing guidance for a common living arrangement. He spoke of their networking and of the children's insertion into the school system. Italy does not have a uniform way of accepting immigrants in the country. However, Mr. Bubbico did stress the importance of human dignity in resolving the conflicts. Elziz Izzedin, an iman, expressed appreciation for the efforts of both countries to receive the immigrants. He noted, in particular, the way the U.S. is able to address the needs of the immigrants when they have entered the country through the legal process. Mr. Stengel stated that the U.S. had been founded as an immigrant country. Ms Mazza pointed out the importance of the media in describing the positive and negative impact of immigration on communities. The conversations continued as those persons involved with the immigration problem considered how to best address this crisis of today.

FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



L to R: Joanne Bendar, SCC; Mark Bechermans, Political Specialist of U.S. Embassy to the Vatican; Amy Lillis, U.S. Embassy Dept. of State; Felix Mushobozi, CPPS, JPIC Secretariat; Sheila Kinsey, FCJM, JPIC Secretariat; Marco Lazzogino, Camillians.

A meeting was called on February 24 by the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See to dialogue about what faith-based communities are doing in the area of humanitarian assistance. Ms. Amy Lillis, US Department

of State Regional Advisor for Religion and Global Affairs, shared her background experiences of working in various countries such as Nigeria, Turkey and Pakistan. Realizing the power of religious congregations in working with the relief services, she is seeking ways to work with faith-based communities in addressing the tragic situations in these countries. During our dialogue, we discussed health care, countering corruption, climate change and the impact of *Laudato Si*, refugee and migrant work and the potential for collaboration. The participants at the meeting shared the work of the Camillians, Franciscans, Sisters of Christian Charity, the Missionaries of the Precious blood and the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. The exchange was broad and much gratitude was expressed for the work done in these areas. Ongoing conversation is needed and input is requested for what is happening with the integration of migrants and refugees in Germany. Stories of what is happening in Germany are needed. Representatives of the U.S. government will be meeting with Germany to discuss the integration programs utilized in the U.S. Also, more conversation is desired amongst the JPIC Promoters regarding best practices of those involved in providing humanitarian assistance.

THE RELIGIOUS AND MIGRATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: PERSPECTIVES, RESPONSE AND CHALLENGES

This Conference on Migration, held on February 22 to 24 at the Passionist Center in Rome, addresses the increase of people fleeing from war, hunger, misery, political and/or religious persecution which has grown in extraordinary dimensions and has changed the dynamics of migration. A strategic and coordinated response, by religious men and women is needed in the current refugee and migration crisis in Europe. Linking local and global initiatives is the vital response.

In order to raise awareness and join hands in the task of responding to the crisis, the event was co-sponsored by Passionists International, Congregations of St. Joseph, Augustinians International and the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians), which all have a presence at the United Nations as Catholic inspired NGOs.

Leading the discussion was a panel which included the Jesuits Refugees Service (JRS), Caritas International, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, and representation from the Italian government.

Participants also heard representatives from civil society organizations, but the stories of the victims and refugees were the most powerful.

Following are reflections from two of our JPIC Promoters.

Carmen Elisa Bando, Sps

Feeling the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, we are driven by our commitment to make the Gospel present. In different ways, we have sought to respond according to our congregational charisms in the various places where we are. While the reality is beyond our reach, we understand that we cannot address this phenomenon and its causes by acting in isolation.

My impressions on the seminar can be summarized in a comment that I heard: “migration itself is not a problem, it is the consequences.” Given this statement I think we as religious women and men are giving many good responses to these emerging needs, but it is time to give a global response in a systemic manner. We have staff, structures and means to do that, we only lack collaboration to put what we have to work. Here is where the JPIC promoters of the JPIC Commission of the UISG / USG could have a role to play in coordinating the efforts to begin realizing this utopia. Who is willing to collaborate? Where do we start?

Jude Nnorom, CSSp

Participants agreed that to develop a sustainable approach to the refugee and migrant situation requires a new thinking that appreciates the ongoing dynamics of migration, rather than the perspective that it is a temporary emergency. Networking and collaboration among religious are approaches that should be further explored. A major insight is the need to collaborate with the Jesuit Initiative at Centro Astalli, support for the counter trafficking office of the Unione Superiore Maggiori d'Italia (USMI), and the initiatives of the International Union of Superior Generals (UISG) in Sicily. Linking these initiatives will strengthen advocacy efforts of the Religious at the UN, as it will provide examples of good practice, which perhaps could influence ongoing migration conversations both in the UN and the European Union. It will make the religious response to the crisis more effective and efficient, and offer possibilities of intra-religious networking and networking with other faith-based and civil society organizations.

THE RULES OF HOSPITALITY WITH MIGRANTS

The half day seminar was organized by “Centro Nazionale Economi di Comunita” (CNEC) on February 26 at the Casa Generalizia Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane. It was attended by the representatives of the association members of religious communities in the Lazio Region and a few other members of International General Administration of congregations in Rome. The President of the association, P. Antonio Marcantonio, underlined two objectives of the seminar. The first was to raise awareness of the complicated nature of heeding the call of Pope Francis for religious congregations to open up their houses for migrants arriving in Italy. The second objective was to open up the eyes of religious congre-

gations of the necessity to follow available legal structures as they respond to this call in the spirit of the Jubilee year of mercy. Some of the questions that were addressed by the invited speakers include: who can the religious congregation welcome into their premises? What administrative, legal and fiscal aspects should they take into consideration? What happens if the congregation is not directly running the activity but has given the job to the third party?

There were five speakers who addressed all these issues. The summary is basically contained in the “Guidelines for Welcoming Asylum Seekers and Refugees,” issued by Conferenza Episcopale Italiana: Indicazioni alle Diocesi Italiane circa l'accoglienza dei richiedenti asilo e rifugiati-VADEMECUM approvato dal Consiglio Permanente, ottobre 2015. The presentations will be available at <http://www.cneec.it/Objects/Home1.asp> in Italian.

LAUDATO SI: A PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE



The SAMIN Laudato Si Mobile brings the ministry to far flung places in Mindanao where the indigenous people they serve live in harmony with nature and also in cities/towns where the people have been forced to give up their way of life and live in poverty to make way for large-scale industries that have taken over their land.

I was invited by Sr. Stella Matutina, OSB, General Secretary of Panalipdan Mindanao, to visit a lumad resettlement area and a mining operation in Surigao del Sur. On February 15, we traveled for eight hours from Davao City on the SAMIN (Sisters' Association in Mindanao) Laudato Si Mobile van together with other members of Sr. Stella's team to the city of Tandag. SAMIN is a collaborative effort of several congregations of women religious in the Philippines who are actively engaged in seeking justice and peace for the lumad (indigenous peoples) in Mindanao. In November 2015, Sr. Stella and Sr. Ma. Famita Somogod, MSM traveled to Rome and had a session with JPIC Promoters regarding the escalating human rights violations in indigenous communities in Mindanao. Sr. Stella also completed the ICWG Mining Survey.

The next day, we visited a lumad evacuation center located in the city's sports stadium, which until recently held 3,000 indigenous people who have been driven away from their lands as military operations continue in the hinterlands of Surigao del Sur to make way for mining operations. In the case of one group, a mem-



Three thousand lumads from 15 communities were forced to leave the land which they cultivate to raise crops for livelihood and food for their family. Now they use plastic bags, which serve as pots, lined up in bamboo racks and planted with vegetables for their meal. Tents serve as their only form of shelter. With no livelihood, the people rely on donations for all their needs—food, water and medicine, etc.

ber of the council of elders told us that armed militia men had entered their community in the early hours of September 1, 2015, and accused the members of supporting the communist. They killed a datu (chieftain), a community leader and a teacher in cold-blood, with the intent of instilling fear in the people so they would move out of their land. Leaving their homes, their livelihood, their source of food, the entire community was evacuated to Tandag where they rely on donations for all their needs. Other lumad communities that have been displaced from their land have a similar story.

By noon, the same day, we proceeded to Carascal and Cantilan where several mining operations are located. From the highway, a rusty-red mountain range, stripped off the green trees that once covered it, could be seen. Laterite was everywhere—on the road, on the ground, in the watershed, on the sea, all around the homes. The destruction of God’s beautiful creation is heart breaking. Allowing the erosion of people’s lives as a result of large-scale mining is inhuman. Why our government allows other countries to destroy our patrimony, while they preserve theirs, is a crime against the Filipino people. And why anyone would want to destroy the beauty of God’s creation, cannot be attributed to anything else but greed!



“The red mountain” is known throughout the Surigao coastline, but it took some time for residents to realize that these mountain ranges hold one of the richest nickel deposits in the world. Today, the Surigao region is host to 10 mining companies.



The once pristine blue water is now red with laterite that has destroyed sea life in the area and resulted in the loss of livelihood for the fishermen. The iron ore is loaded into large ships and transported to China, Japan or Australia to be processed into high-grade nickel.

These mining companies hold a 25-year contract that allows them to extract the mineral from the soil or until they reach rock bottom, and if there is any mineral left, the contract may be renewed for another 25-years.

Everything I witnessed on this day is exactly what *Laudato Si* warns us against. If we do nothing now to stop the destruction of “our common home,” the wrath of Mother Earth will be upon us.

More information on <http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/environment/109403-in-photos-red-mountain-mining>; http://media.wix.com/ugd/e7a99a_1a5a52f58b62419181cd40f274dbcf63.pdf; http://media.wix.com/ugd/e7a99a_72d64cb7c75f4f7c95adabbc8830a117.pdf; BHP Mining Disaster in Brazil <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2016/02/29/4413666.htm>.—

Contributed by Celine A. Quinio

ROUNDUP OF EVENTS



New Working Group Coordinators. Fr. Kennedy Katongo, OMI is the new coordinator of the Africa working Group (AWG), replacing Fr. Peter Welsh, Maf. The change occurred during their January 22 monthly meeting. The group has been endeavoring to re-energize and seek new membership; there has been efforts of collaboration between the group and the National Capacity Building Project of Animators of JPIC, coordinated by Francisco O’Conaire, OFM.



Sr. Maamalifar Margaret Poreku, MSOLA is the new coordinator of the Anti-trafficking Working Group (ATWG), replacing Sr. Marie Lamert, SSCC who returned to the U.S. after serving in Rome

for four years with the Talitha Kum Office and the ATWG. In considering new direction, the group is conducting a survey under the auspice of UISG in order to find out in religious congregations who is engaged in this important ministry. The group hopes to present the result of the survey in April 2016.

Agricultural Biotechnologies Discussed at FAO Symposium. The February 15-17 event discussed the controversial topic of 'Agriculture Biotechnologies' in which the differences in opinion was varied in the light of their spread around the world. FAO called it an opportunity for small holder farmers or family farmers. Director General Jose Graziano Da Silva spoke to this in his opening address at the event. The webcast of the symposium is available on <http://www.fao.org/webcast/home/en/item/4031/icode/>.

There is also a digest of the presentations with a two-page abstract of each presentation. This allows you to look up the speaker and his/her topic, and then view the entire presentation at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bc562e.pdf>. The last featured speaker on the opening day was Professor Gunter Pauli who has done extensive work on ecology and wrote a report to The Club of Rome which was published under the title, *The Blue Economy*. To view Professor Pauli's talk on the webcast, go to http://www.zeri.org/ZERI/Home_files/From%20Deep%20Ecology%20to%20the%20Blue%20Economy%202011.pdf.

The La Via Campesina, perhaps the biggest and most well-organized civil society movement, expressed dismay at the Symposium and, especially, the way it was organized. Some 150 other organizations from around the world signed on to the La Via Campesina press release, which is available on <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/biodiversity-and-genetic-resources-mainmenu-37/1972-corporate-vision-of-the-future-of-food-promoted-at-the-un>.

“Laudato Si: Economics or Religion or What?” On February 27, Br. Louis DeThomasis, FSC, PH.D. engaged the JPIC Promoters and Economes in a thoughtful discussion around the topic “*Laudato Si: Economics or Religion or What?*” Speaking from the wealth of his background experience in finances, foreign services

PRAYER REQUEST

The Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ) requests your prayers for their General Chapter to be celebrated at Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi near Rome from March 24 to April 10. Their chapter theme is “Joyfully Proclaim the Good News”. Please pray that their hearts may truly burn, so that deeply rooted in their charism and fired by the Gospel message of Jesus Christ on their lips, they will leave the chapter set on the road to joyfully proclaim the Good News through their courageous response to the needs of the present age.

and philosophy he shared some “economic fundamentals” with his slide presentation. From this context, he engaged the participants in a discussion regarding the economic factors as they interacted with politics, business, culture and religion. The participants followed up the session with such questions that related to discerning the signs of the times, requesting more elaboration on geo-spirituality, countering the negative influence of money, and being prophetic. The slide show and the text of his presentation is available at <http://www.jpicroma.org/#!laudato-si/ccaz>.

MERCY IN EVANGELII GAUDIUM AS A FOCUS FOR INTER-CONGREGATIONAL SHARINGS

One of the events to celebrate the closing of the year for Consecrated Life in Rome this February was a UISG-sponsored workshop on international-congregational sharing on the messages of mercy from Evangelii Gaudium led by Sr. Sheila Kinsey, FCJM. The session began with a [slide presentation \(http://media.wix.com/ugd/e7a99a_3b71ac47401a40499eb560511fe3c4ec.pdf\)](http://media.wix.com/ugd/e7a99a_3b71ac47401a40499eb560511fe3c4ec.pdf) that featured the works of mercy throughout the world. The photos provided opportunities for women religious to be affirmed and challenged in the mission to witness the Gospel of Mercy. Clearly, we were reminded that the essential vision and ministry of the church include the poor and vulnerable.

Building on the example of the Scriptures, where the messages of Jesus were given in stories, we were opened to the sharing of our personal experiences of mercy. Some of the situations involved companionship of abused persons, struggling to not compromise integrity and helping immigrants. Our examples indicated the importance of sharing our lives and providing mutual support, our need of taking time to make decisions, and knowing that acting in this way is a risk of faith.

By understanding the mercy we received from God we were enabled to be trusted companions for others. Considering our ministries, all of these aspects of mercy act as a leaven because it is our presence that is brought everywhere. We stressed the importance of communication and the power of listening.

In the course of our discussion, some questions surfaced which were answered in part, but we know that more dialogue is needed:

- How do we deepen an understanding of mercy and justice so as to integrate both in conflict situations?
- How do we relate to different perceptions of justice and mercy?
- How do we discern a response when in a particular environment there is not an acceptance of Christians?

And, so the journey continues with Jesus. Energized by our trusting relationship with Him, we felt enabled to honor our role as persons of mercy.

LENTEN RESOURCES

- **Lenten Reflection Guide.** Maryknoll Office for Global Concern has a very useful 2016 Lenten Reflection Guide: Forty days with Scripture and *Laudato Si*. To access, please go to: <http://maryknollogc.org/sites/default/files/Maryknoll%20OGC%20Lenten%20Reflection%20Guide%202016.pdf>.
- **Lenten Fast for Climate 2016.** The Global Catholic Climate Movement is inviting us once again this year to have a Lenten fast for climate in order to express our solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are most impacted by climate change. On each day of Lent a different country will fast to highlight the impact of climate change in their community and express solidarity with the rest of the world. Useful resources are available on the GCCM website: <http://catholicclimatemovement.global/len-en-fast-resources/>.
- **Care of Our Common Home During Lent.** Sr. Terry McKenzie has a very rich reflection resource for individuals and groups based on *Laudato Si*, prepared for this year's Lenten season at <http://eco-spiritualityresources.com/2016/01/>. *An eight-page, five sessions resource is also available* (<https://eco-spiritualityresources.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/laudatosi-reflectionresource-oncare.pdf>).

JPIC EVENTS IN FEBRUARY 2016

- Refugees and Migrants WG Meeting: March 1, 3:00-5:00 pm at Fratelli
- Spanish-Portuguese JPIC Promoters Meeting: March 2, 9:00 am–12:00 noon at UISG office
- English JPIC Promoters Core Group: March 7, 3:00-5:00 pm at Fratelli
- Anti-trafficking WG Meeting: March 10, 3:00-5:00 pm at Fratelli
- Africa WG Meeting: March 18, 3:00-5:00 pm at Fratelli
- Stations of the Cross in the Spirit of *Laudato Si*: March 20, 9:00 am–12:00 noon, Borghese Park
- Integrity of Creation WG Meeting: March 29, 3:00-5:00 pm at Fratelli
- “Violence and Nonviolence in the Islamic Tradition”: sponsored by the USG-UISG Joint Commission for Interreligious dialogue in collaboration with the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Stud-

ies (PISAI), March 12, 9:00 am-12:00 pm. Venue: PISAI, Viale di Trastevere, 89, 00153 Roma (next to Piazza Mastai, bus/tram stop Trastevere Mastai). For inquiries, e-mail usg.secgen@gmail.com or uisgseg@tin.it or uisgboll@tutttopmi.it

- JPIC Formation Workshop, integrating the theme of “Mercy”: November 9–12 at Casa per Ferie “Enrico de Ossò” Via di Val Cannuta, 134, 00166 Roma. *Please note that this is a change from the previous November date.*
- Stations of the Cross reflecting on *Laudato Si*, March 20: Villa Borghese Park. Prayer booklets will be available for download in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian at the JPIC website by March 6.
- International Women’s Day, March 8: time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities. For more information, please go to <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/international-womens-day>.
- International Day of the Forests, March 21: promotes the importance of forests and trees in our lives. Forests cover about one third of the world’s land mass. Roughly 1.6 billion people, including more than 2000 indigenous cultures depend on forests for their livelihood. For more information, please go to <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/forest-day> and <http://www.fao.org/forestry/international-day-of-forests/en/>. Prayer: http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN_21March.
- World Water Day, March 22: focuses on the power power of water to transform our lives. Nearly all jobs are related to water and those that ensure its safe delivery. For more information please go to <http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday> and <http://www.unwater.org/campaigns/world-water-day/en/>.

MARCH INTENTIONS FOR POPE FRANCIS

- *Universal: Families in Difficulty*
That families in need may receive the necessary support and that children may grow up in healthy and peaceful environments.
- *Evangelization: Persecuted Christians*
That those Christians who, on account of their faith, are discriminated against or are being persecuted, may remain strong and faithful to the Gospel, thanks to the incessant prayer of the Church.

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