



Voz en el Desierto

Peace and Justice Ministry
Diocese of El Paso

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Election Workshop, January 13 to Review Bishops' Statement

Fr. John Stowe, O.F.M. Conv., and Fr. Carmen Mele, O.P., will present a workshop entitled "Political Responsibility in an Election Year" on Tuesday, January 13. The two priests seek to educate Catholics regarding Church social teaching as an impetus and a guide for voting in the county, state, and national elections this year.

Fr. Stowe is the Moderator of the Curia of the Diocese of El Paso. He has spoken and written frequently on social justice issues. He also serves as one of the co-chairs to EPISO, the community organizing project in El Paso. Fr. Mele has been diocesan Promoter of Peace and Justice Ministry for the last five years. A



year ago he collaborated on a successful political advocacy workshop.

The program will be coordinated by the diocesan Tepeyac Institute. It will take place from 7:00-9:00 p.m. in the San Martin de Porres Room of the Tepeyac facilities at the Catholic Pastoral Center. There will be a charge of \$6 for registration which includes the cost of the U.S. bishops' recently published document "Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility." All participants of the English session of the Social Ministry Training will participate in the workshop.



Sr. Liliane Alam, FMM, brings tennis shoes, a symbol for immigrants, during the procession of symbols at the 2003 MLK Mass in Queen of Peace Church.

January 18 March for Life Features Rally at Park, Mass in Cathedral

The annual diocesan "March for Life" will take place on Sunday, January 18, beginning at 1 p.m. in Houston Park (Montana at St. Vrain). The event commemorates 40 million victims of abortion within the U.S. and an untold number of broken families since the 1973 Roe v Wade decision at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The event begins with a rally with speakers and singing. At approximately 2 p.m., the march will commence through the streets from the park to St. Patrick Cathedral for a 3 p.m. mass with Bp. Armando X. Ochoa.

All are encouraged to participate. The rally, march, and mass are the most noted pro-life activities sponsored by the Diocese of El Paso.

2004 MLK Mass to Be "Despedida" for Fr. Carmen Mele, O.P.

Bishop Armando X. Ochoa will preside at the sixth annual "Martin Luther King Mass for Peace and Justice." This year the event will take place at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church (131 S. Zaragoza), on Saturday, January 17, at 5:00 p.m.

There is an added attraction to this year's mass. It will serve as a *despedida* (farewell) to Peace and Justice Promoter Fr. Carmen Mele, O.P. He is leaving for a sabbatical year of studies after which his Dominican province will reassign him.

On January 15, 2004, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., would have been 75 years old. King was the leader of the national civil rights movement always promoting justice through nonviolent action. He also spoke out against the Vietnam War until he was assassinated in 1968. Today King he is revered as a prophet and a martyr by people of all races and religions.

Each year during the MLK mass a Black Catholic from El Paso gives a reflection on his/her faith. This year Dr. Paschal Ike, a naturalized American from Nigeria, will have the podium.

Peace and Justice Ministry invites the public to attend the mass and the reception afterwards in the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish Hall. It respectfully requests that people who come to the mass bring a can of food for El Paso's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Food Drive.

U.S. Foreign Policy Display at Casa Vides, Jan. 10.

"Living with the Consequences of U.S. Foreign Policy" titles a presentation by professional photographer-reporter Paul Dix to be held here in El Paso on Saturday, January 10th. World-traveled, Dix focuses his camera on people in Nicaragua whom he knew while working there in the 1980s when Nicaragua communities were under attack by the "Contra" military supported by the U.S. government. Dix returned to Nicaragua 15 years later to take photos of the same people and has them tell the story of their lives in the interim years.

The presentation will be at Casa Vides, 325 Leon St. (opposite the new fire-station) in downtown El Paso Saturday, 7 p.m. January 10th.

MLK Food Drive Seeks Out Parishes

PJM has sent letters to all Catholic pastors in the city asking their support for the fourth annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Food Drive. Parishes can collect food in the name of Dr. King and redistribute it from their pantries for the poor. The drive begins on Monday, Jan. 5 and ends on the MLK holiday, Jan. 19. PJM is also arranging for a collection at the Pastoral Center. For information on how to organize a drive in your parish or place of work, call 872-8422. The city will provide receptacles and arrange pick-ups upon request.

Ministry Training to Immigrants, on Peace and Justice, and in Colonias

The Tepeyac Institute is offering four distinct training opportunities for social ministry. On January 10 and 17, Diocesan Mi-

Just Bits N Pieces

grant and Refugee Services will give bi-lingual training in Ministry to Immigrants and Refugees in the Martyrs of the Americas Room, 9 a.m. – 12 noon. Peace and Justice Ministry will present its Social Ministry Training in English on January 10 (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.), January 13 & 15 (7 – 9 p.m.) in the Martin de Porres Room, and in Spanish on January



"Education Is the Fountain of Hope" by Rick Hamelin of Most Holy Trinity School was the only winner in PJM-CCHD's annual student art contest. Judging was done more on the basis of theme than technique. Rick will receive a \$50 savings bond from PJM

17, 20 & 22. On Saturday, January 24, PJM's Solidarity with the Colonias will hold a training session from 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. in the Martin de Porres Room (mostly in Spanish). For registration call, 872-8420.

Women's Spirituality Conference, Feb. 20 & 21

Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza's 6th Annual Spirituality Conference opens at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, February 20. "Holding the Darkness: What is Mine to Do" is the theme of keynote speaker Judy Bierbaum. The conference features workshops, a silent auction, and the sale of arts

and crafts. It continues on Saturday, February 21, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. All events are at St. Joseph School, 1300 Lamar. Early registration is suggested, call 915 545-1890.

\$7500 for Local CCHD Grants Now Available

Peace and Justice Ministry will accept applications for local grants during the month of January. The maximum grant will be for \$500. Approximately \$7500 is available for distribution. The grant money comes from the 25 percent of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development collection that is retained by the Diocese of El Paso. To apply, write an application according to guidelines on flyer accompanying this newsletter or call 872-8422.

Scouting Needs You!

The Catholic Committee on Scouting (both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts) needs volunteers. They especially want adults who will encourage scouts to earn their religious medals and grow stronger in their faith. Please contact Ms. Jacqueline Gonzalez (546-9433).

Four Given CCHD Grants

Four local organizations have been awarded national Catholic Campaign for Human Development this year. Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center is receiving \$40,000; the El Puente Community Development Corp., \$35,000; EPISO, \$25,000; and the Border Network for Human Rights, a separate grant administered through the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

Apuntes en Español

Marchemos por la vida, domingo, 18 de enero

Se llevará a cabo la "Marcha pro Vida" este año el domingo, 18 de enero, comenzando a la 1 de la tarde en el Parque Houston (Calles Montana y St. Vrain). Después de una actividad pública en el parque, la gente va a marchar por las calles hasta la Catedral de San Patricio para asistir a la misa comenzando a las 3 p.m. con el Obispo Ochoa.

Taller sobre ministerio en colonias, 24 de enero

La Hna. Elisa Zamudio, CSJL, va a dar un taller sobre el ministerio en las colonias, el sábado, 24 de enero, de las 9 de la mañana hasta las 3 de la tarde. La hermana está encargada del Ministerio de Paz y Justicia en Solidaridad con las Colonias. En el taller ella va a informar a los asistentes sobre la realidad en las colonias y las formas en que ellos pueden apoyar a la gente que vive allí. Los interesados en este programa deben comunicarse con la hermana llamando 872-8400, ext. 214.

Upcoming Activities

January

3—Life Mass, St. Patrick Cathedral, 7 am
4—Death Penalty Vigil, S. Jacinto Pl, 6 pm
6—Pax Chisti mtg. Past'l Ctr., 7 pm
10,13,15— Social Min. Tr'g, Tepeyac
13—Pol. Resp. Wksp, Tepeyac, 7 pm
17,20,22—Social Min. Tr'g (Sp), Tepeyac
17—MLK Mass, O.L. Mt. Carmel, 5 pm
18—Rev. for Life Mrch, Houston Pk., 1 pm
24—Colonia Min. Tr'g, Tepeyac

February

1 --Death Penalty Vigil, S. Jacinto Pl, 6 pm
3—Pax Chisti mtg. Past'l Ctr., 7 pm
7—Life Mass, St. Patrick Cathedral, 7 am

March

2—Pax Chisti mtg. Past'l Ctr., 7 pm
6 —Life Mass, St. Patrick Cathedral, 7 am
7—Death Penalty Vigil, S. Jacinto Pl, 6 pm
27-28—Diocesan Eucharistic Congress

Entrenamiento en español sobre el ministerio social, 17, 20 y 22 de enero

El entrenamiento para el ministerio social va a llevarse a cabo en español el día 17 y por las noches 20 y 22 de enero en el Centro del Instituto Tepeyac. El P. Carmelo Mele, O.P., va a enseñar a los asistentes cómo formar un



ministerio en la parroquia y sobre lo

La quinta Posada sin Fronteras tuvo lugar en el Puente de las Américas el 20 de diciembre 2003. Aproximadamente 80 personas de ambos lados estuvieron presentes.

que dice la Iglesia acerca de varias cuestiones sociales, particularmente en vista de las elecciones del año 2004. Para mayor información, se puede comunicar con el P. Carmelo (872-8422) o con el Instituto Tepeyac (872-8420).

El Papa ruega que se enseñe la paz

En su declaración anual de 2004 sobre la paz, el Papa Juan Pablo II ha resaltado la necesidad de enseñar la paz. Explica que se logra ésto al enseñar el derecho y el respeto para derechos humanos. Dice que desde el principio de la civilización los pueblos han hecho acuerdos y alianzas para evitar el uso arbitrario de la fuerza. De estos pactos provienen las bases para el derecho internacional. El Día Mundial de la Paz se ha celebrado al

primero de enero desde el 1968.

Despedida para el P. Mele, el 17 de enero

Se llevará a cabo la Misa anual de Martin Luther King para Paz y Justicia en la Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Monte Carmelo (131 S. Zaragoza), el día 17 de enero a las 5 p.m. La misa y el refrigerio después servirán como una despedida para el P. Carmelo Mele, promotor diocesano actual de paz y justicia. El P. Mele va a tomar un año sabático en Roma durante el 2004.

Mujeres de Esperanza presenta conferencia, 20-21 de febrero

El Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza tendrá su 6ta. Conferencia Anual de Espiritualidad en la Escuela de San José (1300 Lamar) el 20 y 21 de febrero. La Sra. Judy Bierbaum, una terapeuta clínica que ha trabajado extensamente con niños aterrados por incesto, va a dar charlas tituladas "¿En la oscuridad del alma qué debo hacer?" Habrá talleres y ventas de arte y de artesanías. Se sugiere que se inscriba anticipadamente. Llame 545-1890.

Becas disponibles para proyectos sociales locales

Durante el mes de enero organizaciones locales pueden pedir becas del fondo de la Campaña Católica para el Desarrollo Humano. Aunque son limitadas en número y alcance, se otorgan las becas para apoyar grupos a llevar a cabo sus proyectos de acción social. La máxima cantidad para una beca es \$500. Se adjunta la forma de solicitud con este boletín. Para mayor información, llame 872-8422. La Srta. Jessica Concha, una ayudante estudiante, administrará el programa este año.

Sr. Liliane Alam: A Franciscan Missionary to the Border

Sr. Liliane Alam is the (relatively new) executive director of Las Americas, El Paso's immigration advocacy center. She was born into a Christian family in Lebanon and is a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. She has served as an university teacher and a congregational leader. She says that she decided to come to El Paso in ten minutes upon hearing of the need here.

CM: Why did you join religious life? Are your reasons for being a religious sister the same today as when you entered the convent?

LA: At home I had everything to be happy and was able to get whatever I needed. As a teenager, I spent my time between studies, family life, and travels. There was nothing to worry about, but in my heart something was missing. I was always looking for something different, for something more. At 20, it was clear for me that my way of life is the religious life. My search didn't take a long time. I knew the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary from school, and I had all the spiritual support and direction from the Jesuits where I was attending my studies.

The reason for my remaining an FMM is that we live in a fragmented world where my congregation's internationality is a path and sign of communion. This meeting of cultures lived in community is already the good news. Ecumenical collaboration and dialogue with all persons sincerely seeking truth and justice characterize our way of mission throughout the world.

CM: How do you define the mission of Las Americas? Has it always had the same mission? Is that mission still evolving?

LA: The mission of Las Americas is "to protect the human rights of refugees and other immigrants, to challenge the policies and practices which oppress them, and to strive for systemic change towards social justice". In the early 1980s, volunteers at El Paso refugee shelters witnessed refugees being deported back to the oppressive and dangerous conditions from which they had fled. These refugees had no access to legal representation. In response

to this dire need, volunteers and community leaders formed Las Americas.

Our services have expanded to include a wide variety of legal needs expressed by refugees and other immigrants. For example in 1996, we initiated the Justice for Women and Children Project which represents every detained immigrant child in El Paso and provides representation to women de-



Sr. Liliane Alam, FMM

tained by the INS in our service area. In 1997, Las Americas began work on the Battered Immigrant Women Project in response to lack of information and confusion about the rights of battered immigrant women. In 1999, Las Americas initiated the *Poder de la Mujer* project to address the needs of immigrant women and their families in the El Paso area by providing outreach, education and training in immigrant communities.

CM: Poor people everywhere – Latin America, Africa, Asia – are on the move. They seek opportunity in different places. Are their aspirations and actions legitimate?

LA: More than 35 million people around the world have been uprooted from their homes and communities by war, and other conflict. Throughout the world people are forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution, natural disaster, and famine. At present there are almost 15 million refugees and 25 million internally displaced persons worldwide. These uprooted people are of

every race and religion. The majority of them are women and children.

It is also important to note that many of these countries from which migrants are fleeing are exploited by the Western and more developed countries. These people seek opportunity in different places because there is no easy way of living in their own countries. They make the decision to leave their countries in order to make a better life for themselves. Here in the United States, we forget all of the different times that we have gone into other countries, used up or destroyed their resources and then have left the people there to fend for themselves. We need to understand that we, as a country, owe a lot to these people, and if it means giving them the right to live here, then it should be just that.

CM: Are the policies that developed countries use to control immigration legitimate as well?

LA: Immigration laws in "developed" countries set out to continue the "manifest destiny" mindset of a long time ago. Majority groups within those countries worry that they will be overrun so they use their power to keep out new groups. Developed countries continually live in fear. This fear prevents many helpless people from traveling all over the world in an effort to find security and fulfill their dreams.

CM: Las Americas has a CCHD-sponsored project called "Poder de la Mujer." What are the objectives of this program?

LA: *Poder* serves as a community organizing/empowerment project for the immigrant community of El Paso. The group aims to empower immigrants, particularly women, by providing education and training on community organizing and issues important to the immigrant community. In particular, *Poder* works in low-income areas of El Paso including the *colonias*. *Poder* coordinates bi-weekly meetings that bring together immigrants from the commu-

(Continued on page 5)

nity. *Poder* boasts over 200 volunteers of women and their children, as well a core group of 40 *promotoras* (leaders).

CM: What other programs would you like to develop at Las Americas?

LA: For the past three years the focus of *El Poder de la Mujer* their work has been on education about domestic violence and transmitted diseases as well as the prevention of HIV/AIDS. In January it will begin an environmental project concentrating on creating a healthy environment in which to rear children. Two main components of the program will be: 1) participating in health profession workshops in order to become aware of the environment hazards, and 2) training farm workers and community leaders to become health education promoters who will educate their communities on how to eliminate environmental hazards and dangerous practices.

CM: As a Lebanese, what do you believe are the basic problems of the Middle East and how might they be resolved?

LA: The basic challenge for the Middle East is to create a Palestinian state. Since 1948, Palestinian refugees have moved from one country to the other seeking a better life and future for their children. Now they have lived for three and four generations in refugee camps. They have no future, no vision, no freedom. They are not welcomed anywhere.

The conflict, which has lasted for 55 years, can be resolved at any time. It requires that political leaders sit around the table and make peace. It further requires willingness for justice and peace from both Israelis and Palestinians, and a readiness for a fundamental change in the relations between the two peoples. As Christians we can say: "up to now, I have done nothing". Let us begin...

OAKS OF JUSTICE

2003

Asociación de Trabajadores -- Francisco and Paz Orquiz
 Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza -- Chris Divin Cosgrove
 Centro Santa Catalina -- María Isabel Viscaino and Marta Ríos
 Christ the Savior Parish -- Natale and Linda De Rosso
 Corpus Christi Parish -- Dionicio and Cecilia Ronquillo
 Corpus Christi Parish -- Rodolfo and Maria Elena Lechuga
 Cristo Rey Parish -- Estefana González
 Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services -- Lily Gutierrez
 EPISO -- Dolores Ortiz
 EPISO -- Yolanda Cordova
 Gabriel Project -- Elvia Pacillas
 Holy Spirit Parish -- Marina Brecheen
 Immaculate Conception Parish -- William Gilbert and Mary Werner
 Las Americas -- Lynn Coyle
 Most Holy Trinity Parish -- Santos and Rosa Figueroa
 Open Arms Community - Centro Santa Fe -- Frances Shaw, R.N.
 Our Lady of Assumption Parish -- Leo Lujan
 Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish -- Irma Cossio
 Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Fabens) -- Tere Avila
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish -- Beatrice (Betty) Lucero
 Our Lady of the Light -- Sr. Teresa Alcántara, CSJL
 Queen of Peace Parish -- Carol Tures
 San Antonio de Padua Parish -- Jose Calderon
 San Lorenzo Parish -- Sandra Hernandez
 Society of St. Vincent de Paul -- Juan Alañiz
 St. Matthew Parish -- Tom Walters
 St. Patrick Cathedral -- David Harvey
 St. Pius X Parish -- Laura Melendez
 St. Raphael Parish -- Art Aguirre and K.C. Council #7563
 St. Thomas Aquinas Parish -- Maria Antionetta Espinoza
 Sts. Peter and Paul Parish -- Julian and Zuleiva Salinas

The people named above received Oaks of Justice Awards at the 2003 Peace and Justice Ministry Banquet.

Note from the Promoter

This will be my last newsletter. In February, God-willing, I will go to Rome for a year of studies. When I return to the States, my province will assign me to a regular Dominican community and a different ministry. I am looking forward to both the sabbatical and to living authentic Dominican life.

Some "thank yous" are in order now. To those who collaborated on different PJM activities, may God bless you with peace. To those who supported the ministry, especially Bishop Ochoa, may God provide you with friends in moments of need. For those in parishes or social organizations working to improve society, may your efforts be fruitful.

As mentioned on page one, the MLK Mass for Peace and Justice this year will also be a *despedida* for me. I hope that you can attend. But please do not bring any gifts for me, not even money. I have been privileged to serve in El Paso and have been provided all that I need.

For the next year you may reach me by e-mail at cmle@opsouth.org and by regular mail at *Universita San Tommaso, Largo Angelicum 1, 00184 Roma, Italy.*

"Our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they rest in you."

Banquet Keynoter Stresses Right Relations in Jesus' Ministry

Jesuit Provincial Fr. Fred Kammer gave the keynote address at the 2003 Peace and Ministry Banquet in the Marriott Hotel. He spoke about what Jesus did and what he said. The following is an excerpt describing the healing ministry both in Jesus' day and today.

The second thing that I want to talk about is something Jesus did. Jesus heals. He heals a lot and sends the disciples out to heal. And right after the beginning of the Church's life in the Acts of the Apostles one of the first things they do is heal.

Did you ever wonder why? You know we've been taking that for granted for a lot of years. Why did he do it? Why didn't he juggle? Why doesn't he speak French? Jesus heals. And the folks in the Catholic health ministry -- one of the great accomplishments of this Church, those who work in Catholic hospitals and nursing homes -- may ask themselves that same question, why do we engage ourselves in this healing ministry of our Church?

In a wonderful book published by

So what does Jesus do when he encounters the people who have been marginalized and ostracized from their community? ... (He) step(s) over the boundaries of society, the wall that we put up around the sick.

the Catholic Health Association one of their leaders tried to describe for us the situation in which Jesus healed. Remember back to his society when the sick or disabled were considered to be possessed by a demon: "If you are sick or disabled and possessed by a demon, we kick you out of the community." *Leviticus* has a whole set of rules for what happens with those who have skin diseases or leprosy or whatever it might have been in their time. One of those rules is that they have to be ex-

cluded from their community, that they have to shout out "unclean" to anyone who comes near them, that no one is to touch them. And if you touch them, then you are unclean, the subject of exclusion from the community.

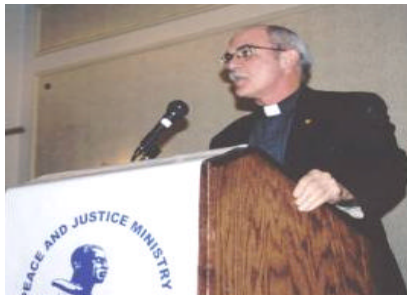
So what does Jesus do when he encounters the people who have been marginalized and ostracized from their community? The first thing he does is step over the boundaries of society, the wall that we put up around the sick. And then he touches them. He puts his fingers in their ears or in their eyes or on their tongues. And when he touches them—the scholars say --- he becomes, and risks being called, "unclean" in the eyes of the people and subject to the exclusion from the community.

So Jesus takes the risk of standing with and touching the alienated and marginalized in his society. And then he heals them. And then in almost every case he says one of two things: "go home to your family, your friends" or "go show yourself to the elders or the rabbi." Why does he do this? Why does he say this?

First, going home is rejoining the community, the family, the extended family. Going to the elders or the rabbi is, according to the *Book of Leviticus*, so that they can examine the persons healed, declare them to be clean, and allow them to rejoin the community. So the reflection of the folks in this book on the Catholic health care system is that the healing ministry is about restoring people back to right relationships with the community.

It's not so strange to us in our own times because we know that literally we isolate certain people with certain diseases. And even people who have lesser ailments -- like in the fight that we had years ago over wheelchairs -- was called what? It was called "handicap access." Access to what? Access to the community. Forty years ago in this country, in a wheel chair you couldn't get into church, into certain halls, the drugstore, the supermarket, the movie theater. You were ostracized from the community. And so we fought a great battle and a costly one for many institutions about access to the life of the community. And even the persons with lesser problems and diseases -- like a migraine headache -- talk about how their sickness causes them to pull away from their family, their workplace, and their community.

I know for myself -- and my Jesuit community members know -- that when I get sick, I pull three blankets over my head. When they knock at my door to see how I am doing, I say, "Leave me alone" because sickness and disability alienate us from the community. So the healing ministry of Jesus like the Jubilee Year is about restoring people to right relationships with the community, bringing the folks on the outside back into the heart of the community relation.



Fred Kammer, S.J., at the PJM Banquet

Poverty is not a crime, but can be an excuse!

By Sylvia Carreon

This is an attempt to answer some disturbing issues brought about by Attorney Fernando Chacon in the November issue. He makes accusations against the very people that service this community. He accuses the City of El Paso, Municipal Court System, Municipal Judges, Municipal clerks and the City Transportation Department for failure to recognize the poor in their time of need when charged with a traffic violation. He surprises me that he did not include the City Police or the Sheriff's Dept. as well.

I have knowledge in the process of the judicial system and have made inquiries of all agencies at hand to assist the needy. When an individual is given a citation (traffic ticket), they have 10 days to make a court date or pay the citation. While in court, even if you plea guilty, the courts give you a time payment plan with the possibilities of an extension if requested. You must make at least an effort to pay on the plan with as little as \$5.00 a month. If you are totally indigent (poor) you may ask the court to take that into consideration, and the courts have been known to dismiss some cases. The arrest warrants are only issued when **people ignore** the citation or the court date and **fail to appear**. No court or judge is out to extort money from the people, as Mr. Chacon contends. Judges do not sentence people to jail for traffic citations.

As for the poor having to pay the fines at the expense of their children's clothing, food and medical needs, let me tell you about agencies to assist the needy. The Human Service Department help people with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) which may include monthly income and Medicaid. The WIC program gives food assistance for children under five

New Aspects of Catholic Social Teaching

Pope's 2004 Message on Migration

With migrants on the move from Asia, Africa as well as Latin America, the Church listens with interest to every new Vatican document on the subject. Pope John XXIII in *Pacem en Terris* wrote of a right to emigrate when economic conditions necessitated. But he never delineated a corresponding responsibility of countries to welcome migrants for this reason.

John Paul II's recent message for the 90th World Day for Migrants and Refugees optimistically sees migration advancing the cause of peace through cultural exchange. The pope does not insist that migrants have a right to travel where they wish. Rather, he speaks of the right of would-be migrants to live with dignity in their home countries. He also reiterates the duty of host governments to regulate the flow of migration into their lands and calls attention to the suffering endured by many migrants.

Day of Peace Message Underscores Need to Teach Peace

In his Message for the World Day of Peace 2004, Pope John Paul II emphasizes the need to teach peace. He explains that this can be done through teaching law and respect for human rights. The pope sees in international agreements to avoid war the foundations of international law that promotes peace. The pope also congratulates the United Nations for its peace-making efforts. The World Day of Peace has been celebrated on January 1 every year since 1968. See http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/.

USCCB Issues Statement on 2004 Elections

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has issued its statement for the 2004 elections. Entitled "Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility," the document typically treats general perspective and specific issues with compelling rhetoric. The document suggests that the Bush Administration has been too heavy handed in military matters. Still it is the gamut of cultural issues that are uppermost in the minds of the bishops. Abortion is the gravest national disgrace, and euthanasia is an ever-present danger.

The document may be found on the web at <http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/index.htm>.

years. The City and County Health Department help families with dental needs and immunizations. The Housing Authority can assist with placing a family in a home. If you do not qualify for Medicaid, you may qualify for CHIPS, also a federal insurance for families. If you are out of work, you can apply to the Texas Work Force Commission to help you learn new skills and possibly to place you on a job. And then there is Thomason Hospital that will not refuse any emergency.

I also inquired on our Sun Metro Bus transportation to allow people to get to work if they do not have a

car. There are 116 buses that leave the plaza at 4:30 a.m. with the last runs leaving at 9:30 p.m. Vans are also available through the Workforce Commission to take you to work and back if you work a midnight shift. Driving is a privilege, not a right, and if you do not have the money to pay for registration, stickers and insurance, then you should not drive. I wonder what Mr. Chacon would say if he was in an accident with someone who had no insurance.

Ms. Carreon is a Deputy Sheriff with the County, mother of five and grandmother of nine .

The Last Word . . . **BREWING JUSTICE: FAIR TRADE COFFEE IN YOUR PARISH**



Many television viewers remember "Juan Valdez" cheerfully harvesting coffee beans in a sun-drenched valley. The image is first-rate advertising. All seems well in the world of coffee. Unfortunately, the reality is shockingly different for millions of coffee farmers.

Coffee is the most heavily traded commodity in the world after oil. Yet most of the twenty five million coffee growers - small farmers and their families - have been left behind in this global market, receiving wages that keep their families mired in poverty. Malnutrition, high infant mortality, lack of schools and health care are their daily lot.

As an alternative to business as usual, Fair Trade organizations pay farmers a decent living wage for their harvest, establish direct trade links and promote cooperatives and access to affordable credit. Communities are able to establish schools and health clinics. Families attain a life of simple dignity.

Fair Trade Certified is not a brand of coffee but a system that avoids a long line of middlemen, speculation and excessive profits. The Fair Trade label appears on assorted brands of coffee and certifies that the farmer has received a fair price for the crop.

On reflection, one realizes that this is about more than coffee. It's about the rights of the worker and the dignity of each person. It's about challenging an economic system that perpetuates poverty. It's about bringing Gospel values to the market place.

Five thousand faith congregations have made the decision to walk the path of justice and purchase and use only Fair Trade certified coffee at all offices and events. And the movement is growing. Two hundred universities serve Fair Trade certified coffee and this "coffee with a conscience" is now available at more than 10,000 retail outlets.

This is good news for small farmers. As demand for Fair Trade coffee grows, more families will be able to participate in the Fair Trade system. Yet there is a long road ahead. The present demand for Fair Trade coffee is at a level that allows only five percent of small coffee farmers to participate.

Growth of the Fair Trade coffee system is a first step in moving the global economic system towards Gospel values and the day when the television image of a happy "Juan Valdez" will truly reflect reality.

Unlike many issues, this is clear and simple. The parish community has an opportunity to embrace the mandate of the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching to do justice. A decision by your parish to use Fair Trade coffee at parish offices and events and to encourage parishioners to use this coffee as a matter of routine will weave action for justice into the fabric of everyday parish life.

"He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord" – Psalm 15. What greater gift could one ask?

Joe Michon and his wife, Linda, are members of St Patrick Cathedral Parish. The Pastoral Council of St Patrick recently voted to use and promote Fair Trade coffee in the parish. For more information and/or assistance with Fair Trade coffee in your parish: jmichon@elp.rr.com