

HEADLINES 2011/02 ... News from the Jesuit Social Apostolate ...

to exchange social justice and ecology news, stimulate contacts, share spirituality and promote networking ...

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\* Narrative: József Hofher SJ, Budapest, Hungary

\* Flashnews: India, Africa, United Nations, Senegal, Colombia, SJES, Spain, Italy, World, India, Asia Pacific, Latin America, World

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A Hungarian folk tale tells the story of the friendship of a young Hungarian, Dani, with a Gypsy of his own age. The godfather of the young Hungarian asks the boy's parents to explain to him why they allow their son's friendship with the "no-good" Gypsy Lajos.

Fortunately, the connection between the boys remains intact. Once Dani asks Grandma Krabi - the grandmother of Lajos - why the Hungarians say that the Gypsies are "no good". Grandma Krabi says nothing, but gives him a magic whistle. She asks the boy to blow the whistle when the uncle speaks again of Gypsies as "no good". During the next visit, the sound of the whistle can be heard. Immediately, the walls start talking: "Do you know that we have been made of clay by the grandfather of Lajos?" After that, also the oven speaks, and then the dishes, the spoons and forks, the harnesses of the horses, the wallpaper and so on. And finally, the tomato says from the table, "and we have been grown by the mother of Lajos." After this, nobody ever said again in Dani's family that Gypsies are "no good".

After ten years in the Jesuit pastoral ministry among the Gypsies, I can say that this story expresses for me the essence and spirit of our work. The most important element of this service is that we seek to build the self-esteem of the Gypsies, to reveal the personal dignity of the human being. For the Gypsies, the greatest burden is not poverty, but that they become second, third or fourth class citizens marked with the stamp of "worthlessness".

Our service among Gypsies is primarily teaching and education. I believe that the Gypsies can only assert themselves in the world today if their knowledge is relevant for the market. The decades-long unhealthy education policy and economic order meant that thousands of Hungarians and Gypsies are now unemployed because of their outdated know-how.

For this reason, we are doing our utmost to fight pure as well as functional illiteracy. Only those who can read and write are able to live with dignity in today's world. We are aiming to contribute to this through the "School of Love" that we have founded.

We consider it extremely important to enter into contact with intellectual groups in order to support them in taking the leadership of their people into their own hands. For years, we have been in contact with a group of Gypsy intellectuals. As a fruit of this collaboration, later in 2011, a Jesuit Roma College will be opened, where the youngsters can live and learn, not just languages but all about leading a dignified life today.

We often think that having a decent life is only a problem for Gypsies who live in deep poverty. But discrimination has the same impact on every human being and on every Gypsy. One can be a learned Gypsy or a Roma with several diplomas, but if in the crowded tram the seat next to him or her remains empty for a long time - and this happens often - it leaves deep wounds.

A young Gypsy told me that he does not primarily expect social assistance from the Church. For him, it is not important if the Church is able to provide social support – this would be the duty of the state and the respective government. He wished, however, that parishes and their priests would accept Gypsies with love and affection. They ought to be perceived just like any baptised Christian, with devotion and respect. And he would expect the Church to be the voice of the humiliated, of those who are wounded in their human dignity, especially in places where even Gypsy politicians behave rather like prostitutes of party politics than like representatives of their people.

We try to be consistent with our mission and, like Dani, to stand next to Lajos, to be a brother where loving closeness and acceptance prevail, and not gestures of rejection.

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PS. For the Hungarian Roma, to use the name “Gypsy” is natural, many even reject the word “Roma”. “Gypsy” has no negative connotations, as in many other European countries. A testimony for this is that in Hungary, one does not speak of “music of the Roma” but “Gypsy music” or “Hungarian Gypsy music”, and this double identity is seen as a sign of deep self-respect.

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India: South Asian People’s Initiatives, a Jesuit-inspired grassroots network, has published a Social Movements Calendar for 2011 with a focus is on peoples’ struggles against International financial institutions. It is the first of its kind which documents all the social movements and struggles of people all over the world. Each day has information on the type of peoples’ struggle and when and where it happened. If you would like to purchase a copy, contact jesadelhi@gmail.com.

Africa: From 20-27January, the African Jesuit Aids Network (AJAN) hosted a workshop in Nairobi on HIV-prevention among youth in Nairobi, bringing together 33 Jesuits and collaborators from 12 countries. It was the first major step in the development of a manual for core HIV-prevention programmes for youth to be implemented in African Jesuit educational institutions.

United Nations: The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome announced on 3 February that world food prices have reached a record high last month, the highest since FAO started its global monthly tracking in 1990 through its Food Price Index. Read an article by José Ignacio García SJ about the situation here: <http://tinyurl.com/5sfsgqu> and sign up to the newsletter of the Ecojes website here: <http://ecojesuit.com/> (in English and Spanish).

Senegal: As reported previously in Headlines, Llorenç Puig SJ and others from the Jesuit social centre „Cristianisme i Justícia“ in Barcelona, Spain, participated in the World Social Forum from 4 to 11 February in Dakar. Read their impressions in this blog (in Spanish): [www.cristianismeijusticia.net/bloc](http://www.cristianismeijusticia.net/bloc)

Colombia: From 9 to 11 February, the International Fe y Alegría Federation organised a major conference in Bogotá called “A Look at Quality from the Perspective of Pedagogy“. The 500 teachers, FyA staff and government representatives were united in their commitment to the right to quality education for the most underprivileged. Read the blog in Spanish here: <http://compromisoporlaeducacion.blogspot.com/>

SJES: This month’s podcast on the website of the General Curia in Rome is an interview with our former director, Father Fernando Franco SJ. <http://www.sjweb.info/jesuitvoices/>

Spain: On 24 February, a report on the relationship between development cooperation and migration policy was presented by Entreculturas and Alboan, two Jesuit NGOs in Spain. The report presents data showing that Spanish development aid has been manipulated in some cases in favour of immigration control, the most striking case being 5.6 million Euros of development aid spent on police cooperation with West African states. Download the report here (in Spanish): [http://www.entreculturas.org/noticias/informe\\_aod\\_control\\_migratorio](http://www.entreculturas.org/noticias/informe_aod_control_migratorio)

Italy: The Rome group of the international Fe y Alegría network is looking for Italian and Spanish speakers to volunteer at a major prison in Rome, teaching Latin-American detainees information technology, mathematics, statistics, accounting, literature and other subjects. Contact María Luisa Berzosa for more information: [mlberzosa@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:mlberzosa@yahoo.com.ar).

World: 8 March is International Women’s Day. The Anti-Trafficking Working Group of the religious orders present in Rome, of which Fr Claudio Barriga SJ is a member, has composed a prayer for the occasion in 14 languages (more will be added) here: [http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN\\_8March](http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN_8March). For World Forest Day, 21 March, which has special importance during this International Year of Trees, a prayer is available in 17 languages here: [http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN\\_21March](http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN_21March).

India: The Indian Social Institute in Bangalore is organizing a two week Summer Socio Cultural Analysis course for all those who are socially concerned, especially citizens, youth, activists, religious men and women and Jesuit Scholastics. The course runs from 26 April to 10 May. <http://tinyurl.com/5vulcd4>

Asia Pacific: The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific has launched a new website where Jesuits and those who work with them can find information related to a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle. Communities, universities, parishes and offices will all find valuable suggestions. The Conference also invites all Jesuit institutions and governance structures to give 5 US\$ towards tree planting in Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines for each flight a Jesuits or lay staff member takes on institutional business. <http://jcap.essc.org.ph/>

Latin America: Six Latin American Jesuit universities are offering an online diploma course in Human Rights composed of three modules: Access to Justice; Participation, Citizenship and Human Rights; and Education in Human Rights. The diploma is aimed at professionals working in public or private institutions, officials of electoral bodies, political and community leaders, educators and administrators, indigenous leaders and women's organizations, members of social, governmental and non-governmental organizations. <http://www.ausjal.org/sitios/educacion/ddhh/> (in Spanish)

USA: Members of religious communities, diocesan clergy, lay people and seminarians are invited to participate in a free online course on Social Justice and Ecology (or JPIC) offered

by Duquesne University. The two-semester course makes available resources on theological reflection and social analysis, conflict resolution, establishing peace and justice, and respecting the integrity of creation. The course is currently run as a pilot project with a limited amount of subjects but will accept new applications from July 2011.

<http://www.duq.edu/jpic/>

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