



Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat of the Society of Jesus

ENG February 2013

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

Narrative

A grace-filled night of confluence

It is Saturday night, a night for PEACE PRAYER OUTREACH. We are on a prayerful night-walk through the lanes where migrants and trafficked women await customers at Geylang, Singapore. This is an initiative of the Franciscan Missionary of Mary, endorsed by the Association of Major Superiors of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, to respond to the burning issues of migration and illegal human trafficking, a modern form of slavery.

The evening begins with a para-liturgy, when we experience a confluence of minds and hearts infused with God's grace. A group of 16 of us - young and more mature professionals, nuns, brothers, priests drawn from the Franciscan Missionary of Mary, Good Shepherd, the Order of Franciscan Friars, as well as Jesuits - was comfortably seated around a table. We pause to ponder over the introductory prayer and individual sharing.

Mal's sharing particularly resonated well with many of us. She is a young professional from the Ministry of Society and Family (MSF). "Most of my friends would be out clubbing and partying on a Saturday night like tonight," she chuckled, "and they exhorted me to enjoy life," she added. "But my parents are supportive of me. And I have a life too and I want to enjoy giving and sharing the unconditional love of God with those girls on the streets of Geylang," she concluded. She shared her experiences of urging her friends to see the wounded sides of these girls in the sex industry. Her wish is that more young people would come and witness and be "lured" by God into such a walk, filled as it is with consolation, delight, and, above all, surprises.



Others too shared their thoughts. "Since joining the PEACE PRAYER OUTREACH a year ago, I have stayed with the questions and the inner search. I find myself growing in an understanding that has enriched my life as a Franciscan." "Ever since my congregation invited us to translate the proximity to the poor into weekend ministry, I feel urged to return

to the margin, to encounter God in these girls coerced into this exploitative industry." "I came because I was invited. I feel moved and would like to have another experience."

The sudden swoop of the anti-vice squads stirs an air of panic in the alleys at the latter part of our walk. The ladies who were parading the streets abruptly scurry away into the houses and the front gate is hurriedly locked by the pimps. The ladies are treated like 'commoditized and financialized' goods in a stall, only to be taken out and hidden from sight during the raid. It is demeaning and dehumanizing, an agonizing sight that fills the heart with pain.

Arising from the goodness of his heart, an elderly pimp of Chinese origin from Singapore shared his thoughts: "This is beyond the call of doing good. We have to do whatever we can to alleviate their suffering. Poverty in their countries has driven them to this. They earned so little that a bottle of water is shared among 4-6 of them. Their lives are utterly miserable."

On the other hand, the night was dotted with two striking moments of God's "breaking forth" that indelibly left its mark on us.

Upon receiving the packet of goodies with deep gratitude, a Singaporean lady of Indian origin rose from her chair, gently held two of us by the hands and uttered a spirited prayer of blessing, "Bless all the Christian sisters and brothers who bring the Holy Spirit to us. Holy Spirit, fill their hearts, bless them as they go around and offer the gifts of love tonight." The 'mission-to-the-ladies' has become a mission-in-reverse. She claimed her dignity and right as a Hindu to shower God's blessings upon us. She told us that she had read the whole Bible except the book of Revelation. Truly, God has surprised us through this lady who reciprocated in full measure the generosity of the 'outreachers' of PEACE PRAYER. The givers of gifts now become the recipients of blessings from those at the margin of society.

In another street where the ladies are from China, one of them requests a second packet. When she is given one, she asks, "Can I offer you a cold drink?" We say "Yes" and she beams with joy as she passes the bottle to us. Indeed, there is a confluence, a flow of joy among us. The women unlock a latent capacity to fully reciprocate with delight in our hearts through this personal encounter. They engage us in a brief conversation that end with reassuring embraces for the ladies of PEACE PRAYER. This gesture affirms their inherent worth as women who endure both social stigma and the violence of the systemic evil of illegal human trafficking.

This regular social ministry has great potential. Many have come and seen; a few have stayed, and some have left. Geylang is a privileged space where the 'outreachers' periodically experience the God who is born on the margins of society in a manger, and grows to be an adult only to be rejected by society for the radicalism of his boundary-shattering message of the Kingdom, the kingdom of God's compassion, justice and mercy, of a loving way of life, and a heart deeply rooted in the love of God and neighbour.

Jojo M. Fung, SJ

Flashnews

Roma - Promotio Iustitiae 110 on Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks (GIAN)



The last two years have seen the development within the Society of what we call the Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks (GIAN). The five existing networks are centered on Ecology, Right to Education, Management of Natural Resources and Minerals, Migration, and Peace and Human Rights.

There you can find the executive reports drawn up by each of the networks. Each report briefly describes the nature of the network: its object, its finality, its plans for future actions, and possible contact persons.

The last five articles contain the position documents of all the networks (except Ecology). Prepared over the last two years, the documents enunciate the initial consensus of the networks with regard to the apostolic challenge they are addressing. Each document contains a description of the phenomenon, an interpretation of it from a faith perspective, and a taking of position. The documents aim to be working instruments for individual and communal discernment in the Society regarding these themes. Perhaps they will serve as material for some community meetings or for formation sessions in our apostolic works. To find PJ 110: [Read more...](#)

USA - Statement on immigration reform



At the end of January, the U.S. Jesuit Conference, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, and the Kino Border Initiative issued a statement encouraging bi-partisan action for comprehensive immigration reform. In order to address "an out-of-date and badly broken immigration system," the U.S. Jesuit Conference has reiterated several components established by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that must be included in a comprehensive approach to immigration reform.

In addition to the U.S. Jesuit Conference's advocacy work, students from Jesuit high schools and colleges across the country will be visiting their Congressional representatives in Washington, D.C. advocating on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform as part of the Ignatian Family Advocacy Month, organized by the Ignatian Solidarity Network. To read the statement: [Read more...](#)

Cambodia - Scholastics and Brother's Circle on Ecology



Jesuit scholastics and brothers from across the Conference gathered in Cambodia at the end of the year to reflect on healing a broken world from December 21st till January the 3rd. In the group of 54 scholastics and brothers were representatives from every Province, Region and Mission in the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, as well as from Portugal, Gujarat and Kerala. The meeting's main theme was "To Heal a Broken World: Reconciling People, Communities and Creation."

The participants highly appreciated the chance to visit and engage communities in the floating villages on the Tonle Sap, an immersion-experience during which they stayed with host families in the Catholic communities, and the opportunity to experience Christmas in a mission setting. To read more: [Read more...](#)

Zambia - Defending Human Dignity and Human Rights



From 7th to 9th of February, an International Conference for the Defense of Human Dignity and Human Rights has taken place in Lusaka. It has been organized by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), together with the German Commission for Justice and Peace. Among other selected topics they focused on the protection of migrants, the defenders of human rights, the infrastructural challenges and the role of the State, civil society and the Church.

Poland - Polish Ecumenical Council protecting creation



For the first time in the history of Polish Christianity, all representatives of the Polish Ecumenical Council, together with the president of the Bishops' Conference of Poland, signed a document on the protection of creation.

The text, in the form of a letter, contains both some general theological affirmations and more practical recommendations. Signatories to the document invite their readers, considered as collaborators of God in the work of creation, to redefine their attitude towards the natural environment and more generally the question of 'the living.'

In the letter, they underline a fundamental link between the paschal mystery of Christ and this necessary change of lifestyle. The Church leaders point some areas of necessary vigilance both at the political and individual levels. They invite the government and local authorities to take a renewed initiative in four domains: waste management, forestry and biodiversity protection, transformation and conservation of food, and international maritime politics. To read more: [Read more...](#)

Asia Pacific Conference - Updates on Ecology



In Asia Pacific, there are continuous challenges of social and environmental injustice. There is a serious commitment of the Conference to ecological concerns and growing awareness about the need to progress in this apostolic area. Some Provinces and Regions have environmental agendas, while others have yet to explore the ecological dimension of the mission. The current scope of experiences and connectivity is already very broad, yet emphasis is given to depth of internalisation, communication, and listening to the signs of the times with compassion, as it is always the poor who suffer first and gravest. To read more: [Read more...](#)

India - Meeting of the Jesuits taking part in Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks (GIAN)



From the 11th to the 13th of February Jesuits that have been taking part in GIAN have gathered together in Raipur in order to organize and coordinate the activities of the five networks: on Migration - displacement, Peace and Human Rights, Ecology, Governance of natural and mineral resources and Education. This is an initiative that will allow them to have a more comprehensive action at the level of the Conference and help them reach better the different Provinces in the South Asian Conference.

Italy - Aggiornamenti Sociali



Aggiornamenti Sociali, the magazine of the Italian Jesuits in Milano has renewed its site offering full access to an archive of the sixty years old magazine.

The new website really allows to "orientate yourself in a changing world", according to the payoff of the magazine. The content has been organized in different areas (Politics, Economy, Church & Religion, International Rights, Society, Ethics & Bioethics, Environment), in order to simplify the browsing experience through the various fields of interest. Within each section, articles are listed in chronological order and, thanks to the tagging system, you can reconnect each item to many others in the rich archives of the magazine. Link to the webpage: [Read more...](#)

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Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES) Borgo

S. Spirito 4 - 00193 Rome, Italy

Tel: +39-06-6986-8393, Email: sjes@sicuria.org

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