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JPIC NEWSBRIEF

A monthly publication of the UISG-USG Justice Peace & Integrity of Creation Commission



Editorial: As a new year moves along, we are encouraged to explore new ways of working together for a better world through collaboration, networking and advocacy. This issue underlines examples of how groups of consecrated men and women are engaged in promoting the message of nonviolence and building peace, and strengthening efforts to make *Laudato Si* integrated in our life and ministry. We continue to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor as we highlight issues of the vulnerable and voiceless in the struggles of refugees and migrants in areas of conflict, and the lands of indigenous people.

LINKS: Click underlined blue text to open a link or copy and paste the url on your browser window.

PEACE MARCH IN ROME



Peace March. A photo with the DRC sign was sent to the participants in the Goma, DRC workshop on “A Compassionate Response to Victims of Sexual Abuse in Situations of Conflict” to demonstrate JPIC Roma’s solidarity with them during their controversial presidential election. Messages of gratitude were received with their New Year greeting and remembrance in prayer during this painful times.

Hundreds of participants joined together in the Piazza of Castel Sant Angelo for the Peace March to the Piazza of St. Peter to commemorate the World Day of Peace message of Pope Francis, “Good politics is at the service of peace”. Every year San Egidio plans this event to promote the importance of peace. Participants held high signs of the countries to be remembered in prayer as we walked the distance between these two piazzas. A loud applause and cheers greeted Pope Francis as he appeared on the balcony to lead the gathering in prayer for the needs of all the person in areas of conflicts and those suffering violations of human rights. In a special way we remembered South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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MIGRATION: A PASTORAL APPROACH AND PROPHETIC ANSWER



Fr. Aldo Skoda, CS, director of the Center of Migrant Studies in Rome and Sr. Florence Villeon, RSCJ, UISG Migrants Project.

On January 12, the training program on Migration and the Challenges for the Christian Community was launched by the UISG Migrants Project in coordination with Salibrini International Migration Institute and the JPIC Secretariat. The four-month program is especially designed to provide a pastoral approach and to assist in giving a prophetic answer to men and women religious working with migrants and refugees. The first of the series of four sessions was presented by Fr. Aldo Skoda, CS, a Scalibrini, who spoke on the [“The Phenomenon of Human Mobility and the Christian Community, Between Challenges and Prophecy,”](#) reflecting his rich background in theology, philosophy, pastoral response and his work as the director of the Center of Migrant Studies in Rome.

Fr. Aldo introduced his session with key elements from the thinking of Pope Francis. This global migration will continue to mark our future. Migration has always been with us in our history with the experiences of Abraham, Israel and Jesus leaving their land for another countries. However, what has captured our attention today are the numbers of forced migrations leaving homelands because of poverty, violence and disasters in the environment. Our challenge is to consider an integral and sustainable development to address the problem. With the large scale phenomenon of mobility, no one can remain indifferent.

Analyzing the negative impact of the media and the use of electoral campaigns to polarize public opinion through fear-based tactics, Fr. Aldo explained how migrants are used as a tool to distract the world from seriously considering the importance of respecting the human rights of everyone.

Several areas were described in the process of mobility: their departure, transit and arrival. At every stage, he emphasized that the focus needs to be on the person and the family and just faceless statistics. The reality of their lives, their cultures, employment options are considered, stressing the importance of building sustaining communities of integration.

Clearly, he said that the Christian vision of person challenges every commodification and exploitation of persons. The imperative of the Gospel is, not only descriptive, but also performative for us. In the spirit of ecumenical learning it is important to allow others to participate in the practice of the life and faith of others. Moving towards an intercultural dimension of the Christian community, he felt that we are in the right direction to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrant and refugees.

[Flyer](#) of future sessions in English, Spanish and Italian.

POLITICS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACE: THE EFFORT OF THE CHURCH



Fr. Rocco D'Ambrosio, director of studies and professor of political philosophy at the Faculty of Social Science of the Pontifical Gregorian University.

The English speaking JPIC promoters monthly meeting in January was organized by the African Working Group with Sr. Emily Jocson, ICM leading the opening prayer and Fr. Rocco d'Ambrosio of the Pontifical Gregorian University, speaking on [“Politics, Civil Society and Peace: The Effort of the Church,”](#) relating it to Pope Francis' message during celebration of the 52nd World Day of Peace 2019 (WDPM)—“Good politics is at the service of peace”.

The Pope's message invites all actors at different levels to take politics seriously—local, regional, national and worldwide—saying “Politics is an essential means of building human community and institutions, but when political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization and even destruction.” (WDPM n°2) The consequences are “corruption in its varied forms” as well as “xenophobia, racism, lack of concern for the natural environment, the plundering of natural resources for the sake of quick profit and contempt for those forced into exile”. (Ibid.n°4)

Society is not a monolithic body. Citizens have mixed identities and loyalties. They belong to various communities, groups, clubs, movements, religious beliefs. They are confronted and influenced by different meanings in daily life. In this social context, Fr. Rocco stressed that the role of the members of the Church is to give meanings to people. The mission of the Church is helping people to grow culturally. Referring to Pope Francis' message on May 25, 2013, he said that the “The current crisis is not only economic and financial, but it is rooted in an ethical and anthropological crisis. Concern with the idols of power, profit and money, rather than with the value of the human person, has become a basic norm for functioning and a crucial criterion for organization.”

Culture is to be understood in its broader sense expressed in the 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World'. (Gaudium et Spes n°53) According to this understanding, culture includes the task to develop human capacities and to render "social life more human both in the family and the civic community".

Today's political language is often based on many words but with shallow meaning. That easily leads to manipulation and facilitates "a climate of mistrust rooted in the fear of others or of strangers, or anxiety about one's personal security" (Ibid. n°5). The spin doctor's strategy in political communication is to manipulate truth. People are getting more information and having more access to information, but this does not mean that they are getting more knowledge. The challenge is to build new meanings. The Church can facilitate and empower people to grow culturally by listening and by promoting participation, trust and respect so that "everyone can contribute his or her stone to help build the common home." (Ibid. n°5). Meanings are built by engaging "every woman, man and generation" who "brings the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies." (Ibid. n°5) Growing culturally means also to give sense to words and to put it into concrete political action. For example, speaking about 'common good' needs to be translated into the politics, and can be misunderstood as a welfare state. It is also important to "reaffirm that peace is based on respect for each person, whatever his or her background, on respect for the law and the common good, on respect for the environment entrusted to our care and for the richness of the moral tradition inherited from past generations." (Ibid. n°6)

"Today more than ever, our societies need "artisans of peace" who can be messengers and authentic witnesses of God the Father, who wills the good and the happiness of the human family." (Ibid. n°5) Following the presentation, several questions were addressed to the speaker. On how to act in a political situation by promoting values, the Fr. Rocco reminded the group that charity is also related to working together for the good of the human family, for justice, peace, caring for the common home, for welcoming and integrating migrants. The promotion of charitable attitudes within all communities, among all members, is also important. On the causes of today's political crisis, globalization and politicians inability to govern it was the response.

For more information about reforms within the Church, read the book Will Pope Frances Pull it off? The Challenges of Church Reforms by Rocco d'Ambrosio, 2017 (in English, Spanish and Portuguese, Italian).—Contributed by Andreas Göpfert, MAFR and Mariano Tibaldo, MCCJ.

FINDING PEACE IN CAMAROOON



Dialogue with Mr. Rob Dixon of the UK Foreign Office which included Cameroonian students and members of congregations with presence in that country.

The head of the West Africa Department of the Foreign Office for the UK Government, Mr. Rob Dixon, was in Rome to gather ideas and proposals from the Holy See towards resolving the Cameroonian conflict. He appreciated the humanitarian interventions of the Catholic Church in this context, especially the concerns that were expressed by the Holy Father during his speech to the Diplomats. A dialogue with him was organized by the UK Embassy to the Holy See in collaboration with the JPIC Secretariat for USG–UISG on January 11 in which many men and women religious participated.

The Cameroonian problem has a protracted colonial, political, socioeconomic and cultural history. It was stated that in the course of their national history there was marginalisation of Anglophone people, culture, heritage and language. There had been all out efforts towards "Francophonisation". The people who had their schooling in English language, had to face selection exams and interviews in French for jobs and higher education; Francophone officers, judges, administrators, who did not understand English, were appointed in anglophone regions. There had been protests in the Anglophone region against these, but the protestors were suppressed by government with arms, arrest and detention. On the other hand, before the international community, the government said that there was no such problem.

It was shared that the government forces as well as the separatists of the Anglophone regions continue to violate human rights. The present conflict has caused the death of hundreds of civilians, destroyed properties and has displaced of hundreds of thousands.

Mr. Dixon admitted that the situation is getting worse and if the solution is not found soon it will be more difficult to manage! Both sides, the government security forces on one hand and the separatist groups on the other, show no sign of coming to the table for dialogue. Great Britain expected that last year, with the political and presidential election, there could

be improvement, but this did not happen. It is now working at the regional level, particularly with the commonwealth nations, at the level of the UN, and at the bilateral level with other western partners such as USA and France to find solutions to the conflict.

Concerns were expressed by those present regarding the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the fact that it has taken so long for the international community to intervene. One participant underscored the fact that what was an Anglophone problem is now between Francophone vs. Anglophone. An example was given where people from the Anglophone regions with parents or friends living in the Francophone cannot even take refuge in there because of the polarization of the relationships. Another issue that was raised was about people who have been put into prison without charges, among whom are Anglophone leaders who could contribute to a dialogue in order to resolve the conflict.

Mr. Rob Dixon promised to take the issues raised and other observations to the appropriate levels to find a solution to the conflict which is highly complicated and risks increase as time passes with no tangible steps to bring the conflicting parties to the table.

JUSTICE FOR THE BRIBRIS OF COSTA RICA



The Bribri indigenous people of Costa Rica struggle to keep their land and their heritage. The spread of colonialism has created a spiral of poverty and despair.

Fr. Vincent Anesthasiar, International Secretary of JPIC for the Claretians, has brought to the attention of the JPIC Secretariat the situation of the Bribri indigenous people who are violently being deprived of their ancestral land in Costa Rica.

On December 25, the Bribri people were assaulted with firearms, their houses set on fire and their properties occupied. The Bribri families have fled to the mountains to protect their lives. The usurpers continue to threaten them not to return to their houses and to leave their property.

Please advocate on behalf of the Bribri by emailing a petition the government to prevent the escalation of violence. An international attention to this disastrous conflict is needed to bring justice. Using the See-Judge-Act process, Fr. Vincent has provided us with the materials needed for action on <https://www.jpicroma.org/advocacy>. In solidarity, let us support this effort and remember in prayer everyone involved in this painful situation until February 22. An update will be in the next issue of *Newsbrief*.

WIDESPREAD SEXUAL ABUSE IN UGANDA



Sexual abuse in spreads even to religious institutions.

In the article, [“A Wake-up Call Against Sexual Abuse in Africa’s Great Lake Region,”](#) Sr. Mary Lilly writes, “Sexual abuse is a widely discussed topic today. It has cut across families (often in the form of domestic violence), spreads even to religious institutions, and is often use as a weapon in conflict situations. Many have experienced this humiliating trauma, and felt its stigma. We are overwhelmed and concerned about it as if it were a cancer! Few could be aware of its magnitude unless they are close to this reality.”

Published by the Catholic News Agency for Africa in January 2019, this very informative article highlights of the workshop on “Compassionate Response to Victims of Sexual Abuse in Conflict Situations.” Sr. Mary offers a glimpse of the experience and the commitment of the participants to enter whole-heartedly into the experience.

The [2018 workshop](#) in Uganda was sponsored in partnership with the UK Embassy and UISG. It was developed by the Area Religious of Uganda (ARU) and the JPIC Commission of UISG-USG. In 2017, the first workshop was held in Goma, DRC.

IN SOLIDARITY: INTERCONNECTING GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONCERNS

The fourth webinar of the Campaign for Sowing Hope for the Planet focused on the theme “In Solidarity: Interconnecting Global and Local Concerns” was held on January 17. With a range of speakers from Poland, Brazil, Panama, United States and Italy, the online participants experienced that

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"In Solidarity: Interconnecting Global and Local Concerns"

global and local relatedness. Their topics covered a range of the themes of "COP 24 and beyond," "Upcoming events in the Global Catholic Climate Movement", "Synod on Amazonia and indigenous spirituality", and a best practice which featured "Animating *Laudato Si* in and through the RSCJ Congregation." The speakers carefully prepared their excellent presentations on specific areas of interest.

The [videos](#) of the webinar are available English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese at [www.jpicroma.org](#) and [www.uisg.org](#). The Vatican pre-paratory document and the popular version of the Synod Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and an Integral Ecology are also available on the JPIC website. The secretariat of the synod expects to receive responses from the local churches by February 2019, and plans to publish the working document the following June.

An article in the next UISG Bulletin titled "UISG Campaign—Sowing Hope for the Planet: Everything is Interconnected" will explain this initiative. The UISG Board has asked that every Superior General chose a contact person to promote this two-year campaign amongst their Sisters.

The next webinar, "Growing Seeds of Hope," will be on April 11th. More information will be forthcoming. On February 6, a new website developed solely for the UISG Campaign Sowing Hope for the Planet will be launched—[www.sowinghopefortheplanet.org](#). This dedicated website will help to strengthen and coordinate the voice of the Sisters and others who want to join this effort. Many resources will be posted, and we encourage you to share even more. This will be available in five languages—English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.

BRAZIL MINING DAM DISASTER



Brumadinho dam disaster has caused toxic sludge and irreversible environmental damage.

Please remember in your prayers the people of Brumadinho, Minas Giras who have suffered from the January dam collapse of the iron ore mine owned by Vale Company. Over 40 persons have died and hundreds are missing. The toxic tailings have covered the area. Please see the [statement](#) by Churches and Mining. The Integrity of Creation Working Group has been involved in mining concerns for several years.

SEARCH FOR A JPIC COMMISSION MALE EXECUTIVE CO-SECRETARY

In 2019, Fr. Felix Mushobozi, CPPS will be completing his six years of service as executive co-secretary of the JPIC Commission. We are very grateful for the many ways he continues to share his priestly ministry and deep concern for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. The JPIC Commission of the USG-UISG is searching for a male religious to work full-time, together with a female religious, as executive co-secretary in the Commission's Secretariat Office in Rome, Italy. It is important that this person have sufficient experience in justice, peace and integrity of creation concerns, that he be fluent in English and have some knowledge of Spanish or fluent in Spanish and have some knowledge in English, and capable of teamwork. He must possess computer and organizational skills. Contact jpicroma@gmail.com for more information not later than March 15, 2019.

Looking for ways to respond to our call to holiness as contemplatives in action who promote God's reign of justice, peace and love.

FEBRUARY INTENTIONS OF POPE FRANCIS

Month of February—Universal: For a generous welcome of the victims of human trafficking, of enforced prostitution, and of violence. The video becomes available on the first Friday of the month.

11 February—27th anniversary of the World Day of the Sick. Pope Francis calls for a culture of generosity. This year the day will be hosted in Calcutta as the Pope cites the example of St. Mother Teresa's care for the poor.

INTERNATIONAL DAYS OF OBSERVANCE IN FEBRUARY

1–7 February—[World Interfaith Harmony Week](#) points out that mutual understanding and inter-religious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace.

6 February—[International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation](#). “The sustainable Development Goals contain a specific target calling for an end to FGM. When this practice is fully abandoned, positive effects will reverberate across societies as girls and women reclaim their health human rights and vast potential.”—UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon

20 February—[World Day of Social Justice](#) which supports efforts of the international community in poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.

[International days of the year.](#)

JPIC MEETINGS IN FEBRUARY

4 February—English Speaking CORE Group, 3 pm to 5 pm at the Fratelli.

5 February—Integrity of Creation Working Group (ICWG), 3 pm to 5 pm at the Fratelli.

6 February—Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Promoters Meeting “The Poor, theological locus for JPIC Commitment”, 9 am to 12 pm at UISG.

8 February—Africa Working Group (AWG), 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm at the Missionaries of Africa Curia.

8 February—Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita. Prayer and awareness against human trafficking—prayer vigil at 6 pm, Basilica of the Pontifical Antonianum University.

9 February—Second of four training sessions on “Migrations and the Challenges of Christian Community: A pastoral approach on migration and to help us give a prophetic answer.” (Other dates are March 9 and April 6 in 2019). The course is conducted in EN, ES and IT with simultaneous translations. There is online access. See flyers in English, Spanish and Italian, and how to REGISTER.

10 February—March from Castel S. Angelo to St. Peter's for Angelus with Pope Francis.

12 February—Anti-Trafficking Working Group (ATWG), 3 pm to 5 pm at the Fratelli.

20 February—English Speaking Promoters Meeting, 9 am to 12 pm at UISG and hosted by the Africa Working Group. Fr. Felix Phiri, M. Afr, former Director of the Islamic studies in the Tangaza University of Nairobi and former Professor and lecturer at Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamology Studies (PISAI), will speak on the theme: “The State of Islam is Sub-Saharan Africa. He will underline and the most significant topics of the presence and spread of Islam in Africa.

21 February—Refugees and Migrants Working Group (RMWG), 3 pm to 5 pm at the Fratelli.

22 February—Prayer “The Poor: Theological Locus for JPIC Commitment”, 7 pm to 8 pm at San Marcello.

25 February—ICR at FAO Office at the Passionists, 3 pm to 5 pm.

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Executive Co-Secretaries: Felix Mushobozi, CPPS and Sheila Kinsey, FCJM

Communications: Celine A. Quinio

Via Aurelia 476, CP 9099 Aurelio, 00165 Roma, Italy

Tel: (39)06.6622929 Mobile: (39)3314348103/(39)3400611596

Email: jpicusguisg@lasalle.org/jplicosec@lasalle.org

Website: <http://www.jpicroma.org>