

VOICES

SUMMER > FALL 2013

Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Finding Common Ground

Voices from participants in a *JustMatters* Module

“After September 11...I saw how ignorance of Islam and of Muslims fueled hatred and scapegoating by otherwise well-meaning Christians (and other non-Muslims).”

—Deacon George Dardess, “A Deacon’s Journey through Islam”
St. Anthony Messenger (September 2011)

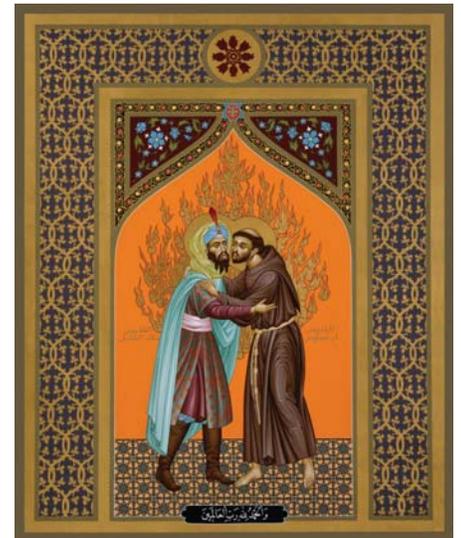
Deacon Dardess, a retired professor and consultant to the Diocese of Rochester on interfaith dialogue, refers to himself as an ordinary American who one day realized that he knew nothing about Islam. Writing in a special edition of *St. Anthony Messenger* in September 2011, he speaks of a time when “he knew nothing of this ‘foreign’ religion: nothing of its holy book, the Qur’an, nothing of its teachings, the people who embraced it, their languages and cultures or even the countries where Muslims live.” All of that began to change in 1991, and since then, having learned Arabic and studied Islam, he wants all Christians to know that “Islam carries the same message Jesus did when he affirmed the key teaching of the law and the prophets (to love God and neighbor)...”

Learn more about the module *In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan: Muslims & Christians Working Together for the Common Good* including sample material and flyers.
<http://tinyurl.com/francisandsultan>

The angry divisiveness following September 11, 2001 helped spark a conversation between Deacon Dardess, Marv Mich and *JustFaith* Ministries. As a result of this conversation, Dardess and Mich created *In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan*, a *JustMatters* module designed to bring Muslims and Christians together to work for the common good and to stand as a sign of Muslim-Christian goodwill and cooperation. We share the following voices of some of those who have participated in this unique module.

Barbara, California

Unlike many in our group, I came knowing almost nothing about the Qur’an and its teachings. So for me, one of the most profound aspects of the experience has been to learn that Christianity and Islam share the same fundamental precepts: to love God above all and to love our neighbor, a love that plays out in acts of charity and advocating for justice for all people.



“St. Francis and the Sultan,” by Robert Lentz, OFM.
Courtesy of Trinity Stores (www.trinitystores.com)

“It is not possible to build bridges between people while forgetting God. But the converse is also true: it is not possible to establish true links with God while ignoring other people. Hence, it is important to intensify dialogue among the various religions and I am thinking particularly of dialogue with Islam.”

—Pope Francis

EDITORIAL CONTENT PROVIDED BY:



Did You Know?

In the Qur’an, stories about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (called ‘Isa in Arabic) are abundant. The Qur’an recalls his miraculous birth, his teachings, and the miracles he performed.

Farrah, California

I came into the *St. Francis and the Sultan* program not knowing what to expect, but a quick review of the book title got me interested. What began as a group of people interested in learning more about the other, soon became a group of friends eager to find areas in which we were similar in our beliefs and to understand and respect our differences. Our discussion session times weren't enough for us. We longed for more. Today, I cherish the friends I've made through the program and hope to continue working with them to make our world a better place for us all.

Fr. Alexei, California

As the Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, I am well seasoned in the many facets of Catholic/Muslim dialogue. What impresses me most about this [module] is that it is not oriented toward scholars or clergy exclusively, but primarily toward the man and woman in the parish and in the mosque. The concept of Muslims and Catholics learning about each other from each other resulting in what will no doubt be life-long relationships is simply irreplaceable. I wholeheartedly endorse this program, and hope to take it to all parts of the Archdiocese.

Alice, Ohio (Pastoral Associate)

Our experience was an enriching one for all. We had 10 Muslims and 10 Christians. The most challenging piece was to look at the prevalence of Islamophobia in our culture. You could sense in the group a profound sadness about what our Muslim brothers and sisters have had to endure, yet their attitude was very forgiving and very hopeful about the future. Our hope now is to volunteer together at the Food Bank come fall.

Our past activities have included doing a course called "Christianity and Islam," Ramadan dinners, picnics, talks and events at the University, and several forays into praying together. The important piece now will be to SERVE together in some way.

Jack, Wisconsin

Great program and dialogue! Great friendships were built! The response from the Muslim community was fantastic!

Richard, California

We've learned that we have so much more in common with the faith and precepts

of our Muslim sisters and brothers than we have differences. We also clarified and corrected many common misunderstandings of Islam that have crept into our culture during the last couple of decades. Islam, or "submission to God," is truly both a beautiful religion and way of life. I try not to miss an opportunity in my daily interactions with colleagues, friends and acquaintances to work my positive experience into the conversation; and, our original group continues to meet and is searching for joint projects on which to collaborate in keeping with the common ground of our faiths. We also began new dialogue groups in our various communities.

Caryl, Wisconsin

If you are ready for an experience full of surprises, sign up for the *JustMatters* module *In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan!* We signed up for the module because we wanted to do something in response to the Islamophobia rampant in the news and the violence connected with it. We discovered richness beyond our wildest imaginations – a virtual shattering of stereotypes held and/or assumptions made!

Our faith and cultural experiences are many, but suffice it to say – "sign up" and explore the richness this dialogue has to offer. Amaze yourself as you build deep relationships with the folks that you see in the library, classroom, doctor's office, or convenience store, but with whom you never engage in serious conversation! Share the faith and beliefs that are really important to you both.

Annie, Arizona

[At the beginning of the module]: We just finished session two of *In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan* – and all I can say is, "Wow!" I want to commend the authors of this module. The sequencing and pacing of the material seems to be truly perfect. Our first two sessions have all of us – Christians and Muslims – panting for more.

[When the module ended]: We finished the module, and I would have to call it a great success. We were all convinced that this class is needed all over the world. We are determined to spread what we had learned to others, so our follow-up project was to organize a "Youth Day" event and invite both Christian and Muslim youth groups. We expected about 15 people – and got 35! It was all very gratifying.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn how peaceful the Qur'an actually is, and now I carry my favorite Surah (Surah al-Ma'ida 5:48) in my wallet.

Tony, California

I didn't know [Muslims] four months ago, but through the module and the camaraderie we've come to know each other; and, without this module the outreach that we are going to do together for the common good wouldn't happen. Our group continues to meet and to read and discuss books as well as plan events. We put together a program, Islam 101, which involves sharing information about Islam and Catholic policy toward Islam since Vatican II.

Mary Kay, Florida

It was a newspaper article about a local Islamic leader being shot at outside the mosque on an anniversary of 9-11 that led us to an imam who joyfully welcomed our proposal to come together for the *St. Francis and the Sultan* module. There was opposition from some members of both faith communities at the start, so we decided to engage only people who were truly open to dialogue.

We continue to be amazed at the many similarities between our faiths and continue to meet once a month to keep on learning, to organize the thrice monthly service projects we've started (and which are drawing more folks from both Ascension and the Islamic Society), and to do some partying!

One 19-year-old in our group was recently elected to the council of leaders at the Islamic Society and is bringing lots of his young friends – Muslim, Christian and Jewish – to take part in our projects.



Fr. Alexei Smith, Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and a social justice activist in the Los Angeles area Muslim community explore the similarities of Christianity and Islam.

NOT OUR ENEMIES

By **Mohammad Samarah and Mary Kay Kantz**

From an op-ed published in *Florida Today*

March 23, 2012

to provide armaments for the regimes that can supply it. Democracy and liberty should be supported for all nations, not only when it is aligned with our national interests.

There is, of course, no excuse for terror. But the vast majority of Muslims today – 80% of whom do not live in the Middle East – are peace-loving, faith-filled people. They descend from the Islamic scholars who preserved the world's knowledge during the 5th to 15th centuries A.D. when the intellectual lights went out in Europe, and who built upon that a vast body of wisdom to be returned later to Europe as the foundation of modern European science and philosophy. They have been, peacefully, a part of America since the first Muslim arrived here with the Portuguese in the early 16th century. Many of us forget or never knew these facts and are just accustomed to viewing all Muslims as the always-and-ever enemy. The voices of fear and fear mongering are self-defeating and are at odds with the celebrated universal values of fairness and tolerance.

Do any of us go around spreading hatred and fear of Christians because of the actions of "Christians" Adolf Hitler or Timothy McVeigh or the Serbs who

slaughtered Bosnian Muslims in 1992-95? Or do we excuse these as aberrations, Christians who simply weren't fully able to observe the dictates of the faith they are identified with? Why can't we draw the same kind of distinction between our Muslim neighbors and the vastly smaller numbers of "Muslims" waging political war today?

Writing in 1993, German Catholic theologian Hans Kung reflected on the failure of Orthodox Christian Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Bosnian Muslims to ever reconcile and exchange mutual forgiveness after World War II. Noting the horrific outcome of that failure half a century later as the three groups sought once again to annihilate each other, Kung said, "I think there can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions."

Being human, we are all at fault in one way or another for the inhumanity rampant in the world today. It will not end until we stop demonizing each other and instead begin talking to each other about how to wage peace, especially within the circles of our shared faith in the God who loves us all.

The writers are members of a local Muslim-Christian dialogue and service group that grew out of an educational program from JustFaith Ministries.

Addressing the Absurdity of War

By **Marie Dennis**

Co-president, Pax Christi International

www.paxchristi.net



Pax Christi's vision is a world where people can live in peace, without fear of violence in all its forms. Based on the Gospel message and inspired by faith, Pax Christi believes that peace is possible and that vicious cycles of violence and injustice can be broken.

A strength of Pax Christi International (PCI) is its grassroots nature. Ordinary people work in communities where poverty fuels social conflict and despair: in schools, universities, and in non-formal education environments; in churches; and in urban and rural settings. They demonstrate for peace in the streets and engage in dialogue with governmental decision-makers and in international organizations like the European Union and the United Nations. They are in countries immersed in armed conflict and in countries producing arms that fuel conflicts beyond their borders.

Often, local Pax Christi organizations from different parts of the world work together with one another and with PCI for peace in a particular context. For the past few years, local Pax Christi groups in the Great Lakes Region of Africa and in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking northern part

of Belgium) have been involved with PCI in a community-based program to promote genuine reintegration of former combatants into their local communities.

Africa's Great Lakes region has formed the backdrop to numerous political crises and civil wars, to rampant human right violations, and to rapes, massacres, and other forms of violence. The deep social and political crisis of the 1990s in the region, generated by the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the subsequent exodus of hundreds of thousands of Rwandan civilians and militia to Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), triggered the largest war between states in the history of contemporary Africa.

According to Caritas Internationalis, six million people have been killed in the conflict in the DRC, which also has led to the displacement of millions of people and to severely aggravated poverty and hunger in the Great Lakes region. A new wave of violence erupted in April 2012 due at least in part to the failure of ex-combatant reintegration programs.

In this context, PCI implemented a community-based approach to the reintegration processes of ex-combatants in two countries.

There are two main components of this program:

- *Listening Communities* are spaces providing ex-combatants with a safe space and an opportunity to tell their stories, to learn to listen to others, to reflect on the factors behind the violence, and to find the necessary resources for social reintegration into their local community.
- *Welcoming Communities* are made up of prominent members of society (local authorities, traditional leaders, and religious leaders) invited to support the reintegration process.

Another important aspect of reintroducing former combatants into society is to create revenue-generating initiatives. Through the Pax Christi program, some economic activities were implemented on a small scale, including collective farm work, the gathering of firewood, and serving as goods carriers at the market. Program participants also started organizing themselves into small cooperative associations, further integrating themselves into the local economy.

For more information about this program and Pax Christi's work around the world see www.paxchristi.net



www.maryknollaffiliates.org
www.maryknollaymissioners.org
www.maryknollsisters.org
www.maryknollsociety.org

Maryknoll Joins with *JustFaith* Ministries!

By Maryknoll Partnership Committee

In recent months the various mission organizations that make up Maryknoll joined in a formal partnership with *JustFaith* Ministries – creating an exciting new synergy. Maryknollers from our four distinct organizations – Maryknoll Sisters, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, and the Maryknoll Affiliates movement – are excited about the bridges this partnership will build among all of us whose hearts are on fire to carry on the mission of Jesus embodied in Catholic social ministry. It is our sincere hope that participants in JFM programs and JFM graduates will feel the energy of this new partnership.

At the recent wake of a long-time missionary who served in Nicaragua, anecdotes were shared about the many times Sister Rita had been mistaken for an elderly Nicaraguan lady. It seems that Sister Rita, who lived there for 40 years, had absorbed so much of that experience that people frequently assumed she was a Nicaraguan.

We hear lots of wonderful stories from all around the world about the experiences of Maryknoll Missioners with people who struggle against tremendous odds in order to feed their families, to heal or educate their children, to deal with environmental contamination, to recover from the trauma of war or natural disasters, to overcome ethnic and religious conflicts or to band together to fight the corruption of governments that fail to provide even basic services to their people. These inspiring stories can be found on our respective websites, and in the publications of our distinct Maryknoll organizations.

So why is this story about Sister Rita important?

It's important because mission is about relationships. Mission is about crossing boundaries, reaching out to others, and caring about others as people with names, stories, joys, sorrows and dreams that are not so different from our own. Mission is about sharing life with others to the point that they and we are not really so "other" after all.

In the words of Marty Haugen's song: *We are many parts, we are all one body, and the gifts we have, we*

are given to share. May the Spirit of love make us one indeed; one the love that we share, one our hope in despair, one the cross that we bear.

For more than 100 years Maryknoll Missioners have worked around the world – taking the side of people living in poverty, struggling for social justice, and promoting human dignity and the sanctity of Creation.

As the journeys of our Maryknoll Sisters, Priests, Brothers, Lay Missioners, and Affiliates carried us deeply into the lives and hearts of others, the otherness dropped away and we started to see that much of the brokenness, the lack of opportunity, and the obstacles to fullness of life that people we had grown to love faced were bigger than questions of personal morality and faith. Structural sin exists and needs to be understood in order to be addressed – and it needs to be addressed together because it is too big for any of us to face alone. This is what putting Catholic social teaching into action is all about.

Mission in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the U.S. among people who live in poverty and exclusion cannot help but call forth compassion from each of us. This translates into an urgency to seek, with those same people and with you, our partners in mission, solutions on both local and global levels that can result in lives of more dignity and hope for all of us. We have learned that the depth of our common human connection, as well as our human connection to our Earth environment, must be respected and nurtured in order for any of us to live in peace. When one among us, including the Earth environment, is suffering, we are all suffering. We are many parts but we are called to recognize that we are, indeed, one body.

We hope that what we have learned can be useful to you as you continue to listen for the particular contribution God wants you to make to our world. We know that by sharing with us what you have learned in your faith journeys you will help us become better missioners.

We hope that through your interaction with Maryknoll a global vision within all of us will be enriched –

a vision that teaches us the world is made richer by its cultural and religious diversity, and that we all have gifts to share and crosses to bear – whether in countries around the globe or in our own communities.

Stay Informed and Get Involved!

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC), based in Washington, D.C., and at the United Nations in New York City, gathers the mission experience of Maryknollers around the world and adds detailed research and analysis to develop concrete proposals for participating in public policy and foreign policy debates based on the principles of Catholic social teaching. Subscribe to NewsNotes to inform your faith perspective and discover appropriate ways for you to take action: www.maryknollogc.org

Come and See!

Participate in a two-week overseas trip designed by Maryknollers to immerse you in the mission reality that we call home. Some trips each year are designed specifically for *JustFaith* Ministries graduates: www.friendsacrossborders.org

Become a Maryknoll Missioner or Affiliate!

Check out opportunities to live out your baptismal vocation to mission, from joining a local Maryknoll Affiliates group to making a full-time commitment to overseas mission, for a few years or the rest of your life! www.maryknoll.org
www.maryknollaffiliates.org

Tap Into Maryknoll Resources to Expand Your Global Vision!

Each of the above websites includes access to considerable resources, including opportunities to get to know our missioners and affiliates, and to nurture and challenge your faith journey. We invite you to inquire about getting to know the Maryknollers who live close to you. There may be a nearby Affiliates chapter, a mission promotions house of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, a Sisters community, or a group of Returned Missioners from Maryknoll Lay Missioners.



A Just Nation Feeds All People

By Eric Bond
Managing Editor, Bread for the World

You've been brought up never to be a charity case, never to have to ask for help, and all of a sudden you're in that position where you got nowhere else to go...and it's hard.

—John Lohmeier, *The Line*

John Lohmeier was a Chicago area bank executive before a series of setbacks left him without an income or savings — with three children to feed. “I never thought I’d be in that position,” John says. “I was a straight A student; I got a high ACT, graduated with high honors; everything was roses.” While he once contributed to charity, he now counts on a local food bank for necessities. “It doesn’t matter if you have to stand in line and feel bad about yourself,” John says, “you have to cross that line to be able to keep the lights on, to be able to keep feeding your kids.”

Whether because of unemployment, low wages, or disabilities, 48 million Americans find themselves living day-to-day with little certainty about how they will feed themselves. Each story is unique, but each shares the stress of living in one of the world’s richest countries without enough food or money to make ends meet. “I just feel like I’ve aged so much,” says John, “it’s like a constant kind of throbbing in your mind of *what am I going to do?* I don’t want to worry about this anymore.”

Since the 2008 recession, poverty has risen in the United States. During this time, food pantries and community kitchens have been crucial first responders for people in need. Fortunately, a network of food banks has developed across the country, distributing an estimated \$5 billion in food annually.

It is not enough.

Pastor Bob Wilson of Plateau Valley Assembly of God in Colbran, CO, exemplifies the kindness and charity of many religious congregations and also just how overwhelming the hunger situation in America has become. Every week, Pastor Bob and his wife, Michaela, transport food from Food Bank

of the Rockies to their small town to meet the increasing demand.

“Ten years ago or so when we started this, I remember driving into the food bank and being excited about filling [our] Suburban with

10 to 15 boxes of food and thinking we were really making a difference in our community,” Pastor Bob recalls. “After a year and a half, we bought a little single axle trailer so we could carry two pallets of food. Now we’re doing four pallets twice a week.”

Despite the generosity of people like the Wilsons, churches can’t possibly keep up with the demand in their communities. Given the staggering need, it’s no surprise that all charitable donations combined account for only 5 percent of the total food delivered to hungry people in the U.S. The federal government provides the rest through programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) and school lunches.

Over the past five years, the number of Americans enrolled in SNAP has nearly doubled, showing how well federal programs can function — i.e., while unemployment and poverty have been at 30-year highs, the number of hungry people in the United States has not risen. When families face hard times, SNAP helps them stretch their resources. And contrary to some rhetoric, programs like SNAP are almost always temporary solutions to families in need. The gross monthly income of a household receiving SNAP is \$731, and the average number of months they receive the benefits is nine.



John Lohmeier, food pantry

In the early 20th century, after parents demanded it, high school was made free for all children. This resulted in the United States having the most educated workforce in the world. When the United States staggered with high unemployment and displacement because of the Depression and Dust Bowl, the federal government responded with direct relief and benefit programs. The Surplus Commodities Program, launched in 1936, is the precursor of the current SNAP program. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson launched the War on Poverty, as the U.S. poverty rate hovered at 19 percent. Programs like Head Start; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and Job Corp reduced that number to 11 percent by 1973.

However, by the 1980s, our nation’s commitment to the hungry and poor had waned. The most current census numbers put the poverty rate at 15%, one of the highest in the industrialized world and the highest since the War on Poverty. If our sense of moral responsibility isn’t enough to spur effective action, policymakers and citizens must consider the high cost of letting hunger continue. In 2011, economists from Brandeis University estimated that hunger is costing the United States \$167.5

billion a year because of its effects on health, education, and economic productivity.

Jeremiah 22 speaks to the role and responsibility of Christians in caring for poor people. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus warns that nations will be held accountable and judged for the ways they have treated the least among them. Romans 13 suggests that our leaders are servants for the good, whether or not they acknowledge that their authority comes from God. As Paul exercised his power as a Roman citizen, so, too, are Christians to advocate for government to justly protect its people (Acts 21-26).

As God's hands and feet in the world, we are called to work toward a beloved community in which every person has an equal opportunity to thrive.

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. To learn more about Bread for the World, visit www.bread.org

Crossing Borders: Migration, Theology, and the Human Journey

Immigration is a complex issue that is reshaping the cultural, economic and political landscape of the planet. *Crossing Borders*, a module from JustFaith Ministries, offers the opportunity

for prayer, reading and reflection as well as discussion and discovery related to this critical and controversial issue of our day.

Over eight sessions, this module provides participants a chance to find common ground and to discover more about themselves, their values, our God and the millions of people who are on the move in every part of the world. For more information: <http://tinyurl.com/jfborders>

JustMatters
Issue based formation.

John Lohmeier is profiled in *The Line*; the Wilsons are profiled in *A Place at the Table*. These two documentaries are resources in Bread for the World's 2013 Offering of Letters. To learn more about these two documentaries and the Offering of Letters, visit www.bread.org/ol

The Spirituality of Giving



When the *JustFaith* program launched for the first time in 1989, I could not have imagined that it would grow into a national organization with tens of thousands of graduates, partnerships with highly respected organizations, a national board, a staff of such remarkable people, and a wide array of programs. I never imagined that our programs would reach so many people and that those people would do so much good in the world.

But it happened.

And it happened because people like you made it happen.

People like you partnered with us – you volunteered, co-facilitated, organized, promoted, and donated.

So thank you to all of you who have been part of this team!

As a new chapter in the American Catholic Church unfolds with the dawning of Pope Francis' leadership, there would seem to be all kinds of new opportunities for the work of justice and compassion to flourish and for *JustFaith* Ministries to serve the Church in an even more robust way.

So, if you're reading this note and have never thought to donate to our work, I'd like to invite you to consider a gift to our ministry. Why? Because for the work of justice and compassion to flourish, it needs people who are passionate and committed. **And it's only with your support that we can do what we do best – inspire people to engage in the Church's social mission.**

To donate to *JustFaith* Ministries, please visit www.justfaith.org/donate or send a check to JFM, P.O. Box 221348, Louisville, KY 40252.

Thank you for making this work possible!

Jack

When we ask for money, it means that we offer a new fellowship, a new brotherhood, a new sisterhood, a new way of belonging. We have something to offer – friendship, prayer, peace, love, fidelity, affection, ministry with those in need, and these things are so valuable that people are willing to make their resources available to sustain them.

From *The Spirituality of Fundraising*, Henri J.M. Nouwen



CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human beings are not islands; we are a community^{*}

www.usccb.org/cchd

by **Dylan Corbett**

Manager for Mission and Identity Outreach, USCCB Justice, Peace and Human Development

^{*}This title is excerpted from the address given by His Holiness, Pope Francis, to participants in the 38th Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Pope Francis has enchanted the world with the notion of a Church on the margins. The captivating attractiveness of such a Church points powerfully to a God who has declared his own solidarity with the poor. Where there is strife and toil, there God is to be found.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) has always dwelt on the margins. For decades it has stood with those laboring on the edges, pushed there by disrespect for human dignity and by hearts immune to the sound of poverty as it knocks on the door of society's conscience. This ministry of solidarity has often brought CCHD to our southern border. Where is a more poignant place to witness life on the margins than at this line both uniting and dividing two great neighbors, Mexico and the United States.

2013 marks 15 years of Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* and the 10th anniversary of *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, the pastoral letter of the Mexican and United States Catholic bishops. To mark the occasion, in May CCHD sponsored "Fronteras de Esperanza," a meeting of folks engaged in the work of justice on the border.

In their milestone documents, John Paul II and the Mexican and U.S. Catholic bishops traced a singularly prophetic vision that remains a challenge today and that was the inspiration behind "Fronteras de Esperanza" – to give flesh and bones to what the Pope styled "a single entity" called America. They wrote of a united America, marked by solidarity



Fronteras de Esperanza included dialogue with CCHD-supported groups like Border Network for Human Rights, Border Patrol, and public officials.

and cooperation and forged by intentional acts of communion. They wrote of an America defined not so much by trade agreements and political boundaries but standing united under the sign of Mary the *Mestiza*, *la Virgen*, *la Guadalupeana*.

In communities along the border, bonds of communion and solidarity are real. On both sides of the frontier, Spanish and English mingle and flow as freely as humor, sarcasm, and a spirit of generosity. On both sides, children struggle to color in the lines, students study

together, parents build families and take care of *abuelos*, the faithful worship, the *Virgencita* is adored on family *altarcitos*, the downtrodden are tended to, farmworkers harvest, fiestas and *quinceañeras* are celebrated with fireworks, and the dead are mourned. Along the border, CCHD-supported groups work to promote justice, build visions of community security, provide water and basic infrastructure in the *colonias*, create jobs, and secure healthy food and quality education for children.

Hummingbirds, pollen, great blue herons and the Rio Bravo pay scant attention to the steel fences dividing people and nations or to the swooping helicopters patrolling them. The enormity of the desert earth beneath one's feet is united under the immensity of blue sky and relentless sun, the only

lasting witnesses to the great migrations that have passed through there.

In truth it is only ecology – cultural and natural – that gives the lie to the hundreds of miles of steel erected to separate and divide. The border wall is not just a symbol of national security but also an unfortunate record of the forced break-up of millions of families without "papers" sufficient to guarantee



CCHD director Ralph McCloud at the fence dividing residents of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez.

their domestic tranquility and security. As one El Paso pastor puts it, the wall stands as "a hostile sign against the Kingdom of God," a barrier to solidarity, a taunting and sardonic insult to human dignity and humane law.

The American- and foreign-owned *maquiladoras* that ring the Mexican side of the border are a testing ground in race-to-the-bottom economics and that only with irony can one call "free-trade." Although animals, goods and money cross the border with ease, people cannot. People are often treated, in the words of Pope Francis, as "disposable goods."

The border witnesses, too, to the thousands of deaths in the dangerous desert of those who obey the dictates of conscious to provide for their family

and thus take up the vocation of the migrant. The border is a place of poverty, where children are growing up poor and without adequate healthcare. It is a place of forgetfulness, where the newcomer is not welcome. It is a place where the authorized are pitted against the "illegal."

The border is a place of pain, division, and contested ground, but rich in culture, humanity, and hope. CCHD-supported groups make hope concrete as they work to infuse an ethic of dignity, solidarity, and equity. Local indigenous communities like the Tohono O'odham promote

Much more can be done. In the face of the structural injustice subjugating too many workers and families to economic displacement, the age-old cultural transactions and encounters that have brought people along the border together for centuries must be intentionally multiplied in order to make John Paul's vision of a single America characterized by generosity, hospitality, and faith a reality.



CCHD brings together CCHD groups and justice ministers to think strategically about promoting justice along the border.

economic development for their children. Grassroots organizations like the Border Network for Human Rights promote immigration reform. The women of *Mujer Obrera* who had jobs in the now-dormant garment factories in El Paso work to promote economic development and a dignified future.

Pope Francis has invited us to the edges of human existence, because it is at the edges where human misery and mercy meet. It is here that the sins of our contemporary economy are often thrown into dramatic, visual relief and where the struggle for justice radiates the goodness of God.

In supporting grassroots organizations working for change and in convening those working on the borders and helping them to think strategically, CCHD is doing its part to keep the vision of John Paul II and the challenge of Francis alive.

EXILE THEN AND NOW

JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK, a year ago, I found it useless to try to sleep with all the noise of the motors and the rusty machinery of the old ship.

JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK, a year ago, I walked through aisles of the old ferry boat that was taking me from my dear country and my dear people, to a faraway country which I knew not, whose people were strangers to me.

JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK, a year ago, I stood before the dark blue ocean that seemed to be endless, and my mind wandered far away.

JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK, a year ago, I thought of my country, my people. A sad feeling came over my heart. When will I be back? I couldn't answer, for I knew not.

JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK, a year ago, as the first glimpse of dawn appeared on the horizon, I discovered that every night, no matter how long, how dark, will have a dawn.

JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK, a while ago, I remembered that even the darkest nights on oceans have an end. I await the dawn and peace.

Fifty two years later, the faraway country is my adopted country and its people are not strangers, but friends. My mind still wanders far away and I think of my country of origin, and its people. I have not been back and I still don't know if I will ever return.

I am still awaiting, for Cuba, the dawn and peace.

Elena Muller Garcia, July 4, 2013

*Elena Garcia left Cuba aboard the Joseph R. Parrott on July 4, 1961. She was 13 and traveled alone. A year later she wrote this poem that was included in *The Acres*, the yearbook of Ursuline Academy in Dallas, Texas, where she attended high school. She has participated in GoodNewsPeople and the Just Peacemaking Module.*



Standing With Workers

By **Kimberly Mazyck**

Church Relations Manager, Catholic Relief Services

As summer comes to an end, we in the United States celebrate Labor Day to recognize and pay tribute to working men and women.

Given our history, we expect workers to have safe work environments and to receive some level of benefits. However, we were reminded of the challenges and dangers that still exist for many workers when a clothing factory in Rana Plaza in Bangladesh collapsed this past April, seriously injuring 968 people and killing 129 people. In June, more than 316 factory workers were still missing. The disaster generated much discussion about clothing bought and sold here in the States, especially among those of us who constantly look for cheap deals when we shop.

Yolanda Dominguez addressed the Bangladesh disaster with her art installation, *Fashion Victims*, when she staged scenes in Madrid, Spain. She had beautifully dressed fashion models sprawled on the sidewalk and covered in rubble. The scenes were meant to conjure images of the garment factory collapse. "The real fashion victims are not celebrities," she said, "but anonymous workers in poor conditions, in polluted countries." Dominguez wanted to promote discussion about cheap clothing and its real cost in the lives of, and to the lives of, the factory workers.

Unfortunately, it too often takes a tragedy to start discussions about consumer choice. One exception for many people is the growing discussion about Fair Trade. Many grocery stores now carry Fair Trade

items beyond coffee and chocolate (which CRS sells), allowing all of us to make solidarity choices in our weekly shopping.

Given that October is Fair Trade Month, it is the perfect time to think about planning a Fair Trade sale to build solidarity with workers around the world and to provide an opportunity for your local community to consider how the act of shopping is more than just an economic activity. Catholic Relief Services has the resources you need to get started. Visit crsfairtrade.org to learn more about Fair Trade and ways to promote Fair Trade in your parish. Also, CRS is a Fair Trade partner with SERRV, which provides many housewares and creative gift choices.

As people of faith, we often challenge ourselves to live simply, but that is very different from living cheaply. In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that "it is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act."

As the summer ends and we think about Labor Day, let's do all that we can to live in solidarity with farmers and artisans around the world through Fair Trade purchases.

Dominguez wanted to promote discussion about cheap clothing and its real cost in the lives of, and to the lives of, the factory workers.



Jennifer Hardy/CRS



Step-By-Step Guide to Hosting a CRS Fair Trade Consignment Sale

The following steps will guide you in organizing a fun and successful sale. Share these steps with your volunteers as organizing principles. Visit www.crsfairtrade.org to order a free information packet.



1 BEFORE YOU ORDER

- Start planning now. Choose a date and location. Ask friends, family, organizations, or youth groups to participate.
- Review the consignment program. You get a 10% discount off the retail price of handcrafts and foods (except Divine Chocolate cases), and you can return handcrafts that do not sell (excluding food and gift baskets).
- Plan to place your order 4 to 5 weeks prior to your sale date. Consignment orders will be shipped 2 to 3 weeks before your sale from a warehouse on the east coast. Please allow for extra shipping time during October and November as order volume tends to be heavier.
- Fill out and fax, mail, or email the Account Information & Sales Agreement Form.
- Prepare your order using the catalog and the Consignment Sale Order Form. Please pay close attention to the catalog items with an asterisk (*) as these are the ones you can return. Fax or mail your order form to SERRV.

2 BEFORE AND DURING YOUR SALE

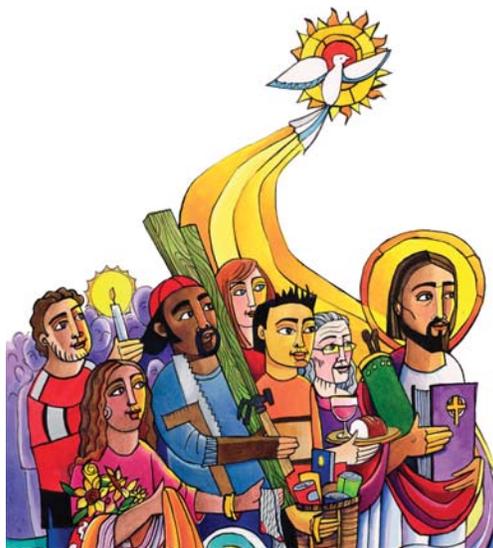
- Spread the Word! Promoting your sale is the key to success.
- Receive your order from SERRV. An invoice will be enclosed in your shipment. Unpack the boxes and ensure that your order is complete.
- If any items are missing, extra, or damaged, complete and return the Adjustment Form included in your shipment.
- Your shipment will also include a Returns Worksheet to complete when preparing unsold handcrafts for return.
- Arrange a cash box, calculator, and start-up cash for making change. All checks should be made out to your organization.
- Have promotional materials and resources from CRS Fair Trade available for each guest.

3 AFTER YOUR SALE

- Mail one check, made payable to SERRV, for the amount that you sold. If your calculation differs from the total once your returns are processed, your account will be billed or credited for the difference. Send your check in the provided envelope within 10 days of the last date of your sale. For prepaid consignment orders, your credit card will be credited when your returns are processed.
- Complete the returns worksheet and enclose it with your return. No food items or gift baskets may be returned. Please pack with care!
- You will be sent monthly statements showing the balance on your account. If you have sent in your returns and payment for items sold, but the credit does not yet appear on your statement, please disregard the statements until the credit is shown. It may take up to 8 weeks to process your returns.
- Celebrate! You've made a difference in people's lives around the world.

GoodNewsPeople

Faith, Hope, and Love in Action



Who Are You Becoming?

It's an important question to ask as you begin each day! Our thoughts, words, choices, actions and inactions reveal who we are; but is this who we really want to be? The *GoodNewsPeople* program is an exciting new program that addresses the question "Who am I becoming?" in a dynamic and thought-provoking way. Designed to be a parish-wide, momentum-building program, *GoodNewsPeople* will familiarize participants with the biblical witness of Jesus and explore the richness of the Catholic faith in a variety of ways that honor the hungers of the soul, the needs of adult learners, and the competing demands of busy people.

Through prayer and reflection in small faith groups, participants will draw on the wisdom that emerges from listening deeply to God's presence and action in their lives. *GoodNewsPeople* engages the head and heart along with the hands and feet as it seeks to build the bonds of community, foster a deeper understanding of discipleship, and lead to vibrant parishes that bring Christ's mission to life.

Who are you becoming? We hope the answer will be: *GoodNewsPeople!*

For more information, to request an information packet, review the materials or register your parish today, please go to: www.goodnewspeople-jfm.org

On Friendship

Is there anything in life as good as friendship? It's good to have a satisfying job, a roof over our heads, enough to eat, and time for recreation, but in the absence of having good friends, they all seem a little colorless. Friendship as the place of laughter, shared stories, conversation, self-disclosure, learning and even shared work is just sweet.

And while friendship can be discovered in all kinds of settings – neighborhoods, workplaces, and bowling alleys – one place where new relationships can happen is in a *JustFaith* Ministries program!

We often hear from folks who describe how they became close friends with some of the other participants during the course of the program and how these newfound relationships seem particularly rich.

What accounts for that richness, I think, is depth and breadth.

Augustine made an observation that reiterated the insights of some of the great Greek philosophers. Augustine noted that most relationships are commonly birthed by affection and/or utility; that is, we come together simply because we like each other or because we need each other's help or support. So, people become friends or even spouses because they enjoy each other's company. People also become friends in the course of sharing a carpool or sharing tools, raising kids, etc.

Augustine notes, however, that there is a third ingredient beyond affection and utility that makes for especially satisfying friendship and that third ingredient is a common gaze beyond each other to a larger good. We are paradoxically drawn into deeper relationships when there is a common goal or vision that transcends the relationship itself. We might call this transcending vision the "Reign of God" or the "common good," and this shared commitment inspires us to be more than we otherwise would be, individually and relationally.

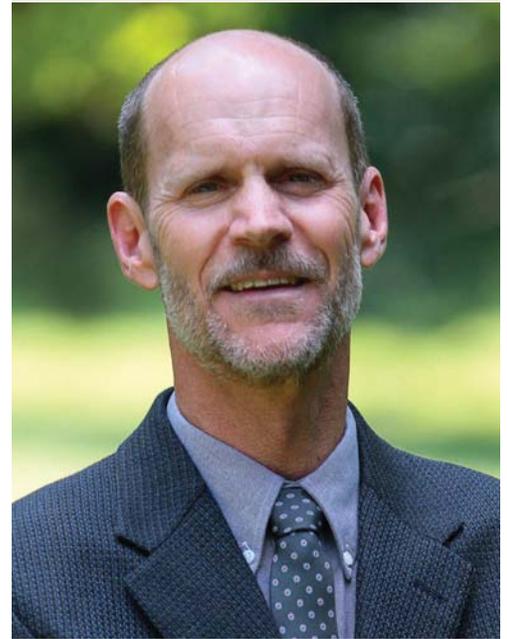
There is something very satisfying about being friends with people whose lives are generous, inclusive, forgiving, caring and self-forgetful. There can be a kind of soulfulness to those relationships that seem mostly liberated from small-mindedness, grasping, and ego.

It is not surprising that people who care for the world like to be with other people who care for the world. It is telling that, despite religious and cultural differences, the Catholic and Muslim women and men who

spent weeks together in the *St. Francis and the Sultan* module (see cover story) found unexpected friendship together. And what did they have in common? A common humanity and – Augustine would say – a common passion to see a just and peaceful world!

We need each other to walk this journey of faith...

Notes From Jack



JFM grads can and should seek and celebrate friendship with kindred spirits. We need each other to walk this journey of faith, not just because it's hard to do on our own, but because it's a pleasure, a gift, even a joy to do it together.

Do you have a new friend (or set of friends) as a result of participating in one of our programs? We would love to hear your story. Send us a note at gradnet@justfaith.org. We might even include it in our next GradNet.

Jack



JustFaith Ministries provides graduates of our programs with a twice-monthly resource called **GradNet**.

To sign up, fill out the online form at: tinyurl.com/gradnet

If you have comments, ideas or suggestions for an article, or if you would like to share digital pictures of *JustFaith* Ministries groups in action, please contact: gradnet@justfaith.org

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OUR MISSION

JustFaith Ministries forms, informs and transforms people of faith by offering programs and resources that sustain them in their compassionate commitment to build a more just and peaceful world.

Graphic Design: PLOW Studio, Louisville, KY

JustFaith
Purpose. From A New Perspective.

JustFaith Catholic

FLEXIBLE, ADAPTABLE, AND MORE IMPACTFUL THAN EVER.

As grads share their JustFaith experience with someone unfamiliar to the program, a common response is, "Wow! That sounds like a wonderful experience, but I could never commit that much time." This kind of feedback has moved JustFaith Ministries toward repackaging the JustFaith Catholic program over the past year.

The program is now more flexible and can be adapted to almost anyone's schedule – anyone who's willing to make a commitment to deepening their own faith journey with others in a small group.

JustFaith Catholic is being designed with four phases of six sessions, with a recommended three-week discernment period following the final session. There are basic sample schedules on the JustFaith Catholic webpage (tinyurl.com/justfaithcatholic) but here are some creative ideas for when to host a group:

- Fall to Spring, with or without two-week breaks between each phase
- Advent to mid-summer of the following year, with two-week breaks between each phase
- January to Fall, with two-week breaks between each phase

Looking back to when you made the commitment, you probably didn't have time in your life for JustFaith. But you made the time. Have you asked others to make the time, too, sharing your own journey?

Why should you and your faith community reconsider JustFaith?

Here are a few possible reasons:

- Last year, your JustFaith group was smaller than normal: this repackaging offers a new way to talk about JustFaith and the commitment.
- Your parish merged with others and is looking for a way to bring leaders together.
- A small faith-sharing group is looking to reconnect and take their understandings of the Gospel to a deeper level.
- Your parish is reinvigorating its social ministry efforts and needs to form leaders in Catholic social teaching.
- Your parish has seen the impact of grads and want to keep that positive spirit moving in the parish.