

The Menu



“But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Luke 14:13-14

Newsletter of the UCC Social Justice Team

Issue 7, May 13, 2007

Peacemaking in your own life: In the past month have you...?

- ** Read about conflict in the newspaper or on the Internet?
- ** Prayed for peace?
- ** Been involved in an argument?
- ** Settled a dispute at home or in school or work
- ** Watched a movie or television program?
- ** Campaigned for peace?
- ** Tried to see another person's point of view?
- ** Spoke to someone in a demeaning way?
- ** Explained to someone how a particular comment hurt you?
- ** Discussed peace and war with your peers?

Source: www.educationforjustice.org

Chef's Special: Pacem in Terris

Catholic Social Teaching: Pursuing Peace

Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war; it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples and the practice of fraternity. Peace is “the tranquility of order.” Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2304.*

To attain the good of peace, there must be a clear and conscious acknowledgement that violence is an unacceptable evil and that it never solves problems. Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings. What is needed is a great effort to form consciences and to educate the younger generation to goodness by upholding that integral and fraternal humanism which the Church proclaims and promotes. *Pope John Paul II's World Day of Peace Message, 2005*

The War in Iraq: An Update

Source: www.educationforjustice.org

Ethnic Conflict

◆ Sunni-Shia tensions have led to a growing number of sectarian killings. Hundreds of corpses with signs of torture have been found. ◆ Kurds and Christians, are also the victims of violent crime and kidnapping.

The Death Toll

◆ A 2006 estimate by Johns Hopkins scientists and Iraqi physicians found that 655,000 civilians had been killed since 2003. ◆ 2,800 American troops have died since 2003.

Health and Education

◆ Since sanctions were imposed on Iraq in 1990, the Iraqi health system has become one of the worst. 25% of children die before reaching age 5 and 12% of hospitals were damaged during the fighting. ◆ Two decades of war, sanctions and funding shortages turned the Iraq education system into one of the region's worst.

Economic Cost of the War

◆ As of Dec. 2006, the war in Iraq had cost the U.S. \$346.7 billion. Columbia University

economists estimated that war costs will top \$2 trillion if it continues until 2010.

Rebuilding Infrastructure

◆ Wars, sanctions and looting left Iraq's infrastructure in ruins. Progress in key infrastructure remains below prewar levels. Although \$30 billion was committed by the U.S. to rebuilding, much of that money has not been released or was diverted to security-related measures. The reconstruction effort has also been weighed down by a l l e g a t i o n s o f mismanagement.

Pax Christi State Conference



May 19 9 AM-5 PM

Pax Christi, the Catholic peace organization, will have their state conference in Austin at St. Catherine of Siena Church. Renowned retired Bishop Thomas Gumbleton will give the Keynote. The conference is a great way to learn about the nonviolence movement, and students are asked only to make a freewill donation. For more info, visit scatherine-austin.org.

Prayer Requests from the Homeless:

The Hope Bags distributed at the UCC on April 29 included prayer request cards recipients could mail to the UCC, and we have already received two requests! Please join us in praying for the bag recipients:

“Pray to help me find housing and get my daughter back from CPS and keep my marriage STRONG. THANKS A LOT!” *From: Mary*

“Pray that the Lord will open our eyes and hearts and give my friends the will to stay off drugs as the Lord has done for me. P.S. Thank you for all your support, thank you a whole bunch o' bunches, now I know how to get my I.D. back [because of the resources info in the bag]” *From: Chris*

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"China Blue" at Congregational Church Tues. May 15 7 PM
China Blue, a moving documentary about denim sweatshops in China, will be shown at the Congregational Church on 23rd and Guadalupe. Afterwards, the new Austin initiative to prevent tax dollars from supporting sweatshop abuses by ensuring the city purchases garments only from sweat-free workplaces will be discussed. Go to congregational.faithweb.com/ for event info and for more info about the ordinance, go to texasfairtrade.org/AustinSweatFree.html

Be a Volunteer at Casa Marianella and Posada Esperanza
Casa Marianella is a refugee and homeless immigrant shelter in East Austin that provides temporary housing, food, clothing, ESL classes and job opportunities to those in need. Its sister house, Posada Esperanza, provides refuge for immigrant women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Casa is currently frequently in need of people to prepare dinner at the house, and both Casa and Posada are always interested in new long-term volunteers to work in the office or teach ESL classes. For more info, go to www.casamarianella.org or call 385.5571.

3rd International Women's Peace Conference, Dallas, July 10-15 **Upcoming Executions by the State of Texas**

Meet and strategize with Nobel Peace Laureates, elected officials, and grassroots peacemakers from other countries, faiths and backgrounds. Share peace skills and design an action plan for peace. Register at www.womenspeaceconference.org. For more info, contact Kathleen Donovan, UT Coordinator, at 214-392-1750.

May 16 Charles Smith
June 6 Michael Griffith
June 13 Cathy Henderson

Peaceful vigils are held every evening of an execution at the Governor's Mansion at 12 & Lavaca, 5:30-6:30 PM. Texas will execute the 400th person since 1982 sometime this summer.

Notable Quotable:

Nobody can be a Christian without being a peacemaker. We are called to a life of peacemaking in which all that we do, say, or think is part of our concern to bring peace. Just as Jesus' command to love one another cannot be seen as a part-time obligation, so too Jesus' call to peacemaking is unconditional, unlimited and uncompromising. Peacemaking is a full-time vocation. *Fr. Henri Nouwen*

SJ Team Mission statement:

The UCC Social Justice Team seeks to connect what we experience at Mass on Sunday to how we live the rest of the week by focusing on the tenets of charity and justice. We serve the common good through works of mercy for the poor and vulnerable and advocating for just social policies.

Take Action for Iraq: Increase funding for community programs

The president vetoed the Supplemental Funding Bill, and negotiations over a new version are expected to conclude soon. Please ask your members of Congress and the White House to make peace building and the welfare of the Iraqi people their primary concern. The debate over proposed benchmarks or a timetable to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq frequently makes newspaper headlines. However, it is important for our lawmakers to realize that little-known grassroots programs in Iraq have great potential for bringing peace. In the first version of the Supplemental, legislators called for millions of dollars more than the president's

request for many local programs that promote children's health and survival, disaster and famine relief, and aid to migrants and refugees.

Please contact your Senators, Representatives and the White House. Urge them to support funding in the Supplemental for these and similar programs without tying them to benchmarks. Further background and a sign-on letter can be found on the website of NETWORK, a Catholic social justice lobby, at capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/alert/?alertid=9705576&type=ML

Key requests:

The development of Iraqi

people's capacity to work locally to bring healing and reconciliation through funding existing proven programs: Community Action Programs (small on-the-ground organizing efforts all over Iraq), Community Stabilization Programs (training in conflict resolution skills), and Democracy Building Programs (helping Iraqis demand more responsive local government). The U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) has stated that these are the programs that DO WORK and should be expanded. These peace programs should not be linked to benchmarks.

Source: www.maryknollgc.org

Like what you see? Want to become a part of it?

A small group of students and adults committed to promoting justice around the UCC and the community produces this bi-weekly newsletter, looks for opportunities to do charity and justice, leads workshops and hosts other events. If you would like to help with planning, have ideas to add, or would like to put a submission in the newsletter, email sjteam@utcatholic.org.