



J/P ALERT

CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE



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Champions of Social Change

By Frater Graham Golden, O.Praem.

Christians everywhere pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Two [Norbertines](#) have dedicated their lives to en fleshing these familiar words: **Br. Steve Herro, O.Praem., and Fr. Jeremy Tobin, O.Praem.** Their efforts toward social justice aim to remove the blinders imposed by culture and society that all might see each other in the light of Christ.

Br. Steve Herro, O.Praem., helps those living in comfort or holding positions of power to realize their obligation to respond to the needs and struggles of their impoverished and marginalized sisters and brothers.

Baptized in the Melkite Rite of the Catholic Church, he has had a strong connection to the Church's teachings on justice from early on in his faith journey. The educational emphasis in Norbertine formation helped bolster his intellectual ability to bring his faith and the contemporary world into dialogue.



"I have always been a politics and history junkie, so being able to connect social justice to Church ministry is natural," he says.

During his early years of formation Br. Steve recalls a series of classes given by Fr. Jim Putman of the diocesan social concerns office that he says "really helped me connect Catholic social teaching to justice." This combined with an eye-opening trip to impoverished Cuernavaca, Mexico, solidified his dedication to ministering on behalf of the poor, oppressed and marginal.

"As a vowed religious, I have professed poverty," he says. "Poverty is more than receiving a smaller monthly living allowance than a professional salary. As one who has vowed poverty, I believe that I am called to advocate for the poor and vulnerable. In the realm of social justice, this means working within our culture to help change systems that are impoverishing people."

"I think the Norbertine vocation of 'locality,' committing to a particular place and its needs,

connects well with Steve's work. While the issues he deals with can be across the nation or the world, he does a good job of helping people to see the local connections," observes Robinson.

Fr. Jeremy Tobin, O.Praem., confronts centuries-old racism and prejudice.

Fr. Jeremy was raised in Rogers Park on the north side of Chicago amidst both Jews and Catholics. He attended [Catholic Theological Union](#) (CTU) in Chicago during the years following Vatican II and says that the faculty of CTU gave him "a love for the Bible that has grounded me all these years."

While at CTU, Fr. Jeremy was thrust from the white north of the city to the black south. "Black Chicago and white Chicago could have been on different planets. It was a true learning experience and growth experience for me that shaped the course of my ministry," he says.

Fr. Jeremy remembers a pivotal experience when he witnessed "a sweatshop ... totally hidden from the pleasant neighborhood around it. It was a Chicago summer. There was no air conditioning and poor ventilation. The workers had to get permission to use the restroom."

Fr. Jeremy helped form the Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance. Like Br. Steve, he also works tirelessly to educate the public in issues of justice. He writes frequently for the Mississippi Catholic, the Clarion Ledger (Jackson, Miss.), the Jackson Advocate, the American Forum, the Mississippi Forum and ¡Ahora Sí! (San Antonio, Texas).

"My spirituality is Bible focused, especially on the prophets," Fr. Jeremy says. "The struggle for justice is to live the death-resurrection of Jesus daily. Think how many centuries it took to destroy slavery and Jim Crow, and we're still at it? My people teach me patience. It is a beautiful life!

"Our founder was a reconciler. He brought working parties to the peace table. What I do is work for reconciliation between the races and ethnic groups," he says. "My call to religious life was parallel to my call to social justice."

[A longer version of this article appeared in [Abbey Magazine](#), Fall/Winter 2010.]

Put the Poor First in Federal Budget Decisions, Say Catholic Bishops, CRS President

WASHINGTON— Expressing concern over proposed federal budget cuts in the Fiscal Year 2011 Continuing Appropriations Resolution, the heads of two U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) committees and the president of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) sent letters to Congress on February 14, reminding elected officials that "decisions on how to allocate opportunities and burdens in setting budget priorities are more than economic policies — they are significant moral choices."

On the international side, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, chairman of the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace, and Ken Hackett, president Catholic Relief Services, said in a [joint letter](#) that "[e]specially in a time of austerity and fiscal restraints, the poor have a special moral claim on limited financial resources." According to an analysis by USCCB and CRS, the proposed Continuing Resolution makes over 26% in cuts for poverty-focused international assistance, but only 2.6% in cuts overall.

"Shared sacrifice is one thing; it is another to make disproportionate cuts in programs that serve the most vulnerable," said Bishop Hubbard and Hackett in the letter. "It is morally unacceptable for our nation to balance its budget on the backs of the poor at home and abroad."

The Church leaders said international assistance is an essential tool to promote human life and dignity, advance solidarity with poorer nations, and enhance security throughout the world. The letter warned that many of the proposed funding reductions will disrupt existing programs mid-stream, undermining their impact, the capacity of local partners, and ultimately the moral credibility of United States. The letter also welcomed the restoration of the Mexico City Policy that prohibits funding groups that perform or promote abortion and the denial of funding to the U.N. Population Fund which supports a program of coerced abortion and involuntary sterilization in China, but noted that the Continuing Resolution also makes dramatic cuts that are life-threatening.

In a [separate letter](#), Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, California, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, called on Congress to place the needs of the poor, the unemployed, the hungry, and other vulnerable people first, in setting priorities in the Fiscal Year 2011 Continuing Appropriations Resolution, saying “[a] moral measure of the budget is how it treats “the least of these” at all stages of life from conception until natural death.”

Citing the call for major reductions in non-security related programs that serve the poor and vulnerable, Bishop Blaire said, “In a time of economic crisis, the poor and vulnerable are in greater need of assistance, not less. Preserving the national security of the country is without doubt imperative, but we cannot secure the nation while at the same time furthering the insecurity of the poor and vulnerable in our midst.”

Bishop Blaire called for “reasonable solutions and strategies to address the federal deficit that will ensure stability and security for future generations” while advocating for “a balanced approach that is just and works to preserve the well-being of poor and vulnerable people.” He also said, “decisions should be made that not only reflect a commitment to national and long term fiscal security but demonstrate justice, compassion and fairness. Our plea, then, is simple: Put the poor and vulnerable first as you consider how to spend limited federal resources.”

Among the main concerns highlighted by Bishop Blaire in his letter are the proposed cuts to funding for **Community Health Centers, affordable housing programs, job training programs**, and critical **refugee funding**. The letter also welcomed the bill's **retention of all appropriations riders against abortion funding**, and its **restoration of a consistent ban on such funding in the District of Columbia**.

USCCB Chairman Supports Wisconsin Bishops on the Rights of Workers

WASHINGTON—Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, California, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, expressed his “support for and solidarity” with the Wisconsin bishops’ statement on the rights of workers.

In a [February 23 letter](#) to Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI of Milwaukee, Bishop Blaire wrote, “You and our brother bishops in Wisconsin are offering a timely reminder of what the Church teaches on the rights and duties of workers, including the right to form and belong to unions and other associations, and the obligation to address difficult problems with respect for the rights and needs of all. As you insist, ‘hard times do not nullify the moral obligation each of us has to respect the legitimate rights of workers.’

“Catholic teaching and your statement remind us these are not just political conflicts or economic choices; they are moral choices with enormous human dimensions. The debates over worker representation and collective bargaining are not simply matters of ideology or power, but involve principles of justice, participation and how workers can have a voice in the workplace and economy.”

Recalling the teachings of Popes Benedict XVI and John Paul II on unions and the rights of workers, Bishop Blaire praised the Wisconsin bishops for consistently sharing the “teaching of the Church in the midst of this controversy” and made a call to everyone involved to overcome differences and put the common good first.

“We pray that the leaders and people of Wisconsin—and across our nation—will respond to your appeal to everyone—lawmakers, citizens, workers, and labor unions—to move beyond divisive words and actions and work together, so that Wisconsin can recover in a humane way from the current fiscal crisis.”

Franciscan Action Network (FAN) Statement on the Budget (excerpts)

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President Obama recently released his proposed budget, which calls for a spending freeze on all programs serving the poor and vulnerable. The Republican Study Committee has a plan calling for the reduction of non-military/security discretionary spending to 2006 levels which could result in a cut of almost 40% for key services affecting the poor.

It is important to remember that the Federal budget is not a balance sheet. It is not a document that says we take in so many dollars and we spend so many dollars so in the end we either have a deficit or we make a profit. The Federal budget is a moral statement reflecting the moral values and priorities of our great nation as a community and each of us as a citizen. It is often said that the United States was founded on Judeo Christian principles. In the first book of the Holy Bible, God asks Cain where his brother Abel is. Cain's response is, “Am I my brother's keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). Throughout the Bible, God very clearly and definitively answers that question. Matthew 25:40 tells us: “I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!”

...

Catholic teachings suggest that a fundamental measure of our nation's moral compass is whether it enhances or undermines the lives and dignity of those most in need. When we make decisions to fund programs that build weapons over programs that care for the poor, we are making a moral and ethical decision. When we choose to spend our dollars on a war in Afghanistan instead of providing maternal and child health care for pregnant women, we are making a moral decision. When we decide to cut funds for homeless shelters instead of increasing revenue, we are making a moral decision. Make no mistake, these are very difficult times and difficult decisions; the choices that our elected officials make will have significant consequences for the poor and most vulnerable. If we are truly a nation of God then we must regain the moral high ground. We must do as St. Francis did more than 800 years ago when he taught us to feed the hungry, to catch those in danger of falling through the cracks of a society that looked down on them, to care for those who cannot escape the poverty that traps them in lives of constant hardship.

Our nation is at a crossroads. Are we truly a nation of God? Are we all brothers and sisters united in our connection to God? As children of God, in what direction is our moral compass moving? Many times you hear people ask, “Why am I responsible for the poor and hungry? I have enough to worry about taking care of myself! Shouldn't they be responsible for picking themselves up by their bootstraps and taking care of themselves?” Is this not the exact same question that Cain asked God when he said, “Am I my brother's keeper?” Jesus never told us that taking up the cross and following him would be easy, or that we could take care of the hungry when it was convenient or when we had extra money. Jesus very clearly said, “What you do to the least of my brethren you do unto me.”

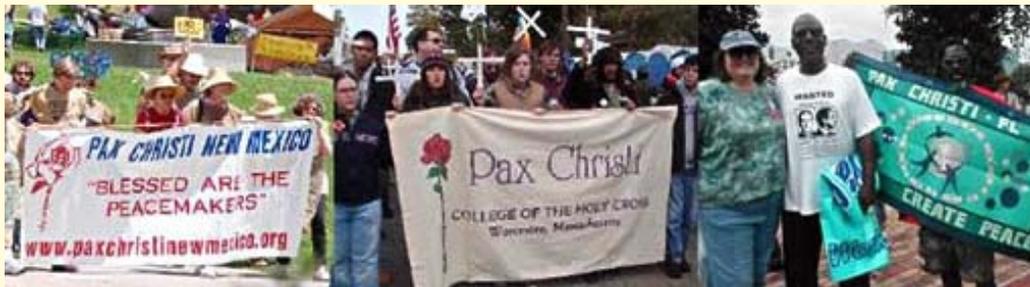
[The complete statement is available on the [FAN web site.](#)]

Education For Justice Staff Received the 2011 Harry A. Fagan Roundtable Award

The Roundtable Award is named for the late Harry A. Fagan, who served as the director of Catholic Community Action in the diocese of Cleveland and later worked for the National Pastoral Life Center as staff for the Roundtable Association. The Roundtable Award is named for the late Harry A. Fagan, who served as the director of Catholic Community Action in the diocese of Cleveland and later worked for the National Pastoral Life Center as staff for the Roundtable Association.

Education for Justice staff Sr. Katherine Feely, SND, Jane Deren and Fr. Jim Hug, SJ, received the Harry A. Fagan Roundtable Award on February 12, 2011, for their exemplary contributions to the achievement of the Catholic social justice vision through the [Education for Justice Web Project](#), housed at the [Center of Concern](#) in Washington, DC. [The Roundtable Association of Catholic Diocesan Social Action Directors](#) presents the award each year to a person or persons whose work, in the tradition of Catholic social teaching, has led to significant progress towards greater social justice and dignity for all members of society at the national or international level.

Pax Christi USA Moves National Headquarters to Nation's Capital



Washington, D.C. -Calling it an "exciting step forward," Pax Christi USA National Council Chairperson Sr. Josie Chrosniak, HM, announced the establishment of a new national headquarters for [Pax Christi USA](#), the national Catholic peace movement, in Washington, D.C.

"The growth of our movement, the dire need for voices holding up nonviolence, and our ever deepening commitment to speak truth to power call us to a new moment. It is an exciting step forward for Pax Christi USA," said Sr. Chrosniak.

Pax Christi USA's National Council determined to make the move at this time as an effort to enhance the organization's ability to influence the content and tone of our national political and religious conversations on issues which are at the heart Pax Christi USA's mission. Pax Christi USA has maintained a program office in Washington, D.C. since 2002, and recently expanded that presence by moving to the Center of Concern and initiating an internship program that includes a live-in community.

"Our intern community is a living witness of Pax Christi's core commitment to nonviolence and right relationships and embodies the values and aspirations of Pax Christi members across the nation," said Dave Robinson, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA. "In a very concrete way, they are bringing our movement to the steps of power by modeling the peace we all seek."

Pax Christi USA's Washington operations are directed by Sr. Dianna Ortiz, OSU. "The D.C. Office works primarily to facilitate the voice of Pax Christi's nationwide network," said Sr.

Ortiz. "We work to effect social transformation through a combination of organizational networking, coalition development and media work, direct interaction with Congress and the Administration, as well as extensive research and production of social analysis and theological reflection to empower grassroots activities nationwide."

Pax Christi USA maintained its national office in Erie, Pennsylvania since 1986. Initiated through the generosity of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, and under the early direction of Sr. Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, the office provided support and resources during a time of transition in Pax Christi USA's history. In 1996, Pax Christi USA purchased a building and expanded staff and activities. During the years in Erie, Pax Christi USA saw its membership greatly increase and grow in terms of political and religious influence and access. Over the past decade, Pax Christi USA staff members have increasingly been called to meet with key governmental leaders in D.C. and collaborate with other national and international organizations based there.

"It's the right time and the right move," said Pax Christi USA Bishop President, Bishop Gabino Zavala. "Pax Christi USA has been blessed by the support we have received in Erie over the years, including the remarkable Erie-based staff and the local peace community, particularly that of the Erie Benedictines. We move forward with this next step in our journey confident that the seeds planted and lovingly nurtured there will continue to thrive and flourish in the soil of our nation's capital," Zavala said.

The Erie office will be maintained during a transition phase through July as the remaining activities there are transferred to the Washington, DC, office.

For more information, contact Director of Communications Johnny Zokovitch at 352-219-8419 or johnnypcusa@yahoo.com.

New USCCB Policy Paper on Climate Change

Over 400 Catholic social ministry leaders from around the country gathered in Washington, DC, in February to learn about the variety of international and domestic justice and peace issues that are of concern to the U.S. Catholic bishops and national Catholic partners. The [Catholic Coalition on Climate Change](#) assisted in a well-attended workshop to share new tools and programs on climate change with many of these leaders, and its exhibit booth was buzzing with visitors who were enthusiastic about furthering the good news of the [Catholic Climate Covenant](#) and [St. Francis Pledge](#). Participants also received the latest [public policy briefing paper](#) from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Questions to Examine Conscience in the Light of Catholic Social Teaching

The USCCB's [Office of Justice, Peace and Human Development](#) has produced an [examination of conscience](#) based on Catholic Social Teaching. This examination can be used as a supplement to the traditional examination of conscience during Penance services or the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Churches for Middle East Peace Advocacy Conference, May 22-24, 2011, Washington, DC



For the Peace of Jerusalem CMEP's 2011 Advocacy Conference

Please join us **Sunday, May 22nd – Tuesday, May 24th** for [Churches for Middle East Peace's annual conference](#). The conference offers an opportunity to deepen and enrich your knowledge and advocacy about the conflict in the Holy Land and prospects for peace. With the conference theme, *For the Peace of Jerusalem*, we are lining up regional experts, faith leaders and advocates to speak with CMEP supporters about love, security and justice as a part of the peace process. In addition to plenary lectures and workshops, a lobby training and lobby day will also be a part of the conference so you can take what you've learned directly to your elected officials in Washington.

You can [register today using a credit card](#), or a [check](#). **Limited time Early Bird rate of \$120 per person! Just enter "gets the worm" as the discount code or on your check when registering!**

To see a [preliminary schedule](#) and [find out more about the conference](#) and registration [visit CMEP's website](#).

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