



J/P ALERT

CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE



May 2011 ([en Español](#))

- [Leaders Unite to Protect Poor People in Budget Debate](#)
- [Vatican on the Death of Osama Bin Laden](#)
- [Justice Award for Sean McDonagh SSC](#)
- [Our Martyr](#)
- [CUA Conference on Rerum Novarum](#)
- [June is Torture Awareness Month](#)
- [Social Action Summer Institute](#)

Christian Leaders Unite to Protect Poor People in Budget Debate

Form "Circle of Protection" Around Programs for Poor People

Washington, DC, April 27, 2011 –

Evangelical, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestants, African-American, and Latino

Christian leaders have joined together to defend the lives and dignity of poor and vulnerable people in the current budget debate. The release of this joint statement marks the strongest and most unified Christian voice in the budget debate. Signed by more than 50 Christian leaders, it states:

"As Christian leaders, we are committed to fiscal responsibility and shared sacrifice. We are also committed to resist budget cuts that undermine the lives, dignity, and rights of poor and vulnerable people. Therefore, we join with others to form a Circle of Protection around programs that meet the essential needs of hungry and poor people at home and abroad."

In a press call today, heads of diverse Christian organizations said that politicians in both parties have failed to bring moral leadership to the budget debate. In the words of the Christian leaders:

"These choices are economic, political—and moral. As Christians, we believe the moral measure of the debate is how the most poor and vulnerable people fare. We look at every budget proposal from the bottom up—how it treats those Jesus called "the least of these" (Matthew 25: 45). They do not have powerful lobbies, but they have the most compelling claim on our consciences and common resources. The Christian community has an obligation to help them be heard, to join with others to insist that programs that serve the most vulnerable in our nation and around the world are protected."

Congress will reconvene Monday, May 2, after a two-week recess. The FY 2012 budget and raising the ceiling on the national debt will top its agenda. According to the Christian leaders' statement:

"Budgets are moral documents, and how we reduce future deficits are historic and defining moral choices. As Christian leaders, we urge Congress and the administration to give moral priority to programs that protect the life and dignity of poor and vulnerable people in these difficult times, our broken economy, and our wounded world."

The leaders outlined eight principles for ethical decision-making that must be considered in a moral budget. These include protecting and improving "poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance to promote a better, safer world" and ensuring that budget

discussions "review and consider tax revenues, military spending, and entitlements in the search for ways to share sacrifice and cut deficits." They also call for a focus on creating jobs since "decent jobs at decent wages are the best path out of poverty, and restoring growth is a powerful way to reduce deficits."

The leaders said that it is the "vocation and obligation of the church to speak and act on behalf of those Jesus called 'the least of these.'" This basic principle has provided a unifying point for Christians that gets past the partisan politics dominating Capitol Hill. Plans are being made to hold political leaders accountable for protecting programs that serve poor and vulnerable people and for using moral principles to make budget decisions.

For a full list of signatories and the complete statement, please visit <www.circleofprotection.us>.

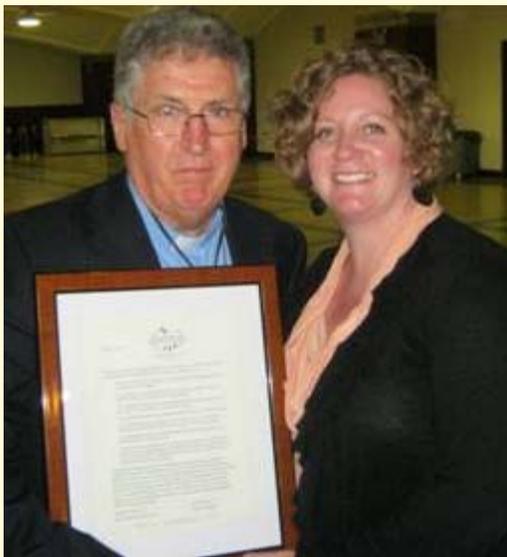
Vatican Statement on the Death of Osama Bin Laden

On May 2 Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, director of the Vatican Press Office, released the following statement:

Osama bin Laden, as we all know, bore the most serious responsibility for spreading divisions and hatred among populations, causing the deaths of innumerable people, and manipulating religions for this purpose.

In the face of a man's death, a Christian never rejoices, but reflects on the serious responsibilities of each person before God and before men, and hopes and works so that every event may be the occasion for the further growth of peace and not of hatred.

Sean McDonagh, SSC, Receives Justice Award



Columban missionary Rev. Sean McDonagh, an internationally recognized eco-theologian, author, lecturer, and consultant to Catholic Church leadership, World Council of Churches, governments, and civil society organizations was recently awarded the Partnership for Global Justice's annual Justice Award in honor of his life's work spanning over forty years dedicated to a more just, sustainable and peaceful world. The Partnership for Global Justice is a network of women and men religious organizations and brings the religious and missionary voice to the United Nations through advocacy and participation.

On May 1 2011, at the St. Paul the Apostle church in New York City, Fr. Sean received the award and was accompanied by Rev. John Burger, current member of the Columban General Council in Hong Kong and former director of the U.S. Region and by Amy Woolam Echeverria, director of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach in Washington, D.C. The citation of the award says:

We are pleased to give the Eighth Annual Award for Justice to Rev. Sean McDonagh on behalf of the Partnership for Global Justice:

- For his leadership in writing and lecturing on the relationship between faith/justice and ecology,
- For raising our awareness that there is a strong connection between global poverty and environmental degradation,
- For calling on Church leaders and politicians to engage in the issues of the environment particularly on global warming,
- For advocating that environmental justice be a core of Catholic activity,
- For challenging church people to play a central role in raising our awareness that the issue of global warming is a moral imperative,
- For engaging in the environmental issues during his missionary years with the people of the Philippines,
- For tracing the cosmology and theology that underlie our relationship with Earth and appealing for a new theological framework that embraces the Earth Community including sacramental practice, contemplative prayer and missionary responses.

Because Sean has focused on living life so dedicated to the deepest understandings of Sustainable Living in our midst, his life has become a beacon of hope for us. His energy, beliefs, enthusiasm and actions not only speak of his convictions, but also his life is a deep message to the entire world that living sustainably is the only option. We thank his family, friends and the Missionary Society of St. Columban as they continue to support Sean in preaching, teaching, writing and living the message of deep reverence for Earth.

The event not only honored Fr. Sean but served as the Partnership's opening event for the United Nation's Commission on Sustainable Development, May 2-13, 2011. Fr. Sean will participate in the Commission not only with NGO status, but also as the Irish government's representative.

Following the UN Commission, Fr. Sean will be in Washington, D.C., where he will also be recognized for his life commitment to JPIC. The event will be co-hosted by Columban Missionaries, the Center of Concern, and Pax Christi USA on May 17, 2011, 3:30-7:30 (presentation by Fr. Sean followed by a reception. For those in the Washington, D.C. area and would like to attend the event, please contact Amy Echeverria at amywe@columban.org / 301-565-45437 for details.

A prolific and prophetic writer, Fr. Sean's most recent book is, *Climate Change: A Challenge to Us All*. Other works include: *The Death of Life: The Horror of Extinction; Dying for Water*; and his groundbreaking work, *To Care for the Earth*.

Our Martyr

[The following article was written by Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB, of [Subiaco Abbey](#) in Arkansas, for the Spring 2011 issue of [The Abbey Message](#).]

We are blessed to have saints in our midst. We don't notice that blessing most of the time. Sometimes it becomes evident, as when the props are removed by a lengthy illness or confinement in a nursing home and the saint inside has to come out of hiding, or when we realize what we're missing after a death. These people may never be canonized, but that kind of recognition is just a further option after they've already become saints.

It's much rarer to know a martyr, one who will be murdered because of Christ. All the saints give their lives for Christ, and many of them, like St. Damian of Molokai, die as a direct consequence of their ministry. But few are murdered because of their Christian vocation and commitment.

We are very privileged to have had a martyr in our neighborhood, Father Stanley Rother, a priest of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, who was killed by an assassination squad in Guatemala in 1981 because of his ministry to the indigenous people in the name of Christ.

His cause for beatification has been introduced. This has major significance for all of us in the ecclesiastical province of Oklahoma City, which is composed of the three dioceses in Oklahoma and Arkansas. Pilgrimages are being arranged to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Father Rother's martyrdom this July.

Stanley Francis Rother was born in Okarche, Oklahoma, about twenty miles northwest of Oklahoma City, on March 27, 1935. He was ordained a priest in 1963, a year before the Archdiocese began a mission among the impoverished Tzutuhil Indians centered in the village of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala. In 1968, Father Rother was appointed to the mission,



which at that time was thriving with a team of thirteen priests, religious and laity, running a medical clinic and two schools in addition to serving several scattered churches. But within eight years, violent political eruptions and other developments had caused the departure of all the Americans except Father Stan Rother.

Father Stan immersed himself more and more in the lives of the people of Santiago Atitlán. He shared their primitive conditions, their joys and sorrows, their oppression by the government and army. Though he had had a difficult time with Latin, and was even delayed two years in the seminary because of academics, he learned Spanish and after five years the local Tzutuhil dialect. He led the people in worship, helped in the health clinic, developed a cooperative farm.

Political unrest increased during the 1970s. The government began to target teachers and missionaries who were awakening the people to their human dignity and rights, because this was threatening the empire of the moneyed class. By 1979 there were routine burnings of fields and destruction of farm equipment, and then an escalation into killings by police and army, and the disappearance of people whose corpses would later be found. Repression, denial of civil rights, and assassination became worse across the region. On March 24, 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero of neighboring El Salvador was gunned down by government agents while raising the chalice at Mass a day after calling on soldiers to stop obeying orders of repression and killing. Father Stan knew all this; his letters at the time tell of the precautions he was taking. He didn't think he would be targeted because he did not make political statements. He simply did his work. He only wanted to be Christ for his people. But in July, 1981, he wrote in a letter that six priests had been killed and two kidnapped since May, 1980. Many missionary priests (who comprised 80% of the priests in Guatemala) began to be recalled from the country.

Father Stan still did not believe the time had come for him to leave. He felt that the indigenous people would experience his departure as another loss and hurt, and that they would lose the small protection he might bring them as an American citizen. In his Christmas letter of 1980 he summed up his reason for staying: "The shepherd cannot run" (These words became the title of a brief biography and collection of last letters of Father Stan available through the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City's website). But he began to stay away from his bedroom at night, sleeping instead in a room under the staircase.

Finally, it came. Three masked men entered the rectory just after midnight on July 28, 1981. They found him, and he knew what it was. They shot him twice. There was silence. Father Stan Rother was 46 years old.

Today, some of the people responsible for Father Stan's murder may still be alive. If they have not repented, their life is a death. But hopefully they have repented. Father Stan would want that for them and he would help them. That's the way he was. At any rate, Father Stan Rother himself is more alive than ever and will be a source of life to others from here on. He is our martyr, and we pray to him.

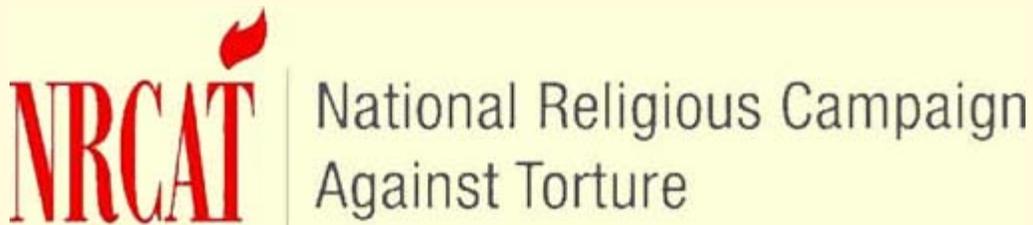
Catholic University of America Conference on Rerum Novarum

The landmark papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* -- "Of New Things" -- appeared in May of 1891. A conference on May 2nd and 3rd at the Catholic University of America celebrating the encyclical's 120th anniversary featured major addresses by His Eminence, Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and by John Sweeney, former President of the AFL-CIO,

Written by Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* was the Church's blueprint for its engagement with the moral imperatives posed by the modern world. In particular the encyclical marked the Church's embracing of its mission for justice and morality in the economy, in political life, and in society. Organized by the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies, The Catholic University of America, the conference traced the legacy of *Rerum Novarum* through the Church's 20th century and contemporary policy engagements, with special attention to the Church's work on questions of labor, economy, justice, and government.

Videos of the main presentations can be found at < <http://ipr.cua.edu/RN120th.cfm> >.

June 2011 – Torture Awareness Month



June 26th is United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Several years ago, religious and human rights organizations in the United States declared the month of June to be Torture Awareness Month as a way to provide greater visibility to this issue and provide an opportunity for coordinated actions across the country.

This June, NRCAT encourages congregations and religious organizations to focus on the need for accountability for U.S.-sponsored torture since September 11, 2001. NRCAT continues [our call for a nonpartisan Commission of Inquiry](#) to be appointed by the President and/or the Congress. Learning from the past is the best way to build a torture-free future. NRCAT has also [called upon the Attorney General to appoint a Special Prosecutor](#) to investigate the use of torture.

Resources for Torture Awareness Month are available on the [NRCAT web site](#). CMSM's ***Resolution against Torture*** can be found on the [CMSM web site](#).

Social Action Summer Institute

July 10-13, 2011 * Loyola University * New Orleans, LA

SOCIAL ACTION SUMMER INSTITUTE

Join social action ministers from across the country for the annual Social Action Summer Institute, sponsored by the [Roundtable Association of Catholic Diocesan Social Action Directors](#). The four-day institute provides a prayerful, intensive education and advocacy training. The track for beginners will cover the foundations of Catholic Social Teaching, while this year's advanced symposium will address the theme "Focus on the Worker: 'New Things' in Labor 120 Years after *Rerum Novarum*."

For more details and registration, see the [SASI webpage](#). [Limited scholarships are available](#). The deadline for registration is June 15, 2011.

CMSM



- *assists major superiors in their role as leaders;*
- *promotes dialogue and collaboration with the conference of bishops and other major groups in church and society;*
- *provides a corporate influence in church and society.*

8808 Cameron St., Silver Spring, MD 20910-4152
Tel: 301-588-4030 • Fax: 301-587-4575 • www.cmsm.org

This newsletter is sent to members and associate members of CMSM. It is also sent to justice and peace directors of CMSM member organizations, and to others who have expressed an interest. If you fall into the last category and no longer wish to receive this newsletter, send an e-mail to postmaster@cmsm.org and you will be removed from the list.