



J/P ALERT

CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE



June 2010

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the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment came into effect. The convention reaffirms that the equal and inalienable rights of the human family are the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.

Torture Awareness Month

On June 26, we commemorate the [United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture](#), a day set aside by the United Nations General Assembly to demonstrate solidarity to all those whose minds, bodies or spirits have been impacted by torture. It was on June 26, 1987, that

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 activities across the country.

Ending torture is very important for Catholics since our teachings state that torture is an intrinsic evil. No individual and no nation should engage in torture. Dr Stephen Colecchi, Director for international Justice and Peace for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote in the January 18, 2010 edition of America magazine: "The church views torture as an intrinsic evil that can never be justified. The inevitable harm it does to individuals and to society as a whole allows no exceptions. To those who



would advance arguments for the exceptional use of torture to protect public safety, the

Catholic Church argues that we cannot do something intrinsically evil and expect good to come of it.... The basis for the church's current total rejection of torture is its teaching on the life and dignity of the human person. The human person is created in the image of God. In Christ all are offered redemption without exception. In Catholic teaching, human dignity does not come from any human quality or accomplishment; it comes from God."

During Torture Awareness Month in 2010, the [National Religious Campaign Against Torture](http://www.nrcat.org) (NRCAT), a coalition of more than 280 religious organizations including 51 Catholic organizations, is encouraging the religious community to use this time to do two tasks that are particularly important to Catholics:

1. Send post cards to Members of Congress urging their support for guaranteeing that the International Committee of the Red Cross has access to detainees held by the U.S. You might have a table before or after Mass where people could sign the post cards. We suggest that the post cards be delivered to your Members of Congress. Download the post cards and learn more about this issue and these and other strategies at www.nrcat.org/icrc/ .

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a mandate under international law to act as a neutral observer in conflicts and to protect civilians and prisoners of war from torture and abuse. For decades, the ICRC has acted to ensure that captured soldiers are not simply "disappeared," but rather given the rights guaranteed to them under international law.

Historically the U.S. has supported allowing the ICRC to conduct oversight to prevent the abuse of prisoners. After Sept. 11, 2001, however, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began holding detainees in secret with no provisions made for ICRC access.

President Obama issued an executive order closing those prisons and requiring that all

government agencies report detainees to the ICRC. However, this is not a permanent solution since a future President could rescind those orders. It is therefore very important that Congress pass legislation providing the ICRC with access to all detainees held by the United States and assure that no one is tortured.

2. Arrange to show the video "Ending U.S.-Sponsored Torture Forever" during the month of June and discuss candidly questions such as: Can torture ever be justified? Do harsh interrogation techniques make Americans safer? A Discussion Guide for Catholics and information on ordering the video is available at www.nrcat.org/300.

"Ending U.S.-Sponsored Torture Forever" is a 20 minute video that helps people of faith discuss these questions. It includes: Dr. Stephen Colecchi, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; Matthew Alexander, former air force interrogator; Dr. George Hunsinger, Princeton Seminary professor; Dr. Sayyid Syeed, Islamic Society of North America; Dr. David Gushee, founder of Evangelicals for Human Rights; and Rabbi Brian Walt, founder of Rabbis for Human Rights.

Engaging in these two efforts is an important way to honor Torture Awareness Month and to keep faith with the Church's teachings that torture is always wrong. All the details of how to participate in these activities listed on NRCAT's [Torture Awareness Month](http://www.nrcat.org/torture-awareness-month) webpage.

For more information, please contact the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, 110 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20002; 202-547-1920; campaign@nrcat.org.

[Videos on torture are also available on YouTube:

[Stop Torture Now](#)

Ending US-Sponsored Torture Forever, [Part 1](#)

Ending US Sponsored Torture Forever, [Part 2](#)

CMSMs [Resolution Condemning Torture](#) is available on the CMSM web site.]

National Religious Leaders Denounce Health Professionals Involvement in Experiments on Detainees

In light of today's [June 7, 2010] release of Physicians for Human Rights new report, [Experiments in Torture: Human Subject Research and Evidence in the Enhanced Interrogation Program](#), Rev. Richard L. Killmer, Executive Director of the [National Religious Campaign Against Torture](#) has responded with the following statement and announced the release of a new video "[Accounting for Torture](#)," that describes the PHR report:

"As religious leaders we commend Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) for their groundbreaking work uncovering and documenting evidence of the involvement of United States military and intelligence health professionals in performing experiments, without consent, on detainees in the custody of the U.S. following September 2001.

Such experimentation would violate the legal and ethical protections afforded by the Nuremberg Code, the Geneva Conventions, federal regulations governing human subject research - known as "The Common Rule" - and the federal War Crimes Act.

We have adamantly opposed and consistently spoken out against U.S.-sponsored torture. Torture is immoral and abhorrent, violating the teachings of all our religious traditions.

Just as adamantly, we now condemn these alleged acts of illegal and immoral experimentation. Separate and distinct from the torture, such medical experiments could themselves constitute war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.

With painstaking care, the PHR report details how the experiments and the participation of

health professionals in the interrogations of detainees were critical components for the fabrication of a legal framework construed to protect interrogators from prosecution for committing acts of torture. The experiments also served to refine the illegal torture practices used by the U.S. government.

These revelations are profoundly disturbing and raise for us the question of what more remains hidden. The spiritual health of our nation will continue to suffer until the full truth opens a path to the justice and healing that our nation so desperately needs.

With heavy hearts and a keen sense of urgency, we call upon the President and the Congress to establish a Commission of Inquiry to undertake a comprehensive investigation into the use of torture including its use in medical experiments on detainees and to pursue the steps required to ensure that U.S.-sponsored torture will never, ever, again be sanctioned and practiced."

For further information, contact **Rev. Richard Killmer, Executive Director, National Religious Campaign Against Torture**. Office: 202-547-1920; Cell: 207-450-7242; Email rkillmer@nrca.org.

Migrants: illegals or God's ambassadors? (excerpts)

By Dean Brackley, SJ

[Dean Brackley, SJ, is a New York Province Jesuit, teaches theology at the [Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"](#) (UCA) in San Salvador. He has just finished a term as holder of the Wade Chair at Marquette University. This article appeared in the National Catholic Reporter on May 14, 2010. You can read the entire article at ncronline.org/news/justice/migrants-illegals-or-gods-ambassadors.]

... Every day hundreds of poor Central Americans leave their countries and head north. They're not alone. The poor are in motion everywhere today. Worldwide, the number of immigrants has doubled in the last 30 years to almost 200 million people. Almost one in five lack proper documentation. This is a massive global phenomenon.

Consider what it means for a country like El Salvador. A few years ago the U.S. embassy estimated that an average of 740 Salvadorans were abandoning their country every day, mostly bound for the U.S. Today's estimates run between 400 and 500 a day. If all were leaving for good, El Salvador, with a population of six million, would lose one percent of its population every five months and half the population in twenty years. But not all leave for good. Some of those who left yesterday were actually deported from the U.S., or from Mexico, a few weeks ago.

...

The scale of migration northward from Central America, and also from Mexico, and of deportation southward, is mind-boggling. What does it say about conditions in our neighbor-countries to the south? ... The majority of people there lack opportunities for a decent life. At least two-thirds of Salvadorans, Nicaraguans and Hondurans are poor, despite lower official figures. It's worse in Guatemala. The U.N. Development Program recently reported that only one in five economically active Salvadorans has a decent, stable job. Even before the recent crises a great spike in fuel and grain prices, followed by the fallout from the financial crisis--, things were getting worse in Central America. For example, while chronic malnutrition declined from 13 percent to 10 percent from 1990 to 2003 in Latin America and the Caribbean overall, it increased in Central America from 17 to 20 percent.

...

Locally, we must welcome immigrants to our local schools and congregations. In those settings, we can let them tell their stories. Putting a human face on the immigration problem in this way softens hearts and dissolves prejudice. Thinking more globally, we will

have to work toward the long-term goal of an adequate juridical framework for international trade and finance. In the meantime, we must also globalize solidarity in favor of the sustainable development that reduces the need to migrate. The churches, especially the Catholic Church, with people on the ground in poor countries, have no rivals in their potential to globalize the practice of love.

...

In Leviticus we read, the foreigner who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the foreigner as yourself(Lev 19:34). No ethical precept is repeated more frequently than this in the Old Testament. (45) The letter to the Hebrews tells us: Do not neglect to show hospitality to foreigners, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it(Heb 13:2). Dorothy Day called the destitute poor God's ambassadors. I was a foreigner,said Jesus, and you welcomed me(Matt 25:35).

Like God's Suffering Servant, today's immigrants are despised and rejected as sinful lawbreakers. With deeper insight, Isaiah sees that the Servant was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities(Isa 53:3,5). In the present case, not strictly for your transgressions and mine, but insofar as they are the fruits of past U.S. foreign policy. The Servant is a light to the nations(Isa 42:6), and by his bruises we are healed(Isa 53:5).

The desperate poor who migrate north are representatives of the poor billions to our South, from whom we are estranged, to our loss and theirs. Perhaps God is sending them to revitalize our churches, our nation and our broken world.

Whither Honduras?

By Ismael Moreno Coto, SJ

[Ismael Moreno Coto, SJ, (Padre Melo) is director of Radio Progreso in Honduras. He has recently been the object of death threats for his defense of human rights (see [J/P Alert for May, 2010](#)).]

Continuation of the dynamics of the *coup d'état*

The make-up of the government headed by Porfirio Lobo Sosa has within it all the destabilizing dynamisms present in the coup d'état of June 28, 2009. In place of a break there is continuity, and the signs point to greater instability. During the months of the present political regime, one can count seven journalists murdered. Many others are receiving death threats, and several leaders or relatives of leaders of the resistance have been murdered. Homicides, criminal kidnappings, extortions and criminality in general have increased to the point where there have been an average of fourteen homicides daily from the inauguration of the administration of Lobo Sosa. There are no signs that the methods of traditional control of the State and the economy by the reduced political and business elites can lead to a way out. Rather than being resolved by the elections and the new government, the crisis has deepened.

A New Social Contract

Diverse sectors of society unconnected to the governing elites agree in reiterating the necessity of a New Social Contractor strategic plan of struggle, as some organized sectors of Honduran popular resistance prefer to call it which would have at least the following three components:

First component: define content

This content is organized in three areas.

First area: Demands for natural resources, the land and the environment that politically have to do with sovereignty, understood as control by the decisions of the State and the citizenry about their patrimony (sovereignty is the major defect of the country and it has to

do with the content of its patrimony); and agrarian reform that breaks with the logic of a handful of business leaders who hoard the most fertile land of Honduras valleys and subordinate food supply and the very lives of the peasant population to the export interests of multinational agribusiness. The same would have to be said about the forests, water, energy, mineral wealth and the whole of natural riches, such as is the case with the potential existence of oil in the lowlands and coast of the Honduran Atlantic.

Second area: Social demands that have to do with education, health, housing, salaries, respect for ethnic and sexual minorities, respect and promotion of social organization and mobilization. To know how to situate the social demands connected to the demands for sovereignty and natural resources, is a strategic way of guaranteeing the participation of all the sectors of society, without letting traditional elites impose their demands as though they were the united demands of the nation.

Third area: Politico-juridico-institutional demands that have to do with the transformations that the Honduran State needs in order to effectively advance in what the sectors in resistance call the re-foundation of Honduras. Here is where the demand for a constitutional National Assembly belongs, the same demand utilized by Honduran elites as an argument for overthrowing the administration of Manuel Zelaya Rosales, and that which presently represents the political factor that gathers and convokes the organized sectors in the National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP, for its initials in Spanish).

Second component: define the social and political subject

Here is found the debate concerning political parties and social movements, the relationship and the difference between the two, and the identity that the National Front of Popular Resistance is to assume. The present debate implies at least establishing the relationship and the differences among three positions.

First position: That the resistance convert itself into an internal current within the Liberal Party, with the purpose of reclaiming that political institution from those who carried out the coup d'état, and from there proceed to elections that permit reclaiming the power of the State to continue the transformations cut short by the coup d'état.

Second position: Convert the FNRP into a political party that will struggle for the transformations contained in the first component of the New Social Contract. Those who think thus affirm that the country finds itself facing the unavoidable challenge of fighting for political power, and that aside from armed struggle, such a fight will only succeed through elections. Nevertheless, others think that converting the FNRP into a political party would be to reduce the power of the national resistance, so broad and sustained through many expressions at the grass roots. A strictly electoral campaign would end up weakening the popular struggle.

Third position: The FNRP should establish a permanent identity as a broad front that channels as a social movement the diverse demands of the popular and social sectors of the country, the professional as well as community organizations in the various territories of the country. The FNRP, insofar as it is a broad movement of social struggle should have two modes of struggle in the present period: the first mode a campaign of pressure to weaken, denounce and unmask the present regime as a strict continuation of the coup d'état in order to oblige the convocation of a national Constitutional Assembly; and the second mode, continuing to make progress in the definition of a proposal for independent candidates that will eventuate in a successful formula for the next general elections.

Third component: define participation in the political processes of elections

Once the identity of the FNRP is defined, the struggle to democratize the mechanisms of popular participation must be guaranteed. The end result should be that the electoral processes cease to be legitimating expressions of the control of the State on the part of a reduced elite, rather conditioning the possibility of citizen participation in the construction of democracy and the Rule of Law. In the case of Honduras, it is not a question of a deficient

Rule of Law but rather of its absence. The political and business elites use the term to impose the law of the strongest and violate the human rights of the citizens.

A Consistent Ethic of Life (excerpts)

by Kenneth R. Overberg, SJ

[Kenneth R. Overberg, a Jesuit priest, holds a Ph.D. in Christian ethics from the University of Southern California. He is professor of theology at Xavier University, Cincinnati. The complete article (published in 1998) can be found at www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0798.asp]

...

The late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin articulated [the] perspective [of a consistent ethic of life] in the early 1980's, and it has become a centerpiece of the U.S. Catholic bishops' moral teaching. Pope John Paul II has affirmed similar themes in his 1995 encyclical *The Gospel of Life* [*Evangelium Vitae*].

What is the consistent ethic of life? It is a comprehensive ethical system that links together many different issues by focusing attention on the basic value of life. In his attempts to defend life, Cardinal Bernardin first joined the topics of abortion and nuclear war. He quickly expanded his understanding of a consistent ethic of life to include many issues from all of life. Already in the first of a series of talks, this one at Fordham University, Cardinal Bernardin stated: The spectrum of life cuts across the issues of genetics, abortion, capital punishment, modern warfare and the care of the terminally ill.

...

This linkage of all life issues is, of course, the very heart of the consistent ethic of life. This linking challenges us to pull together things that we might have kept apart in the past. Often our convictions seem to cluster around 'conservative' or 'liberal' viewpoints as in the above examples. But the consistent ethic of life cuts across such divisions, calling us to respect the life in the womb, the life of a criminal, the life on welfare, the life of the dying.

...

The consistent ethic of life challenges us every day. 1) It encourages us to hold together a great variety of issues with a consistent focus on the value of life. 2) It challenges us to reflect on our basic values and convictions which give direction to our lives. 3) It leads us to express our commitment to life in civil debate and public policy.

...

It is not sufficient to be pro-life on some issues; we must be pro-life on all issues no matter what our political party, business, union, talk shows, advertising or family may say. These powerful forces significantly shape our values and convictions, sometimes away from a consistent ethic. Yet our faith ought to be the deepest source of our values.

We ought not underestimate the challenge of being pro-life; it might seem easier to appeal to common sense or accepted business practice or even ethical relativism. In *The Gospel of Life* John Paul II urges all persons to choose life consistently, personally, nationally, globally. This invitation is really a profound challenge: to look deeply into ourselves and to test against the gospel some of our own deeply held beliefs and practices.

John Paul writes: In a word, we can say that the cultural change which we are calling for demands from everyone the courage to *adopt a new lifestyle*, consisting in making practical choices at the personal, family, social and international level on the basis of a correct scale of values: *the primacy of being over having, of the person over things*. This renewed lifestyle involves a passing *from indifference to concern for others, from rejection to acceptance of them* (#98).

...

The consistent ethic of life provides both a solid foundation and a powerful challenge to live as faithful disciples and involved citizens. It calls into question all views that contradict the message and meaning of Jesus. It challenges us to reject the culture of death. It challenges us to create a culture of life every day, at home, at work and in society.

How? The way we vote, the jokes we tell, the language we use, the attitudes we hand on to children, the causes we support, the business practices we use, the entertainment we attend, the way we care for the sick and elderly: in all these ordinary activities we express consistency in respecting life or we get trapped in contradictions.

If we are consistent, we must speak and act concerning abortion and euthanasia but also concerning welfare and immigration, sexism and racism, cloning and health-care reform, trade agreements and sweatshops, the buying and selling of women for prostitution, genocide and many other issues. Based on our ancient Scriptures and attentive to contemporary experiences, the consistent ethic of life provides an ethical framework for confronting the moral dilemmas of a new millennium. It helps us to promote the full flourishing of all life.

Pax Christi Conference



To register for this conference online, go to www.paxchristiusa.org/NationalConference2010.asp

To download a PDF of the conference brochure with registration form and register by mail, ([English](#)) or ([en Español](#)).

Pax Christi USA, JustFaith Ministries announce new partnership

Washington, D.C. Pax Christi USA, the national Catholic peace movement and [JustFaith Ministries](#) announce a new partnership focused on promoting and practicing the social mission of the church among Catholics throughout the United States.

This is an exciting match for Pax Christi USA, stated Dave Robinson, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA. JustFaith is one of the most incredible engines for educating people in the pew on Catholic social teaching and the gospel values from which that teaching springs. We look forward to how our two organizations together can reach Catholics who are hungering for the gospel vision of a more peaceful, more just and more sustainable world.

Pax Christi USA's statement of purpose articulates that the Church's mission to witness to the peace of Christ in the world begins in personal life and extends to communities of reflection and action to transform structures of society. JustFaith Ministries and Pax Christi USA share this common belief that dedicated Catholic communities can be vehicles for substantive change in our world today. By collaborating, we believe we can help to empower the Church to fulfill its vocation as that community of disciples which gives flesh to the message of

compassion, justice and peace which Jesus proclaims.

JustFaith Ministries provides programs that transform people and expand their commitment to social ministry through the study and experience of Christ's call to care for the poor and vulnerable. The program is well-known to many Pax Christi members; Pax Christi members throughout the U.S. have served as facilitators and participants in JustFaith programs in their parishes. Over 20,000 people have participated in the JustFaith program.

Pax Christi USA will formally announce the new partnership with JustFaith staff members, including JustFaith Founder and Executive Director, Jack Jezreel, on Friday, July 16 in Chicago at the [National Catholic Conference on Peacemaking](#).

Jezreel and Joe Grant will be featured speakers at the conference, presenting a track on the peace-building parish. The announcement will be part of an open reception at 5:30pm at the site of the conference, the Rosemont Hotel at O'Hare, for conference participants and JustFaith graduates and program participants.

For more information, contact: Johnny Zokovitch, Pax Christi USA Program Director: (352) 219-8419 or johnnypcusa@yahoo.com.

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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.