



ROUNDTABLE REPORT

THE ROUNDTABLE ASSOCIATION OF DIOCESAN
SOCIAL ACTION DIRECTORS

November 2008

Advent Africa Summit to Roll Out Archdiocese of Chicago's Partnership with Diocese in Zambia

In many places, the arrival of Advent heralds the coming of crowded shopping centers and a frenzied rush to meet deadlines before the holidays descend. But for the Archdiocese of Chicago, the beginning of Advent signals a different marker.

For the past eight years, since the "Africa Rising: Hope and Healing Project" produced by Catholic Relief Services, the Office for Peace and Justice has put on an Africa Summit at the beginning of the liturgical season in order to draw attention to the particular needs of this region, of which there is a large population in the local area. According to Adrienne Curry, Program Director for Catholic Relief Services and Justice Education, Advent, a season of hope and waiting, is an ideal time to draw attention to the plight of so many in Africa who are waiting for relief. Curry highlights the fact that, like those who wait for Christmas, there is a joy and a faith that persists among Africans.

At a time of year when people are so consumption focused, Curry believes that it is ideal to promote education and understanding among Chicago Catholics about the needs and experiences of the Church in Africa. Particularly because there are so many Africans present in the Chicago area, the Summit creates an opportunity to build dialogue and awareness.

This year, the Africa Summit, which has been held at various locations but most frequently at St. Dorothy's Parish in the South Side of the city, will take on an especially unique task. It will be the forum by which the Archdiocese rolls out its newly initiated partnership with the Diocese of Mongu in Zambia. Using Powerpoint presentations and educational materials, the Archdiocese will provide attendees with information about Zambia and the Diocese of Mongu in particular. The partnership, which will focus on ways to build relationship and understanding, has not yet been defined. Rather, the Summit will provide the opportunity for Catholics in Chicago to develop an understanding of the unique opportunity available in the partnership, to get excited about it and to help with the process of discerning what the final product should look like. The hope, Curry says, is that "eventually delegations from both sides would be able to visit each other" in order to learn through experiencing each others' cultures.

In addition to discussion of the Mongu partnership, this year's Summit will include a presentation by Stephen Hilbert, Policy Advisor to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on Africa and Global Development issues. His presentation will focus around, "Why Africa Matters." The summit will also include a presentation by Fr. Michael Perry, OFM on the state of affairs in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DRC) where a hold on peace in political and social relations has remained tenuous. Fr. Michael spent many years working in the DRC with the Franciscans.

The Summit is expected to draw a diverse array of attendees. The Archdiocese hopes to garner a large turnout from the large Zambian community residing in Chicago as well local parishioners, priests and diocesan staff.

Beyond the presentations and discussions taking place, the summit hosts a craft sale where those in attendance can purchase fair trade crafts and gifts for Christmas which are made by African artisans, allowing attendees to make this time of year a reminder of those in Africa who continue to wait with hope. This year, in addition to the items that have traditionally been sold, the sale will have a host of crafts produced in Zambia in order to highlight the special partnership being built there.

Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux Provides Continuing Disaster Response in the Wake of Gustav and Ike

by Rob Gorman

The Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux continues our Matthew 25 Disaster Response Program, an effort we began two days after Hurricane Katrina hit three years ago. Since then we have never really been out of the disaster response ministry.

Hurricane Gustav damaged many roofs in this area, but Hurricane Ike brought the flood waters - very much the way Hurricane Rita inundated our diocese three years ago. We don't have the kind of money we did after Katrina, but we did just receive the final CCUSA Katrina/Rita recovery grant so that will come in very handy. We will use the \$1,066,500 to help people elevate their homes, install outside lifts to get to their elevated homes if they are unable to climb the stairs, and we will sponsor additional LA LIFT houses. The LA LIFT house is an elevated, storm resistant house designed by MIT and our local disaster preparedness and response agency - [TRAC](#).

The three LA LIFT houses already built survived Gustav and Ike virtually undamaged - and one was located directly in the path Gustav took as it came ashore.

We are also working to develop parish-based volunteer teams within the diocese to help disaster victims within the diocese. That effort has been very slow in developing, but we continue to plug away at it.

At the same time we continue our advocacy for coastal restoration and urge every else to do the same. Without healthy wetlands and barrier islands we have no chance against future storms; they are our most effective lines of defense.

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CRS Publishes Documents on Faithful Citizenship in Global Solidarity

As the elections draw near, we have looked toward the USCCB's "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship- A Call to Political Responsibility" for guidance. One of the issues the document poses is the

responsibility to look toward a political situation that enhances global solidarity. In order to help us to do this, Catholic Relief Services has published several "Election 2008" documents which examine some of the global concerns that come into play with regard to global solidarity. These documents are attached below for those who want to further their understanding of international issues impacted by our political leadership.

National Faith Leaders "Tour" for Immigration Reform Making its Way around Country

On Tuesday September 9, a group of faith leaders, including Most Reverend Bishop John Wester of Salt Lake City; Rabbi David Saperstein, the Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; Reverend Samuel Rodriguez, the President of the National Hispanic Leadership Conference and Dr. Jim Ryan the Council Executive for the Colorado Council of Churches launched a "Tour of the Faithful" campaign in order to advocate for the need for immigration reform as the nation moves toward elections this November. The campaign, entitled "Moral Voices Unite for Immigration Reform" is a collaborative work of different faith groups hosting 18 events around the country drawing attention to the need for reform on behalf of the human rights of all persons residing in the United States. In doing this, faith communities are acknowledging that the treatment of immigrants in the US is not in line with the tenets of their faith and as Patty Cuthbert, the moderator for the launch, explained, they're "not letting politicians ignore the issues" as the elections approach.

While the month long tour is already underway, the faith leaders who spoke at the teleconference agree that this is not simply a pre-election action, but a collaboration that will continue after the new Congress and President are seated in order to advocate for immigration policy reform. Among the issues they will be bringing to political leaders are the preservation and unification of families, movement away from the current enforcement policies of raids and deportation, legal protection for immigrants including greater authority for judges to protect the human rights of immigrants, and the development of a bi-partisan coalition to act on behalf of this issue.

The events which will be hosted by "Tour of the Faithful" include prayer vigils, detention facility visits, workshops and rallies. For more information visit www.tourofthefaithful.org.

Video Exposes ICE Targeting of Parish

Every year thousands of migrant farmworkers, many from Mexico, come to harvest crops and work on dairy farms in Upstate New York. Recently raids and random pick-ups of Latino workers by ICE and Border Patrol have frightened the workers and restricted their movement. According to Catholic Immigration News (June, 2008) ICE officials have "stated that as a matter of practice ICE does not target churches, hospitals, or other important basic needs programs for enforcement actions." However, increased presence of Border Patrol in the vicinity of the Church of the Epiphany in Sodus, NY before, during, and after the Sunday afternoon Spanish Mass and the arrest of a Mexican man en route to Mass on his bicycle, inspired community members and others to begin an Anglo "Church Watch" program both to witness and stand in solidarity with their Latino neighbors. Since the week this video was filmed by a community leader, the Border Patrol has not been seen near the church during Mass, but Mass attendance has dwindled from 200 or more to 30-35 people. Workers are increasingly isolated.

New Associate Director Energized by Social Action Summer Institute Experience

by Katie Anderson

This summer was an exciting time for me as I graduated from Boston College's Institute for Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry and got my first "real" job with Catholic Social Services in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana. I took a break from packing and moving to experience another first, my first Social Action Summer Institute — one I hope will be a first among many! This year's Summer Institute was held on the campus of Oglethorpe University in Atlanta. Our hosts from the university and the Archdiocese of Atlanta were gracious, knowledgeable, and fun; they worked hard to make everything about the week a success.

The classes and workshops were spiritually and intellectually nourishing. During the first part of the week, I attended the Advanced Symposium on Racism, a track that was eye-opening and challenging. A spectrum of speakers including Fr. Clarence Thomas, Ms. Nathalie Piraino, and Dr. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva invited us to open our minds and hearts. In particular, I remember Fr. Bryan Massingale's talk on race relations in the history of the church and its social teaching and his exhortation to see minorities as equal partners and agents instead of groups to just be nice to, however well intentioned the kindness. Dr. Laurie M. Cassidy and Dr. Alex Mikulich's presentation, "Interrupting White Privilege," also challenged me to look harder at the ways in which I am privileged and others are slighted.

I'll never forget our afternoon in downtown Atlanta. We began by visiting local CCHD-funded projects Atlantans Building Leadership for Empowerment (ABLE) and the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR); our next stop was the King Center. We walked along the street where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. grew up; we paused by the reflecting pool where Dr. King and Coretta Scott King are buried. We met a family resting on the porch swing at Dr. King's childhood home and touched the bricks of Ebenezer Baptist Church. What an experience!

Liturgy and prayer were an integral part of the experience, too, as the sponsoring organizations did a beautiful job of coordinating morning prayers, and the opening and closing masses were uplifting and inspiring.

I got a pleasant surprise when I attended the module on prayer, spirituality and justice that Bob Hurd led. The workshop was not theoretical: We sang! Mr. Hurd taught us a neat blues song, "You've Got to Move" by Mississippi Fred McDowell, and after we got the rhythm and the clapping down just right, he told us we'd be performing in that night's famous and long-awaited talent show! The talent show was a smashing success, as there are some very talented folks who attend the Summer Institute, and each act was terrific.

The best part of the week, though, was meeting so many interesting and dedicated folks from around the country (and Canada) whether they were rookies like myself or grizzled veterans. I'm still relishing my experience at this year's institute, and looking forward to next year's already.

See you in Denver in 2009!

Roundtable Member Joanne Welter presented with Advocacy Award by Migration and Refugee Services

On July 30 at the National Migration Conference, the Roundtable's own Joanne Welter of the Office of Catholic Social Mission, Diocese of Tucson, AZ was presented with the Office of Migration and Refugee Services of the US Conference of Catholic Bishop's Award for Public and Administrative Advocacy. Joanne received this award for her many years of service with Tucson's Office of Catholic Social Mission engaging in effective advocacy on behalf of immigrants and refugees with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, affected communities, the print and broadcast media, and the general public on the issue of migration and refugee issues. Her area of advocacy has been primarily focused on US-Mexico Border migration issue advocacy.