



Franciscan Sisters Congregational JPIC Newsletter

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France: Sortir du Nucléaire —Nuclear Phase Out Efforts Continue

By S. Françoise Weber



Map showing Metz, in the heart of the struggle to end nuclear energy production in France. It is a struggle to save our "common home" from nuclear waste contamination. The city of Metz is circled in red.

On December 6, 2016, at our sector meeting at the convent of BAN St Martin, I invited the head of the association "Sortir du Nucléaire" to give us the latest news on the efforts to stop the development of a nuclear waste burial site near Metz and to phase out nuclear power in France. Sortir du Nucléaire has grown recently to over 27,000 members in the Association of the Eastern Region. Informed people are mobilizing more and more to safeguard Earth and to end the dangers posed by continued nuclear power production. France has 58 reactors; 14 were shut down due to defects in the

steam generators. The French nuclear situation is becoming worrisome. In January 2017 another meeting will be held on the subject of what to do about France's aging nuclear reactors. Should the

reactors be patched? NO! This is dangerous for workers, too expensive, and too risky. France needs alternative energy sources that pose no threat to the environment.

Additionally, we must oppose the CIGEO project, established to create nuclear waste burial site at 500 m underground. This project will cost 25 billion euros. Who will pay for this mad imprudence? French law forbids the disposal of foreign radioactive waste in France. As a result, no foreign waste will be disposed of at CIGEO. The radioactive wastes to be disposed of are generated mainly at France's nuclear power and nuclear fuel reprocessing facilities. Sixty percent of the long-lived intermediate-level wastes (ILW-LL) and 30% of the high-level wastes (HLW) destined for CIGEO have already been generated. These wastes will continue to be generated until France's nuclear power plant fleet is retired. Therefore, it is imperative that France cease to operate nuclear power plants if the threat posed by nuclear waste is ever going to stop. Stopping nuclear production is an emergency. It is also the goal of the demonstrations that continue to call attention to the madness of the situation! Protesters occupied the beautiful woodlands of Mandres in Bure, France. They are struggling against the planned underground disposal facility for highly radioactive nuclear waste and the nuclear company Andra. After 6 months of protest, they succeeded in getting the court to halt the clear cutting of the forest by Andra, since they had not obtained the needed permits before beginning. Court fights continue. In the meantime, the forest is threatened with destruction in addition to the catastrophic threat of possible nuclear contamination. Care for the Earth, our common home, requires a change away from fossil and nuclear fuel and toward clean, renewable energy for the future.

The Sisters of the French Sector were interested in all this information! The morning passed quickly. Mr Drapier and his wife had dinner with us. It was a very nice meeting!

Netherlands: Hearing and Responding to the Cry of the Poor and Neglected

By Mirjam Wolthuis

As the Sisters here are getting older we don't go into the world as much as before. Yet our engagement with vulnerable and neglected people is unabated. When necessary and possible, we jump into action. Since the refugee problem is still a big topic due to the continuing war in Syria, we continue to reach out to refugees and the poor. On the occasion of the closing of the exceptional Year of Mercy, we invited residents of the Jeannette Noel House from Amsterdam for a visit. This is a shelter home for refugees who have ended their legal procedure in the Netherlands and other people in misery. The core group of 15 people in this house are inspired by the work of Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker. The founder of the Jeannette Noel House named the spare room in his house the Christ-room. He would open his door for everyone that needed a warm bed and place to stay for a period. One of our Sisters, touched by these stories, went to get a painting she once drew of a wandering child that shouldered his ditty bag around with him. She gifted it to the Jeannette Noel House. Most precious however was that the representative of the Jeannette Noel house afterwards wrote how much he realized that they continued the life work of the Sisters and how much he felt connected with and supported by us.



Sister Nicolette gifts her painting to representatives of the Jeannette Noel House in Amsterdam.

advocacy.

Of course our hearts and efforts were invested in several developmental projects in the world. First there was the 35th jubilee of the project Harapan Jaya from our sister Jeannette van Paasen in Indonesia. The aim of the project is to make mutilated people more human through treatment of cheiloschisis (cleft lip), burn wounds, and congenital anomalies. More than 7,531 patients have been successfully treated via Harapan Jaya. At the same time this jubilee was the farewell of Sister Jeannette's presence in Indonesia. It was an unbelievably great and thankful farewell party! Sister plans to continue her involvement from her home in the Netherlands through prayer and



Sister Jeannette and some of the staff at Harapan Jaya.



Some of the patients and families treated at Harapan Jaya.

Furthermore, we are keeping informed on a yearly basis about the developments within a hospital project in Malawi. This year the Malawi-people came to visit us in the Netherlands on the morning of the election of Mr. Trump as the new president from the U.S. How happy we were that we could spend our attention to this Malawi-project of compassion and mercy!



Sister Magdalena with waka-waka solar lamp to the right.

At the occasion of our last Chapter as a Province (since October we are a region) about 120 waka-waka-solar lights were given to the development aid projects of our Congregation worldwide. This waka-waka-solar-light

(www.waka-waka.com) is a beautiful initiative. When you buy a light, automatically one light is given to a development aid project. The lamps help children to study, protect women on their way home in the dark and prevent from fires due to oil-lamps. We recommend that everyone give the light of our inspiration to younger generations in a way like this!

Malawi: Spreading Christmas Peace to the World

By S. Raynelda Saragih

In Malawi, the Sisters seek to strengthen peace within their own hearts by creating adoration communities. Praying before the Blessed Sacrament fills them with peace and love which they then send out to the world.

At the school, students participated in a Christmas festival. They learned Christmas carols and competed with one another to showcase their singing. Dramas were also performed, enacting the story of Christmas. Dancing clubs also performed, adding to the festivities.



Dancing clubs performing during the Christmas festival.



Singing practices for the children.



Drama club performing the Christmas story.

During the school year, a daily breakfast is served to the learners as well as to the poor. A few days after the end of school, the Sisters invited the staff, parent-teacher association, and police staff of St. Francis School to celebrate Christmas at the Sisters' home as one family. The Sisters also gave gifts to the poor who live in the local area, thus bringing joy and hope in this special season of peace.



Sisters sharing Christmas with the St. Francis school staff and with the local neighbors who are in need.

Romania: Bringing Christmas Joy to the Poor and Sick

By S. Lydia Fecheta

I was sick, and you visited me!

This is the motto of the nurses and caretakers who work at the Domestic Medical Care Center in Caransebes. The 5 employees visit almost 60 patients a month to address their most basic care needs. Many of the clients have financial difficulties. Most live alone and many are elderly. Some of them are cared for daily; others are visited twice a week. Most of the work is financed by sponsors from Germany and part of the support comes from the city. In addition to caring for their physical needs, these workers bring love, care, attention and hope.

Also this year, thanks to generous people from Germany, the Sisters and staff in Romania have restarted the “shoe box action”. Shoe boxes were filled with great love and filled with things that bring joy to the people. These parcels, which were distributed by the team of domestic nurses, have brought Christmas joy to the poor and sick people. For many it is the only Christmas present they will receive. With these gifts we want to be a sign of love and the closeness of God among the people. We would like to thank all those who helped us to continue this joy: children, adults, families and groups. We know that in this season of giving and receiving gifts, the greatest gift is the gift of light, love and hope!



A gift is presented to a sick, elderly lady.



Another client receives love along with her gift.

USA: Interfaith Prayer and Solidarity Strengthen Bonds of Hope

By S. Beatrice Hernandez



World AIDS Day prayer service in the Motherhouse chapel in Wheaton.

December 1, 2016 was the 28th annual World AIDS Day. As the global AIDS epidemic continues to claim millions of lives, this was a day to remember, to pray and to hope. We joined with Sisters and friends at our motherhouse chapel for our yearly prayer service. A beautiful quilted art piece created by the mother of a young man who died of AIDS was hung in front of the altar, accompanied by a framed photo her son. This served as a reminder that each of the more than 70 million people who have died of AIDS since the epidemic began in 1981 was a brother, sister, parent, spouse, life partner, son, daughter, friend. Each number represents a person with a name and a face and a life that touched many other lives. Some people lost whole communities of friends and loved ones, devastated and torn asunder by grief and death. We also recognize, however, that there is hope in the midst of this loss. There is hope that those living with HIV/AIDS will be able to live with dignity and respect in all countries of the world; that medications

will continue to improve until a cure is possible; that all people infected with HIV will have access to treatment; that education will continue to decrease the rates of infection and that effective vaccines will soon be found.

On January 1, 2017, World Day of Peace, we ushered in the New Year. Here in the United States, we are acutely aware of the growing anti-immigrant sentiment, fueled even more by the political rhetoric of our recent presidential campaign. Along with this, religious discrimination directed primarily toward Muslims is on the rise. In response to this, the Interfaith Coalition of Du Page County hosted an interfaith gathering. The theme was *Breaking Down Walls—Stories of Hope*. Sisters Bea Hernandez, Sylvia Wehlisch and Mary Lou Wirtz attended the service along with nearly 300 people from many faith traditions. We joined our hearts and voices in songs, prayers and hope for peace, understanding, respect and solidarity with one another. Testimonies and words of inspiration were shared by representative of Beth Shalom Congregation (Jewish), New Life Covenant Church, Baha'i community of Naperville, the Sikh Coalition, the Hindu Temple of Aurora, the Buddhist Meditation Center and the Islamic Center of Naperville. The keynote address was delivered by Rev. Dr. JoAnne Marie Terrell, an ordained elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Michigan. She is a professor of theology, ethics and the arts at Chicago Theological Seminary. In her remarks, Rev. Terrell called us all to truly live the love that animates our faith. She pointed out that justice is empty unless it is rooted in love. She called on each of us to open ourselves to the transformative power of love and to carry that power into the world, thus creating the reality we hope for!



Affan Affan Farid-Islamic Center of Naperville



Julie Glen-Congregation of Beth Shalom

Indonesia: Caring for Each Other and Welcoming Visitors

By S. Klementina Sinaga



In Indonesia, the elderly Sisters have a morning gymnastics program twice a week led by Sr. Graela Sitanggang. This is done to help the elderly Sisters with the movement of their joints and to improve their health. At the same time, the implementation of this sport fills the Sisters with excitement and establishes new connections among them. They seem relaxed and accept their situation. It also helps to create bonds between the younger Sisters and their elders.



Sisters in Indonesia lead some of the older Sisters in daily exercises.

It has become a tradition in the province of Indonesia to receive volunteers each year via Sr. Angela in Germany. They lived in a home for two weeks to learn the languages of Indonesia. Afterwards they divided into several communities and joined in with the kids while practicing the language of Indonesia. As a result of their successful efforts they felt excited; they had a wonderful time of service. As time moved on and their time with us drew to a close, they gathered at Kembati Home Center for farewell events before returning to their respective countries. These celebrations were arranged in the sense of mutually entertaining each other. The Sisters, aspirants and others led the volunteers in dances from the culture of East Timor. Thus they all rejoiced in life as brothers and sisters.

In welcoming the Christmas season, all the Sisters were busy with many activities such as cleaning and pruning flowers. Many of the flowers have dust obscuring the beautiful colors of the petals and leaves, especially the flower known as Agape. So Sr. Imeldine and Sr. Klementina tried hard to make them shiny and back to the original color. Other Sisters also assisted them to do so. Now, the flowers look bright and beautiful.

Two young Sisters (Sr. Coni Orien and Sr. Leosinta), one girl, and three postulants were busy decorating the Chapel and motherhouse community with beautiful Christmas trees, cribs, arranging flowers by Sr. Natasha and other decorations. We are pleased and happy; their efforts help to make our prayer even more joyful. All the Sisters were taking part in preparing this wonderful Christmas.

We wish you Happy Christmas
25 December 2016.

Brazil: Confronting Violence Against Earth and Her People

By S. Raimunda Barbosa

In November, 2016 Sr. Diana Silva participated in the seminar “IN DEFENSE OF THE AMAZON”, during which we discussed the Church's evangelizing activity in the context of the Amazon. Our diocese agreed that social justice dimensions are a priority in the pastoral action of the Church. However, many leaders are not developing this theme in studies and reflections. Bishop Flávio Giovenalei emphasized that the social dimension is linked to our faith, so the Church needs to become more involved in social issues. During the plenary session, participants recognized the need to strengthen the union between Church and society and develop a spirituality of commitment to life in all its dimensions.

Sr. Gesiane Passion participated in the Pre-Pan Amazon Social Forum, which discussed alternatives of resistance to the destruction of the national territory of the Amazon. The event happened in the auditorium of the federal University, UFOPA, in December 2016. The programming included discussion on Brazil's political climate, government reforms and PEC 55. (In his short time in office as an un-elected president, President Michel Temer has tried to roll back progressive measures carried out by Worker's Party leaders. The Brazilian senate has voted 65 to 14 for PEC 55, an austerity measure that will limit social spending for the next 20 years. PEC 55 aims to freeze public spending in the country for the next two decades. By tying any increase to social assistance programs to the previous year's inflation rate rather than GDP rates, this effectively limits what all future governments can spend on health, education and social welfare. Critics argued that the poor and marginalized in Brazilian society will disproportionately bear the burden of the cuts that will significantly undermine rights enshrined in the constitution.) The dialogue was clear in calling for a better understanding of the scenario in which we live and who the reform of Government is favoring with these austerity measures. The second wheel of conversation was to analyze how low tariffs will affect the Amazon when these are debated during the Pan-Amazon meetings which will take place in April 2017 in Peru. Also discussed was the articulation of the seminar in defense of the Amazon and the Diocesan social week. The reflections discussed the concept of capitalism, neoliberalism and the articulation and confrontation of social movements. As a concrete action, seminar participants wrote a letter of repudiation to the Councilors who support the construction of ports in Santarém. Participants also decided to support the occupation of the students at the federal University.



WALK FOR PEACE DAY on January 1 happened on the streets of Santarém. Sr. Gesiane, Sr. Romilda and Sr. Raimunda participated in the event. All the churches came out to protest tax hikes, physical violence and the psychological, social and economic effects on the population. During the march, we heard statements about the reality of violence in our country, especially in the prison system, where there have been instances of brutality against prisoners. In Manaus, for example, the police beheaded an average of 50 detainees who led an inmate rebellion. All this violence affects the social security of the people.

The walks were completed with a Eucharistic Celebration in the Church.

Sisters Raimunda, Romilda
and Gesiane at the Walk For
Peace in Santarem.