JPIC Team Encourages People to Resist Bribes in Mining Expansion

GUALACO, Honduras - A half-century ago, this area of Honduras witnessed the deaths of two priests and a crowd of peasants demonstrating against the confiscation of land and the assault against human rights. Now the Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation committee is once again protesting injustice.
"Don't sell your conscience for 200 lempiras," (about $9 U.S.) said Franciscan Father Avelino Verdugo, to the people of San Esteban.

The Honduran department of Olancho is a hotbed for new mining concerns. Almost 90 new small mining companies are lobbying for concessions to produce barium sulphate. Some people have reported being bribed for their support.

“As Christians, we are called to promote the values of justice, peace, truth, love and solidarity,” Father Verdugo said. “We have an ethical and moral responsibility to work against the anti-values of those who damage the environment.”

Read more about the challenges faced by the Honduran people here.

An image of the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, one of perhaps many 'forgotten' stories of injustice. Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

Faith in Public Life Addresses Faithful Activism

President of Xavier University, Jesuit Father Michael Graham, opened a Faith and Public Life session on faithful activism by sharing a story.

The massacre began over Memorial Day weekend, 1921, after 19-year-old Dick Rowland, a black shoeshiner, was accused of assaulting Sarah Page, the 17-year-old white elevator operator of the nearby Drexel
Rowland was arrested. Rumors started that he had been lynched, prompting black citizens to run to the courthouse. Some were armed.

Twelve people were killed, ten white, two black. The city erupted in violence. In what has been called the single worst incident of racial violence in American history, the attack, carried out on the ground and from private aircraft, destroyed more than 35 square blocks of Greenwood, the wealthiest black community in the United States, sometimes called "Black Wall Street." More than 800 people were admitted to hospitals and as many as 6,000 black residents were interned at large facilities, many for several days.

Few people have heard of this story. It has only recently made headlines since a dig has been authorized (scheduled for April 2020) to find a reported mass grave related to the incident.

Graham asked the assembly to reflect on this event's absence from standard history lessons, saying, "How many other stories have been erased?"

Cabrini University in Maryland will host the last session of the series, on faithful activism, on March 30.

Read more here.
Justice and Peace Commissions

The Bishops of West Africa met in February to urge African governments to promote and pursue global, legal strategies to regulate international corporations in Africa.

“On our part, we instruct the Justices and Peace Commissions of all our dioceses to redouble efforts and innovations in care, protection, and support of the victims of the harmful effects of land grabbing and forced expropriation of land. In addition, we also undertake to do intense advocacy work with all national and international bodies so that strong frameworks and mechanisms can be put in place to correct any injustice and anomaly,” the Bishops affirm.

Land-grabbing has been a justice issue in the area recently due to increased pressure from mines and agribusiness. Some are calling this a new scramble for Africa.

According to the Vatican News Service, African governments have sometimes offered large tracts of land for foreign investment with little or no consultation of rural communities. Some communities have been forcibly removed from their ancestral lands. In some cases, valuable trees or pristine land reserves are destroyed with the knowledge of some government officials. In many cases, for the locals, the touted benefits of technology transfer and increased employment do not materialize at all. Sometimes entire communities are further impoverished.

Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, and Togo are all preparing for elections in 2020. The bishops urged that elections be fair and violence-free, and that the results be accepted by all.

Read more.

Photo courtesy of CISA News Africa.

CALL TO ACTION

Promoting and supporting biodiversity and our natural resources begins with a few simple actions:

- Avoid using pesticides that end up in
rivers and lakes, as they are harmful to wildlife.
- Eat seasonal produce. It tastes better, it is cheaper, and it is environmentally friendly.
- Participate in local urban farming. Grow a few vegetables yourself or join a CSA in your area.
- Make your own compost with kitchen scraps. It supports biodiversity and enriches the soil.
- Never buy products made from threatened or endangered species.
- Eat less meat. Meat production has a huge impact on greenhouse gas emissions and reduces biodiversity.
- Buy recycled products.
- Help fund projects to rehabilitate lands. Learn more here.

GLOBAL GOALS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Goal 15: Biodiversity

Wild species of animals and plants are an integral part of the world’s biological diversity, as are genes and ecosystems. The ecosystems where wildlife can be found, such as forests, wetlands, plains, grasslands, coral reefs and deserts, represent another aspect of biological diversity, together with genetic diversity.

The vast array of interactions between all of these components over the course of nearly 3.5 billion years is precisely what has made our
planet habitable to all species — including our own, which depends entirely on biodiversity for everything from food, energy, material for handicrafts and construction, to the very air we breathe. Unregulated or poorly managed human activities have severely impacted both local and global ecosystems, altering biodiversity and putting the very existence of many species under threat.

According to the 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, approximately 25% of species are already threatened with extinction and natural ecosystems have declined by 47% on average. This threatens to heavily impact our sources of food, fuel, medicines, housing and many more. This year’s World Wildlife Day will thus not only seek to celebrate the vibrant diversity of the biosphere, but also highlight the stakes humankind has in conserving this diversity of life and ensuring its long-term survival through a move towards a more sustainable relationship with it.

Read more about this sustainability goal here.

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**U.N. INTERNATIONAL DAYS**

2020

**March 1**
**Zero Discrimination Day**
On Zero Discrimination Day, we celebrate the right of everyone to live a full and productive life—and live it with dignity. Zero Discrimination Day highlights how people can become informed about and promote inclusion, compassion, peace and, above all, a movement for change. Zero Discrimination Day is helping to create a global movement of solidarity to end all forms of discrimination. More.

**March 3**
**World Wildlife Day**
World Wildlife Day is an opportunity to celebrate the many beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora and to raise awareness of the multitude of benefits that their conservation provides to people. At the same time, the Day reminds us of the urgent need to step up the fight against wildlife crime and human-induced reduction of species, which have wide-ranging economic, environmental and social impacts. Given these various negative effects, Sustainable Development Goal 15 focuses on halting biodiversity loss. More.

**March 8**
**International Women’s Day**
The emerging global consensus is that despite some progress, real change has been agonizingly slow for the majority of women and girls in the world. Today, not a single
country can claim to have achieved gender equality. Multiple obstacles remain unchanged in law and in culture. Women and girls continue to be undervalued; they work more and earn less and have fewer choices; and experience multiple forms of violence at home and in public spaces. More.

March 22
World Water Day
The human right to water entitles everyone, without discrimination, to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use; which includes water for drinking, personal sanitation, washing of clothes, food preparation, and personal and household hygiene. More.

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