

# JUSTICE AND PEACE NEWSLETTER

Holy Cross Indian Province of Priests  
Justice and Peace Committee

Vol. 2 No. 1

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## Editorial

We hope you will find this JPC Newsletter informative and interesting – a useful tool to make our Province progress in its social commitment and action. The Newsletter indeed gives the promised material for **our Regional Meeting** in February/March on **Social Involvements of CSC Local Communities** – a short reflection by Leonard and an agenda by John. *If relevant and courageous decisions are taken at our meetings, these can go a long way in gradually transforming our lives and involvements towards a greater sensitivity to the poor.* It goes without saying that we count on the full collaboration of all (especially the Coordinators) in this matter.

This Newsletter moreover contains several news and reflections on the JPC, the involvements of Fr. Al Mahoney and Sr. Mary Turgi, the International Meeting in Bangladesh in Nov. 2003, and our formation, pastoral and social ministries in South India. (We have also included the 2003 Social Issues Calendar for February-June.) This sharing can inspire all of us and give us insights to make our ministries more relevant. Many thanks to all the contributors!

The **JPC Report on CSC Apostolic Ministries in South India** is being prepared. It will be sent to you in the second half of March along with the material for the **JPC Study on Religious Poverty and Life-Styles**. This will probably be our last study before our term gets over with the October 2003 Provincial Chapter.

**John Desrochers**

## JPC NEWS

- The JPC held a meeting on 17-12-2002. The January issue of the **JPC Newsletter** was then planned.
- The Formation Committee (FC) discussed the June 2002 **JPC Report on Social Formation** on 28<sup>th</sup> November. (John was with the Committee members for an hour.) The FC is expected to give its recommendations to the Provincial Administration, which will discuss them in a forthcoming Council Meeting. *The JPC expects an official reply, hopefully before the May retreat.*
- The **JPC Report on Apostolic Ministries** is being finalised by Leo and John. Roque and some scholastics tabulated the survey findings with Leo. The Report will be submitted to the Provincial Administration and sent to all the confreres in the South by the end of March 2003.

# Possible Social Involvements for CSC Communities

*(Practical Points for Reflection and Implementation)*

*Leonard Fernando*

There are two types of possible social involvements for our CSC local communities: 1) To participate in what others are organising; 2) To do ourselves what we can within our parameters.

## Join Hands with Others!

There are many **worldwide organisations** like *Amnesty International* who conduct campaigns on human rights issues, the death penalty, International Criminal Court (ICC), cancellation of debts, against war in Iraq and so on. These organisations (and the **Holy Cross International Justice Office!**) invite the wider public to join hands. *Our CSC local communities should discover how to get involved in such issues*, e.g., through a signature campaign or writing letters. (The ICC could have tried Narendra Modi for the Gujarat riots, if India had signed the treaty. Almost all countries except the USA and India have signed!) We may sometimes feel that we are doing very little but our interventions have an impact. Doing a little is much better than doing nothing!

Then, there are **national issues** such as the Gujarat riots, natural calamities, Hindutva, the anti-conversion Bill, draconian legislations like POTO etc. Some groups organise rallies and campaigns related to these issues. *We should try to actively take part in these programmes.* There are also many **local issues and incidents** related to police atrocities, Dalit oppression, women's rights, human rights and so on. We should find out the details of these issues through relevant magazines and documents (and sometimes even through our own enquiries if possible), educate the people and our formees, *and take action after proper reflection and planning.*

## What can we do on our own?

*There are many possibilities.* **At the parish level**, we can hold inter-religious meetings, empower the laity, form Self-Help Groups and Basic Human Communities, invite the parishioners to help the poor in various ways (even by donating food, blankets and clothes), organise the youth for social awareness and action, encourage them to contest elections for local bodies etc. **In our formation houses**, we can have regular input sessions and discussions on social issues; weekly visit and help certain groups like the poor in slums and villages, and the aged and the sick in institutions or at home; give importance to the poor in our celebrations and share with them some of our facilities (e.g., providing them a room to study in the evening); organise the youth as already mentioned; conduct work and experience-based camps in villages during holidays etc. *(The two booklets of the Karnataka JPC [cf. below page 6] suggest many other possibilities.)*

## International Justice and Peace Meeting

Al. Mahoney just informed us that the **International Meeting of Holy Cross Justice and Peace (JP) Coordinators** will take place in Bangladesh in November 2003. Bangladesh was chosen because this year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our presence there. The meeting was planned by Jim Mulligan and the Provincials of Bangladesh in November-December 2002.

1. **DATES:** Nov. 9-15, 2003.
2. **PLACE:** Most likely at the Rampura Scholasticate and CSC Provincial House, Dhaka.
3. **Proposed Programme:** 1) Sunday, Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>, **Arrival**; 2) Monday (10<sup>th</sup>) to Thursday (13<sup>th</sup>), **Meetings**; 3) Friday (14<sup>th</sup>) & Saturday (15<sup>th</sup>), **visits either to Holy Cross missions in Srimongol or in Jalchatra.** (Both are a few hours from Dhaka.)

Al Mahoney will prepare the agenda with Jim Mulligan and the Dhaka Coordinating Committee. Suggestions should be sent to Al Mahoney at the earliest. The **JP Coordinators are expected to take care of their travel expenses**, but assistance may be available if an application is made to Al Mahoney before March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003. *The other expenses will be taken care of by the JP General Fund.*

## PROPOSED REGIONAL MEETING IN FEBRUARY/MARCH 2003

John Desrochers

The JPC would like *each regional meeting to consider, in February/March, “whether (and how) every CSC local community can/should adopt a meaningful social project and even become involved in relevant social action in its neighbourhood” or elsewhere. This is the theme we suggest.*

By now, some religious congregations in India have adopted 2 concrete proposals in relation to this theme. 1) **Some ask every local community to put aside a certain percentage of their total income or budget for the poor and thus set up a Local Fund** for meaningful services/projects for the benefit of the poor (varying from the education of needy children and the treatment of poor patients to building houses, paying the salaries of social workers/activists, financing various projects or campaigns etc.). Some congregations put aside 1-2%, and a few others like the Bethany Sisters 5-8%. This comes to a sizeable amount every year.

2) **Some congregations moreover ask every local community or even member to become involved** (at least part-time) **in a social ministry** (e.g., prison ministry, care of dropouts, street children, AIDS patients etc.) **or a social project** (adopting a slum/village or school, organising self-help groups, joining some social groups or organisations etc.). A few congregations also appoint a ‘social worker’ in every community. In his article, Leonard makes some other suggestions for relevant involvements.

So far, our local Holy Cross communities in India do not regularly/systematically follow any of these measures. **Should we too get involved along these lines?**

### Questions for Sharing:

- 1) In principle, should every CSC local community become regularly involved in a social ministry or project? What are your reasons for or against this measure?
- 2) What specific social ministry/project could/should your own community adopt? What corresponds better to people’s needs and your capacities?
- 3) In principle, should every CSC local community put aside a certain percentage of its income or budget for the poor? Why or why not?
- 4) If so, what percentage do you suggest for your community? How should this money be spent?

### Practical Remarks:

1. Frs. Hervé, Adai, Simon, Jimmy, Leonard and John will conduct the regional meetings in February or March and send their reports to John, the JPC Secretary, by the end of March.
2. The JPC does not expect the regional meetings to finalise the details of the ministry/project (and the Fund and its beneficiaries) of every local community, but firm decisions should be taken at least in principle. Then, every community can finalise its concrete involvement by June 2003.

## JPC NEWS

- At its Dec. meeting, the JPC discussed its **Study on Religious Poverty and Life-styles**, which will be made from early April to June end. The JPC decided to change its approach for this study. Instead of replying to a questionnaire, *every religious will be interviewed in writing. We will also suggest a few questions for a sharing in the local communities.* This material will be circulated **by the end of March. The confreres will be asked to reply by May 10<sup>th</sup>** and the Report will be submitted by the end of June. John will be in charge of this study with the help of Ronald and Leonard.

## The Experience of Fr. Al Mahoney

Fr. Al Mahoney gladly accepted the JPC invitation to briefly share his experience as Assistant Coordinator of the Holy Cross men's Justice and Peace Ministry. He writes: "*The struggle for justice and peace in our world is an essential component of our baptismal character as Christians.* Therefore, when I was invited in 2000 by Fr. Morin to become involved, I was quite happy. Yet, I was also hesitant, for I wasn't sure what this ministry meant for our Congregation. But I knew what I felt from my wonderful experience with poor indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico from 1974 to 1995. I knew that in those circumstances it meant risk and sacrifice on a fairly constant basis."

**"I would describe as bitter-sweet my experience of trying to animate the brethren in Holy Cross for the past 2 years.** There were moments of enthusiasm and great joy while visiting and meeting with the Justice and Peace Coordinators throughout the world. But I also have moments of doubt and disappointment at the seemingly weak response of many confreres and even several persons with responsibility in the Congregation. As Isaiah said in the first reading of Sunday, Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, our people are "walking under a cloud of darkness". Hunger, starvation, refugees, AIDS, wars and rumours of even more horrendous wars are ever in the news. The prophet urges us to wake up and see the light which is there to guide us."

"Yet, it sometimes seems *we religious don't get much concerned about our responsibility to do something significant to attack the root systemic causes of these situations of darkness, to denounce and uproot them and to plant and announce the good news of what needs doing.* This puzzles me. Yes, we do some theoretical things like talking and holding conferences, but then **what do we concretely do about the next step?** What we sometimes do presents little or no challenges to the existing systems, for we prefer the easy route of individual charity. This is necessary and not to be looked down upon. But **if it is not accompanied with effective action in solidarity with those who suffer most, what are we really doing?"**

## A Letter from Sr. Mary Turgi

**The Holy Cross International Justice Office (HCIJO)** stimulates and unites the social justice work of the four Congregations of Holy Cross – **providing a public Holy Cross voice on critical issues.** In the past year, in addition to our original focus areas (global economic justice, ecological sustainability, and rights of marginalized peoples), *we have devoted a great deal of energy to opposing the U.S.-led "war on terrorism" and a "preventive war" against Iraq.*

Highlights of our educational work so far include the publication of two brochures: *Beyond Jubilee* and *Earth at Risk* and two *Perspectives* newsletters: one on Cancellation of Third World Debt, and one on Free Trade and Globalisation. A third *Perspectives* on key environmental issues (e.g., water scarcity and genetically-modified foods) will be published soon. Response to these materials has been excellent, from college professors and campus ministers to parish committees and other religious congregations. One brochure was even distributed to all the major superiors of religious in the U.S.

Our website [www.holycrossjustice.org](http://www.holycrossjustice.org) is a critical tool for HCIJO – **for ongoing education and for advocacy.** We have used the website very successfully to gather signatures from the Holy Cross family around the world: e.g., nearly 900 on debt relief letters sent to the World Bank/IMF, over 600 on the *HCIJO Statement Opposing War on Iraq* sent to Kofi Annan, the UN Security Council, and the U.S. Administration. *In addition to these letters, the Office – with the consent of the Executive Committee - has signed on to approximately 30 public statements and ads promoting justice and peace.*

**Your participation in HCIJO's work is crucial!** We need you – to write for the newsletters, gather signatures for our public statements, and spread the message of our materials. **If you would like to help HCIJO in some way, please contact me at [mturgi@igc.org](mailto:mturgi@igc.org).**

## News on 'Social' Formation

### An Initiative in Aymanam

Fr. Jimmy Mathew writes from Aymanam: "I wish to share something that applies to the confreres and candidates here. Fr. Biju and I are entrusted with the primary responsibility of the formation of our young candidates. However, we also have a lot of opportunities to reach out to the people through the pastoral ministry. This complements our formation ministry. As a young priest in Holy Cross, **I see the importance of integrating the social dimension in both these ministries.** *Jesus called, taught and trained his disciples in the midst of the day-to-day life-situations of the people.* We are in the world but not of the world. We therefore have to become part of the social reality in one way or another. I wish to explain here a little experiment of ours to promote and integrate the social dimension in the CSC formation."

"On Sunday afternoons we send our young candidates to **Navajeevan**, a home for the abandoned, destitutes, mentally handicapped and socially discarded. This home was started by Mr. Thomas 20 years ago with 2 inmates in a modest 2-room building in Arpookara, Kottayam. Navajeevan has rehabilitated about 750 mentally ill vagabonds. Today it has 194 inmates who are taken care of with much love and attention. Besides, Navajeevan daily feeds more than 2,000 poor patients and their relatives at the Medical College, District hospital and Children's hospital. Many ordinary people, seminarians, medical students etc volunteer to help in their own little ways the less privileged to have a better and happy life. They thus contribute to social well-being and the kingdom-building process.

On Sundays our candidates render their little services to these people, meeting them, speaking with them, carrying sand for the construction or firewood to the kitchen etc. At times our confreres help the inmates through the sacramental ministry as well. All this is a little contribution to the work of God in the building of a society that is loving, caring and compassionate. This experience helps our candidates to consider the less privileged as fellow humans, with dignity and honour. It also prompts them to be at the service of the poor and the mentally ill people. Above all it makes them aware to be grateful to God for having blessed them with good health and a healthy family upbringing. Yes, *social formation is and must be very much part of the formation policy of our formees in Holy Cross.*

### Concrete Efforts to Promote Social Action – Sakalavara

Fr. Heinencio DeSouza thus describes his efforts to promote social action among the candidates at Sakalavara: "I have taken the initiative to contact Fr. Frankie Serrao SJ., from Jnana Jyoti, Anekal. He is looking after a Centre for Integral Rural Welfare. He happily accepted to allow our students and Bro. Albert to work in the village for 8 days and get some experience. Fr. Frankie first told our students to become members of their family and work with them. They built together a new house. They experienced hardships and pains, and came to understand the meaning of suffering and the cross. On the whole, they were very happy because of the spirit of cooperation and mutual love. On the last evening, they came back from the village and stayed at Father's Centre. They reflected on their experiences and took some concrete resolutions to work for the poor. On Christmas day, we also organised some games for about 70 poor children. We gave them prizes and some eatables and soft drinks. They were very happy.

*"A globalised economy has to be analysed in the light of principles of social justice, respecting the preferential option for the poor... and the requirements of the international common good"* (John Paul II, quoted in **Perspectives**, Winter 2002).

## News from Holy Cross Social Ministries

### My One-Sided Ministry

*Leonard Fernando*

I don't believe in being neutral and following the middle path. I am one-sided! I am pro-poor, pro-Dalit, pro-women and pro-suppressed masses. I organise people and youth to come together (first) and fight against oppression (second). For me, these two goals are interrelated; one cannot exist without the other. I have been actively involved in issues such as the Dindivanam Workers Issue, the Campaign against Police Atrocities Against Women, the struggle against sand excavation and the Sterilite Industry, several Dalit struggles, the Tamil nationalist issue and so on. I have also been writing for over six years on these matters without mincing words. **My life and ministry have become almost inseparable.** I have been jailed once (for the workers issue in Dindivanam). In the midst of all this, I met many trying situations in society and within our Holy Cross family. *It is fulfilling and challenging. Christ has always been the source of everything for me!*

### My CSA Involvements

*John Desrochers*

I was surprised when Leo told me in December that quite a few confreres don't know much about the activities of the **Centre for Social Action (CSA)** and the **Bangalore Social Action Trust (BSA)**, respectively registered in 1976 and 1996. Since I don't want to take any new staff members before the Provincial Administration sends a CSC confrere, I am now working with only two part-time employees and Mrs. Christina Rani Peter, the full-time Office Manager and typist.

With the help of its Editorial Board and many contributors, the BSA has been publishing the quarterly review *Integral Liberation* for more than six years. At present, I am giving every year 2 or 3 training sessions of about 5 days each, and another 3 or 4 shorter ones. In the last 25 years, CSA has published 12 booklets of 75-125 pages and 14 books, with an average circulation of more than 5000 copies. For about 5 years, CSA also had a department guiding 15-20 activists and 60-80 local groups in their work with Dalits in Tamil Nadu and Andhra; this department has now become an independent NGO.

In 2001, I moreover got involved in the **Justice and Peace Cell (JPC)** of the Karnataka Regional Conference of Religious (KRCR). In 2002, we published two issues of the JPC Newsletter, a *Directory of Social Organisations and Centres in Karnataka*, and a 225-page book entitled *Social Involvements of Religious in Karnataka* (Rs 60). We also organised a 2-day seminar of the KRCR-JPF (*Justice and Peace Forum*) with 45 participants representing 25 religious congregations, and published its 72-page Report, *The Response of Religious to the Social Challenges in Karnataka Today* (Rs 10). In this Report, the KRCR-JPF participants sent two Letters, one to the Major Superiors and another to Fellow Religious in Karnataka. An estimated 1300 religious took part in the reflection. In January 2003, we published a 64-page Report (Rs 10) presenting the replies we received. (These two booklets contain many reflections on religious life and formation today, and can be useful to all our CSC confreres in India). By August 2003, we plan to publish a book on *The Poor in Karnataka*, presenting the available information on this subject. By June 2003, we also expect to publish a booklet on "*The Pay-Scale of Workers in Church/Religious Institutions*" – to launch a Campaign in the next KRCR-JPF seminar in July 2003. **A definite plan of action will then be finalised on other issues as well.**

After consulting Fr. Thampi, I accepted to be the Coordinator (and Chief-Editor) of a **NBCLC Project** involving the publication of the *Social Teachings of the Church* and about 15 booklets of 60-80 pages on major social issues. This project was finalised at an all-India meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2002. It will hopefully be completed by the end of 2006. Collaborators have already been approached for their contributions and the project will be officially launched around June 2003... **When more Holy Cross become available, CSA will probably become involved in many other projects concerning various issues of development, justice and social change.**

## Information from Some of Our Parishes

### St. Sebastian Church, Loliem

*Ronald Serrao*

The Loliem Parish comes under the Archdiocese of Goa & Daman. It is situated in South Goa, the furthest parish of the diocese along the Karnataka border. It is about 67 km from Panjim, 47 from Margao and 18 from Karwar in Karnataka. The boundaries of the parish follow the coastal areas on one side and the forest on the other.

*People in the parish belong to the middle and lower-middle class. Many have to work hard to make both ends meet. Quite a few people are daily labourers. Some of the educated go to the Gulf in search of jobs. Many children give up their studies after class X and remain at home due to lack of job opportunities. Several people are addicted to drinks, which are easily available. But a renewal is taking place with the formation of small Christian communities. This parish is considered 'mission territory'. Some houses are very interior and it takes hours to reach them.*

**Our action plan** is first to visit all the families in the parish as well as in the surrounding areas, which we have already begun. In this way, we can assess the situation. Many people want to talk to us and they need a patient hearing. *Our next step will be to prioritise the needs and focus on one or two areas.* We presently feel we must focus on the education of children, as there are many dropouts. **We thus try to build God's kingdom by reaching out to the needy.**

### The Woriur Parish

*A. Arokiasamy*

It is almost four years since Holy Cross took over the Woriur Parish. Woriur has more than 100,000 people living in its environs. Only about 2,000 are Catholics. There are some educated people in our parish, but *the majority comes under the below poverty line category.* We have three Dalit colonies in our fold. Most people do coolie or construction work. With the meagre income they get, they survive. In spite of their poverty, they are deeply religious.

Our parish has taken steps to provide the needed infrastructure to our school. It has done immense work towards education in the past four years. We have also started three basic Christian groups to strengthen their life. They do a good work in bringing people together. In Pandamangalam, they were encouraged to become part of a women's group to fight for their rights. They were able to stand for their rights and confront the police with the help of women's organisations. **The forming of self-help groups (SHGs) will be a great boon for the poor.** Probably, we will have to work in that direction to help the poor to stand on their own.

### The Sacred Heart Parish Sub-Centre

*Leo D'Souza*

In the Ramwadi Sub-Centre, we have 328 Catholic families. Along with the people, Fr. Joe Alphonse and I are striving to build a **participatory and dialogical Church.** In our humble way, we are trying to empower the poor and the laity, and to encourage lay participation in all the parish activities. Since most of our members have to constantly interact with people of different religions, we encourage all the People of God to dialogue with other faiths. *It is in this atmosphere of religious complementarity and harmony that the Sub-Centre is called to communicate the Gospel in a way which is faithful both to the Christian tradition and the Indian psyche or soul.*

Many of the parishioners live in extreme forms of poverty, unemployment and exploitation. The oppressed people are kept on the margins of society, economically, culturally and politically. The poverty

and exploitation of women remains another serious problem to address. At times the evil effects of materialism, individualism, hedonism and violence are seen in the lives of many families. When they seek employment, many parishioners are discriminated against because of their name and religion.

*I feel that the spiritual life of our Sub-Centre cannot be divorced from social and political concerns, but must have an impact on the overall direction of life towards God and his kingdom. All the parishioners are called to live by a spirituality which promotes the love of God and neighbour.*

One of our goals is to be recreated and transfigured into Christ so that we “re-present” Christ. Christ repeatedly called his followers to abandon their former ways of living. The demands he made were not solely aimed at changing attitudes. He motivated his followers to discover how his imperatives of love, justice, freedom, peace, sacrifice and joy can affect the patterns of their lives. This must be lived in the pastoral contexts of our Sub-Centre which is called to be a participatory and dialogical Church.

Like the holy tent, Yahweh’s dwelling-place, which was moved about with the chosen people, our Sub-Centre is called to journey with God in Christ. As a participatory Church, each of us is an instrument for the sanctification of others. Our unity and peace are realised in and through Christ in whose way we follow.

**THEMES FOR THE YEAR 2003<sup>†</sup>**  
**Combat Communalism, Promote Secularism**  
**Harness Student Power for Social Change**  
**International Year of Fresh Water**  
**Campaign for Consumer Rights**

### SOCIAL ISSUES CALENDAR 2003<sup>†</sup>

2 February Widows Day*	7 April World Health Day
19 Panchayat Day	18 World Heritage Day
21 Cancer Survivors Day	22 Earth Day
21 Mother Language Day*	30 No Child Labour Day
28 National Science Day	1 May May Day
8 March Women’s Day*	3 World Press Freedom Day
14 Day of Action on Dams & Rivers*	15 Day of Families*
15 Consumer Rights Day*	22 Day for Biological Diversity*
21 World Forestry Day	31 World No Tobacco Day
21 Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination*	5 June World Environment Day
22 World Day for Water	20 World Refugee Day
4 April Anti Child-Prostitution Day	26 Day Against Drug Abuse & Illicit Trafficking*
6 Campaign Against Hunger and Disease Day	26 Day of support of Torture Victims*

\* International Day. † Extracts from **GOA DESC RESOURCE CENTRE**, 11 Liberty Apartments, Feira Alta, Mapusa, Goa 403 507; Tel: 0832-252660. E-mail: goadesc@goatelecom.com

***How can you remember/celebrate these days in your community/neighbourhood/area so as to create awareness and even improve the situation?***

*“Only poverty has been truly globalised in our age. The over-praised neoliberalism and the omnipotent market are a mistaken vision and the root cause of some of the most serious problems that afflict us” (Patricio Aylwin, quoted from Perspectives, Winter 2002).*

**Could we make a better use of Perspectives and other HCIJO material?**