

**JUSTICE EN BREF
JUST NEWS
JUSTICIA Y ESPERANZA
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Volume IX No. 2
April 2009

When you receive this new edition of JUST NEWS, we will be at the dawn of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Marie-Anne Blondin, the Foundress of the Sisters of St. Anne. We will also be celebrating 'life stronger than death' in the beautiful Easter season. Millions of people are affected by the food crisis and the financial crisis but we are not letting down our arms facing these social justice challenges. At times, we may wonder if our actions bear fruit. One of the characteristics of the commitment made by religious communities is perseverance. We need to persevere, to use certain strategies and to send out clear messages that bring about change. We must also do our part to carry out the changes we hope for. We are not alone in this journey: we are linked to many other religious communities and groups that pursue the same goals.

Marie-Anne Blondin's perseverance was remarkable! Why not let her inspire us? Pleasant reading and fruitful commitments in the light of Easter!

SSA Social Justice Office



Life is stronger than death

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The legacy of Esther Blondin



The meaning of reconciliation

Exclusive Interview with Sister Rita Larivée, SSA, Congregational Leader



Social Justice Office :

Sister Rita Larivée, the Orientation of the last General Chapter said : “we commit ourselves to witness to and promote reconciliation and justice”. Reconciliation : what does it mean?

Sister Rita Larivée:

The word reconciliation is more common today than in the past. And it certainly became popular during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that took place in South Africa some years ago.

For me, the congregation has an interest in this process today because it’s a way to bring people together who have been hurt or misunderstood. Of course, the word involves many levels of interpretation and is not easy to define. Even within our chapter environment this past summer, it was clear that the various languages used within our congregation have slightly different meanings for the term.

The real challenge is finding a way to get from the hurt to the healing. It’s not a simple process.

Social Justice Office :

How can we understand the link between reconciliation and justice?

Sister Rita Larivée :

You asked me about justice and reconciliation, but it’s really injustice that we are talking about—a wrong has been done and we need to find a way to correct it. But, actually, reconciliation isn’t only about correcting an injustice. It’s much more. Reconciliation is a process for healing a hurt that is very deep. There are injustices that can be stopped. But stopping the injustice doesn’t necessarily stop the hurting.

I think it’s important to realize that not every disagreement needs reconciliation in the deepest sense. Two people can have an argument and resolve their differences with a simple conversation.

When I speak of reconciliation, I am referring to a process that will help heal a deep wound that otherwise cannot stop hurting—a wound that never goes away and, in a sense, continues to hold a person hostage. It’s a level of profound suffering and is much more than your day-to-day misunderstandings.

As I was studying the history of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions around the world, I realized that they all had one thing in common: They needed a way to heal a hurt that has no other solution. Some injustices can never really be fixed.

This is when I realized the uniqueness of the Christian tradition. I was studying the great wisdom traditions of the world and it became apparent to me that the Christian understanding of reconciliation is rather unusual. It offers the world a way to heal the hurt of a terrible injustice that has no other way to be fixed and there is no solution. For instance, the members of a family who have been assassinated – there is no way to ever fix this. Where do you find peace?

Injustices such as lack of water can often be corrected. But when harm has been done that remains forever, what do we do?

Social Justice Office :

What does the Gospel say about reconciliation and forgiveness?

Sister Rita Larivée :

Within the Christian tradition, we speak of the power of forgiveness, but not in the traditional sense. When Jesus forgives in the gospel, it is always in a situation that otherwise has no remedy. There is no other way for the healing to take place.

For me reconciliation is about those situations that have no way to be healed and involves the art of forgiveness in a very nontraditional sense. What I mean by this is that forgiveness is really a process we choose to enter because there is no other way to heal the wound. Saying to someone you forgive them doesn't really heal a deep wound. Forgiveness is a big part of the process of reconciliation and only happens over a period of time.

Forgiveness doesn't erase an injustice and it doesn't make friends out of enemies. It's a process we choose to enter for the sake of a better future. We let go the pass; we let go the injury so as a way to find peace.



But we do not ignore the injustice and we must name it for what it is. And, of course, the injustice must stop and we must not forget it. But when all has been placed out in the open, we make a choice for life. We choose to begin again for the sake of a new future.

This is an over-simplification. But reconciliation for me is the process of naming the injustice and then choosing to enter a process of forgiveness for a wound that cannot otherwise be healed. It's a choice for inner peace.

Social Justice Office :

Is this the same as resolution of conflicts?

Sister Rita Larivée:

I'm not speaking of conflict resolution or arbitration. Reconciliation is not something that can be imposed. It must be chosen.

I often ask myself: What do we as Christians have to offer the world? And it's this internal process of setting our spirits free by choosing life for ourselves. Suffering doesn't necessarily go away on it's own. We may forget about it for a period of time, but it often returns. True healing happens when we make a conscious choice for it.

As I said earlier, when I think of reconciliation and justice, I'm not talking about disagreements hurt feelings. I find today that the term INJUSTICE is used in a way that minimizes the true injustices around the world. I think we need to be careful not to minimize the meaning of the word.

Social Justice Office :

What is the role of our Office of Social Justice?

Sister Rita Larivée:

The Office of Social Justice was established as a strong voice in favour of the marginalized and those who are excluded from society. It speaks for those who have no voice and cannot speak for themselves. We must never lose sight of this primary mandate. The office has been structured to work on large projects that require significant resources, long-term commitments, and a network of people united for systemic change.

In my Christmas letter, I spoke of injustice and the need for reconciliation. What do you do when the future of the world community has already mortgaged to past injustices? The future is always influenced by the past. But we choose which way we will build the future.

When so much hurt happens, as with Israeli-Palestinian conflict, you can't fix it. Yet our Christian tradition offers us a way out of the madness. Again, I bring you back to the Gospels and the stories of Jesus' healing. Forgiveness and healing are inseparable. And Jesus offers both when there is no other way.



One chooses a process to build a better future

Social Justice Office :

How do you connect the story of Mother Marie-Anne and reconciliation?

Sister Rita Larivée:

When I read the story of Mother Marie-Anne, I see how she was excluded and marginalized. And I think she understood very well the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation. I think she knew first hand the process of choosing life for herself each and every day. She could have left the Congregation, but she chose another way. She chose to enter a future that otherwise could not have existed. She chose the path that went beyond the injustices that could not be healed any other way.

Social Justice Office:

Thank you sister Rita Larivée.



For personal and community reflection

- What do I find nourishing in this interview? What is most enlightening?

- Do I have any questions?

- What links do I make with my own personal experience and community experience?

- Find a symbol that expresses reconciliation. Share it with those around you.

Around the garden

Notre-Dame-du-Perpétuel-Secours Province

The sisters of Haïti underlined the first edition of World Day for Social Justice on February 20. The material, which had been prepared by the members of the Secretariat of the Justice and Peace Commission and Integrity of Creation of the USG/UISG in Rome, was distributed to all the houses.

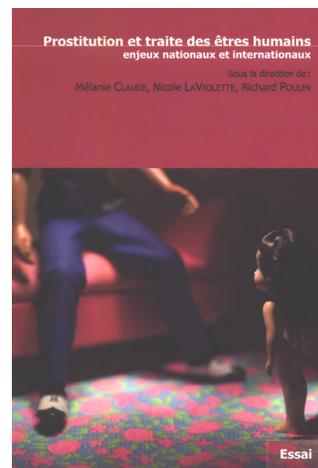


Esther Blondin Province

By Sister Denise Breault

By the time you receive this edition of JUST NEWS, approximately 125 sisters, 40 associates and 10 other lay people will have been made aware of the UNANIMA INTERNATIONAL campaign and dossier regarding the theme, “Stop the demand”. Sister Denise Caron prepared a tool kit and ritual based on the one distributed by UNANIMA International and offered it to those interested in using it for animation purposes. Sister Denise conducted two meetings, the first one was on November 25 and the second one was with the associates of Sr. Huguette Quevillon on January 9, 2009. Sister Jacqueline Lafontaine spoke to the senior sisters of the 5th C floor of the Mother House who were very moved and challenged by the drama of the trafficking of women and children. Sister Alberte Madore facilitated a meeting with the sisters of the St. Anne community using the UNANIMA dossier. Sr. Réjeanne Martin created bookmarks that were distributed to the sisters each month. She also adapted the material and the ritual for use by the Marie-Michel community on January 3, 2009. On February 24, we were invited to attend a meeting organized by the *Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, (CLES)* an organization that has an abolitionist view. CLES took this opportunity to launch their web site (www.lacles.org), their brochure and two books, Pornography and hyper-sexualization and Devastated Childhoods. 2nd volume (French)

On the first World Day for Social Justice, on February 20th, we celebrated and used concrete means to express our support for Bill C-268. This Bill modifies the criminal code which now includes a minimum imprisonment sentence of 5 years for offences dealing with the trafficking of persons under the age of eighteen, On the 18th of each month, the sisters have been asked to wear the necklace or stole, almost identical to the one worn at our last general chapter, to express our solidarity and to be united as one in our prayer against human trafficking.



Saint Joseph Province

Sister Sheila Moss write to us : «At our Community Meeting on Feb. 14th the Social Justice Committee did 3 things: We reminded the sisters of the D & P Lenten campaign, encouraging them to donate. Dawn Mahara displayed the D & P materials. We invited the sisters to reflect on the environment by: a) introducing the topic of climate change through a presentation by Debra Freeman, then a DVD on the topic which had been shown at last year's SJ network meeting followed by a discussion on the topic - b) sharing the concrete actions that could be taken in our use of energy. We used a section from "This great and beautiful world" produced by the CRC, which was facilitated by Marina Smith. A discussion followed. We focused on the Kairos action plan which invites all to sign a card to be sent to the government asking that oil companies not be given a subsidy. Joyce Harris pointed out the facts concerning the oil companies' profit, and collected the signed cards. We concluded by a prayer from "This great and beautiful world", led by Lorraine LaMarre.



In our ongoing effort to promote social justice we acknowledge the help of the sisters at St. Ann's Residence who have been a great help to women with HIV/AIDS by responding to the "call" for-toiletries and clothes.

We continue to be involved in the area of Human Trafficking. At present sisters Lorraine Lamarre and Joyce Harris have been assisting a Team in Vancouver who are planning a Workshop to prepare for the 2010 Winter Olympics. We were pleased to read the recently published letter by the Bishops of BC/Yukon on trafficking.

Celebrate 20 years!

Recently we were proud to celebrate 20 years of dedicated service to those in need by TAPS (Together Against Poverty). Several sisters attended a presentation by the Director of Canadian Policy Alternatives who gave clear statistics of the situation of poverty in our province and a lively fundraising concert with jazz musicians, young violin players, a poet, and the "Gettin' Higher Choir" of which Gertrude Scott is a member.



Did you know?

A new study reveals that BC's poor and middle class families are in worse financial shape than their parents' generation. The study, released today by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, finds that fully 60% of families with children are earning less than their counterparts in the late 1970s, while incomes for the wealthiest 10% have increased dramatically. The result is a widening gap between the rich and the rest of the population.

Saint Marie Province

Human Trafficking

After contacting her Massachusetts State Representative, Sr. Carol has learned that a Massachusetts Anti-Human Trafficking Bill was re-filed at the beginning of this year and will hopefully be voted on in this current session of the legislature.

Polaris Project said : We know that trafficking occurs in every ethnic community and in every social class, although it is difficult to know exactly how many cases of human trafficking arise in Massachusetts. There were about 55 documented cases of human trafficking in the Boston area between October 2004 and March 2006, according to the founding director of the Trafficking Victims Outreach and Services Network. There are documented cases of both forced labor and sex trafficking in Massachusetts. One case affected 120 manual labors from Africa and South and Central America forced to work for little or no pay. The Grove Hall Youth Workers Alliance has counseled over 80 girls between the ages of 11 and 18 who were trafficked for commercial sex.

Source : <http://www.polarisproject.org/content/view/154>

Death Penalty

The Social Concerns Committee continues to fund organizations working to reverse death penalty statutes in many U.S. states.



Again this year the Sisters of Saint Anne are co-sponsoring the annual Good Friday Silent Vigil against the Death Penalty and All Violence. This takes place at the State House in Boston. Massachusetts, at this time does not have a death penalty statute. During the vigil meditations on the 14 Stations of the Cross are prepared and read by participants.

Immigration

The Social Concerns Office continues to monitor immigration concerns through the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition. This group focuses not only on this state's issues but on federal ones as well. The office also refers people directly to agencies which can help them.



Closing of the School of the Americas

The Social Concerns Office continues to help fund the efforts of the School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) to close the School of the Americas (SOA), which was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001. It is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia. Over its 59 years, the SOA has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers. These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage a war against their own people. Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared," massacred, and forced into refugee status by those trained at the School of Assassins.

The office also supports U.S. Congressman James McGovern as he has, year after year, introduced federal legislation to close this school. When last year's vote in the House was taken, the measure was a few votes short of passing. This year could be the year it gets passed because the Democrats have the majority in both the House and Senate.

Land Conservation

Province Leaders, Sr. Marguerite St. Amand and Sr. Yvette Bellerose, participated in the 2008 Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference. They participated in workshops entitled Land Conservation 101: The Tools, Players, Programs & Jargon Demystified, Land Conservation and Food Sovereignty in Massachusetts, and Environmental Justice through Land Conservation. These workshops helped them take initial steps in questions of land conservation and sustainable living.

Web site : http://www.thetrustees.org/pages/38698_massachusetts_land_conservation_conference_2009.cfm

Workshop on NON VIOLENCE

By Ana Maria Gajardo

It is with great joy that we received the visit in Chile of Sr. Sheila Moss who shared her experiences and led a session on non-violence on January 30-31 at the Marie Esther Center. In attendance were 40 people from various backgrounds and ages, parish youth groups, Associates, sisters of various congregations and Sisters of St. Anne.

In this workshop, we became more aware that our actions are tainted by violence and that it is part of our daily life. Violence, in its emotional, verbal or physical expressions, dominates us, destroys us and dehumanises us. In our actual world, we experience several forms of violence. The circle of violence is broken by non-violence. However, this does not mean (is not synonymous) that we need to avoid conflict.



We reflected on violence to the earth, our planet and its consequences: climate changes, global warming, etc. We must always remember that we are an integral part of the diversity. We have to learn to live, to see, to listen and to act differently. We can and must transform our milieu. The challenge of non violence is global. We have to meet this challenge. The time to act is NOW.



CONGO: a true miracle!

Sister Margaret Jacques and Sister Jeanne Ménard arrived in Kilembe at the end of January 2006 where they gradually discovered the problems that affected the people, one being malnutrition. One of the things that can be done to help is to plant peanuts or soybeans. But Sr. Claire Racine added, "Since the cows had eaten all the soybeans, the women had none left to plant crops." One day, a mother arrived with her year and a half year-old baby. The little girl was so weak that she could hardly open her eyes and mouth. Her friends were telling the mother to save her money for her baby's funeral.



However, we chose another attitude, that of believing that the child could live! Sister Margaret started giving the baby a glass of soy beverage every morning and she persevered in doing so. After six weeks, can you believe that the little girl was running and laughing! This is the miracle of soy! The women became convinced of the need to continue harvesting soybeans when they saw how it could help fight malnutrition. The crop is grown within three months and the people can harvest three crops a year! "In Kikwit", added Sr. Claire Racine, "we keep talking about malnutrition to those who visit us as we too learn more about this problem while working in the garden to diversify crops. Of course, it is also necessary to have an ecological fence..."



Rebuilt!

February 2009 : Volunteers with Vacations That Give, a ministry of the Sisters of Saint Anne, under the direction of Sr. Yvette Dargy and Sr. Pauline Laurence, traveled to Gulfport/Biloxi, Mississippi to help with Hurricane Katrina recovery.

Seven of us left from Logan Airport on February 7, 2009. Joining the group was Associate Jo Belli, and, serving as cook for the group, was Sister Pat Callahan.



Sister Pauline Laurence, sister Pat Callahan, Jo Belli, associate and sister Yvette Dargy

On Sunday we visited New Orleans. This allowed the group to know one another in a relaxed manner and prepared us for our work together.



On Monday we began our work which consisted in the demolition of a home that had to be rebuilt. The next four days were spent replacing siding, soffit and painting another home which had been damaged by the hurricane.



Each day began with a common prayer for blessings on our day and concluded with a period of reflection based on a scriptural passage.

We completed our week happy with the work that we had done, having made new friends and having deepened our understanding of what it means to share the Gospel message in word and in deed.

Web site : <http://www.vacationsthatgive.org/>

UNANIMA International



Presence of the SSA at the United Nations and at UNANIMA International

On March 5, 6 and 7, Sr. Rita Larivée and Sr. Lucille Goulet attended the UNANIMA International meeting in New York. At this meeting, the member representatives of religious communities evaluated the campaign STOP THE DEMAND and noted the important commitments made by all.

During this meeting, the three objectives of the campaign were recalled:

- To create awareness regarding the reality of the demand in human trafficking.
- To promote actions to counter the demand that feeds on human trafficking.
- To change the mentalities and attitudes of our society so that the exploitation of others – especially the sexual exploitation of women and children – will become unacceptable.



On the left: Sr. Cecilia Nya, SHCJ with Sr. Lucille Goulet, SSA. On the right: Sr. Rita Larivée, SSA, and Sr. Mary Ondreyco, SNJM.

The 53rd session of the Commission on the status of women was held on March 2 to 13 at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York. UNANIMA International actively participated in the preparation of this event and during the session which was attended by 35 participants. Catherine Ferguson, the coordinator of UNANIMA INTERNATIONAL spoke before representatives from different countries. Here is a brief excerpt of what she said. *“We support the suggestion that great efforts must be made to re-socialize men and boys (as girls have been socialized) into a sense of social duty and responsibility which can effectively confront an entrenched system of gendered division of labor and patriarchy.”* **10**

TOOLBOX

FIND OUT MORE

Read the pastoral letter of the bishops of British Columbia and the Yukon on human trafficking. Visit the web site: <http://www.rcav.org/ht/> (English only)

The web site CLES offers abolitionist reflections on prostitution. A world without prostitution is possible: <http://lacles.org/> (French with English section)

WHAT TO DO NEXT

The loss of homes: during this financial crisis, thousands of families are losing their homes. Visit the web site <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/>

Let us continue to campaign against human trafficking and its demand. There are no doubt people, family members and friends in your surroundings who have not yet signed the UNANIMA International postcard.

Distribute our next posters on World days!

Next deadline for articles : May 1, 2009

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We thank Sr. Jacqueline Arbec, SSA for the photo of the hands of Mother Marie Anne Blondin used in this issue and in the previous one.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Do our actions change anything?

Our actions bear fruit if we include an educational dimension, if we make known our vision of world justice to the proper authorities, if we take action with others, if we persevere in our actions, if we partner with public personalities, if we make our actions visible,

if we do not hesitate to ask questions so that mentalities will change, if we pray, if we keep updated on the way the campaign is progressing, if we remain in solidarity with the victims, if we believe change is possible and if we act in a collective manner.

To come

A poster for Earth Day *2009*



AGENDA

April 22: Earth Day

May 22: International Day for Biological Diversity

June 5: World Environment Day

June 8: World Ocean Day

Ecological Credo

Archdiocese de Munich

I believe that the Creator entrusted the Earth to the human race so that humans would look after it conscientiously, develop it with harmony, and lead it to its fulfilment by caring for its riches and beauty.



I believe that Jesus Christ represents hope for the world. He died on the cross in communion with all human beings. He frees us by his Love without limit.

In union with the Creator, Jesus gives us the power to overcome diseases, hatred, disappointment and resignation. By his resurrection, He awakens us to new life.

I believe in the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes to the divine gift of forgiveness, sheds light on our behaviour and leads us to live in freedom as children of God. Divisions and boundaries disappear thanks to the One who cares for all forms of life.



For the glory of God and the fulfilment of Creation.