

Millennial Goals of Development

Do YOU want to make a difference?

*When Jesus ... knew that he had been ill for a long time,
he said to him, "Do you want to be well?"*
John 5:6

Despite the fact that many people in our world live in better conditions than ever before in history, extreme poverty remains a lasting challenge for developing countries. The tragedies of food shortages, a lack of access to safe drinking water and essential medicines, a low level or complete lack of education affects hundreds of thousands of women and children. Below are some data from the United Nations/Millennium Development Goals website:

- ◆ A woman dies from complications from childbirth every minute. Approximately 99% of deaths due to pregnancy and its complications occur in developing countries.
- ◆ At the beginning of the new millennium more than 100 million school-age children were without access to education, and 96% of the children were from developing countries.
- ◆ Over 10 million children die annually in developing countries; most of these deaths could be avoided by good nutrition and medical care.

How do we respond? Most of the time, through habit, we take the stance of helpless compromise with an inability to change. The evangelical question which Jesus asked the paralytic may have special significance for us: Do you want to be well? (John 5: 6) If – as a human community – we are able to ask ourselves this question, we will find possibilities and power for taking specific actions.

Millennium Declaration

On the eve of the new millennium, the United Nations took up the challenge to tackle the problem of poverty and hunger in the world. During the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, leaders of 189 nations committed themselves to eradicate extreme poverty and significantly improve the situation for people living in the poorest countries by 2015. The goodwill of the signatory states was confirmed by the signing of the Millennium Declaration which took place on September 8, 2000. The content of the Declaration can be summarized in a few key issues, called Millennium Goals. According to the declaration these goals are to be achieved by 2015. For the first time in history there is a detailed plan of co-operation among countries to reduce extreme poverty.

Millennium Goals:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDs, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development



The Millennium Goals are achievable.

*It is not in the United Nations
that the Goals will be achieved.*

*They have to be achieved in each country
by the joint efforts of the Governments and people.*

*Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN
1997 – 2006*

In 2005 government representatives met to evaluate progress in meeting each of the goals at the Millennium Summit +5. They revised some plans which they felt would better help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) by the year 2015. The Millennium Development Goals began as a social movement which over the past 10 years have become a challenge for an expanding circle of people of good will. It became clear that the responsibility for achieving the Millennium Goals cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of government leaders. They are a challenge for all people of good will.

Campaigns to promote the MDGs were initiated in most of the countries throughout the world. The goal of each nation's campaign is to educate its citizens about the targets of development set out by the UN, the positions of the individual country towards each goal, and the possibilities of involving citizens in the implementation of the Millennium Goals. These materials may be accessed at:

<http://standagainstopoverty.org/> or <http://www.end-poverty2015.org/>.

The deadline for the Millennium Development Goals is in a few short years, 2015. Progress towards the achievement of MDGs is monitored annually by the UN. As of this writing, most people involved recog-

nize that some of these goals will not be achieved by the deadline. Supplementary tasks which may assist with achieving some of the goals were approved during the UN Summit in September 2010. In the report "Keeping the Promise," prepared before the meeting, UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, wrote: "We must not fail the billions who look to the international community to fulfill the promise of the Millennium Declaration for a better world."

Many non-governmental organizations are involved in the ultimate achievement of the Goals. Conditions which are needed to achieve the MDGs were discussed at the G8 Summit, the Forum for Economic and Social Council of the UN, during meetings of business leaders and discussions at conferences of the NGO forum at the UN General Assembly.



Is this enough? Most developing countries depend on financial cooperation among countries. The current global economic crisis, along with the various local armed conflicts only serve to place more of our brothers and sisters in Christ in situations of extreme poverty. Although it is expected that some goals - such

as access to basic education in African countries or reduction of child mortality in Asia - will not be achieved until about 2040, UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, has stated that some have already been achieved: the percentage of people living below the poverty line in developing countries fell from 46% to 27% since 2000.

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Our presence

values – motivation – information – brotherhood

What can we, consecrated women and Felician Sisters, do to help in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals?

The Millennial Declaration appeals to our Catholic and Felician Franciscan values to do all we can to allow our brothers and sisters worldwide to live with dignity. These values include freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for the environment, and shared responsibility. These are beautiful words. However, we know how they can be misunderstood and misinterpreted, especially in our age of relativism. Isn't it a privilege for us – consecrated women – to bear testimony to real values which find their source in God?

For many years the Congregation of Felician Sisters has served the poor. We can identify with helplessness in the face of poverty and hunger, and with the lifelong ramifications of poverty-related diseases and of the lack of education.



In diverse ways we attempt to provide the material and spiritual needs of the people we meet. We do all of this for Christ, whom we see in our poorest brothers and sisters. We do not need campaigns promoting the work among the poor!

These campaigns, which encourage everyone to take action, need the spiritual inspiration and

motivation given to us by the Holy Spirit. They need the flame of our charism!

Education and reflection

You are invited to:

- ◆ search for information about the Millennium Goals (you can start browsing the web pages suggested in this article)
- ◆ be familiar with the Millennium Declaration expressed in the MDGs
- ◆ interpret the meaning of each of the MDGs according to Christian values

Action – you can:

- ◆ promote the Millennium Campaign
- ◆ include information about the Millennium Goals in education programs
- ◆ cooperate in any way you can with those who under the banner of the Millennium Goals do good in the world.

To find out more about the Millennium Development Goals please go to the websites listed below:

1. United Nations
<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
2. United Nations Development Program
<http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/md-governview.html>
3. Millennium Project
<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/>
4. UNJ Women
http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/millennium_development_goals/
5. End Poverty Campaign
<http://www.endpoverty2015.org/>
6. WHO
http://www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/en/
7. UNICEF
<http://www.unicef.org/mdg/>
8. One World One Hope
<http://www.worldforworld.org/index.asp>

- SM Honorata Grzeszczuk (NA)

Reforestation PROJECT in Kenya



While visiting Matiri Mission in Meru, Kenya this past summer I was struck by the dusty, parched, treeless landscape and so I was shocked to hear that a century ago (a short 100 years), the area had been a forest. Meru is located northeast of Mount Kenya and is the site of one of eight missions in which the Felician Sisters minister around Mount Kenya.

When I returned home, I researched the environmental changes due to deforestation and discovered that indeed Kenya, as many countries throughout Africa, has experienced a significant loss of forest in the past fifty years. Although forest covers only two to three percent of Kenyan soil, a large proportion of the Kenyan population live in the vicinity of the forests. Many of the trees in the forest around Mt Kenya are unique to that area but are at risk of becoming extinct.

An increase in population growth starting in the 1970s is one of the underlying causes behind de-

forestation in the country. People cut down the trees for timber and fuel and clear trees off land for new farms. Deforestation results in soil erosion. The rich soil is removed during heavy rains and the farmer can no longer use the land for planting. The farmers then move to other lands, cut down the trees for farms, and the cycle begins again.

Previously, the thick vegetation that covered the land served to trap moisture and keep temperatures cool. Deforestation has led to a loss of biodiversity due to drought and changing rain patterns. Farmers can no longer predict rainfall which has resulted in crops drying up some years, leading to lack of food, and threatening the lives of subsistence farmers.

The International Small Group and Tree Planting Program, known as TIST, is helping small communities of subsistence farmers to reverse the effects of deforestation. Over the past decade, TIST has worked with small, local groups, and today

works in over 1,600 villages in Kenya. TIST trains and encourages the groups to develop and share “best practices.” TIST provides small stipends to groups and helps local farmers meet their economic needs, even during times of drought. The farmers adopt new farming practices using existing tools and natural fertilizers that protect soil and increase crop yield. The group is involved in decision making, and they decide which species to plant.

In Kenya, TIST has planted over 5 million trees. The trees provide a new “virtual cash crop” in greenhouse gas credits. According to the TIST website (www.tist.org) this is how greenhouse gas credits work:

- ◆ Carbon, a part of CO₂ is used by trees and is stored in soil and trees. This carbon storage can be measured and the proven results sold as “greenhouse gas credits.”
- ◆ With palm computers and Global Position System (GPS) technology, TIST data on tree growth and carbon storage is collected and transmitted through the internet.
- ◆ Small cash stipends for every living tree are then deposited regularly into bank accounts opened by Small Groups for this purpose. This stipend encourages groups to devote the time and care necessary to ensure the trees’



survival while providing a source of income for years to come for family necessities such as medication and school fees.

In Kenya, TIST goes beyond “sustainability” by allowing the current generation of farmers to meet its economic needs. It leaves a legacy for their children and improves the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Catholic Relief Services has teamed up with TIST in its efforts to curtail deforestation in the area around Mt. Kenya.

*Deforestation
has led to a loss
of biodiversity...*

Sources:

<http://www.tist.org/>

<http://www.crsprogramquality.org/agriculture-feature-plant/>

<http://www.mountkenyatruf.org/assets/pdf/Ecol-ogy%20Booklet.pdf>

- S. Maryann Agnes Mueller (NA)

...Serve them with RESPECT for their DIGNITY...

RTL Art. 50.2

REFLECTION 1:

The concept of the dignity of human life consists of numerous aspects and appears frequently approached in today's publications.

The concept of dignity has a number of meanings¹. Dignity is undoubtedly a value. Everyone tries to live so as to be worthy of respect and to be able to say that he has his dignity.

Polish law speaks about dignity as a personal good, and is thus protected by law. From the ethical point of view, it is expressed in one's self-esteem. Every human being on this Earth has the right to live in dignity in decent conditions and to die in dignity. This right is not dependent on his conduct.

Creating man in His image and likeness, God gave him a unique and inalienable dignity which is the foundation of social order and the necessary condition for development in all areas of human life². Human dignity cannot be subordinate to economic processes, political goals, any ideologies or doctrines of a party. It is at the heart of the Christian vision of man and the world.

The concept of human dignity is universal and timeless; it was already known in ancient times. Christians, though they did not invent it, greatly propagated it. Everyone has dignity, whether rich or poor, man or woman; regardless of race, religion or skin color.

More importantly, these observations depict the teach-

ing and activity of the Catholic Church and that of Religious Congregations. The main objective of religious congregations, besides striving for the perfection of their members, is primarily to help provide a worthwhile life for the poorest, abandoned and neglected members of human society. This love of God, who wants to show it in the constant concern for the most disgraced and marginalized, those who count for nothing in the eyes of this world.

The special nature of our Congregation is determined primarily by the spirituality of St. Francis, as expressed in his Rule:

♦ *And let them be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the lepers and those who beg on the street*³.

♦ *As they announce peace with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts... The sisters and brothers are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring*⁴.



The first words of the Felician Sisters' Constitution speak about the charism, which is the gift to the Church:

♦ *Our life in the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice is inspired by the charismatic gift of our Foundress, Sophia Truszkowska. Her boundless love of God manifested itself in complete surrender to his divine will and overflowed into com-*

1 <http://www.godnoscirodzina.pl/pojecie-godnosci>.

2 Henryk Koch, *Godność człowieka- niezbywalnym prawem i fundamentem ładu społecznego*, Perspektywa, Legnickie Studia Teologiczne – Historyczne, Rok IV 207 nr 1 (10).

3 St. Francis, *The Rule and Life of Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis*, Ch. VI Life in Poverty, Art. 21.

4 St. Francis, *The Rule and Life of Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis*, Ch. IX Apostolic Life, Art. 30.

passion and mercy, consuming her in service to the needy and concern for the salvation of all people⁵.

- ◆ In response to the call of the Church and the signs of the times, we work to alleviate injustice and collaborate in the mission of human advancement. We embrace new forms of apostolic activity which conform with the spirit and aim of the Congregation... We seek, primarily through works of mercy, to foster and deepen true piety in the hearts of all people... We remain available for diverse services to the People of God, especially the poor and the needy⁶.

As a result of many socio – economic changes taking place in Poland since 1989 and up to the present, the describing of which is not the purpose of this article, it was necessary to look anew at the work and ways of ministry of the Congregation.

The ministries of the Felician Sisters of the Krakow Province embrace the people within the south and south - east territories of Poland. These are mainly in the areas of the Małopolska and Podkarpackie Provinces. These are not the poorest regions of the country, however, even here such problems as high unemployment, low standard of living below the poverty line for many families, and a large labor related emigration exist. These phenomena lead to an increase of various forms of pathology and violence in families.

An unstable and inconsistent legal system and inadequate financial resources, reduced year by year, allocated to assist the needy, make this national aid more difficult and less effective.

Sisters of the Province of Krakow are primarily engaged in:

- ◆ Serving meals to the poorest people near the Motherhouse front door;

⁵ Constitutions of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice „Response To Love”, Book I., Chapter I. Our Felician Heritage, p. 41.

⁶ Constitutions of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice „Response To Love”, Book I., Chapter V. Apostolic Mission, p. 67- 68.

- ◆ Working in parishes as caretakers of the sick, elderly and disabled in order to provide for their daily needs;
- ◆ Catechetical work, in addition to religious education, gives the sisters opportunity to be in contact with children and young people from broken families, families affected by alcoholism, and unemployment;
- ◆ Admitting children from families with difficult economic and living conditions to kindergartens and hostels run by the sisters – sometimes without asking for payment;
- ◆ Offering comprehensive care to the most profoundly mentally disadvantaged, especially in our Nursing Home in Iwonicz;



- ◆ Serving meals to the poor or needy in various or most convents of the Province;

- ◆ Organizing day camps and summer camps for children from low income families.

As it appears, the commitment of the Sisters in so many different works testifies to the immensity of the needs to ensure a dignified life to the people, advocating

for the weak, the needy and the forgotten.

- Siostra Maria Melchiora (KR)

REFLECTION 2:

I was a catechist for 27 years and then, for the following 7 years, I worked with children who needed acceptance and understanding as well as guidance in learning and acquiring the most necessary skills needed to function normally within society. Last year, I began working with people who are materially, intellectually and morally poor. Due to their situation they lack a basic knowledge of the faith. At present, I am becoming more familiar with my new surroundings and with the people whom



I meet on an almost daily basis. I have opportunity to converse with them for an hour before dinner. During these conversations I learn about their lives, living conditions and family relationships.

Once I helped one person to find shelter. Now this person has a job and a house and abstains from drinking alcohol. Another time, I accompanied a group of 24 people on a pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine in Czestochowa. For them this pilgrimage was a reprieve from daily problems and a springboard to strengthen their faith.

Besides, on Christmas there was a Eucharist with a good homily celebrated for the poor. This was followed by a sharing of Christmas wishes. These people experience many problems and great sufferings due to their ignorance of the law. In the near future, we are planning to have a meeting with a lawyer to help the poor in this regard. "It never rains but rather pours for the poor." I tried to involve them in preparing the meals



because the people who have become engaged in the preparations get the sense that they are working for this meal.

My hope is that if I continue working in this apostolate I will be able to help many people to change their lives for the better with the help of God's grace. May God bless us.

- SM Gabriela Patrzyk (PR)

REFLECTION 3:

A close study of the apostolic ministry of each Polish Province would provide the most complete answer to this question. The Felicians in Poland, first and foremost, serve the poor, not only materially but also morally and spiritually. They do this in the spirit of the Gospel and the charism of their Blessed Foundress - Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska. It is clear that Felicians help everyone to whom they are sent to live and die with dignity.

If we look at the apostolates of the Province of Our Lady the Queen of Poland, we see that they focus primarily, though not exclusively, on children and the elderly. It is worth noting that, as in the times of their Foundress, these two groups are most at risk in our contemporary world and society. These are the ones who have experienced the various forms of poverty the most. The children entrusted to the care of the sisters have to deal not only with pathological situations resulting from the addiction to alcohol and drugs within the family, but material poverty caused by the unemployment of their parents as well.

They are also experiencing the increasingly more common phenomenon of being "social orphans" because of the breakdown in family life where parents are often overworked or not present to the children. Felician Sisters of the Warsaw Province face children's traumas on a daily basis. Sometimes, as early as in the kindergarten, children experience the tragedy of their parents being divorced or one or both parents leaving the country in search of an improved financial status or a career. In these cases the children are often

left in the care of their grandparents.

Due to the opening of Europe's internal borders and a large number leaving in search of work, the number of so-called "Euro-orphans" is increasing in Poland at a surprising rate. Children suffer emotional or psychological breakdowns that very often result in rebellion, aggression, disobedience and inflicting self-harm. Sometimes children even go into depression due to lack of self-esteem and dignity stemming from the painful experience of not belonging and a threatened sense of security.

Programs for Children

The Felician Sisters of Warsaw work in 50 public schools, 9 kindergartens, and in sponsored educational institutions which consist of 2 schools and 4 kindergartens. One of these kindergartens incorporates children of all levels of learning abilities in the classrooms and one is a sociotherapeutic center. Through these ministries the sisters provide for more than 10,000 children and young people. They offer them an intellectual development, a permanent system of values, and a Christian vision of the world. They help them to come to know the truth about God who infinitely loves and accepts every human being whose dignity exceeds the whole created world. Contrary to appearances, this is not at all an easy task taking into consideration modern dechristianized tendencies and the promotion of secondary paganism. Sisters who are catechists testify that thirty years ago only a few, perhaps 30 or 40 six year olds, would raise their hand when asked: "Who has not heard about God?" At present, we are dealing with an inversely proportional situation. In a country with over a thousand years of Catholic tradition, this is an alarming call for the new evangelization, to which Bl. John Paul II so strongly

called us. Restoring man to God is always connected with the promotion of his dignity, and the absence of God in his life is the greatest human misery.

In addition to the classroom curriculum the sisters try to harmoniously combine physical, mental and spiritual development through their involvement in pastoral programs. These programs which include: The Eucharistic Youth Movement, Biblical Circles, Rosary Circles, Mission Circles, Theatre Circles, Bielanki i.e. Marian Girl's Service, The Light-Life/Oasis Movement groups, and prayer-liturgical

groups reach a total of 1646 children and adolescents according to the provincial statistics of 31 December 2010. Such involvement protects young people against misusing their time or bonding with delinquent youth. It also helps them in shaping humane attitudes and making good human choices.

The Felician Sisters of the Warsaw Province also organize holiday trips, pilgrimages, and tours that are formative in nature and are oriented to specific topics. In winter and summer of last year, sisters organized 37 holiday camps for 790 children and 740 young people. In

order to avoid discrimination against children who, due to the inability to pay the fee, would not be able to participate in the "Winter in the City" or "Summer in the City" programs, sisters who are catechists earn money from various collections, festivals and grants, which they solicit from the local authorities. Sisters often find ways to provide adequate clothing and equipment for the children participating in the summer camps. The integrated kindergarten in Kalisz offers an educational environment where children of different developmental abilities are able to grow in



self worth and in respect for the dignity of each other, regardless of their individual abilities.

Socio-therapeutic Center



Another example is the Socioterapeutic Centre for children from dysfunctional families in Warsaw. The facility is fully oriented to offer service to the persons from a socially—and often morally—dysfunctional environment. The Center currently provides day care for 45 children from Monday to Friday. The children receive two meals, help with their homework, and the opportunity to participate in additional art, sports and computer classes. Children and their families are able to benefit from therapeutic services offered by a psychologist who is on staff there. The purpose for this institution, which also houses a soup kitchen for the poor and homeless, is to help those who come to restore their sense of self worth and to adapt their behaviors in order to return to society. What is very important is the religious formation of the children and adults. The sisters and priests who are invited to work with them prepare programs that include sacramental preparation, retreats, conferences, shared prayer, pilgrimages, individual interviews, etc.

Poor pensioners, homeless and alcoholics coming to the soup kitchen numbering from 50 to 100 a day in summer and in winter up to 200, can take a bath, receive clean clothes, food, help from the priest and an Alcoholics Anonymous group. Sisters accompany them with their presence and give counsel and support, as in the other ministries. Felicians deal not

only with the administration of their institutions, but also directly “touch” the poverty of people whom they serve, which in itself, raises their sense of dignity. As far as possible, sisters also try to help the people permanently improve their existence. They help the people to find housing or employment and send them to a psychologist, therapist, or lawyer when needed. A better understanding of the people and the impact their situations have on their development allows the sisters to take more effective and efficient action as well as to make the proper demands.

Care of the Aging

Another form of poverty is aging, loneliness, infirmity, or a sense of uselessness and rejection. This problem has existed forever, and today it continues as one of the greatest challenges of an aging European continent. In her times, Mother Angela tried to respond to those inevitable problems, in face of which wealth, knowledge, titles and offices do not matter. Felician Sisters of the Province of Our Lady the Queen of Poland also want to emulate their Foundress in this field. In the face of the cries of this world for euthanasia, the sisters strive to help the elderly and the sick to live with dignity until their natural death as designed by God and to



peacefully cross the threshold of eternity. A total of 278 chronically ill women are cared for by the sisters in four institutions. Eighty percent of these women are bedridden and, for the most part, cataleptic. The sisters provide these people with the necessary

treatment irrespective of their social status and free services are given to those people having financial difficulty. Nurses and support staff render simple nursing services.

Having a Felician Sister responsible for each department is a priority. As in all Felician institutions, the employed professional lay staff undergoes formation in the Mission of the Congregation and of the given institution. It is worth noting that this kind of work is not very popular therefore it is difficult to hire sufficient professional lay personnel. In the absence of lay people, the sisters need to increase their efforts to provide the patients with the needed services.

In addition to ensuring that the women have decent housing, nutrition and health, they are also provided with the necessary spiritual help, including accompanying them in prayer at their time of death. Moreover, mentally alert women participate in enriching organized meetings with children and youth and, wherever possible, therapy and manual classes that are provided. Particular attention is also devoted to respecting people of other denominations and people who have dementia.

Sisters have also played an important role with the families of the residents, who often have to learn how to accept and care for the infirm and aging person or prepare for the person's imminent death. They are ones who most need to be shown the meaning of suffering and perseverance to the end. Often, under the pretence of bringing relief, these families might be tempted to shorten the last stage of life for those whom they love. Human dignity must be preserved and respected from natural conception to natural death, though our measure is indeed not the measure of God, nor our time is his time.

Day Care Center for Elderly

Moreover, in the province there is also a co-educational Day Care Centre for the Elderly and Disabled where

35 people from deprived backgrounds are rendered assistance. The sisters organize transportation to the center, meals, various activities and opportunities for prayer. If need be, the sisters visit them in their homes to feed and bathe them, to perform certain nursing and hygienic services, to prepare medicines and to do some house cleaning. They try to do all this with great tact, so that as the sister director, who is personally involved in providing these simple ministry tasks, says—"the elderly person feels important and needed". The "fruit" of treating these people with love can be evidenced upon their return to the

Centre after a visit with their children who often do not have patience with them. Upon seeing a Felician Sister they joyfully exclaim, "How good that you came to take me, Sister, because I'm being mistreated at home; my son is in jail, my daughter is yelling at me. At sisters' house, it's like in heaven." The residents consider the Center a friendly harbor.



Russia and Kenya

A separate article could be written about Kenya and Russia, where Felician Sisters of the Warsaw Province minister. Financial support for the missions and the people whom sisters serve is provided for by the province and by benefactors who come to know about these missions through the promotion of the ministries and institutions. However, what is more important than providing material donations is teaching the local people the proper use of donations, as well as self-sustainability for the future. Therefore, one of the most common forms of building a sense of human dignity is to strengthen the faith and support education of the children and youth. This is done primarily through Polish families sponsoring the complete education currently given to about 70 children and through the catechesis given by our sisters to the children and adolescents.

Apostolate of prayer

Not everything can be expressed in numbers and percentages. Almost every Felician house in the province within the territories of Poland, Kenya and Russia has its own poor people in need of food, financial assistance, healthcare, comfort and prayer. The needs are great and there are never enough hearts and hands among the sisters to respond to these needs. The provincial house often receives mail with requests from prisoners. After verifying the authenticity of these requests, the requests are taken care. For many years now this has become an informal apostolate of mercy. There are also many phone calls and letters with requests for prayer or correspondence. These are answered especially by the elderly sisters from the infirmary and information regarding these requests is posted on the bulletin board. Among the requests are pleading for help in finding a job for the means to live, for paying off a debt, for the grace of healing, for the conversion of the relatives, for help with troubled marriages, for the gift of children, etc. In the case of urgent needs, the sisters respond with community novenas, night adorations, fasting and acts of penance. It sometimes happens that after offering such prayer a reply is received, with a report of the waking from a coma, the disappearance of symptoms of a sickness or the solution of a hopeless situation. One of the most moving cases in recent years is an incident involving Veronica, a two-year old, who went under the rear wheels of the car

while her father was backing out of the garage. The unconscious child was taken to the Children's Health Center in Międzylesie by her parents. Her desperate father then came to the sisters to beg for prayer. The whole community of the Motherhouse started a desperate appeal through the intercession of our Mother Foundress for a miracle that actually happened. To the amazement of the doctors, Veronica soon regained consciousness sustaining no injuries and was discharged from hospital. The parents came with her to the convent to thank the sisters for their prayers and announce that they will make a thanksgiving pilgrimage to Czestochowa.

It is not possible to mention all the ways that help is rendered to people by the Felician Sisters in Poland so that they can live with dignity despite various shortcomings. It should be noted that everywhere where the dignity of people is threatened, you can expect an appropriate response from the sisters. Taking only last year into account, sisters signed and sent personal and collective petitions and support to state authorities for amendments to the Family Act; to request the protection of human life from conception to natural death, protection of children from exposure to adoption by homosexual couples; and in opposition to the "in vitro" method of childbirth, and the planned privatization of forests from which poor people benefit at large. The sisters also expressed their opposition against the gay parade in Warsaw to the president of the city. All of these petitions, proposals and objections were supported with sisters' prayer and concrete acts of penance in accordance with the nature of our Congregation. In the spirit of atonement, the sisters joined in the national day of expiation for the gay parade that did take place in the capital city. Therefore, wherever Felician Sisters faithfully fulfill their vocation, according to God's law, the doctrine of the Church and our Felician charism, God is glorified and human dignity is promoted.

- SM Fidelia Janas (WA)

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and the absence of God in his life
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Striving for Justice

Sister Mary Christelle Sawicki joined the diocesan delegation with Bishop Edward U. Kmiec in attending the New York State Catholic Conference Public Policy Forum held in Albany, New York on Tuesday, March 8, 2011. The theme for the day was "Catholics at the Capitol." Participants attended workshops and prescheduled meetings with members of the New York State Senate and Assembly throughout the day. The issues included abortion and support for alternatives to abortion; support for comprehensive conscience protection for individuals and institutions, preserving Catholic schools, protecting the poor and those severely impacted by the economic downturn, maintaining healthcare infrastructure and health care coverage for low and moderate income individuals,

and opposing the redefinition of marriage. This event was truly an experience promoting Gospel Living in the third millennium.

On March 19, 2011 Sister Mary Lea Malak and Sister Mary Jeanine Heath attended a study day sponsored by the Franciscan Federation Region 3 in Frankfort, Illinois. The presenter for the day was Sister Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF who spoke on *The Franciscan Charism and Catholic Social Teachings: Foundation for Living Justly*. Sister Madge used the Franciscan sources as well as the Social Justice Encyclicals to demonstrate how human dignity was advocated throughout the years by the Catholic Church.

She encouraged participants to expand their hearts to accept all people and to reflect on what happens within as we encounter the other. Sister Madge defined an intellectual conversion: thinking differently, an affective conversion: dealing with feelings deep within, moral conversion: acting with conviction, socio-political conversion: public acting because of our faith and a religious conversion: responding to an encounter with God.

Sister Maryann Agnes Mueller participated in an interfaith discussion and prayer at the Paterson Islamic Mission in New Jersey on March 31, 2011. The topic of the discussion was Justice in the Roman Catholic and the Islamic traditions. Over 100 participants joined in common prayer prior to the presentations. The participants then broke for prayer in their respective faith traditions and returned for a question and answer period and dinner.

On April 9, 2011 Sister Mary Inez Moch and Sister Mary Jeanine Heath attended a study day entitled Ministry with Immigrants Day 2011: Seeking Justice With Immigrants at Maria High School in Chicago, Illinois. The event was sponsored by Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, a committee sponsored by the Chicago Archdiocese. The keynote



Painting: "Rescuer of the weak"

Author: Melissa Carter

(<http://melissacartercreations.com/gpage17.html>)

This painting depicts the Hand of the Rescuer (God) taking the hand of the orphan. The skin tones in the painting are a reflection of all ethnic groups. Also resembling different countries are the bracelets on the child's wrist.

One of the bracelets has charms that read Hope, Love, and Joy.

speakers were Joshua Hoyt from the Illinois Coalition for Immigrants and Refugees Rights and Reverend Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. from the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL. Topics discussed included: immigrant rights, church documents regarding immigration, and first person accounts by undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.

On May 12, 2011, Sister Maryann Agnes Mueller attended the Commission on Sustainable Development which was held at the United Nations in New York. Topics covered included the management and safe transport of nuclear materials, sustainable consumption and production, and the parameters needed for a green economy.

A Peace Forum, highlighting different aspects of peacemaking in different areas of the world, is held several times a



year by the Pittsburgh North People for Peace at Kearns Spirituality Center, McCandless, Pennsylvania. On May 15, 2011 Tina Whitehead, a volunteer for six years primarily with Sabeel, a Palestinian Christian Peace and Justice movement, shared slides and experiences of living and working in Jerusalem and the West Bank. She witnessed the deterioration of conditions for Palestinians in the area and raised awareness of their plight and of the continuing difficulties which they face. Sister M. Faith Balawejder attended the session.

Sister Clare Marie Berryhill and Sister Maryann Agnes Mueller participated in a workshop and lobby day sponsored by Churches for Middle East Peace

Palestinian children in the Ghaza Strip

Painting: "Our Unique Children"

Author: Mary Southard, CSJ

(<http://www.marysouthardart.org/>)

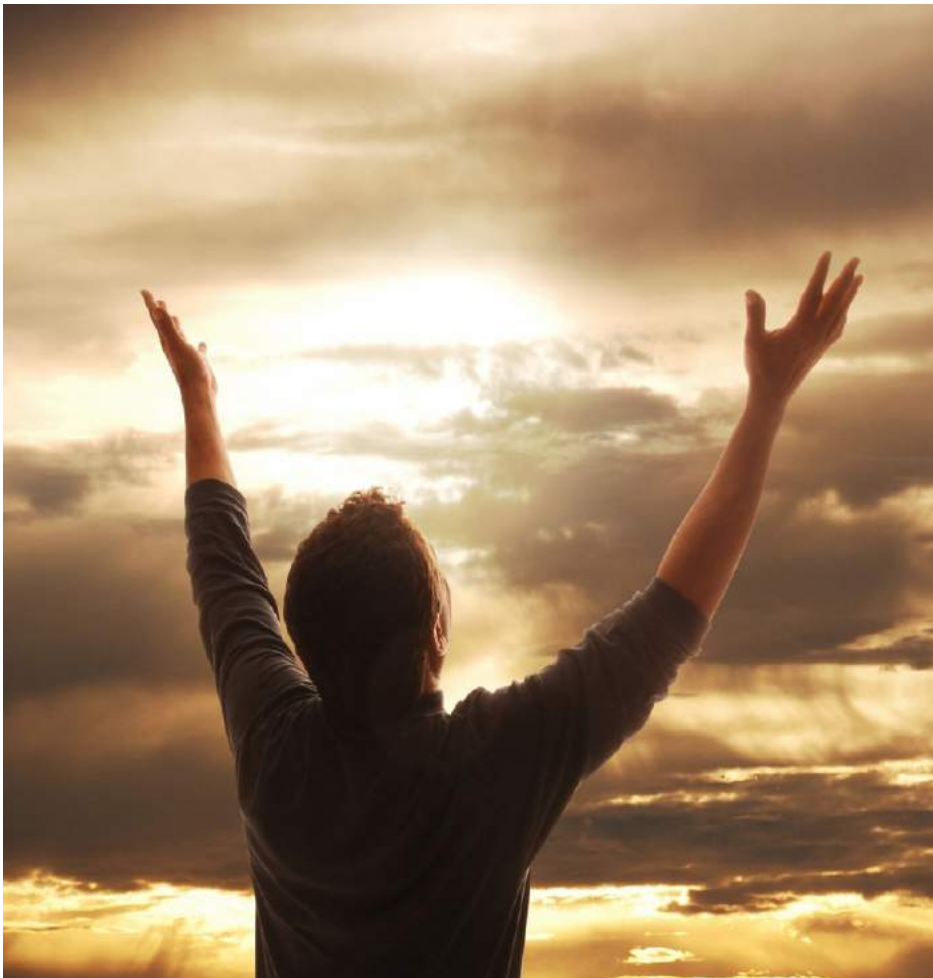
in Washington, D.C. May 23 and 24, 2011. Rev. Dr. Elias Chacour, Archbishop of the Greek Melkite Catholic Church in Nazareth and Galilee, the keynote speaker, presented workshops on the role of faith in reconciliation and on working for a shared future among the three major religious groups in the Middle East. Other presentations dealt with the recent change and reform in the Middle East, the Palestinian nonviolence movement, and the Israeli peace movement. The presentations served to prepare the participants to lobby their legislators on Tuesday, May 24.

On Sunday, May 29, 2011 under a brilliant sunny sky, a longtime dream of Brother Bill Carrothers CFC and Sister Jacqueline

Keefe CSSF came to fruition with the official opening and blessing of Jericho House in Wainfleet, Ontario, Canada. The building, set on a 17 acre site surrounded by forests and grasslands, is a magnificent new retreat and conference centre for youth leadership programs and workshops, youth and adult retreat days and overnights and for local community groups who wish to use the centre for meetings and prayer. It is an ecumenical, inter-faith centre in the Catholic tradition.

On June 1, Helene Paharik, director of the Department

of Human Dignity, Diocese of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania gathered together members of Parish Justice and Peace Committees in the diocese and those who were interested in creating one in their parishes. It was a preliminary meeting for people to get to know one another and to share some of the activities sponsored by the active groups. Jim Hanna, Pastoral Council Member, and Sister M. Faith Balawejder, Pastoral Associate, from St. Louise de Marillac Parish, attended in the hope of getting more involved with some active groups particularly in the South Hills areas.



MERCY

- Cyprian Kamil Norwid

*When tears flow,
they wipe it
with a handkerchief,*

*When blood flows,
they make haste
with sponges;*

*But when the spirit
seeps out
under oppression,*

*They don't come running
with an open hand,*

*'till God, with lightning
flash,
wipes it himself -*

- Not until then!...

9 Days and 9 Nights

S. M. Izajasza Rojek and several other Felician Sisters participated in a nine-day novena before the Heart of Pentecost held for the fourth time at the Capuchins Friar Minor Convent at Loratenska St. in Krakow. The novena was under the motto: "9 Days and 9 Nights of Prayer for the Church".

The vigil started at midnight of June 3rd in the Chapel of Loretto and continued until 9 p.m. Saturday, June 11th. The focus of this year was for the intentions of persecuted Christians throughout the world.

During 9 days and nights, there was continual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the entire New Testament was read. This year, the information on the situation of persecuted Christians was also read. See: <http://www.kapucyni.pl/index.php/info/4119-9-dni-i-nocy-modlitwy->

At the entrance door to the chapel, there is a display mounted with the information about Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian, and mother of 2 children, who on November 7th, 2010 was sentenced to death and charged with an alleged blasphemy against Mahomet. The display contains cards with the text of the letter which can be sent to her to give her as well as her loved ones spiritual support.

The novena was numerously attended and prayed by various groups of people; lay and consecrated men and women, young or old. All those who wanted to prepare themselves for the Heart of Pentecost and also those who are not indifferent to the fact that not every human being can freely, with no obstacle practice their faith, came to participate in the novena.

- SM Izajasza Rojek (PR)



JUSTICE & PEACE

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Abbreviations

Rome, Italy – RO
Kraków, Poland – KR
North America – NA
Przemyśl, Poland – PR
Warszawa, Poland – WA
Curitiba PR, Brazil – BR
Embu, Kenya – KE