

## The Franciscan Way of Sozology

In the last century, a rapid growth in technology and industry took place, causing a serious breach in the ecological balance throughout the world. Its negative effects are manifested in human life as well as in the entire created world. Due to the huge range of issues to be dealt with, different institutions and organizations on both regional and international levels have addressed this problem. This issue has also been addressed by research and public opinion poll centers around the world. The combined efforts of ecologists, geologists, geographers and representatives in the fields of science, technology, economics and humanities gave birth to an interdisciplinary branch of science known as sozology, sometimes considered as a part of applied ecology. It is defined as the study of the effects and consequences of the changes in the environment caused by the socio-economic activities of humankind and of the successful prevention and reduction of the negative consequences. Traces of ecological thinking can be found not only in all past epochs and cultures, but even in the present where its influence can be seen in almost every field of human activity. Its extraordinary popularity and huge range of influence inclines one to believe that ecology responds to the deepest human needs, including the search for the truth about the world and humankind's place in it. It should therefore be stressed that ecology does not belong to religious truths (non-empirical) but to the system of empirical findings.

*Fools! Did not he who made the outside  
make the inside too?*

Luke 11:40

The foundation of the ecological world view is the deep conviction that there is a mutual dependence between the condition of human life and the environment. Such dependency can be accepted by everyone on the basis of an elementary knowledge about the world. But the supporters of ecology present it in such a way that one can often get the impression that the perception of the world through the lens of ecology is religious in nature.



The following are a few statements in which ecology is unduly mixed up with religion:

- ◆ Thomas Berry from Fordham University in the United States claims that humankind's responsibility for the ecology "is the highest priority on both religious and spiritual levels."<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ The Global Forum held in Moscow in 1990, which brought together delegates from 83 countries, urged the establishment of the "world councils made up of spiritual leaders" and "the organization of a prayer meeting of people of different religions /.../ which could give a new, spiritual and ethical foundation for future human activities on Earth."<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ The "high priest" of the cult of the cosmos, Carl Sagan (Seattle, USA) proclaimed that "all the efforts to protect and nurture the environment should be based on sanctity."<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ During the Earth Summit, held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-

<sup>1</sup> N. I. B. HURY za Earth & Spirit: The Spiritual Dimension of the Environmental Crisis, International Conference brochure sponsored by Chinook Learning Center, Seattle, WA, Oct. 19-21, 1990, EKOLOGIA? ZA, A NAWET PRZECIW..., w: "Słowo i życie" NUMER 10-12 / 97.

<sup>2</sup> "Słowo i życie" NUMER 10-12 / 97; za: The Moscow Plan of Action of the Global Forum on Environment and Development for Human Survival, Jan. 1990 (final draft).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Ghali (Egypt) called on the world to return to the pagan worship of nature: "All over the world nature was a source of various deities: forest, desert, mountains gained personality. People started to worship them and gave them homage. The Earth has a soul. Our task is to find this soul again and breathe life into it. This is the purpose of our conference in Rio."<sup>4</sup>

The media provides us with a volume of data about air pollution and its devastating impact on human health and the state of the Earth; the water and land pollution which lead to the contamination of food; the noise which exceeds an acceptable level, etc. This threatening data is used by the so called "ecology of fear" to consistently

*Then I heard all the living things in creation—everything that lives in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, crying: To the One seated on the throne and to the Lamb, be all praise, honor, glory and power, for ever and ever.*

*Revelations 5:13*

vegetation world comes from a religious outlook on life. /.../ Mother Earth is a guarantor of the moral order and a directive for ethical standards and social behaviors.



call for the urgent reduction of environmental pollution lest there be an inevitable total destruction of humanity. Reading these threats from a religious perspective, apart from reason, the devastation of the environment could be compared to the profanation of the sacred. Such a reading is acceptable because of the effect the destruction of nature has on the average human person. In the Polish magazine "Ekoświat" we read: "Our prosperity depends on our activities on the planet. The Earth rewards good management but punishes us with disasters and loss of health for the destruction and lack of consideration."<sup>5</sup> In his research on the attitudes of African tribes towards the Earth, H. Zimoń comes to the conclusion that their compliance with the laws of nature is associated with their perception of the Earth and of humankind as a whole. He states: "Organic solidarity existing between the earth and the human, animal and

The Earth punishes people who violate the moral order, such as murderers, adulterers and criminals."<sup>6</sup> There are numerous examples of attributing the power to reward the appropriate behavior and to punish the offense towards the Earth. These examples could be found both on the ground of ecological thinking and in the framework of the pagan cults of Earth, Gaia, Tellus or Terra which essentially boil down to the belief that human life is dependent on the Earth.

In the face of so great a threat to the purity of faith, though marginal at first, this problem of the protection of the environment has begun to be addressed more often in the social teaching of the Catholic Church. It appeared in the documents of the Holy See, for the first time, in the Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (March 26, 1967). Since that time, it has continuously been a part of papal teaching. On June 1, 1972, the same Pope sent a

<sup>4</sup> "Świat i życie" NUMER 10-12 / 97, za: Ground Zero (C.T.Communications, Box 612, Gladstone, MB R0J0T0, Canada, Oct./Nov., 1996), 8.

<sup>5</sup> G. Lewińska, *Ludzkość przed trybunałem*, w: "Ekoświat", nr 11/2001, s. 8.

<sup>6</sup> H. Zimoń, *Sakralność ziemi u ludu Konkomba z Afryki Zachodniej*, s. 35.





letter to Maurice Strong, UN Secretary General, on the Protection of the Human Environment in which he clearly defines the position of the Catholic Church on this regard. The Pope wrote: “Today, there is an awareness of the fact that man and his environment are more inseparable than ever. The environment is a fundamental condition for life and for human development. He, in return, enhances and ennoble the environment by his presence, work and contemplation.” The Pope continues: “‘Everything God has created is good,’ writes St. Paul [(1 Tm 4:4)], dwelling on the words of Genesis regarding God’s love for all creation, for humankind’s dominion over creation does not mean destruction but improvement. It is not to change the world into an unbearable chaos but to make it a place of beauty, ordered in accordance with respect for all things. Thus no one can, in an absolute and egoistic way, appropriate the environment which is not *res nullius* – a property of the individual, but *res omnium* – a common property and heritage of all humankind. Its owners, both private and public, must act keeping in mind the common good. After all, humankind is the first and greatest wealth on the Earth.”

The source of the crisis in the exploitation of the environment lies in the arbitrary treatment of natural resources as only a reservoir of consuming goods. From the faith perspective, the environment is not only a surrounding on which we more or less biologically depend but it is a part of the mystery of creation, which we can use but also must respect. Human beings should respect the imminent purpose which God has placed in all things.

Contemporary environmentalists have constructed the allegation that the Judeo-Christian tradition is responsible for the ecological crisis because of the elevation of humankind over nature, which was initiated in the appeal from the Book of Genesis: “subdue the earth.”<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the magisterium of the Church emphasizes that the source of the ecological crisis is not merely in the control but in the misuse of the power which humankind possesses. The separation and opposition of humankind and nature does not have its roots in the Bible where humankind is indeed the most important but nevertheless one of many created beings and subordinated to God’s Will, but in the same contemporary ideologies which make humankind the center of creation.

True environmental protection has nothing to do with the activities aimed at the termination of humankind’s interference in nature or at preserving it in an intact condition, but with the harmonious coexistence and mutual development of humankind and the surrounding world. In other words, to treat the environment as a value which is threatened and protected. This is not a technological problem of new inventions that would limit the emission of poisonous dust and wastes, but primarily a new lifestyle which opposes excessive consumption and gives priority to solidarity between people and, consequently, a new attitude towards nature.

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*. . . nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*Romans 8:39*

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Environmental ethics or the philosophy of ecology teaches that humankind should be caring and friendly towards the environment, whereas ecological education indicates specific ways humankind should follow in order to protect nature. The ultimate goal of their actions is to stimulate humankind to love nature. The practical tips of environmental ethics, used also by the magisterium of the Church, are as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> Wisdom 1:27



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- ◆ Humankind is an integral part of nature and cannot be separated from nature nor from its laws.
- ◆ Using the forces of nature, humankind can control it but should do this in a safe way and only in the frame of its laws.
- ◆ If the world of nature is to be the basis of life for individuals and for society, its capacity for self-renewal must be maintained.
- ◆ In humankind's relations with nature, an attitude of violence and dominion should give way to an attitude of reconciliation, cooperation and custody.

The model of the new person who in his/her own life has realized this refreshing ideal of relationship with God and his creatures was St. Francis. For eight centuries the Church has put him as the model for the Christian interpretation of the Book of Nature, as the visible world has been called. He was not concerned with ecology or zoology, he did not examine the world in an empirical or theoretical way. He also did not become dependent on divine creatures but on God alone. His message could be simply summarized in two points:

- ◆ respect for creatures
- ◆ gratitude towards God

Among all the saints one could not easily find one who would be a greater master in blessing God, people and creatures than St. Francis. Blessing was his way of

expressing gratitude and praise to God. In God is the source of all that is good in the world. Therefore, it was logical to St. Francis that all the gratitude and praise for the beauty, wisdom and goodness of creation, including humankind, should be given to him. His enthusiasm goes beyond the boundaries of the "Canticle of the Creatures" which is merely a prerequisite and a pause in awe before the magnificence of creation and its Creator. St. Francis' religiosity is clearly Theocentric.

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*For the creation, being at the service  
of you, its Creator, grows tense  
to punish the wicked and loosens  
for the benefit of those who trust in you.*

*Wisdom 16:24*

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The consequence of gratitude for creation is respect for the Creator and for creation. Our Poverello loved creatures for God's sake. God loves what he has created so St. Francis wanted to love what God loves. Biographies of St. Francis are full of touching descriptions of his meetings with animals, his presence and prayer in the outdoors surrounded by the miracles of nature with which God rewarded his trust. From each one of them we can learn this particular respect for the world which, as in the case of St. Francis, will fill our souls with joy, blessing and trust, and not with the "ecology of fears".

– SM Mariana Michalik (WA)



# Child Abuse Awareness

*How do I, as a Felician Sister, help alleviate the suffering of abuse on children and women?*

A verse from our *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise Week 1: Psalm 25*: "Turn to me, and be gracious to me; for I am alone and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my suffering," resonated within me as I reflected in October, the month designated to bring to child abuse to our Felician awareness and prayer.

I felt called to gather some experiential responses to love as a Felician Franciscan sister when serving survivors of abuse. We, as Felician Sisters in Our Lady of Hope Province, have access to data on the statistics—one current number is that 3 children in the United States will die from reported child abuse and neglect each day of the year. We can use the internet search engines and government or agency sources for the logical analysis . . . yet, what is ours to do?

I have gathered five experiential reflections from Felician Sisters in Our Lady of Hope Province, including my own. Each sister simply shared from insights gleaned from within Felician ministry and life. Rather than summarizing from the individual reflections, I felt that the reader is capable of drawing out what he/she needs, and hopefully just reads with openness and connectedness. I am extremely grateful to the sisters able to respond at such short notice.

— S Angela M Ybarra (NA)

## REFLECTION 1:

In the spirit of the charism of our Blessed Angela, we as Felician Franciscan Sisters need to meet the needs of our time. In relation to the problem of abuse of children and women, I have one word—EDUCATION.

First, we as women dedicated to the service of God through his people must ourselves be educated so that we recognize the signs of abuse. The woman who too frequently "walks into a door" or the child that seems to always "fall off his/her bicycle."

Secondly, we as educators must provide those abused with the tools they need to handle the situation. We must also know the organizations which provide help in such situations.



Thirdly, we as educators must ourselves be vigilant that we do not become abusers....verbal or the silent treatment.

It is so easy to look the other way because we don't want to get involved. But we are involved. When these things happen on our watch, then we must act. In my own journey as a school counselor, I have been threatened with retaliation, lawsuits, physical harm, and reports to the archdiocese. It is supremely difficult to face an abusive parent who is in denial or the parent whose relative is sexually abusing their child. Nonetheless, the situation must be handled. As in most things, education is the key. Knowing the signs and responding to them.

— SM Angelee Kowalik (NA)

## REFLECTION 2:

The Felician Sisters have been ministering to the people of Mooncrest, especially the children ages 3 – 18, since 2002. The children in the neighborhood are victims of drugs, alcohol abuse, violence and neglect. Through the Mooncrest Children's Programs we only reach 45 of the 150 children living in the neighborhood. We meet with these children everyday of the school year and six weeks in the summer.

Living in the neighborhood makes it possible for us to be PRESENT to these children. We provide a safe place for them to be immediately after school and six weeks in the summer. Most of the children we work with have seen more than we will in a life time. They see drugs being delivered, they see violence as a conflict manager, they are victims of neglect. Many times they do not have a warm meal or warm clothes to wear.

The Felician Sisters ministering in Mooncrest serve as a PRESENCE to these children. In our presence we offer them love, security and role modeling, and a safe place



to be. Many fathers are incarcerated or not in the picture at all. Mothers are on drugs or having another baby to cash in on a welfare check.

The Felician Sisters offer: VISIBLE PRESENCE, LOVE, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND MOTHER ANGELA'S VALUES. WE ARE AVAILABLE TO THE CHILDREN AND THE ADULTS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. They know that we live just a few doors down from the Community Center . . . WE ARE THERE FOR THEM.

– SM Rene Procopio (NA)



### REFLECTION 3:

For me to ALLEVIATE any abuse calls for: 1. AWARENESS 2. EDUCATION 3. PRESENCE, PRESENCE, PRESENCE

Here is an experience I had during my current Felician ministry:

Margie has been coming to PVCC (Pomona Valley Christian Center) for breakfast everyday. Last week she came with a bruise and a cut on her forehead. I asked her what happened. She replied, "My boyfriend beat me up and this is NOT the first time that this happened. She continued, "The blood was ALL over my clothes, police took my clothes and brought me to Pomona Valley Hospital." Tears came down her beautiful face. I asked her, "What can I do for you?" She replied, "PRAY"— and so we prayed.

In inviting me to share my ideas of how I am called to help others as a person, as a Felician Sister, I thought of the following poem. In reflecting on this poem, we can help remember who we are—and what we as Felician

Sisters are called to do today. It is taken from Marianne Williamson's book, *A Return to Love*, p.165, popularized by Nelson Mandela's 1994 inaugural speech. For me, this says it all:

– SM Therese Ann Parobek (NA)

### Let Your Light Shine

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.*

*Our deepest fear is that we are  
powerful beyond measure.*

*It is our light, not our darkness,  
that most frightens us.*

*We ask ourselves,*

*Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,  
talented and fabulous?*

*Actually, who are you not to be?*

*You are a child of God.*

*Your playing small does not serve the world.*

*There is nothing enlightened about shrinking  
so that other people*

*won't feel insecure around you.*

*We are all meant to shine, as children do.*

*We were born to make manifest  
the glory of God that is within us.*

*It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.*

*And as we let our light shine,  
we unconsciously give other people*

*permission to do the same.*

*As we are liberated from our own fear,  
our PRESENCE automatically liberates others.*

*Let our LIGHT SHINE through our PRESENCE.*

#### REFLECTION 4:

The gospel of *St. Matthew 25:35* has been the guiding light that governs the St. Ann Outreach Center in Kingstree and the St. Philip Outreach Center in Lake City, SC.

... I was hungry and you gave me food  
 ... I was thirsty and you gave me drink  
 ... I was a stranger and you welcomed me  
 ... I was ill and you comforted me  
 ... I was in prison (in my home) and you came  
 to visit me

This scenario is played out daily. The Catholic Center is a haven for all those in need. I have never felt more like a daughter of Blessed Mary Angela than I do ministering in South Carolina. The children who come to the after school program don't know they are poor, but they know they are loved and they love the sisters in return.

Each month the Blessed Mary Angela meal brings nearly 100 people together for a warm dinner. More than that, it brings them together in friendship. It provides me with an opportunity to sit with the poor, hear their stories, offer encouragement, meet a stranger, smile and just be present to them. The heartfelt gratitude expressed by young and old alike is more than enough to give me great satisfaction knowing I have offered a bit of love.

It is always a sale day at the clothing closet. That's where affordable clothing can be purchased at \$2.00 a bag. It's not Macy's, but women and men alike feel like it is Park Avenue. What a warm feeling when someone finds a "treasure."

I love my ministry. Most of all I love those to whom I minister. They fill me with awe and love of God.

— SM Adrian Jumbelic (NA)

#### REFLECTION 5:

By the blessing of my Felician community, my current ministry as a licensed social worker trained in attachment approach with the Attachment Healing Center allows me the honor of working with children and adolescents in the Bernalillo, Valencia and Tarrant counties of New Mexico. The ministry provides relationship-centered therapeutic treatment to children, adolescents, and

their parents or caretakers, and helps emotionally distressed youth connect and learn to trust and heal after experiencing abuse and trauma. Most of the abuse these children and adolescents experienced began from their own primary caretakers, and now they struggle to allow anyone close, relationally—especially adults or caring authority figures. These children have learned to behave with coming close defensively and then going away—so as not to get hurt. Generally, the persons most targeted with their defenses are the adults most caring and kind—at first. When ministering, I consider their blatant verbal and nonverbal acts of defiance (hygiene issues, profanity, lying, spitting, self-injuring themselves or others, etc.) as fearful defenses to survive. And when we, as persons, are truly welcomed and feel "safe" with another to speak our own truth, we let our defenses down . . . and learn to trust again.

As a Felician Sister, I have grown to understand more clearly what I, personally, have heard and experienced throughout my Felician life: it is the caring presence of another that truly brings healing. I believe this is our call as Felician Sisters wherever we are missioned within the extended Body of Christ in today's world. Regardless of our professional training, we have such a richness of our deep vowed prayer life, of our Felician Franciscan heritage of being "sister to all". I feel these two essentials are required from us within community and within ministry--in truly "listening with the heart" to another authentically.

This "listening with the heart" is a very difficult calling—since it requires my on-going daily conversion and hard, deep work of truthfully being open and recognizing areas needing healing and growth inside of me, and connecting my own findings as a humble epiphany. When my own defensiveness arises inside me, I find it is usually connected with feeling threatened or fearful, many times connected with past or perceived experiences, and here is another opportunity for me to let Christ's healing light in so that I may love God with my whole heart, with my whole soul and mind, and with my strength (cf. Mk 12:30) and love my neighbor as myself (cf. Mt 22:39). This is following in the footprints of Christ to me. I believe that when we center ourselves in God, we, as Felician Sisters, will know what we are to do when faced with healing abused survivors today.

— S Angela Marie Ybarra (NA)



# Go out into the whole world; proclaim the Good News... *Mark 16:15*



This summer was busy for us Felician Sisters, in the field of evangelization and mission work. It is time to give thanks to our gracious and good God for sending us, little and weak creatures, to the ends of the earth to share in the mission of his son Jesus Christ and to cooperate with him in the spiritual renewal of the world. The sisters went without a special backup, long preparations and detailed plans, without calculation and care for their own comfort, sharing with generosity what the Congregation has: hands ready to work and hearts ready to proclaim God's love.

For the moment imagine a map of the world and see the Ukraine, Israel, Haiti, Northwest Territories of Canada, Kamchatka, Russia, the United States and Poland. The seeds of hope were sown by our sisters in all those places this summer.

"The ends of the earth" looked differently for each group of Felicians. One element was the same: spiritual and material poverty of people to whom the sisters went. All of those places are in need of material help but even more so of a spiritual renewal – evangelization. Most are places where the Word was proclaimed in the past, but for many reasons the seed of the Word was not able to rise. That seed fell on rocky ground, or weedy ground, or arid land, unable to grow. The seed of the Word needs to be sown again. Sometimes good news needs to be carried to those about whom no one wants to remember because they are too far, the journey is too dangerous and there are no basic comforts assured. Felician Sisters from the very beginning know that *they may not refuse any help or service asked of them in God's name...especially those refused by others, the Sisters trusted God and in everything relied upon His help, confident that He would assist them* (Memoirs, p.42).

Twelve sisters of Our Lady of Hope Province; SM Angela Machowski, S Maryann Agnes Mueller, S MaryAnne Olekszyk, SM Lea Malak, SM Andréa Chudzik, SM Michael Gurgone, SM Timothy Ruzsala, SM Johnice Rzedkiewicz, SM Lucette Kinecki, S Marilyn Minter, S Rose Marie Kujawa and S Judith Ann Marie Pike were given the grace to minister to the poorest of the poor of our times in Haiti. Aware of differences in climate, culture and language, not sure about the conditions of their accommodations or having access to clean water, the sisters went to serve as they could. Through their service and advocacy, the lives of at least some people were changed for the better. People in Haiti lost not only their infrastructure and the roof over their heads, but also people dear to their hearts. Some left alone in this tragic situation lost faith or started to seek God just recently in order to understand the meaning of their





sufferings. Most importantly, their prayer and loving presence brought hope to many, many more people. Sisters still dream of tent cities, camps for deaf people forgotten by their own, or even about rats making noise at night in the pile of garbage close by their place of repose. Difficult memories will pass but what will remain with the sisters is the personal change of heart that this



experience brought. Meeting with such great poverty, inexpressible in words, cannot stay without response; it creates in a person's heart a response of thanksgiving for all one has. It makes it impossible to keep all the goods only for yourself without sharing them. It moves a heart to spontaneous prayer for those who suffer or even desire to go and serve them. The decision to send the sisters to Haiti and the sisters' decision to respond to the call was surely a sign of the Spirit working in people. This grace could happen only in the hearts that overflow with love for suffering brothers and sisters. The words of *Response to Love* resound in our ears: "Open to the Holy Spirit and faithful to the Gospel, we are adaptable and available to respond to the changing needs of the Church and the world. While accepting the challenges of new ministries and new ways of sharing with the family of God, we give priority to the cause of the poor and oppressed" (RTL Book I, p.14). At this moment in the history of our Congregation, poverty and oppression had the face of the people in Haiti.

SM Jeanine Morozowich and S Clare Marie Klein taught English language to students of the Ukraine. English classes give a chance for those people to get better jobs. The culture of this post communistic country is different. Languages spoken there, Ukrainian and Russian, sounded strange in the sisters' ears. Living conditions were much simpler than the sisters could remember from hearing of past times in novitiate and even the way of prayer—beautiful but so different—

demanded that they have a very open heart and mind. Sisters carried in their hearts the words of the one who sent them: "Do not keep moving from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Lk 10:1-12). Are bad living conditions going to stop us? Who will go, if we do not? God took care that the fruits of this mission were abundant. Sisters left many young people and college teachers enriched; not only by knowledge of the English language, but also by their spirituality and great Felician Franciscan joy. Sisters did not receive honor distinctions and did not earn money; just the opposite – they had expenses. However, "do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Lk 10:17-20).



Love for the Congregation, its spirit, mission and its members deepened in the sisters who had the advantage to participate in the mission experience in Kenya this summer. SM Danuta Zmuda (KR), SM Jana Bochenek (PR), SM Anuncjata Piętka (WA), SM Lorianne Tylczynski, S Maryann Agnes Mueller and S Margaret M Padilla (OLH) with SM Inga Borko (RO) coordinating the experience, were privileged to share lives with the sisters of the Embu formation house and the local convents. Simple jobs, such as working on maize and beans for dinner together with the Kenyan sisters, gave the sister visitors a great opportunity to get to know native Kenyan sisters, their culture, and even a little bit of their language. Sister visitors also shared the lives of Felicians of North America and Poland. All of these gave us opportunity to experience international community of our Congregation in the dimension to which *Response to Love* calls us: "Though diverse in our personalities, we strive to create a oneness in truth and

charity and become to the People of God a visible sign of the Trinitarian community of Love" (RTL Book I, p.63).



Every place the sisters visited was blessed by meeting native people, interacting with them, entering into their homes, participating in the wakes and funerals and listening to their stories. A week dedicated fully to ministry was spent in Ruiru. Visiting people and sharing with them what the sisters had brought (flip flops, t-shirts, toys, and most of all bread and milk), called the people to do the same for the sisters. Sisters were gifted with chickens, beans and other vegetables and fruits. Unforgettable impressions were left in the sisters who visited the slums of Nairobi where they were able to enter, thanks to the Community of John XXIII; whose members live, minister and evangelize among the people of the slums, and who made an incredible difference in the lives of those people. We also strove to have our input in the transformation of the Kenyan world. Thanks to the generosity of parishes and institutions from which the sisters came, seven children will have assured education in elementary school, two girls will be able to continue their high school education, and one boy and one girl will be able to finish their job preparation. The service that allows others to grow filled sisters with joy for a long time and gave strength to undertake new challenges. Thanks to this visit, appreciation and love for the Congregation as a whole grew, not only in the sisters who visited Kenya but also those who welcomed them. The sisters also experienced how important unity of sisters is, regardless of language, local differences and distance that separates us. The sisters experienced how "our unity is strengthened by singleness of purpose, common spirit, shared tradition, and our communion rooted in the love

of Christ. In these we find support needed for growth of divine life within us and for development of our natural gifts to realize God's plan for us" (RTL, Book I, p.63).

The blessing to minister in the land that was walked by Jesus Christ was given to two sisters from Warsaw/Rome — SM Eliana Remiszewska and SM Agnieszka Mruga. The sisters ministered to the refugees from Sudan who came by foot to Eilat, Israel trying to escape death in their own country. It is difficult to imagine how large the wounds that those people carry are. Almost all of them witnessed tragic death of their family members and friends murdered in a cruel way. Many of these deaths occurred in the desert on the way to Israel. Others were murdered because of the name of Jesus. Israel became the Promised Land for people who ran from Africa through the Red Sea to Israel. But this land is not "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8) for them. Sudanese people are not wanted there; even though they are a cheap labor force and their needs are not cared for. They are left without their own home, without country, without work or means of life. Without knowledge of any of the languages



used in Israel they suffer poverty and isolation. Sisters taught them the English language — the formal language of South Sudan — the country to which they hope to return.

Sisters lived among the people in the poorest part of the kibbutz, now serving as a camp for Sudanese, in the barracks, sharing their only room with a little mouse. Their little friend was not interested in looking for another apartment, so the sisters had to accept this presence as God's gift for that time. Sisters had a Muslim family for their closest neighbor. Unsearchable are God's ways! God puts together people of different religion, cultures, languages; customs where they would never go by themselves. God has no favorites. "There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). God is not the god of war, exile or separation but of peace and unity.

What was common to all those experiences, regardless of the place where the sisters were, is that the sisters were able to bring hope to suffering people who felt forgotten by God. "Our Christian charity reaches beyond



our religious community to the whole human family as we accept all people in the spirit of St. Francis" (RTL Book I, p.64). The words that the sisters heard in Eilat for their farewell: "Thank you sisters for coming to us from so far, you are a sign for us that God did not leave us and that the Church cares for us," express similar feelings and words that were whispered in Kenya, the Ukraine, Haiti, and other places.



During the summer months many other Felician Sisters from all the provinces were engaged in various valuable and much-needed evangelization activities among the children, youth and adults.

SM Aurelia Kazaryn (WA) took part in a very interesting evangelization experience in Poland by the shore of the Baltic Sea. During the experience she and a group of young people were challenged to live totally out of God's providence without money, preordered accommodations or meals. Those days brought them a very strong conviction that God takes care of those who put their trust in him. Fruits of their ministry were great: many conversions, returns to the Church and acts of forgiveness. You can read more about this activity on our Congregational website.

Summer was busy for SM Donata Gurak (KR) and SM Jana Bochenek (PR) who were getting ready to leave for Kamchatka in the early fall. We can read about their lives and ministry on our Congregational website. This is another channel by which God's grace can flow to the ends of the earth.

SM Thaddea Meyers (NA) and SM Lea Malak (NA) ministered this summer to children in the summer camp of Tulita, Northwest Territories, Canada. Sisters also witnessed the support by the Felician community to our SM Celeste Goulet (NA) who has worked there for many years already by herself.

SM Angela Machowski, SM Timothy Ruszala, SM Patricia Kennedy, S Dianne Marie Durak, SM Alice Buczko, S Anita Marie Louise Taddonio, SM Monica Anne Blazuk, S Beatrice Marie Plamondon, SM Mark Derbas, SM Jo Ellen Tyranowski, S Kathryn Mary Elliott, SM Jeanette Skornia and S Michelle Marie Stachowicz (all NA) assisted with the ministry of evangelization in Kingstree, South Carolina. They participated in various programs prepared by two communities of Felician sisters already ministering there.

Starting with *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI on Evangelization in the Modern World, and continuing through Pope John Paul II's constant call to *New Evangelization*, listening to the present Pope Benedict XVI calling religious to make *in creative fidelity the challenge of the new evangelization your own* and announcing "*New Evangelization*" the theme of the next Synod of Bishops and following our *Felician Mission* to cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world, we Felicians desire to be where the heart of the Church is pulsing and to share unconditional love of God with all, especially the poorest – those whose hearts are still in darkness because the message of the Gospel was not proclaimed to them.



Thank you, sisters, for responding to the call of spiritual renewal of the world. Thank you, also, to the sisters at home who supported these outreach ministries by prayer, word, and material needs. This good work would not happen without your assistance.

The sisters who would like to share their summer experiences with the Congregation which were not mentioned here are asked to do so by sending their stories to [sminga@feliciansisters.org](mailto:sminga@feliciansisters.org)

– SM Inga Borko (WA/RO)



# “All the Earth Proclaim the Lord”



Elena Segura, Director of the Office for Immigrant Affairs for Chicago, addressed the group, presenting startling facts about the current status of immigration in the U.S. and the concerted effort of our Catholic Bishops to educate and advocate for justice for immigrants and refugees. Elena's passionate challenge that our faith calls us to work for immigration reform and what our presence as Eucharist demands stirred hearts. All were deeply moved by her presentation.

Each member presented an overview of her province or local area's activities over the past two years and members attested that these presentations provided new ideas to implement in their respective area.

Four special presentations were made on the recent evangelization and immersion experiences. S MaryAnne Olekszyk reported on the ten sisters who journeyed to Haiti in June and July and some recommendations they hope to bring to the North American Provincial Chapter to consider for on-going presence there. S Maryann Agnes Mueller used PowerPoint to relay the experience of the seven sisters who visited Kenya and learned of Felician ministries there. Eliat, Israel was the destination of SM Agnieszka Mruga and SM Eliana Remiszewska to work teaching refugee children. Sister Agnieszka, in her presentation, described the experience as unforgettable. SM Eliana gave the report on the

“All the Earth Proclaim the Lord” was the theme of the Congregational Justice and Peace Committee which met October 13-15 in Chicago, Illinois.

Attending the meeting were: Sisters M Alice Nasimiyu Sirengo, Kenya; M Cynthia Ann Machlik, Michigan; Dorothy Ann Mary Moczygomba, New Mexico; M Faith Balawejder, Pennsylvania; M Inga Borko, Rome-Coordinator; M Izajasha Rojek, Przemyśl; M Jeanine Heath, Illinois; MaryAnne Olekszyk, Pennsylvania-Our Lady of Hope Province Liaison; M Mariana Michalik, Warszawa; Maryann Agnes Mueller, New Jersey-Our Lady of Hope Justice & Peace Coordinator; M Melchiora Kłossek, Kraków; Nancy Marie Jamroz, Pennsylvania, CJPO Chairperson; M Gerard Fredrick, New York-Webmaster; serving as translators were Sisters M Agnieszka Mruga, Rome and M Eliana Remiszewska, Rome; serving as secretary was SM Therese Szczepczynski,

Pennsylvania. Not able to attend the meeting were: Sisters M Jacqueline Keefe, Canada; Maria Lázara do Carmo, Brazil and Rosemarie Goins, Texas.

SM Inga Borko convened this second meeting of the group. In the Plan of Action approved at the General Chapter of 2006, the Committee was to meet twice before the next Chapter. In her welcome remarks she reminded the sisters that working for justice and peace is an essential part of Gospel living.

The meeting began each day with a prayer service calling the group to be conscious of our Felician global presence. The theme incorporated the threefold emphasis of committee focus: promoting a culture of life, working for human dignity (especially for immigrants, refugees, women and children) and advocating for care for creation.

Part of the meeting agenda was dedicated to special presentations:



Ukraine which was prepared by Sisters M Jeanine Morozowich and Clare Marie Klein who taught in a summer english camp there during the month of August.

Two simulations made all present more conscious of the injustice in land acquisition and the way we are over-consuming earth's resources. S MaryAnne Olekszyk guided the group in "Turtle Island," illustrating the injustice of taking land from the Canadian native people. S Maryann Agnes led the group in calculating their ecological footprint. Both exercises helped the sisters gain insight into current justice concerns. On the last day of the meeting, the attendees joined about 30 other people at a detention center in the city to pray the Rosary for the illegal immigrants who were being deported that day. This was a wrenching experience for those who gathered there.

The meeting ended with a prayer service in which all the sisters

planted a seed, verbalizing her wish or prayer for how the world will be made better by incorporating decisions and learnings from the meeting.

– S Nancy Marie Jamroz (NA)

The impact of the meeting was summarized by several sisters:

The days were replete with so much information and sharing . . . I truly enjoyed the time and look forward to our next gathering."

– SM Cynthia Ann Machlik (NA)

"The international experience was very beneficial and may lead to more interaction . . . We have been challenged by our Felician Franciscan saints and blessed . . . if not now, when? . . . If not us, who . . . ?"

– SM Gerard Fredrick (NA)

"I think the meeting was a priceless experience of mutual learning and sharing. I'm grateful for information which was shared."

– SM Agnieszka Mruga (WA/RO)

"It was important for me to meet other coordinators face to face so that when we have our conference calls we can understand each other better. It was a blessing for me to know what other sisters are doing so that I could improve my own, and encourage sisters to participate. I learned that it was not about funds, but our time and commitment in service and prayer. I can now speak convinced of what justice and peace is all about. Best wishes from Kenya."

– SM Alice Nasimiyu Sirengo (KE)



# Haiti Still Hurting After Earthquake

In September, nine months after the January 12th earthquake which destroyed much of the capital of Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas, the Haitian government confirmed that the tragedy claimed the lives of 230,000 people with 300,000 people injured, 2 million displaced, and another 3 million affected. Today, more than a million Haitians still live on the streets between piles of rubble, and it is estimated that just 2 percent of the rubble has been cleared. According to Catholic Relief Services, 13,000 temporary shelters have been built, less than 10 percent of the number planned.

In September an isolated storm destroyed an estimated 8,000 tents and shacks in Port-au-Prince and six people, including two children, were killed. Landowners threaten entire camps with forced eviction. To make matters worse, some seismologists are worried that Haiti may experience an even more devastating earthquake in the future.

An earthquake of 7.0 magnitude would cause damage anywhere in the world; however, in Haiti, the devastation was magnified due to poverty. Eighty percent of Haitians lived below the poverty level prior to the earthquake with 54 percent living on less than \$1.00 a day. Poverty also contributed to the poor buildings and infrastructure which collapsed during the earthquake, as well as inadequate medical facilities. Lack of basic equipment and reliable roads also made it more difficult for Haitians to recover survivors from the rubble.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest countries in the world. Why is Haiti so poor? Although Haiti



is geographically situated in an area prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes, a study of its history shows that its poverty appears rooted in greed of both Haitian leaders and the international community.

In the 18th century, while under French rule, Haiti was considered one of the richest colonies in the world. Haiti gained independence from France in 1804. In 1825, France incurred the first debt on Haiti by demanding a compensation of today's equivalent of 21 billion dollars in exchange for French recognition of Haiti as a sovereign republic. France had warships ready to back up this demand. In modern times, between 1964 and 1986, Haiti was ruled by the Duvalier family. Corruption and oppression reigned and international business development stayed away from

Haiti as a result. A large number of educated Haitians left the country to escape oppression. Loans incurred during the Duvalier rule account for approximately 40% of Haiti's debt. Although many of the donor countries and institutions were aware of the misappropriation of funds by the Duvalier family, it was tolerated so long as the rulers were against communism. These debts were since canceled under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Program.

After the Duvaliers lost power in 1986, Haiti was ruled by a provisional military government. In 1987, a new constitution was ratified which provided for a democratic election of a president. However, on election day in 1987 violence erupted and the elections were cancelled. In the words of former United States President Jimmy Carter, "Citizens who lined up to vote were mowed



down by fusillades of terrorists' bullets. Military leaders, who had either orchestrated or condoned the murders, moved in to cancel the election and retain control of the Government." In 1988, Leslie Manigat was elected president, but three months later he was ousted by the military. Military rule and violence ensued. The Haitian National Intelligence Service, which was both created and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency in the United States, was widely involved in political violence and drug trafficking. On September 11, 1988, while celebrating liturgy, parishioners at the St. Jean Bosco Church in Port-au-Prince were massacred during a three hour attack and the burning down of the church. Up to 50 parishioners were killed and 80 others injured. Two years later, in December 1990, the pastor of the church, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Salesian priest, was elected as president of Haiti by 67% of the vote in an election that international observers judged as a free and fair election.

In September 1991, Aristide was overthrown by the military which again gained power. Again, thousands of Haitians were killed during military rule. Over 40,000 attempted to flee to the United States by boat to escape the violence in their country, but most were denied entry and sent back. Soon after this, the Central Intelligence Agency stopped funding the Haitian National Intelligence Service, and in 1993 the past relationship between the two agencies was made public. The following October, Aristide was allowed to return to the presidency to serve the remainder of his term. In June 1995, Rene Preval, at that time an ally of Aristide, was elected President with 88% of the vote. In January 1999, Preval dismissed the legislative bodies and began to rule by decree. In 2000, Aristide was again elected President by 90% of the vote. In 2004, Aristide was again forced to leave office—it is unclear whether he resigned or, as he claims, was forced out



by the United States. Charges of embezzlement and corruption against him were never proven and soon the charges were dropped. Rene Preval was again elected president in 2006; his term expires this year.

Trade policy between the international community and Haiti has often hurt the Haitian farmers. The United States disposes of surplus crops of rice, sugar, and poultry by giving them to Haiti in the form of food aid, which undercuts the Haitian farmers. Out of the 10 million people who live in Haiti more than 4 million rely on international food aid daily. Programs need to be designed to help the Haitian people be more self sustainable, especially with regard to food. Since the earthquake, former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, has admitted that legislation he supported during his presidency to increase the import of rice into Haiti decimated that country's own rice production.

In February, shortly after the earthquake, the G7 countries, which include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, canceled Haiti's debts so that the money could be used for rebuilding.

One concern in the past few month is that Monsanto, a United States based company, donated almost 500 tons of hybrid corn and vegetable seeds to Haiti. Haitian peasant farmers have protested, due to their beliefs that the seeds are sprayed with fungicides that may be dangerous to farm workers and that the seeds will not grow well after the first year, thereby leading to a dependency on the company for more seeds in future years. The Monsanto website acknowledges these fears, however states, that the seeds are safe.

Another factor contributing to the poverty in Haiti today, and unfortunately for years to come, is the environmental devastation and soil erosion due to deforestation. For the past 200 years, the people have cut trees for fuel without replanting. Each rainy season, which lasts four or five months, leads to brown rivers of soil which come down the mountains and flow into the Caribbean Sea. Deforestation has also significantly contributed to the floods following some of the hurricanes that have recently hit Haiti. Aerial maps of the island clearly show the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Haiti appears brown but the Dominican Republic, where the cutting down of the forests has been outlawed, appears green.

## Haiti (cont.)

Lands that do produce crops for export are owned by the elite of Haiti. The money for these crops is also not spent in Haiti but in Europe and the United States. Moreover, farmers who work on these lands are paid lower salaries (less than \$1.00 a day) than in other industries in Haiti.

Prior to the earthquake, access to potable water was limited to the rich in Port-au-Prince. Eighty percent of all disease in Haiti is considered to be from unsanitary water. Only the wealthy have sewage systems. The Felician Sisters who ministered in Haiti after the earthquake reported people going into the rubble to relieve themselves and streams of water and sewage in the middle of the roads after a rainstorm. However, Catholic Relief Services reports that the access to potable water has actually increased since the earthquake!

According to Catholic Relief Services, aid agencies in Haiti are transitioning from emergency relief efforts to a long term recovery phase, which may last as long as 5 -8 years. The Catholic Church continues to be one of the prime social service providers.

Haitian human rights advocate Pierre Esperance echoes what several of our Felician Sisters stated regarding the recovery process: "The Haitian people need to be involved in the process." Another important element in the recovery process is the Haitian diaspora, many of whom are educated Haitians who fled the oppression of their country during military rule. As Sister Mary Andréa Chudzik noted upon returning from Haiti in June, "I believe and am praying for strong, competent leadership from among the Haitian people. Many Haitians have been educated but then leave Haiti. Something must be done to encourage young people to stay and help rebuild Haiti."

— S Maryann Agnes Mueller



## JUSTICE & PEACE

Published by the Congregational Central Office for Justice and Peace, and the Provincial and Regional Coordinators:

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Editor: S Maryann Agnes Mueller (NA)  
Publication Design: SM Francis Lewandowski (NA)

Publication Office:  
Felician Sisters of North America  
Office of Communications Technology  
36800 Schoolcraft Road  
Livonia, Michigan 48150 USA

[www.FelicianSisters.org](http://www.FelicianSisters.org)

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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