



OPFAM

Dominican Family Matters

A Newsletter for the Dominican Family in Australia, New Zealand, Solomons and Papua New Guinea

Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel!

Motto for the years leading up to 800th celebration in 2016; 2010 – “The Mission of Preaching”

26th July 2010

8th DOMINICAN ASIA PACIFIC JUSTICE, PEACE & CARE OF CREATION CONFERENCE Sawangan, West Java, Indonesia. 4-9 July, 2010.

The passing of yet another milestone in the journey of promoting Dominican solidarity in mission in our region was celebrated in early July. This was the very successful 8th Regional Justice, Peace and Care of Creation (JPCC) Conference held at a retreat centre at Sawangan, a picturesque rural setting about two hours by car from Jakarta. The Conference theme, following the trafficking theme of the 2006 Taiwan Conference, was:

*“Human Labour is a gift; Unjust Labour is a scourge.
Suffering Labourers, the Human face of the Suffering God.”*

Over fifty participants represented 10 countries: 31 Sisters, 9 members of the Dominican Laity, and 9 Friars, with a few people coming and going. We regretted that no representatives from India, Pakistan, Iraq, Taiwan, Solomon Islands and New Zealand could be present, and intending Sri Lankans were blocked by Visa problems. Australians included Sr Mary Ryan op (WA), Sr Rose Mary Kinne op, Margaret O’Shea, Anne and John Gibbins (Eastern Australia), Fr Luke Rawlings op, and Sr Gabrielle Kelly op (SA).

On Sunday evening, 4 July, the Indonesians welcomed us with a heart-warming cultural and liturgical ceremony. The Bishop of Bandung presided at the Eucharist, the children of the Boncel orphanage (conducted by the Sisters), in traditional Javanese garb, delighted us with dance and song, organisers and speakers were presented with a special Indonesian blessing scarf, and a banquet was enjoyed by all.

On Monday morning, 5 July, the International Co-Promoters, Fr Carlos Rodriguez Linera op and Sr Toni Harris op spoke, respectively, on the biblical foundations of work as a gift and a blessing, and on Catholic Social Teaching, with brief accounts of notable Dominicans in the field. Zone Reports were presented. For Pacific Zone D, Fr Andrei Kurniawan spoke to the Indonesian Report; Sr Wendy Mea spoke about Timor Leste; Sr Rose Mary Kinne delivered the Solomon Island Report, and Sr Mary Ryan (in a Kiwi-Australian community) spoke to both the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Reports – in the absence of any New Zealanders.

In the afternoon, the theology of suffering was expertly addressed by Sr Kathleen McManus op, Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Portland, Oregon, in the United States. Kathleen’s earlier doctoral studies had focussed on the work of Edward Schillebeeckx, whose theology is intimately bound up with the experience of suffering in our world. Both that background, and Kathleen’s ongoing research into the experience of women’s suffering within the institutional church, equipped her well to address women’s experience of negative contrast in, a) the global suffering of women in poverty, and b) the spiritual suffering of women in the church - in the light of Schillebeeckx’s phenomenological method. [The text of Kathleen’s sessions will not be available until a little later, since the material was drawn from articles soon to be published.]

On Tuesday 6 July, the day of ‘exposure’, participants in 5 groups visited different centres: two Muslim boarding schools (*pesantren*) in the vicinity of Jakarta; factory workers; residents at a Women’s Crisis Centre, and a government Social Department.

Margaret O'Shea and Gabrielle Kelly were in the group that visited a *pesantren* – 700 boarding students from ages c.12-30. Their group 'spoke' with about 20 of them – young men and young women - and 3 male leaders. The young women (secondary age and post-secondary) were completely garbed in black. Their leaders were most pleased that Christians had come to visit, hosted us to a delicious midday meal, and afterwards, opened the proceedings to questions and comments.

Anne and John Gibbins also visited another *pesantren*. The Director was hosting a conference of young people working in social service as an inter-faith community. The Director was most anxious to assure us that Islam is promoting peace and tolerance. They served us a delicious lunch after which the Local Government Congressman invited all to his office for more refreshment.

Sr Rose Mary and Fr Luke visited the Social Department Centre of the Indonesian Government where Indonesian deportees from Malaysia are housed before returning to their homes. Local women escaping domestic violence stay here with their children until their husbands are 'processed' by the police. It was 'low security' – no barbed wire ! About 25 men and 8 women and children gathered to meet us and Fr Rofandi op offered Mass, as many are Catholics from Flores. Most deportees owed money to 'brokers' working on the northern side of the Indonesian archipelago. This network provides labour, legal and illegal, for Malaysian plantations and domestic servants for households. Many deportees had suffered abuse and had not received wages.

Sr Mary Ryan was in the group that visited a Crisis Centre for the rehabilitation of overseas workers rescued from exploitation. These women have been maids working mainly in the Middle East. This type of work is undertaken because of poverty and is seen as a way to earn good money to send home to support their families. Due to the harsh working conditions and ill-treatment, and physical and sexual abuse, many become traumatised and suffer from depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses. Their employers put them on a plane and send them back to Indonesia often without their identity papers and no wages. They are assessed by a Mental Health team on arrival and where necessary sent to the psychiatric ward of the Government hospital for treatment, which can last from 2 weeks to 3 months. They are then reunited with their family. If the family doesn't want them, often they are taken by the 'brokers' and sent to another employer! Some women had been back overseas two and three times.

In the evening of this day, in the grounds of the Sisters' Boncel orphanage, we planted a tree in a brief prayer ceremony recognising the 25th anniversary of the JPCC network in our Region.

On Wednesday 7 July, we heard from Indonesian and regional experts on the difficulties of the labour situation in Indonesia and the region. Participants at the conference then made concrete plans as to how they might address the situation in their local areas. Australians present recognised that our country, while far from perfect, does not suffer the same degree of worker injustice, and addressed our local agenda. We focused on the injustice to refugees and migrant workers and resolved to continue working for Human Rights and for the promotion of education in justice. We also focused on working to build a sustainable future by joining other groups trying to change policies that are unjust.

On Thursday 8 July, the International Co-Promoters shared briefly about the diversity of Dominican JPCC activities around the world, about the work of our Dominican representatives at the UN in both Geneva and New York, and emphasised again that the work of justice and care of creation is not an optional extra, but integral to everything we are and do.

Then followed a review of roles and zonal structure for the Asia Pacific Region. The current Regional Co-Promoters, Sr Rosa Yaya op and Fr Bien Trinilla op (Philippines), introduced the session, sharing their experience of positive aspects and difficulties, and gave the background to the proposal (from the meeting of November 2008) that Indonesia might want to consider changing to the Southeast Asia Zone (from the Pacific Zone). Zone Liaison persons (only two of us out of the four were present) also shared positives and difficulties. All were then invited to discuss in country groups whether they wished to make any changes to present Zone arrangements. All participants chose to remain in their present Zone.

Zone Liaison persons were then confirmed or appointed. Indonesians, East Timorese and Australians present asked Sr Gabrielle to continue in that role for the Pacific Zone – and she happily agreed to continue as long as she can.

Thursday evening was given to a 'cultural night' of singing, dancing and general merriment. Australians do not fare well in cultural items. This time, we changed from 'Waltzing Matilda' to 'Bound for Botany Bay'. We are determined that whoever goes next time will have something better to offer. Our country is still in thrall to convict ancestors, prisons and

detention centres! We have four years to change our contribution to something our Asian-Pacific friends can understand and appreciate.

On Friday 9th July, the Conference Statement was approved, and suggestions invited for the next conference theme, the next venue and the next Regional Co-Promoters. All agreed that 'Interfaith dialogue' should be the next conference theme. Since the new Indonesian friars have established in Pontianak, Kalimantan, a Centre for Research in Interfaith Dialogue (CRID), the suggestion that the next venue be Pontianak was endorsed. It was a little more difficult to settle on new Co-Promoters. The Philippines, though gifted with many Dominicans, felt they should not do it again, since they have served for the past 2 terms of 4 years! With the encouragement of all present, and after overnight discernment, to the joy of all, the Indonesians accepted the role. Sr Hermine Nurhayani op (who spent some months in Darwin with Gabrielle's community last year) and Fr Andreas Kurniawan op (ordained a year ago, and a key person in organising this 8th Conference) – and resident in Pontianak - are Regional Co-Promoters for the next 4 years. The new Co-Promoters intend to establish a new Regional JPCC website with news, reports and other information. (See also press releases Union of Asian Catholic News : www.ucanews.com , July 6 and July 13; 'Dominicans fight for dignity in labor'). We hope that this website will encourage participation of Dominican Family members from different countries in projects in the region.

Conference proceedings are at <http://jpcc2010.dominikanid.org/2010/07/8th-dominican-asia-pacific-justice-peace-care-of-creation-regional-conference/>

As always at these gatherings, it is the personal experience of being among the wider Dominican Family that is mutually life-giving, though difficult to communicate and share to good effect. The reality is that all local Dominican life is part of this larger mosaic.

Based on the report of Sr Gabrielle Kelly op. modified by Anne Gibbins, Rose Mary Kinne , Margaret O'Shea and Mary Ryan.

CONFERENCE STATEMENT

In grateful celebration of the 25th anniversary of our togetherness in working for Justice, Peace and Care of Creation in the Asia-Pacific region, and in joyful anticipation of the 800th foundation anniversary of the Order of Preachers,

We, the Dominican Family, have gathered in Sawangan, West Java, Indonesia, for this 8th JPCC Conference to reflect on the issues concerning the dignity of human labor.

Acknowledging the realities of unjust labor as a scourge, we re-commit ourselves to the prophetic path of St. Dominic, to recover the dignity of human labor as a gift.

We therefore resolve:

1. To bring the Good News to all laborers who are the human face of the suffering God;
2. To challenge unjust political, economic, social, cultural and religious structures that deprive people of their human rights and dignity;
 - a. Through education as a universal priority, and
 - b. According to the particular country plans of this Conference;
3. To work for sustainable development to preserve the Earth that nurtures us and;
4. To recognize and respect the richness of each culture that reflects the beauty and goodness of God's creation.

Trusting in the continuing efforts of each member of the Dominican Family and in God's compassionate providence, we express our profound hope for the realization of these resolutions.

Dominican Calendar

- Jul-27 Bl. Robert Nutter Martyr
Aug-2 Bl. Jane de Aza (+1205) Spanish, mother of our Holy Father Dominic and of Bl. Mannes,, housewife.
Aug-3 Bl. Augustine Kazotic (1260-1323) Croatian, priest, preacher, administrator, Bishop of Zagreb, later of Lucera.

Please send contributions – short paragraphs – about Dominican Life in your area to archives5@bigpond.com.au – OFTEN!