

# SCARBORO missions

March-April 2011 \$1.00



The search for  
ecological justice



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VOLUME 92, NUMBER 2  
MARCH-APRIL 2011

Publisher: Scarboro Foreign Mission Society  
Editor/Designer: Kathy Gillis

The Scarboro Foreign Mission Society (Charitable Reg. #11914 2164 RR0001) is a Roman Catholic missionary community involved in mission overseas and in Canada. Founded in Canada in 1918 by Fr. John Fraser, Scarboro's initial purpose was to train and send missionary priests to China. Forced to leave China after the Second World War, Scarboro began working in the Caribbean, Asia, and Latin America.

Scarboro Missions magazine publishes four editions each year, plus the calendar. The articles published represent the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Society.

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Printed in Canada and mailed from Toronto East L.P.P., Scarborough, ON. Return postage guaranteed. ISSN 0700-6802

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COVER: The Jacana (sometimes referred to as the Jesus bird or lily trotter) whose huge feet enable it to walk lightly on the earth. The Jacana is from a group of tropical waders in the family Jacanidae.

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EDITORIAL



By Kathy Gillis

The Reign of God

This issue of Scarboro Missions opens with an article about climate change. Scarboro's Justice and Peace Office coordinator Karen Van Loon writes, "We participate in a world where excessive pursuit of profit has resulted in over consumption and exploitation of the goods of the earth, disregard for impoverished people, and so much waste dumped into the air, water, and land that it threatens the fabric of life on earth."

How do we respond to this overwhelming picture—a vision that seems incompatible with all that we understand of the Reign of God? What is God asking of us now? Karen's article helps us to see this reality in the light of the Gospel and points to ways in which we can participate in bringing about God's vision of a world of justice, peace, and love.

From Brazil, Fr. Ron MacDonell writes about efforts there to preserve the environment. At a recent assembly of all missionaries working with Indigenous peoples in Brazil, they listened to the voices of the people and pledged to support indigenous movements focusing on land and environmental issues. The Brazilian Bishops have also developed this year's national Lenten campaign on the theme of "Fraternity and the life of the planet."

We are also proud to present a review of *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*, co-authored by former Scarboro missionary Mark Hathaway and Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff. Reviewer

Arthur Blomme, another former Scarboro missionary, tells us that this award-winning book shows us the path to transforming humanity's way of being in order to bring about a healed earth. It is a book that blends science and spirituality to transform our understanding and our behaviour in a time of crisis, but a crisis of our own making and therefore one that we have the wisdom to rectify.

The first step on this path to healing and wholeness is to become aware of our connectedness with all life and of the goodness and sacredness of all creation. "God, out of love, is the creator of all that exists and what God created is good," Fr. John Carten writes in his article exploring the debate between Evolution and Creationism.

We also present an Aramaic translation of Matthew's Beatitudes. May reading this original translation of those very familiar words bring fullness of meaning and be a blessing to you as you reflect on your part in bringing about the Reign of God.

Two champion builders of the Reign of God who continue to inspire us are Bishop Francisco Claver and Bishop Samuel Ruiz. We remember them in this issue with stories by Scarboro missionaries who were blessed and privileged to have walked a little way with them.

May these and other stories contained in this issue, help you in some way as you reflect on what God is asking of you today and how we can participate in the great work of building the Reign of God.∞







By Karen Van Loon

# The search for ecological justice

Many consider climate change, with its moral and justice implications, to be the defining issue for our time

On a Sunday afternoon in February this year, people gathered in Toronto for a multifaith retreat on translating our faith into action and making a difference for the environment. After exploring ecological spiritual resources from Islam, Judaism, and Christianity that inspire protection of the environment, participants learned about effective environmental advocacy from the insights of a leading climate change campaigner. This event was part of a retreat series on Environmental Decline and Climate Change as Moral Issues initiated by the University of Calgary's Oikos Centre for the Environment.

These kinds of gatherings are like springs of water in what can be a desert experience when reflecting on our ecological reality. The signs are in the news, in science reports, and in United Nations documents—we are facing a great extinction crisis as species disappear up to 1,000 times the natural rate and this is predicted to rise; we are losing forest area about the size of Costa Rica each year; rising ocean temperatures are being linked to a phytoplankton decline of about 1 percent per year—phytoplankton are a critical component of the planet's life support system and produce about half the oxygen we breathe.

The year 2010 equalled the 1998 and 2005 records for the world's warmest year. An unprecedented sequence of extreme weather events occurred last year including a record heat wave and wildfires in the Russian Federation, monsoonal flooding in Pakistan, and calving of a massive 250 square kilometre iceberg

from the Greenland ice sheet. While a longer time frame is needed before attributing an individual event to climate change, this sequence of events matches climate science projections of more frequent and more intense extreme weather events due to global warming.

## Insufficient action

We are threatening the life support systems of the planet and not yet taking sufficient action. In Copenhagen in 2009 and Cancun in 2010, countries participating in the United Nations conference on climate change have not made adequate commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet their stated target of keeping temperature increases below 2°C so as to avoid dangerous climate change. Many consider even the 2°C target to be too high based on recent science and are calling for even greater emissions reductions. A United Nations Environment Program report estimates that current reduction pledges are likely to result in global temperature increases of 2.5 to 5°C by the end of this century.

Canadians have one of the highest rates of greenhouse gas emissions per person. In 2010 Canada finished near the bottom, in 54th place out of

57 countries, on the Climate Change Performance Index, which evaluates and ranks countries based on their greenhouse gas emissions and climate protection policies. We have international recognition for undermining the United Nations climate talks and for very weak emission reduction targets and policies.

It is tempting to be overwhelmed by the immensity of this desert, to ignore it and move on to more pleasant experiences or the demands of everyday life.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into a desert for 40 days where he was tempted. He left the desert "filled with the power of the Spirit" and went on to proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:14-18). And so Jesus began his mission of establishing the Reign of God on earth.

As followers of Jesus we are called to participate in this mission. What might this mean in our situation today of ecological deterioration and persistent poverty where around a billion people still go hungry every day? How can we witness the good news?

There is growing recognition that poverty and the ecological crisis are related. As the Canadian Catholic

“...the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey through history: “The Spirit of God with marvelous foresight directs the course of the ages and renews the face of the earth.”  
Pope John Paul II, 1990, *Redemptoris missio* #28



Members of the Elderly and Disabled Group made up of people dealing with the effects of polio, amputations, impaired vision, and old age who want to help support themselves and their community with a seedling and irrigation project. Rumphu, Malawi.

Bishops have described, “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one. Ecological harmony cannot exist in a world of unjust social structures; nor can the extreme social inequalities of our current world order result in ecological sustainability.” We participate in a world where excessive pursuit of profit has resulted in over consumption and exploitation of the goods of the earth, disregard for impoverished people, and so much waste dumped into the air, water, and land that it threatens the fabric of life on earth.

Pope John Paul II has said, “the ecological crisis is a moral issue,” a statement echoed by many. It is also a justice issue.

The Global Humanitarian Forum estimated that “every year climate change leaves over 300,000 people dead, 325 million people seriously affected, and economic losses of US\$125 billion.” The vast majority of those affected are impoverished people living in the global South, yet

they have contributed the least to climate change. Industrialized countries of the global North have produced the majority of greenhouse gas emissions and have benefited the greatest from the current global economic system at the root of the crisis. Climate change will also have a growing impact on future generations as well as on plants and animals at risk of extinction.

This is the reality our generation faces today. Twenty years ago Pope John Paul II said, “the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone.” We have not yet adequately assumed that responsibility, given that the ecological crisis continues to worsen. We have been living as though unaware that we belong to an interdependent community of life on earth. While there is a personal response for each of us to discern, the ecological crisis requires our community response as well.

The Holy Spirit has been moving throughout history to bring about a

fuller realization of the reign of God, and inviting all people to participate in this work. Catholic theologian and author Denis Edwards has written about the Spirit at work in the great movements of history:

“To follow Jesus means being led by the Spirit as he was Spirit-led at every stage of his journey... The Spirit of God is always the Spirit of communion, communion with our human sisters and brothers and communion with the whole of creation. It is not difficult to see the Spirit at work in great movements of our times—the ecological movement, the movement seeking justice and peace above all for the poor of the Earth, and the feminist movement seeking the full equality of women. In spite of all the human failures and sin that play a role in these movements, they are places where the Spirit of God is powerfully at work, calling us to our own part in these as movements of liberation and hope.”





Scarboro missionaries with family and friends in Ottawa on October 24, 2009, participating in the first International Day of Climate Action organized by 350.org (see box on page 7). That year, 5,245 events took place in 181 countries.

In previous generations, there were people who heeded the call and no longer remained blind to certain situations of injustice and suffering. They worked together to abolish slavery, to protect workers' rights, to end Apartheid, to gain civil rights, and for other world transforming efforts. These efforts reflected the movement of the Spirit in history as "good news to the poor" and "freedom for the oppressed" became more real for many. Deep transformative change is not easy. The witness and sacrifice of those who participated in these movements still provides inspiration for us today. What witness will we give?

Many consider climate change with its moral and justice implications, and as part of the overall ecological crisis, to be the defining issue for our time. Our generation is confronted, in the

words of Martin Luther King, with "the fierce urgency of now." We have a short window of opportunity to control our greenhouse gas emissions or we face increasing risk of reaching tipping points beyond which accelerating climate change will lead to great suffering and ecological destruction. The actions we choose over the next decade or so will influence life on earth for many centuries to come.

Last June KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, in conjunction with others, organized a cross-Canada climate justice tour where Southern and indigenous partners shared about the impacts of climate change in their lives as well as discussed possible just solutions to the climate crisis. The tour ended with a workshop on building the movement for climate justice in Canada, held at

the 2010 People's Summit—civil society's alternative to the G8 and G20 Summits in Huntsville and Toronto.

One partner on this tour, Francois Pihaatae, the ecumenical animator on climate change for the Pacific Conference of Churches, spoke about climate change impacts in the low lying Pacific islands including flooding, contaminated drinking water, more tropical cyclones, and displaced people. He described the Church's prophetic role and voice in the Pacific and encouraged people to work together saying, "individually we are a drop but together we are an ocean."

Efforts at movement-building are growing at local, national, and global levels, as people join together in networks, coalitions, and assemblies to learn from each other and search for ways to work together (see box for a



## Calls growing for a financial transactions tax

A growing number of development and environmental organizations, faith-based organizations such as KAIROS, trade unions, politicians, economists, and other supporters continue to advocate for a global Financial Transactions Tax (FTT). An FTT is a tiny tax (e.g. 0.05%) paid by banks on the trade in financial transactions such as stocks, bonds, foreign exchange, and derivatives. This tax could raise billions of dollars each year for fighting poverty and climate change at home and around the world.

Make Poverty History Canada is strengthening its campaign for an FTT this year as France, an FTT supporter, will host the G8 and G20 summits. For more information and action ideas please visit [www.robinhoodtax.ca](http://www.robinhoodtax.ca)

few examples).

People come from a diversity of backgrounds, skills, faiths, and motivations for involvement which include concern for children or grandchildren; solidarity with our neighbours in the global South already struggling with the impacts of climate change; desire to protect the environment; or faith in the God of life and love. Broader and deeper participation and collaboration are still needed until perhaps together as an ocean we can begin to turn the tide and learn to live more justly and sustainably on earth.

Every now and then one of my children will ask a question which brings me to a halt as I struggle for the words to respond. As a family, we have tried to gently educate our children, discover together the wonders of creation, and explain why we do such things at home as recycling or saving energy. We also bring them along to family friendly demonstrations calling for stronger action on climate change. One evening my daughter asked me, "Will the earth be okay?"

After some soul searching I replied that we trust in a loving God who created this wonderful earth and who will one day heal the earth and make all things new. We don't know what that will be like and we leave that to God. We do know that in the meantime we need to work with God and do our part in loving creation.∞

*Lay missionary Karen Van Loon  
coordinates Scarboro's Justice and Peace  
Office in Canada.*

## Examples of a growing movement

**Greening Sacred Spaces** is a practical program developed by Faith and the Common Good (FCG), a network of Canadians from different faiths and cultures who seek common ground for the common good. Greening Sacred Spaces assists faith communities to create a more sustainable and energy efficient place of worship and to educate their members about ecological issues. Scarboro Missions supports this interfaith initiative and conducted an energy audit of its Toronto central-house with the assistance of Greening Sacred Spaces. From this, Scarboro did several energy and water efficient retrofits including lights, insulation, weather stripping, thermal windows, and a solar assisted water heater.

**Climate Action Network Canada** is a nation-wide coalition of environmental, faith, labour, development, aboriginal, health, and youth organizations committed to making action on climate change a reality. Scarboro Missions, along with more than 100 diverse organizations, has signed onto a Climate Action Network Canada open letter calling on the government to end tax breaks for oil, coal, and gas companies of around a billion dollars every year—money better spent on pressing social and environmental needs in Canada and abroad.

**Make Poverty History Canada** has also called for an end to fossil fuel subsidies and for this money to be redirected towards helping low-income countries cope with climate change. MPH Canada has more recently started campaigning for action on climate change, as part of its focus on ending poverty, due to the serious negative impacts of climate change on the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, such as causing more hunger. MPH Canada is part of the broader movement calling for a financial transaction tax as a way of raising billions of dollars each year for fighting climate change and poverty at home and around the world (see box above).

**People's Assemblies on Climate Justice** took place across Canada during the December United Nations climate negotiations in Mexico. The assemblies were organized by the Council of Canadians, KAIROS, the Indigenous Environmental Network, and others. The ongoing assemblies seek to create a space where community organizers, labour, environment, or faith groups, students, and other concerned citizens, can work together to share experience, knowledge, and resources in order to build a local response to a global crisis.

**350.org**, an international campaign, is building a movement around justice and science-based solutions to the climate crisis. Many scientists and climate experts consider 350 parts per million to be the safe upper limit for carbon dioxide in our atmosphere and 350.org calls for a return to below this level. In October 2009 they organized the first 350 International Day of Climate Action and 5,245 events took place in 181 countries. Scarboro Missions participated in the Ottawa event (see photo facing page).





Above: At the 2011 regional assembly of CIMI, the Missionary Indigenous Council founded by the Brazilian Bishops, participants say a prayer for nature. CIMI includes all Catholic missionaries working among the Indigenous in 11 regions throughout Brazil. Facing page: Indigenous leaders anoint missionaries with paint from the Urucu plant. All photos credited to Hoadson. Graphic on facing page is from the Brazilian Church's 2011 national Lenten campaign, "Fraternity and the Life of the Planet."



## Working together for the life of the planet

Missionaries working among Indigenous peoples in Brazil gather to pledge support for indigenous movements for the care of all creation

By Fr. Ron MacDonell, S.F.M.

In 1972, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops founded CIMI, the Missionary Indigenous Council. CIMI includes all Catholic missionaries working among the indigenous and is divided into 11 regions throughout Brazil. At the time, missionaries working among indigenous peoples in Brazil were appalled at situations of genocide perpetrated by the military dictatorship and by the government's explicit policy of total integration of indigenous peoples into Brazilian national society. CIMI accompanies native peoples in their village meetings and assemblies, helping them create strategies to demand their rights (land, health, education, language, and culture) so as to ensure the survival of the rich cultural diversity of Brazil's 180 indigenous groups.

At a national assembly in 1995,

CIMI members defined the organization's objective:

"Animated by our faith in the Gospel of life, justice, and solidarity, and in the face of aggressions arising from the neoliberal model, we have decided to intensify our presence and support among indigenous communities, peoples and organizations, and intervene in Brazilian society as allies of the indigenous peoples, strengthening the process of autonomy of these peoples in the building of an alternative, multiethnic, popular and democratic project."

As a member of CIMI, I serve as linguistic resource person in Amazonas and Roraima states. I accompany communities that wish to revitalize their languages, helping them to construct language learn-

ing models. Over the years, the term used in Brazil has changed from *tribus* (tribes) to *povos indígenas* (indigenous peoples), but has not yet arrived at *Primeiras Nações* (First Nations)—reflecting, perhaps, society's fear of indigenous autonomy.

This February, I attended the annual regional CIMI assembly on the theme, *The Contribution of Indigenous Peoples in the Preservation of the Environment in the Context of Global Warming*. We listened to two indigenous leaders, Marcos Apurinã and Sonia Guajajara of COIAB (Coordination of Indigenous Organizations in Amazonian Brazil). They voiced their concerns about deforestation and informed us of a recent document asking the government to reduce deforestation in the Amazonian region, principally



CIMI participants offer a prayer with sacred purifying smoke.

in areas where the government's Accelerated Growth Projects are operating. Brazil's new President, Dilma, has promised to address indigenous concerns, particularly the construction of the Belo Monte hydro project on the Xingu River in Pará state, slated to become the world's third largest dam. It entails the flooding of a huge tract of jungle (516 square kilometres) and the forced relocation of indigenous groups.

Addressing the issue of global warming, Professor Paulo Graça of the National Institute of Research on the Amazon (INPA) said that by 2090 temperatures on the planet will rise from 1.8 to 4.0°C, and the rain cycle in the Amazon jungle will be adversely affected.

He affirmed that deforestation is one of the main causes of global warming and presented statistics showing that deforestation occurs at a much lower rate on indigenous reserves. Thus, supporting indigenous land claims will also help to reduce deforestation.

The Assembly reflected on indigenous peoples' role in preserving the environment: their respect for nature, taking from the earth what is needed for survival and not selling products

(fish, fruits) large-scale for profit. This is an alternative system to that of the current capitalist system of accumulation. Indigenous who move to cities often fall into the culture of accumulation and individualism. Products of industrial society new to indigenous culture, such as pop cans and paper wrappers, now litter villages and rivers. The future will involve a struggle between the traditional way of life with its balanced inter-relationship with the environment, and the confrontation with industrial society, focused on exploiting nature for profit.

The CIMI assembly ended by defining two objectives for 2011-2012: as missionaries, we will support and strengthen the organizations of the indigenous movement, and we will focus on land and environmental issues. We will work in conjunction with the national Lenten campaign, with its theme "Fraternity and the Life of the Planet". We will become more sensitive to the cry of our home planet, as voiced by St. Paul: "...the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth..." (*Romans 8:22*). Join us in prayer and action to protect our planet Earth.∞





By Fr. John Carten, S.F.M.

# Evolution or Creationism?

With our understanding of the universe today, how do we interpret the story of Genesis?

Many times in recent years I have listened to groups of Christians demand that the teaching of Darwin about evolution be balanced by the story of creation. They seem to be saying that to be Christian one must believe that the world was created in seven days. I think some of these viewpoints present a negative image of Christians, as though science and religious belief are in conflict with one another and in order to be a faithful Christian we must put aside our intellect.

The inspired story of creation as it appears in the first and second chapters of Genesis was meant to teach us spiritual truths. It explained to us the who and the why of creation. Who created the world? Why was the world created? It was never intended to explain the how of creation. How did God bring about all that we see?

The inspired writers were limited, like us, in their knowledge of the world around them. The entire universe as they knew it seemed like a flat plate under an upside down bowl. The earth was flat and if you journeyed far enough you would fall off the edge. The sky was bowl shaped and appeared to be a solid firmament into which God placed the stars, the sun, and the moon. Below the earth and above the sky was water. When it rained, God opened doors in the sky and the water fell to the earth. The oceans, rivers, and springs flowed out of holes in the solid earth that allowed the water below to come to the surface. Then above the sky and the water that was above it, God dwelt in majesty, sur-



Drawing depicting what the writers of Genesis may have understood of the universe.



NASA photo

“As we grow more conscious of the expansiveness of grace, then the need for ecological responsibility and action is felt more deeply, urgently.”

rounded by the heavenly hosts.

This is the world that the sacred writers thought existed, and they put the activity of God into a seven-day cycle because the Jewish people of that time were living this seven-day cycle, including the rest on the seventh day, the Sabbath. Thus this explanation of God's activity made their seven-day cycle even more holy.

## The unfolding universe

Today, the more scientists discover about the unfolding universe, the more people of faith can realize how wonderful and incredible is the power of God. The discoveries of science do not diminish God. They become a gift to help us understand the complexity and diversity of God's activity and grace.

In our lifetime, astronauts have left the surface of the earth and looked upon our home planet. Through the ingenuity of science we are able to look far out into the universe and learn about billions of galaxies with

billions of stars in each galaxy. We have learned that not only our earth, but even the star that is our sun are far from the centre of the universe. The discoveries of scientists should make our awe of the majesty of God and of what God has done even more profound.

Ursuline Sister Noreen Allossery-Walsh summed it up beautifully when she said, “The wisdom of science helps us to understand more fully the expansiveness of God's grace. Do we continue in the narrow perspective of limiting God's activity to seven days or do we open up our hearts and minds to 14 billion years of God's creativity and unfolding grace.”

If the sacred authors were writing the creation story in our age, they would be inspired to create a story that would describe the creation of the universe as we now know it.

In the end, there should be no conflict between the truth of science and the truth of faith. Both these truths are just reflections of the truth that springs from the heart of God and as

such should be compatible.

Again quoting Sr. Noreen: “As we grow more conscious of the expansiveness of grace, then the need for ecological responsibility and action is felt more deeply, urgently. We understand more fully the intricacy of life, the vulnerability of our interrelatedness which needs to be preserved and maintained. Touching into and experiencing grace is not an end in itself. It has a purpose and horizon.”

When all is said and done, for people of faith the truths of the Genesis story remain the same. God, out of love, is the creator of all that exists and what God created is good. Indeed it is very good.∞





By Shawn Daley

# Labourers for the harvest

Each year during Holy Week, a group of Dominican lay people go out to forgotten regions of the country providing health care and celebrating faith

Since I was a little boy I have loved Holy Week, especially Holy Thursday with all the candles lit for adoration. Jesus' words to Peter have always haunted me: "Can you not at least pass one hour with me?" (*Matthew 26:40*). Throughout my life I have been blessed to participate in the week commemorating Jesus's passion... his love.

As a missionary to the Dominican Republic, another passage began to haunt me: "The harvest is great but the labourers are few" (*Matthew 9:37*). In the parish of Matanzas, Bani, Scarboro missionary Fr. Joe McGuckin is the only priest for nine villages and each village has one or more chapels. I wondered, how could he be present in all these places for all the different Holy Week celebrations? I began to think about the other half of Jesus' words: "...ask therefore the Lord of the harvest to send labourers for the harvest." And that is just what happened.

We asked and God sent us participants from a Jesuit-run lay mission program in the Dominican Republic. They are a group of doctors, lawyers, dentists, and other lay professionals, accompanied by a Jesuit priest, who go to more forgotten regions of the Dominican Republic during Holy Week each year. At a time when thousands of Dominicans head to the beaches, this group of dedicated people give up their holidays to go and serve. Last year they came to our village of Arroyo Hondo and "pitched their tent amongst us" (*John 1:14*). They slept on the floor, ate whatever was given them, and cut back on their accustomed water use because the



Holy Week in Arroyo Hondo, Bani, Dominican Republic. Scarboro missionary Shawn Daley assists Jesuit Father Eugenio Rivas who accompanied a lay mission team to the village.

“ All the people they helped during the day were invited each evening to the chapel. Holy Week became something for both body and soul. ”

village gets just two hours of running water a week.

During the day members of this group of missionaries held a health clinic and a dental clinic; others went door to door asking if anyone was ill or needed to talk.

All the people they helped during the day were invited each evening to the chapel. Holy Week became something for both body and soul; it became a time of healing and renewal. There were beautiful celebrations—we held a Seder meal and we did the washing of the feet, which was especially meaningful here where many people go barefoot or wear sandals. You will often see someone washing another person's feet in a backyard under the shade of a tree. On Good Friday evening, we walked through the village with torches and a huge cross. People took turns carrying the cross and came out of their houses to touch it and to pray with sincere reverence.

The missionaries even acted out the Resurrection in a play Sunday morning for those who still had the courage after the night vigil. People were becoming so used to something new happening in the church that they wanted to keep coming back.

As a result of the group's visit, the villagers now had wonderful, dynamic ideas of how to celebrate Holy Week liturgically and vibrantly. They were not ideas from a foreign mission but ideas brought by a group of Dominicans going out to share the Good News with other Dominicans. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you (*Matthew 7:7*).



Photos above: The Jesuit mission group of lay professionals, accompanied by a Jesuit priest, who spent Holy Week providing health services and celebrating faith with villagers in Arroyo Hondo. Right: Groups of people await their turn for health care outside a temporary clinic.

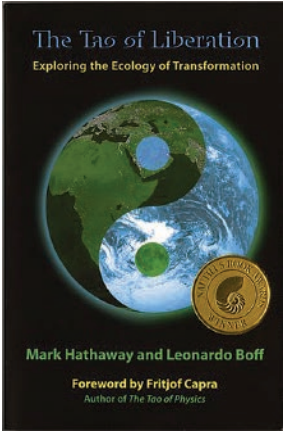


How true it is that we asked God to send labourers and God answered.

As Scarboro Missions slowly reduces its responsibilities in the Dominican Republic, it is reassuring to see that Dominicans who have received our missionaries for so many years are now missionaries themselves. They are now hearing and acting on the words, "go and teach."<sup>∞</sup>

After serving in the Dominican Republic, Shawn Daley has been accepted as a Scarboro priest candidate and is now in Canada for studies and formation.





# The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation

By Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff

Orbis Books, 2009, Paperback, 448pp. \$26.92 9781570758417

Reviewed by Arthur Blomme

Transformation of human collective behaviour is critical to the continued viability of life that makes up our planet. Our personal transformation is a prerequisite for collective transformation. New wine goes into new wine skins.

*The Tao of Liberation* begins with an explanation of the Chinese character for crisis, a combination of two symbols: the symbol for danger and the symbol for opportunity. In order to see the opportunity, we have to see the danger. Hathaway and Boff try to unpack the danger posed by the current trajectory of human behaviour by exploring the cosmological mindset that propels our species to continue down the dangerous path leading to the incremental destruction of Earth. The opportunity is presented as a different cosmology, one that invites us to be open to the ancient wisdom presented in our spiritual traditions. It is an opportunity to become fully alive and creatively conscious; an opportunity for spiritual transformation.

The danger we face is from a global economic system that seems to compound deficiencies and paradoxes to make our history appear totally out of our control. *The Tao of Liberation* provides a very comprehensive summary of the dysfunction of corporate capitalism on the world stage. In this system all knowledge is put to the service of planetary destruction as individuals and groups race to incrementally consume the resources of the planet. There is an ever increasing gap between the rich and the poor. The diversity of our cultural heritage is being lost as traditional cultures get absorbed into the dominant culture. The same processes are at work diminishing our biodiversity. We are changing our climate, destroying our fresh water. The book systematically presents the seemingly overwhelming crisis of our time.

Cosmology is the story of the origin and destination of the universe and our meaningful purpose within this story. The predominant cosmology changes from generation to generation incorporating the discoveries of science and the reflections of philosophers about life in the universe. Corporate capitalism continues to dominate human collective behaviour largely because of the cosmology adopted by a critical mass of humanity. Hathaway and Boff call this story of capitalism the cosmology of domination.

There are a number of presuppositions in this cosmology

of domination that distort the original message by enhancing the significance of certain elements of the ancient story while neglecting other elements. The cosmology of domination portrays humanity in a struggle to overcome nature. It is about the survival of the fittest where the “best” rises to the top of the food chain in business and nature. Modernist philosophy has enhanced the separation of humanity from nature to a perspective that champions individualism, competition, and the valuing of nature only for its utility to humanity. Elements of traditional cosmologies pertaining to right relationships and collaboration within a nature that includes humanity are neglected.

## The new cosmology

The “new cosmology” refers to the story of humanity’s relationship to the universe, informed by the latest science describing the forces of cosmic evolution. The new understanding that comes from the latest scientific research reaffirms ancient intuitions about human relationship and collaboration with nature. Most of all, this new cosmology has facilitated us to recognize the dangerous consequences to our planet posed by the cosmology of domination.

Whereas the cosmology of domination promises us a material paradise, it is actually disrupting the harmony of our existence with nature and pummeling creation into ruin. On the other hand, the new cosmology helps us understand our humanity more fully. This understanding not only reveals to us the danger of the situation we find ourselves in, but also reveals the creative potential of our species and the opportunity that exists to transform human collective behaviour. Traditional spiritual practices that transform the human spirit are complemented with scientific understanding to make personal transformation more accessible.

## A book about hope

*The Tao of Liberation* is ultimately a book about hope. Hathaway and Boff courageously confront the monumental challenge of healing our planet by focusing on the spiritual capacity of our species to transform itself. Leonardo Boff is one of the principal authors of the final draft of The Earth Charter which is in turn featured in *The Tao of Liberation*. Sometimes called the Charter of Interdependence, the Earth

THE 2011 ELDERBERRY CONFERENCE

## Walking the Way of Blessing An Ecospirituality of Earth Healing

With Mark Hathaway

Friday, April 29 at 5:30pm (with supper) to May 1 at 1:00pm

Ignatius Jesuit Centre, Guelph, Ontario

For more info: [www.elderberryconnection.ca/conference.asp](http://www.elderberryconnection.ca/conference.asp)

Full registration (accommodations and meals): \$325

Meals and sessions only: \$175

When faced with the reality of deepening injustice and ecological crisis, we may feel overwhelmed and powerless to act fruitfully for change. Yet, this crisis is also an opportunity to awaken to a deeper power at work around and within us—the sense of the “I can” of the cosmos, the hidden potentiality of the *kingdom* of God. Drawing on the Aramaic version of Matthew’s Beatitudes (*featured on this page*), the 2011 Elderberry Conference will explore new insights for healing our souls and healing the Earth.

### About Mark Hathaway

A Scarboro lay missionary from 1982-1998, Mark Hathaway co-authored, with Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. The book has won numerous awards, including the 2010 Nautilus Gold Medal for Cosmology/New Science and First Place for Faith and Science in the 2010 Catholic Book Awards.

Mark is an adult educator who researches and writes about the interconnections between ecology, economics, psychology, social justice, spirituality, and cosmology. He has worked ecumenically for ecology and justice, both in Canada and Latin America. Mark is currently a PhD candidate in adult education and environmental studies at the University of Toronto.

For more information, see: [www.taoofliberation.com](http://www.taoofliberation.com)

Charter is an ethical statement about right relationship in the community of life. I am very excited to learn about the Earth Charter as a starting point for bringing about the transformation of our collective behaviour as a species. *The Tao of Liberation* for me is a handbook for implementing the Earth Charter. It provides the analysis and describes transformative spiritual practice that supports the ethos proposed in the Earth Charter. As such *The Tao of Liberation* is an important tool for transforming the collective behaviour of our species. The ideas in the book are new to many of us which sometimes makes it a difficult read. It is a book worthy of group study to learn the new cosmology and the spiritual practice that will inspire an alternative trajectory of conscious evolution.∞

*Arthur Blomme is engaged in integrating personal and social transformation in a spiritual practice that he has synthesized from many faith traditions and modern philosophy. He is a former Scarboro lay missionary who served in Peru. He continues to practice his Catholic faith acting for social justice and engaging non-dualist thought through Taoist/Chi Gong meditation.*

## Matthew’s Beautitudes

Adapted from the Aramaic Translations of Neil Douglas-Klotz in Prayers of the Cosmos(1990)

**Blessed** are those who find their home in the breath and who devotedly hold fast to it as though it were all that was left; they shall be empowered with the “I can” of the One.

**Fruitful and ripe** are those who are weak and confused, who wander and grieve as they weep for their frustrated desire; they shall feel their inner flow of strength return and see the face of fulfilment in a new form.

**Blessed** are those who have softened what is rigid within; they shall receive the physical vigour and strength of the Earth.

**Fruitful and ripe** are those who wait up at night, weakened and dried out inside by the unnatural, unjust state of the Earth, thirsting for all to come together around the same table; they shall be encircled by the birth of a new world.

**Blessed** are those who, from their inner wombs, birth mercy and compassion; they shall feel its warm arms embrace them and be surrounded by cosmic ardour.

**Fruitful and ripe** are those who are energized by a deep and abiding purpose, whose hearts are filled with passion; they shall witness the power of the One who moves all and who manifests herself in all things.

**Blessed** are those who plant peace each season; they shall become channels of life who embody divine communion.

**Fruitful and ripe** are those who are dislocated and shattered for trying to right the imbalance of our world; to them belongs the ruling principles of the cosmos, the hidden potentiality of God immanent in the very fabric of the universe.

See [www.abwoon.com](http://www.abwoon.com) for more information on this translation.



# Mission cooperation at Scarborough

By Fr. Jack Lynch, S.F.M.

The missionary work of the Church involves a great deal of cooperation and collaboration and this is taking place among the different mission societies. In the last 10 to 15 years, Scarborough Missions has developed a program to assist in the formation of missionaries from other societies. It is the generous support of our many benefactors that has made this program possible over the years. We have not only prepared Scarborough candidates, but also members of mission sending organizations in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

We would like to present some of those who are presently with us at our central house in Scarborough, Ontario.

- **Fr. Idara Otu** is a member of St. Paul's Missionary Society of Nigeria, a young community with more than 200 priests. Fr. Idara (inset with Scarborough priest candidate Shawn Daley) was working in Sudan and is presently in residence with us while he pursues studies at Regis College in Toronto. He will complete a licentiate in theology focusing on the Social Thought of the Church.



Once he completes his studies he will return to Nigeria as a member of their seminary staff in Abuja, Nigeria.

- **Fr. Nahum Gutierrez**, a member of the Guadalupe Missionaries of Mexico, has already completed a licentiate in theology in France specializing in interreligious dialogue. Fr. Nahum has been with us since September 2010 and is completing studies in English. He has been assigned to new mission work in China as part of a team of three Guadalupe missionaries who will begin studies in Mandarin later this year.

- **Frs. HyungJoon Kim, Secheol Park, and Jimin Kim**, priests of the Korean Mission Society headquartered in Seoul are presently studying here as part of their formation for future mission work. Frs. HyungJoon and Jimin have been assigned to Campeche, Mexico, to continue their formation in Spanish and will be living with the Guadalupe Missionaries of Mexico. Fr. Secheol will be working with the team of Korean missionaries in Papua New Guinea.

- **Fr. Fernando Arango** is a newly ordained priest of the Yarumal Missionaries of Colombia. He is presently doing a refresher course in English before returning to the



Standing L-R: Secheol (James) Park, Scarborough missionary Shawn Daley, and General Council members Frs. Jack Lynch and John Carten. Seated L-R: Alberto Puente Colunga, Nahum Gutierrez De La Torre, Jimin Kim, Hyungjoon (Paul) Kim.

pastoral team in the Diocese of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Two more members of Yarumal will be ordained to the priesthood on Pentecost Sunday, June 12, and will arrive at Scarborough Missions in August for further studies in English. They have been assigned to mission work in Asia—one in Thailand and the other in Cambodia.

- **Sr. Maria Elisa** (inset with Yarumal missionary Fr. Fernando Arango of Colombia) is a member of the Missionaries of St. Theresa, better known to us as the Teresitas. They are one of three religious communities of women founded by Bishop Miguel Angel Builes, founder of the Yarumal Missionaries. Their mother-house is located in Medellin, Colombia. Sister Maria lives with a community of Notre Dame Sisters while studying English in Toronto. She is a nurse and will join six other Teresitas presently working in the interior of Kenya, all of whom were sponsored by Scarborough and enjoyed the community life and support of the Notre Dame Sisters while studying English in Canada.



- In September a priest from the Society of St. Thomas the Apostle of India and a diocesan priest from Malawi will stay with us while doing postgraduate work at the Toronto School of Theology.

We are most grateful to all of you, our benefactors, for your very generous support which makes possible our collaborative effort. Our sincere thanks to all of you.∞

## Golden Rule Day at the UN, April 5, 2011

April 5 is International Golden Rule Day. This year, it will be celebrated at the United Nations headquarters in New York with a special screening of "Animating the Golden Rule...", a documentary by Tina Petrova inspired by Scarborough's Golden Rule poster. In this life affirming video, Toronto high school youth through rap, art, and drama, embody the values of the Golden Rule.

Golden Rule Day is an effort of the Ethiopian-based Interfaith Peace Building Initiative, a URI member organization in Ethiopia chaired and founded by Mussie Hailu, a Golden Rule activist and collaborator with Scarborough's Interfaith Department. The day was first proclaimed in April 2007.

Award winning actor, writer, director, and producer Tina Petrova is also a consultant and a retreat facilitator with Scarborough's Interfaith Department. For more information, please visit: [www.thegoldenrulemovie.com](http://www.thegoldenrulemovie.com)

### Charter of Compassion

On November 12, 2009, the United Nations unveiled The Charter for Compassion (based on the Golden Rule) that calls upon the world to take practical and sustained action in an effort to address the political, religious, and social issues of our time.

The movement to mobilize the Charter was the idea of Karen Armstrong, a former Catholic nun and author of more than 20 books on comparative religions. In 2008 she won the TED (Technology Entertainment and Design) prize of \$100,000, for her "wish" (One Wish to Change the World). Karen received support from the Fetzer Institute, a private foundation based in Michigan, who provided the resources and people to make her wish come true. So far, nearly 70,000 people have affirmed the charter.

Armstrong has been quoted as saying, "It isn't just a matter of being nice. It requires you, all day and every day to put yourself in someone else's shoes... It's hard work, but we have to try because we're in a dreadful state. Our world is dangerously polarized."

On behalf of Scarborough Missions, Tina Petrova presents Karen Armstrong with a Golden Rule poster and introduces her to Scarborough's wealth of Golden Rule materials during Karen's recent visit to Toronto.



### Charter for Compassion

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

Go to [www.charterforcompassion.org](http://www.charterforcompassion.org) to join the charter.



# Children of Abraham

## “That you may know one another....”

The International Conference of Christians and Jews in Istanbul last June brought together people of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith traditions engaged in interreligious dialogue

By Sr. Lucy Thorson, NDS

Thanks to the generous support of the Scarboro Missions Interfaith Department and my congregation, the Sisters of Sion (NDS), I was pleased to be able to participate in the International Conference of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) in Istanbul, Turkey, last June. It was a great opportunity to connect, reconnect, and deepen relationships with diverse persons and groups (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) engaged in interreligious relations in many parts of the globe. The ICCJ organizes events particularly in the field of Christian-Jewish understanding, leading also to cooperation with Muslims with whom we share a common spiritual heritage as descendants of Abraham and our common concerns in the contemporary world.

The coming together of more than 100 participants from 22 countries in a predominantly Muslim country was for me a sign of the new realities in our otherwise troubled world. Jews, Christians, and Muslims together have a significant contribution to make to changing attitudes.

The beautiful city of Istanbul, once known as Byzantium and Constantinople, offered a very challenging venue for this international gathering. Istanbul is described as the most eastern city of the West and the most western city of the East. It is the only city in the world that spreads over two continents (Europe and Asia) and is a natural meeting place between cultures and religions.

During our conference we rediscovered the vitally important role that Istanbul has played in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim history. I was



Sr. Lucy Thorson (right, front) attends the workshop on Women's Issues in the Abrahamic Traditions during the International Conference of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) in Istanbul, Turkey, last June.

also delighted to spend a couple of days with our Sisters of Sion who run a French-language college in the heart of Istanbul where, through education, they have been building bridges among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim students since 1857.

The theme of the ICCJ conference was taken from Sura 49:13 of the Koran which reads: “O humankind, we created you from a single pair of male and female, and made you

into nations so that you may know one another...”. Together as Jews, Christians, and Muslims, we spent four days in Istanbul exploring the potential but also the pitfalls of interreligious dialogue, both bilateral and trilateral. There was no intention on the part of ICCJ of abandoning the specific dialogue between Christians and Jews, crucially important for so many reasons.

On each of the days, a keynote

“We join all those who love the Land called holy by three inter-related religions [Judaism, Christianity, Islam] in being impatient for the day when it truly will be a sign of interreligious cooperation and even love between the nations of Israel and Palestine...let our impatience be tempered by having ‘mercy upon words’ so that through dialogue mutual understanding may grow.”

*Statement of the International Council of Christians and Jews, Heppenheim, Germany, July 2010*



Above left: Suzannah Heschel, daughter of Abraham Heschel and Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, presents the workshop on Women's Issues in the Abrahamic Traditions. ICCJ 2010.

speaker from one of the three religions addressed the overall theme of getting to know one another from the perspective of each person's own tradition. There were respondents each from one of the other traditions. Workshops dealt with a variety of related topics, such as exploring our common heritage through sacred text study, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and women's issues in the Abrahamic traditions.

The morning of the final day was concluded with two interesting concurrent panels on controversial topics, one on Turkey and the European Union, the other on religion and the state. The afternoons provided opportunities to get to know the rich diversity of Istanbul's religious and ethnic communities. These outings included visits to a Jewish museum and synagogue; the famous Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia; and the



Cantors at a synagogue in Istanbul that was visited by participants of the International Conference of Christians and Jews.

Roman Catholic Cathedral in Istanbul. One evening featured the screening of a fascinating film on Turkey's role in saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust, which included the role of Monsignor Roncalli (later Pope John XXIII).

Among the multiple opportunities provided by the Istanbul ICCJ conference to “know one another better,” I was struck by the presentation and workshop of Suzannah Heschel and the strong words she shared with us when she said: “For me to be a Jew is to think critically, not submissively. I cannot be Jewish in the way of past generations...What I receive, I must also transform.”

I also found the insight and vision of ICCJ president Debbie Weissman from Jerusalem most encouraging when she said: “By holding the ICCJ conference in Turkey, precisely at such a challenging moment in history, the

International Conference of Christians and Jews made a strong symbolic statement about the vital importance of interreligious dialogue.” Yes, as children of Abraham, I feel that we are invited to continue to learn and to listen so that we may “know one another better.”

*Sr. Lucy works in the Interfaith Department of Scarboro Missions and is an executive member of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Toronto.*



# REMEMBERING BISHOP CLAVER

## 1929 – 2010

By Fr. Pat Kelly, S.F.M.

Fr. Charlie Gervais and I spent part of our missionary life in the Philippines with Bishop Francisco “Cisco” Claver in the diocese of Malaybalay, Bukidnon. Charlie was in the parish of San Fernando and I was in the parish of Linabo. We became close friends with Cisco.

In 1972, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos scrapped the constitution and declared martial law, which was to last until 1981. During that time, the military was very active in both of our parishes and they created a state of fear among the people.

Nearly every week we would go to Cisco and relate to him the happenings within the parishes and how the people were coping. I can still see him holding his pipe, listening intently to what we were saying and making comments to encourage us.

In both of our parishes at that time, there were many killings, including Fr. Godofredo Alingal who was shot and killed in his rectory in Kibawe, Bukidnon. For Bishop Claver, a primary focus of the Church was non-violence. The community of believers was to be the instrument and witness to the way of change for the good of all. As Charlie would say, “no pious piffle ever came out of Claver.” The bishop’s message could be applied to the concrete situation—in the struggle for justice, peace, truth, and love. Cisco was very adamant that the Church was to be Good News to the poor and in order to be that, we must look at reality from the side of the poor and oppressed.

With martial law, the reality of those without a voice and without power, those most vulnerable, was



Fr. Charlie Gervais, Bishop Francisco Claver, and Fr. Pat Kelly chat in the dining room at Scarboro Missions during Bishop Claver’s visit to address the Assembly at Scarboro’s 12th General Chapter in 2007.

clearly evident.

Martial law also galvanized many groups who believed armed struggle was the only way to depose Ferdinand Marcos.

Cisco, in his role as bishop, encouraged the people in his sermons, talks, and writings to look for creative ways to dismantle the dictatorship, but nonviolently. There were many demonstrations, boycotts, and other mass actions to publicize opposition to the regime, and many members of Christian communities suffered greatly for their call for justice. In the end, these actions bore fruition in the marvellous and nonviolent People Power revolution that forced Ferdinand Marcos to resign and leave the country in 1986.

Fr. Charlie recalls, “I will never forget the joy of celebrating with the people when they finally expelled the dictator in a nonviolent demonstration in the streets of Manila. I was there when millions of Filipinos stopped military tanks with their bodies, ros-

aries, prayers and flowers.”

For me, Bishop Claver made real what we say in the Our Father: “Your Kingdom come, your will be done.”

For Cisco, the purpose of the Church is to change this world for the good of all. Each believer must use their gifts and talents to make real, even in a small way, the vision that we are all part of one human family and to do that within people’s concrete lived situation.

In God’s providence, Charlie and I were given a precious gift: the gift of knowing Cisco, being molded in our missionary life by him, and being allowed to work with him to proclaim and witness to God’s love of all people. He helped us to see the importance of building the Kingdom of God here on earth.∞

### On being Church in Bukidnon

*Excerpts from a pastoral letter of Jesuit Francisco Claver, Bishop of the Diocese of Malaybalay, Bukidnon, October 11, 1981. Scarboro missionaries Frs. Pat Kelly and Charlie Gervais were serving in the diocese at that time.*

This year we celebrate the 12th year of the setting up of the Prelature in Malaybalay...From a strictly human point of view, our history as a Church has not been a happy one.

1. The ‘70s started with the clergy and religious under heavy attack as being Communists, destroyers of the peace, troublemakers, etc. All they did was to give strong support to the FFF (Federation of Free Farmers).

2. In the local elections of 1971, our parish school in Dangcagan was burnt to the ground as a warning to us not to “meddle” in politics. Our “crime”: our close cooperation with the movement for clean elections, the CNEA (Citizens’ National Electoral Assembly).

3. When martial law was imposed in late 1972, the first prisoners of the regime were the director of our Social Action Center and two of his associates. Their “crime”: their work for justice for farmers.

4. In 1976, our radio station DXBB was forcibly shut down by the military. Its real “crime” was its unflinching advocacy of freedom even under dictatorial rule.

5. Shortly after, in early 1977, our newsletter, *Ang Bandilyo*, was also suppressed. The charge was subversion and rebellion. The real issue was the speaking of the truth of our political situation...of military oppression.

6. This year, in April, Father Alingal was shot dead. His work for justice was not appreciated by the powerful.

...All these events happened because the Church had become deeply involved with people, had become in fact a Church of the people, not only a Church of laws and doctrines, of rites and ceremonies and sacraments. The Church had broken out of the narrow confines of sacristy and sanctuary, and had gone to the people where they were. Doing so, it has had to identify with them in the oppressions and injustices imposed on them by our current political and economic system.

...We—priests, religious, lay leaders, people—have centered our efforts on building ourselves up as real communities of faith, strongly aware that this faith is not something we celebrate only periodically in our chapels and churches... Faith is something we have to do in day to day living, the impelling force, in fact, of all our striving for individual and family betterment, for more widespread social justice, for greater economic and political equity, for the genuine development of ourselves as the People of God, men and women of rights and, even more fundamentally, of dignity...∞

### Bonifacio and the fish

By Fr. Charlie Gervais, S.F.M.

Bonifacio was an *alagad* (Christian leader) of a village called Nakabuklad. The Tigwa River made a left turn near it. Over the years the river had cut into the right bank at the turn and created a little lagoon where the fish would spawn. When any family needed extra food for their next meal, they could catch a fish or two in this lagoon.

One day a group of soldiers went to this riverbank for a picnic, expecting to cook up a few fish over a fire. Not having a fishing rod, they threw an explosive device (grenade or dynamite stick) into the water and then gathered the fish that were either dead or stunned by the explosion. This of course is an illegal act because it destroys the fishing ground. Bonifacio reported this in the diocesan newspaper *Ang Bandilyo*.

When the soldiers of Halapitan read the report, they were furious. They were drinking one night and decided they would shoot Bonifacio and report that he was a rebel. One civilian who was a member of the army reserve and



was at the drinking party came to see me early the next morning when the rest of his drinking buddies were still sleeping. He told me about the plan to shoot Bonifacio and was afraid they might carry it out. I thanked him for warning me and immediately went to find Pancho, a parish catechist, and asked him to take a letter to Bishop

Claver, bishop of our Diocese of Malaybalay, Bukidnon, explaining the danger that Bonifacio was facing.

Pancho came back the same day with a letter from Bishop Claver for the commander of the military in the town of Halapitan with a copy to me. After 25 years, I still remember the essence of the letter. As usual, Bishop Claver was strong and to the point. It went something like this:

*“A very disturbing report has been sent to me. I have been informed that Bonifacio, the church leader of the village of Nakabuklad, may be salvaged because of his reporting that the military threw an explosive device into the lagoon. (Salvaged was the term used for outright elimination.) You had better protect this man, Bonifacio, or you will be held personally responsible for his murder. Control your soldiers or suffer the consequences.”*

Bonifacio was not bothered and the soldiers did not return to the lagoon.∞





By Fr. Ron MacDonell, S.F.M.

# REMEMBERING BISHOP RUIZ 1924 – 2011



Sibhan Rowan, Development and Peace

“I think you will have to walk, you’re too tall to ride on a donkey,” Bishop Samuel Ruiz said to me. He had arrived in the town of San Juan del Bosque, tucked away in the hills of Chiapas, Mexico, where I worked as a lay missionary in the early 1980s. I was to accompany him to a Tzotzil village where he would celebrate the sacrament of confirmation. It was an arduous trek to the village, involving an hour’s hike down a steep incline to the bottom of a gorge, then crossing a river on a wooden slat bridge, and finally climbing up to the village. Bishop Ruiz chose to ride on a donkey. I was keen to go on foot, and so I took off with the catechists. The confirmation celebration with the young Tzotzil Mayan people was both serious and joyous, their faces illuminated by happiness at receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Later, back at San Juan, Bishop Ruiz observed: “You climbed fast! I had barely started the climb back when I looked for you, and there you were, almost at the top of the cliff!” Indeed, I wanted to do everything fast in those days, in my mid-20s. During my two years in Chiapas, I learned to slow down and walk at the pace of the people. I learned from this bishop who rode on a donkey, like Our Lord riding into Jerusalem. I observed the cross of oppression: indigenous peoples exploited by landowners, the men beaten and the women abused, the coffee beans bought at a cheap price. I observed death: leaders assassinated, children dying of malnutrition. I witnessed the light of the resurrection, shone forth by the Church which opted to speak for the poor,

in particular the indigenous peoples. Bishop Ruiz was our pastor, beloved by the people, who called him “*jtotic*” (our father).

I learned much in the bible courses I participated in with the people. Once we hiked nine hours to a remote village and spent five days studying the Gospel of St. Mark with new catechists. During the course, we experienced a communal feeling, sharing our food of beans, tortillas, and peppers, enduring the heavy heat of the afternoon, sleeping on the wooden planks that served as church pews. As we read each gospel chapter, we answered four questions: What did

Jesus do? Who were his friends? Who were his enemies? Is the situation similar to our reality today?

Our reflections convinced us that the Good News of Jesus Christ is liberating. He invites us to denounce social injustices and to proclaim a world of justice and peace. “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (*John 10,10*).

Bishop Ruiz spoke clearly about this full life, this dream of Jesus where all of us live like brothers and sisters, where economic exploitation no longer exists, where there is no more racism or division based on hatred or prejudice. Bishop Ruiz inspired many missionaries to come and work alongside the local church leaders to make the dream a reality. A program for permanent deacons was created for indigenous church leaders. Cooperatives for coffee growers were founded. Women’s sewing centres were set up, and so on. We will sadly miss this great man, but we rejoice with the legacy he has left us. *Muchas gracias, jtotic!*∞

“ Being a prophet is nothing more than making our life a witness to what we believe in. This is what it means to proclaim the Reign of God...we might be asked to dedicate ourselves and take more responsibility for important things in the process of change. This requires giving testimony, and with this might even come persecution. ”

*Bishop Samuel Ruiz, “Seeking Freedom”, published by the Toronto Council of Development and Peace, 1999.*

## In solidarity with the people of Chiapas

In the early 1980s, Scarboro missionaries worked in Chiapas, Mexico, and experienced firsthand the plight of the Mayan people. The bishop of the diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas at that time was Samuel Ruiz Garcia who invited us to come. From the very beginning Bishop Ruiz stood in solidarity with the people. His support of their cause eventually led the Mexican government to force the Vatican to remove him from Chiapas.

On January 1, 1994, Chiapas, Mexico’s southernmost state, drew international attention after an uprising by Zapatista rebels. Descendants of the Indigenous Mayan peoples, they were protesting centuries of exploitation made worse by the North American Free Trade Agreement. The rebellion led to the militarization of the area and along with that, intimidation, assassinations, and a massacre of villagers such as at Acteal when 45 Indigenous men, women, and children were killed by paramilitaries on December 22, 1997.

## Taniperla mural

In 1998, a mural was unveiled in the town of Taniperla in Chiapas. The mural depicted Mayan traditions and ideals of community life, and represented peace, harmony, unity, and happiness. It was designed and painted over a period of four weeks by members of 12 Indigenous communities in the area as part of a communications workshop with university professor Sergio Valdéz Ruvalcaba.

The day after the mural was unveiled, Mexican armed forces occupied Taniperla and covered the mural in white paint. They arrested Professor Valdéz along with a human rights activist, Mr. Luis Menendez Medina, and five Indigenous participants. The actions of the security forces were perceived as an attempt to destroy the municipality’s autonomy.

In an act of international solidarity, the Taniperla mural was recreated in Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Italy, Ireland, San Francisco, Mexico City, and in Canada at Scarboro Missions. The mural, titled “Greeting to Taniperla,” was a community art project. In addition to the original design, it also includes images representing issues affecting Toronto communities. Local artists Claire Carew, Hannah Claus, Sady Ducros, Lynn Hutchinson, Raffael Iglesias, and Shelley Niro, worked with 16 students from two Scarborough area high schools (Winston Churchill Collegiate and Alternative Scarboro Education 2) and with children from five Toronto elementary schools. The mural imagery was workshoped at A Space Gallery, a Toronto non-profit art gallery, and then painted on the walls of the handball courts at Scarboro Missions.

Professor Sergio Valdéz Ruvalcaba who had been imprisoned, and a young Mayan activist, Nicolás Gómez Pérez, came from Mexico to be present at the mural’s unveiling on July 2, 2000. About 250 people took part in the event, which included an interfaith prayer service with members of the Baha’i, Jewish, and Sikh faith traditions. As well, there was a Mayan ritual and dancing, with the troupe made up of Mayans who had immigrated to Canada.

*Adapted from “Greeting to Taniperla” by Fr. Charlie Gervais, S.F.M., Scarboro Missions, March 2001.*



Top: Fr. Charlie Gervais, one of the organizers who helped bring the Taniperla mural to Scarboro Missions. The unveiling of the mural.



A woman and a young boy are walking away from the camera on a dirt path. The woman is on the left, wearing a light-colored short-sleeved shirt and a long skirt. The boy is on the right, wearing a blue and red backpack with the number '58' on it, and holding a blue book. They are walking along a path that is bordered by a brick wall on the left and trees on the right. The sun is shining brightly from the upper right, creating a warm, golden light. The background shows more trees and a building partially visible behind the wall.

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Scarboro missionary Barbara Michie, Mzuzu, Malawi.  
Credit: Mike Traher, SFM

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