



SISTERS
OF THE PRESENTATION
of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Stand Together
and spend yourselves for the poor

Justice Update - June 2007

How Do I “WIDEN MY TENT”?

June 20 is **World Refugee Day**. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is a key legal document in defining persons who are refugees, their rights, and the legal obligations of states. According to this document, a refugee is a person with “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” (Article 1A, 2)

Refugees were once ordinary persons and because of circumstances, now find themselves in an extraordinary situation. This phenomenon can be reflected upon from two points of view: that of those who have had to leave their place of origin; the point of view of those who may receive them and from whom they may request asylum. The reflections on these two perspectives vary depending on the part of the world in which a person lives.

While some individuals/countries may be concerned about invasion, others are working to transform the mentality of their people in order to eliminate discrimination and racism. Instead of countries rejecting people, perhaps we may do well to work with countries in an effort to develop an economic or political system that can provide a decent livelihood for refugees.

CONNECTIONS

Encourage and support mutual understanding, solidarity, and cooperation among all peoples and within and among nations. (Earth Charter, #16a)

“The cry of those made poor and the cry of the Earth call us to continue the mission of Jesus...” (IPA Identity Statement)

REFLECTION

In reflecting on the experience of refugees, the New Testament provides stories for reflection. We begin with the birth of Christ who had to escape the violence of Herod and move into exile. The Good Samaritan and the Syro-Phoenician woman also contain refugee stories. Questions that enable us to integrate reflection of refugee experiences with reflections on our experiences include: “When, where, and how have I had the experience of feeling uprooted, a stranger, lost in a country that was mine? What were my feelings? What allowed me to find my bearings and eventually feel at home? Who are those in my “community” who are displaced? What cries of distress do I hear? How can we make room for them in our lives, communities, and budgets?”

ACTIONS

1. The International Union of Superiors General in their recent gathering urge us to “**widen our tents**” through listening to the voices of women refugees and displaced persons. This means that we create interior and exterior welcoming space. We are required to educate ourselves and others, to engage in on-going dialogue and use our collective power through networking to denounce unjust laws and structures. To nurture our growth, perhaps we might look for and attend a World Refugee Day. A variety of events are listed at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/events?id=3e7f46e04> (on right side select a country to view events).

2. Senators will continue debate on June 5 with final passage expected June 8. **S 1348** (Immigration Legislation), contains some good elements and some serious concerns. The Catholic bishops have chosen neither opposition nor support but raise concerns to improve the bill, particularly family issues. Stay informed and take action at <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/action.html>

3. Earlier, Congress committed \$50 billion in new funding to expand the successful **SCHIP** program (State Children’s Health Insurance Program) to help cover millions of uninsured children. This commitment must be honored. Urge Senators (phone 1.800.828.0498) to reauthorize SCHIP or visit: <http://ga3.org/campaign/insureourchildren?rk=0dA0vg51kgNDE>

4. A Global Day of Action is set for **June 10-11** to protest the **40th anniversary of Israel’s illegal military occupation** of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, and Syrian Golan Heights. Citizens of the United States have a special obligation to protest Israel’s illegal military occupation because it is our government that provides Israel with the military, economic, diplomatic, and corporate support that it needs to sustain and expand its control of the geographic region. Watch for events in your area to attend and say, “**No to the Israeli Occupation.**” You can watch for events at <http://www.unitedforpeace.org/calendar.php?calid=21239> or contact local groups in your area.