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Local Initiatives for Peace: Perspectives from Gujarat

An event, "Local Initiatives for Peace: Perspectives from Gujarat," will take place on Tuesday, September 20 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the US Institute of Peace, Washington, DC. The speaker will be Father Cedric Prakash, Jesuit priest and Director of Prashant, a human rights and peacemaking organization in Gujarat, India. The focus of the presentation will be on Muslim/Hindu relations in Gujarat. David Smock of the Institute of Peace will serve as moderator. To RSVP, please send your name, affiliation, and daytime phone number to publicaffairs@usip.org.

United Religions Initiative Interfaith Peacebuilding Guide

This guide provides 50 exercises, plus readings and references. With this interactive training Guide you will:

- Develop basic skills in conflict analysis, interfaith dialogue, nonviolent action, healing and reconciliation
- Create a shared vision and action plan for your community using Appreciative Inquiry

- Build group trust and ability to deal with challenging intra-faith and interfaith issues
- Deepen individual capacity for understanding other faiths

Written by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Barbara Hartford, Claudia Liebler, Susanna McIlwaine, Cynthia Sampson and members of URI

To preview or purchase: www.uri.org/peacebuilding/guide

For more information, e-mail Barbara Hartford at: peacebuilding@uri.org

Campus Connection Catholic Relief Services

The CRS Campus Connection

<http://dc.publicaster.com/enterpriseSMTP/enterlinkinfo.cfm?campaign_id=0902J84E4A7E4C46704040441&ct_to=kostickj@jmu.edu&emailid=2494288&list_name=05.06.24.List&target=http://www.crscampusconnection.org/index.html> page has recently been updated with some new resources. Please visit these links today, and use them to help you think of ways you can get your community engaged in global social justice.

Check out the new CRS Publications

<http://dc.publicaster.com/enterpriseSMTP/enterlinkinfo.cfm?campaign_id=0902J84E4A7E4C46704040441&ct_to=kostickj@jmu.edu&emailid=2494288&list_name=05.06.24.List&target=http://www.catholicrelief.org/publications/> page. CRS staff members write some amazing documents, and now you can have access to them. This page contains CRS' best thinking on international development issues including: peacebuilding, education, and HIV/AIDS. It's a fantastic site for research projects and class presentations!

Also, visit the International Campaign Page

<http://dc.publicaster.com/enterpriseSMTP/enterlinkinfo.cfm?campaign_id=0902J84E4A7E4C46704040441&ct_to=kostickj@jmu.edu&emailid=2494288&list_name=05.06.24.List&target=http://www.crscampusconnection.org/Catholic.Campaign.Page.html> . CRS is co-sponsoring several timely initiatives that deal with trade, aid, debt, peace, immigration and other crucial topics. If you're looking for campaigns on international issues that are supported by the U.S. Church, this is the place.

For more information, contact Kevin Kostic, CRS university relations manager (kkostic@catholicrelief.org).

World-Renowned Theologians to Converge in Boston in the Fall of 2005 for an International Conference on Violence and Christian Spirituality

Brookline - Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, in cooperation with the World Council of Churches and the Boston Theological Institute, will host an international conference on Violence and Christian Spirituality from October 27 to 29, 2005 on the college campus in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Guest speakers will include Dr. Marc Gopin, Director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University; and Dr. Ioannis Petrou, Professor of Social Ethics at the University of Thessalonike's School of Theology, among other notable theologians and academicians. In opening remarks, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Sam Kobia, will present the ecumenical challenge of the Christian churches to participate in the building of a culture of justice and peace by overcoming violence. The Keynote Address will be presented by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, who will address how Christian spirituality advances a culture of justice and peace.

Of particular significance will be Friday evening's lecture entitled "Ecumenical Perspectives on Religious Freedom and Human Rights, by Dr. John Witte, Jr., Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Religion at Emory University in Atlanta. Dr. Witte is a noted specialist in legal history and religious liberty and has published 100 professional articles and twelve books. He is also the Director of the Law and Religion Program at Emory.

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis, Dean of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, stating his purpose behind this conference remarked, "Violence is a universal scourge that tears at the fabric of communities and threatens life. According to the Report of the World Health Organization on Violence and Health, almost two million people worldwide lose their lives to violence. But violence is often predictable and preventable. The Christian churches, because of their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, must contribute their spiritual tradition in the common effort of humanity to overcome violence by building a culture of justice and peace. The conference will study the multiple and complex

aspects of violence and retrieve those aspects of Orthodox Christian spiritual life that contribute towards the building of a culture of peace."

"By hosting the conference here at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, we as a center of theological study will also be seen as a center for serious theological reflection," added the Rev. Fr. Nicholas Triantafilou, President of Hellenic College and Holy Cross.

Distinguished scholars from nearby Harvard University, Boston College and Boston University will contribute to the weekend's program. They will include David Little from Harvard Divinity School, David Hollenbach from Boston College, and Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou from Boston University.

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology is the only Greek Orthodox seminary and graduate center for Orthodox higher education in American. Home of the Archbishop Iakovos Library and Learning Resource Center, Holy Cross shares its campus with Hellenic College, the only fully accredited Christian Orthodox undergraduate liberal arts college in America. The schools are located at 50 Goddard Avenue in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Contact: Greg Filias (207) 363-4067

Violence and Christian Spirituality

An International conference sponsored by Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, In cooperation with the World Council of Churches and the Boston Theological Institute

October 27-29, 2005

Thursday

- 4:00 p.m. Registration
- 5:00 p.m. Vespers
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Welcome and Remarks

Rev. Fr. Nicholas C. Triantafilou, President of Hellenic College and
Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

Greetings - "Overcoming Violence: An Ecumenical Christian Task"

Dr. Sam Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

7:30 p.m. Keynote Address - "A Christian Spirituality of Peace and Justice in a Violent World"

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, Lic. Th., Th.D., Ph.D.

Friday

8:00 a.m. Matins

8:30 a.m. Breakfast

Session I:

9:15 a.m. "Religion, Violence and Peacemaking"

Marc Gopin, James H. Laue, Professor of World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution. Director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution. Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

George Mason University, Arlington, VA

9:45 a.m. "Religious Fundamentalisms and Interfaith Dialogue"

Dr. Tarek Mitri, Inter-Religious Relations and Dialogue, World Council of Churches

10:05 a.m. "Peace, Human Development, and Overcoming Violence"

Dr. Ioannis Petrou, Professor of Social Ethics, School of Theology, University of Thessalonike

10:25 a.m. "Witnessing the Peace of God in a Violent World"

Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos, Associate General Secretary for International Affairs and Peace. National Council of Churches, USA

10:45 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. Discussion

12:30 p.m. Lunch

Session II:

2:00 p.m. "Christian Anthropology for a Culture of Peace"

Dr. Thanasis N. Papathanasiou, Editor of Synaxis

2:20 p.m. "Violence and the Freudian 'Death Instinct' from a Christian Orthodox Point View"

Rev. Dr. Adamantios Avgoustides, University of Athens, Greece

2.40 p.m. "Domestic Violence ? Violence against Women: A Panel Discussion"

-Rev. Dr. Diane C. Kessler, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches.

-Dr. Kyriaki FitzGerald, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese

-Dr. Philip Mamalakis, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

3:45 p.m. Break

4:00 p.m. Discussion

5:00 p.m. Vespers

5:30 p.m. Dinner

7:00 p.m. An Evening Address

"Ecumenical Perspectives on Religion Freedom and Human Rights"

Dr. John Witte, Jr., Jonas Robitscher Professor of Law and Ethics

Director of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

Responses:

· David Little, T.J. Dermont Dunphy Professor of the Practice in Religion, Ethnicity, and International Conflict and Director of the Center for the Study of Values in Public Life, Harvard Divinity School.

· David Hollenbach, S.J., The Margaret O'Brien Flatey Chair in Catholic Theology, Boston College.

· Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, Associate Director, Institute on Religion and World Affairs, Boston University.

Saturday

Session III:

8:00 a.m. Matins

8:30 a.m. Breakfast

9:00 a.m. "Nonviolence in the Orthodox Tradition"

Very Rev. Dr. George Tsetsis, Ecumenical Patriarchate

9:20 a.m. "Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Patristic Tradition"

Rev. Dr. George Dragas, Professor of Patristics, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

9:50 a.m. "Building an Identity of Forgiveness and Reconciliation"

Dr. Rodney L. Petersen, Executive Director of the Boston Theological Institute

10:10 a.m. "A Trinitarian Approach to Ecumenical Peace-Church Ecclesiology"

Rev. Dr. Fernando Enns, Professor of Systematic Theology Ecumenical Institute, University of Heidelberg, Germany

10:40 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. Discussion

12:00 p.m. Lunch

Session IV:

2:00 p.m. "The Cosmic and Social Dimensions of Christian Spiritual Life"

Rev. Dr. Thomas FitzGerald, Professor of Church History, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

2:20 p.m. "Discerning the Spirit of God in an Ambivalent World"

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis, Professor of Systematic Theology

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

2:40 p.m. "Praying and experiencing God's Justice and Peace in the Liturgy"

Rev. Dr. Alkiviadis Calivas, Professor Emeritus of Liturgics Holy Cross
Greek Orthodox School of Theology

3:00 p.m. "Suffering and Spiritual Life: The Making of a Compassionate Human
Being"

Professor Lucien Richard, Boston University

3:20 p.m. Break

3:30 p.m. Discussion

4:00 p.m. "The Saints: An Embodied Presence of God's Peace"

Dr. James Skedros, Associate Professor of Early Christianity and
Byzantine History, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

4:15 p.m. "The Spirit of Compassion in the Canonical Tradition of the Church"

Dr. Lewis Patsavos, Professor of Canon Law, Holy Cross Greek
Orthodox School of Theology

4:30 p.m. Discussion and Listener's Report

5:15 p.m. Great Vespers

7:30 p.m. Reception and Dinner

The Religious Dialogue on: " The Role of Religious Leaders in Peace-Building "

The Sudan Inter-Religious Council in cooperation with the US Institute of Peace organized a dialogue meeting on the role of religious leaders in peace building. It was held in the Friendship Hall in Khartoum on 25th and 26th July 2005. The Meeting deliberated on 4 papers under two main titles:

- 1- The Role of Religious Leaders in Making and Supporting Peace Policies.
- 2- The Role of Religious People in Relieving the Bitterness of War and Healing the Wounds of Victims in Conflict Areas.

Two Muslim professors and two Christians participated in writing the working papers.

The Meeting brought together more than 40 figures representing Christian and Muslim leaders from the various churches, and communities in addition to national personalities and academicians.

The Meeting stressed the importance of such gathering, and the significant role that religious leaders of different communities can play to build peace and heal wounds. The celebrations which continued for two days were marked by common understanding and keenness to cooperate in order to support the peace process in the Sudan. The Meeting reached the following recommendations.

a) *Make and Support Peace Policies:*

1-The Meeting welcomed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that put an end to the blood shed, and called for sincere implementation of the Agreement, especially the clauses related to religious freedom and rights. It also urged the religious leaders to adopt a program that supports peace policies in all parts of the country and complements the government's strategy for peace.

The Meeting urged the leaders to play a mediatory and impartial role between the political powers, especially between parties within the government in case of conflict that might jeopardize the cooperation and reconciliation, or hinder the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

2-The religious leaders should agree on a covenant based on equality and respect of religious freedom for all communities, and specify the issues that are considered of national interest, which people should not dispute or undermine. The covenant should draw the proper political and social behaviour that all parties and factions should abide by. It should state the shared religious values and ethics that need to be respected and not offended, as it will strengthen the entity of society, reinforce its unity and respect its diversity.

3-Organizing joint meetings among religious leaders, government officials and political figures, to exchange information and consult on tackling problems, and specify duties that could be fulfilled by religious institutions, especially in cases of unruly behaviours, instigation or aggression among followers of sects, which might escalate and threaten peace and unity of the country. In this sphere, it is possible to reform the Advisory Council of the Minister of Guidance, in a way acceptable to all parties, to

hold regular meetings between the government and the religious leaders. It could be a forum for discussing common problems and issues of national interest.

4-Spreading the concept of religious tolerance and acceptance of political and cultural differences because diversity is a basic fact of life that is unavoidable; it can be a factor of power and strength if dealt with in an appropriate manner. The political-religious discourse should change from the language of mobilization and confrontation, to that of peace, coexistence and love. The fundamentalist elements in each sect, who decline from the course of reconciliation and coexistence, should be confronted from within through an enlightened dialogue based on authentic religious texts which call for knowing and cooperating with one another.

5- Cooperation among religious leaders and institutions to attract material and moral support from inside and outside the Sudan, for purposes of developing poor regions, and rehabilitating war-affected areas. A joint leading committee should be formed for this task. For example, an inclusive international conference for Muslim and Christian leaders could be organized to support peace and unity in Sudan.

The religious institutions should continue their humanitarian work in providing relief, health and educational services, especially in poor areas and displaced camps. The government should encourage and support such humanitarian work.

6-The religious leaders should give an example in cooperation in humanitarian and social fields. They should develop social and personal relationships among themselves to serve the cause of understanding and cooperation. They should also call on their followers to avoid ridiculing or humiliating other beliefs, or hurting those who disagree with them, and distant themselves from all actions, which lead to hatred against others. Religious institutions should avoid indulging themselves in conflicts for the interest of individuals or groups for worldly gains. They should overcome racism and regionalism, in favour of wider mixed political, cultural and social entities that adopt common goals which serve the interests, integration and unity of the country.

They should spread the culture of peace, reasoning and verification of news and rumours before accepting them.

7- Activate the Sudan Inter-Religious Council, support it and participate positively in its activities, so that it can play its role as an effective organization for communication and cooperation among various religious groups. The Council should establish branches in different parts of the Sudan.

8- Developing training programs for young religious and civil leaders on conflict resolution, religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

B) Alleviation of War Bitterness and Healing of Wounds:

9- Religious figures should call on war victims to follow the religious teachings of forgiveness and removal of bitterness and hatred from their hearts, because such feelings spoil the souls and bring evil. They should advise them to hold to the values of patience and generosity, because that pleases God and attracts His forgiveness and love. Religious leaders themselves should be a model in overcoming grudges and raise high the values of peace, forgiveness and love. They should strengthen the lines of communication and acquaintance among themselves.

10- Religious leaders should give joint speeches at religious events, popular gatherings and national celebrations reminding people of the significance of tolerance and forgiveness for peaceful coexistence, rebuilding the country and creating a better future for coming generations. They should also remind people of the value of prayer and supplications for peace- building, doing the good and spreading love, as these actions wash away hostility from the hearts, the way the white dress is washed from dirt. The genuine faith is directly linked to good deeds, and they never part ways.

11- Since peace, tolerance and love will not flourish in a society that suffers from injustice, corruption, favouritism and poverty; the religious leaders should advise the government and chiefs of society to stick to justice, equal opportunities and proper behaviour. They should also assist the weak and needy and compensate the victims of war.

12- A joint commission should be formed from religious leaders and national figures to call for mutual reconciliation and forgiveness, in order to erase hostilities and grudges from people's hearts and to recognize the harm and injustice that people suffered, so that they may look forward for a better future in which social justice, mercy and love shall prevail.

13- Intensify peace and reconciliation programs on mass media and means of guidance; teach the material as a subject in schools and institutes. The media programs and the educational syllabi should be models for diversity and pluralism, which is the characteristic of the Sudanese society.

For more information: Prof. al-Tayib Z. al-Abdin, Secretary General, SIRC, Khartoum
(tayibzain@hotmail.com)

The Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN) is a voluntary network of practitioners, academics, clergy and laity from around the world which seeks to enhance the study and practice of Catholic peacebuilding, especially at the local level. The CPN aims to deepen bonds of solidarity among Catholic peacebuilders, share and analyze “best practices,” expand the peacebuilding capacity of the Church in areas of conflict, and encourage the further development of a theology of a just peace. While it is a Catholic network, the CPN believes that authentic and effective Catholic peacebuilding involves dialogue and collaboration with those of other religious traditions and all those committed to building a more just and peaceful world.

Contact Information:

Gerard F. Powers, *Coordinator*, or Colette Sgambati, *Program Assistant*

Catholic Peacebuilding Network

P.O. Box 639

Notre Dame, IN 46556-0639, USA

574.631.9370 (ph)

574.631.6973 (fax)

email: cpn@nd.edu

<http://cpn.nd.edu>

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