

Solidarity and Human Rights by Sr. Masicha Carolyne, SSND (AF)



Solidarity simply defined is bonding together for the purpose of caring for each other. In solidarity we embrace Jesus' call to compassionate living. We enter into the hurts and sufferings of others. It is not a mere vague feeling of compassion or a shallow distress at another's misfortune. (*Pope John Paul II*) It is a deliberate determination to commit oneself to work for changes that enhance the well-being of all.

How can we become lovers of our neighbors and acknowledge that human rights are God-given? Can we allow ourselves to be challenged and reminded that everyone is entitled to all rights articulated in the UN Declaration, without discrimination of any kind?

Yearly, we have opportunities to reflect on the meaning, the importance, and the need to respect human rights. One such event is the [16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence Campaign](#) (Nov. 25-Dec. 10), which emphasizes that violence against women is a violation of human rights. As individuals and community, we need to continually commit ourselves to works of developing just structures. By doing so, we take up the responsibility of upholding the goals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in our daily lives and protecting the freedom and rights of others in our families, communities, and societies.

In addressing human rights issues: the right to life ... to own property ... to work ... to go to school, solidarity moves us to cease talking about people and talk of individuals with faces and names. Rights and responsibilities are inseparable. How can we support each other to claim and be responsible for our rights?

Millions Stand-Up Against Poverty and Take Action for the MDGs

After a year in which progress on eradicating global poverty has actually been reversed, more than 173 million people came together across continents, cultures and time zones to tell governments in no uncertain terms what they want them to do: *End Poverty and Achieve the Millennium Development Goals—Now!*

The third annual [Stand Up and Take Action](#) ([Deutsch](#)) ([Español](#)) demonstrated citizens' resolve to hold their leaders accountable for promises made at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit. With just six years left to the 2015 deadline for the achievement of the MDGs, their messages reflected a growing sense of urgency and impatience with the slow pace of implementation of policies and programs that help the poorest and most vulnerable.



SSNDs, their colleagues, and friends were among the millions in 120 countries who took action to remind leaders at the local, national, and international level that time is running out. Communities in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Chatawa, USA prayed for an end to poverty and stood up for the MDGs. Students and faculty in Makó, Hungary organized a special day to reflect upon how they might live more responsibly; while at the Academy of the Holy Angels in Demarest, USA, 500 members stood up against poverty, organized a food drive, and signed a petition in support of revitalizing US foreign aid. The Global Justice & Peace Commission of the Milwaukee Province organized participation in the Jubilee USA "Change, not Chains" post card campaign. Over 200 post cards were completed by sisters and staff at Notre Dame Elm Grove. Many other SSNDs took advantage of on-line events and added their voices to the call to end poverty.

In Solidarity for Peace by S. Roxanne Schares, SSND *Shalom* Coordinator

Around the world, members of the SSND family: sisters and associates; colleagues, employees, and friends; students, faculties, and parish communities commemorated the United Nations [International Day of Peace](#), September 21.

SSNDs of the Italian Province prayed for peace through songs, psalms, and reflection. The [Generalate Community](#) in Rome welcomed the Jubilee Center Community sisters and lay missionaries of the Institute for World Evangelization for evening prayer. Prayer began with each person blessing people and places with peace, then lighting a candle for them.

In Hungary, sisters prayed for peace during morning and evening prayer using the September Solidarity Reflection. One community included a reflection with power point. In Slovenia, [School Sisters of Notre Dame](#) prayed for peace during community prayer and the Eucharist. Catechists led their classes in prayer for peace, discussions, and commitment to concrete actions for peace. In Germany, students of [Theresia-Gerhardinger-Gymnasium am Anger](#) in Munich made peace pinwheels and distributed them in the school.



[Sisters of the Polish Province](#) celebrated the day under the banner: “They will hammer their swords into plows and their spears into pruning knives.” (Is 2:4) Throughout the day sisters prayed for peace. Students in catechetical classes and youth groups in Poland and Belarus prayed and discussed elements for building peace. The *Shalom* Club in SP 115 School in Warsaw prepared peace greeting cards, planted a “Tree of Peace”, and drew up and distributed an “Appeal for the Day of Peace” in the school and parish and to leaders of their city quarter of Mokotów.

In Kenya, students of St. Mary’s Girls Primary School in Kisii held a prayer service, during which they listened to a peace story, sang, read from the Bible, and shared about how they can bring peace into their homes and their school. The *Shalom* Club of Notre Dame Girls Secondary School in Sunyani, Ghana held a prayer session and silently stood up to pledge their commitment to peace.



In the USA, the [All Saints School Community](#) of St. Peter, Missouri gathered in the morning around the Peace Pole for prayer led by members of the *Shalom* Club. Students, faculty, and the parish community prayed to become the voices of Peace that the world needs. As a sign of their promise and commitment to reflect God’s peace, students signed their names to mirrors that were placed in the peace garden. Later the mirrors will go to the students’ homerooms to be a constant reminder that they “are the voice of God...that God is here and God is everywhere.”

Students at the [Academy of the Holy Angels](#), Demarest, New Jersey began their commemoration on September 18 by gathering during lunch break at the Peace Pole to sign the online “We Must Disarm” Declaration. On the day itself, everyone received a *Shalom* peace prayer card; students and faculty were invited to sign the International Day of Peace Pledge, making a commitment to be a peacemaker “Right Here, Right Now.” Teachers incorporated prayer and action for peace into their classes. Classes began with a peace song, guided meditation, or a centering exercise creating inner peace. Films and websites were viewed and studied. An Italian class prayed the Prayer of St. Francis in Italian; then students wrote their own commitments to peace in Italian.

Nearly 400 gathered at the Peace Pole of Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Wisconsin for a public prayer for peace, organized by the Global Justice and Peace Commission of the [SSND Milwaukee Province](#). Students from Notre Dame Middle School and St. Mary’s Visitation Grade School joined the sisters, associates, employees, and friends in reflective prayer and spirit-filled song. At noon the [Sisters of St. Louis](#) provincial house rang bells for one minute during which there was silent prayer for peace.

Later in the afternoon sisters gathered for a prayer service using the September International Solidarity Reflection for Peace.

School Sisters of Notre Dame and the Congregation of Notre Dame at Villa Notre Dame in Wilton, Connecticut gathered around the Peace Pole. Joining with the sisters at the ringing of the convent bells were all staff members of the Villa. They prayed in the 13 languages represented among them, and each received the memento of a pencil bearing the Peace Pole inscription: "May Peace Prevail on Earth".

Linking and Collaborating through *Shalom* by S. Eileen Reilly, SSND (AM)



"Wherever possible, we link our ministries across the world. We collaborate with others on all levels, sharing our charism and spirituality. Together we carry our mission into the future." (*Call to Solidarity*) Although not explicitly stated, this was the theme of the recent meeting of the *Shalom* Branch Representatives of North America.

Meeting at the St. Louis Motherhouse, we began our time together by "Deepening our Sense of Place," through a reflection on the beauty of this site on the banks of the Mississippi River and on ways the sisters have preserved and revered all creation. Then much of the time was spent learning from each other about how each works to "carry our mission into the future" through the *Shalom* Network as well as SSND presence at the United Nations.

The focus on girls' education provides all of us opportunities to collaborate. We have done this by bringing girls to the UN to participate in meetings on girls' rights and by supporting an alternative Christmas gift-giving to support of education of girls in SSND schools in Africa, a program that we dream of expanding. *Shalom* Clubs provide another opportunity for linking ministries as we search for ways to facilitate sharing among the clubs which exist in Africa, Europe, North America, and South America.

As we strive to "collaborate with others on all levels," we also reach beyond our SSND network. Whether it is farm workers, victims of human trafficking, or immigrants, we work together with others who share our concerns, as we share our charism and spirituality, as well as our interests, gifts, and experiences.

SSNDs Attend UN Conference by S. Ann Scholz, SSND UN/NGO Director

School Sisters of Notre Dame Gilma Alexandrino da Costa (SP), Jacci Glessner (LA), and Ann Scholz joined some 800 NGO representatives from more than 50 countries in Mexico City for the 62nd Annual DPI/NGO Conference, "[For Peace and Development: Disarm Now!](#)" ([Español](#)).



Speakers repeatedly pointed to poverty and underdevelopment as the cause, and, in many cases, also the affect of most of the world's conflicts. Roberto Zamora, a Costa Rican peace activist and lawyer, put it bluntly; too much money was being spent on the military in rich nations to hold onto power. Instead of investing in arms, states should invest resources in health, education, distribution of wealth, food, and water. Also pointing to the dangers and waste of spending on weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, was Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor of the City of Hiroshima, Japan, and President of [Mayors for Peace](#) ([Español](#)).

Conference participants urged governments to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without further delay or conditions. They also called for strict government regulation of the sale, trade, possession and use of small arms and an effective arms trade treaty for all types of conventional weapons.

S. Jaci summed up the whole of the experience, “One of the impressions that will stay with me is that of the numbers of persons present from all parts of the world. If there are so many people in the world dedicated to the promotion of peace and justice, and in particular to the elimination of weapons at all levels, then there is great hope for the world.”

Prior to the start of the DPI/NGO Conference, SSND delegates joined the delegates of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) and the Religious of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ) for a three-day orientation about the United Nations and the work of NGOs especially religious congregations at the UN. Thanks to the generosity of the local RSCJs, participants received an orientation to Mexico and an introduction to the Mexican people. The group celebrated Sunday Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe with hundreds of pilgrims, including a group of campesinos who offered their food and drink freely to all who passed by. Later participants shared a meal and conversation with some of the women who first claimed and then built Cologne Santo Domingo, a neighborhood in Mexico City.

Announcements

[The UN Climate Change Conference](#) meets in Copenhagen, December 7-18. Consider joining the [UN Seal the Deal Campaign](#) to build political support for comprehensive global climate agreement. Follow COP 15 in all the UN languages on the [Host Country’s Website](#).

[Human Rights Day](#), commemorated on December 10, focuses on non-discrimination with the theme: “Embrace Diversity; End Discrimination”. SSNDs, their colleagues, and friends join with the international community to work toward ending all forms of discrimination and to promote human rights for all. Resources are available on [SSND International website](#).



The [Commission for Social Development](#) will meet at UN headquarters in New York, February 3-12, 2010. This [48th Session of the Commission](#) will focus on social integration. The Social Integration survey, which several SSNDs participated in, will help inform NGO recommendations to governments at the Commission meeting.

The 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women March 1-12, 2010



will review progress and continuing challenges on the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. At this session the SSND delegation will include young women from Mt. Mary College in Milwaukee.

This year marks the [20th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). For this occasion, UNICEF published [Progress Report for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection](#) which draws attention to violations of children’s basic rights in many countries.

