

Call to Solidarity: The Way to Peace by S. Ann Scholz (UN/NGO Director for SSND)



Wars and armed conflict kill thousands of people around the world each year; most are women and children. Wars turn adults and children into soldiers and families into refugees. Wars destroy environments, cultures, and economies; and they happen every single day.

How can this be in a world made in the image and likeness of God? How can this be in a world redeemed by one who came to bring all to oneness in God? How can this be in a world blessed by the grace of the Spirit of Peace?

I will not presume to offer any definitive answers to those eternal questions. However, like many before me, I learned a long time ago that peace does not begin on the battlefield, or at the negotiating table, not even in the halls of the United Nations. Peace begins—peace must begin—in the hearts and minds of each of us. Peace, true peace—the peace that surpasses all understanding—begins when we embrace the essential unity of all creation which has at its center the creative love of God.

Peace begins when we take into our hearts the pain of a mother who cannot feed her son. Peace begins when we embrace the suffering of a father who cannot educate his daughter. Peace begins when we open our souls to the brokenness of our world.

Peace grows when we nourish the minds and souls of those who seek wisdom and grace. Peace grows when we take seriously the words of Jesus to feed the hunger and clothe the naked. Peace grows when we act on behalf of justice and participate in the transforming work of God's Spirit.

Peace is the fruit of life lived in union with God and solidarity with all of God's creation and it requires that we risk all we are and all we have for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ.

SSNDs Collaborate for Justice and Peace by S. Jacinta Ondeng (AF)

School Sisters of Notre Dame ministering or studying at [Tangaza College](#) appreciate and support activities of the college's Justice and Peace Commission (JPC). Tangaza College is a constituent of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi, Kenya. Since its inception in 1989, Tangaza JPC has been a source of hope for college students and staff as well as for members of the wider community.

The Tangaza JPC is dedicated to building just and peaceful relations within the college and beyond. It promotes harmonious relationships among its students, administration, and teaching and non-teaching staff. It has successfully mediated many issues involving students and staff and has led efforts to ensure that justice and peace prevail within the Tangaza community.

The JPC has pursued various activities during the last academic year. Following the disputed general election results of December 2008, which led to the violence in Kenya, the Commission's priority has been to the displaced people at various camps. These camps of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) still exist, and people live in desperate conditions. Students and staff visited various camps during the year, expressing solidarity, bringing consolation, and distributing foodstuffs and clothing. The question remains unanswered as to why the government has not settled the IDPs to places which they can refer to as home.

Other activities included organizing capacity-building workshops and facilitating sensitization seminars for youth in the slums of Nairobi. One highlight was the launching of an anti-drugs campaign among the youth in the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa. In May 2009, the commission organized a public talk on the topic “The Kenya We Want/The Kenya We Don’t Want.” The talk was attended by representatives from seven other universities and colleges.

Through the invitation of the JPC of Marsabit Diocese, some of the JPC members gave peace talks to five schools within the diocese as well as a peace-building workshop to the Gabra and Borana communities in conflict with each other. Presently, the Commission is mobilizing to feed 800 youth camps severely affected by famine in this region.

The Tangaza College JPC confronts with steadfast hope all the challenges that they experience as they respond to the cries of Earth and its people. School Sisters of Notre Dame in Nairobi, Kenya find collaboration with the Commission a means and a concrete expression of living the *Call to Solidarity*.

Action for Climate Justice by S. Roxanne Schares (*Shalom* Coordinator)



Concern for Earth and the environment with the urgency to act *now* becomes more evident every day. Commemoration of Earth and Environment days, calls to prayer and ecological conversion, seminars, and advocacy on climate change are just some of the ways people around the world are expressing ecological commitment. In words and deeds, Pope Benedict XVI also conveys firm commitment. Several sections in [Caritas in Veritate](#) (48-51) are dedicated to the environment, and the theme chosen for his message for the World Day of Peace 2010 is “If you want to cultivate peace, take care of creation.”

People around the world commemorated [World Environment Day](#) on June 5 by celebrating the gift of Earth and all creation and by taking action for climate justice. School Sisters of Notre Dame and their students, colleagues, and friends marked the occasion in a variety of ways. In Kenya, students at Kiptere’s St. Francis Girls Secondary School planted trees and flowers.

The SSND Generalate Community in Rome, Italy prayed for ecological conversion. They then enjoyed an evening of picking fruit in the generalate gardens. In Hungary, the sisters held a special prayer service with reflection on scenes of nature. Groups of students went on nature excursions. [Patrona School in Budapest](#), held a cultural day for which students, and chose ecological issues for study and presentations.

Staff of [SUNSEED Eco-Education Center, Mount Calvary](#), Wisconsin organized two prayer services for the people in that locale. Participants were invited to commune with nature, to reflect on Scripture, to mourn the misuse of creation, and to commit to action. Tours of the center gardens, orchard, labyrinth, and the chicken and pig havens followed.

Faith communities are taking action and organizing themselves to join together in prayer and in the struggle to defend the rights of Earth and the rights of the poor and marginalized. Efforts to lobby governments and international institutions on the issue of climate change are urgently needed in preparation for the [UN Conference on Climate Change Conference](#) to be held in Copenhagen, December 7–18, 2009.

Join SSND Delegations to the UN Commission Meetings in 2010 by S. Ann Scholz (UN/NGO Director for SSND)

Association with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) requires that Non-Governmental Organizations make their experience and expertise available to ECOSOC's Commissions.



Please consider becoming more directly involved in the SSND ministry at the UN. You can start by learning more about the issues before the Commissions and taking that agenda to prayer. If you have information or comments related to the Commissions' agendas or would like to join a delegation, please write to Ann Scholz, SSND at

ssndunngo@earthlink.net.

[Commission for Social Development](#) (CSocD) February 3–12, 2010

The Commission's work focuses on the implementation of the [Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action](#) and is primarily concerned with social justice and the promotion of people-centered development. The [48th Session of the Commission](#) will focus on social integration.

[Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW) March 1–12, 2010

The CSW is dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. The 54th Session of the CSW will review progress and continuing challenges on the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. At that session the SSND delegation will include young women from Mt. Mary College in Milwaukee.

[Commission on Sustainable Development](#) (CSD) May 3–14, 2010

CSD promotes dialogue, elaborates policy options, and builds partnerships for sustainable development. [CSD-18](#) will focus on [transport](#), chemicals, waste management, mining, and the development of a [Ten-Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns](#) in preparation for negotiations at the 2011 session of the Commission.

[Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#) (PFII) April 19–30, 2010

The Permanent Forum is an advisory body to ECOSOC with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health, and human rights. Its 9th Session will focus on the special theme for the year, "Indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity: articles 3 and 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

Coming Events

SSNDs Attend UN Conference in Mexico City



The School Sisters of Notre Dame will send a delegation to the annual [United Nations NGO Conference](#) to be held in Mexico City from September 9–11, 2009. This year's conference, *For Peace and Development: Disarm Now!*, aims to highlight effective ways that civil society can contribute to the advancement of disarmament and peace and, as a result, promote sustainable development.

This year's delegation includes SSNDs: S. Gilma Alexandrino da Costa–São Paulo, Brazil; S. Jacqueline Glessner–Lima, Peru; and S. Ann Scholz–Director of the SSND UN/NGO Office. An orientation will be held jointly with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the Religious of the Sacred Heart. The orientation will introduce participants to the work of religious congregations at the UN.

International Day of Peace—September 21, 2009



The International Day of Peace was established by the United Nations to “commemorate and strengthen the ideals of peace within and among all nations and people.” The day is a global call for ceasefire and non-violence. This year, Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon will use the day to ask governments and citizens of the world to focus on the important issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. His message is simple: “We Must Disarm!”

Join millions around the world as they embrace peace and challenge world leaders to lay down their weapons. Resources and suggestions about how to commemorate the day are available at <http://www.gerhardinger.org/english/jpicsen/idopsep2109/jpicidop09.htm> and at www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/2009.

Stand Up and Speak Out against Poverty and for the MDGs—October 16-18, 2009



For the fourth year in a row, the SSND family will join millions of people around the world and Stand Up and Take Action to show their support for the fight against poverty and for the [Millennium Development Goals](#)

(MDGs).

This year, Stand Up will take place against the backdrop of a deep financial crisis and a slowing global economy. The current economic climate threatens to undo and possibly even reverse the very significant gains that have been made towards achieving the MDGs. Stand Up is a vital opportunity to send a clear and urgent message to world leaders and decision makers and to raise the political stakes. Information and resource materials are available at <http://www.gerhardinger.org/english/jpicsen/standup2009/standup09.htm> and at www.standagianstpoverty.org ([English](#), [German](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#))

II Special Assembly for Africa

Join in solidarity with the people of Africa during the Synod of Bishops [II Special Assembly for Africa](#) October 4-25, 2009. The theme is “The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace”. Follow what takes place at the synod; learn about what is actually happening in Africa and why; come to understand the joys, the struggles, and the hope of the people of this continent; and work for justice and structural change for the benefit of everyone on the continent. For more information on the African Synod, visit www.yesafricamatters.org.

Celebrate International Day of Climate Change, October 24



October 24 is the foundation day of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and of the United Nations. This year it is also designated [International Day of Climate Action](#). More than 100 nations are taking part in this grassroots global event; embracing an ecological commitment and making courageous decisions to promote climate justice. Celebrate the wonder of God’s work among us and gratefully commit to act together in solidarity with all Creation.