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HONG KONG: JUSTICE & PEACE NEWSLETTER

The Network of Justice and Peace Workers (JPW) has launched its first quarterly e-newsletter in March. Titled "JPW Bulletin," the newsletter features news about events and activities of various Catholic justice and peace organizations and affiliated groups in the Asia-Pacific region. The January-March 2009 first edition of the newsletter includes a special section called "Justice and Peace Resources" which highlights the "World Day of Social Justice Prayer." The Bulletin is posted on the ACPP (Asian Center for the Progress of Peoples) website at www.acpp.org/jpwb/jpwb0901.htm

UZBEKISTAN: BIBLE AND MEL GIBSON'S 'THE PASSION' BANNED IN KARAKALPAKSTAN REGION

Nurulla Zhamolov, senior religious affairs official in Karakalpakstan (north-western Uzbekistan), announced that religious materials including hymn books, Bible Encyclopaediae, Bible dictionaries, and children's Bibles are "banned for import, distribution or use in teaching." Mel Gibson's 2004 "The Passion of the Christ" was also included in the list of banned materials, which is odd, reports say, since the feature film was shown throughout the country attracting large crowds. Karakalpakstan covers a third of Uzbek territory, but is home to only 5 percent of the population. Only Islam is allowed in the region. The only exception is Russian Orthodoxy which is allowed in the regional capital of Nukus. (ASIANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: CHURCH RADIO STATION STRAFED WITH GUNFIRE

Unidentified men fired gunshots at the gate of the Catholic AM radio station, DZPA, in Bangued, Abra province on June 17. Divine Word Bishop Leopoldo Jaucian, however, said it is not certain whether the attack was directed to diocesan broadcaster, Marjorie Trinidad, and her family sheltering there, or just a prank by teenagers with guns. The compound of the 30-year-old radio station houses a newspaper office, an Internet café run by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), and the NGO, Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government. The national journalism union, meanwhile, says the attacks are related to a column Trinidad wrote alleging anomalies at the local power cooperative. Bishop Jaucian said many people living in Abra own unlicensed firearms and use them impulsively. He would direct his priests, the bishop said, to encourage private armies in the diocese to surrender their unlicensed firearms during a government-sanctioned amnesty program between July to October this year. (SE)

"...reflecting on the significance of new technologies, it is important to focus not just on their undoubted capacity to foster contact between people, but on the quality of the content that is put into circulation using these means."

- Pope Benedict XVI, 43rd World Communication
Day Message

HONG KONG: PRIESTS AND NUNS COMMUNICATE VIA INTERNET

A seminar held on June 26 to mark the 43rd World Communication Day revealed that some priests and sisters in the diocese do manage to communicate with young people across the Internet. Father Philip Chan Tak-hung, a contributor of amusing stories to the Chinese-language Catholic weekly *Kung Kao Po*, said he has over 600 contacts on his Facebook. He called it consolidating the unity of God's supporters. Sister May Lim Yin-ling told the more than 100 people present at the seminar, that with the use of technology, she has managed to break through the stereotypical attitudes many young people hold towards sisters. Like Fr. Chan, she makes a bit of time each day on Facebook to reply to comments and questions, and it helps to build relationships outside the classroom. A parish worker from St. Benedict's in Shatin, Sister Sania Ho Ka-yi, said she too has been able to help parishioners understand more about her vocation through her blog and dispel a few myths. The seminar was organized by the Hong Kong Catholic Social Communications Office, *Kung Kao Po* and the Diocesan Audio-Visual Centre. (SE)

MALAYSIA: BIBLE WITHOUT 'ALLAH' PROMOTED IN BOOK FAIR

A Bible in Indonesian Malay, but without the word "Allah" in it, was promoted during the international book fair held April 17-26 at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur. The book was displayed among other Islamic books on the first days of the book fair. The bible, *Kitab Suci*, was printed in Indonesia but the publisher did not confirm whether this edition was approved by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Indonesia. According to experts in Malaysia, evidence points to the wrong use of words *Elohim* and *Tuhan* or Lord with *Yahweh* in the K to substitute the word *Allah* or God. In an article published in the "Herald" on April 26, the newspaper's editor, Fr. Lawrence Andrew, SJ, said this is "crass plagiarism!" "We, as Christians, are naturally disturbed by the fact that such a publication has been allowed to be promoted in Malaysia," the priest said. (CATHOLIC SABAH)

HONG KONG: 'DIALOGUE' SUGGESTED AT THE BOOK FAIR

Religious leaders at the 20th Hong Kong Book Fair held from July 22 to 28 have suggested that a session on interreligious dialogue be organized to help introduce fair-goers to different religions. The fair at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre had a Religious and Spirituality Zone in which were clustered Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Buddhist and Taoist booths. In recent years, religious groups have organized activities, in addition to the display of books and periodicals, to promote a wider readership. This additional activity is a good venue to promote culture and introduce books to readers, a Catholic priest said. (SE)

INDIA: CONCLUSION OF THE PAULINE YEAR USED THEATERTOEVANGELIZE

In closing the Year of St. Paul, the Pauline sisters have staged a theater play on June 29 in Vasai, and later in Mumbai entitled *Parivartan Shaulacha* (“The Conversion of Paul”). The sisters themselves have written the script in Marathi, the local dialect. The project showed the work of St. Paul, his love for Christ crucified and his passion in apostolic action. It has become a useful instrument for vocation promotion and evangelization. It also spurred interest among young audiences in the story of the Apostle. The Archdiocese of Mumbai has joined the Pauline Family in organizing study seminars and prayer encounters to celebrate the Pauline Year. Among the initiatives taking place in India is the publication of a new version of the Bible by the Society of Saint Paul. (FIDES)

TAIWAN: PRIESTS’ CHOIR FORMED TO HELP CLERGY RELIEVESTRESS

Bishop Thomas Chung An-zu of Chiayi diocese has formed a priests’ choir to help his clergy beat work stress. The bishop, who plays the violin and guitar, says that just as people in modern day society face much pressure in their daily lives, so do priests. In light of this realization, he decided to form a priests’ choir to help them relieve stress, enjoy greater fellowship among themselves and at the same time bring joy to others. Nineteen out of the 49 diocesan and religious priests in the diocese have signed up for choir membership. The group performed their first song, the Latin hymn *Panis Angelicus*, at the Chrism Mass on April 9. They also performed at the diocesan youth day held from May 28 to 30. (UCANEWS)

CAMBODIA: LIGHTNING DESTROYS CHURCH-RUN SCHOOL’S MEDIA FACILITIES

A lightning strike on May 9 completely destroyed the radio and TV studios of the Don Bosco Technical School in Sihanoukville, southern Cambodia. None of the more than 100 boarders at the school’s premises when the lightning struck was hurt, reports however say. A fire caused by the lightning did not spread beyond two sound-proof rooms but firefighters failed to save the facilities that were built in February. Two computers, a projector and other audiovisual materials were completely destroyed, a school official said. The studios and equipment, used for media education, had been bought using donations from the Netherlands. Don Bosco Technical School is a leading vocational training institute in Cambodia run by the Salesians of Don Bosco. Aside from Sihanoukville, it has four other campuses in the country, in Battambang, Kep, PhnomPenh and Poipet. (UCANEWS)

SRI LANKA: UNKNOWN GANG HACKS ARCHDIOCESAN WEBSITE

The website of the Archdiocese of Colombo was hacked on April 29, blocking hundreds of thousands of viewers trying to get news from the then growing humanitarian disaster in the north of Sri Lanka. According to the archdiocese, this was the work of an “unknown gang.” The website has been a key source of news as government forces closed in around the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which wants to establish a separate state in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. As of early May, the archdiocese’s website at <www.archdioceseofcolombo.com> is fully functional again, reports say. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: CHURCH PROPOSES CUTS ON FILM ‘ANGELS AND DEMONS’

Church representatives met with Censor Board chairperson Sharmila Tagore and other censor board members in New Delhi on May 1 to discuss the Church’s view about the movie “Angels and Demons.” The film is based on the same titled novel written by “The Da Vinci Code” author, Dan Brown, and was released worldwide in mid-May. The Church proposed deleting certain scenes as the film generally portrays, yet again, the Church and the Pope in poor light. Otherwise, right-wing groups might take advantage of the situation to hurt the Church’s image. “There is a lack of information about the Church and its involvement in social development... A movie trying to depict the papacy in bad light may send wrong impressions about the Church and its structure,” spokesperson of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI), Fr. Babu Joseph, was quoted as saying. After the meeting at the Films Division Auditorium, Fr. Joseph said Sharmila Tagore has agreed with the Church’s view on the film. (SAR NEWS)

BANGLADESH: TRADITIONAL SONG CYCLE MARKS PAULINE YEAR

The performance of *shongkirtan*, a devotional song cycle based on Saint Paul’s life, in April in Muzgunni parish, southern Khulna, gave a traditional flavor to the Pauline Year. The *shongkirtan*, originally a Hindu form of devotion, is very popular in southern Bangladesh. They were adopted by Christians in the country more than 150 years ago as foreign missionaries evangelized among the Hindus. The traditional art form is similar to medieval European miracle plays. The recent performance in Muzgunni focused on St. Paul and included dialogue and songs. It has moved many in the audience to tears. The Pauline *shongkirtan* was written by Father Dominic Halder, parish priest in Khulna. (UCANEWS)

CHINA: SICHUAN SEMINARY TURNS 25, WANTS TO PRODUCE BETTER PREACHERS

Sichuan Catholic Seminary in southwestern China has marked its 25th anniversary on June 22-23 with a determination to enhance preaching skills and spiritual life among its seminarians. Bishop Paul He Zeqing of Wanzhou, a board member and an alumnus of the seminary, suggested a series of lectures on homiletics and more practice giving homilies. He told a board meeting on June 22 that Catholic priests and seminarians sometimes lack preaching skills and are not as poised as many Protestant pastors. The bishop also said he attaches great importance to all-round formation of seminarians’ personality. Another board member, Coadjutor Bishop Paul Xiao Zejiang of Guizhou, advised the seminary to nurture religious sentiment and spirituality among seminarians. (UCANEWS)



“When we find ourselves drawn towards other people, when we want to know more about them and make ourselves known to them, we are responding to God’s call - a call that is imprinted in our nature as beings created in the image and likeness of God, the God of communication and communion.”

- Pope Benedict XVI, 43rd World Communication Day Message