



The Earth possesses Rights and Dignity

The bad news just does not want to end in 2010 – the year of catastrophes. Hardly has one alarming message vanished from the headlines, when it is followed by new reports about the worst floods within living memory. These reports speak of hundreds of deaths, destruction of harvests, of the infrastructure etc. These are mostly capers of nature that occur ever so often, but not in that frequency and virulence. The man-made climate change shows its destructive force. Has the world come apart at the seams? It is apparent, in any case, that the usual way of dealing with catastrophes is no longer sufficient to prevent us from anxiety about the future.

The central issue of the “World Peoples’ Summit on Climate Change“, which was held in Cochabamba, Bolivia in April of this year, was by far more fundamental than the questions on causes and consequences of the climate change. As President Morales emphasized in his opening address, it is about the rights and the dignity of the earth. The earth is not to be regarded as an object and as a possession of mankind, but as an autonomous subject. The anthropocentric worldview that dignity and rights are only due to mankind as an intelligent creature is replaced by a much broader view of things. We have to understand at last that we are all a part of a greater whole and that we will only fare well if we pay respect and preserve it. Especially the people of the Andes have maintained an infallible instinct for centuries and throughout the many wrong tracks of industrial development. Earth was perceived as the great Mother, who produces everything and who provides everything we need for life. The earth is

thus understood as the encompassing organism regulating itself, healing damages, thus protecting and safeguarding life. It is virtually an intelligent biosphere in which mankind can develop and live if he/she pays respect to this autonomous dignity and takes care of whatever life in it. Land and mankind form a unity that may not be treated separately. One can even say: the land is part of the dignity and the rights of mankind.

This should be the true motivation for a new ecological awareness. Any kind of aggressive exploitation of nature, every unscrupulous waste of limited resources of the earth for profit reasons are to be regarded as a violation of the rights and the dignity of the earth. Therefore, there was also discussion on possible measures to legally punish these violations. It was suggested to use a UNO Court of Justice where the violation of the dignity of the earth, the destruction of rain forests, air pollution, contamination of the oceans etc., will be determined as crimes and will be punished accordingly.

It has been verified by climatologists that we will only be able to prevent the climate collapse if we drastically reduce CO² emission. This requires sustainable good management and the change of our lifestyles. Will we be able to understand and accept this challenge? This can only be achieved if we find a way to live together in a brotherly and sisterly relationship with all beings on this earth. Francis had already discovered this 800 years ago and he was a living example. This will remain our special obligation.

Andreas Müller OFM

Africa

DR of Congo: Solemn Relaunch of the CCFMC in Kinshasa

12 June 2010 marks the official relaunch of the CCFMC in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This event was celebrated during the appointment of Bishop Stanislas Lukumwena OFM as the country's CCFMC Coordinator.



The celebration began with a prayer and the introduction of the 27 attending representatives from various branches of the Franciscan Family (a. o. OFM, OFM-Cap and a number of representatives from affiliated Franciscan Congregations). After reading of the letter that had been sent by the CCFMC Center on the recommendation of Bishop Stanislas as CCFMC Coordinator for the DR of Congo, Bishop Stanislas took the floor to explain the goals of his CCFMC activities.

We quote. "The task is endless; Franciscan spirituality has to make way into our homes. Franciscan charism has to be clearly visible. The Brothers and Sisters need to be filled with Franciscan spirituality. For this reason we will open an office to provide you with the working tools in order to secure the formation of all novices, of the young members of the orders, and for all of us in general. Each congregation will name the members, who are suited for formation, i.e. animators that will first of all be trained and who will then in turn become trainers themselves. The focus lies on Franciscan spirituality and its foundations. Also with retreats we have to work together as we are one family. We will begin in Kinshasa and from there we will move on to Lubumbashi, Bukavu, Kasai, and Brazzaville and so on. We will take care of the entire Franciscan Family. "

At the end of the celebration Father Stanislas Lukumwena announced that an individual committee would be formed for the handling and the execution of projects.

During the concluding question time all persons present wanted to find out, among other things, about the relations between the CCFMC, the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality in Rome, and the Formation Centre for Franciscan Missionaries in Belgium. They were interested to find out about the experiences of the CCFMC in Germany and what kind of relations it maintains with other Franciscan institutions.



In place of Bishop Stanislas, the team of the CCFMC Centre in Würzburg would like to comment briefly:

The Franciscan Institute of Spirituality in Rome was involved in the elaboration of the CCFMC lesson units. From the very beginning the course had been designed as an inter-Franciscan project; the General Administrations of the First Order, the OSC, the IFC-TOR Congregations and the International Secular Order OFS are represented in the International Board of the CCFMC. The idea of the course is to address the most important problems of our time from a Franciscan point of view and thus to create a Franciscan awareness. Therefore, the lesson units are an important basis for the development of specific initiatives and campaigns in the Church and in society. The CCFMC Center in Germany coordinates the worldwide propagation of the

course among the Brothers and Sisters of all branches of the Franciscan Family and maintains the networking with other inter-Franciscan institutions as well as with such non-governmental organizations that are working in the fields of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. We often experience that the CCFMC has led to a deeper experience of our common identity in the individual orders and congregations and it is perceived as a uniting power and source of energy for the Franciscan Family.

Latin America

Paraguay: Youth in the Countryside at the Centre of CCFMC Work

One of the important activities of the CCFMC in poor rural areas of Paraguay is the introduction of young people to practical agricultural activities, the love of the countryside and nature, for example through the production of compost which will then be sold. Irma Britez, the CCFMC Coordinator for Paraguay, reports on this facet of her work.



Among other things, a number of municipal commissions are being supported in order to improve the living conditions of their members. This assistance, e.g. refers to an especially poor neighborhood of Malloquín, where more than 100 families live. Another example of the engagement of mainly OFS members is the co-production of agricultural products to sell them together with typical dishes on the market. The number of youth who participate in such projects of individual communities ranges between 30 and 50. The regions covering this aspect of the active CCFMC assistance are a. o. Encarnación, Caaguazú, Villa Rica, Pedro Juan Caballero, Nepomuceno, Maciel and Capiibary.

One of the highlights of the previous CCFMC activities in 2010 was the seminar for the Cono Sur Region, which was held in the Capital of Paraguay, Asunción, from 9 to 14 February, furthermore, the annual assembly of CCFMC animators from 23 to 25 April which served for the exchange of personal experiences by the individual animators with the Franciscan way of life; and on 22 May a meeting of the Paraguayan Coordinators was held in Ciudad del Este, which had the purpose to strengthen the

team and also to decide on dates for meetings. In addition, there were a number of days of action, ecological excursions and commemoration events.

Signs of the Times

A year full of catastrophes

The year 2010 will probably go down in history as one of the worst years of catastrophes within recent years. The series of shocking news began already on 12 January with the devastating earthquake in Haiti. In summer, this was followed by the floods in China and Pakistan, huge forest fires in Russia, and also the gigantic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. This does not only leave behind hundreds of thousands of people who mourn just as many deaths, but also a destroyed environment.

More than twenty million people need help

The extent of the high tide of the century in the Pakistani Province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is downright unthought-of. Some 80,000 sq km alongside of the River Indu with its tributaries have been flooded by endless masses of water – about the size of Italy. The flood did not spare anything: entire villages, towns, infrastructures, and harvests have been destroyed. 20 million people have been hit hard. It will take years until they will be able to live under normal and secure circumstances. And this can only be achieved if literally the entire global community participates in the reconstruction process.



Forest fires in Russia



Russia has experienced the biggest heat wave since the beginning of the weather records 130 years ago. The consequence was vast forest fires, at the worst point 200,000 hectares of land were burning in 600 locations. Many people have lost all of their belongings. Large parts of the harvest have been destroyed and thousands of farmers are faced with ruin.

The vicinity of the capital, with a population of 15 % of the Russian population including all suburbs, was especially afflicted by the stinking smog. Whenever

possible, people fled to the countryside or even went abroad.

Landslides in China

Two million cubic meters of debris moved in a layer of five kilometers in length, which was hundreds of meters wide towards the densely populated area alongside the river Bailong in Tibet, where 40,000 people live. More than 1,750 people have lost their lives. Torrential rain had unleashed the avalanches in Gansu Province. Geologists and environmentalists agree this time: severe weather situations have admittedly provoked these catastrophes, but man-made reasons have set off this disastrous magnitude. From 1952 to 1990 about 130,000 hectares of forestland have been felled in Zhouqu and the farmland of 7,000 hectares was doubled to more than 14,000 hectares.



780 million liters – the largest oil spill of all times to this day

According to recent estimates so far about 780 million liters of crude oil have run into the Gulf of Mexico. There have always been repeated complications during the BP attempts to stop the spread of the oil spill.

This may be the biggest US environmental disaster since the sinking of the "Exxon Valdez" in 1989, which will continue to have a devastating effect for a long time to come. Experts estimate the long-term expenses for the clearance of all environmental damages to be billion amounts in three figures. Even though life is getting back to normal in the coast region, those affected are still skeptical. According to recent studies, about 80 per cent of the spilled oil has lowered to the seabed. What this could mean for the marina fauna, for the fish population, and the coral reefs, and whether the oil residues or of the oil dispersant Correxit could get to the food chain, are still unsolved issues. It is obvious already today that deep sea drillings for oil in future will only be carried out using strict safety precautions. This would of course lead to a vast cost increase. Some already say that this disaster has rang in the end of the oil era if we take the environmental concern seriously.



These are the biggest catastrophes of the current year, on an unprecedented scale. Many could be added that are more localized, but not less disastrous for those affected. These are catastrophes that were caused by regular freak weather situations, but many of them are likewise man-made. They are the consequences of the climate change, which is caused by an economic activity, which orientates itself more along the limits of the global ecosystems. They are warning signs, which we will be punished for if we continue to ignore them.

