

## Pastor's Corner - March 27, 2011 - Building a World of Justice

Already the third week in our Lenten Journey during which we have been invited to heed the call to conversion which comes from the Gospel and from the teachings of the Church but also from the dramatic situation in which we find ourselves in this world of ours. The Solidarity calendar which you were given at the beginning of Lent connected us especially to the people Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, many of whom suffer from an overwhelming number of crises and injustices. Each day on this calendar invites us to reflect on or pray for some little building block in our quest to build the reign of God, a world of justice. **Jesus called us to compassion which literally means to “suffer with” and which is the basis for our reaching out to be in solidarity with. That solidarity needs to translate in action.**

Last week's bulletin insert reminded us that a world of justice includes the right of every person to participate in the building of a nation including the right to vote in elections. It gave two beautiful examples of how the Development and Peace partners in Burundi and Guinea helped in ensuring that elections there were peaceful and transparent. As we may enter our own election time here in Canada we might want to be thankful for that right but also work towards making that right respected and entrenched in countries such as Myanmar (Burma), Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Ivory Coast, etc., etc. This means that we need to cry out against oppression and violence and war. **But especially, we need to make sure that the basic human rights to food and water, shelter, education, work and an adequate wage, safe haven for refugees, justice, participation, true and effective foreign aid, etc. are part of our political platforms and of our discussions during the election campaigns. Christians need to force candidates and parties to address these issues. Systemic changes need to be discussed and proposed; not just more charity!** We need to challenge governments and corporations to look at what is called the triple bottom line: yes, a reasonable return on investment, but also and at the same time indispensable is social accountability and the necessity of environmentally sound practices. The Gospel demands that we have such a holistic approach because our God made us stewards of creation. All the people of the world are children of the same Father and sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ called to serve one another and especially those in need, those on the fringes of our society and communities.

Last year around this time I returned from participation in the D&P Solidarity Tour to East Timor and visits to my own Dominican communities there and in Kalimantan (Borneo). Direct contact with people who live in poverty here and elsewhere but who are rich in so many other ways is a wonderful way for us to become fully aware of the journey which the Gospel is proposing to us in life. All of us are not able to have that privilege but let us support all those who live with and work directly with the Anawim of God. We might remember how Archbishop Oscar Romero, deemed to be a “safe” bishop who would not challenge the establishment, was converted by the poor in El Salvador once he began to have direct and intimate contact with them. This past week on March 24th we celebrated the 31st anniversary of the murder of this Saint, still not recognized by the official church yet beloved and honoured by the people in Central and South America. He was murdered by an officer of the US-backed Salvadorian army which oppressed the people for decades. It was a truly historic event when US President Obama this past week lit a candle at his tomb in the cathedral of San Salvador and called him “an inspiration to many people in the world.”

Shalom, Fr. Rolf, OP

*Fr. Rolf*