

Remembering Dorothy Stang: American Nun Murdered in Amazon for Advocacy Work

Anapu, Para State, Brazil — 74 year old American missionary Sister Dorothy Stang was assassinated February 12, 2005, in the Amazon state of Para, Brazil.

Sister Dorothy was travelling to a sustainable development project in Anapu with some colleagues when she was shot three times by two gunmen.

From Christianity Today:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/news/miss/256.htm>

Brazilian Police revealed that a 73-year-old American nun was killed in the Amazon rainforest area as she was preaching the Bible.

Sister Dorothy Stang, has devoted in environmental work and defending human rights in a remote jungle region of Amazonia for 20 years. The region is known for illegal logging, slave labour and violent land conflicts. Despite her passion and sacrifices for the people, she received countless death threats over the years for her advocacy work.

Reported by Associated Press, the murder took place when Stang was on her way to a meeting with local activists about land reform last weekend. Two gunmen approached her; a witness said Stang pulled the Bible from her bag when she was confronted and started reading. Her killers listened for a moment, took a few steps back and fired. They shot her three times in the face, the police said.

Stang was killed at the Boa Esperanca settlement where she worked with some

400 poor families near Anapu, a small town in Para state...

Behind the death of Stang, it was believed that gunmen wanted to silence her because she refused to stop speaking out against the powerful loggers and ranchers who have carved up large parts of the Amazon into their personal fiefdoms, according to one of Brazil's most respected ministers...

Nilmario Miranda testified Stang, "She always asked for protection for others, never for herself."

From Greenpeace:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/news/nun-assassinated-defending-ama>

"Sister Dorothy refused to be intimidated and she paid an enormous price," said Paulo Adario, Greenpeace Amazon co-ordinator. "She selflessly worked for many years supporting the rights of rural workers, and defending the Amazon from reckless deforestation and we can't let her death be in vain."



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Environmental Justice

Caring for God's Creation

Creating a deeper respect for
God's creation and engaging
concerned individuals in
activities that deal with
environmental problems,
particularly as they affect
the poor.

Environmental Justice: A Call to Stewardship

By Susan Hines-Brigger

With their Environmental Justice Program, the U.S. bishops are encouraging people to care for God's creation every day and take on the moral issue of ecology.

The following article has been condensed. To see the full article, please visit:

<http://americancatholic.org/Messenger/Apr2001/feature3.asp>

Walt Grazer, policy adviser for the USCC Office for International Justice and Peace, spoke about the vision of the Environmental Justice Program with St. Anthony Messenger:

The goal of the program is to help educate and motivate Catholics to a deeper respect for God's creation and to engage parishes in activities aimed at dealing with environmental problems, particularly as they affect poor people.

The program "was kind of a natural outgrowth of work that has in some ways gone on for 70 years through the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, which addressed the relationship between the environment and agriculture," says Grazer.

The farm crisis in the 1980s also raised an awareness of the link between the environment and social issues. Then, in the late '80s, Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles suggested that the bishops begin attending more to questions concerning the environment. So in 1989, Grazer organized a symposium of ethicists, policy analysts and scientists to discuss the issue.

The next year, the issue of ecology received a boost when Pope John Paul II issued his 1990 World Day of Peace message, *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility*. In the message,

the pope called the environmental crisis a "moral issue" and pointed out the "growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life." He further noted, "Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty toward nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith."

Children Suffer the Most

The connection between the environmental crisis and the impact that it has on society is a very important aspect of the EJP. Grazer says that it is often the poor who have the fewest resources and live in the places no one else wants to—next to waste dumps or polluted water. They in turn suffer the ill effects of environmental problems.

"The pope calls for the right to a safe environment," Grazer says. "Well, for many of these people, they don't have a safe environment. And so from the justice point of view, the question becomes: What does it mean to have a right to a safe environment when you have these people who obviously don't have access to clean water, clean air and, perhaps even worse, are working in industries where they're exposed—like farmworkers—to high amounts of chemicals?"

In August 1999, a special effort was launched on behalf of children's environmental health. Children, says Grazer, are especially susceptible to environmental health hazards.

The effort brings together Catholic Charities USA, the National Catholic Education Association, the National Council of Catholic Women, the National Association of Catholic Facilities Managers, the Catholic Hospital Association, the USCC Pro-life Secretariat and the Domestic Social Development Office to promote a concern for protecting the unborn and children from the harmful effects of environmental pollution. ■

Environmental Justice Program (EJP) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Mission

EJP seeks to educate and motivate Catholics to a deeper reverence and respect for God's creation, and to engage parishes and dioceses in activities aimed at dealing with environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor. EJP acts as a resource for Catholic dioceses and state Catholic conferences, and through them Catholic parishes.

Foundation

EJP is active in the public policy arena advocating for environmental policies which protect the poor, promote environmental health and safety, ensure that the right to private property is balanced with the claims of the common good, and promotes sustainable environmental and economic development.

Activities

EJP focuses on four activities to advance the mission of the program:

- Scholarship
- Leadership Development
- Public Policy/Advocacy
- Special Projects

For more information see:
<http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/ejp/>

Making a CASE for Children's Health

As Catholics, we are called to care for God's gift of creation and to protect the most vulnerable among us. The poor suffer most directly from environmental decline and have the least access to relief from their suffering.

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/case/index.shtml>