

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

April, 2005



*Still
Tending
the Holy
as April
Arrives*

Fragment

Flowers in the crannied wall, I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower--but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is. Alfred Tennyson



April 22, 2005 is the 35th Anniversary of EARTH DAY

Earth Day is a movement to educate, inform and protect our planet with all its inhabitants and reminds us of our interconnectedness and the common future we share. The first stirrings of Earth Day occurred when it became apparent that the state of our environment was simply a non-issue in the politics of the United States, let alone the world. The people were concerned, but the politicians were turning a deaf ear. Through the efforts of Senator Gaylord Nelson, Attorney General Robert Kennedy and President John Kennedy, the seeds were planted that ultimately blossomed into Earth Day in the United States. Later Senator Nelson stated, "Earth Day worked because of the spontaneous response at the grassroots level. That was the remarkable thing about Earth Day. It organized itself." *Action Step:* Enter Earth Day in the search engine or earthday.enviroink.org and find out more about this event and celebrations.

Jane Goodall, Wangari Maathai and Sister Dorothy Stang are women who are alike in their commitment and love for the earth, its promise and the people.

Jane, born in London, England, April 3, 1934, is known for her pioneering research and her efforts to protect endangered animals and their habitat. In 2002 she was appointed as a United Nations "Messenger of Peace" and she continues to speak out for the environment and for ALL living things. Jane Johnson Lewis has collected some of Dr. Goodall's comments and these are a few:

"Especially now when views are becoming more polarized, we must work to understand each other across political, religious and national boundaries."

"The least I can do is speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves."

"The greatest danger to our future is apathy."

Explore the Web. Enter "Jane Goodall" in the search engine to learn more.

Sister Dorothy Stang, 74, a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, was assassinated in Anapu, Para, Brazil, Feb. 12, 2005. Shot six times by unknown gunmen, she was laboring in the Amazon jungle to halt illegal loggers and powerful ranchers take over of peasants' lands and the devastation of the Amazon Rain Forest. She was acutely aware of the dangers in this stand, and commented to a close friend, Marlene DeNardo, who had advised her to be careful, "We have to worry about the Brazillian people, they're the ones who are vulnerable."

Action Step: Go to www.sfgate.com and click on the February 16, 2005 article NUN KILLED IN BRAZIL AN UNFLINCHING ADVOCATE, by Tyche Henricks, Chronicle Staff Writer. Write to the following people expressing your shock and concern about the brutal killing of Sister Dorothy and the violence done to the poor and the Rain Forest by the illegal loggers and powerful ranchers.

Brazil Ambassador to the US
he Honorable Roberto Abdenur
3006 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008-3634

Secretary of State Condeleeza Rice
US Department of State
2001 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Lift your pen to speak for JUSTICE. It is a mighty instrument.

Wangari Maathai, the first environmentalist and African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize (2004), invites us to remember, "We are called to assist the earth, to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own - indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder." In 1977, she organized a grassroots network of rural women into the Green Belt Movement, which planted 30 million trees and with each seed, the seeds of democracy. Her government's reward was beatings, harassment and jail. Hers was the struggle for the poor, to overcome malnutrition and inadequate housing and poverty. Her solution, "Why not plant trees?" She knew anyone can dig a hole to plant a tree. Trees provide many resources: fuel; building material for houses and fences; fruits; fodder and additional income. Paradoxically another quality appeared with the trees, the citizens' responsibility to demand a better government. "We have a lot to do. We know the little we do is making a positive change. If we can multiply that several million times, we can improve the world."

Action step: Go to www.wangarimaathai.com. or www.greenbeltmovement.org. or www.wangari-maathai.org.

LAST WORDS - Celebrate John Muir (born April 21, 1838), Father of the National Park System. He shaped conservation and environmental movements. His vision and life's work provided us all with a priceless gift of beauty. "God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand straining, leveling tempests and floods; but He cannot save them from fools." John Muir

Action step: Go to www.sierraclub.org for access to daily news & updates on environmental issues affecting our world. Enter JOHN MUIR in the search engine. Did you know he spent his final years in Martinez, California?

On March 21, the US Bishops launched a Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty. Timed to coincide with Holy Week, the campaign builds extensive work teaching and lobbying to end the death penalty. Please refer to the website with resources and information for the campaign: <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/national/deathpenalty/index.shtml> (See enclosed brochure)

Submitted by the Social Concerns Committee