



# carmelngo

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"New efforts involving the entire international community are necessary to eliminate the root causes of it (human trafficking), to offer proper care and attention to its survivors, and to bring its perpetrators to justice."

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

## Young Carmelites Working to Bring Structural Change



"Committee for Life, Peace, and Coexistence."

In this issue we present the writing of two young Carmelites who are very involved in social justice projects while being part of their province's formation program. Since June 2012 Rolf Nepi Willemsen has been engaged in a special ministry as consultant for Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Regional Office of the World Health Organization in the Americas. The organization is located in Washington, DC., where Willemsen is studying theology. Saúl Adalberto Mejía is a first year prenovice at the Xiberta Center, the Carmelite formation house in El Salvador. He has been working as part of the

### Exploring New Ways in Health Diplomacy

Founded in 1902, PAHO is the oldest international public health agency in the world and the only one that is both part of the Inter-American System of Organization of American States as well as of the United Nations System. Its primary mandate is to "promote and coordinate efforts of the countries of the Western Hemisphere to combat disease, lengthen life, and promote the physical and mental health of the people." Besides PAHO's involvement in the health agenda of the Americas and on the global stage of health diplomacy, it has offices in almost every country of the region that guarantees a proximity to actual living conditions of the people and allows for a closer assessment to develop strategies and effective interventions.

"My contribution to PAHO's mission was to provide advice with regard to new partnership opportunities within the Faith-based sector. I was tasked to map out and approach new potential partner organizations and develop strategies to increase cooperation. This endeavor included establishing a database of Faith-based organizations (FBO) that are actively involved in the field of health in the Americas and reaching out to them. Together with my colleagues in External Relations, I was able to facilitate telephone-conferences with various groups, to organize informal meetings both on managerial as well as country level, and to brief PAHO leadership and staff on opportunities that an increase of cooperation with FBOs entails with regard to serving PAHO's goal to improve the health of the people in the Americas," explained Willemsen.

### Why Faith-based Organizations?

During the 65th World Health Assembly in May 2012, Member States agreed to emphasize the social determinants of health in the next General Program of Work and Proposed Program Budget and to adopt a global target of a 25% reduction in premature mortality from non-communicable diseases. These high-level policy decisions reflect a need to reach out beyond the health sector in order to address the social determinants of health. Among the civil society organizations, the Faith-based community includes major health providers in the developing countries who provide a significant amount of health services globally.



Pan American Health Organization and Monsignor Robert J. Vitillo, Head of the International Delegation, Special Advisor on HIV and AIDS for Caritas Internationalis, meet at PAHO headquarters, in Washington, D.C. Carmelite Rolf Nepi Willemsen is second from the right.

### Actual State of Affairs

PAHO has undertaken significant outreach to Faith-based organizations as they share many common health objectives and they also enable PAHO to reach the community level. To accomplish this outreach, PAHO has sustained and expanded its collaboration with Faith-based organizations.

Currently Catholic Health Association of the United States, Caritas Internationalis and other large Catholic organizations with focus on Latin America and the Caribbean have been introduced to PAHO and entered the dialogue. PAHO's aim is to extend further the approach of FBOs, regardless of denomination, in order to improve health and raise standards of living throughout the Western Hemisphere.

### Challenges Along the Way

Despite the many good steps that PAHO has taken in approaching and partnering with the Faith-based community, there are difficulties remaining that emanate from both sides. The major concern for some of PAHO's staff members is that FBOs might undermine PAHO's neutrality by using health projects to proselytize. On the other hand, FBOs are mostly open to evaluate collaboration but tend to fear a domination of their projects by such a large and strong partner. Yet, the right steps have been taken on both sides to enter into a deeper dialogue of mutual respect and appreciation of the respective commitment.

### Ties with Justice and Peace

I am very grateful for having had the experience as a Carmelite to minister at PAHO this past year. As Carmelites, we live in the midst of the people, sharing the joys and sorrows of those around us. We so become a sign and a prophetic witness of new relationships, of fraternity and friendship. Called to recognize and address the injustices in the world, we contribute to establishing the kingdom of God.

Pope Francis recently said: "If the investments in the banks fall slightly it is a tragedy, what can be done? But if people die of hunger, if they have nothing to eat, if they have poor health, it does not matter! This is our crisis today!" The year at PAHO proved to me that the UN and its specialized agencies indeed play a central role in facing the real crises of our times and in the search for the common good of humanity. The Church, and its various ministries, is certainly a good partner with whom to cooperate, for the good of all.

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### Bureau for Life and Peaceful Co-existence of the Citizens: A Commitment to Human Rights in El Salvador

The year 2009 is considered one of the most violent in the history of the country of El Salvador. From the torturous violation of human rights in the parish community of Tierra Virgen (now known as Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish), west of the municipality of San

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### Useful Websites to Learn More about these Issues:

**Pan American Health Organization**

[www.paho.org](http://www.paho.org)

**Caritas Internationalis**

[www.caritas.org](http://www.caritas.org)

**World Health Organization**

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

**Msgr Vitillo's Blog at Caritas Internationalis**

[blog.caritas.org/tag/msgr-robert-vitillo](http://blog.caritas.org/tag/msgr-robert-vitillo)

**Papal Messages on World Migration Day**

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/migration/index\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/index_en.htm)

**Creative Projects in Central America**

[creative-associates.us](http://creative-associates.us)



## A Renaissance of Vatican II

A new Spring for the global church, a true global pope, a papacy focused on the world's downtrodden, a pastoral papacy, these are just some of the descriptions given to Pope Francis as he begins his reign as head of the Catholic Church. According to church historian, Alberto Melloni, "For Pope Francis, social justice is not a sort of service of the church, an external relations department oriented to those who are victims of injustice, but it is part of the very essence of the church." One of the first actions taken by Pope Francis was the appointment of a commission of cardinals, all but one from outside the Vatican, who will assist him in governing the church. This action was seen as the first implementation of the principle of collegiality, put forth 50 years ago by the Second Vatican Council that called for greater representation of the Catholic faithful in church governance.

Fifty years ago when Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council he often said that it was time to open the windows of the church to let in some fresh air,

“Pope Francis seems to have understood this message. John XXIII exhorted the Council Fathers “to use the medicine of mercy rather than the weapons of severity” in the documents they would produce.

the Holy Spirit. Perhaps Pope Francis is attempting to do the same. According to Pope Francis the Second Vatican Council “was a beautiful work of the Holy

“The Holy Spirit

upsets us because it moves us, it makes us walk, it pushes the Church to move forward. We wish to calm down the Holy Spirit, we want to tame the Holy Spirit and this is wrong. Because the Holy Spirit is the strength of God, it's what gives us the strength to go forward. Nowadays everybody seems happy about the presence of the Holy Spirit but it's not really the case and there is still that temptation to resist it. But after 50 years have we done everything the Holy Spirit was asking us to do during the Council? No, we celebrate the anniversary, we put up a monument, but we don't want it to upset us. We don't want to change and what's more there are those who wish to turn the clock back. This is called stubbornness and wanting to tame the Holy Spirit. The Spirit pushes us to take a more evangelical path, but we resist this. Submit to the Holy Spirit which comes from within us and makes us go forward along the path of holiness.”

Could this be a time of renaissance for Vatican II? The stated purpose of Vatican II was the spiritual renewal of the church and the reconsideration of the church in the modern world. Vatican analyst Massimo Franco says Pope Francis is contrary to his predecessors, whose worldviews were shaped by 20th century European history. Pope Francis is steeped in the global issues of today and of the future. John XXIII stressed a pastoral, not a doctrinal, focus for the Council. The Church did not need to repeat or reformulate existing doctrines and dogmas, but rather it had to teach Christ's message in the light of the modern world's ever-changing trends. In other words, John XXIII said the church need not fear the secular world, because it is in the secular world that we encounter the living God. Pope Francis seems to have understood this message. John XXIII exhorted the Council Fathers “to use the medicine of mercy rather than the weapons of severity” in the documents they would produce.

On May 1st, International Workers' Day, the pope referred directly to the collapse of a garment factory in Bangladesh that killed more than 1,000 workers. He expressed anger at their wages of \$50 per month, calling it “slave labor,” “In a world that talks so much about rights, how many times are human rights trampled? In a world that talks so much about rights, the only thing that seems to have them is money. We live in a world where money rules. We live in a world, in a culture, where money worship reigns.” Statements such as this point to Pope Francis' deep concern of what he calls “the negative aspects of globalization.” Too often human rights and the environment are trampled upon for financial profit. People are trafficked for their labor and natural resources are used as if they will not be depleted. “It is a disgrace for our societies that consider themselves civilized,” said Pope Francis.

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## Central American Creative Projects Spawn Anti-Violence Movements, Transcend Borders

In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, three of the most violent countries on the planet, some youth are not giving up on themselves or their countries. Instead, they are reclaiming their communities by working to mitigate the violence that is robbing them of a better future.

The violence these young people face is frightening and it is pervasive. Honduras' homicide rate is 82 per 100,000 according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. Young people represent six deaths out of every 10. Youth are both the perpetrators and victims of crime. With similar figures in El Salvador (66 per 100,000) and Guatemala (41 per 100,000) the murder rate in these Central American countries dwarfs even that experienced in Mexico or Colombia.



Rising above these grim statistics, young people in all three countries are leading an advocacy campaign that thousands of youth have embraced, culminating in the Youth Movement to Prevent Violence.

The effort began in Guatemala in 2009 as a small ripple that began making waves that eventually reached El Salvador and Honduras. Today, it has become a full-fledged indigenous Movement with youth volunteers at the helm directing activities that have led them to be noticed by the highest offices in their republics.

from: creative-associates.us

Top: Young men from a silk-screening project. Bottom: Students come together to brainstorm about a project.

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A key part of his message at his inaugural Mass and repeating it on his radio address on Earth Day Pope Francis said, "Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill, let us be protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."

This environmental message echoed the final document of the Fifth General Conference of the Council of Latin American Bishops in Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007. Pope Francis, who was then Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, chaired the committee that drew up the final recommendations. That document criticizes extractive industries and agribusiness for failing to respect the economic, social and environmental rights of local communities, especially indigenous people. It praises the region's rich flora and fauna, calling for the preservation of the Amazon rainforest as part of "the inheritance we received, for free, to protect."

In Latin America and Africa, environmental problems are closely linked to poverty, with the poor living in areas that are the most vulnerable to climate change and the degradation of the soil. "Francis will put the ecological crisis high up on the agenda," said Rev. Luis Scozzina, Director of the Franciscan Center of Studies & Regional Development. He also noted that the poor, people special to Pope Francis, are hurt most grievously by environmental degradation.

John XXIII believed the church need not fear the secular world, because as he said, "it is in the secular world that we encounter the living God." By his words and actions, Pope Francis seems to embrace the secular world as a father who loves and teaches his children.

*by Jane Remson, O. Carm. - Main Representative*

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Martin, in the department of San Salvador, developed the initiative, under the direction of the Hermanas Carmelitas Hijas de la Iglesia, to form the "Bureau for Life, Peace, and the Co-Existence of the Citizens" (*Mesa por la vida, la paz y la convivencia ciudadana*).

The Carmelite Order, being faithful to its charism and being inculturated in El Salvador, is actively involved in the journey of the people of God in El Salvador. This involvement has become an inspiration for many young people who are seeking to devote our lives to the service of the Kingdom of God, in the midst of the people. Carmel gives an answer to their concerns.

The parish community invited leaders of the communities of the western area to join the fight for promotion of human rights. They were asked to support the right to life, access to water, decent housing, the physical integrity of both men and women, to organize, the training of community leaders, among other rights.

As a result of the parochial efforts, the Inter-Institutional Municipal Council for the Prevention of Violence (CMIPV), was established in January 2010. This brings together local and national government agencies as well as representatives of community organizations, in order to promote the prevention of violence in the Municipality of San Martin, which is considered one of the most violent municipalities in the metropolitan of San Salvador (AMSS). Efforts were focused on the youth, promoting a culture of peace, living together, recreation, entrepreneurship among the young people, defense of the rights of children, youth, adolescents, women and older adults.

Encouraging the art and talent of the young people, various activities such as walks for peace (with the participation of young people from various areas of the municipality), a celebration of the anniversary of Archbishop Romero, vocational workshops, scholarships for young people with limited resources, reconstruction of public areas, have taken place. Each activity demonstrated the strength and vitality of the young people's commitment to be promoters of life and co-existence.

The passion for the Kingdom of God continues to motivate us to stay engaged with our youth and the *timeca* (the nickname of the children of this municipality) in order to see the building of the Kingdom among His people.

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