

# PEACEWEAVERS

*I refuse to believe that we are unable to influence the events which surround us*  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland

March, 2011

Social Justice Office

## News from Mary Ellen

Despite the bone-chilling cold of these past few weeks my thoughts and dreams have been of the sunny Italian cities of Desenzano and Brescia. I have been very blessed, as have many of you, to meet Angela in these places. Yet, I would suggest that her call to us is the same in Cleveland as in Italy. It is a universal call to be peace-makers. Her words are a guide to bringing love and care into a world so deeply in need of the divine presence.

As we move into the season of Lent, Angela's invitation to justice work seems even more compelling in this time when we hear of so much unrest and violence from the Middle East to our own city.

Angela traveled in her world bringing love and care. Her words invite us to do the same! May this Lent be a time for us to look more deeply at her invitation to us to follow Christ, our lover.

\* "With the help of God try to acquire such an attitude of mind and heart that...you act solely out of love of God and zeal for souls." Testament

\* "Live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will. Be bound to one another by bonds of charity, esteeming each, helping each other, bearing with each other in Christ Jesus." 9<sup>th</sup> Counsel

\* "I beg you lead...by love and with a gentle and kindly hand...For God has given freedom to each person and God does not force anyone, but only proposes, invites and advises..." Testament

\* "You will find no other recourse than shelter at the feet of Jesus Christ." 7<sup>th</sup> Counsel

## Efforts to Stop Taxpayer Funded Abortion

The new pro-life leadership of the House is working to present legislation that will defund Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, and any other form of tax supported abortion. Republican Chris Smith (NJ) and Democrat Dan Lipinski (IL) just introduced the *No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act* that would prohibit taxpayer funds from being used for abortion across all government programs. A second bill titled the *Protect Life Act* was also introduced to prohibit taxpayer support for abortion in the new health care law. The success of this pro-life legislation is critical to protecting the un-

born. To sign the petition and learn more about stopping taxpayer funded abortion go to the Americans United for Life website: [www.aul.org](http://www.aul.org)

## Reminder

The following houses offered to put together a basket of kitchen items for the Community Women's Shelter on Payne Ave:

Assisi Place - December

Bethany House – January

Maple House - February

St. Anthony House – March

St. Mark's – April

Gratitude House – May

? – June

? – July

These baskets were given to women moving into their own apartments and were greatly appreciated. Many thanks!

## Did You Know?

1. March 1<sup>st</sup> was *International Death Penalty Abolition Day*.

2. In Finland, the world's first permanent repository for high level radioactive waste created by nuclear power plants is being hewn out of solid rock. It must last 100,000 years as this is how long the waste remains hazardous. Once the waste has been deposited and the facility is full it will be sealed off and never opened again. Or so we hope, but who can ensure that?

3. 1.1 billion people in the world do not have access to safe drinking water, roughly one-sixth of the world's population.

4. The average American uses 100 to 175 gallons of water per day. The average African uses 5 gallons per day.

## World Water Day

World Water Day has been held annually on **March 22<sup>nd</sup>** since 1992, when the United Nations focuses attention on the importance of freshwater—advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

*Tapped*, a documentary that covers the depth of the bottled water industry as well as social, economic and environmental issues associated with bottled water versus tap water will be shown at the Tower City Cinema on Earth Day.

### **Recognizing the Crime**

The locations and settings where **trafficking** occurs do not always appear suspicious. For instance, trafficking could be occurring at places frequently visited by the public such as restaurants or hotels. There, it is important to remember that the key indicators of this crime may not be in the setting itself, but in the conditions and circumstances of the labor involved.

A crucial aspect of recognizing the crime is in discerning the elements of human trafficking from the apparently *normal* behaviors that disguise it. The more complicated cases appear to be unattached to any criminal behavior. Therefore, the more education and experience a person has, the less likely a case of human trafficking will go undetected or ignored.

The U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services launched the *Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking website*. This website [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/) has many downloadable materials to help concerned citizens educate others as to the signs of human trafficking and the ways to obtain help for its victims.

### **Improvements for Hungry People**

The Healthy, Hungry-Free Kids Act was passed by the House and signed into law by Pres. Obama. The House also passed the Middle Class Tax Relief Act of 2010, which included tax credits for low-income workers. The bill also protected the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit.

### **How Do Tax Breaks for the Wealthy Negatively Affect Women?**

For all middle-income working-class people, programs such as Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare are important, but America does not have an endless source of wealth. When you spend money for tax cuts for people who do not need it, eventually the argument is going to be made, and the policies put in place that we can't afford other things. And those things they say we can't afford include Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other programs that are important for working families. Social Security is a program that disproportionately benefits women. Women and their children are the majority of the recipients.

To the extent that policymakers seek to cut the deficit by cutting important social programs, then the economic security of women will be undermined.

Sojourners, March, 2011

### **Handwritten Letters – the Most Effective Way**

Most Americans now use e-mail or other quick ways of getting in touch with businesses and friends. However, handwritten letters are still one of the best ways to reach your representative and senators. Next to face-to-face meetings, letters from constituents are incredibly effective.

Why? The answer is largely *quality versus quantity*. It's difficult to identify a magic number of handwritten letters needed to raise the profile of an issue. But several current and former congressional staff said that their offices open a folder and begin tracking a topic more closely once they've received just five to seven letters.

### **Coming Events**

Each year *Bread for the World* invites churches from all religions across the country to learn about and then take up a nationwide Offering of Letters to Congress on an issue that is important to hungry and poor people. Last year's focus was domestic – the Earned Income Tax Credit.

This year, 2011, we'll be urging members of Congress to reform foreign aid to make it more effective in reducing poverty.

On Saturday, **March 19<sup>th</sup>** from 9:30am-12:30 pm interested people will gather at the Cleveland Food Bank, 15500 South Waterloo Rd.

*Convicting the Innocent*, The Perils of our Criminal Justice System – A talk to be held on Wednesday, **March 23<sup>rd</sup>** at 7:30 pm at the Church of the Resurrection. The speakers are Jim & Nancy Petro, authors of *False Justice, Eight Myths that Convict the Innocent*.

Save Our Communities – *Books not Bombs, Jobs not Jails, Families not Foreclosures*

What would Cleveland look like if we shifted our taxpayer dollars away from war and militarization?

Join us on **April 15-16**, 2011, to bring our tax dollars home. Basic social services are rationed, while military spending keeps growing. This kind of government spending is killing local communities. Some are calling for tax reductions and further cuts in government spending, but we believe we should spend tax dollars differently, by investing in people.

Friday, April 15<sup>th</sup> – Public Square/Old Stone Church.

Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup> – Community Forum, Trinity Cathedral

Peace Action, Cleveland