

Fairness and Firmness in Sierra Leone Elections

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The 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary elections held in Sierra Leone this year worked. It was the second election since end of the hostilities that tore the country apart and the third multiparty election since the mid 1990's. This bodes well for stability, as fragile as it may be. Much has been written about the candidates, the voters, and the threats of violence, both in the build-up to the election as well as in the aftermath.

What has not been acknowledged, and something that AFJN wishes to raise, is the role that Ms. Christiana Thorpe played in the election. Christiana is a Sierra Leonean woman from Freetown, a Catholic, a teacher, in her earlier years a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny and headmistress of one of the premier schools in Makeni. I was the chair of the Board of Governors for that school, and at the time I was Education Secretary for the Diocese of Makeni. Christiana was a good friend of mine. I always admired her passion for students, teachers, and staff, her fairness and firmness in running the school as well as her cheerful nature. She later served in the Ministry of Education and in mid-90 became the Minister of Education for the AFRC Government.



Christiana Thorpe,
Minister of Education

I returned to Sierra Leone in 1995 to find Christiana there, doing her best to root out the culture of corruption that was present and so corrosive to education and development. During that time, she was able to bring FAWE (Forum of Africa Women Educationalists) to Sierra Leone, raising the profile of women teachers and girls in need of education. It is no surprise that President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah named her the Chief Election Commissioner for these 2007 elections. She was able to set the dates for the election, both the general election in late July and the run-off two weeks later. She personally visited many of the polling stations around the country and as votes were being counted, nullified 100 polling stations that received more votes than the number of voters who registered. She would not let corruption hold court over these elections.

In the words of Bishop George Biguzzi, s.x., Bishop of the northern Diocese of Makeni, "If there was any doubt, she looked into it. She did not bend to pressure and followed

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Save the Date!
 April 18-21, 2008
 "Celebrating Africa:
 Analysis to Action"
 AFJN's 25th
 anniversary with
 special guests
 Jeffrey Sachs and
 Ishmael Beah

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the book. She ran the elections fairly and openly, clearly and peacefully. She made Sierra Leone proud.” In the end she received high praise for her firmness and fairness, those same characteristics I knew in her when she was headmistress of St. Joseph’s Secondary School. Christiana is for me an example of the many women, trained by our women religious, who are making significant impacts on

Africa today. Congratulations, Christiana and congratulations to the many sisters who formed these women. Your investment and love is contributing to justice and good governance as African nations grow. AFJN salutes you all.

*Fr. Rocco Puopolo, s.x.
Executive Director*

No HIV/AIDS Treatment for the Children

By Barbie Fischer

According to the UNAIDS 2006 Report, 2.3 million children under the age of 15 live with HIV/AIDS around the world. Of those children, 2.1 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2005 alone, an estimated 700,000 children were newly infected, mainly through mother-to-child transmission (MTCT). In the time it takes you to read this article a child somewhere will have contracted HIV. Today 1,400 children will die of AIDS, just like yesterday, and it will happen again tomorrow unless something is done to save these children.

Earlier this year, UNICEF announced that the global child mortality rate has dropped 23 percent since 1990. Although the international community worked hard to achieve this child survival gain, HIV is ravaging it. In some of the highly affected countries up to 58 percent of under-5 mortality is caused by HIV. Current evidence suggests that unlike adults, HIV infected children follow a more aggressive course of illness, with 30 percent dying at age one and 50 percent at age two. The majority of these deaths could be prevented through early diagnosis and timely provision of effective care, support and treatment. However, this is all easier said than done.

One of the critical challenges in providing care to children infected with HIV is that many are infected in the womb and for children under 18 months old there is a deficiency of specific and affordable diagnostics. The commonly used HIV antibody tests are cheap and easy to use; however, they are unreliable when used among children younger than 18 months. Viral load tests could be used to detect HIV among these children, but they are expensive (between \$25 and \$1,255) and difficult to use. Therefore, the tests are not available in most health facilities in countries where resources are constrained. But the first step towards providing care, support and treatment is an HIV diagnosis for children. It is essential that prices for diagnostic tests, specifically viral load tests, be significantly reduced and that new more easy-to-use diagnostic tests for children less than 18 months old be developed.

A second challenge in helping these HIV infected children is getting them the proper anti-retroviral treatment (ARTs) to curtail the disease. As previously mentioned, about one-third of HIV-infected infants will die within their first year of life, and half will die before their second birthday, but these numbers can be reduced if the children receive ARTs. Currently only one in ten children needing ART receive it. The remaining 90 percent face a bleak and short-lived future. There are syrup forms of ARTs on the market but they are four to eight times more expensive than their comparative adult forms. Not to mention that pediatric ARTs are difficult to handle and caregivers of young children often opt to break or crush adult medicines in order that the child may receive any form of treatment. Despite the fact that this risks under- or over- dosing the

“The majority of these deaths could be prevented through early diagnosis and timely provision of effective care, support, and treatment.”

child, many feel that it is a necessity in order to give the child a chance to live.

ARTs are not the only pharmaceutical drugs that these children need. Due to the severe depletion or lack of growth in their immune systems caused by HIV, infected children are at high risk for opportunistic infections, which are infections caused by organisms that usually do not cause disease in a person with a healthy immune system. Some opportunistic infections include Pneumocystis pneumonia, Candidiasis (an infection in the intestinal tract), and severe staph infections, among others. Administration of Cotrimoxazole prophylaxis, which cost as little as three cents per child per day, helps to prevent these commonly acquired opportunistic infections in HIV-infected children. They can reduce hospital visits and mortality by as much

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The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa: What Does it Mean for African Farmers?

By Joseph Effiong

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) aims to develop Africa's agricultural capacity by working with farmers and scientists to introduce new varieties of seeds of Africa's major food crops that are more productive and resilient. According to Kofi Annan, AGRA's chair, along with introducing educational programs to accelerate the development of African agricultural expertise, AGRA will also "improve the health of Africa's soils water management initiative to help Africa's small-scale farmers get the most crops for each drop of water."

Could this simply be rhetoric that has been heard before? What role will AGRA really play in small farms in Africa? These concerns form the basis of the campaign by faith-based organizations to ensure that the harmful effects of the green revolution experienced in Asia are not repeated in Africa.

NGO's recognize that Africa is not producing enough food to feed its teeming population, so the difficulty with AGRA is who is going to produce the food and how will it be produced? What AGRA emphasizes is high-yielding crops to feed the people, but the emphasis is on only sorghum, cotton, corn, and flax, a relatively small variety of African crops. There is also concern over Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) which has been a key advocacy issue with environmental NGO's at the fore. Major disadvantages of the genetically modified crops include high water and nutrient consumption, and the need for fertilizers and pesticides to survive. Without these conditions fulfilled, GMO crops cannot produce as much as indigenous crops. The fears that AGRA will use GMOs have been confirmed, despite earlier denial by Kofi Annan.

Mass pollution, removal of soil nutrients, and fertilizer runoff to streams and rivers are bound to occur with large-scale cultivation of GMOs. Excess water use will have profound effect on water levels as was experienced in India and other parts of Asia where the water level has dropped drastically after the introduction of the green revolution. AGRA will also reduce biodiversity because it

finances a few crops at the expense of others, like in the US where 75% of food is derived from 12 plants. Rise in cost among small scale farmers will result in small farmers losing their land thereby increasing inequality. Also, since inputs are to be supplied by multinational corporations, there is danger that agriculture in Africa will be controlled by foreign powers. Foreign bodies will eventually dictate the technology to be used, the land use practices, and financial modalities by institutions and governments that accept AGRA financing.



AGRA will undermine traditional African cultivation practices with high-tech farming.
Photo courtesy CRS.

Such high-tech farming will not benefit local farmers but may make them more impoverished if corporations take over the farming business, which is what happened in the US. In addition, the high-tech monoculture will drive corporations to introduce GMO patents resulting in biopiracy of not only food but also medicine. Also, value will be detached from the farmer and placed on the seed

as is the case in most countries in Asia. What this means for the farmer is that his concerns and problems will further be ignored and that they are not important in the food production process.

All of these issues will have far-reaching ramifications for development in Africa. There may be decreased resistance to HIV/AIDS because of reduced nutrients in food crops. In terms of debt, most African governments cannot finance seed production research, extension and hosting of protocol meetings and, if they agree to AGRA, eventually will be forced to borrow finances in order to support these projects thereby increasing their debt burden. It will also increase private debt for small scale farmers, resulting in exploitation and land control.

This is a new instrument of oppression by corporations to promote seed, fertilizer and pesticides sales since these crops can no longer be marketed in Europe and America because of chemical restrictions. Those involved in the deal – apart from the Rockefeller and Gates foundations – include multinationals such as DuPont pesticides production, Monsanto seed production, African Development Bank, World Bank, United State Agency for International

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Cultivating Justice for All Stakeholders in Rwanda

By Bahati Ntama Jacques

In responding to crimes it is natural to desire justice, but have you ever asked yourself *what kind of justice?* Our justice system uses criminal justice because it is part of the democratic form of government and is consequently what our law schools teach. Nevertheless, after reflecting on crimes and the need for justice around the world, particularly in Africa, AFJN has chosen restorative justice as one of its focus campaigns. AFJN desires to raise awareness of restorative justice as an alternative to criminal justice in ending conflicts and suffering in many communities throughout Africa and elsewhere.

“The prejudice that every Hutu is guilty of genocide is a clear social concern that needs a different response other than criminal justice if Rwanda is to recover from the 1994 genocide.”

Restorative justice differs from criminal justice; where criminal justice focuses on achieving social control by obedience to laws and punishment of transgressors leaving the victims unheard, restorative justice gives voice to the victims while still holding the transgressors accountable for their actions and encouraging personal change.

In a restorative justice system, the criminal is responsible for the crime and held accountable before being restored through reconciliation process. Its vision is to build a present and a future harmonious community by acknowledging the victim and identifying the victimizer through the accountability and reconciliation processes. Rwanda is an outstanding example of where restorative justice is needed in order to bring reconciliation to its tribes.

In 1994, Rwanda experienced genocide. The first response to this tragic crime, rooted in a long history of tribalism and power struggles between Hutu and Tutsi, was to establish a criminal justice system to punish the Hutu guilty of genocide. Today, after many trials, punishments, and a continuous hunt for those responsible for genocide, Rwanda is still far from healing. The prejudice that every Hutu is guilty of genocide is a clear social concern that needs a different response other than criminal justice if Rwanda is to recover from the 1994 genocide.

AFJN’s concern for Rwanda stems from the belief that the

UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania does not provide what it will take to heal Rwanda’s wounds. As a criminal justice court, it is focused on only the crime and the perpetrators are punished more than they are held accountable. Rwandans need restorative justice, beyond the Gacaca Trials, to take their justice system a step further. Restorative justice would provide an opportunity to all the victims (the families that lost loved ones, the families of the offenders, and the community as a whole) to play a role in finding a curative solution to the genocide crime that is still fresh in the minds and the souls of the Rwandan people.

A woman from Rwanda who was interviewed by AFJN, said that though she was not in Rwanda when the killings happened, she feels that she is wanted by the criminal justice system because she is a Hutu. Un-

fortunately, there is a generation of Hutu teens born after the genocide who feel the same way. It is therefore imperative that Rwanda utilize a form of restorative justice to rebuild neighborhoods, brotherhood, sisterhood, and friendship in response to the crime of genocide that deeply wounded the intertribal relationship between Hutu and Tutsi.

Like in Rwanda, Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu, Uganda believes that restorative justice is what it will take to end conflict in Uganda and heal the Gulu people from the devastation of the crimes committed by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) since 1986. BBC News quotes the Archbishop as saying, “In Uganda rebels ask for forgiveness. Forgiveness is healing and it has a more lasting effect than revenge, the perpetuation of hatred, the perpetuation of war.” This is in agreement with what Mr. Martin Ojul, a Lord Resistance Army’s representative told Mega FR radio station. “We are here for reconciliation and we want to come back and live with the people peacefully and in harmony.”

Given the many conflicts in Africa, AFJN does not believe that all of the crimes committed can be feasibly tackled by the criminal justice system. Consequently, AFJN has decided to promote restorative justice as an alternative to criminal justice in order to bring justice to all and an end to conflicts and the suffering of many African communities.

Privatizing Violence in Africa

By Mary Hansen

One of the goals of the United States' new military command for Africa, AFRICOM, as defined by the Department of Defense (DOD) is to promote security and stability on the continent by increasing the security capability of African countries. This includes professionalizing African militaries and providing peacekeeping forces and support.

DOD officials have said that the AFRICOM force of about 600 will be mainly administrative personnel concentrated at its headquarters, currently in Stuttgart, Germany. They will be both civilian and military personnel re-assigned from the European Command (EUCOM), Pacific Command (PACOM), and Central Command (CENTCOM), the military commands that African operations were previously drawn from.

However, achieving AFRICOM's goal of increasing the security capability of African countries will require more than just administrative personnel. Furthermore, with U.S. troops over-extended in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, one of the likely options for AFRICOM is to hire military contractors. Considering the recent Blackwater, Inc. controversy in Iraq, this option is increasingly unsettling.

Hiring military contractors in Africa is not a new strategy. The Bush administration employed DynCorp International to restructure Liberia's military forces in 2003. After two years of operations and a \$35 million pledge from the US government, the military contractor has failed to achieve what it was hired to do, train 2,000 Liberians in US military tactics.

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as 43 percent in populations where antiretroviral therapy is not available. However, so far only 1 percent of the children who need cotrimoxazole prophylaxis have access to it.

The majority of countries that have HIV/AIDS plans in effect include no provisions specifically for the 2.3 million children around the world who are infected with HIV/AIDS. Pediatric HIV/AIDS is a growing concern for

Despite this failure, the United States signed a contract for continuing "peacekeeping, capacity enhancement, and surveillance efforts" with DynCorp in 2004, worth between \$20 and \$100 million. Then, earlier this year, the Bush administration assigned a \$10 million job for DynCorp to provide logistical support to peacekeeping missions in Somalia.

Other private military contractors currently active in Africa include Northrop Grumman Corp, with a contract worth up to \$75 million, and KBR Inc., a subsidiary of Halliburton Co., with three bases in Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia.

The current reliance on military contractors to carry out U.S. interests in Africa suggests that their new role in AFRICOM will be anything but what Theresa Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, described as "in the back room."

Although government officials like Whelan have said that the role of military contractors will

be limited, it seems inevitable that they will be the face of the U.S. military in Africa under AFRICOM. With this in mind, Congress should put strict limitations on what they are allowed to do and who is held accountable if things go wrong. Ultimately, AFJN would like to see the use of military sub-contractors eliminated in Africa and will be campaigning for an end to private defense. In December, AFJN will begin a petition to ask Congress to put an end to such irresponsible foreign policy and we sincerely hope you will lend your support. Visit www.afjn.org for more about AFRICOM and what you can do to counter this new command.

AFJN. Every child is a gift from God and every child deserves a chance to live. Currently, AFJN is part of a working group that is drafting specific proposals to present to Congress regarding the reauthorization of the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief. Continue to check our website for ways you can aid in this endeavor. Join us as we advocate for providing better pediatric diagnostic tools and more treatment for children with HIV/AIDS, thus providing hope for the futures of millions of children worldwide.



Instead of promoting development and diplomacy as paths to security in Africa, the United States has chosen to use the military and private defense.

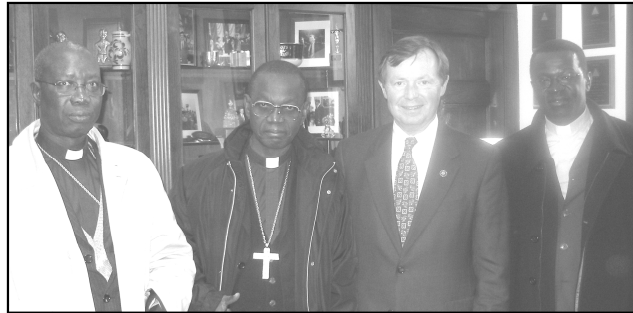
West African Pastors Advocate for Farm Bill Reform

By Fr. Rocco Puopolo, s.s.

At the beginning of November, AFJN assisted Oxfam America in efforts to bring to light the plight of African cotton farmers as the Farm Bill was being debated in the Senate. Oxfam invited three West African Pastors: Bishop Thomas Kabore, Bishop of Kaya, Burkina Faso; Bishop Jean Noël Diouf, Bishop of Tambacounda, Senegal; and Abbé Cyprien Dakouo, Secretary of the Finance Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Mali. These three countries are cotton-producing countries, but their production has been undermined by cotton subsidies to US farmers. The delegation was in Washington from November 2nd-11th visiting members of Congress, officials at the White House, and staffers at the World Bank.

Their message was simple:

“This [Farm Bill] legislation affects not only the people of the United States, but many people around the world. Many of those people who are impacted by the Farm Bill live in our parishes and our dioceses, where extreme poverty is our daily bread... [we] are not economists or politicians... rather we are bishops and pastors from West Africa who know first-hand the reality of millions of Africans who depend on farming and who struggle every day to make a decent living to



Left to right: Bishop Diouf, Bishop Kabore, North Dakota Rep. Earl Pomeroy, and Abbé Dakouo

support families, raise children and to provide some chance for a better future... [they] want nothing more than a fair chance to grow their crops, to sell what they produce and to make a living for themselves and their children... We are grateful for US generosity, without which many of our brothers and sisters would die of hunger or disease, but we would be more grateful if we could also stand

on our own two feet and join farmers and workers elsewhere who enjoy the fruits of their labors and the work of their hands.”—From the Statement of Bishop Thomas Kabore at the US Capitol, November 6, 2007

AFJN policy analyst, Bahati Ntama, accompanied the delegation on their visits to the Hill and to other events. They also spent a day at Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Headquarters, learning of the many ways that CRS assists their people and having the opportunity to personally meet and thank many of the staff who work with their issues. By the end of the visit, the Bishops and Abbe Cyprien were very grateful for the experience of engaging legislators in dialogue on this bill and meeting those of us who advocate on their behalf. AFJN invites its membership to take up where the Bishops left off. They did their best to end subsidies that hurt all poor farmers, here and there. Now it is up to us. Please visit the AFJN website for more information about the 2007 Farm Bill and what you can do to influence the lives of smallholder farmers worldwide.

Intern Strategies at Congo Global Action

By Alexis Nadin

During my time at Congo Global Action, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has reached a new height and as a result the international community is starting to take notice of the mounting crisis and those facing this struggle. For this reason, I value my position and responsibilities at Congo Global Action Coalition (CGA), where I spend my time as an intern for Africa Faith and Justice Network. I have been delegated the task of organizing CGA’s outreach campaign; as a result, I have garnered a passion for outreach as a tool which can aid CGA in its efforts to compel the international community to take notice and end the rape, economic exploitation, civil strife, and terror facing innocent civilians in the DR Congo.

I have begun the long process of creating materials that will

inspire, empower, and enable our constituents to act. Included in these materials are fun, easy, and powerful ways to make a difference in communities across the country. Having recently launched our website, these tools will soon be readily available to anyone who wants to make a difference and to stand in solidarity with the Congolese. Furthermore, the office is abuzz with efforts to plan the 2008 Congo Global Action Conference and Lobby Day which will be held in Washington, DC. I truly believe this conference will enable Congo Global Action’s members to command the attention of the United States Congress and the global community, while providing those individuals with the tools to return to their homes and continue to advocate.

If you are interested in learning more about Congo Global Action please see our website: www.congoglobalaction.org or email me at alexis@congoglobalaction.org.

The Shifting Face of the AFJN Board

The structure of the AFJN Board of Directors is changing. During the past year, we have worked to ensure strong representation of the missionary religious communities – societies and congregations that have traditionally formed the backbone of AFJN on the Board – while at the same time we have expanded and diversified the Board so as to better connect AFJN to dioceses, parishes, schools and other agencies. Within the last year, the Board has welcomed Dr. Michael Gable, Ms. Lacey Haussamen, Mr. Trevor Rodrigues, Mr. John Kleiderer, and Sr. Joan Marie Doud, MMS. These new Board members bring a wealth of experience and fresh and unique perspectives that promise to enhance the effectiveness of AFJN.

Dr. Michael Gable is the Director of the Mission Office for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and teaches various courses at Xavier University, the College of Mount St. Joseph, and the Athenaeum. Mike brings with him a wealth of experience in mobilizing and organizing justice and peace efforts at the parish level. He was a Franciscan Lay Missionary in Honduras in the early 1970's and was later a Maryknoll Lay missionary in Venezuela and Bolivia in the late 1980's. He has been a pastoral associate, a DRE, and a communications director for Maryknoll. Mike is married with four children and two grandchildren. Notably, his office just coordinated the first Africa Educational Summit in September which welcomed 170 people to a challenging day of information that will lead to stronger advocacy.

Ms. Lacey Haussamen is currently a graduate student in public health at Emory University in Atlanta. Lacey served as a lay missionary with the Congregation of Holy Cross in Uganda for two years. Before beginning graduate studies at Emory, Lacey worked as an AFJN staff member and, among other things, did amazing work on HIV/AIDS-related issues and the AFJN website.

Mr. Trevor Rodrigues is an extremely talented and committed lay leader and Coordinator of the Africa Ministry at Saint Monica Parish, Santa Monica, California. Together with the pastor of Saint Monica Parish, Msgr. Lloyd

Torgerson, Trevor has been tireless in his efforts to connect Saint Monica to the Church and people of Africa. Trevor was born in East Africa and therefore has a personal link to the region.

Mr. John Kleiderer is currently the Policy Director for the Office of Social and International Ministries of the Jesuit Conference in Washington, DC. It entails advocacy both with the US government and with select US corporations in which the Jesuits have investments. John has been an advocate for the poor and working for justice for many years now. As a Jesuit Volunteer, John taught in the journalism department at St. Augustine University of Tanzania in Mwanza from 1997 to 1999. He then worked for the Jesuit Refugee Service until 2001 in the western part of Tanzania along the border with Burundi where many from Burundi were in refugee camps due to the civil war. He is now married and lives in DC. John is no stranger to Capitol Hill and his presence on the Board promises to, among other things, help us improve and forge partnerships that will enhance AFJN's effectiveness. He also sits on the Board of the Washington Office on Africa.

Sr. Joan Marie Doud is a Medical Mission Sister who recently returned from 44 years of medical service in Uganda, primarily as a nurse-midwife. Her many years in Uganda included service in Medical centers, outpatient care, outreach clinics in underserved areas of Western Uganda, Southwest Uganda and primary health care in villages with a curative base. Sr. Joan Marie is completing the term of Sr. Maria Hornung who had to leave the Board due to new duties with the Medical Mission Sisters.

While we fully intend to strengthen connections to the religious communities – societies and congregations that have given and continue to give the work of AFJN life – the efforts to broaden and diversify the Board will continue. We are confident that such efforts will enhance the work of AFJN to promote policies that put people first in Africa.

*Fr. Bob Dowd, CSC
Chair of the AFJN Board*

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Development (USAID), African Agric Biotech, Africa Rice Centre, and other American and European corporations.

The key challenges facing farmers in Africa are off-farm systems and market failures, not low-yield crops. There need to be improvements in market information systems, crop storage, processing, and transportation, along with

advocacy for policies that support small scale farmers, rural development, environmental sustainability, and trade favorable to poor farmers in Africa.

AFJN is working with other organizations to fight underdevelopment in Africa and to give African farmers an alternative to the green revolution that will preserve biodiversity in crop production.

We hope you will join us for our 25th Anniversary Conference and Celebration, April 18-21, 2008 in Rosslyn, Virginia! Keep an eye on the AFJN website for details and conference registration.

Have a Merry Christmas!

The **Africa Faith and Justice Network**, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, educates and advocates for just relations with Africa.

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