The World Community for Christian Meditation

Published on *The World Community for Christian Meditation* (http://www.wccm.org)

CARE FOR CREATION: Commemorating the life of Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN

From Pax Christi USA?s Global Restoration Committee

?*I don?t want to flee, nor do I want to abandon the battle of these farmers who live without any protection in the forest. They have the sacrosanct right to aspire to a better life on land where they can live and work with dignity while respecting the environment*.? ~Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN

One of the dimensions of just peace-making is the attention to human rights and global restoration. This is one of the pillars espoused by Pax Christi USA. In remembering and celebrating the life and death of Sr. Dorothy Stang, we become aware of her struggle against the disregard for the human rights of Indigenous people and for the preservation of the forest.

Sr. Dorothy was shot on February 12, 2005 near Anapú, a small Amazon jungle village where she was active for 23 years, helping local peasant farmers fight for their land and their rights in the face of encroachment by large landowners and logging companies.

The Independent/UK in 2005 published the following: ?As with the death of Mr. Mendez, a rubber tapper, the murder of Sister Dorothy has triggered waves of outrage among environmental and human rights activists who say she dedicated her life to helping the area?s poor, landless peasants and confronting the businesses that see the rainforest only as a resource to be plundered and which have already destroyed 20 per cent of its 1.6 million square miles. The stakes could not have been higher. **Greenpeace estimates that 90 per cent of the timber in Para is illegally logged**. The danger of speaking out against such exploitation could barely have been greater. Campaigners say Para has the country?s highest rate of deaths related to land battles. Greenpeace said that more than 40 per cent of the

murders between 1985 and 2001 were related to such disputes.? (Published on Tuesday, February 15, 2005 by *theIndependent/*UK)

Her anniversary reminds us of the courage and audacity of a prophet to speak out in defense of those whose voices are smothered through fear and brutal force. Sister Dorothy Stang was one of those prophets who could not abandon the battle against big logging companies in favor of the poor peasant trying to eke out a living in and from the forest. She often wore a t-shirt with the slogan, ?A morte da floresta é fim da nossa vida?, the ?**Death of the forest is the end of our life**?.

Shockingly, the Brazilian Supreme Court released the farmer found guilty of ordering the 2005 murder. This move has alarmed human rights defenders, saying other cases involving land disputes puts the rights of poor farmers in jeopardy. Galvao, the culpable man, had been arrested in 2008 and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Sr. Dorothy was 73 at the time of her murder and had lived in the Amazon jungle for three decades.

Sr. Dorothy?s community here in the U.S. shared with us that this February 12th and 13th, the eve of Ash Wednesday and Ash Wednesday, as they have every year since her death, a crowd will gather at the site of Dorothy?s death. People from all over the Anapu area and beyond, land reform activists, women and children as well as men from the sustainable development communities she helped establish, priests and perhaps the bishop, even a politician or two will stand in that sacred place and proclaim to one another, to the forest and the sky that Dorothy lives. They will sing and pray and then share a simple meal and talk not so much about the past, but about the future and their hopes. The crowd gathered round testifies to an unconquered spirit that still lives ? and inspires and calls us to attend to the life of the forest and indeed to attend to all we love wherever we are.

Peace & Justice

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