

EDITORIAL

On the morning of February 12, 2005, Sister Dorothy Stang, a Notre Dame de Namur nun from Dayton, Ohio, USA, but a naturalized Brazilian citizen, was on her way to a community meeting when two men stopped her in the rainforest in Anapu, Para, Brazil. They asked her if she had any weapons. She replied: Only the Bible, and pulled it out of her bag to show them. She quoted one passage: "Blessed are the poor in spirit because the kingdom of heaven is theirs." Receiving the nod from one of the men, the other fired a shot at Sister Dorothy, which struck her in the abdomen. The shooter then fired a second shot into her back. Finally the shooter fired four shots into Sister Dorothy's head.

From the early 1970's, Sister Dorothy had been helping the poor peasants to make a living by farming small plots of land, and by extracting products from the forest without deforestation. She also tried to protect the peasants from criminal gangs, who wanted to steal their land, land which the government had granted to them. Previously Sister Dorothy had received many death threats. Regarding these, she once wrote: "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 the land where they can live and work with dignity, while respecting the environment." At the time of her death Sister Dorothy was 73 years old.

In 2005, the two shooters were sentenced to over 20 years in prison for their role in the death of Sister Dorothy. In 2010, two ranchers who had ordered her killing were sentenced to 30 years in prison. (cf. Wikipedia, "Dorothy Stang")

Sister Dorothy's life and death introduce us to this issue's special topic: the Social Teachings of the Church. Sister Dorothy was a person who truly lived out the social teachings. She made a

sentence from the 1971 Synod of Bishops, the topic of which was Social Justice, a part of herself: "Action on behalf of justice is an integral part of preaching the Gospel." As we can see, people today are still living and dying for the principles expressed in the Church's social teachings.

In this issue, Cardinal Zen, emeritus bishop of Hong Kong, and Father Mark Fang, SJ, professor of Scripture on the Theology Faculty of Fujen University, Taiwan, each provides a commentary on Pope Benedict XVI's most recent social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*. Anthony Lam, the editor of the Chinese section of *Tripod*, paints a sketch of the 120 years of papal social teachings, from Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* up to the present encyclical of Pope Benedict. We also re-produce a beautiful and succinct summary of Catholic Social Teaching from a recent issue of *Scarboro Missions*, which Scarboro has graciously allowed us to use. Also included are a book review and recent news about episcopal ordinations in China.

For those interested in learning more about the Church's social teachings, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 2004 published a *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Translators are working on a Chinese version of this book, which has yet to be completed. This writer knows of at least one introduction in Chinese to the Church's social teachings. In the 2007 edition of *Blue Book of Religions*, published annually by the Institute of World Religions of the Academy of Social Sciences, scholar Wang Meixiu wrote an article on the Church's social teachings, in which she lists all the social encyclicals, from *Rerum Novarum* to *Centesimus Annus*. She comments that they offer, from the Church's point of view, analyses of and solutions for many of the world's social problems. (*Blue Book of Religions*, 2007, pp. 350-368) One can see that for the last 120 years, the Church's social teachings have had an influence far beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church itself. (PJB)