

As I submit this article, it is early August here in Iowa and the heat index has consistently been above 100 for many days. In our part of the state, the heat and drought are adversely affecting the corn and soybean crops. On the other side of the state, near my hometown, the Missouri River has been well out of its banks for weeks, with folks being displaced from their homes. In some cases homes have simply been swept away. This has occurred after the incredible spring when so many were affected by floods and springs in several of our fraternity regions. There is no doubt that my brother and sister Secular Franciscans have responded to the immediate needs of their family and neighbors with incredibly generosity without great fanfare. Thank you for responding to those needs!

And around the world there have been disasters relating to weather that have also caught our attention. The earthquake and tsunami in Japan occurred so quickly, the loss of life was so extensive, that for many people the reaction was disbelief. But prayer and donations have enabled us to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters there, so far from us.

Now we learn that rains that usually fall from October to December failed to appear in 2010 in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. Spring rains this year were erratic and insufficient. As a result, the area lost two growing seasons.

This drought has placed 10 million people in dire need of humanitarian aid. Kenya, in addition to facing its own drought problems, is also faced with refugees from Somalia.

JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION
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Prices for staple foods, already high, are increasing, nearly doubling already. There has not been a drought of this magnitude in the area in 60 years.

Catholic Relief Services reports that in Ethiopia they are leading a program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development that involves working with nine other humanitarian organizations to distribute food. The reach of that effort is expanding from 400,000 to 1 million beneficiaries. CRS is working with Caritas Ethiopia to identify other critical needs.

In Kenya, CRS and partners are responding to the needs of the Somali refugees and their local hosts, who are themselves suffering because of the drought. Through our many ongoing water, sanitation and agriculture projects in Kenya, CRS is also responding to Kenyans' needs during this crisis.

We can help by praying for the people of East Africa. CRS has prayers and petitions at:
<http://uspartners.crs.org/downloads/horn-of-africa-drought-prayer.pdf>



And we can make donations to the CRS East Africa Emergency Fund. As with other such relief efforts, donations can be sent to our National Fraternity Treasurer, Dennis Ross, SFO, 8933 Trailwood Ct. Mentor, OH 44060-2131.

Peace and all good, *Kent*

JUSTICE, PEACE & INTEGRITY OF CREATION AWARD

FR. LOUIS VITALE, OFM, a Franciscan Friar known for protests against war and torture and advocacy for the poor, is the 2011 recipient of the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order's *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award*. The award will be presented at the SFO National Chapter, to be held October 25-30, 2011 at St. Francis Retreat Center in San Juan Bautista, CA.

Formerly known as the *Peace Award*, it was renamed this year to capture the significant efforts in the areas of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. JPIC Chair Kent Ferris, SFO, noted "Our Franciscan *Rule* reminds us of our responsibility to 'individually and collectively be in the forefront of promoting justice by the testimony of our lives.' The JPIC Award allows us to recognize those who have modeled such courageous efforts."

Letters of nomination told not only of the issues Father Louie has focused on, but also on his personal lived experience. "Father Louie is the ultimate model for us on our journey of following in the footsteps of Sts. Francis and Clare. Watch for more on Father Vitale and the award presentation in the next issue of *TAU-USA*."

