

## CELEBRATING UNITED NATIONS DAY

A call for peace and reconciliation, respect for human rights and use of our gifts and resources for the advancement of all people

In our recent gathering at Siena Center, motherhouse of my Racine Dominican Community, we celebrated the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and recalled the goals and hopes of the organization. Many leaders in the past have called on people and nations to use their spiritual powers as well as other skills and resources to work together for peace and reconciliation and human development for all people, especially those most deprived and neglected. To achieve international cooperation in solving problems of an economic, social and cultural or communitarian character will require the commitment and good will of each of us. The hopes and prayers and actions of all can go a long way in promoting peace and well-being in our war-weary world.

There are endless ways to participate locally, nationally and globally in areas such as clean water, child welfare, help for children and families caught in natural disasters, wars and more. One such organization that directs people toward solutions is UNICEF ([unicefusa.org](http://unicefusa.org))

The words of former President Dwight Eisenhower give us much food for thought. He called the nation to reflect on the money spent on military operations. He reminds us that it is not just money alone that is spent on the military. "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense – a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. The world is spending more than money on arms. It is spending the sweat of our laborers, the genius of our scientists, the hopes of our children." These words indicate clearly that much of military spending nationally and globally can be equated with material, intellectual and spiritual theft.

Then there is the human cost of war. Some estimates of this cost is staggering. US deaths from Iraq/Afghanistan wars are 4,334, The number of suicides reported by the army has risen. This year's figure from January to mid-July is estimated at 129. Iraqi death from January 2005 to August 2009 of police and military: 7,895 and civilians: 46:070. Other figures from Veterans for Peace report that more than 1,000,000 Iraqi men, women and children have been wounded, killed or psychologically traumatized since the beginning of the war.

We are doing all of these things in the name of national security. We have some legitimate concerns in this area, but war and violence are not the answer. We first need to address the human needs that are a greater threat to our security. Our own and other economies have been on the brink of collapse in the recent economic crisis. At the same time, we are pouring huge amounts of money into war mongering. There must be another way. Human development and dialog among conflicting people and nations will be a better way to achieve peace.

Military expenditures by the United States alone amounts to nearly half of the world's military spending. The UN Millennium Development Goals are achievable if only one tenth of what is spent on military was used for human development. What a difference that would make for ourselves and future generations. (Peace economy project.)

What kind of security do we want to achieve in the future. Each one of us can make our voices heard on behalf of peace and human security not only for ourselves but also for the sake of generations yet to come. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We pray that we will be signs of peace security and hope in our time and place. Let us begin today with courage, conviction and hope. May God's peace fill our homes, our hearts and our world.