



**“NO ONE IS FREE  
UNTIL  
EVERYONE IS FREE”**  
*(Vivet Pandik)*

During the month of January we reflect on each of the Human Rights in The Universal Declaration. In the light of these articles, events and people across the globe, who have stood for Human Rights, inspire us:

Sr Dorothy Stang SND defended the human rights of the poor landless populations of Brazil for forty years. She worked with farmers to rebuild their livelihoods and to defend them in the face of logging firms and wealthy ranchers before being murdered on **Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> 2005**. Soon after her death, 22,000 acres were reserved for development by poor farmers whose cause she had championed.

**Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>  
is national human trafficking awareness day.**



**For child soldiers, child labourers and children exploited in pornography, we pray;**

**R. Deliver them from darkness into your wonderful light.**

**For young girls exploited on city streets and hidden in brothels, R.**

**For enslaved women, desperate, alone and abandoned. R.**

**For men in bondage, betrayed forgotten and despairing. R.**

**For all Human Family members currently enslaved around the world, we pray. R.**



**RELIGIOUS OF THE  
SACRED HEART OF MARY**  
NGO Associated with the Department of Public Information (DPI)  
**The United Nations**

**RSHM @ the UN:**

**Extracts from an Intern's Diary (October – November 2008)**

**Anne Murphy**

The United Nations is a microcosm of humanity: a concept, not just a building. Whatever I had expected to find inside the United Nations Headquarters in New York during my period as an NGO intern, a Meditation Chapel was not on my list; but, that's where Rita Arthur, our distinguished RSHM/UN/ NGO representative, took me on my first day. This tiny, tomb-like chapel is dimly lit and seems to speak of darkness to light, emergence from imprisonment, resurrection. It spoke of hope and a vision of a better world. It reminded me of Newgrange. It was a good place to begin. Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General of the United Nations from 1953 to 1964, personally planned and supervised every detail of the Meditation Room. In 1957 Hammarskjöld wrote a reflection to be distributed to the visitors to the room. For me, his text is a distillation of the vision of the UN; I found it inspirational. It gave me an unexpected focus for the weeks that were just beginning; I began to realise how much there was to think about; how much I had to learn:

**"We all have within us a center of stillness surrounded by silence.  
This house, dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace,  
should have one room dedicated to silence in the outward sense  
and stillness in the inner sense. It has been the aim to create  
in this small room a place where the doors may be open  
to the infinite lands of thought and prayer."**

Halfway through my internship, I was musing on the structure of the United Nations: the image of a giant Christmas tree came to mind. I suppose the star on the top would, more properly, be the Vision or Goal of the UN rather than Ban-Ki-Moon, the current Secretary General. I suspect, if I were to keep the Christmas Tree image going, he, and the other luminaries of the systemic bodies, from Secretary General to various commissioners and delegates, would be the glittering and flickering lights which encircle the extended branches of the structure whose roots and essence belong to and grow from the aspirations of a needy and yearning humanity. As for the NGOs and related and ancillary agencies, they/we might be the needles which cling to the tree in their greenery and which, eventually, cover the ground in their millions; then they are carried on the soles of passing feet to the four corners of the earth. All metaphors/analogies fail to meet the analysis of rigorous logic, if carried too far; so, I ask you to bear with my imaginings – this is creative accounting, rather than a scientific offering. May I add: the Christmas tree would have to be on a moving dais, circling very slowly, which would offer different aspects from different perspectives and from changing points of view. I leave the rest to your imagination.

*Inside the UN the issues of the world are on the agenda:*

**Peace and Security; Human Rights; Climate Change; Disarmament; Rule of Law; Children and Youth; Sustainable Development; Poverty Eradication; Food Security; Shelter; Health; Gender Equality; Education.**

I have been privileged to observe and participate in NGO work on some of these issues in my time at the UN; it has changed me. It will take some time to consider and prioritise my hopes and possibilities for the future, for the future of RSHM/NGO. I came home grateful and humble. Rita's mantra to all of us in her promotion of the work of the UN is to find a focus; by this she is suggesting that for authentic work as NGOs we, RSHMs, need to work on issues which are close to our hearts, reflective of our charism. The Benedictine writer Joan Chittister has written: 'Find the thing that stirs your heart and make room for it'. This is what I/we have to do; I did not expect to find education, spirituality, and music at the heart of the UN dream. One of the most significant revelations of my internship was to attend meetings of RUN – Religious at the UN. I did not know there was such a group: their commitment, energy, idealism grounded by realism, all rooted in gospel values foundational to the pursuit of human rights and justice, made me proud to be numbered amongst them. It is good for us to be here.

All of us, in our own way, already commit ourselves, passionately, 'that all my have life'. This may not, and need not be, in the corridors and committee rooms of the UN; as Rita says; 'It is a way of thinking'.

'I live', the American transcendentalist Thoreau wrote, 'in a very small house, but my windows look out on a very large world'. In embarking on this period of engagement as RSHM/NGO at the UN we have dared to open those windows just a little. Who knows where this will lead us.

Anne would be happy to visit any community or other gathering to speak about the UN, just contact her.