

Special Interest Articles:

- Appetito Bags – We can cut more plastic out.
- It's Official – Buble Bee endangered.
- Hakeem al-Araibi – urgent action needed.



Greenland's Ice

We begin a new year and, sadly, all the signs indicate that we are one step closer to an environmental disaster. We have just sweltered through a record breaking heat wave that, with the El Niño in place, suggests a cruel drought ahead of us. There have already been power shortages down south due to the increased reliance on air conditioning, and water shortages may follow.

But a little discomfort with the heat is not the main concern. Scientists say Greenland's ice sheets may have reached a "tipping point," a stage of irrevocable melting, which would have dire consequences for people living on coastlines and beyond around the world, according to the New York Times.

absorbs more sunlight. This in turn, raises the surrounding temperature and causes more ice to melt. If Greenland's ice sheets melted, global sea levels would rise by 23 feet, enough to displace billions of people around the world. Such a steep sea level rise would harm or destroy coastal agricultural systems, contaminate bodies of potable water, intensify tropical storms, and more.

The world's poor are most likely to be most impacted by rising sea levels because of a lack of resources to relocate as coastal conditions deteriorate. Countries around the world are grappling with the refugees from war torn parts of the world. Get ready of a massive increase in "climate change refugees!" Given our lifestyle has contributed to this disaster, are we prepared to do our part to help people who will be impacted by the consequences?

J.R.Sanchez CP

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The latest research, published in the science journal the 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,' adds to a growing consensus that Greenland's melting will only accelerate over time. As ice turns to water, it becomes darker and

Appetito Bags

We have already made great strides in eliminating plastic shopping bags. People are becoming more and more used to using reusable shopping bags and making it part of their routine to take it with them to the shopping centre. But we haven't eliminated all plastic from our shopping. If you are like me, I have continued to use the small plastic bags provided when buying fruit and vegetables, only to throw them in the bin when I get home. Well not any more!

also act as storage bags for fruit and vegetables to preserve their freshness. They can be put into the fridge and washed in the washing machine when done to be reused. They include a drawstring for carrying or storing produce; they help limit the use of disposable plastic or brown paper bags; the mesh design allows air to circulate, keeping produce fresh longer, and they are easy to clean.

These bags are available from Victoria's Kitchen, or can be sourced on line from kitchenwarehouse.com.au. Join me in making the switch.

J. R. Sanchez, CI



A friend of mine introduced me to 'Appetito Bags.' These are reusable mesh bags that serve to replace the plastic, but

JPIC Happenings



Having just come back to work following my annual holiday time, I've hit the ground running in preparation for the Mass I've organised for the 8th of February at St. Stephen's Cathedral for the feast of St. Bakhita. The idea came from a similar mass that ACRATH Melbourne organised to raise awareness of, and pray for, the victims of human trafficking and modern day slavery. The mass itself is organised and the Bishop booked, but my work in preparation will include ensuring that the Sudanese choir will be there to provide the music and making sure I have all the relevant information, songs, etc., so as to print off the mass booklet. Going back to work on the Australia Day long weekend didn't help as it was impossible to contact anyone. But hopefully there is enough time to ensure all is ready.

Apart from this project, the year begins for me, as chair of the JPIC committee, with preparing this first issue of the JPIC

newsletter for 2019, as well as preparing an article for the JPIC blog.

Peter Gardiner CP and I have had further communications since the last newsletter and he declined the offer for further study as he wanted to pursue some other JPIC opportunities for work overseas. In the mean time, Peter organised another opportunity for interested parties who are connected with us as Passionists, to join Volunteer Building Cambodia for an immersion experience that involved building homes for poor families in Cambodia. Gwen and Russ Winterscheidt, who are part of the team directing the PFGM for Queensland and Northern NSW, took part in this latest experience and in Gwen's own words, she described their experience as, "We have been on a steep learning curve and met some amazing people."

J.R.Sanchez, CP

When man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order. (JPIC)



It's Official

The bumblebee has been officially added to the ever-growing list of endangered species along with the grizzly bear, the northern spotted owl, the grey wolf, and about 700 other animal species that are extinct. Once abundant in the grasslands and prairies of the East and Midwest USA, the bee has now been restricted to protections in continental USA as its population keeps dwindling at an alarming rate.

The good news, if there is any, is that by listing it, the bumblebee will receive the protection it needs and so stands a chance of surviving the many threats it faces – from the use of pesticides to diseases. Human encroachment has led to the subsequent loss of their natural habitat, which played a significant role in the bee's declining population. The classification will foster the conservation of tall grasses and protection of grasslands that the bee, and other pollinators, naturally thrive on. This will in

turn be critical to the natural ecosystems and agriculture that are dependent on them for pollination.

Although a step in common sense, and welcomed, the designation will not sit well with several industries and corporations, such as the Petroleum, home builders, cotton and rural electric industries, who have already filed a petition requesting a year's delay in the listing.

So the survival of the bumblebee faces many challenges. It is not without irony that these corporations have petitioned against the listing, considering pollinators are responsible for the propagation of around one third of our food supply. The Washington Post estimates a series of lawsuits to follow from the petition signatories seeking to de-list the bee.

J.R.Sanchez CP



The Bolsonaro Threat

A major blow to the environment and for our world's future, in light of Climate Change, has come with the election of the new president of Brazil. Jair Bolsonaro, an authoritarian nationalist sometimes called the 'tropical Trump,' has staked out an environmental agenda that would open the Amazon to widespread development, putting at risk a region that plays a vital role in stabilizing the global climate.

Bolsonaro won the presidential runoff last October and has marshalled an unprecedented social media effort. The vote represented a widespread rejection of the Worker's Party, which had ruled Brazil for 13 years and was characterised by massive corruption scandals and economic collapse. Bolsonaro's tough image appealed to many voters, much as Duterte's did in the Philippines.

With the support of the Congress, the military and agribusiness sector, he has vowed sweeping changes including the effective end to environmental licensing for infrastructure projects, which would open up vast areas of the Amazon to development. This includes a ban on creating new protected areas or indigenous territories. If the worst plays out, the deforestation rate in the Amazon could nearly triple. This environmental disaster would unfold at a time when climate change and diminishing rainfall already pose a serious threat to the Amazon, whose vast stores of carbon could be released into the atmosphere.

Unfortunately the election results show that the environment was an insignificant issue for the people of Brazil.

Ray Sanchez CP



Arms Race Rebooted

As promised by Donald Trump, the US has begun making a new, low-yield nuclear warhead for its Trident missiles that arms control advocates warn could lower the threshold for a nuclear conflict. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) said the first of the new warheads had come off the production line and was on schedule to deliver the first batch before September of this year.

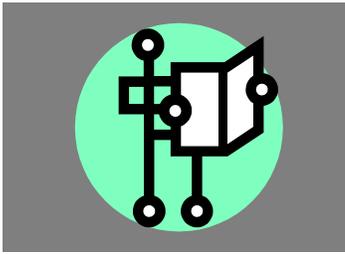
The Trump administration has argued the development of a low-yield weapon would make nuclear war less likely by giving the US a more flexible deterrent. It would counter any enemy perception that the US would balk at using its own fearsome arsenal in response to a limited nuclear attack because its missiles were all in the hundreds of kilotons range and too big to use because of the untold civilian casualties that would result.

This is a worrying development as it is based on an optimistic scenario that assumes there will be no miscalculation on the US side. It is also concerning given the news we received towards the end of last year about China's development of an electromagnetic rail gun for its warships. China appears to have taken a huge stride ahead of the US deploying this new weapon.



Traditional guns use an explosive charge to generate a high-pressure cloud of gas that forces a projectile out the open end of a barrel at high velocities. But the propellant generates heat and pressure, restricting the practical size, speed and durability of such a weapon, and requires large stores of explosives to be carried aboard a ship. But an electromagnetic rail gun uses powerful magnets to sling warheads down its barrel and into the air. This will enable larger warheads to be fired much faster and further than traditional cannons, and could sink ships and even destroy aircraft and missiles in flight at ranges and accuracy normally expected from missiles. Freud was right! We have a death wish.

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Hakeem al-Araibi

25-year old, former Bahraini national footballer, Hakeem al-Araibi holds refugee status in Australia after fleeing his homeland in 2014. He was granted political asylum in 2017, and has since joined and plays for Pascoe Vale in Melbourne. He fled Bahrain after he was convicted in an unfair trial of vandalizing a police station, even though he was abroad and playing in a televised football match at the time. Since finding refuge in Australia, he has spoken out about the human rights abuses in his home country, including the torture he suffered in detention.

In early December 2018, Hakeem travelled to Thailand with his wife for a honeymoon, expecting to sightsee and relax on the beach. But on arrival he was detained after Bahrain authorities initiated an INTERPOL Red Notice, effectively a warrant for his arrest. That Red Notice has since been lifted but he is still being held in detention by Thailand

awaiting possible deportation. He has now spent more than 50 days in a Thai prison cell and wakes up everyday not knowing if this is the day the unthinkable will happen. If deported back to Bahrain Hakeem faces imprisonment and torture, having been sentenced to 10 years by a Bahraini court in his absence.

The Australian Government has called on the Thai authorities to release Hakeem immediately. The Australian foreign minister, Marise Payne, says she has raised it with her Thai counterpart, Don Pramudwinai, requesting that Hakeem be allowed to fly back to Melbourne as soon as possible, stating that returning him to Bahrain would contravene his rights under international human rights law.

Please visit the Amnesty International website and sign the on-line petition or make a donation towards this cause.

J.R.Sanchez CP .

