**FAIR TRADE NEWS**

A couple of years ago Claremont became the first “Fair Trade Town” in Southern California. Now Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church has become one of the first “Fair Trade Congregations” in the nation.

**Fair Trade**

Thanks to the efforts of Joe and Linda Michon of *Fair Trade Claremont* and their committee, and by unanimous vote of the City Council, about two years ago Claremont became the first “Fair Trade Town” in Southern California, joining the ranks of such cities as London and Boston. Now Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church has become one of the first “Fair Trade Congregations” in the nation.

Fair Trade products, including coffee, chocolate, sugar, arts and crafts, and many others, are featured at the Claremont Earth Day Celebration, at the annual meetings of Sustainable Claremont, and at other events. The committee has also worked with local merchants to make Fair Trade products more available for everyday shopping. Now Fair products can be found all over town, *but you have to look for the Fair Trade label!*

What is the meaning of “Fair Trade?”

Fair Trade incorporates strict environmental standards that have impacts beyond the local area. These include a ban on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Fair Trade products, elimination of toxic chemicals in fertilizers, incentives for organic conversion, practices to maintain clean water, to preserve rain forests and more. Because of these standards, Fair Trade has been endorsed by the Sierra Club and Green America.

Fair Trade promotes economic sustainability with fair prices and fair wages for small farmers and artisans in the developing world. Fair Trade also delivers *social* sustainability with a portion of funds earned by the community set aside to use for local development (schools, scholarships, clinics). In effect Fair Trade gives a moral context to globalization. All major religions have endorsed Fair Trade as an effective means to address global poverty and slow environmental destruction.

The Fair Trade committee of the Interfaith Sustainability Council seeks to educate and move to action, connecting the dots between the faith we profess and the products we purchase. The group has given presentations and staffed interactive educational booths at Earth Day, the Claremont Independence Day Celebration, Rotary Clubs, The LA Green Festival, St Lucy’s High School, Church Women United, and several area Congregations. It has collaborated with the Conscientious Projector Project of Progressive Christians Uniting in screening the “The Dark Side of Chocolate” and “Buyer Be Fair”.

A *Fair Trade Congregations* Campaign was launched in the U.S. in September of this year. The Campaign provides the tools and a platform to raise awareness in congregations of how the values of our faith should guide our buying decisions and the profound impact these purchase decisions have on millions of small producers and the planet. *Our Lady of the Assumption* *Catholic Church* has recently earned official recognition as a Fair Trade Congregation. The Interfaith Sustainability Council plans to encourage and assist other area congregations to join this program. Several of our congregations already use Fair Trade Products, and plans are under way for others to become Fair Trade Congregations using OLA as a model.