



HERMANAS DE LA CARIDAD  SISTERS OF CHARITY OF  
E VERBO ENCARNADO E INCARNATE WORD

March 2017

## Seeds | By: Katty Huanuco, CCVI and Jennifer Reyes Lay |

In this month of March, we lift up and celebrate women, both past and present, who are shining examples for us of incarnating God’s love through their commitment to justice, peace, and the care of creation. Women continue to lead the way in the work to end human trafficking, to end gun violence in our communities, to teach and bring about peace amidst conflict, to welcome the fleeing refugee, to care for and protect our mother earth, and resist systemic oppression while creating new life-giving possibilities for our world. To all the women sowing their seeds of peace and justice – we thank you and we honor you!

As we send out this edition of Seeds, we are also conscious of the suffering experienced by many throughout the world. In particular we join our thoughts and prayers with the people of Peru who have been devastated by recent heavy rains and flooding. Recognizing that these abnormal weather patterns are the result of human caused climate change, we recommit ourselves to doing all we can to prevent further climate change and protect the most vulnerable who are already impacted.

As always, we invite your feedback on the articles contained here and in our collective work for justice, peace, and the care of creation in general. We recognize that we cannot do everything, but we can do something, and we can do that something well. And when we each do our something, we can have an important collective impact. We hope the articles and action ideas included here inspire you to do your something!

## Human Trafficking

**HOW THE NATIONAL HOTLINE CAN HELP VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING FROM LATIN AMERICA.** Maria’s daughter was 16 years old when she was recruited by a dangerous pimp.

After trying, unsuccessfully, to bring her daughter home several times, Maria was running out of options. Originally from Mexico, lacking legal status, and having only lived in the U.S. for a short time, she didn’t know where to turn.

Then, one of her friends told her about the **National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888)**. Thinking she had nothing to lose, she gave it a try. When Maria first spoke with a Hotline advocate named Jenny, she was afraid. But Jenny assured her that the Hotline is a confidential, non-governmental organization, so Maria felt she could trust her with her story.

Jenny explained how the Hotline works with trusted law enforcement officials who are trained to respond to human trafficking and always put the needs of victims first. Understanding

the grave danger her daughter was in, Maria agreed to cooperate with them. With Maria's help, the officials brought her daughter home safely.

Maria's daughter is one of over 4,300 potential victims of sex trafficking with a connection to Mexico or Central America reported to the Hotline since 2007. Stories like hers show how ruthless criminal networks or individuals operating on both sides of the border target vulnerable young women and girls from Mexico or Latino communities in the U.S., and exploit them for profit.

Traffickers deceive and entice victims through false promises of love, good jobs, or safe passage to the U.S. Often lacking legal documents, money, and English fluency, these women and girls are trapped – controlled by their traffickers through debt bondage, physical violence, and other brutal types of abuse.

Over the past six months, National Hotline staff have worked closely with Polaris's Mexico team to identify common challenges victims of this form of trafficking often face. By training our National Hotline advocates to recognize the signs of this network, we're ensuring the Hotline is better able to identify needs, service gaps, and solutions for callers.

In January, bilingual Hotline advocates received supplemental training to learn more about the context of this issue and discuss resources that could empower them to more effectively help this population overcome frequent barriers to services and assistance. As one result of this training, the Hotline and Polaris strategic initiative teams developed a glossary of slang frequently used within this network so advocates can better understand victims' stories and mirror the language they and their loved ones use to describe their situations.

Another challenge the Hotline identified is the very real threat of harm many victims face – to themselves or to their family members, whether they're in the U.S. or in their home countries. Advocates are now more prepared to help these callers create a safety plan, and can also connect them to our partner Hotline in Mexico, operated by **Consejo Ciudadano (01-800-5533-000)**.

As we saw in Maria's story, callers about these cases are often afraid to interact with law enforcement. They may have concerns about immigration, as well as perceptions of corruption carried over from their countries of origin. The trained law enforcement and social service providers we partner with understand these fears and know that, too often, traffickers may use a person's immigration status as a means of control.

**The Trafficking Victims Protection Act guarantees every victim of human trafficking the right to seek justice and assistance, without regard to their status in this country.** In upholding this law, the Polaris-operated Hotline is a resource that will confidentially assist any caller in need. *(Article from the Polaris Project)*

## Environment

**THIS DISASTER IS CALLED CLIMATE CHANGE.** Peru is suffering at the moment from heavy rains, floods, and storms that are causing loss of life, as well as personal, material, and economic damages. Piura, Lambayeque and La Libertad are - this week - the regions most affected. At the national level, INDECI reports that this season of rains starting March 6, has caused 56,000 victims, 43 people killed, more than 100,000 homes affected, more than 2,000 kilometers of roads affected or destroyed, as well as about 15,000 Hectares of crops affected or lost.

In light of this disaster, responsibilities lie in lack of planning, lack of execution of prevention strategies, and lack of timely response to the emergency, both by local, regional and national

authorities. These responsibilities are being highlighted -correctly- by the media as well as by the opposition, and by the authorities themselves who do not cease to pass the blame between another.

But there is an important element that everyone is ignoring, and it is vital to understand the current magnitude of the phenomenon, as well as the reality we will face each year: these disasters are not a casual or passing event, but are inscribed within the process of climate change which our planet is suffering because of the pollution and contamination produced by human beings.

The figures do not lie. In January, "NASA, NOAA and WMO confirmed that 2016 has been the hottest year since 1880. Last year the global temperature was 1.1 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial age. In addition, it was 0.07 degrees warmer than 2015, whose high temperatures were already a cause for worldwide alarm. Moreover, the recent month of January 2017 is the third warmest in 137 years."

As predicted in all scientific projections, this global warming is associated with the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. And in Peru we can attest to this: if a few months ago an emergency was declared in several regions due to the drought and "water stress" that was leaving the crops and cities without water, as well as allowing the proliferation of forest fires; today we are living one of the most violent rainy seasons recorded.

These are phenomena associated with "visible" climate change. There are also "invisible" effects, so called because they are slower and less violent processes, but no less harmful. The disappearance of glaciers, the loss of soil fertility, the appearance of new pests that damage agriculture, rising sea levels, among others, are phenomena that we have to face now and they will significantly impact our opportunities for ongoing development.

So it is not just a matter of worrying about the current emergency and the necessary solidarity with our compatriots, much less should the discussion revolve around whether to suspend the Pan-American games. It is to understand that we are immersed in a process of climate change and degradation of the natural environment, a product of human activity, particularly of productive and industrial activities. For this reason, the demands to the authorities must also include planning in the use of the land that takes this phenomenon into high consideration, that prioritizes the mitigation and adaptation to climatic change, that protects our basins and that assumes that the environmental concerns are not secondary, but on the contrary are a key element to ensure future development - that is, sustainable development. (By Paul E. Maquet)

## **Living Laudato Si:**

*An article from the San Antonio Archdiocesan Task Force on the implementation of Pope Francis' message on climate change and caring for our common home. (Reprinted with permission from Today's Catholic newspaper, March 3, 2017, p. 28) By Sister Martha Ann Kirk, CCVI*

Pope Francis in his message to the whole world, Laudato Si, challenged us to take scientific findings about climate change and global warming seriously, but he noted that spirituality is needed as much as science. He wrote, "Praise be to you, my Lord'. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.

'Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs'. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will."

We are invited to live in a familial relationship with what God has made. We won't save what we don't love. How do we develop love of God's creation? Caring for a tiny plant in the University of the Incarnate Word community garden, is one of Dominic Teran's ways of expressing his commitment to care for the earth. As a student of math and philosophy, he takes seriously the rising numbers indicating deadly global warming and our responsibility as humans. He asks probing questions inviting others to think.

Pope Francis noted that all need "an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. (217)"

Pope Francis warned that it is not enough "to think of different species merely as potential 'resources' to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right. (33)"

Let us think of how we can teach children of all ages and remind ourselves that each species gives "glory to God." Do we spend our leisure time wondering around malls where we are seduced to buy more and more whether we need it or not? Or do we spend our leisure time outside contemplating the beauty of God's creation? Do we spend our time gardening in partnership with the Creator who gave a garden and walked there (Genesis 2).

From kindergarten through graduate studies, gardens can and should be a part of every educational institution. In these we learn possibility, patience, perseverance, and wonder. We sweat and we stretch. We are delighted when the gifts appear. We learn to deal with loss when little creatures have devoured the fruit before we arrive.

Laudato Si remind us that "Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. . . Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us" (159). Let us build intergenerational solidarity. Grandmothers can teach the three year old grandsons to grow parsley in a pot in the kitchen. Big brothers can lead younger siblings growing carrots in that empty bed in the front yard.

In a small amount of space between University of the Incarnate Word buildings, Teran and his fellow student gardeners grow many vegetables and herbs in raised plots. Not only are UIW students enriched by gardening on our own campus, they have gone out and helped develop community gardens at Ella Austin Community Center, Carroll Early Childhood Center and have assisted with an expansion at Guadalupe Community Center. In doing this the students have developed friendships, gotten to know other parts of the city, and become more engaged citizens.

Not only can we be physically nourished by the vegetables, but we can be spiritually transformed. Pope Francis wrote, "The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that 'contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves'" (223)

*Sister Martha Ann Kirk, CCVI, is a Professor of Religious Studies at the University of the Incarnate Word and is a member of the San Antonio Archdiocesan Task Force to promote Laudato Si.*

## Sister Story: Sr. Mary Pezold

Celebrating her diamond jubilee this year while continuing to lead and serve where needed, we are excited to honor Sr. Mary Pezold this month for our sister story highlight. As a woman who strives to be a living witness for peace and justice in our world, she has touched many lives over the past 60 years serving in both educational as well as pastoral settings.

Sr. Mary first worked as a teacher when she entered the Congregation, serving at St. Francis of Rome in Illinois, and later at both Incarnate Word Academy and Incarnate Word High School in various teaching and administrative positions. She spent over 20 years as a pastoral associate at St. Anselm parish in St. Louis and St. Joseph parish in Cottleville. She has also generously given of her time and talents to serve in leadership of the Congregation both provincially and in the Generalate, as well as on the US Ministry Council which she chaired up until last year.

Whether it's working with students, faculty, staff, or families, Sr. Mary sees her ministry of teaching, leading, and accompanying as intimately connected to our collective work for peace, justice, and the care of creation. In her words, "I have had so many opportunities to share God's presence. It is an incredible privilege to journey with others."

Working in educational administration, she can see how a culture of peace, justice, and concern for creation permeates the whole curriculum and environment in our CCVI educational institutions. She has worked with faculty and staff over the years to help educate and train them to also be living witnesses to the peace and justice work they encourage in the students. Everyone works together when it comes to service projects and social justice initiatives. She particularly enjoys getting to see the passion and energy that young people have for engaging in peace and justice work.

Sr. Mary Pezold currently serves as the Interim President of Incarnate Word Academy (IWA) in St. Louis, MO. She shared about the great work going on at IWA related to the area of JPIC. IWA has a diversity club, dialogue around issues of justice and peace is facilitated by the school's guidance counselor, and they just recently started a book club inviting parents, students, faculty and staff to gather together to discuss *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. They also work to care for creation by recycling and caring for the beautiful campus and land around the school. Sr. Mary says, "We have to take every opportunity to help the school community be a light that radiates peace, show we can work together in our diversity, and promote a deep respect and inclusion for all."

Incarnate Word Academy is blessed to have the leadership and living witness of Sr. Mary Pezold guiding them during these challenging times in our communities and country. As she prepares to celebrate 60 years as a vowed woman religious, she continues to give of her time, talents, and love to all she encounters. For a life and ministry that embodies the values of peace, justice, and the care of creation we offer our gratitude to Sr. Mary Pezold!

## Human Rights

**DEFEND HEALTHCARE FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE.** The House has introduced the Affordable Care Act (ACA) "repeal and replace" legislation, called the American Health Care Act. The legislation proposes not only to make major changes to the insurance coverage provisions of the ACA — eliminating the individual and employer mandate, premium tax credits, and cost-sharing subsidies — but also to fundamentally restructure the Medicaid program. The legislation has now been approved by the House Energy & Commerce and Ways & Means Committees and is expected to be taken up in the House and Senate in the coming weeks.

CHA (Catholic Health Association) strongly opposes the American Health Care Act, which asks the low-income and most vulnerable in our country to bear the brunt of the cuts to our health care system.

Specifically, we oppose the proposal to cap federal Medicaid financing beginning in FY 2019, thereby eliminating the federal-state shared financing partnership for the Medicaid program. Medicaid is already a lean program, with spending per beneficiary considerably lower than private insurance and growth in spending per beneficiary slower than private insurance.

Capping the federal financing for the Medicaid program, whether through per capita caps or block grants, fundamentally undermines the health care safety net and will lead to major reductions in benefits and coverage for vulnerable individuals and families.

We urge you to contact your Representatives and Senators and urge them to oppose this legislation as currently drafted. Specifically, urge them to:

**1. Reject the proposal to cap federal Medicaid financing with a "per capita cap."**

- Capping Federal Medicaid dollars will:
  - Cause major reductions in benefits and coverage for vulnerable individuals and families.
  - Sharply reduce federal payments and shift costs onto states, health providers and beneficiaries
  - Shift the risk of all costs above the cap to the states, including:
    - public health crisis like the opioid epidemic;
    - increased mental and behavioral health services;
    - new drugs or medical advances; and
    - natural or man-made disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes or lead poisoning
  - Lock in federal funding levels based on earlier state benefit choices, constraining new investments
- For those in Medicaid expansion states, capping Federal funds will:
  - End the state's enhanced Federal matching rate for new enrollees as of Jan. 1, 2020

**2. Ensure health care coverage is available and affordable for all**

- Adjust the proposed tax credits to ensure affordability, especially for low-income individuals and families, by basing them on income in addition to age
- Eliminate the 30% increase in monthly premiums for those who are unable to maintain "continuous" health insurance coverage, including individuals with pre-existing conditions

For more information about the legislation, see the House Ways & Means Committee notice and Energy & Commerce Committee notice. You can reach congressional offices through the **Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121**.

## Peace

**WOMEN AT THE HEART OF NONVIOLENCE.** *Following is the address given by Marie Dennis at the 2017 Voices of Faith event, held at the Vatican on March 8. (Originally appearing on the website for the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative)*

Almost a year ago, 85 people from around the world gathered here in Rome for what has been called a "landmark" conference on nonviolence and just peace. Invited by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International, participants came together to imagine a

new framework for Catholic teaching on war and peace that could help the world move beyond perpetual violence and war. Central to our conversation were the voices of people promoting active nonviolence in the midst of horrific violence and among them, the voices of women.

Many participants came from countries that have been at war or dealing with serious violence for decades: Iraq, Sri Lanka, Colombia, South Sudan, the DR Congo, Mexico, Afghanistan, Palestine, El Salvador, the Philippines, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Burundi, Guatemala and more. Their testimony was extremely powerful.

Iraqi Dominican Sister Nazik Matty whose community was expelled from Mosul by ISIS said, “We can’t respond to violence with worse violence. In order to kill five violent men, we have to create 10 violent men to kill them.... It’s like a dragon with seven heads. You cut one and two others come up.”

Ogarit Younan, who co-founded the Academic University for Nonviolence and Human Rights in Lebanon, shared her positive experience of equipping youth, educators and community leaders throughout the Middle East with nonviolent skills to end vicious cycles of violence and discrimination.

Jesuit Francisco DeRoux told the story of Alma Rosa Jaramillo, a courageous woman, an audacious lawyer, who had joined their team in the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia to support displaced small farmers. She was kidnapped by the National Liberation Army, the ELN, and finally released. Then she was captured by the paramilitaries. “When we managed to recover Alma Rosa,” Francisco told us, “she was lying in the mud, dead; they had cut off her arms and legs, with a chainsaw.” Immediately, another women stepped in to take her place, as did Alma Rosa’s son, Jesus – and the team continued to talk with the guerrillas, the paramilitaries and the army, searching for a nonviolent solution a war that had gone on for 50 years. Over and over again they heard from campesinos, native people, afrocolombians – people whose youngsters had joined the guerrilla groups, the paramilitary groups and the army: “Stop the war, stop the war now, and stop the war from all sides!”

Gathered in Rome we heard similar stories from many of the conference participants – courageous people in local communities living with unimaginable danger who said ... stop the militarization, stop the bombing, stop the proliferation of weapons – rely on nonviolent strategies to transform conflict.

Together during the conference we wrote an Appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence, urging the Church to move beyond the language of “just war” that has been central to Catholic theology on war and peace for centuries and to “integrate Gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the Church through dioceses, parishes, agencies, schools, universities, seminaries, religious orders, voluntary associations, and others.”

We asked Pope Francis to write his World Day of Peace message, and someday an encyclical, on nonviolence. Obviously, we were delighted with his 2017 World Day of Peace message on Nonviolence: A style of politics for peace.

But central to the Church’s process of studying and promoting active nonviolence must be the full participation of women:

- women who are theologians to help develop a new moral framework for Catholic social thought on war and peace, a rich theology of nonviolence, and excellent
- exegesis around the nonviolence of Jesus;
- women in politics and social sciences to help articulate effective nonviolent strategies to use in a dangerous world;

- grassroots women to design nonviolent practices that can in fact protect vulnerable communities;
- women in Catholic schools, Catholic universities, seminaries and parishes who can teach nonviolence;
- women who will bring Catholic values to the public debate on the use (or not) of violent force close to home or on the other side of the world;
- women who will insist that resources be devoted to meeting basic human needs and protecting the integrity of the natural world, not building more weapons for war;
- women who will help the world shape a just and sustainable peace that responds to the real needs of our families and local communities; and on and on.

What if ... Catholics were formed from the beginning of life to understand and appreciate the power of active nonviolence and the connection of nonviolence to the heart of the Gospel – trained to understand the implications in the 21st century of love your enemy?

What if the Catholic Church committed its vast spiritual, intellectual and financial resources to developing a new moral framework and language for discerning ways to prevent atrocities, to protect people and the planet in a dangerous world?

What if women were central to articulating and implementing this shift in Catholic understanding of and commitment to nonviolence and just peace?

For Christians, nonviolence is a way of life, a positive and powerful force for social change, and a means of building a global community committed to the well-being of all. Active nonviolence is a multilayered approach that is fundamental to the teaching of Jesus and recognizes the humanity of every person, even our sons and daughters who are perpetrators of terrible violence. It is a process for ending violence without lethal force, for transforming conflict, and for protecting the vulnerable. It is a process that women own in the depths of our souls.

Now more than ever it is time to put active nonviolence into practice in our own neighborhoods and around the world.

No one knows how to do this better than the women in any society and so Voices of Faith today honors women: makers of peace and promoters of active nonviolence in a troubled world.

## **Immigration**

### **TAKE ACTION AGAINST THE BORDER WALL, DEPORTATIONS, AND DETENTION CENTERS**

President Trump has signed a series of executive orders that discriminate against our immigrant, refugee, and Muslim neighbors. These orders further a hateful, xenophobic agenda that does not represent the welcoming communities across the United States. Walling off America, reducing community safety, and turning our back on those in need are affronts to our country's values of family unity, fairness, and equality. As people of faith, we are called to stand against these discriminatory policies.

The Trump administration is moving forward with its plans to build a border wall, increase detention of asylum seekers, and expand a mass deportation force targeting our undocumented community members. Congress has the power to stop Trump's plans in their tracks by opposing any funding that would implement these executive orders.

### **URGENT CALLS NEEDED: Tell Your Members of Congress to OPPOSE Funding for Trump's Deportation Machine, Border Wall, and Detention Centers**

Trump is asking Congress for an additional \$7.5 billion in fiscal years 2017 and 2018, over and above last year's funding for immigration enforcement, at the expense of vital education, housing, and nutritional assistance programs that promote public safety and alleviate poverty. Congress has an opportunity to protect our tax dollars and ensure billions of dollars don't go toward expanding immigration enforcement,



separating families, or detaining children. Now is our chance to tell our Members of Congress to live up to our values and act with moral authority.

**Call Your Senators and Representatives: (866) 961-4293\***

*\*Please call this line 3 times to be connected with your 1 Representative and 2 Senators*

Sample Script: *"I'm your constituent from [City, State, Zip Code], and I urge you to NOT fund President Trump's wall, deportation force and detention centers, and instead do everything in your power to rescind his immigration and refugee executive orders. Our tax dollars should be spent alleviating poverty and investing in our future — not rounding up our community members. My community welcomes refugees and immigrants."*

Please also share a personal story about why welcoming immigrants and refugees is important to you, your community, etc. Let them know the specific ways that immigrants and refugees contribute and are welcomed in your community.

Trump's executive orders are morally reprehensible, and as Americans and as people of faith, we must stand together and mobilize against these discriminatory policies. Please spread the word and have everyone you know share this take action! Visit our JPIC Blog for more online actions you can take.

## **News**

### **SOLIDARITY WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN PERU**

The rains in Peru have caused massive flooding, which has so far resulted in an estimated 75 deaths, 11 missing, and more than 70,000 homeless with a total of 300,000 affected according to official data. Peru has now declared a state of emergency as half of the country is impacted and there is a forecast of continuing heavy rains.

Our Sisters, Missionaries, Associates, and Collaborators in Peru are ok, trying to recover in light of the emergency, and are joining with others around them to help those who are still most affected. We are grateful for all the gestures of solidarity and prayer that we have received from the Congregation. Your prayers and presence strengthen us.

Several of you have shared your desire to offer a donation in solidarity with our ministries and people in Chimbote (which is one of the cities affected). So we want to let you know you can send any donations through Claudia Montes (Claudia.montes@amormeus.org).

I also want to share that the Conference of Religious in Peru (Confer Peru) is receiving donations for the people in Santa Eulalia, Piura and Huarmey (affected population) through:

Name of Bank: Scotiabank

Name of the account: SSMM CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS OF PERU

No. Cta. In National currency (S /): 000 2682222

No. Cta. In US \$: 039 7006369

Once you have the deposit voucher, scan it and send it to the e-mail: oficina@crp-conferperu.org, do not forget to specify that what is deposited is to support the families affected from flooding in Peru.

I end thanking you again for your solidarity, hope, and prayers in these difficult moments. Any questions or concerns please write to us: [jplic.office@amormeus.org](mailto:jplic.office@amormeus.org)

*By Katty Huanuco, CCVI. Sister Katty is Director of Congregational Justice, Peace and Earth Office - Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and Coordinator of Human Rights at Conference of Religious in Peru.*

**JUSTICE PROMOTERS FOR WOMEN RELIGIOUS GATHER IN CHICAGO.** March 5-7, 2017 JPIC staff and promoters from women's religious congregations across the country gathered in Chicago, IL for their second national convocation titled, "Which roots will we water? Systemic Change and JPIC Ministry." Representing the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word was Jennifer Reyes Lay, Assistant Director for the CCVI JPIC Office. There were over a hundred participants made up of women religious, associates, and lay women and men. Overall it was an inspiring and challenging three days of strengthening networks and relationships, learning about systemic oppression and systemic change, and praying and reflecting on where we've been and where we are going.

The keynote speaker for the convocation was Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, a professor of Theological and Social Ethics at Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Her latest book is "Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation." Her keynote focused on themes in her most recent book including what grounds us in our work for systemic change, tools of systemic change, roots of moral power, and tools of resistance. She reminded us that "to love means disrupting systemic injustice." This is part of our vocational call, to incarnate God's love in the world, means to work for justice, peace, and the care of creation.

Here are some of the wonderful insights shared by Cynthia:

- We root ourselves in the promise of God's infinite and endless love. We are called to receive that love and also embody that love in the world.
- We need to have "critical mystical vision" which means 1) seeing clearly what is going on and unmasking systemic evil that tries to present itself as good, 2) seeing what alternatives are already in the process of becoming or creating new realities, and 3) acknowledging the sacred powers at work in the universe for the wellbeing of all creation.
- Climate change is a manifestation of white privilege and class privilege. Those with the most privilege are polluting those with the least privilege. The majority of climate refugees are African and Asian.
- By doing little to nothing we actively contribute to oppression and systemic evil.
- We come from a rich heritage of "fiercely loving subversive faithful resisters." Do we know and share these stories? What is the story we see ourselves a part of?
- From the wisdom of Ireneaus of Leon, we are "mud creatures," moist by the dew of the Holy Spirit so we can continually be molded by the Word (Jesus) and Wisdom (Spirit) of God into who we are meant to become. How will we maintain our moistness?
- Pando is a vast network of Aspen trees with interconnected root systems. Use this image to reflect on how we can build stronger root systems with one another to keep one another nourished and moist with the Holy Spirit.
- We need both resistance (stop systemic evil) and rebuilding (create new just systems).
- Action in one level of society impacts the others (individual, family, civil institutions, businesses, government).
- There are many options for actions to take, and all are needed! These include: lifestyle changes, economic advocacy, legislative advocacy, community organizing, education and consciousness raising, public witness, economic alternatives, direct service to those in need, worship and prayer, and theological reflection.

During the rest of the convocation there was time for conversations, relationship building, and breakout sessions on immigration and refugees, human trafficking, gospel nonviolence, feminism, legislative advocacy, Laudato Si and care of creation, and racism. Many of these topics and actions are items that the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word are already actively involved

in, and Jennifer share about some of the ways the CCVIs have engaged in prayer, education, and action around gospel nonviolence, human trafficking, and care of creation.

On the final day of the convocation each table had time to reflect on the following two questions: 1) What needs to happen to ensure a vital JPIC ministry in women's religious congregations working toward systemic change? 2) How can we as JCWR (justice coordinators for women religious) members help foster this organization? There were many great ideas and hopes shared to continue supporting one another and working together for systemic change as women's religious congregations. There was overwhelming support to continue having these national convocations every two years, and in the off years to try and have more regional gatherings.

After gathering together for three days in prayer, education, and reflection, we left with a renewed sense of hope, energy, and commitment to the work of justice, peace, and care of creation, knowing that we are in the struggle together and are continuing a long and powerful history of faithful resistance to injustice and evil in the name of our loving God.

## **Contact us**

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