



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

January 2017

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

Each new year brings a chance to reflect on the past and dream for the future. We are grateful for all of the excellent work we were able to accomplish together in 2016 for justice, peace, and the integrity of God’s creation. As we begin this new year, we re-commit ourselves to our collective mission to be prophetic voices in our world today.

Many of you gathered together on January 1st for the World Day of Prayer for Peace. We know that together, in prayer, reflection, and action, through the help of the Incarnate Word, we can become peace in a world marked by violence. Our faith calls us to engage in the creative nonviolence of Christ when facing the systems of oppression, injustice, and violence in our world today. We draw strength and hope knowing that many others from around the world join with us.

January in the United States is also the national month for human trafficking prevention and awareness. This offers all of us an opportunity to re-commit to our corporate stance against human trafficking. February 8th is the World Day of Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking, which falls on the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, the patron saint of victims of trafficking. Included in this edition of Seeds is a prayer service adapted from the Talitha Kum Network for you to use when you gather in prayer with your communities and/or families on February 8th.

We wish everyone a blessed new year, and as always please contact us with any questions, suggestions, or comments about how we can support your work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation!

Human Trafficking

Presidential Proclamation for Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Our Nation wrestled with the issue of slavery in a way that nearly tore us apart -- its fundamental notion in direct contradiction with our founding premise that we are all created equal. The courageous individuals who rejected such cruelty helped us overcome one of the most painful chapters in our history as we worked to realize the promise of equality and justice for all.

But today, in too many places around the world -- including right here in the United States -- the injustice of modern slavery and human trafficking still tears at our social fabric. During National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, we resolve to shine a light on every dark corner where human trafficking still threatens the basic rights and freedoms of others.

From factories and brothels to farms and mines, millions of men, women, and children in the United States and around the world are exploited for their bodies and their labor. Whether through violence, deceit, or the promises of a better life, some of the most vulnerable populations among us

-- including migrants and refugees fleeing conflict or disaster, homeless LGBT youth, Alaska Native and American Indian women and girls, and children in poverty -- are preyed upon by human traffickers. In order to rid the world of modern slavery we must do everything in our power to combat these violations of human decency.

The United States has pursued efforts to address these crimes and lift up individuals who have suffered unspeakable abuse at the hands of traffickers. Through the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, we have joined with the private sector, faith communities, law enforcement, and advocates to coordinate efforts to prevent trafficking and protect victims. Focusing on an agenda that prioritizes victim services, the rule of law, procurement of supplies, and increasing public awareness, the Task Force has strengthened Federal efforts to end human trafficking. In 2012, I issued an Executive Order to strengthen protections against human trafficking in Federal contracting, and nearly a year ago, I signed legislation that strengthened our ability to prevent products made with forced labor, including child labor, from entering American markets.

We must address the consequences of human trafficking and work to tackle its root causes. This past fiscal year, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice provided more than \$60 million to community-based organizations and task forces to assist human trafficking victims, and since the beginning of my Administration, we have nearly tripled the number of victims connected to services. The Department of Homeland Security has also taken steps to streamline immigration procedures for trafficking victims and ensure their regulations are consistent with existing law. And through new Victims of Crime Act regulations, Federal funds can now be used to help human trafficking victims with their housing. Through the White House Council on Women and Girls, we have worked to address the sexual abuse-to-prison pipeline that disproportionately affects those especially vulnerable to sex trafficking -- including young women and girls of color. And the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking -- comprised of 11 human trafficking survivors of diverse backgrounds and experiences -- recently released its first set of recommendations for combating human trafficking while keeping survivor perspectives in mind.

Every action we take at home, from the clothing we wear to the food we eat, is connected to what happens around the world. As a Nation, we have worked to address the problem of forced labor in our supply chains, and as individuals, we must strive to be conscientious consumers. Working with our friends and allies, we have made this issue an international priority. Just this year we used multilateral fora, including the North American Leaders Summit, the East Asia Summit, and the United Nations, to raise awareness and work with partners around the globe. In addition to urging other countries to develop and expand their anti-trafficking laws and services for victims, we are also stepping up our foreign assistance in this area. Working alongside the international community, we have seen significant increases in trafficking prosecutions and convictions, and we have made great strides in supporting victims.

As leaders in the global undertaking to end the exploitation of human beings for profit, we must always remember that our freedom is bound to the freedom of others. This month, let us find inspiration in America's progress toward justice, opportunity, and prosperity for all and reaffirm our pledge to continue fighting for human rights around the world.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 2017 as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, culminating in the annual celebration of National Freedom Day on February 1. I call upon businesses, national and community organizations, families, and all Americans to recognize the vital role we must play in ending all forms of slavery and to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand sixteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-first. BARACK OBAMA

Victory in the Fight Against Human Trafficking: Backpage Shuts Down Adult Ads Page

The online classified website Backpage.com said it has suspended its adult ad pages, citing government pressure about the content being shared there.

A 2016 Senate report called the website the "largest commercial sex services advertising platform in the United States" and said that "Backpage officials have publicly acknowledged that criminals use the website for sex trafficking, including trafficking of minors." The report also accused Backpage of not complying with congressional requests for information about its revenue.

On Tuesday, links to advertisements for escort services in U.S. cities linked instead to a press release from the company as well as links to the websites of organizations that advocate for free speech rights. In the press release, the company wrote it had suspended adult content as a "direct result of unconstitutional government censorship": "For years, the legal system protecting freedom of speech prevailed, but new government tactics, including pressuring credit card companies to cease doing business with Backpage, have left the company with no other choice but to remove the content in the United States."

"Ferrer, 55, is charged with pimping a minor, pimping and conspiracy to commit pimping. Two controlling shareholders of Backpage — Michael Lacey and James Larkin — also are charged with conspiracy to commit pimping," NPR's Camila Domonoske reported. In October, the CEO of Backpage.com, Carl Ferrer, was arrested in Houston and dozens of law enforcement officers then searched Backpage's Dallas headquarters, as we reported.

The website's owners have faced similar charges in California and Washington, according to The Associated Press. The California complaint alleged Backpage.com didn't just host ads for sex, some of which were trafficking minors, because the site helped advertisers write ads that would elicit clicks.

"The Washington state Supreme Court similarly ruled last year that the company didn't just host the ads, but helped develop the content," the AP reported. "That ruling allowed a civil lawsuit to continue by three minors who attorneys said were in the seventh and ninth grades when adult professional sex traffickers used Backpage to sell them as prostitutes."

Prayer Service for International Day of Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking (Feb 8):

Our sisters and brothers in the Talitha Kum Network, of which we are also a part, have created an excellent prayer resource for the World Day of Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking which is February 8. The theme of their prayer service is "They are kids, not slaves!" We invite you to use this prayer service in your communities and families. As the JPIC Office, we share with you below a shorter version of this prayer service, adapted from the resource created by Talitha Kum, 2017.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Environment: Decorate a center table with colorful or black cloth. Place 9 lit candles on top, with an additional, larger candle (unlit), in the middle. Place an image of St. Josephine Bakhita on the table with the candles.

Introduction: "Dear brothers and sisters, today, 8 February, the liturgical memorial of St. Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese Sister, who as a child had the traumatic experience of being a victim of trafficking, the International Union of Superiors General of Religious Institutes have promoted the Day of Prayer and

Reflection against trafficking in persons. I encourage all those who are committed to helping men, women and children enslaved, exploited, abused as tools of pleasure and often tortured and mutilated. I hope that those who have responsibilities in government will seriously strive to eliminate the causes of this shameful scourge, a scourge unworthy of a civilized society. Let each of us be committed to being a voice for our brothers and sisters, humiliated and deprived of their dignity. Let us all pray together." *(Pope Francis)*

Opening Song. *Choose a well-known song that fits with the theme of the prayer service for all to sign along.*

LEADER: After each of the following statistics is shared, extinguish the light from one of the candles.

- Worldwide there are 168 million children in child labor. More than half of them, 85 million, are in hazardous work. (ILO)
- 20 million child workers are employed in factories that make garments, carpets, toys, matches and hand-rolled cigarettes. Agriculture remains by far the most important sector where child laborers' can be found (98 million, or 59%), but the problems are not negligible in services (54 million) and industry (12 million) – mostly in the informal economy. Most children work in farms that produce consumer products such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, rubber and other crops. (ILO)
- Asia and the Pacific still have the largest numbers (almost 78 million or 9.3% of child population), but Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the highest incidence of child labor (59 million, over 21% of child population). (ILO)
- There are 13 million children in child labor in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the Middle East and North Africa there are 9.2 million. (ILO)
- Every year, 22,000 children die in work-related accidents. 9% are in industry, including mining and quarrying, manufacturing and construction. (ILO)
- The number of children involved in armed conflicts has increased to about 300,000 over the past decade. 14 is the average age of a child soldier. 40 % of child soldiers are girls. (ILO)
- 2 million children are subjected to prostitution in the global commercial sex trade (UNICEF)
- Millions more children are likely exploited in prostitution or pornography each year around the world, most of the time lured or forced into these situations through false promises and limited knowledge about the risks.(UNICEF)
- About 1 in 10 girls under the age of 20 have been subjected to forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point of their lives. (UNICEF)

SILENCE: Take a few minutes in quiet reflection.

FIRST READING:

The third edition of the International Day of Prayer and Awareness against trafficking in persons highlights the sufferings and the hope of trafficked children and adolescents. According to the last official statistics of the United Nation, one in three victims of trafficking are children. The number of trafficked people who are less than 18 years old is constantly increasing, worldwide. Children and adolescents are trafficked for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced marriage, illegal adoptions, forced labour, organs removal, begging, criminal acts (like child soldiers, drug smuggling) and witchcraft. It is urgent to listen to the cry of these little ones, to everybody, every family and every community, who experience the violence of exploitation and slavery, who is injured and humiliated.

SILENCE

LEADER: Let us light the large candle in the middle now, and as we light it let us say together:

EVERYONE: We want to become a sign of hope to all trafficked children and their families. We announce: "They are Kids! Not slaves!"

SONG: *choose a song for reflection*

EVERYONE: We want to become a sign of hope to all trafficked children and their families. We announce: "They are Kids! Not slaves!"

READING FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURE: Mt 25:40

LEADER: We have to recognize that many efforts are being made to end these crimes against children. Many people are making a difference in the world. We will now hear these stories of hope, and with each one, light two candles.

Reader 1: Several Congregations of Women Religious and Church Organizations such as Caritas offer protection and shelter for children and adolescents who are survivors of trafficking. They are rescued from any kind of exploitation and trafficking. The shelters offer psychological, health and educational care. They allow the children to build up their own future! Many of these children, after a holistic health care time, are able to return to their own original family.

Everyone: *Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*

Reader 2: In the last 10 years many organizations have been promoting prevention activities to reduce the vulnerability and consequently the risk of people to be trafficked: Educational programs, scholarships for poor children in rural areas, income generations programs (not user what income generations means), health care. Prevention has become a key word to promote a real change in the society, giving opportunities and alternatives to children and their family.

Everyone: *Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*

Reader 3: Worldwide non-profitable organizations, faith based and grassroots organizations, governments, social movements and businesses strengthen collaboration and networking at local, regional and international level in order to eradicate trafficking in persons.

Everyone: *Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*

Reader 4: The integrated commitment of many organizations and the social polices of many governments help to reduce the number of child labor. The Global number of children in child labor has declined by one third since 2000. The change is possible!

Everyone: *Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*

LEADER: We want to continue to spark the light of hope in our work to end human trafficking and support survivors. Let us conclude by prayer the closing prayer together:

CLOSING PRAYER: O God, when we hear of children and adults being deceived and taken to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labor, and organ ‘harvesting’, our hearts are saddened and our spirits angry that their dignity and rights are ignored through threats, lies, and force. We cry out against the evil practice of this modern slavery, and pray with St. Bakhita for it to end. Give us wisdom and courage to reach out and stand with those whose bodies, hearts and spirits have been so wounded, so that together we may make real your promises to fill these sisters and brothers with a love that is tender and good. Send the exploiters away empty-handed to be converted from this wickedness, and help us all to claim the freedom that is your gift to your children. Amen

Environment

Sign a Petition Today from the Catholic Climate Movement and LCWR for President Trump to Honor the Paris Agreement

LCWR is partnering with the Catholic Climate Covenant to collect signatures on a petition to be delivered to President Trump shortly after the inauguration. While we do not have a delivery date set, we are aiming for a signature deadline of February 1.

As President-elect Donald Trump assembles his cabinet and advisors, we are facing major uncertainties for the future of U.S. climate policy. The President-elect has said he will withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement—a commitment by 193 countries to solve the climate crisis. This agreement is supported by Pope Francis and is the result of years of negotiations.

Catholic Climate Covenant has prepared a petition to be delivered to the President shortly after the inauguration on January 20th. The petition calls upon our next president to honor our international commitments and to act to solve the climate crisis. As Catholics, we recognize our responsibility to advocate on behalf of creation and the poor. Our advocacy is now more important than ever.

Please distribute the petition widely. Share this sign-on link with friends and family, your community and in your parish bulletin. For more ideas about how to promote the petition download our toolkit.

We have a very short window to gather as many signatures as possible. Please share the petition with friends and family, community members, gather signatures by tabling after Mass or during other church or school events, etc. Our goal is to deliver a petition signed by thousands of Catholics calling on President Trump to honor the Paris Agreement, the Green Climate Fund, and the Clean Power Plan!

Here's the text of the Petition:

"Dear President Trump,

As members of the Catholic community in the United States, we are praying that your presidency may be blessed with wisdom and compassion. As you take office, we urge you to demonstrate bold leadership in addressing the climate crisis by honoring the Paris Agreement, contributing to the Green Climate Fund, and implementing the Clean Power Plan.

Because climate change is already harming millions of people across the U.S. and around the globe, Pope Francis has called national leaders to work together to address this crisis. Similarly, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) strongly supports a national carbon pollution standard as essential to effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

In order to limit the impacts of climate change on creation and on the human family, we urge you to: Maintain the United States' moral leadership on climate change by honoring the Paris

Agreement (COP21) and taking swift action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions between 26 and 28 percent compared with 2005 levels by 2025; Support sustainable development and address the underlying causes of migration by honoring the United States' initial pledge of \$3 billion and further supporting the Green Climate Fund to help poor countries adapt to the effects of climate change; Support job creation and economic opportunity by encouraging states to craft plans to reach and exceed their Clean Power Plan carbon reduction goals by transitioning to renewable energy sources like wind and solar power and enacting energy efficiency and conservation standards.

An overwhelming majority of Catholics in the United States (73 percent) believe that government needs to do more to address the issue of climate change – a sentiment repeatedly expressed by Pope Francis and our Bishops.

As the leader of the most powerful country in the world, you have a critical role to play in solving this crisis. We urge you to take swift and meaningful action before it is too late."

Tips for Sustainable Event Planning

The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word have set a goal to ensure that by 2018 at least 50% of all materials and refreshments used in events are environmentally friendly. Check out some of the event planning tips put together by Iowa State University to help you in the planning stages of your event to make it as sustainable as possible!

Pre-event: Green Your Vision: The successful greening of your event starts in your mind, in the brainstorming and planning. Consider designating a sustainability chair or director to your planning committee.

Green Your Shopping List: Avoid buying new things. Reuse old items. Reach out to your social networks and groups you have worked with in the past and build a relationship of reciprocity.

Borrow their equipment and resources with the expectation that you will, in return, support them in the future. Reach out to groups that you haven't worked with yet and begin a relationship of reciprocity. Just because you may not be involved with the same activities doesn't mean partnering opportunities do not exist.

Green Your Vendor List: Look for vendors who have had experience with green products and services or are willing to work with you. Ask them about sustainable options. If they do not have any ideas, ask them to find and provide them—be persistent: the more demand they receive, the more they will provide options to future customers. If you are just buying a few products and not working through a vendor, look for green certified products.

If you have to go with disposables for an event, look to make sure they are compostable, not just biodegradable. Biodegradable products break down through the action of a naturally occurring microorganism, such as bacteria, fungi etc. However, when dumped in landfills, it can create methane or contain toxins. Compostable is pretty close to biodegradable plastic but it is able to break down into carbon dioxide, water and biomass at the same rate as paper, should not produce any toxic material, and should be able to support plant life. TIP: Check out New American Dream's Conscious Consumer Marketplace for great leads on sustainable vendors and products! Go to www.newdream.org

Green Your Food Options: Look for local food options! To increase social sustainability, look to partner with other groups on campus who can provide alternative dishes such as ethnic, vegetarian or vegan options; consider sampling organic products as well.

Living Laudato Si

In this edition of Living Laudato Si we celebrate the great work going on at Incarnate Word High School in San Antonio, TX. Incarnate Word High School was one of the first schools established by the Congregation, and is the oldest Catholic girls school in San Antonio. It is no surprise then as a long time ministry of the Incarnate Word Sisters, that they continue to embody the values of incarnational spirituality, including a strong concern for the earth, our common home.

Two particular classes they offer teach students not only about the science behind the natural environment, but also our interconnectedness to the natural world and responsibility to care for it. Environmental Science includes topics like conservation and sustainability, and the Aquatics class studies water issues including the impacts of pollution and ecological disasters. Campus Ministry started a community garden project last year. They have big dreams of being able to use the fresh food grown in the community gardens by students to help provide healthy food options to low income members of the community that students are already in relationship with through various service projects.

Within the school itself, everyone collaborates to support the environment by recycling as much as possible including paper, plastic, ink cartridges, and even old computer equipment. The school is hoping to convert their water fountains to support re-filling reusable water bottles. They also use LED lights throughout the school building.

And it's not just students and staff, parents support the work to care for creation as well. The Parent Teacher Organization has been active in planting trees and doing landscaping throughout the school's campus.

Thanks to all at Incarnate Word High School for your commitment to Live Laudato Si and care for our common home! We can't wait to see what the students do next!

Sister Story

While Sr. Walter Maher is the newest member of the Congregation's International JPIC Committee, she is certainly not new to the work for peace and justice. A Sister for over 50 years, she currently serves as the Vice President for Mission and Ministry at the University of the Incarnate Word. She has been in that role since 2009 after leaving congregational leadership, and it is evident when speaking with her that she has a deep passion for the work she does to share and inspire the CCVI mission in others.

For Sr. Walter, "Justice is not separate from mission; they are one. Justice is about looking around, knowing what the concrete needs are, and figuring out how I can respond. That's our mission." And it is with great joy that she shares this mission with students, staff, faculty, and administrators at the University through various formation programs and opportunities.

In addition to formation, another very important part of Sr. Walter's ministry is facilitating the life of prayer and worship at the University. She sees this as the real work of the University: to inspire students, faculty, and staff through opportunities of communal prayer and worship, in order to understand the heart of the mission and identity of the University and allow that inspiration to move them forward. She also brings in the writings and messages of the global Catholic Church, reflecting on recent encyclicals and tying in the theme of the Year of Mercy to retreats and reflections last year.

Sr. Walter believes that the shared life of prayer and worship can transform, and encourages all to participate, even those who aren't Catholic, because they are one community. The dignity of every student, of every religion, is respected and uplifted in an active inter-faith council at the University as well. Sr. Walter says, "We can all come together, knowing we are working for the common good." What a beautiful lived example of social justice and collaboration for our world!

With a long history of ministry in education since she entered the Congregation, it is no surprise that Sr. Walter loves her work with students. Just as she shares her passion for mission and ministry, the student's passion for working for justice in the world inspires her as well. She is particularly excited about one dream that became a reality last year when the University became a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) designated university. There were about 30 students who attended an all-day training about CRS, and left full of energy and commitment to this work. Some of the current foci of the group are on climate change, fair trade, and migration.

She is also inspired by the dedication of the faculty and staff to the mission of the University. Currently she is working with faculty of the graduate level programs to integrate Catholic Social Teaching into the curriculum. There is a group of 20 people who gather together to reflect on issues of social justice from the lens of Catholic Social Teaching on a personal, communal, structural, and global level.

When reflecting on her many and varied responsibilities in her ministry, Sr. Walter acknowledges that she is, "all over the place, but the power of presence is so important. I really see my ministry as a ministry of presence. As a representative of the Congregation I hear students, staff, and faculty acknowledge how important my presence is and that I'm not afraid to jump in where needed, doing what needs to be done while always keeping the larger vision of our mission present." This is also apparent in her open door policy. She always has an open door for anyone in need to come in, share with her, and together they can help figure out a response to any problem as it arises.

Even with her many responsibilities and busy schedule at the University, Sr. Walter was still willing to say yes when invited to serve as a member of the Congregation's International Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Committee. She brings with her an open heart, and many years of experience serving in diverse communities and responding to a variety of needs. She sees this as just one more way she can continue to serve the Congregation which she says has so richly blessed her own life.

Thank you Sr. Walter for your "Yes" to collaborate with the International JPIC Committee, and for all of the passion, love, and humility you bring to your ministry with the University of the Incarnate Word. What a blessing to all who benefit from your many gifts, shared so generously!

Human Rights

Activists Arrested Calling for End to Death Penalty

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Forty years after the first execution of Gary Gilmore under contemporary laws, 18 anti-death penalty activists were arrested at the U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday. The group unfurled a 30-foot-long banner that read "STOP EXECUTIONS!" on the steps of the Court. On the sidewalk, a crowd of over 80 supporters observed the action, carrying 40 posters (1 for each year) with the names of the other 1442 men and women executed since 1977.

They also carried roses in two colors, a reminder that they are remembering both families of the murdered and families of the executed as they stand together saying, as one banner did, "We Remember the Victims, But Not With More Killing."

The group included several murder victim family members, a death row exoneree, family members of the incarcerated, pastors and religious leaders, and national leaders in the death penalty abolition movement. It was the largest act of civil disobedience against the death penalty in modern history.

One of the participants who was arrested was Randy Gardner, whose brother, like Gilmore, was executed in Utah by firing squad. "My Brother Ronnie Lee Gardner was executed in 2010 by the same state and by the same method as Gilmore," Gardner stated. "I believed then, and I still believe now, that the death penalty is morally wrong. I never condoned what my brother did, but when the state executes someone, they create yet another family that is damaged and grieving. We don't have to kill to be safe from dangerous criminals and hold them accountable. It is time to abolish the death penalty."

Shane Claiborne, influential Christian author and activist, speaking of the significance of religious leaders, said this: "Sadly, the death penalty has succeeded in America not in spite of Christians but because of us. Over 80% of executions in the past 40 years have been in the Bible Belt. As a Christian, that is especially troubling because one of the tenants of our faith is this: No one is beyond redemption. Much of the Bible was written by murderers who were given a second chance. Moses. David. Paul. The Bible would be much shorter without grace. So it was a beautiful thing to stand alongside my fellow clergy and faith leaders... And, if you go to jail, it's good to have a nun and a priest next to you. As we look at history, we are reminded that we've got good company among the holy troublemakers who have gone to jail for justice. Abortion is not the only pro-life issue."

Claiborne continues: "When we try to kill those who kill, we mirror, and legitimize, the cycle of violence. We can deal with violent crime without resorting to the violence we want to rid the world of. As faith leaders and clergy, we stand together, with families of the murdered and families of the executed, and say NO to all killing. Violence is the disease, not the cure."

Scott Langley, a death penalty abolition organizer from New York, said "The national tide has turned against the death penalty with more and more states, counties, and juries refusing to continue this barbaric practice. We acted today to call on this Court to recognize that standards of decency and human rights have evolved to the point that this has to end now."

Background: Forty years ago, on January 17, 1977, the State of Utah shot to death Gary Gilmore, who "volunteered" to be killed in revenge for his murder of Ben Bushnell and Max Jenson. This state-assisted suicide was the first execution under the Supreme Court's upholding of the death penalty in 1976. Since then, there have been 1442 more executions, with another scheduled on January 18 in Virginia. Nearly 3,000 prisoners are currently on death rows in 31 states.

Called To Mission

During the first weeks of January, I (Sr. Katty Huanuco) had the opportunity to share the spirituality and charism of our CCVI Congregation and the work of our Congregational JPIC Office with our lay missionaries in Lima, Peru.

These days of sharing gave everyone a chance to better understand Peruvian culture and society, its historical reality, and the challenges it presents to our mission in Peru. It was also a precious time to experience an inclusive retreat where all the memories and experiences from 2016 were reflected on in light of Scripture, in order to renew our commitment to the poorest and most vulnerable.

The first day we gathered together, and after having lunch with our sisters in Lima, we visited the Shipiba Community in Cantagallo, Lima. The shipiba-koniba community, are indigenous

Amazonian communities living in Lima. This population has been recovering from a fire that left more than 280 families homeless in November. Sharing with the women artisans encouraged us in our work and reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening women's leadership. They gave us a lot of hope.

The next day, we visited the National Museum of Archeology, Anthropology and History of Peru in order to understand the diversity of cultures in the country. In the afternoon we arrived at the Museum of Memory and Tolerance, a space that chronicles the last 20 years of violence in Peru. After these visits, we talked about our commitment to this country, its people and the world, to create a culture of more respect, nonviolence and peace.

After contemplating this reality, with the support of Sisters Ivonne and Carmelita, the missionaries had opportunities for reflection around our call to incarnate the merciful love of God in our concrete commitment in Peru.

Then there were 4 days of spiritual retreat, where the concrete faces of victims of human trafficking, the cries of the earth, and the victims of violence continued to call us to collaborate with God in healing the suffering of the world. One phrase we reflected on was, "be visible signs of community in diversity." This is a call that continues to require us to be a presence of compassionate love that engages in the transformation of the world, so that the world can fulfill its plans to serve the joy of all women and men.

It is interesting to note that our lay missionaries Diana, Mark, Juan, Selena and Ana Catarina come from different cultures and countries, and have been in Peru since August 2016 with a missionary commitment in Chimbote for two years.

Thank you for helping us to extend the Mission and Work of the Incarnate Word as Lay Missionaries of the Incarnate Word. As a Peruvian, I feel very honored to have them among us, sharing the God of life with such humility and love. Our prayer accompanies your ministries in Chimbote. Blessings.

Peace

Pope Francis Invites the World to Think About Nonviolence by Sister Martha Ann Kirk, CCVI
Pope Francis' message today for the 50th World Day of Peace, "Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace," posits that violence will not quell violence.

That message is for everyone, not just Catholics.

The year 2017 also will see the 50th anniversary of the speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Riverside Church, the "Beyond Vietnam" speech, in which he condemned the "triplets" of racism, militarism, and materialism. Pope Francis praises Dr. King's use of creative nonviolence in the face of racial injustice and he, too, is connecting those three issues.

Many of these ideas were developed at the "Nonviolence and Just Peace" conference held in Rome last April. The Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Maguire spoke of the conference as a turning point in history. The Catholic Church's reliance on "just war" theory, articulated by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas and in use for centuries, is shifting.

Documents indicate that in the first centuries of Christianity, Jesus' followers heeded his words, "Those who live by the sword die by the sword" (Mt 26:52), and they refused to kill. What the Pope lays out is closer to that earlier, radical message. "Nonviolence and Just Peace" is now a global initiative reaffirming the centrality of active nonviolence to the vision and message of Jesus, to the life of Christianity, and to the lifetime task of healing and reconciliation.

The Pope gives examples to emulate: Gandhi, of course, but also the Muslim Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. "Women in particular are often leaders of nonviolence, as for example, was Leymah

Gbowee and the thousands of Liberian women,” Francis states, noting that she gathered Muslim and Christian women who organized “nonviolent protest that resulted in high level peace talks to end the second civil war in Liberia.”

I have repeatedly done educational programs with Muslim women. Currently, some of us are planning an open conversation to discuss the Pope’s message and how it compares with Islamic ideas.

The Pope writes, “When Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she clearly stated her own message of active nonviolence: ‘We in our family don’t need bombs and guns, to destroy to bring peace – just get together, love one another... And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world.’”

Mother Teresa can sound naive, but perhaps Americans are the naive ones. We have not developed our ability to think clearly and critically, nor our ability to imagine. Do we recognize that by one analysis the United States has chosen to be at war 223 out of 240 years since 1776, about 93 percent of our history?

I can think of walking, diving, and dancing because I do these. Can I think how it would feel to flip as a gymnast?

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his farewell address to the nation in 1961, warned that we were losing our ability to think because the economics of the military industrial complex, rather than the values of democracy, were leading us. The Pope invites the peoples of the world to think, not to be driven by the structures and greed that Eisenhower and Dr. King deplored.

For a contemporary Catholic leader, Francis sounds almost like the Jewish prophet Isaiah 2,700 years ago, inviting people to “beat swords into ploughshares, spears into pruning hooks.” Do we recognize that we can transform the instruments of death into instruments that bring a harvest of life? Do you or I want to think? Or continue to be naive?

Immigration

National Migrants Week: Jan 8-14

For nearly a half century, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated National Migration Week. National Migration Week is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of immigrants, refugees, migrants and survivors of human trafficking in our communities as well as to highlight the work of the Church to serve and accompany newcomers.

The theme for National Migration Week 2017 draws attention to Pope Francis' call to create a culture of encounter. In the homily given at his first Pentecost as Pope, he emphasized the importance of encounter in the Christian faith: "For me this word is very important. Encounter with others. Why? Because faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others."

With respect to migrants, too often in our contemporary culture we fail to encounter them as persons, and instead look at them as others. We do not take the time to engage migrants in a meaningful way, but remain aloof to their presence and suspicious of their intentions. During this National Migration Week, let us all take the opportunity to engage migrants as children of God who are worthy of our attention and support.

Sanctuary Prayer: (by Jane Deren, PhD)

Who offered the stable for the birth of a child? Who offered refuge in Egypt when the family had to flee? Who welcomed them there? Who will offer sanctuary to the immigrants in our communities

as they face roundups, as their human dignity is ignored? Who will welcome and protect them? Who will choose love and inclusion over fear? Who of us will recognize a holy family, a mother, a child? Who of us will remember Christ's words: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me; What you do for the least of these, you do for me." Amen

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