



December 2017

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

For those in the United States, this is a season of thankfulness, and it can be an opportunity for all of us throughout the world to stop and take a moment to remember our blessings and offer thanks to God. We are grateful for the Incarnate Word, who took on flesh to show us what it looks like to proclaim God's kingdom of justice and peace on earth by pouring oneself out in love. We are grateful for the original call that founded our Congregation to serve Christ in those who are suffering, and the brave sisters who responded to that call. We are grateful for the countless ways that the Congregation has lived that mission throughout the years, always responding the person in need as Christ himself. And we are grateful for all the blessings that allow us to continue this prophetic and loving ministry in our world that is sorely in need of some Good News.

In this month's edition of Seeds we continue to share information and resources on the themes of peace, care of creation, immigration, and human trafficking. The Season of Advent is upon us and we also offer you a collection of resources to add in your Advent practices and reflections. Beginning November 25th – the International Day for Eliminating Violence Against Women and ending December 10th – the International Human Rights Day, we encourage you to participate in the campaign: 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.

We also want to remind everyone to Save the Date of December 10th for our annual Prayer and Fast for Human Rights Day. To continue living into our commitment of Gospel nonviolence and just peace, this year for the day of Prayer and Fasting we will be focusing on the right of all to live in peace. We have prepared a guide on fasting as well as recommended prayer resources on peace and nonviolence with reflection questions. [You can download that guide HERE.](#)

Our Office is always open to your comments and suggestions, and we love hearing about the great work you are doing or seeing. Please keep in touch! Thank you again for all you do, and we wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season!

Sister Story: Sr. Sofia Mamani

I share with you here my (Sr. Sofia Mamani CCVI) experience of the Meeting of Religious Life from Indigenous Communities in the town of Machetla II (Diocese of Huejutla, Hidalgo, Mexico). I arrived on October 20th in the morning and all of the sisters were already there. The joy of everyone was very contagious. My congregational sister, Sr. Ana Luisa Prieto CCVI, introduced me to various sisters from the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious for Mexico (CIRM) as well as

the sisters from the organizing committee, and the hosting Bishop – a very nice priest. I quickly felt at home.

We were also welcomed by people from the Machetla community while some sisters prepared the Altar of the Mayan culture with the 4 cardinal points. The people from the community had many yellow flowers, and invited us to stand in a line. This was their way of welcoming us, and it was a beautiful welcome. The flowers were woven into small wreaths, so that each sister received a wreath of flowers placed on their head. Then we were given a yellow string of flowers around our necks, and at the end they gave each person a staff to hold of varying sizes. The majority of the religious participants wore white embroidered blouses. They looked beautiful, like queens or rather: like Saint Teresa with her crown.

Then they invited us to go to the altar of the Mayan culture and they explained to us each point beginning with the East: from where the sun rises there the life of each person is born and the fertility has its origin in the sun. In the West: there is the water that encircles life and where the sun is hidden: it keeps energy. The equilibrium. Life is transformed. In the North: there is power and strength. The South: is the place of thorns, the place of self-sacrifice and place of flowers.

One of the nuns invited us to settle in the direction of the east. After reading the meaning, she invited us to dance around the altar with the ritual music of Huejutla. Soon the rhythm of the music stayed and the image of all the religious sisters reminded me how meaningful our life is. Afterwards, each Congregation presented itself in a very creative way; it was very experiential. After the welcome, we shared a meal together. Everything was very tasty. I was curious and went to taste the water; it was as sweet as the waters of the springs of my land (Puno, Peru), so I knew there was the secret!

After eating, we were presented with the objective of the gathering and the methodology: THE PATH OF INDIAN THEOLOGY: TOUCHING THE HEART OF GOD, a method of reflection from the perspective of native theology. A guide for theological reflection from the ancient narratives of our ancestors. The person in charge of the topic was Juan Manuel Garcia (a layperson with a lot of experience) who emphasized that this methodology consisted of living and feeling reality with the pains and joys in the life of our peoples. That is, to share the joys and pains of the LIFE of the people and in that reality contemplate the will of God and of the ancestors, explain the historical response of God to the problems, and build a new ideal reality of life from the project of God.

We shared in the group about our own ancestors. We had many experiences in common: the values of life, a great love of the earth, working together, the deep sense of community, trust in God, and our way of contemplating the nature and value of our native languages. While we have a lot of particularity and differences between cultures, something that unites us is our struggle to care for God's creation: ecology.

We ended the day with a very beautiful Eucharist presided over by 5 priests and accompanied by a chorus of children and teenagers who played the violin. All the religious women were with our flower chains (on the head, around the neck and in the hand). After the Mass, we had dinner and left in a truck that took between 10 and 12 sisters according to how it was organized. The community welcome each of us into a family. I loved this gesture!

I stayed with a family that spoke a language I had never heard before. The woman who welcomed me has 2 sons and 6 daughters but they are all out of the house. Most of her daughters are in Mexico City; one of her children is in Monterrey and the other in Canada. She lives with her daughter-in-law, a granddaughter and a grandson. Her house is very well cared for thanks to the efforts of her and her children. They were a very nice family, and I happily stayed with them for two nights.

The second day we started with a delicious egg-based breakfast with black beans, very tasty. Then a reflective, contemplative prayer with dance. Then we had an open dialogue with some questions such as: What do we hear? What resonates in our heart? Then it was time for illumination from the wisdom of the grandmothers and grandfathers.

Sr. Herlinda, a Guatemalan religious, shared the clock of the Mayan culture, an instrument used since ancient times to measure the passage of hours, minutes and seconds. They had 13 calendars and 18 months and from that they knew the quality of people and how everything was connected and integrated. That is why the people of this culture ask you: how is your heart? There is also a deposit of wisdom of the ancestors who give us advice through stories. Some phrases that were constantly repeated included the importance of sharing food with the needy, with the deceased and the attitudes that help create inner peace; for all this strengthens the heart. Theology is the experience of God in the Indigenous communities and peoples, because they recognize God in everything.

The third day we started very similar as in the previous days: with a rich breakfast and a deep prayer. Sister Ana Luisa Prieto made a summary highlighting the blessings of each day shared together; it was very significant. We focused this day on creating the means to act.

What wonderful teachings I received and carry with me! Now my question is how do I offer this back in our religious family and in the town where I am? For all this helped me strengthen my heart, because when we touch the depths of our being, we can speak from the heart. Being there allows us to listen to our dreams. Inspiration springs forth from the source of all being. I will find the way; I know and feel it.

I end this time with much gratitude for all those women of faith I gathered with, for our Congregation, and for Sr. Ana Luisa Prieto. Thank you.

Ecology

Letter to President Trump on Climate Change

The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word - San Antonio are proud to join with over 160 of our Catholic colleagues in endorsing this letter (below) to President Trump and the United States Congress. Our faith calls us to prophetically speak out on behalf of God's creation. As Pope Francis stated in *Laudato Si*, the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor are one. Let us work together to respond to these cries, heal the earth, and protect the poor and vulnerable.

November 16, 2017

Dear President Trump and Members of the United States Congress:

As leaders of Catholic organizations in the United States, we write with one voice to urge you to reassert U.S. leadership in the global effort to address climate change. On behalf of people who are poor and vulnerable and future generations, we especially ask that you act based upon the best available climate science; fund the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; honor U.S. commitments to the Green Climate Fund; and meaningfully participate in the deliberations of the UNFCCC.

The Catholic Church has long called for a prudent approach to creation. In 1971, Paul VI wrote, "Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation." His successors, Saint John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis have advanced the Church's call for us to care for creation, a tenet of Catholic social teaching.

Catholic leaders across the nation and world have explicitly and consistently affirmed climate change as a moral issue that threatens core Catholic commitments, including to: protect human life, promote human dignity, exercise a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, advance the common good, live in solidarity with future generations, and care for God’s creation which is our common home.

The Catholic Church has for years supported actions to address climate change based upon the best available science. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) expressed in its 2001 statement *Global Climate Change: A Plea For Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*: “In facing climate change, what we already know requires a response; it cannot be easily dismissed. Significant levels of scientific consensus—even in a situation with less than full certainty, where the consequences of not acting are serious—justifies, indeed can obligate, our taking action intended to avert potential dangers.”

We are thus obligated by our faith to act – especially now considering the November 3rd National Climate Assessment from thirteen federal agencies that concludes: “[B]ased on extensive evidence, that it is extremely likely that human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse gases, are the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century. For the warming over the last century, there is no convincing alternative explanation supported by the extent of the observational evidence.”

Guided by these principles and findings, we members of the Catholic Church in the United States ask that you:

1. Fund the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The UNFCCC and IPCC are indispensable institutions for the advancement of global diplomacy, action, science and knowledge on climate change. The United States has provided funding for these institutions since 1992, and we applaud the Senate Appropriations Committee’s recent bipartisan amendment to include \$10 million for them in the Senate’s FY2018 budget. We echo the USCCB in its letter urging Congress to support this amendment and call for the Administration and Congress to support future allocations to ensure US participation and leadership in the global efforts to address climate change.

2. Meaningfully participate in the deliberations of the UNFCCC

Climate change is a global problem that requires global solutions. As our nation enjoys vast resources and has been a primary contributor to climate change, justice requires that the U.S. display strong and consistent leadership within the UNFCCC. In this way, the U.S. can help secure science-based global commitments which rapidly reduce greenhouse gas pollution and avoid so-called “tipping points” towards unavoidable and catastrophic impacts.

3. Honor U.S. Commitments to the Green Climate Fund

One measure of a society’s greatness is how it treats people who are poor and vulnerable. As our Catholic tradition instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first, we urge you to honor U.S. commitments to the Green Climate Fund. The Fund helps less developed nations most impacted by climate change to build resilience to present and future impacts. Their peoples are disproportionately harmed by climate change despite often contributing least to the problem.

We heed the call of our Church, which implores, “As individuals, as institutions, as a people we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for our children and for generations yet unborn.” We hope that you will accept our appeal, so that we may continue to dialogue and work together to manifest this change of heart.

Headwaters updates

Have you checked out some of the wonderful offerings at the Headwaters Sanctuary lately? There is a lot going on, and they are sure to have something for everyone!

Just in the past month Headwaters has hosted volunteer work days, yoga sessions, an educational presentation on the importance of native trees and how they are restoring them in the sanctuary, an interactive workshop for kids to explore wildlife, offered a free showing of an environmental film as part of their monthly film series, a workshop on invasive plants and the problems they pose, led a walk exploring the early archaeology of the area and how the first peoples in the San Antonio region interacted with the Headwaters, offered a birding walk and tour, and shared about the history of the medicine wheel and plans to incorporate this source of wisdom into the Headwaters Sanctuary.

Adding a medicine wheel to the Headwaters Sanctuary is an exciting development to honor the native wisdom and spirituality of the land, and share it with others. Medicine Wheels are stone structures with cosmological and geographical significance, built by Native Americans across North America over the past 10,000 years. The Headwaters limestone wheel will correlate with the Blue Hole and related springs found depicted in the Rock Art of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands. Through analyses of geography, astronomy, archaeology, and oral history, it is believed the Rock Art is a 4,000 year old map of Texas and record of indigenous cosmology. The Headwaters Medicine Wheel will be a reflection of this Rock Art and serve as a guide towards stewardship of the Sanctuary.

For a full list of all the exciting upcoming events offered at the Headwaters, check out their Facebook Page and their Website.

Headwaters recently posted a message of thanks on their Facebook page: "Headwaters at Incarnate Word is grateful for the thousands of hours given by volunteers to better the Headwaters Sanctuary each year! It is only through volunteers that our small ministry can increase the biodiversity and beauty of the 53-acre nature sanctuary, which is the last undeveloped parcel of the CCVI heritage land in San Antonio. We are also eternally grateful to the Sisters, of course, for setting aside this piece of their history for us to preserve, protect, and celebrate!"

On behalf of the Congregational JPIC Office, we would also like to extend our thanks and gratitude to the staff and volunteers of Headwaters, especially Alex Antram and Pamela Ball, for their outstanding work and commitment to caring for our common home through the preservation of the Headwaters Sanctuary, educating the community on topics of environmental justice and sustainability, and offering a spiritual refuge and encounter with the divine for all who experience the Headwaters Sanctuary. Thank you!!

Living Laudato Si

Green Week at Colegio Mexicano

As part of the closing ceremonies to celebrate 130 years of Colegio Mexicano, the educational community participated in the First CM Green Week in September, where various activities were carried out.

Families were able to participate in a Recycling Competition, where they made useful or decorative items for the house. The first place obtained a kit of 3 ecological bins for their house, second and third place obtained a CM thermos and a recycling transport bag.

The students of higher primary and secondary education were able to participate in two lectures on Sustainability given by Dr. Sandra Yanette Lozano Garza, MED, from the Sustainability

area of the University of Monterrey (UdeM) and the second by Dr. Efrén Robledo Leal, from the Faculty of Biological Sciences of UANL.

Finally, all the students accompanied by their teachers and management and administrative staff participated in the sowing of ornament seeds to embellish the trees adopted from our beautiful Forest, which is located at the front of our facilities.

In the light of Laudato Si and our inspirational CM-phrase in this cycle - Nature, the Image of God, listen to her and respond - all of our ecological activities are oriented to take care of our common home and strengthen our image as a sustainable school.

Human Trafficking

Shared Hope Releases Report Cards on State Trafficking Laws

Yesterday, in a briefing on Capitol Hill Shared Hope released the 2017 Protected Innocence Challenge State Grades! How did your state score? Full reports available online.

The Protected Innocence Challenge, launched in 2011, is an annual report that grades each state on the strength of their laws to fight child sex trafficking. Each year a toolkit of resources is released to help advocates and legislators improve their laws.

This year's report demonstrates a 7-years of progress in improving state laws that combat child sex trafficking, yet also calls attention to the gaps where states have not progressed. When launched in 2011, 26 states had an "F" grade on 41 points of law that impact child sex trafficking. This year there are now 36 As and Bs. Check out these and other stats on our website.

Texas scored an A and Missouri scored a B.

The major area of improvement needed in Texas is in decriminalizing minors who are victims of human trafficking. Texas's sex trafficking law currently criminalizes the use of a minor under the age of 18 in a commercial sex act regardless of force, fraud, or coercion. The prostitution law refers to the sex trafficking law to provide an affirmative defense for sex trafficking victims. Texas' organized criminal activity law specifically targets trafficking of persons and includes certain CSEC offenses as predicate crimes, allowing use of this law to prosecute sex trafficking networks.

All commercially sexually exploited children are defined as juvenile sex trafficking victims. Texas's sex trafficking and CSEC laws do not prohibit a defense based on the willingness of the minor to engage in the commercial sex act. Texas's prostitution laws do not prohibit the criminalization of minors under 18, but case law has held that a child under 14 may not be charged with prostitution. Juvenile sex trafficking victims also face criminalization for commercial sex acts committed as a result of their victimization, but may assert an affirmative defense that she or he was sex trafficked. Additionally, a juvenile sex trafficking victim may be able to avoid a delinquency adjudication through participation in the Trafficking Persons Program, but entrance to the program is not mandated. Further, specialized services are available under the Governor's Program for Victims of Child Sex Trafficking. For purposes of child welfare involvement, the definition of "abuse" includes child sex trafficking, CSEC, prostitution, and ICSE; additionally, the definition of "abuse" does not include a "caregiver" barrier because abuse may be committed by "a person," which is broad enough to allow child welfare involvement in non-familial trafficking cases.

For the full Texas report check out our blog.

Missouri criminalizes child sex trafficking without requiring use of force, fraud, or coercion, and the trafficking law includes buyer, trafficker, and facilitator conduct. Further, the definitions of abuse and neglect specifically include child sex trafficking. However, specialized services are not

statutorily mandated, and the critical tool of wiretapping is not expressly permitted in trafficking investigations, handicapping law enforcement and prosecutors.

Missouri law expressly prohibits a defense based on the willingness of the minor to engage in the commercial sex act if the victim is under 14; this defense is not prohibited for older minors. Prostitution laws apply to minors under 18, meaning juvenile sex trafficking victims may face criminalization for commercial sex acts committed as a result of their victimization. However, Missouri law mandates referral of juvenile sex trafficking victims to DSS and DJJ for a service and assistance assessment, but access to specialized services is not required. For purposes of child welfare intervention, the definitions of abuse and neglect include child sex trafficking without specifying a relationship between the child and the perpetrator of the abuse.

Check out the link on our blog for the full Missouri report.

Immigration

Take Action: Extend TPS for Honduras, El Salvador, and Haiti

The administration has terminated the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Nicaragua, effective January 5, 2019. The administration was unable to decide whether to extend TPS for Honduras, resulting in an automatic six-month extension until July 5, 2018. However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) signaled the possibility that the TPS designation for Honduras might also be terminated at the end of the six-month automatic extension and the fate of TPS holders from El Salvador and Haiti are still in jeopardy.

This decision illustrates the administration's prioritization of anti-immigrant sentiment over an honest assessment of in-country conditions. It also shows the cruelty and inhumanity of DHS to force TPS holders to continue to live with uncertainty and fear.

This decision must be met with a swift and powerful response by our elected leaders and community members. Our Senators and Representatives need to hear that their constituents stand with TPS holders and call on Congress to ensure TPS holders are protected from deportation. Please take 6 minutes to call your Members of Congress (2 minutes per Member) right now and make your voice heard!

Urge Your Members of Congress to Support TPS Holders and #SaveTPS! (202) 224-3121

Please call 3x for your 2 Senators and 1 Representative

Sample Script:

"I'm your constituent from [City, State]. As a person of faith, I stand in solidarity with my immigrant neighbors and support Temporary Protected Status (TPS). I strongly condemn the administration's termination of TPS for Nicaragua and am concerned about the future of my neighbors from Honduras. TPS is designed to protect people from being returned to harm and is extended based on country conditions. More than 300,000 of our neighbors are TPS holders. They contribute billions of dollars to our economy. Nearly 273,000 U.S. citizen children have a parent with TPS. Tearing apart families and devastating communities is immoral and wrong-headed. I urge [the Senator or Representative] to do everything she or he can to ensure that the administration reinstates TPS for Nicaragua; extends TPS for Honduras, El Salvador, and Haiti for at least another 18 months; and supports legislation that would ensure stability for TPS recipients who have lived here for many years."

DHS has yet to reach a decision on TPS for Haiti or El Salvador. Violence, weak institutions, and a lack of human rights protections in Central America, as well as food, housing, and public health crises in Haiti persist. As people of faith, we have an urgent call to stand with TPS holders

and tell the administration to do everything they can to see TPS protections extended and pass a permanent legislative solution.

Here are 4 more ways you can take action!

- 1) Write & Share Press Releases Condemning Reports of TPS Terminations: Press releases increase public education and raise the public profile of why TPS is important to our communities. We encourage faith organizations to take a public stance condemning Nicaragua's TPS termination, denouncing the cruelty in only a 6-month extension for Honduras, urging the administration to extend TPS designations for all TPS countries for at least 18 months, and calling on Congress to pass a permanent solution for TPS holders.
- 2) Join the Prayer Chain and Share on Social Media: Record a video of yourself holding a printed, filled out #Faith4TPS sign. Upload your video to Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook with the hashtag #Faith4TPS and tag the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (@interfaithimm). Don't forget to tweet at your Members of Congress and @realDonaldTrump.
- 3) Plan #Faith4TPS Events: Host an interfaith vigil, educate your faith community, and organize other events to lift up the importance of TPS. Local actions are a great way to amplify voices of TPS holders in the media, and don't forget to invite your national, state, and local officials. Click here to view our Interfaith Toolkit to Defend TPS to learn more.
- 4) Write for Media: Elevate the public call by publishing a letter to the editor ASAP condemning the termination of TPS for Nicaragua, and reports of possible TPS terminations for Honduras, El Salvador, and Haiti, urging the administration to extend these designations for at least 18 months, and calling on Congress to pass a permanent solution for TPS holders.

Thanks for your continued support of our immigrant neighbors and for whatever you can do to stop the administration's attempts to disrupt our communities, separate families, and deport our friends.

Peace

Sutherland Springs: Examining the Idolatry of Guns

Twenty-six people were killed and twenty others wounded in the First Baptist Church at the Sunday Service on November 5, 2017 in a small town Sutherland Springs, not far from San Antonio, Texas. In the light of this terrible tragedy MOMS DEMAND ACTION FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA held a Vigil service in downtown San Antonio in front of Madison Square Presbyterian Church. They invited Sister Martha Ann Kirk, CCVI, to speak.

These are some of the remarks that were shared:

I have been around guns all my life. I grew up in south Texas, we have been farming and ranching since 1875. You never know when a rattle snake might come into the yard. Those deer are bad getting into good pasture land---and venison makes such good sausage and jerky. I've always been around guns, but guns are tools, like lawn mowers. My friend had her finger cut off by a lawn mower. You have to careful with all tools. Now the guns were in a high closet carefully hidden away. We knew that the guns were just tools and ones that needed to be handled very carefully.

How did we get to this point in our society that the guns are as looked to as the "saviors." How did the tools get to be the idols that we worship? This change in attitude seems to have started during the presidency of General Ike Eisenhower. He had used guns in war, but when he left the presidency, he issued a warning that those who made guns, the military industrial complex were starting to dictate to the people that weapons would save us, that we must have more weapons. He spoke strongly of the great danger of letting the makers of weapons, the makers of guns dictate.

People educated in democracy, human rights, diplomacy, and human relationships need to work for the common good. They need to think and not be puppets of the weapons manufacturers.

Let us be educated people and sensible people. When an alcoholic goes to an AA meeting, he/she must stand and say their name; for example: "I am Jane Doe and I am an alcoholic. I want to begin the process of rehabilitation." All of us as citizens must stand and say, "I am Martha Ann Kirk, I am a citizen of the United States, my nation has a violent national culture of which I am a part. I must recognize I am part of the problem and I am here to begin the journey to change our violent national culture."

Why is the US so violent? What can be controlled and not controlled? Though things will never be perfect, what can get better? Is there some sudden tendency to be violent when one crosses from Canada down into the US? Does the US have such bad racism that things are violent? Do we have more mentally ill people? Research has shown that the US is not extraordinary in those things.

"The only variable that can explain the high rate of mass shootings in America is its astronomical number of guns. . .The top-line numbers suggest a correlation that, on further investigation, grows only clearer Americans make up about 4.4 percent of the global population but own 42 percent of the world's guns. From 1966 to 2012, 31 percent of the gunmen in mass shootings worldwide were American, according to a 2015 study by Adam Lankford, a professor at the University of Alabama.

Adjusted for population, only Yemen has a higher rate of mass shootings among countries with more than 10 million people — a distinction Mr. Lankford urged to avoid outliers. Yemen has the world's second-highest rate of gun ownership after the United States. Worldwide, Mr. Lankford found, a country's rate of gun ownership correlated with the odds it would experience a mass shooting." (From "What Explains U.S. Mass Shootings?")

Guns do not kill people. People kill people BUT EASY ACCESS TO GUNS MAKES IT FASTER AND EASIER TO KILL PEOPLE. Global research indicates that, not a tendency to violence, but easy access to guns was the predictor of mass shootings.

While the US could and should do better providing care for the mentally ill, "A 2015 study estimated that only 4 percent of American gun deaths could be attributed to mental health issues. America's gun homicide rate was 33 per million people in 2009, far exceeding the average among developed countries. In Canada and Britain, it was 5 per million and 0.7 per million, respectively, which also corresponds with differences in gun ownership. American crime is simply more lethal. . . A New Yorker is just as likely to be robbed as a Londoner, for instance, but the New Yorker is 54 times more likely to be killed in the process." ("What Explains")

"More gun ownership corresponds with more gun murders across virtually every axis: among developed countries, among American states, among American towns and cities and when controlling for crime rates. And gun control legislation tends to reduce gun murders, according to a recent analysis of 130 studies from 10 countries. . . The United States also has some of the world's weakest controls over who may buy a gun and what sorts of guns may be owned.

"After Britain had a mass shooting in 1987, the country instituted strict gun control laws. So did Australia after a 1996 incident. But the United States has repeatedly faced the same calculus and determined that relatively unregulated gun ownership is worth the cost to society.

"In retrospect Sandy Hook marked the end of the US gun control debate," Dan Hodges, a British journalist, wrote in a post on Twitter two years ago, referring to the 2012 attack that killed 20 young students at an elementary school in Connecticut. "Once America decided killing children was bearable, it was over." ("What explains")

Abusers' access to guns increases the risk of intimate partner homicide as much as fivefold, according to a study in the Annals of Internal Medicine. ("Mass Shootings")

Realize your power. We do not have to live in service to the weapons industry, the gun manufacturers, the NRA, we have freedom of speech, we can write letters to the editor, we can do research. We can elect sensible legislators.

WE do not have to worship guns as the saviors.

(Links to sources used for this talk can be found on the blog)

Pray – Study – Act on Nuclear Disarmament

This past weekend the conference titled, "Perspectives for a World Free from Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament," was held at the Vatican. This is the largest international conference on nuclear disarmament since the Nuclear Ban Treaty was adopted this summer.

Out of this conference came Pope Francis's condemnation of nuclear weapons. He said, "Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family."

Prayer for the Vatican conference:

Creator God, We thank your Holy Spirit for inspiring and guiding those who met this weekend in Rome, including the Pax Christi delegation.

Your world is precious but human folly threatens its very existence.

We pray for those whose lives have been destroyed by nuclear weapons and nuclear testing.

We pray for those denied the essentials of life when money is squandered on nuclear weapons production.

We pray that our Church will speak to the world with clarity and wisdom and work with world leaders to ban the development, possession and use of nuclear weapons.

With Pope Francis, we commit ourselves to work for a world without nuclear weapons.

We pray in hope for a world built on just relations and cooperation between people who wish to live in peaceful co-existence.

Amen

Study: Links to list of educational resources on the blog.

Action: Yesterday, the first congressional hearing on nuclear weapons since 1976 took place. They are reevaluating the US nuclear weapons process, specifically the protocol surrounding the president's ability to use them. Advocate to Senate Foreign Relations Committee that we need stricter protocols in place. Share Pax Christi International's information about the Vatican's nuclear weapons conference on social media and to your communities.

Human Rights

Leave No One Behind: End Violence Against Women

From 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign is a time to galvanize action to end violence against women and girls around the world. The international campaign originated from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 1991.

This year, the UNiTE Campaign will mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence under the overarching theme, "Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and

Girls”— reflecting the core principle of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls” reinforces the UNiTE Campaign’s commitment to a world free from violence for all women and girls around the world, while reaching the most underserved and marginalized, including refugees, migrants, minorities, indigenous peoples, and populations affected by conflict and natural disasters, amongst others, first.

As in previous years, the color orange will be a key theme unifying all activities, and buildings and landmarks will be lit and decorated in orange to bring global attention to the issue of violence against women and girls.

Join us! Share your photos, messages and videos showing how you orange the world at facebook and twitter using #orangetheworld and #16days. For more information about the theme, download the Action Plan online. For more information about Orange Day, please contact Natalia Tuerogerman, natalia.tuerogerman@unwomen.org. The United Nations Official Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women will take place on 22 November from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Prayer for World AIDS Day

World AIDS Day takes place on the 1st of December each year. It is an opportunity for people worldwide, and especially the men and women in Catholic health ministry who have served those living with HIV/AIDS, to unite in the fight against HIV, to continue to show support for people living with HIV and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day.

So that your organization can participate in this day of awareness and reflection, Catholic Health Association (CHA) is sharing a prayer for use in your meetings, online newsletters, in social media and throughout the communities you serve.

And so we pray ...

God of Promise, today we are mindful of our sisters and brothers suffering with HIV and AIDS. We ask your healing presence on millions of people living with the disease today; particularly the children who are infected or who have been orphaned by the disease. Make of us a safe haven for those who are abandoned, discriminated against and rejected on account of their illness. Inspire us to speak out for a just distribution of health care and medical aid in this country and for generosity in sharing our resources with those struggling under the weight of this epidemic overseas. As we begin our Advent celebration of waiting in hope for the birth of your Son, let us remember those across the world who wait in hope for a cure. Amen.

Advent Resources

There are many ways you can bring a focus of justice, peace, and the care of creation into your Advent practices and prayers. Check out our blog for links to the resources below to guide in your prayer and reflection this Advent season.

[From Education for Justice Reflections](#) by: Angel Mortel

In many ways, Advent unfolds as a film would. Creative Voice and former EFJ intern, Angel Mortel, works with Brave New Films producing social justice documentaries. “We go through Advent with the same anticipation with which we watch a film, eager to see how it ends. We need to be reminded to wake up, prepare, celebrate, and rejoice in the coming of our Savior and lasting hope.”

Catholic Mobilizing Network

Join us during this Advent season for prayerful reflection and hopeful anticipation. Every Monday you will receive a special Advent reflection for the coming Sunday. The reflections are available online, on social media, and can also be downloaded as a complete set. Enjoy the Sunday Advent scripture readings through the lens of justice and mercy.

Pax Christi

Each year, we produce new, original reflections for the season of Advent. These reflections are rooted in the daily scriptures and the spirituality of nonviolence. As activists, we know how important it is to be connected to God in order to do our important work. We look to our Source to give us the strength to bring about God's peace and justice.

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