



May 2018

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

As we approach the Congregational Chapter Meeting, we continue to pray with and for all those who will be attending and discerning the Spirit's invitation for our community of sisters and the many ministries in which we serve. May it be a time of deep prayer for wisdom in how we are called to share the healing and saving love of the Incarnate Word with the whole of creation. May we be strengthened and renewed in our commitment from the last Chapter to be a prophetic voice for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

In this issue of Seeds we share with you many examples of how we as the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, in collaboration with other like-minded individuals and organizations, continue to live into our commitment for peace and nonviolence, to welcome and protect the rights of our immigrant brothers and sisters, and proudly declare that we are "still in" when it comes to addressing climate change and caring for our common home. We hope these articles and prayers give you hope in the work you are doing to care for the most vulnerable among us.

Ecology

Catholics are Still In

The Catholic Climate Covenant officially launched on April 25 the "Catholics Are Still In" campaign to assemble church institutions behind a united Catholic Climate Declaration advocating for U.S. action on climate change and support for the Paris Agreement despite the Trump administration's plans to exit the deal.

"As Catholic communities, organizations, and institutions in the United States, we join with state, tribal, and local governments, as well as businesses, financial institutions, and other faith organizations, to declare that we are still in on actions that meet the climate goals outlined in the Paris Agreement," the declaration reads.

It continues: "Climate change is an urgent moral issue because it compromises the future of our common home, threatens human life and human dignity, and adds to the hardships already experienced by the poorest and most vulnerable people both at home and abroad. We teach that governments exist to protect and promote the common good, and that 'the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all,'" referencing a passage from Pope Francis' 2015 environmental encyclical "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home."

The General Leadership Team for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word has agreed to sign on to this campaign. We encourage other Catholic congregations and institutions, especially our sponsored ministries, to considering signing on as well to show your support for the Paris Agreement and commitment to caring for our common home.

Immigration

Crossing Borders, Sharing Humanity

By Sr. Katty Huanuco, CCVI

I represented our Congregational Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in Alamo, Rio Grande Valley, Texas USA, participating in 'Crossing Borders / Sharing Humanity', an event promoted by the Stuart Center for Mission, Leadership Educational and Technology of the Religions of the Sacred Heart with the support of The Mexican American Catholic College (MACC).

Representatives from about 15 organizations met together for 7 days and participated in presentations, discussion, exhibitions, and lived experiences with ARISE with the aim of highlighting the main causes and effects of migration and human trafficking, and focusing on the construction of alternative solutions marked by human dignity, justice and the defense of human rights, in the search of a more dignified life for migrants and those affected by trafficking.

For me they were days of great blessing. To feel, see, and hear the testimonies of those who have migrated to the US looking for a decent life or fleeing violence, visit their houses, go to the border and observe the walls, and be in the shelters and organizations that support those who live in constant vulnerability was really challenging. The challenges here are also in our own countries. These range from problems with being received, to integrating, to high vulnerability for exploitation. We concluded by publicly asking that the human rights of all people who migrate be respected, because these rights cover all human beings.

It is worth mentioning that ARISE is a program that works with families to strengthen their communities. Located in four cities in South Texas, each ARISE center responds to the specific needs of the community. ARISE's mission is to help communities help residents identify life goals and provide resources to help them achieve those goals for themselves. ARISE is co-sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Central South and the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word of Houston.

PRONOUNCEMENT: CROSSING FRONTIERS / CONNECTING HUMANITY

Representatives of 15 organizations from 10 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Canada, Japan and the United States, below as signatories, gathered in Alamo, Rio Grande Valley, Texas, USA to participate in Crossing Borders/Sharing Humanity. Learning from one another through popular education, we focused our attention on Human Migration and Human Trafficking.

As such, we denounce the criminalization of migration and affirm:

1. Migration is a worldwide phenomenon that is manifested by the movement of people in search of a better life.
2. People do not choose to migrate. They do so to escape poverty and/or violence. Migration causes people to be estranged from their homeland, their culture and their family.
3. Migrants are human beings and should be treated and respected in their entirety.

4. The greater the restriction in laws and the higher the walls, the greater the risk people will undertake in their search of a better life. The implementation of measures of persecution and exclusion, and the laws that generate repression benefit clandestine and criminal organizations that profit from the suffering of others.
5. Current immigration policies are unacceptable and degrading. They create an environment that fosters human trafficking and increases the risk of the most vulnerable sectors.
6. Victims of Trafficking live in silence and intimidation. Discrimination, objectification and oppression, especially towards women and girls, condemn them to situations of profound exploitation.

We call on governments to:

- Implement changes needed to guarantee a dignified life for all people so that every person can exercise their right to migrate or their right not to migrate.
- Guarantee the labor rights of workers
- Provide safety, dignified treatment, and respect for Human Rights of each and every migrant

We are committed to:

- continue working to respect the universal human rights of migrants.
- continue to advocate for immigration reform in our countries in an effort to guarantee the safety of migrants so they do not become the prey of groups operating outside the law
- continue to welcome, promote, protect and integrate migrants in our own organizations.
- denounce trafficking in persons and everything that leads to it
- strengthen our work by participating in networks in favor of migrants and victims of trafficking.

April 13, 2018 Alamo, Rio Grande Valley, TX

Statement in Response to the National Guard Deployment to the US/Mexico Border

The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word stand with our Bishops (US Statement and Mexico Statement) and other people of faith (Pax Christi statement) in expressing deep concern about the decision of the U.S. Government to send U.S. National Guard troops to the southern border with Mexico.

Our faith requires us to welcome the stranger and give aid to those in need. We recognize there is a crisis at our borders. However, it is a humanitarian crisis for those fleeing violence and persecution, not one that requires military intervention. We denounce the rhetoric that seeks to dehumanize those who cross the border and deny them their human dignity and human rights.

We are a Congregation that serves in both the United States and Mexico. Grounded in the expansive love of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, we will continue to welcome, support, and advocate for the rights of all who choose to cross the U.S./Mexico border.

Peace

Relationship Building with Sr. Dr. Eva Lumas

On April 26, 2018 the Incarnate Word Foundation as part of their "Recon" programming and initiative sponsored an evening with Sr. Dr. Eva Lumas, SSS at St. Alphonsus "Rock" Church. She spoke about the power and importance of building strong, diverse relationships. Sr. Lumas is a

Sister of Social Service who has taught at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, CA since 1994 and is currently serving as the Interim Co-Director of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies in Louisiana. She has taught and lectured throughout the country on topics of faith and culture, interculturalism, catechesis and Black spirituality. She has also served as the Coordinator of Catechetical Programs for the National Black Sisters' Conference.

The program was also sponsored by the North City Deanery (NCD) Interracial Relations Committee and the Peace & Justice Commission of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. The NCD Interracial Relations Committee brings together predominantly white and predominantly black Catholic Churches within North City to build relationships across racial lines.

The program began with praise and worship music led by the North City Deanery Choir. Then there was an initial welcome by a member of the Interracial Relations Committee and opening prayer by the pastor of St. Alphonsus, Fr. Rick Potts. Sr. Helena Monahan, CCVI was present representing the Incarnate Word Foundation and offered a Scripture reading from 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, 12:12-13.

Sr. Lumas then offered the keynote presentation on her reflections and own personal stories of building relationships with those who are different from you. She shared six important characteristics of relationship building: 1) Acknowledge there is always more to learn. 2) Learn what we don't know. We only know the world as we see it. How do others see it? 3) It is so important to show up. When you show up in new spaces, be open to change. 4) You might have to wait, but keep showing up. Just because you are present doesn't mean that you will be welcomed right away. Be persistent. 5) Be willing to open yourself up. Don't make those in the present pay for the sins of the past. Believe that this time, this relationship could be different. 6) Find mentors in this work. It is important to process and spend time with others.

In a world that is so divided today, it is important work to build close relationships with those who come from a different cultural background than you. This is also important peace building work. It is much harder to hate or cause harm to someone you know personally and care about, so diversifying one's friendships and communities is an important part of building a culture of peace and nonviolence. The work to end racism and the work of nonviolence go hand in hand.

John Dear Book Tour in St. Louis

On Monday, April 16th approximately 85 people gathered in St. Louis, MO to listen to John Dear share about his newest book: *They Will Inherit the Earth: Peace and Nonviolence in a Time of Climate Change*. His talk was held at the center of the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, sponsored by the Intercommunity Ecological Council which includes the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. The CCVI Congregational JPIC Office was proud to help support this event as it brings together two of our main focuses for the Congregation: nonviolence and care of creation.

John Dear gave a powerful and moving talk, mixing together biblical exegesis, scientific facts, humor, faith, and hope. The title of the book comes from a reflection on the 3rd Beatitude "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Mt 5:5). Dear, drawing on reflections by Thomas Merton, translates the ancient understanding of "meek" to be our modern day equivalent of "nonviolent" in the sense of King/Ghandian nonviolence. It is those who live a life of committed nonviolence who will be at one with the earth. He also reflected on the term "blessed" and translated the original word to more accurately mean, "awake or get up, and go forth." So these are calls to action. Awake and go forth, living nonviolence with all of creation, and you shall live in harmony with the earth.

John Dear has proven himself over and over again throughout the decades to be a dedicated champion of peace and nonviolence. He challenged those in attendance to get involved in more grassroots organizing because it will take a large scale nonviolent grassroots movement to truly change the course we are on right now which is destroying the planet. We need concerted effort to end all wars, and the United States is the largest supplier of the arms trade around the world. We have been engaged in perpetual war for decades, feeding what President Dwight D. Eisenhower called the "Military Industrial Complex." For the survival of the planet and all of creation, we must shift from a war and violence based economy, to a peace and flourishing of creation based economy.

Dear praised the encyclical "Laudato Si" by Pope Francis which has inspired a renewed focus and commitment to an integral ecology that honors our interconnectedness with all of creation. He also talked about the work being done in Rome to bring together major leaders of nonviolent movements from around the world to share stories, ideas, practices, and foster a stronger commitment to peace and nonviolence throughout the Catholic Church. In 2016 after the first such meeting they issued a Appeal to the Catholic Church to Recommit to the centrality of Gospel Nonviolence which we as a Congregation signed onto in 2017, along with hundreds of other religious congregations and Catholic organizations. The call now is for the Pope to issue an encyclical specifically on Just Peace and Nonviolence. Dear encouraged attendees to advocate for this encyclical as well.

Overall it was an inspiring and challenging evening with John Dear, learning about the connection between nonviolence and care of creation, and holding on to the hope that together we really can make a difference in the world. If you would like to learn more about the work that John Dear is doing check out Pace e Bene, and you can sign up to receive e-mail updates on the ongoing work for a more peaceful and nonviolent world.

Human Rights

Catholics Participate in Rally to End Racism

A reflection by Jennifer Reyes Lay

April 3-5, 2018 thousands gathered in Washington D.C. to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by continuing his work to end racism with the launch of "A.C.T. Now: Rally 2 End Racism." This initiative was sponsored by the National Council of Churches in the U.S. and endorsed by a variety of faith-based organizations including LCWR, NETWORK, the Franciscan Action Network, and Pax Christi USA. A.C.T. stands for Awaken, Confront, and Transform, reflecting the call to awaken people of faith to the reality of racism and our historical ties to it, confronting the racism that is still prevalent in the Church and in the world, and working to transform these systems of racial oppression.

The event began on Tuesday evening, April 3rd with an ecumenical prayer service at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral. Representatives from both the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches offered their reflections on the event and the importance of people of faith coming together and committing to finish the work to end racism.

On Wednesday, April 4th, the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., tens of thousands of people gathered at the MLK Memorial on the National Mall for prayer and silence in memory of Dr. King and all who have gone before us in the fight to end racism. From the MLK Memorial, marchers processed in silence to the middle of the national mall where the Rally 2 End Racism was held throughout the day, featuring a powerful and diverse list of presenters speaking to the topics of awakening, confronting, and transforming. The Rally kicked off with an

interfaith prayer service including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and many others. Present at the march was a small but mighty group of Catholics against racism made up of both lay and religious.

After being energized and inspired by the Rally on Wednesday, Thursday was a day of action and advocacy on Capitol Hill. We participated in legislative visits to our Senators and Representatives, sharing with them the legislative priorities related to racism identified by this campaign such as environmental racism, gun violence, mass incarceration, education inequalities, immigration policies, and exploitative economic practices such as pay day loans. Those who weren't able to attend the Rally were also encouraged to engage in local advocacy visits and voter registration campaigns in the cities in which they live.

It was powerful to see so many different Christian denominations coming together and making a public commitment to work to end racism. This event was just the kick off for a multi-year campaign to encourage faith communities to awaken themselves to the reality of racism, confront this legacy tied to our faith tradition, and transform ourselves and our communities to end racism once and for all. As people of faith we have a responsibility to work to realize the kingdom of God here on earth, building beloved community where all are free and able to live the lives that God has intended for them. Ending racism is a vital part of this kingdom building work, and with the commitment displayed at the Rally 2 End Racism, I am hopeful that we can make serious progress on eliminating this sin that has plagued our communities for so long.

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