

July 2015

Volume 1, Issue 7

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

A social justice newsletter of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order St. Francis



Special Interest Articles:

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Donna Wilhelm, Dorothy Pagosa, Marjorie White, Maxine Smith, Michele Richardson, Rose Grabowski, Rose Marie Bommer, Shannon Fox — Social Justice Committee

It is Right and Just by Sr. Rose Grabowski

Back in the 1970s I was living in Milwaukee and working at Harambee Community School. This inner-city school was not only a challenge for me, but it also opened my eyes to real poverty, injustices, and social justice issues.

At that time each province had a Peace and

Justice Committee, but it was later that one committee was formed. It was a privilege to be a member of that group.

When Sister Dorothy Pagosa joined 8th Day Center, she was able to enlarge our areas of interest and involvement.

With this July issue of our newsletter, *We*

Commit Ourselves, we share recent issues and events with you.

We pray during the Liturgy, "*It is right and just*" to give God praise, and we are asked to be merciful and just to one another.

The challenge continues for each of us daily. ■

Is a "Just War" Possible?

by Sister Donna Wilhelm, Social Justice Committee Member

This was received from Associate-to-be Jeanne Boros, Associate Marge Church, and Sister Sandy LoPorto who attended a talk: *'The Promotion of Peace: The Church's Teaching on War, Non-Violence, and the Just War Theory.'*

The presenter was Fr. Joseph Koopman, STD who explored the teaching of the Church on war and the new problems that have arisen with the advent of modern warfare. Father Koopman is an assistant professor of moral theology at St. Mary Seminary in Cleveland, OH.

Marge says, "It was very interesting to learn

the Catholic Church's view and stance on what may be considered a "just" war. It's a very difficult subject and very difficult to arrive at a conclusion which would satisfy all cultures.

And from Sandy we hear, "I was disappointed that there is no one clear position on a just war theory." She shared an important resource: the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

"There has always been tension in the Church's teachings: 'War is a scourge and never an appropriate way to resolve problems that arise between nations.'"

Compendium, no. 497, and,

"A war of aggression is intrinsically immoral.... The requirements of legitimate defense justify the existence in States of armed forces, the activity of which should be at the service of peace." ■

Compendium, nos. 500, 502



Marge Church, Fr. Koopman, Sr. Sandy LoPorto, and Jeanne Boros

Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology

*“We respect the earth
and recognize that all life
is interconnected in a
continuing cosmic
evolution.”*

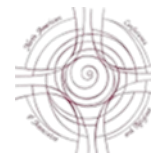
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This item (below) was published in the NACAR newsletter, a publication sent to Associates across the nation. To receive their newsletters go to their website: www.nacar.org

—Maxine Smith, Social Justice Committee Member

North American Conference of Associates and Religious



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Here is a beautiful reflection prayer that is taken from Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si." May the fruit of this prayer touch our hearts and heal our earth with love.

A Prayer for Our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace. ■

Transforming our Hearts:

Excerpts from a Statement by Jean Vanier

Templeton Prize News Conference, British Academy, London, March 11, 2015

I first of all want to thank you, Jennifer Simpson, and your father, Dr. John M. Templeton, Jr., and all those who work with you, especially the judges, for the wonderful prize you have awarded me.

I want to thank in a special way all those I represent here, people with intellectual disabilities of L'Arche and Faith and Light.

They have brought me so much over the past 50 years, and have taught me more than all those teachers and professors in schools and universities that I have attended.

They have taught me about what it means to be human and about how our societies can be transformed to become more peaceful and unified.

Our world is evolving rapidly, and is at a crisis point today. Either we will move together towards a deeper unity of all people, in a spirit of openness, fraternity and mutual respect, or the divisions that exist will grow into terrible forces of fear and hate, encouraging wars, terrorism and even the use of atomic weapons, each of which is a form of suicide for humanity.

A change for peace is beginning. The horrible age of slavery, where human beings were cruelly brought from Africa to the Americas, has largely gone.

Unfortunately other forms of slavery, such as prostitution and sex trafficking, still exist. That age however left after-effects, in apartheid and in forms of racism that persist today.

"... They have taught me about what it means to be human and about how our societies can be transformed to become more peaceful and unified."

Thank God that the people of Africa, as well as the indigenous people of Canada and other countries, are no longer seen as "savages," but as dignified peoples with sacred traditions that could benefit all of humanity.

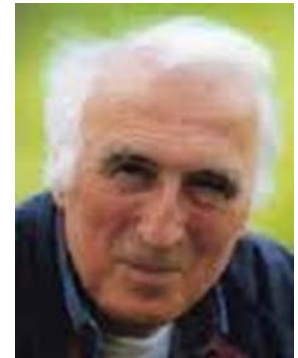
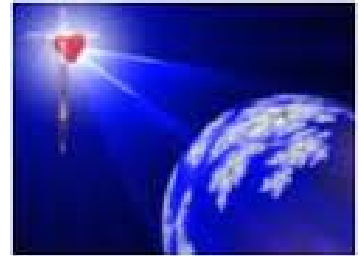
There is also a change in the way people with intellectual disabilities are seen. For many years these wonderful people were seen as "errors," or as the fruit of evil committed by their parents or ancestors.

We see for instance in the Gospel of John, the disciples of Jesus asking him about a man born blind. Was he born blind because of his sins, or because of the sins of his parents?

This idea that people with disabilities were the fruit of evil committed by ancestors still remains in some strands of religions.

Children born with disabilities were traditionally hidden away in big institutions, or in poorer countries where institutions did not exist, in the cupboards of their homes, or sent as beggars into the streets.

They were seen as hardly human, and as a shame and dishonor for their parents. They were terribly humiliated and rejected. Today we are discovering that these people have a wealth of human qualities that can change the hearts of those caught up in the



Jean Vanier

Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology

"In the spirit of St. Francis we share our stories, pray with persons of multiple faiths and cultures, and open our hearts and homes to those in need."

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Continued on pg. 4



Social Justice

“Stemming from our Franciscan values and the fact that all life is interconnected, members, vowed and non-vowed, are encouraged to be engaged in ministry with those living on the margins of society and struggling to live with dignity.”

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Transforming our Hearts ... continued from p. 3

culture of winning and of power.

There is also a change in the way we are discovering the qualities of a person, hidden underneath their capacities of knowledge and of power. The value of human beings resided so often in their qualities of strength, of competence, of efficiency and of knowledge. Sometimes, fortunately, these were also coupled with values of honesty and integrity.

Countries, groups and people were more or less fighting to win and to be the best, to have more and to do more. So it was that generals and politicians were applauded, monuments created in their honor, and streets named after them. It was power and competence that defined the identity of someone.

Change is gradually taking place, like a little seed in fertile earth, a seed of peace. For this change the whole world of psychology has helped us all to see how people can be manipulated by their unconscious needs to win, and by compulsions grounded in the fear of losing and of being no good. People can throw themselves into ideologies that cut them off from experience and reality.

Universal peace can only come if we develop and awaken those very human qualities, hidden under the more superficial needs for power and of winning, which lead us to welcome reality. These qualities are those linked to the heart—the capacity to love people, to respect them deeply, to live authentic relationships with others, to yearn for truth and justice in the huge family of humanity; qualities of humility, of forgiveness and of compassion for those who are weaker and in need; in short to seek the wisdom of the heart...

With this wisdom we learn to meet as human beings. The horrors of Auschwitz and of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima have been a wakeup call. The cry is for no more war. No more treating people as evil or just to be pushed away as having no value. We must start to meet: people must meet people; we are all human beings. Before being Christians or Jews or Muslims, before being Americans or Russians or Africans, before being generals or priests, rabbis or imams, before having visible or invisible disabilities, we are all human beings with hearts capable of loving...

It is only as we meet and share together person to person, eye to eye,

and heart to heart that we discover what it means to be human and to discover the joy of being together, working together towards a common mission of peace and unity...

My dream for this magnificent prize you have given me, and through me to L'Arche and Faith & Light, is for us to create spaces and opportunities for such meetings, meetings which transform hearts. Places where those caught up in the world of success and normality, and those who are in need, but who are also teachers of love and of simplicity, come together. Places where they can share together, eat together, laugh and celebrate together, weep and pray together; where the hearts of those who carry power in our society can be melted and rest; and where all together we may become a sign of peace. ■

Read the complete "Transforming Our Hearts" statement, learn more about the Templeton Prize, and view videos of Jean Vanier speaking on a number of topics at the L'Arche USA website:

<http://www.larcheusa.org/jean-vanier-wins-2015-templeton-prize/>.



Reducing Our Carbon Footprint: Around the Congregation

(Editor's Note:

This section is a continuation of a listing published in the May and June issues of our newsletter.)

Here are more things our sisters and associates are currently doing to reduce our carbon footprint:

- I am learning to print less and referring more

to saved documents rather than printing everything, and I take my tablet with me to meetings for referencing minutes, etc.

- I try to recycle good used clothing, even after purchasing most of them at resale shops.
- I try to purchase and use recyclable picnic items: plates, cups,

avoiding plastic and especially Styrofoam.

- I have made an effort to turn the water faucet off and not allow water to run while I am doing the dishes, brushing my teeth, and cooking.

What are YOU doing?

More to be published in future issues. Send your feedback to Sister Dorothy Pagosa for the August issue. ■



Social Justice

"We continue to influence our public officials to pass legislation that supports the human rights of all through email campaigns, public meetings, letter writing, phone calls, etc."

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Citizens Climate Lobby:

Group meets monthly in Stevens Point *by Sister Rose Grabowski*

Every month a group called the **Citizens Climate Lobby** meets in Stevens Point, usually at the Schmeekle Reserve at UWSP, located close to St. Joseph Motherhouse.

At the July meeting they joined the international conference call with guest speaker, Patrick Carolan of the **Franciscan Action Network**. He urged the group to appeal to Catholic priests and

bishops, to support climate action.

He noted that selling carbon credits encourages wealthy/powerful people to buy their way out of the climate crisis instead of changing their consumer-based lifestyles and an economy based on unlimited growth.

He also discussed the Global Catholic Climate Movement's petition, which he expects will gain

millions of signatures worldwide.

Also at their July meeting they distributed free copies of "*Faith-Based Statements on Climate Change*."

The Citizens' Climate Lobby recently sent more than 850 volunteers, including members of the Stevens Point chapter, to meet with more than 500 House and Senate offices in Washington, D.C.

REMEMBER...

We welcome your submissions in the form of:

- "Sightings"
- Brief write-ups of your activities, "prototypes," suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources.

Please send these to Sister Dorothy Pagosa by August 7th for inclusion in the August issue of our newsletter, *We Commit Ourselves*.

~Your Social Justice Committee