



### Special Interest Articles:

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- Paris Climate Talks



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## The World Cries Out for Mercy *by Sr. Dorothy Pagosa*

This month's edition of "We Are Committed" provides updates and information on several issues with which we have been concerned for quite a while.

- Climate change—the Paris Conference of Parties took place in November. What were the results of that?

- Sister Alexanne Osinski (in her retirement) is providing time to minister to immigrants.
- February 8<sup>th</sup> is the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita. That is a day we consider the plight of those who are trafficked—as was St. Josephine in her time.

- We also recall that some men have been jailed without due process, for 14 years, in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

During this Year of Mercy, as designated by Pope Francis, there are many issues that call for mercy. These are just a few. ■

## Paris Climate Talks: Future of Climate Change Good News... and Bad *by Sr. Dorothy Pagosa*

*"By comparison to what it could have been, it's a miracle. By comparison to what it should have been, it's a disaster.... The talks in Paris are the best there have ever been. And that is a terrible indictment."*

George Monbiot,  
[The Guardian](#),  
December 12, 2015

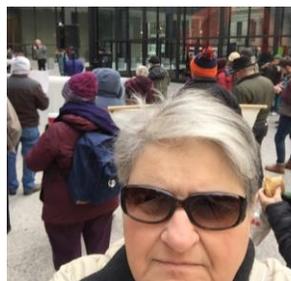
Over the last several months, as the world readied for the Conference of Parties in Paris, France, many environmental justice groups joined together to try to emphasize the need for dramatic reductions of greenhouse gases.

Throughout the world, there were massive

demonstrations to try to influence the parties to take the environment seriously.

Pope Francis wrote his encyclical "Laudato Si" in which he called attention to the disposable world we "think" we live in.

And, I had joined over 350 people in Chicago in late November to call for actions to reduce fossil fuel consumption.



### Good News

The good news out of Paris is that 173 countries came together to discuss global warming. Even the United States was involved this time. It is worth noting that the U.S. was not involved in previous climate change meetings in any meaningful way. That is remarkable and shows that a shift has been made that many, if not all, countries are understanding the need for reductions in greenhouse gases.

Environmental activists converged on the city of Paris. Activists were holding demonstrations and meetings all over the world. They continued to

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Sister Dorothy, along with Ivy and Ketya from 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center, standing in front of a pile of pet coke (residue from refining tar sands) on the south side of Chicago

protest in Paris despite the ban.

**T**here was also a display of shoes in the streets of Paris showing who would be protesting if they could.

One pair of shoes that had been placed there was from Pope Francis with the phrase “*Laudato Si*” written on a card along with his signature that had been inserted inside the shoes.

**A**nother piece of good news is that a number of countries, including the United States, have agreed to donate money towards a fund to help developing nations deal

with effects of climate change.

### **Bad News**

The bad news is that due to the attacks just several weeks before the conference, activists were denied the right to hold protests even though some defied the ban. Non-renewable promoters were still allowed to hold exhibits.

**W**hen all was said and done, the UN Paris Agreement even said straight out that the combined efforts of all countries present do not bring greenhouse gases beneath 2 degrees Celsius—the benchmark that gives a reasonable

chance to avoid the most devastating repercussions caused by climate change. Pablo Solon, former Bolivian climate negotiator, estimates the end result would increase the temperature from 2.7 to 3.9 Celsius.

### **In the Future**

The work is not yet complete. There will be a meeting held in November 2016, and more in years after that, to look at what is happening.

Environmental activists are pledging to keep up the pressure to have the agreement refined even more, so that we will enable the world to survive into the future. ■

## **Ministry to Immigrants – Unaccompanied Children**

by Sister Alexanne Osinski, SSJ-TOSF



**T**he 17-year-old smiling boy—trying to grow a man’s beard—called me “Bibi.”

I sat at a table in a home for unaccompanied immigrant minors (converted from a nursing home) on the south side of Chicago that housed almost 200 children. At that table were four other teenagers from Punjab in India. They were honoring me by calling me “Grandmother.”

And we were trying to follow directions, written in Spanish, for an origami project.

Since I retired from ministry as a home health

occupational therapist, I have been volunteering in several programs established by the Interfaith Coalition for Detained Immigrants. Chicago has 500 beds for unaccompanied children scattered across the city.

**T**hrough various agencies, lucky children eventually may find a family member somewhere in the US willing to take them in.

Some may wind up in foster care; some may age-out and, when 18 years old, may be sent to an adult detention center; some may be deported.

We volunteers do not probe into the circumstances which brought them (all alone) to that moment and that place.

**M**y first experience with the group was in a noisy dining room on Chicago’s north side. Sixty children sat at 10 tables, wondering about the small pile of autumn leaves, construction paper, and crayons in the center of their circle. They were told to “rub” the leaves on the paper, incorporate their name into the design, and reflect on “changes” in life

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## Ministry to Immigrants

as represented by the autumn leaves, with the hope of new growth in the spring.

There were 12 different countries represented (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, Nigeria, Somalia, India, Bangladesh, China, Cuba, Kenya, and Swaziland) and several different languages spoken in the room.

A couple of children were deaf and had formed their own sign language.

Most children came from climates that had no autumn or winter seasonal

changes. Ages ranged from 4 to 17.

No one stayed at the site for more than four months, some as little as a few days. All were taking English classes at the residence and were being tutored.

One day a 9-year-old asked me how old I was. I remember thinking, "I am more than 8 times your age, but I am still learning what it means to be sister, neighbor, friend." I realize I have taken American and Christian values for granted most of my life. And, like a "youngster," seeing for the first time. ■

### Editor's Note:

*Sister Alexanne also mentors Jesuit scholastics who are volunteering at a south side facility for unaccompanied children, volunteers at a house of hospitality for immigrants released from detention, and provides transportation and supplies to those immigrants released from detention who are reuniting with families or getting housing elsewhere.*



Children in Detention Center

"One day I was asked by the program director if I would be a mentor for Jesuit scholastics who were volunteering at a south side facility for unaccompanied children. These young men were there to learn to be ministers. Perhaps most significant thing they had learned from their experience thus far was the fact that there was only that brief, present moment that could be depended on to make a difference in someone's life.

One never knew from visit to visit whether a child would be gone. And they had to learn to work within a system with strict unquestioning rules that offered little possibility of ministering in ways that were familiar."

—Sister Alexanne

## Walk in our Shoes: Understanding the Latino Experience

Here's an invitation to help make our communities safe and welcoming for immigrants!

Participate in the "Walk in our Shoes" immigration simulation. Encourage your friends and colleagues to participate as well!

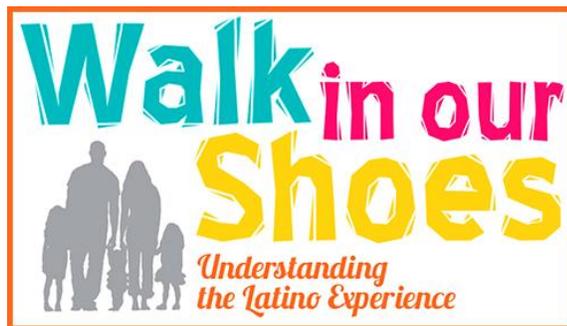
**Saturday, February 20, 2-5 pm**  
**School Sisters of Notre Dame**  
**Notre Dame of Elm Grove, WI**  
**Registration deadline: January 31, 2016**  
**Suggested contribution: \$10**

For more details and registration information go to <https://www.ssndcentralpacific.org/walk-in-our-shoes-2016>.

If there are enough registrations, a morning session will be added.

### Note:

**Walk in Our Shoes** is not about actually walking! It's about taking on the role of an immigrant to experience what it might be like to apply for a job, try to get medical care for a child, or figure out how to manage daily life in a language different from your own. The event takes place in a conference room. The objective is to sensitize participants to the realities faced by area immigrants. ■



Sponsored by the SSND North American  
Immigration Collaborative

**School Sisters of Notre Dame,  
Central Pacific Province**

## February 8: International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking



**St. Josephine Bakhita,** you were sold into slavery as a child and endured untold hardship and suffering..

Once liberated from your physical enslavement, you found true redemption in your encounter with Christ and his Church.

O St. Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery; Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released from their chains of captivity.

Those whom people enslave, let God set free.

Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and let them look to you as an example of hope and faith.

Help all survivors find healing from their wounds.

We ask for your prayers and intercessions for those enslaved among us.

*Amen*

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Union of Superiors General has designated February 8 as an annual day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking.

February 8 is the feast day of **St. Josephine Bakhita**, who was kidnapped as a child and sold into slavery in Sudan and Italy.

Once Josephine was freed, she became a

Canossian nun and dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering. She was declared a Saint in 2000.

On February 8, Catholics all over the world are encouraged to host or attend prayer services to create greater awareness about this phenomenon.

Through prayer, we not only reflect on the

experiences of those that have suffered through this affront to human dignity, but also comfort, strengthen, and help to empower survivors.

If **you** come across anyone who appears to be trafficked, contact the following hotline number:

**1-888-373-7888.**

DO NOT try to handle it on your own. ■

## Close Guantanamo...!!!

January 11, 2016 marked the 14th anniversary of the opening of the Bush Administration's "war on terror" prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

On his second day in office, President Obama pledged to close Guantánamo within a year. Yet it remains open, undermining America's values and national security.

Of the remaining 104 prisoners, 45 men in total were either cleared for release in January 2010 by an interagency Task Force established by President Obama, which was made up of the top intelligence and law enforcement officials in

the nation (35 in total) or by Periodic Review Boards established in 2013 (an additional 11 prisoners). Some of these men were previously cleared by the Bush Administration – some as long ago as 2004.

It is unacceptable that the U.S. government continues to hold men that its own national security experts have recommended for release or transfer, and that Congress has intervened to maintain this deplorable state of affairs.

**We call for the immediate closure of Guantánamo.**

Guantánamo harms our nation every day it stays open, and it continues to



serve as a potent symbol for terrorist recruitment. As President Obama explained in a speech in early 2009, *"Instead of serving as a tool to counter terrorism, Guantánamo became a symbol that helped al-Qaeda recruit terrorists to its cause. Indeed, the existence of Guantánamo likely created more terrorists around the world than it ever detained."* That remains true today.

Guantánamo also undermines our bedrock commitment to the rule of

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## Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology

*"We embrace our immigrant roots and identify with the struggle of all people to find a home in this world."*

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments  
26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter

## WE COMMIT OURSELVES

### **Close Guantanamo** (Continued from page 4)

law, making that fundamental principle less secure for all Americans.

**W**e call on the President to honor the principled and pragmatic commitment he made on taking office, and we insist that Congress stop

making Guantánamo—and the fate of the men imprisoned there—into a cynical game of political maneuvering.

- See more at:

<http://www.closeguantanamo.org/Our-Mission#sthash.2psgplwh.dpuf>

**S**ister Dorothy Pagosa participated in a demonstration in Chicago calling for the closure of Guantanamo.

Other demonstrations were held in Cleveland, Washington D.C., and cities throughout the United States. ■

## Celebrating the Jubilee Year of Mercy

### **Corporal Works of Mercy**

*Feed the hungry  
Give drink to the thirsty  
Clothe the naked  
Shelter the homeless  
Visit the sick  
Visit the imprisoned  
Bury the dead*

### **Spiritual Works of Mercy**

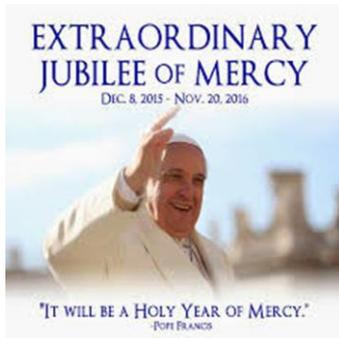
*Counsel the doubtful  
Instruct the ignorant  
Admonish sinners  
Comfort the afflicted  
Forgive offenses  
Bear wrongs patiently  
Pray for the living and the dead*

**"It is my burning desire** that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

It will be a way to awaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty.

And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy."

– **Pope Francis**,  
*Bull of Indiction of the  
Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*



**December 8, 2015  
to  
November 20, 2016**

### **REMEMBER...**

We welcome your submissions in the form of

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

**Please send these to Associate Maxine Smith** *by the end of January* for inclusion in the February 2016 issue of our newsletter, *We Commit Ourselves*.

~Your Social Justice Committee