



Special Interest Articles:

- Sr. Rose G.: This August Issue
- Questions to Consider: Presidential Candidates



Individual Highlights:

Child Prostitution in Wisconsin 1

Women and Children Seeking Asylum 2

Update: Water Crisis in Flint, MI 3

Civil Discourse: "Creating Just Language" 4

Sr. Donna Wilhelm, Sr. Dorothy Pagosa, Sr. Marjorie White, Maxine Smith, Sr. Rose Grabowski, Sr. Shannon Fox—Social Justice Committee

Our August Issue

by Sister Rose Grabowski

Our introductory paragraph to the Congregational Commitments from our 26th General Chapter begins with the words, "*Grounded in our Franciscan heritage to live simply and companion the oppressed...*"

In this August issue of our Social Justice newsletter we call your attention to a few areas where

oppression occurs, either in word or deed. These include:

- **Child Prostitution** here in Wisconsin, the state where our Mother-house is located;
- **Women and children** who are seeking asylum in the US;
- An update on the **water crisis** in Flint, MI;
- Using "**just language**" when engaging in civil discourse.

One area I especially call to your attention is the article on pp. 2-3, entitled "**Questions to Consider: Presidential Candidates.**"

Thank you in advance for giving serious consideration to issues that are so important when we select our next president.

I invite each of us to remain open when reading about, or listening to, the candidates. ■

Child Prostitution in Wisconsin

Carl Waterstreet, special agent with the Wis. Department of Justice, writes: "*The demand and the age of the prostitutes is getting younger by the day, and that's what is scary.*"

We think young girls are "used" in the big cities only.

However, Highway 41 from Milwaukee going into Oshkosh, Fond du Lac, Green Bay, and the Fox Valley fuels sex trafficking during big events such as festivals, EAA, (Experimental Aircraft Association), football games, and rock concerts.

Police Department detective Paul Frey shared: "*There's no shortage of escort ads during events like EAA. They're willing to come up from Milwaukee to Oshkosh and Appleton for a single meeting for \$100 to \$200, or whatever it takes.*"

The girls are drugged and do not even know to which city they are brought.

National Internet Crimes Against Children conferences have trained officers to take advantage of a tactic known as interdiction.

As with drunk-driving checkpoints, police pick a spot to check for suspicious behavior. They look for broken head- or tail-lights. They stop them and do investigative questioning, such as: "Why are these kids in here?" This has proven to be a successful technique.

Waterstreet stated: The ruthlessness of the pimps is another thing that's scary. And it's getting worse and worse." ■

(Quotes taken from an article in the *Post-Crescent Appleton paper*, written by Katherine Lynn and gathered by Sister Rose Grabowski)

Questions to Consider: Presidential Candidates

From a coalition of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good and several other national Catholic organizations come these questions to consider when reading about or listening to candidates for the up-coming elections.



"The gift of life is the first gift we have received. Sometimes we risk forgetting about this, as if we were the masters of our existence while instead we are radically dependent. In fact, it is a source of great joy to hear that at every age in life, in every situation, in every social condition, we are and remain sons and daughters."

Pope Francis (General Audience, June 18, 2015)

Consider:

- How does each candidate talk about preventing mass shootings and gun violence in our streets?
- What alternatives to abortion and euthanasia does each candidate discuss such as assistance and support to expectant mothers, in particular those who are low-income?

In this rich country of ours, it is a scandal that, instead of focusing on jobs and a living wage, too many in the political class

seem focused on budget cuts that will only further constrict economic growth and result in layoffs of those who provide vital services such as firefighters, emergency medical personnel, teachers, and childcare and elder workers.

Consider:

- How does each candidate respond to questions about the wealth gap in this country?
- What ideas does she or he have for addressing this?
- What is each candidate's position on health care reform?
- What is being proposed to ensure that all Americans have access to healthcare?

Jesus calls us to love not only our friends but also those who seriously sin and who might be enemies.

Consider:

- What is each candidate's approach

to conflicts in other parts of the world?

- Does she or he talk about lessons learned from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?
- How does each candidate talk about the role of diplomacy and peacebuilding in preventing conflicts?
- Does she or he promote investing in peace-making programs?

In Jesus, no one is excluded and no one is left behind.

Consider:

- Where does each candidate stand on a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants?
- On deportations?
- On detention of women and children in for-profit prisons?
- How does each candidate challenge anti-immigrant rhetoric?

Continued on pg. 3



Women and Children Seeking Asylum

The Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) is a broad network of community organizations and faith network as well as concerned individuals. Their work focuses especially on women and

children seeking asylum here in the United States, arriving in Texas.

You can connect with IWC for vital information through the Internet at www.texasiw.org.

At their website you will find more information on their **Backpack Project** (also, see last page of this newsletter for more info), **Bond Fund**, and efforts to keep Karnes Detention Facility open for families. ■

Questions to Consider... *continued from page 2*

Living simply, protecting creation, and addressing climate change is a response to God's ancient request that we be stewards of all that God has given and entrusted to us.

Consider:

- How does each candidate talk about climate change?
- Does he or she have any policies for addressing this issue?
- What does each candidate say about alternatives to fossil fuels, and jobs associated with them?

Faith teaches us how important it is to encounter the suffering of others. It is the fruit of invisible violence that plagues our communities every day. It is the violence that afflicts the poor and makes us indifferent to others' suffering.

Consider:

- What is each candidate's stance on mass incarceration and reform of a criminal justice system that disproportionately puts people of color in prison for long periods of time?
- What is each candidate's position on voter identification laws and other restrictions that suppress voting among people of color?

The United States' foundational commitment to religious liberty has, for more than two hundred years, helped unite Americans, not divide them. We oppose efforts to restrict religious liberty for all people of any religion, but we also oppose efforts to demean it by turning it into a partisan issue.

Consider:

- How is each candidate talking about our Muslim neighbors and refugees from the Middle East?
- What is each candidate saying about the freedom of conscience of individuals, religious institutions, and even private businesses? ■

COALITION OF NATIONAL CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS:

*Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Faith in Public Life: Catholic Program
Franciscan Action Network
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Pax Christi USA
Pax Christi International
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Extended
Justice Team*



Michigan's City of Flint Water Crisis Update

In 2014 the city officials of Flint, Michigan announced to the public that the water supply in the city contained levels of lead that far exceed safe standards. High levels of lead in the blood of children may result in learning problems, ADHD, and some physical difficulties.

The source of the tainted water people were

drinking, cooking, and bathing with was the Flint River. (City officials had previously stopped purchasing water from the Detroit Water Authority as a cost-cutting measure.)

The water in the Flint River was so contaminated that as it passed through the antiquated pipes, debris flowed into the drinking water carrying lead particles. This episode called attention to the need

for massive infrastructure updates in our country. It also places front and center the fact that clean, potable water is a human right.

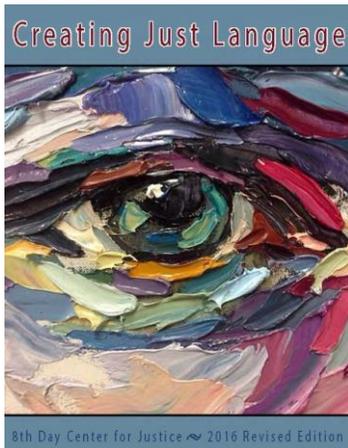
On Friday, July 29, 2016 Michigan Attorney General announced criminal charges against six state employees, alleging that they were instrumental in hiding and altering tests on Flint's water. The tests showed the water

Continued on pg. 4



Civil Discourse: “Creating Just Language”

By Sister Dorothy Pagosa



How many of us have winced as we have heard what has passed as political discourse during this election season?

While many of us understand that the world needs love and challenge, some of the hateful comments being put forward can be used to increase terror and our fear of each other.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious has begun a petition to call for civil discourse during this election season:

“We call for a return to civility in our discourse and decency in our political interaction that promotes the common good, reaches out to others, engages in constructive dialogue, and seeks together the way forward. We hope for political dialogue that reflects the principles and values upon which this nation was founded.”

LCWR July 2016

To sign on to the LCWR petition you can go to <http://tinyurl.com/htpeqdn>.

Back near the beginning of the founding of 8th Day Center for Justice, the staff recognized that words matter. How something is said influences how people view each other. The first edition was called “Cleaning Up Sexist Language.” If our language only includes he/him in our religious rituals and how we refer to leadership roles, it was thought (rightfully so) that women would be discounted and diminished.

Now many years later, 8th Day Center has revised this document and call it “Creating Just Language.”

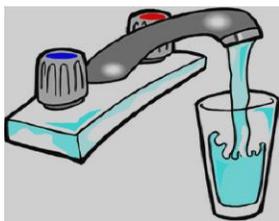
No longer do we just include sexist language (although that is still included). Now we include how language impacts

violence/nonviolence through the use of militaristic language.

- How do we speak about people with disabilities?
- How can we change racist language?
- Can we challenge heterosexist/homophobic language?
- Classism... ageism... faith discrimination... sizeism are all challenges to our use of language.

Words do matter. Words can build society up or tear it down. The book does not demand that you change everything immediately and chastise yourself if you slip. We all stumble, but we can learn.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the book, “Creating Just Language” please feel free to contact me at dpagosa@aol.com. ■



Flint Water Crisis Update... continued from page 3

being delivered to the citizens of Flint contained poisonous levels of lead, but citizens were consistently being told the water was safe to drink and use.

Charges had previously been brought against three state employees and the Attorney General states

that more people are being investigated.

The citizens of Flint continue to need donations of bottled water.

Their city needs financial assistance to change the outdated lead plumbing in the homes and buildings in the city. This is also a reminder

that the children of Flint will need medical and educational support for many years to come.

We are again reminded that clean water is a basic human right and we must continue to provide it to all people in our country and all countries of the world. ■

– Associate Maxine Smith



Items that may be of Interest...

Short Videos from Pope Francis

Each month during the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis has been issuing a brief, 1-2 minute video on various topics through the “Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network.”

This month, in August, his topic is “Sports, A Culture of Encounter”—so relevant with the Olympics being held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

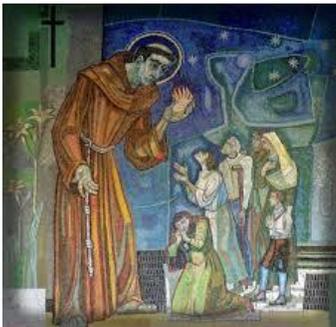
You can view this brief video by going to the website: www.thepopevideo.org.



Topics of previous months:

- **January:** Interreligious Dialogue
- **February:** Care for Creation
- **March:** For Children and Families in Difficulty
- **April:** Small Farmers
- **May:** Respect for Women
- **June:** Solidarity in Cities
- **July:** Indigenous Peoples

Once on the website these earlier ones can be accessed by clicking on “Videos” at the top of the screen. ■



“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.”

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments
26th General Chapter

Backpacks: Donations

Sponsor a Refugee Backpack

Volunteers at the Mennonite House in Texas welcome women and children 24 hours a day on their journey to unite with their sponsor family in the U.S.

There is a daily need for specific items to fill the backpacks for the journeys of these refugees. A typical backpack can be prepared with a



donation of \$25, providing such items as drinks, snacks, blankets, toys, toiletries.

Sponsor a refugee backpack at:

<http://bitly.com/refugeepack>. ■

REMEMBER...

We welcome your submissions in the form of

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

Note: The **next issue** of *We Commit Ourselves* will be published in **October**.

Please send any items for inclusion in this next issue to **Sister Dorothy Pagosa** by **September 22nd**, the first day of autumn.

~ Your Social Justice Committee