

June 2017

Volume 3, Issue 3

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

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



Special Interest Articles:

- Focus of our June issue: Two Congregational Commitments
- A Prayer for Migrants and Refugees



"Each day war forces thousands of families to flee their homes. People like you, people like me."

**World Refugee Day:
June 20, 2017**

Individual Highlights:

UN World Refugee Day 1

EWG: Environmental Working Group 2

Upcoming Film 2

Recommending: Book and Film 3

Symposium: New Ways Ministry 4

Pre-symposium Retreat with Sr. Simone Campbell 5

Sr. Cecilia Marie Morton, Sr. Donna Wilhelm, Sr. Dorothy Pagosa, Jennifer Dillon, Sr. Marjorie White, Maxine Smith, Sr. Rose Grabowski, Sr. Shannon Fox
—Social Justice Committee

Our June Issue *by Sister Donna Wilhelm*

The genesis of this newsletter, several years ago, was the **Congregational Commitments** promulgated by our 26th General Chapter in 2013.

If we recall the title headings of those commitments it is easy to see that they are very congruent with our preparation for the 27th General Chapter in which we are now engaged.

At the 26th General Chapter we said:

"Grounded in our Franciscan heritage to live simply and companion the oppressed, we Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis commit ourselves to refounding our congrega-

tion. Based on values of gospel living and framed within the Universe Story, we claim the following statements as integral components."

I would suggest that each area of commitment:

- ✧ **Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology,**
- ✧ **Membership,**
- ✧ **Formation,**
- ✧ **Social Justice,**
- ✧ **Finance,** and
- ✧ **Care for the Elderly**

comes from the depths of our striving to live simply, justly, humbly as women and men of prayer while constantly discerning our response to the many and varied issues pressing us to action in our world today.

This particular newsletter will focus on two of our commitments:

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

We hope that the offerings in this newsletter will provide food for thought, exploration, and conversation. ■

United Nations World Refugee Day: June 20, 2017

Each day war forces thousands of families to flee their homes.

To escape the violence, they leave everything behind – everything except their hopes and dreams for a safer future.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, believes that all refugees deserve to live in safety.

The **#WithRefugees** Campaign petition was launched in 2016 as a platform for the public to express solidarity with people forced to flee and encourage governments to take action.

The petition asks governments to:

- Ensure every refugee child gets an education.

- Ensure every refugee family has somewhere safe to live.
- Ensure every refugee can work or learn new skills to make a positive contribution to their community.

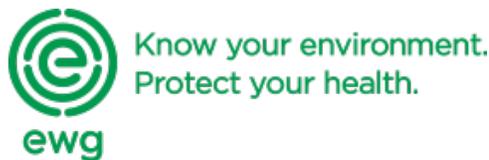
Note: For more information watch the upcoming *Communiqués* and go to <http://www.un.org/en/events/refugeeday> ■

Environment and Health (Environmental Working Group)



AgMag
[Feeding your mind,
saving the planet](#)

You'll need to go online to enjoy the full benefit of this organization. The address is www.ewg.org. They even offer an app that you can carry with you to check the risk and benefit of food and all sorts of other things.



EWG's Food Scores
[EWG rates 80,000+ products](#)

ABOUT US

The Environmental Working Group's mission is to empower people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment. With breakthrough research and education, we drive consumer choice and civic action.

We are a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting human health and the environment.



EWG's Consumer Guide to Seafood
[Find healthy seafood picks](#)

Find EWG on the web at www.ewg.org. ■

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

SSJ-TOSF Congregational
Commitments
26th General Chapter

For Your Consideration



Remember the film, "An Inconvenient Truth" by Al Gore?

A decade after "An Inconvenient Truth" brought climate change into the heart of popular culture comes the follow-up that shows just how close we are to a real energy revolution.

You can watch the trailer for Al Gore's newest film, **An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power** by clicking on the following link:

<http://imdb.to/2nO1L3>

Or, you can go to YouTube and view from a selection of brief trailers.

In Theatres July 28, 2017

A Book Worth Reading

Sister Maria Kurrie writes:

"I came across the following in a book I'd been reading... Thought maybe it could touch our hearts on the issue of the racism that remains in our hearts..."

This is from the book, Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America by Michael Eric Dyson."

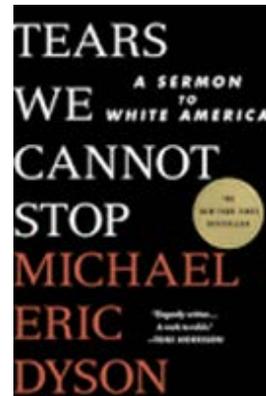
"Not knowing black folk intimately exacerbates the distance between the white self and the black other. One solution is new black friends. It is distressing that so few of you have more than a token black friend, maybe two. Every open-minded white person should set out immediately to find and make friends with black folk who share their interests. It is not as hard as it seems. Black folk come in every variety of belief, ideology, and politics, just as any other American does, and the vast majority of us are morally upright.

"The fact that you do not know real, ordinary, splendid black folk is astonishing. The more black folk you know, the less

likely you are to stereotype us. The less you stereotype us, the less likely you are to fear us. The less you fear us, the less likely you are to want to hurt us, or to accept our hurt as the price of your safekeeping. The safer you feel, the safer we'll be.

"Beloved, hopefully your new friends will make it easier for you to speak up against the injustice that black folk face. Martin Luther King, Jr., said that we would have to repent not only for the 'evil words and deeds of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.' We need to hear your voices ring out against our suffering loud and clear."

—Michael Eric Dyson
pp.206-7 ■



"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."

SSJ-TOSF Congregational
Commitments
26th General Chapter

A Film Worth Seeing:

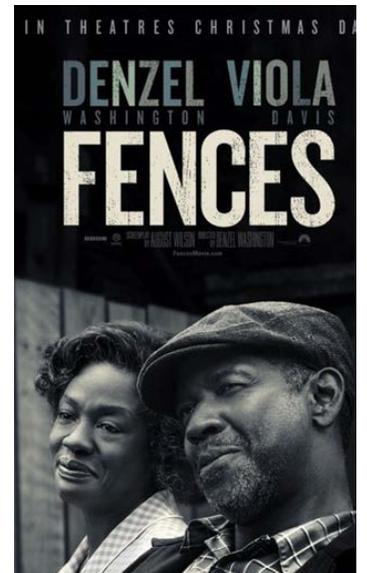
August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "Fences"

29 years after its Broadway premiere, "Fences" arrives in theaters courtesy of a screenplay by the late playwright himself. With two Pulitzer Prizes and his

ten-play magnum opus, "The Pittsburgh Cycle," (of which "Fences" is the sixth work), Wilson takes his rightful place alongside Eugene O'Neill, Edward Albee and Tennessee Williams as one of the

greatest American playwrights. The focus of Wilson's cycle is African-American life across the entire 20th century, with each play taking place in a particular decade. ■

Ebert review



Did you know?

For more than a billion Muslims around the world, Ramadan is a "month of blessing" marked by prayer, fasting, and charity.

Ramadan began May 27, 2017 and ends June 25, 2017.

For more info, click on <http://bit.ly/2sknshN>



April 28-30, 2017

Hilton Rosemont Chicago O'Hare Hotel ♦ Chicago, Illinois

By Donna Wilhelm, *ssj-tosf*

New Ways Ministry (a ministry with and for LGBT Catholics) hosted its 8th National Symposium April 28-30, 2017 in Chicago. We were represented there by sisters Donna Wilhelm and Dorothy Pagosa. Our congregation received one free registration by being an "Endorsing Organization." **

Plenary sessions were preceded by the scripture reflections of Bishop John Stowe, OFM, Conv.

The bishop's reflection on Matthew's telling of the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Matt 18: 12-14, emphasized the value of each human being. He said, "Morality is about the well-being of the human person, not specific prescriptions of the Law."

He went on to quote Jesus' dictum, "I desire mercy not sacrifice." Bishop Stowe, in his final reflection, re-minded those gathered that the process of discerning God's will is always messy. And he reiterated the now-famous response of Pope Francis to a question about LGBT

people, "Who am I to judge?"

The conference included plenary sessions with the following topics:

- **"Pope Francis, Social Ethics, and LGBT People"** (Rev. Bryan Massingale, professor of Theology at Fordham University)
- **"Sexual Ethics and Same-Sex Marriage"** (Assistant Professor Lisa Fullam, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley)
- **"Religious Liberty, Employment, and LGBT Issues"** (Leslie C. Griffin, William S. Boyd Professor of Law at UNLV)

Each presentation will be available on our website for viewing by associates, sisters, and others who may be interested.

Audio presentations of each day's breakout sessions included:

- **Challenges of LGBT Church Workers**
- **Lesbian Nuns: Gift to the Church**
- **Transgender and Intersex Identities and the Family**

I was particularly struck

by Fr. Massingale's presentation when he described the Church as having an "Open Closet" at its heart. "Our current theology," he said, "involves an emphasis on 'behaviors,' public toleration, and condemnation." The fear is that "if we talk openly about LGBT persons in the Church, that open conversation will contribute to public visibility and contribute to greater social acceptability.

He continued, "Where there is no discussion of homosexuality and where there is an "open closet" there is no public recognition and often there is the denial of human rights.

Have I piqued your interest? Consider viewing/ listening to the talks. They will be available on the Congregational website soon. ■

**** (Symposium endorsement is a statement of the need to provide a public forum where contemporary views about sexual orientation and gender identity can be responsibly expressed and reasonably discussed. It does not imply that the speakers' views are necessarily those of the endorser.)**

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

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments
26th General Chapter

Symposium Retreat

The Symposium was preceded by a day-long retreat led by Sister Simone Campbell, SSS.

The retreat focused on the question: "What spiritual gifts and practices do we need as we work for a

church that lives the qualities of justice and mercy in regard to LGBT issues?" ■

See page 5

Radical Acceptance

Pre-symposium Retreat with Sister Simone Campbell

By Sister Dorothy Pagosa

The day before the New Ways Ministry Symposium, I was delighted to be a part of a retreat day given by Sr. Simone Campbell.

Sr. Simone spoke of the necessity of being open to dialogue with other people who might have opinions different than ours.

She spoke of the challenge she had in trying to have a conversation with U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan about his proposed budget that would have cut so many programs essential to the wellbeing of children and those who are impoverished.

It was hard for her to get an appointment with him. She spoke with his aides and finally was able to speak *very briefly* with him. Obviously they did not come out of the meeting with changed opinions.

Later Sr. Simone spoke at a congressional committee. One of the representatives challenged Sr. Simone and tried to criticize her for even coming.

Guess who came to the rescue. Speaker Ryan spoke of the respect he had for Sr. Simone even though they disagreed.

We broke into small groups to answer the following questions:

- Who in your family is it difficult to speak with about politics?
- What worries you about this election cycle?
- What gives you hope for our nation?

The last question was probably the hardest for us to answer, but we did see hope.

Sr. Simone reminded us that hope is a communal virtue.

Community, she said,

is essential during these times.

We need to fight (not physically) for a vision. We need to have 'Holy Curiosity' to find out what is behind some of the issues we are dealing with.

It is fear that divides. Don't be afraid to listen.

Sr. Simone shared this poem from the book "Evicted" by Matt Desmond:

"Time is greater than space.
Unity prevails over conflict.
Realities are more important than ideas.
Whole is greater than the part."

We ended the day with the challenge:

"Do your part and claim it with confidence." ■



A suggestion from Sister Rose Grabowski:

Our book club in Stevens Point has just finished reading ***Born Bad Original Sin and the Making of the Western World*** by James Boyce.

"This highly original readable book shows how the Christian idea that we are all somehow fundamentally warped has helped to shape democratic politics, free markets, sexual anxieties and even debates about whether dead babies go to heaven," says Marion Maddox, an Australian author, academic and political commentator and a regular commentator on issues of religion and politics in the Australian media. This book is highly recommended by several other authors.

Sr. Rose notes, however, "I personally preferred ***Original Blessing*** by Matthew Fox."



Please remember June 20, 2017 World Refugee Day



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

SSJ-TOSF Congregational
Commitments
26th General Chapter

A Prayer for Migrants and Refugees

Good and gracious God, we thank you for the gift of families. We are grateful for all of the joy and love that they bring into our lives, and we ask that you provide special protection for all families, particularly those who face hardships as they move in search of a better life.

Show mercy to those who travel in danger, and lead them to a place of safety and peace.

Comfort those who are alone and afraid because their families have been torn apart by violence and injustice.

As we reflect upon the difficult journey that the Holy Family faced as refugees in Egypt, help us to remember the suffering of all migrant families.

Through the intercession of Mary our Mother, and St. Joseph the Worker, her husband, we pray that all migrants may be reunited with their loved ones and find the meaningful work they seek.

Open our hearts so that we may provide hospitality for all who come in search of refuge. Give us the courage to welcome every stranger as Christ in our midst.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

Amen (USCCB)

The Social Justice Office will send more reflections closer to the date so that your local community can share prayer or get involved in actions coming to your area.

REMEMBER...

We welcome your submissions in the form of

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

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

Please send any items for inclusion in this next issue to **Sister Rose Grabowski** by Friday, **July 21st**.

~ Your Social Justice Committee