WE COMMIT OURSELVES:
A social justice newsletter of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order St. Francis

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April: Celebrating EARTH DAY

There is much to reflect on in this April issue of our Social Justice Newsletter. Since April 22nd is Earth Day, we begin by focusing on that special event.

At our 26th General Chapter in 2013 we approved Congregational Commitments where we committed ourselves to specific important actions. This month we focus on the commitment dealing with Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology where we said:

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

Enclosed you will also find information on upcoming events related to the area of social justice, as well as reports on recent events, such as the one on the World Day of Prayer held at St. Joseph Motherhouse in March, the Good Friday Walk by 8th Day Center, and Sister Barb Knauf’s recent apostolic experiences in Chicago.

On a personal note, I am currently a 38-year old special education teacher at Clare Woods Academy and a member of the Social Justice Committee. I grew up in Cleveland,

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Earth Day Then and Now

While it’s true the fire that swept across the Cuyahoga River on June 22, 1969, is regarded as a major catalyst of the environmental movement, it hardly came as a surprise to Cleveland residents. It wasn’t the first fire, it was the ninth.

The infamous image of the burning, oil-topped Cuyahoga River that made it into Time magazine and ignited a nation is actually of a fire from the 1950’s. But no matter the date, the message remained: the Cuyahoga, as well as other industrialized rivers, was dying.

Thanks to Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, 20 million Americans gathered on April 22, 1970, to speak out about their environmental woes.

Earth Day gave voice to the people – a voice that called both neighbors and lawmakers to action.

In the following decade, a slew of environmental regulations and laws went into effect. Some of the most notable include the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act, and Toxic Substances Control Act.

And since the development of Earth ‘Day’, the celebration has grown to Earth ‘Week’ and even to Earth ‘Month’.

From Ohio Environmental Council’s Website

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Ohio and hold a master’s degree in special education from Indiana University.

Ever since I was in high school I have been interested in social justice issues, especially in women’s rights and in disability rights.

On page 5 I’ve included an article (with photos) sharing my experience of participating in a performance related to Equality that was held at the Athenaeum Theater in Chicago.

My hope is that, as you read this April issue, you will find the contents of our congregation’s Social Justice Newsletter, “We Commit Ourselves,” helpful in your own living and in your prayer as we, women and men Franciscans, live a life dedicated to equality, justice and peace.

Earth Day: The History of a Movement

Excerpts from Earth Day Network Website

Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city slickers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders.

The first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts. "It was a gamble," Senator Gaylord Nelson recalled, "but it worked."

As 1990 approached, a group of environmental leaders organized another big campaign. This time, Earth Day went global, mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries and lifting environmental issues onto the world stage. Earth Day 1990 gave a huge boost to recycling efforts worldwide and helped pave the way for the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It also prompted President Bill Clinton to award Senator Nelson the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1995) —the highest honor given to civilians in the United States—for his role as Earth Day founder.

The fight for a clean environment continues in a climate of increasing urgency, as the ravages of climate change become more manifest every day.

We invite you to be a part of Earth Day and help write many more victories and successes into our history.

Frequently asked questions:

Q: What can I do for Earth Day?

A: The possibilities for getting involved are endless! Volunteer. Go to a festival. Install solar panels on your roof. Organize an event in your community. Change a habit. Help launch a community garden. Communicate your priorities to your elected representatives. Do something nice for the Earth, have fun, meet new people, and make a difference. But you needn’t wait for April 22! Earth Day is Every Day. To build a better future, we all must commit to protect our environment year-round.
My name is Barb Knauf and as a second year novice one of my apostolic experiences I had was in March in Chicago. I had the opportunity to be with Dorothy Pagosa at the 8th Day Center for Justice. Living my whole life in central Wisconsin, this experience was an eye opening one. I not only learned more about myself and social justice but the many things going on around me that have stirred feelings in me that I did not know were there.

There were three main things from this time that made an impression on me.

One was the Reparation for the Chicago Police Torture Survivors. This ordinance was to be voted on by the Finance Committee, so I joined in the support at City Hall. The committee ended up not voting on this but did set up a date for a hearing, which is a step in the right direction. The survivors will be able to testify to the torture that occurred from 1972 through 1991 on African American men and women under the former Chicago police commander, Jon Burge.

Another issue was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which they are trying to figure out if there should be a one state or two. When I watched the film "Roadmap to Apartheid," I realized how different things can be than what is being reported on the news.

The third issue I found out about was when I attended a meeting of the Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants. The advocacy committee brought to our attention the two bills, H.R. 1149 – the Protection of Children Act, and H.R. 1153 – the Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act, that were at the House Judiciary Committee. These are not favorable bills for immigrants, especially the children. When I watched the film "Patriot Act," seeing the fear in people’s eyes at the possibility of prison or being deported had me asking myself, "What can I do to be more aware and active when it comes to social justice?" What about you?

8th Day Center Presented Good Friday Walk for Justice

This year’s theme "Give Light and People Will Find the Way" was the inspired title of Ella Baker’s workshop during the Civil Rights Movement at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee.

We (at 8th Day Center) believe, as did Ella Baker, "we will find the way" to make the spirit of the resurrection of true peace with justice happen through our collective efforts.

Every Good Friday, 8th Day gathers friends and partners for our Annual Good Friday Walk for Justice.

The Walk is a modern-day way-of-the-cross. Starting at the corner of Congress and Michigan we walk, pray, and sing our way through 10 Stations in downtown Chicago.

We explore the issues of the day that remind us to "give light."

This year’s Walk was held on Friday, April 3, 2015.
The World Day of Prayer USA Committee had worked with the women of the Bahamas in order to have this year's prayer service. They chose to consider Jesus' words to the disciples after washing their feet: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" The women of the Bahamas describe what Jesus does when he washes the disciples' feet as "radical love."

To them, radical love comes from humility, compassion and commitment, but not servility. It can't be confused with ways and systems that produce racism, classism, sexism, abuse or fear. God's radical love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in.

This service engaged our community in considering how it might become a beacon of God's radical love. The service was attended by 88+ persons, women and men.

The committee of Stevens Point women is a group of dedicated women who have been together for over a decade planning and organizing these ecumenical services. They were wonderful to work with these past weeks and helped to make the day a success. Their homemade bakery goods were delicious after the service and during fellowship time.

It was a privilege to coordinate this day.

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Upcoming Social Justice Events

Below is info on upcoming Social Justice Events we have received:

- **Saturday May 9, 2015**
  - "Let My People Go" Detention—A Matter of Conscience to be held in Arlington Heights, IL
  - (See Registration Form on page 6 of newsletter)

- A weekly “Action Alert Digest” is available from the Franciscan Peace Center. It consists of current news items and opportunities for taking action on social justice issues such as active nonviolence and peacemaking, human trafficking, immigration reform, the death penalty, environmental concerns, and poverty.

  You can sign up to receive this “Action Alert Digest” via e-mail by clicking on the following link:

Sister Shannon Shares Recent Experience

This past November, I had the great fortune to be cast in a show called “Six Stories Up in Equality” done by Telling Tales Theater and directed by Tekki Lomnicki.

It was performed November 7-16, 2014 at the Athenaeum Theater in Chicago.

The program paired adult actors of various backgrounds and disabilities with a diverse group of middle school students with and without disabilities.

The six pairs wrote vignettes that dealt with themes such as religious equality, racial equality, disability rights and gender equality.

These vignettes were woven together to form the hour and a half-long show.

I personally learned so much from working with my scene partner on our vignette about religious equality. We had an opportunity to share faith (she was Jewish), and bounce ideas off each other for our scene.

I think my biggest learning was just from watching such a diverse cast and crew come together to create the show, and accept each other’s differences and different abilities without hesitation or question.

By opening night, we had become kind of a little family. It was one of the best theater experiences of my life.

The feedback I got from audience members was that the show inspired them to work for equality across a lot of areas as well.

Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology

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

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments
26th General Chapter

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 Associate Maxine Smith by the end of April for inclusion in the May issue of our newsletter, We Commit Ourselves.

~Your Social Justice Committee
“LET MY PEOPLE GO” Detention – A Matter of Conscience

★ Saturday, May 9, 2015
St. James Parish Center/School at 820 N. Arlington Heights Road in Arlington Heights, Ill.
★ 8:15 - 8:45 a.m. Registration ★ 8:50 a.m. Welcome, Opening Prayer
★ 12:45 p.m. Closing
★ 9:00 a.m. Keynote Speaker: Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas, Bishop of Tucson, Ariz.

★ Workshops:
   Gwen Farry, BVM & Greg McPhee, MM, 8th Day Center for Justice

B. Living in the ICE Age: Legal Aspects of Detention
   Bernadine Karge, OP, Attorney at Law, Chicago Legal Clinic

C. Understanding Detention Through the Eyes of the Corrections Officer
   Patrick Firman, Former McHenry County Deputy Chief of Corrections

D. Unaccompanied and Alone: Children in the Immigration System
   Marisa Chumil, LCSW, and Jahja Wu, Attorney at Law, The Young Center

★ Panel: Immigrants’ Stories

--- REGISTRATION FORM ---

Name: ____________________________ Amount enclosed: _______________________

Phone: (_____) __________ E-mail: ____________________________

Parish / Congregation / School / etc. _______________________________________

Workshop selection (circle two): A  B  C  D

Registration Deadline: Wednesday, April 26, 2015

Cost: $25 per person with pre-registration; $20 per person in group of 10 with pre-registration; $30 at the door
FREE for students with ID - Pre-Register and show ID at the door

Please make checks payable to: SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF IMMIGRANTS
Mail this form, with payment to: Dorothy Pagosa, SSJ TOSF
8th Day Center
205 W. Monroe #500
Chicago IL 60606

To reserve a display table or for questions: Call Dorothy Pagosa, SSJ TOSF, at (312) 641-5151 Ext. 113