April 2016
Volume 2, Issue 4

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

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

Special Interest Articles:
• Sr. Marge White: This April Issue
• Climate Change
• Our Food Supply
• A Prayer for Our Earth (Pope Francis)

Individual Highlights:
FAN “Ecumenical Advocacy Days” 1
What are GMOs? 2
Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network 3
Sustainable Development Goals 4

Earth Day by Sister Marjorie White

On April 22nd we will celebrate Earth Day.
Guided both by our Franciscan values to care for creation and the words of Pope Francis in his recent encyclical, Laudato Si’, I have taken an “earth” focus for this issue of our newsletter, We Commit Ourselves.

My hope is that the articles and resources you will find on the following pages will be helpful for you.

Join FAN at Ecumenical Advocacy Days in April

As we focus on the care of our earth, we are aware that in this election year lives, votes, and the global economy are at stake.

As followers of the gospel we ask, “Who has a voice?” The response is, “Everyone!” This year’s theme for Ecumenical Advocacy Days is “Lift Every Voice!”

But in our neighborhoods, cities, and around the world, the voices of too many people are silenced.

In this country, communities of color are under siege: named and unnamed black people are killed each year by police; immigrants are detained and scapegoated; and public displays of discontent and calls for solidarity have too often been met with disregard, suppression or violence.

Around the world, decisions that affect the well-being of lives and the entire global economy—ones based on continued growth despite the limits to earth’s natural resources and capacity to absorb such growth—are often made in closed boardrooms and in great secrecy.

But as Christians, we believe that leaders and policy makers are called to act and to govern in fairness and with justice for all!

Like the persistent widow who demands that the judge hear her plea (Luke 18:1-8), at Ecumenical Advocacy Days, 2016, we will bring our petitions for justice to Capitol Hill. Like the persistent widow, we will not be silenced.

FAN will be presenting two workshops at this year’s weekend: one on Christian-Muslim relations and one on Money in Politics.

Be sure to register to attend EAD (Ecumenical Advocacy Days) April 15-18, 2016.

If you are unable to attend, please connect with the Franciscan Action Network website for updates at: https://franciscanaction.org
What are GMOs...?

What are Genetically Modified Organisms?
A lot has been said about genetically modified organisms, known as GMOs. But what are they, exactly?
GMOs are living organisms whose genetic material has been artificially manipulated in a laboratory through genetic engineering, or GE. This relatively new science creates unstable combinations of plant, animal, bacterial and viral genes that do not occur in nature or through traditional crossbreeding methods.

What are the supposed benefits of GMOs?
Virtually all commercial GMOs are engineered to withstand direct application of herbicide and/or to produce an insecticide.
Despite biotech industry promises, none of the GMO traits currently on the market offer increased yield, drought tolerance, enhanced nutrition, or any other consumer benefit.

What are the impacts of GMOs on the environment?
Over 80% of all GMOs grown worldwide are engineered for herbicide tolerance. As a result, use of toxic herbicides like Roundup has increased 15 times since GMOs were introduced. GMO crops are also responsible for the emergence of “super weeds” and “super bugs” which can only be killed with ever more toxic poisons like 2,4-D (a major ingredient in Agent Orange).
GMOs are a direct extension of chemical agriculture, and are developed and sold by the world’s biggest chemical companies. The long-term impacts of GMOs are unknown, and once released into the environment these novel organisms cannot be recalled.

How do GMOs affect farmers?
Because GMOs are novel life forms, biotechnology companies have been able to obtain patents with which to restrict their use. In effect, these large companies now “own” the seeds.
As a result, the companies that make GMOs now have the power to sue farmers whose fields are inadvertently contaminated with GMOs, even when it is the result of inevitable drift from neighboring fields. GMOs therefore pose a serious threat to farmer sovereignty and to the national food security of

Continued on pg. 3

Climate Change

After the Paris Conference we might want to raise our personal consciousness of climate change.
For example, did you know that agriculture is among the greatest contributors to climate change? It emits more greenhouse gases than all cars, trucks, trains, and airplanes combined—largely from methane gas released by cattle, rice farms, nitrogen from fertilized fields, and carbon dioxide from cutting forests.
In light of this, it would be important to examine our use of beef and foods/products that require the destruction of tropical forests.
(Suggestion: Read the ingredient labels on food to see how many packaged/processed foods contain palm oil.)
For more information visit: https://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/
Our Food Supply

Every time we sit down to eat we know the food has been harvested by farm workers who are not always treated justly. An integral component of caring for the earth is also caring for those who harvest the food.

The struggle for just wages, a safe working environment, and decent housing began in the late ‘50’s and culminated in the formation of the United Farm Workers led by Cesar Chavez.

Some remember and participated in the lettuce and grape boycotts in the ‘70’s.

Through nonviolent tactics such as boycotts, pickets, and strikes, the UFW brought the struggles of farm workers out of the fields and into cities and towns across the country.

This movement of farm workers organizing for better pay and safer working conditions has continued to grow since 1962.

Currently, the UFW organizes in major agricultural industries nationwide and continues to win contracts for worker protections.

Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network

Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network, a national organization founded in 1986, is dedicated to pastoral ministry and leadership development with migrant farmworkers and rural immigrants in the U.S.

Since 1996 CMFN has provided faith formation and leadership development through Pastoral Courses and other workshops.

The themes of these weekend programs include spirituality and leadership development.

CMFN also coordinates Episcopai Visits to different states throughout the country as well as immersion experiences for college students and other interested groups.

- For a greater understanding of the United Farmworkers and their work today visit www.ufw.org
- For more information on the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network visit www.cmfwn.org

Continued from page 2...

What are GMOs... ?

Where does the Non-GMO Project come in?
The Non-GMO Project is a non-profit organization with a mission of protecting the non-GMO food supply and giving consumers an informed choice. They offer North America’s ONLY third party verification for products produced according to rigorous best practices for GMO avoidance (for more info, click here).

Their strategy is to empower consumers to make change through the marketplace.

If people stop buying GMOs, companies will stop using them and farmers will stop growing them.
On September 25, 2015 countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda.

Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years.

For the goals to be reached, everyone needs to do their part: governments, the private sector, civil society and people like you.

Do you want to get involved?
- You can start by telling everyone about the goals.
- They’ve also put together a list of actions that you can take in your everyday life to contribute to a sustainable future.

For more information visit and/or click on the above link “list of actions.”

You can view their website by going to http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

A Prayer for Our Earth

Pope Francis ended his Encyclical, Laudato Si’, with two prayers, reminding us all of our relationship to Creation and the Creator. Below is one of those prayers.

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.

Amen.

REMEMBER...

We welcome your submissions in the form of
- “Sightings”
- Brief write-ups of your activities, “prototypes,” suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources.

You can send items to any member of the Social Justice Committee for inclusion in the next issue of our newsletter, We Commit Ourselves.

~Your Social Justice Committee