



HERMANAS DE LA CARIDAD  SISTERS OF CHARITY OF  
DE VERBO ENCARNADO THE INCARNATE WORD

October 2017

**Seeds** | By: Katty Huanuco, CCVI and Jennifer Reyes Lay |

The realities of our world today present us with more needs than we can possibly respond to. However, we trust that each person, doing what they can for justice, peace, and the care of our creation, will make a difference.

All life is connected, and what we do for one, impacts the whole. We have seen this over the past two months as natural disasters left devastation in their wake and communities came together to do all they could to help their neighbors. We reflected on this over the past month during the Season of Creation. We learned about this through our work to end human trafficking across borders throughout the Americas and Caribbean. And we encourage you to continue living out this spirit of solidarity and interconnectedness in advocacy for our immigrant and refugee brothers and sisters, and those currently awaiting execution on death row.

This edition of Seeds shares stories of events from the past couple of months, as well as ideas and actions for prayer and advocacy. We hope that at least one of the articles sparks in you a desire to take action and make a difference, because each person doing their part can help change the world!

We thank you for all that you already do, and invite you as always to contact the JPIC Office with any comments, suggestions, or questions you may have. We are here to serve.

## Human Trafficking

### Report from the Continental Seminar Against Human Trafficking in Bogota, Colombia:

Over 100 people – women and men, religious and lay – from 20 countries throughout the Americas and Caribbean gathered in Bogota, Colombia August 18-20, 2017 for an international seminar on human trafficking sponsored by CLAR (the Latin American Conference for Religious). The various networks of women religious working against human trafficking in these countries were present including USCatholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, Red RAMA, Red KAWSAY, RAHAMIM, UnGrito Pela Vida, and TAMAR.

The theme for the seminar, “salgamos a prisa al encuentro de la vida” (let us go out with haste to encounter life), came from the scripture passage of the Visitation: Mary going out and encountering Elizabeth. On the opening morning we reflected on where there is an urgent need for us to quickly go out and respond, and who do we encounter? Responses included feeling a call to the margins, to go to the borders and respond to migrants and the most vulnerable, women and children, to go beyond our own congregations and reach out to more laity and other faith groups,

and also to go back to our own congregations to educate, encourage, and inspire them to join us in this important work to end human trafficking.

The three day seminar was broken down into the see-judge-act paradigm, focusing on one each day. The first day included an educational presentation about human trafficking in general by Dr. Norma Castillo, and included sharing the current reality of trafficking within the various countries represented. Then there was a presentation focused specifically on migration and its connection to human trafficking. Participants learned about how forced migration due to a number of different factors including poverty, political repression or instability, and violence create vulnerable populations for human trafficking. The work to end human trafficking is intricately connected to the work for immigration reform and just international economic policies. In groups we reflected on Pope Francis' call to gather, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and refugees in our communities. How are we already doing this and how/where can we do better?

Towards the end of the first day we heard a powerful testimony from a survivor of human trafficking who was a former professional soccer player. This was eye opening as the professional sports world isn't often thought about as being complicit in networks of human trafficking, but the lure of being able to go to a different country and play professional soccer actually traps a number of people every year into situations of trafficking, particularly as exploited labor. He shared about the difficulty of victims to receive justice because of the heavy burden on them to prove they were exploited. This leads into a vicious cycle of victim blaming and re-traumatization, and in many cases even violent threats from those who the charges are brought against. Unfortunately his traffickers were never prosecuted, but this young man is now an active advocate, raising awareness so other young boys and men don't fall victim to this same trap like he did.

Image may contain: 6 people, people smiling, people standing and indoor  
Group leaders report back on discussions from small groups

Day two included a focus on children as well as some deeper theological reflection on the themes covered and general work to end human trafficking. The presentation on children and human trafficking was given by Dr. Nelson Rivera from the organization Renacer (Reborn), which is a partner with ECPAT, working to end child sex and labor trafficking. He shared how trying to document child victims of trafficking is very difficult and there are different understandings as to what constitutes trafficking or exploitation of children, especially in the area of labor. Small groups reflected on what child sex and labor trafficking looks like in each country and what are the challenges in addressing this crime against children. Many countries throughout Latin America shared that both the culture and the complicity of police and government officials make it very difficult to denounce human trafficking, prevent it, and penalize those responsible.

Fr. Guillermo Campuzano led the theological reflection, and for many participants it was one of the highlights of the seminar. He beautifully wove together the themes of human trafficking, migration, and child exploitation with theological reflections inspired by biblical passages and the words of Pope Francis. Bringing in the themes of this urgent call out into the world, he said that it is through the cries of the victims of human trafficking that God has been and continues to call us. The direction we need to go is toward those cries. While there are many different charisms throughout the various religious orders, all charisms connect to this work to end human trafficking because human trafficking is connected to all parts of society (schools, hospitals, social services, churches, families, etc.). He offered a challenge to those gathered to recover the prophetic nature of their charism.

The day ended with an incredible liturgy led by Fr. Guillermo that was truly the work of the people. Everyone sat in a circle around a map on the floor of the Americas and Caribbean. At

different parts throughout the liturgy, everyone was invited to participate in constructing the map before us, from placing the dirt on the ground, to lighting and placing a candle in each country present, to sharing the fruits of the earth as fruits of our labor in this work together. It was a powerful visual representation of an integral ecology that connects not only us humans gathered, but the whole of creation throughout the Americas recognizing that God's loving and creative presence flows through it all and sustains us in the work we are called to do in the world. Fr. Guillermo presided over the Eucharist on the ground, on top of the soil, offering a powerful visual of a God who became incarnate, taking on the earthly material substance of creation and unifying God to that creation forever more. We are all the Body of Christ, broken and blessed and shared with the world.

The third and final day of the Seminar was about moving towards action together. Participants learned about Talitha Kum, the international network of the Vatican against human trafficking, and their vision to encourage networks of religious life against trafficking in every country. There was space to learn about the various networks currently present working to end human trafficking, and then we split off into regions to do more specific work to collaborate across borders with those closest to us.

USCSAHT met with Mexico (RAHAMIM) and Central America (Red RAMA and other countries) to reflect on how we can build stronger networks between the countries, share resources, and improve communications in our joint work to end human trafficking and support survivors. One of the challenges discussed was effective communication and sharing of resources across borders. Many people from Central America are traveling through Mexico with a destination of the U.S. or Canada, but the networks in Central America don't know the resources to share in the other countries for those who might need them. For example, once a Salvadoran reaches Mexico, who can they call if they need help or where are the safe houses along the way? Who can help them contact their family to let them know they are ok? And the same for once they cross into the U.S. Where are the places and who are the people they could reach out to for help?

Because of this conversation one of the goals set forth by the region was to develop a directory of contacts and resources across the countries to be able to use and share as needed to support any potential or current victims of trafficking. One way that USCSAHT can help with this is to translate more of their information and resources into Spanish, since many victims of both sex and labor trafficking are Spanish speaking from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. There was also a need expressed to form networks against trafficking in the countries that do not currently have one, and strengthen the networks that are new and still in formation. All those present affirmed the value of having a cross-continental meeting like this one, and would like to see future opportunities for collaboration and relationship building continue.

I think it is safe to say that everyone left the Seminar with a renewed energy and sense of hope in this work, because while it is heartbreaking to see the realities and impacts of human trafficking in our world it is also inspiring to join with one another across countries, cultures, and languages and know that we are not doing this work alone. We are stronger together. Rooted in our faith in a God who is incarnate Love and Compassion, we can respond to our call to go out into the world and experience transformative encounter in this work to end human trafficking.

*Written by Jennifer Reyes Lay, Assistant Director of the JPIC Office*

### **1<sup>st</sup> Annual Sr. Antona Ebo Social Justice Conference**

The Archdiocese of St. Louis hosted their first annual Sr. Antona Ebo Social Justice Conference on Saturday, September 29, 2017. The Conference was named after Sr. Antona Ebo, a Franciscan Sister of Mary and St. Louis native who is a long time witness and advocate for civil rights and social

justice. The conference included an opening keynote talk by Rev. Starsky Wilson, pastor of St. John's UCC and former co-chair of the Ferguson Commission which helped author the report "Forward through Ferguson" of policy recommendations for addressing the systemic racism and injustice throughout St. Louis city and county. Rev. Starsky reflected on the "unfinished business" of the Christian community in reclaiming our call to be Jesus' witnesses/disciples in the world today.

The conference was broken into two sections of breakout workshops focusing on the areas of the death penalty, poverty, human trafficking, care for creation, the school to prison pipeline, issues of health, and immigration. Jennifer Reyes Lay, Assistant Director for the CCVI Congregational JPIC Office, was invited to moderate the panel on human trafficking and share about Catholic Social Teaching on human trafficking. She shared excerpts from bishop's statements and the past three popes who have all spoken out against human trafficking as a sin that violates human dignity. She also shared about her work with US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking and the recent conference in Bogota, Colombia. The other presenters on the human trafficking panel included a survivor and current advocate, a prosecuting attorney, and a DHS/ICE official who focuses on cases of human trafficking.

Overall there was a diverse group of approximately 300 people in attendance at the conference. The lunch time panel focused on the "young church doing social justice" and was energetic and inspiring for all to hear about the initiatives led by teenagers and young adults throughout the diocese, putting their faith into action. This was a common theme heard throughout the conference of encouraging participants to take their faith and worship out of the sanctuary and into the streets, giving witness to the work for justice we are called to as disciples of Christ.

## **Sister Story: Sr. Dot Ettl**

September 12, 2017 marked the three year anniversary of our dear sister Dorothy Ettl's passing. Fondly known and remembered as Dot, she was a woman of great faith, conviction, passion, and joy. Her work for social justice and women's equality in the world continues to live on through Women's Global Connection which she co-founded with Sr. Neomi Hayes, and the Ettl Center for Civic Leadership at the University of Incarnate Word, which re-named itself in her honor as a commitment to keep her spirit alive in the work for a more just and equitable world. We share with you this month reflections on Sr. Dot's life from these two CCVI Ministries.

### *From the Ettl Center for Civic Leadership:*

"Dorothy Helen Ettl was born in 1940 in St. Louis, Missouri, one of two daughters of Marie and Winn Ettl. She attended Incarnate Word Academy where she became acquainted with the Sisters teaching there and entered the Congregation upon graduation from high school. Her exceptional leadership skills were easily recognized and she earned her MSW from the Worden School of Social Work at Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio. After a noteworthy career as a social worker, Sr. Dot (as her friends called her) was encouraged to continue studies, and she earned the PhD in Transpersonal Psychology from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California.

Sr. Dorothy believed strongly in the power of Consecrated Religious Life and served as General Superior of her Congregation from 1984 to 1990. As a member of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Board, she dedicated her remarkable talent to the envisioning of religious life after the Second Vatican Council. She facilitated this process in many religious Congregations in the U.S. and Canada. While recognized as a woman of great accomplishment, Sr. Dot was continually honing a quiet, contemplative style that inspired

confidence. She manifested a unique ability to gather people in communities dedicated to systemic change.

While Sr. Dot was anchored at UIW as a Professor of Organizational Leadership in the Dreeben School of Education, her creative energy knew no boundaries. Her latest project was bringing the Center for Civic Leadership (CCL) from idea to reality. A partnership between UIW and CHRISTUS Health, the Center is dedicated to promoting the common good for those in most need. Sr. Dot believed that the mission of the CCL is a legacy of UIW, CHRISTUS Health and the Sisters.

Sr. Dot's legacy, passion, and energy will be forever missed but will continue to progress via the work of many faculty, students and staff at The University of the Incarnate Word including the Ettlting Center for Civic Leadership & Sustainability and the Cardinal Community Leaders Program."

*From Women's Global Connection:*

Dot's many published works and writings on the topic of sustainable and relational women's empowerment continue to speak to so many. Today we wanted to share some of her words that were foundational as she and Sister Neomi Hayes built WGC into the thriving San Antonio-based nonprofit that it is today.

Dot on cross-cultural learning...

"Creating the environment for mutual learning can be troublesome and time consuming. It raises questions of ethics and power relationships that must be faced in order to preserve integrity in the education or research process. When we recognize the bonds between theory, research and experience, we have to abandon the conventional attitudes of disinterest and disembodiment. We find that we are unceasingly formed as well as informed by our engagement." - Leadership for Action: Wedding Adult Education and Social Change, 2001

Dot on taking volunteers on service-learning immersion trips...

"We have found an interest in building a global solidarity and in working for the empowerment of women worldwide. We have seen the goodwill of many who have professional expertise to offer and who want to be connected." - WGC Global Ambassadors Concept Paper

Dot on becoming a true global citizen...

"At its core, the (WGC) mission is about transforming us from VIEWERS of a disconnected and conflicted international reality, to PARTICIPANTS in creating a more interconnected and responsive global community." - WGC Global Ambassadors Concept Paper

## **Ecology**

### **The Big March**

On Friday the 22nd of September, Chimbotanos could hear the sound of trumpets and drums being played along with people chanting: la bahia es un tesoro, que vale mas que el oro (the bay is a treasure, worth more than gold) among other chants. The march was organized by a collective citizen group known as Chimbote de Pie. Over the years Chimbote has seen a decline in ecological biodiversity in the bay and a rise in pollution: specifically trash, sewage, and chemical waste. Not only does the waste dumping have an immediate effect on the lives of Chimote citizens but contributes to larger environmental issues of ocean pollution and decline in biodiversity. This march advertised as the "Gran Marcha Civica" was orchestrated to combat this issue.

Besides tackling the cultural issue of throwing trash on the street, there is a lack of governmental support to create a cleaner and more sustainable environment in regards to waste.

The steel, fish, and even citizen waste does not go through a processing and treatment plant which would allow the water to be re-used. Although this newly treated water may not be safe enough to drink, it could be used for watering gardens, farmland, and even the water within the toilet bowls. But because this process does not occur, tons of highly toxic and polluted water are pumped directly into the ocean every day, creating a dead zone otherwise known as Chimbote's bay. However the pollution does not just stay in the bay. The tainted water affects the nearby beaches and marine life in the open sea. Just thinking that perhaps the fish we eat has been swimming in our own waste is an off putting concept. And for these reasons, Chimbote de Pie marched.

One of the efforts of the march was to spread awareness to the citizens that the Municipality and other agencies such as SedaChimbote need to take greater responsibility in correcting this problem. Additionally, the march's intent was to unite those in agreement, because a roar of voices makes a louder statement than the voice of one. So as the march made its way from Plaza Miguel Grau (Plaza 28 de Julio), past the Municipality in Plaza de Armas, and all the way to SedaChimbote, their chants could be heard. A number of schools, volunteer organizations, and environmental groups, equating to about 500 people, came out to support the cause: "No mas desage a la bahia" "No more sewage in the bay." Undoubtedly the event was a success. Cultural and governmental changes do not happen overnight, yet with persistence and perseverance, Chimbote de Pie hopes that one day the bay will no longer be used as a dumping ground. So the next time you throw your trash on the ground, think about Chimbote de Pie and the fight to live in a cleaner environment.

*Written by Selena, CCVI Missionary in Chimbote*

### **Incarnate Word Sustainability Efforts part of SA300:**

The San Antonio Tricentennial Commission recently wrote the Ettlign Center for Civic Engagement, approving the project proposal for: "Serving in Sustainability Projects, Cultivating Compassionate Care for All of Creation."

These are the main ideas of the proposal:

One reason that the beautiful property with abundant trees near the headwaters of the San Antonio River was purchased for a school in 1897 was because the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word recognized that nature restores people and that people need to learn of nature and learn to care for nature. This is carried forward in the Sustainability goals, education, and initiatives of the University of the Incarnate Word as a whole and particularly implemented by the Ettlign Center for Civic Leadership. The center promotes community service and service learning in community gardening, "Sustainability Scholar" projects, recycling efforts, and the center guides students to work with Headwaters - a 53 acre nature sanctuary with multiple educational and sustainability projects for people of all ages. The UIW Engineering Department has developed projects with solar and wind energy and the Ettlign Center is encouraging even more student participation.

We wish to have 300 hours of service to sustainability initiatives done by various students throughout 2018 under the title "Serving in Sustainability Projects, Cultivating Compassionate Care for All of Creation." We are "growing a legacy of service" with many branches of community gardening, a pollination garden, rooting out invasive species and nurturing native plants, documenting trees, on-going research, and other things.

By the end of the year:

1) Students will know that Incarnate Word was founded in civic engagement (the mayor wanted people to care for the sick and start a hospital in 1869) and we carry civic engagement and service into the future---they are a part of this

- 2) Students will have more skills and knowledge in creation care
- 3) Students will have more community building skills because they have worked with others for the common good.

The Etting Center will provide information where and how service can be done and will track what students have done and their reflections on what they have learned.

With this approval, all the Incarnate Word sustainability service initiatives are official Tricentennial Project/Events. We may use their logo and the SA300 office will promote our service initiatives through e-blast, website, and calendar, and a volunteer sign up page. In addition to these sustainability efforts, UIW educational events have also been accepted as part of the "Education and History" area of the Tricentennial and the events of Incarnate Word Sisters, CHRISTUS Health, and UIW have been accepted as Tricentennial Partners.

### **First Annual Headwaters Native Wildlife & Habitat Celebration**

The first annual Headwaters Native Wildlife & Habitat Celebration took place on Sunday, October 8 with nearly 400 members of the public enjoying activities on the grounds of the Brackenridge Villa. The festival at the head of the San Antonio River was a culmination of a week of events recognizing World Animal Day, World Habitat Day, and St. Francis of Assisi's Feast Day.

The week kicked off with Healing the Headwaters, a volunteer day focused on ecological restoration of the Headwaters Sanctuary. Meditative walks, a native plant gardening workshop, and a film about ecotheologian Thomas Berry followed. The feast day of St. Francis was commemorated with a Blessing of the Animals & Prayer for Creation ceremony in the Sanctuary with over 70 companion animals in attendance.

The culminating festival had family friendly activities focused on South Central Texas ecosystems. Community partners offered educational booths on native plants, pollinators, reptiles, bats, birds, and more. Information on composting, creating rain gardens, and gardening for wildlife were included to encourage members of the public to bring conservation home. A CPS Energy tree giveaway, live animals, crafts, face painting, and drone tours of the Sanctuary were well-received by the community. A Headwaters raffle was supported by local businesses interested in promoting environmental conservation and Texas Public Radio provided media sponsorship. The goal of the Celebration was to bring people to Headwaters that may not have visited before, and educate them in fun, informal ways about the wonders of the natural world. We succeeded!

Special thanks to CCVI, the Village at Incarnate Word, and the University of the Incarnate Word Grounds crews for their support in Celebration logistics. We were assisted by over 50 volunteers in the preparation and execution of this event. We are grateful for our Headwaters Village of Volunteers!

There was a small booth where volunteers provided items to sell to support Headwaters. Items still available for purchase include St. Brigid's Path blank notecards, \$12 for a pack of 10; Headwaters Walking Sticks made from Ligustrum (an invasive tree that hurts San Antonio ecosystems if not removed), \$30; Aldo Leopold's cornerstone conservation text "A Sand County Almanac," \$10; and a Headwaters window decal, \$4. Email [info@headwaters-iw.org](mailto:info@headwaters-iw.org) if you wish to learn more about these items being sold to support our free educational programming.

# **Living Laudato Si**

## **Listening to the Cries of the Earth, the Cries of the Poor:**

Responding to Pope Francis' call to hear the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor, a group of 35 people gathered in St. Louis, MO for an ecumenical prayer service on Thursday evening, September 28th as part of the Season of Creation. The prayer service was organized by the Intercommunity Ecological Council which is made up of women's religious congregations in LCWR Region X, including the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. It was also co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of St. Louis Peace and Justice Commission.

The prayer service wove together excerpts from Pope Francis' Laudato Si, statements from the world day of prayer for creation, and reflections on the current reality of pollution, climate change, and environmental racism. Sr. Carla Mae Streeter OP offered the main reflection, inviting those present to reflect on who they are, and where they are. In the work to care for our common home, there has to be a change of heart in human beings to see their interconnectedness with all of creation and to respond with creativity and compassion to the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor.

After reflecting on both the beauty of creation and the ways we contribute to her destruction, each table offered one petition of praise and one petition of lament during a communal prayers of the people. The response after each petition was the Taize refrain "Kyrie Kyrie Eleison" which was used to connect to the ecumenical Taize service in France which was held earlier this month as part of the Season of Creation.

Each participant was also invited to write down on a ribbon something or someone that they love in the created universe, because we will protect what we love. These ribbons were hung up on a string and then at the end of the prayer service each person was invited to take a ribbon that wasn't theirs and to incorporate what was written into their own prayer and promise to protect. The closing prayer ended with all participants repeating the Laudato Si pledge to pray for and with creation, live more simply, and advocate to protect our common home.

Overall it was a beautiful service to honor and celebrate our connection to creation as well as deepen our commitment to hear and respond to the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor. Thanks to all who were able to join us!

# **Immigration**

## **Congregational Statement in Support of DACA and Dreamers**

The Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, join with Catholic faith leaders throughout the country and others in expressing our extreme disappointment and disagreement with President Trump's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. DACA has benefited over 800,000 young people who are our neighbors, our classmates, our co-workers, our fellow parishioners, and friends. The decision to cancel this program will not only hurt and hinder the future of these young people who currently have DACA status, but also our communities, churches, states, and entire country.

We stand by our January Statement in Solidarity with Immigrants and Refugees in reaffirming our charism and commitment as CCVI Sisters to incarnate the compassionate love of God to ALL people, regardless of immigration status. We continue to stand for and with our brothers and sisters who have the trust and courage to leave all that they know and love to build a better life for themselves and their families, including their children.

Given this recent decision, it is more important than ever that Congress immediately address our broken immigration system and pass the proposed bi-partisan Dream Act of 2017. We join with faith leaders throughout the Catholic Church, as well as other denominations and religions, in urging everyone to contact their Senators and Representatives to express your support for the bi-partisan Dream Act of 2017 and ask that they take immediate action to ensure that DACA recipients and other qualified undocumented immigrants can live and work in this country with safety and security. May all people of good will come together to advocate and practice compassion for our neighbors, relief for families, and an end to needless deportations. Visit our blog for a link to ask your Members of Congress to STAND IN SUPPORT OF DREAMers.

### **Share the Journey**

On September 27 Pope Francis launched a two-year campaign to encourage us all to love our neighbors and to Share the Journey of the millions of migrant and refugee families who are seeking safety and a decent life. We invite you to participate -- and to encourage your networks to join you.

The Share the Journey campaign, which is being sponsored by Caritas Internationalis, highlights Catholic teaching on migration and reaffirms the Church's commitment to assist our migrant brothers and sisters who have fled their homeland for a better life elsewhere.

As part of this campaign, the Catholic bishops of the United States have selected October 7-13, 2017 as a week of action for migrants and refugees. Titled Dioceses for DREAMers it will focus on Catholic support and solidarity for DACA youth, DREAMers and the DREAM Act 2017. With your participation in the week of action we can build the grassroots momentum that is needed to pass legislation that protects DACA recipients and DREAMers and provides a pathway to citizenship for DREAMers.

You can find more resources on our blog and join us in spreading the word on social media, using #ShareJourney and #ComparteElCamino.

## **Peace**

### **Our Commitment to Peace:**

Violence in its many and varied forms surrounds us. This violence can manifest as physical, emotional, psychological and/or spiritual harm. Some of the most blatant forms of physical and psychological violence include perpetual warfare and exorbitant military spending, feminization of poverty, a throw away culture, and intolerance of difference. In light of this reality, 'Nonviolence and Just Peace' was born, a worldwide initiative that reaffirms the centrality of active nonviolence in the message of Jesus, in the life and praxis of the Catholic Church; and in our vocation to heal and reconcile both people and the planet.

Our Congregational Commitment for Peace is our response to the initiative launched at the Conference on Nonviolence and Just Peace, held in Rome April 11-13, 2016 by the Conference of Major Superiors, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and other Catholic organizations.

After communal discernment and conversation our Congregation (the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word) signed on to the "Appeal to the Catholic Church to Recommit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence" pledging to promote the understanding and practices of active nonviolence on the road to just peace, with the desire to be authentic disciples of Jesus, challenged and inspired by the stories of hope and courage.

In our mission to incarnate the compassionate love of God, caring for the Body of Christ that suffers in the world today, we feel called to transform our own lives, our communities, our

countries and our Congregation with actions that lead us to create and support a culture of peace and non-violence.

As the Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, we thank all the Sisters who have helped us to reflect, pray and respond daily to the call of the Incarnate Word at this time. Our task is challenging but we trust in God who calls us to be artisans of the active and creative nonviolence of Jesus. Because nonviolence practiced with determination and consistency has produced impressive results.

## **Human Rights**

### **Thank You Mexico**

The earthquake on September 19 shook all Mexico. Mexico City has more than a hundred families who are still grieving the loss of their daughters, sons, fathers, mothers or material goods that they obtained through hard work over the years, and no one could remain indifferent to the hope and pain of the most vulnerable and the earth.

This earthquake uncovered irregularities in construction, precarious working conditions and a political class that 'debates' how to lend a hand before the upcoming election results. Yes, there is chaos but there is also a lot of solidarity. In the midst of it all are scores of young people who were mobilized to clean, rescue and bring help to the victims. I saw them determined to be on the side of the most vulnerable. And there they were, by their side.

And anguish did not have nor will it have the last word. I bear witness to so many gestures of solidarity, even in the midst of so much sadness, that turn life into extraordinary stories. In this network of solidarity, as Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word through the diversity of our ministries, we organized ourselves and went out to encounter life with the sole purpose of extending hope.

During these days along with Sr. María Márquez, Sr. Covadonga Suárez and Sr. Ofelia Lozano, we simply went to be with the other. We visited people in Santa María Nativitas, San Gregorio, Del Valle, Incarnate Word University, Xochimilco and in these places we found the most profound relief.

But our elder Sisters went further. They all adapted their eating habits, they gave up their sweets and prayed every day so that everyone will realize that there are many others who are in need of what seems so basic for some of us: that is daily food.

Going through the broken streets with people of broken spirits called me to a special courage and above all an attitude of strong humility. Because I needed to accept that although we wanted to help many we couldn't help everyone. Food, water, basic underwear, toys and sweets will always be insufficient in light of those women and men who helped, who are helping, and who will help to recover a dignified life.

As I write these lines, I bring back to my mind and heart the face of Mrs. Cecilia and her home, because even in the middle of the disaster, she organized her neighbors to share food, to look for safe spaces for the little ones, to report damages and fight for their rights. She has put love in motion and she has turned it into consolation, acceptance, prayer and so many other things.

I end this reflection more than surprised to be here and to be living this experience that forces us to remember what we are capable of together. I am returning to Peru immensely grateful to all the people who have helped us to be a religious community that is responsive to the urgency here in Mexico; because they know that something as delicate as attending to the life of the most vulnerable cannot wait. Let's continue.

*By Sr. Katty Huanuco, CCVI*

## **Work to End the Death Penalty During Respect Life Month:**

Pope Francis has said, "The Golden Rule also reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage of its development. This conviction has led me, from the beginning of my ministry, to advocate at different levels for the global abolition of the death penalty." (September 24, 2015). In the two years since Pope Francis's plea, we have made great strides towards ending the death penalty. Let's continue this important work to end the death penalty this October.

The Catholic Mobilizing Network which works to end the death penalty and promote restorative justice has created a "Respect Life Month Toolkit" full of resources which you can find on our JPIC Blog. One of the requests this month is to try and prevent the six executions currently scheduled for October. Three of those six are within Texas. Please contact the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to ask for clemency in the following cases:

- Robert Pruett is scheduled to be executed on October 12, 2017
- Anthony Shore is scheduled to be executed on October 18, 2017
- Clinton Lee Young is scheduled to be executed on October 26, 2017

Here is a sample letter, but feel free to personalize it yourself. Please send a separate letter for each case.

*Dear Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles,*

*I am writing to you to express my concern over the execution of Clinton Lee Young scheduled for October 26, 2017. As the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, you have the power of mercy and grace to grant clemency for Clinton.*

*At the center of my Catholic faith is the belief in sanctity of life and the inherent dignity of the human person. This respect for life is upheld for all and is never lost from one's actions. As Pope John Paul II said, "the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil." This means we recognize the dignity of Clinton Lee Young, despite the crime for which he was convicted, though he maintains his innocence. The gift of life is from God alone; we do not have the power to create or destroy it.*

*I do not forget the undeniable grief and tremendous pain of the victims and their families. As a Church, we pray for the healing and peace of all victims of violent crime. We do not, however, condone the state's planned execution as a form of justice. I ask that you grant clemency for [Clinton Lee Young; birth date: July 19, 1983; TDCJ#999447 **OR** Anthony Allen Shore; birth date: June 25, 1962; TDCJ#999488 **OR** Robert Lynn Pruett; birth date: September 18, 1979; TDCJ#999411.]*

*Sincerely, (add your name)*

## **Contact us**

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