



JUST Love

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF PEACE, JUSTICE AND
ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH

COVID-19: A Call to a Politics of the Heart

In Catholic piety, June is the month of the Sacred Heart. The vulnerable heart of God, brimming with unconditional love, has always been an appealing symbol to the Company of Charity. St. Louise de Marillac painted large images of the Sacred Heart and distributed them to the early communities of the Daughters of Charity. The Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth used to include among their daily devotions a prayer by St. Gertrude of Helfta, the great 13th century mystic of the Sacred Heart, that saw in the heart of Jesus a “fountain of life” and “a burning furnace of love.”

The indigenous peoples of Chiapas, Mexico, offer a profound spirituality of the heart. For them the o'on (heart) is the dwelling place of the ch'ulel (soul)-but not the soul as an individual spirit but rather a collective soul that draws the entire community into the shared space of a single heart. This enables the people to live by a “politic of the heart” with the goal of communal wholeness. The soul awakens in the people the potential to bring itself to collective greatness.

The COVID-19 pandemic has drawn us into the shared space of a single heart. It has forcefully proven the truth of the words Pope Francis chose as the theme of the celebration of the 5th anniversary of *Laudato Si'* - “Everything Is Connected.” Every inhabitant of the planet has been drawn into a common experience. The virus is no respecter of national borders or social class. There is no human institution-culture, economy, education, government, religion-that has not been transformed by COVID-19. This crisis has shown what the indigenous peoples of Chiapas have known all along-one heart, one soul.

It now remains for us to decide: can we choose a new politics of the heart with the goal of a common wholeness? No one can ignore the massive social inequities that the pandemic reveals. Jeff Bezos becomes history's first trillionaire while a record number of people file for unemployment. The pandemic does not discriminate but our health care system does. The large percentage of deaths is among vulnerable populations in nursing homes, prisons, and food processing plants.

We need to enter into our heart and hear there the call of God to collective greatness. In every human chest pumps a sacred heart. Can we be for one another a fountain of life, a glowing furnace of love? Will we emerge from this crisis transformed by a politic of the heart?



Sentencing of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7

As June *JustLove* goes to press, we await the sentencing scheduled for May 28 and 29. Seven Catholic peace activists entered the Kings Bay Trident Submarine Base in Georgia on April 4, 2019 to perform an act of symbolic disarmament. They used hammers to follow the prophecy of Isaiah “to beat swords into plowshares” and poured blood to make holy what was evil in a sacramental action. Kings Bay is homeport to six ballistic missile Trident submarines, each of which deploy twenty Trident missiles carrying four or more warheads of at least 100 kilotons. The 7 include Fr. Stephen Kelly, SJ who has been in jail ever since the action; Elizabeth McAlister who was educated by the Sisters of Charity at Help of Christians, East Orange, NJ; Dorothy Day's granddaughter Martha Hennessy; and Catholic Workers Carmen Trotta, Patrick O'Neil, Clare Grady, and Mark Colville. Ironically the Government has denied their request to serve their sentences with house arrest because of the dangers of COVID-19 in prison but the sentencing will be done by video because of the danger of gathering people in a courtroom. For updates on the sentencing <https://kingsbayplowshares7.org/>



Working for Peace, Justice, Earth in the Time of COVID-19

So much of our action for peace, justice, and ecological integrity is done in community. We attend demonstrations together; plan and network on committees together; gather in groups to educate ourselves on justice issues together. Almost overnight, COVID-19 and social distancing has made our accustomed ways of social activism impossible. With justice advocates everywhere, the PJEI Office has been using creative ways to advance our mission in difficult circumstances. Here are a few:

-A lot gets done by ZOOM these days. The justice promoters of the Charity Federation have meet by ZOOM. I have participated in ZOOM webinars on how the pandemic effects immigrants and refugees; also for activities to celebrate *Laudato Si'* week at the end of May. Every morning I gather with a group of peace activists on ZOOM for lectio divina on the daily readings and to support one another.

-Advocacy by phone, email and signing on to letters and statements on the SC PJEI Priority Issues is on going. There is intense advocacy around people experiencing homelessness, an important issue for the SCs. You can't shelter at home if you don't have one!

-NJ immigration advocates have found a creative way to protest. Several times we have driven in car caravans around local detention centers honking our horns demanding the release of people in immigration detention because of the dangers of COVID-19 in prisons. We observed social distancing and still made our voices heard.

-Mutual Aid groups have self-organized all over

New Jersey. In Paterson one such group serves over 100 meals a day to people experiencing food insecurity.

-Supporters are running 2.23 miles for Ahmaud Arbery, the unarmed black man shot and killed while jogging in Georgia. This social media campaign was a factor that lead to the arrest of Arbery's murders who initially were not charged.

-An easy way for you to participate in our PJEI mission is to like and follow the PJEI Office Facebook page. Updated multiple times a day, our page offers opportunities for inspiration, education, and action. Check it out! <https://m.facebook.com/Office-of-Peace-Justice-and-Ecological-IntegritySisters-of-Charity-300157523445664/?ref=bookmarks>



Like everyone, the Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity with other justice advocates is adjusting to the "new normal." And we are discovering, to paraphrase St. Vincent de Paul, that justice is inventive to infinity.

JPIC Dates to Remember in June

5 World Environment Day - "Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us, as living creatures, are dependent on one another." Pope Francis; *Laudato Si'*, #42

8 World Oceans Day - On this day "Wear Blue, Tell Two": Wear something blue to honor our oceans' waters and research some facts on the state of the oceans and share the information with two people. <https://worldoceansday.org>

12 International Day Against Child Labor - Worldwide 218 million children between 5 and 17 years are in employment. Among them, 152 million are victims of child labor; almost half of them, 73 million, work in hazardous child labor. <https://www.un.org/en/events/childlabourday/>

19 Solemnity of the Sacred Heart - "From our contemplation of the Pierced Heart of Jesus in the heart of wounded humanity flows the desire to commit ourselves with greater passion and compassion to justice, peace and integrity of creation." Religious of the Sacred Heart

26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture - "Torture is a mortal sin! Christian communities must commit themselves to helping victims of torture." Pope Francis <https://www.un.org/en/events/torturevictimsday/>