



JPIC Focus News

The Newsletter of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Network

Issue #1 Vol. 22 March 2018
www.sistersosf.org

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The Work of a Peacemaker Today

by Sister Sharon Havelak

As Franciscans, we live with a deep joy, rooted in an even deeper relationship with God and with all our sisters and brothers – both people and creation. Those relationships form the fundamental basis of our peacemaking. But it's not easy to live out those relationships in our troubled world.

Tonight, as I write this article, another story is emerging. Another city, another high school is in mourning. Parkland, Florida, (which, ironically, was designated as Florida's safest city in 2017) is now added to our list of "this can never happen again." But the sad truth is that Parkland is the site of the 18th school shooting (the 30th mass shooting) in 2018 and it won't be the last. Violence – bred from hatred and fear, which grow out of economic and social injustice – seems to have the upper hand.

It doesn't have to be this way, but, as Pope Francis tells us, it will take work. In May of 2015, he met had an audience with 7,000 children, part of the Peace Factory, an interdisciplinary, non-

governmental organization that promotes integration, multiethnic and cross-cultural understanding through education, starting in primary school. He answered their questions about peace and peacemaking – and some of their questions were pretty insightful. Many of these children had experienced violence and/or economic hardships.

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"For all our differences and disagreements, we can live in a world of peace. In opposing every attempt to create a rigid uniformity, we can and must build unity on the basis of our diversity of languages, cultures and religions, and lift our voices against everything which would stand in the way of such unity. Together we are called to say 'no' to every attempt to impose uniformity and 'yes' to a diversity accepted and reconciled."

-- Pope Francis, Address at Memorial at Ground Zero, New York, Sept. 26, 2015



Pope Francis stressed:

“Peace involves work, it is not about staying calm and doing nothing. No! True peace means working so that everyone has a solution to the problems, to the needs, that they have in their land, in their homeland, in their family, in their society.”

Peacemaking also takes courage. Twenty-nine year old Saba Ismail is an excellent example of a courageous peacemaker. As a teen, she was coaxed out of her comfort zone by her father who exposed her to the hardships faced by others. At ages 15 and 16, she and her sister founded Aware Girls, a youth and women-led organization, working to empower young women and promote gender equality and peacebuilding in Pakistan. The organization is now a vital part of the struggle for human rights in her home country, enabling young women to act as change agents in their communities, receive an education, and gain control over their lives.

How can we live out our Franciscan call to be peacemakers today? Inspired by the words of Pope Francis, may we let go of our fears and have the courage to roll up our sleeves and work against the large and small injustices we see around us. May we believe, as Saba Ismail has said, that “Peace is not an overnight miracle. Everyone needs to contribute to build peace. For me, peace means people feel safe in their homes, on the streets, in the markets, in their mosques and their temples. It means celebration of all our diversities.”

“... Everyone needs to contribute to build peace. . .”

Issue: **Death Penalty**



In their “Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty, announced March 2006, the Bishops asked us to pray for the victims of crime and their families, those who have been wrongly convicted and those awaiting execution. The following prisoners are on death row, awaiting execution soon. Please keep them in prayer, as well as their families, their victims and the victims’ families. Also, please continue to pray for healing in our country that the spirit of peace and reconciliation, rather than violence and revenge, may prevail.

March 2018

20 Russell Bucklew, MO
27 Rosendo Rodriguez, TX

April 2018

11 William Montgomery, OH
25 Erick Davila, TX

May 2018

9 James Hawkins, TN
16 Juan Castillo, TX

Executions in 2018: 3

Executions since the ban was lifted in 1976:
1,468

Sources for information: Death Penalty Information Center (www.deathpenaltyinfo.org). Numbers are accurate as of February 15, 2018.

The Cost of War



Estimated cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to date:

Iraq	\$ 821,261,803,886 (every hour: \$117,035)
Afghanistan	\$ 798,246,510,754 (every hour: \$4 million)
Total	\$1,816,810,654,248 (every hour: \$8.36 million)

For the Cost of the Pentagon Slush Fund, taxpayers in the United States are paying \$58.6 billion this year. Here's what those tax dollars could have paid for instead:

- 791,099 Clean Energy Jobs created for 1 year, or
- 1.05 million Infrastructure Jobs created for 1 year, or
- 24.72 million Children Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for 1 year, or
- 1.76 million Scholarships for University Students for 4 years, or
- 5.67 million military veterans receiving VA medical care for 1 year, or
- 40.77 million Households with Solar Energy for 1 year

US Military Deaths: 6,931 (Iraq: 4,526 Afghanistan: 2,405)

Iraqi civilians killed: 179,470 – 201,101

Sources for information: The National Priorities Project (www.nationalpriorities.org/costofwar), the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count (<http://icausalities.org/>) and Iraq Body Count (www.iraqbodycount.org). Numbers are accurate as of February 15, 2018

US Gun Violence Statistics: 2018



Total Incidents of Gun Violence in the US: 6,575

Total Deaths by Gun Violence in the US: 1,827

Total Injuries by Gun Violence in the US: 3,144

Children (0-11) injured or killed: 69

Teens (12-17) injured or killed: 333

Mass Shootings: 30

Accidental Shootings: 215

Officer Involved Shootings:

 Suspect Shot/Killed: 292

 Officer Shot/Killed: 38

Source of information: Gun Violence Archive, www.gunviolencearchive.org. Numbers are accurate as of February 15, 2018

Lenten Earth Meditation

by Rosine Sobczak, OSF

The environmental situations we face today are unprecedented. The challenges of global warming, species extinction, possible nuclear war, an upswing in usage of fossil fuels, destruction of our nation's National Parks, oil depletion, food shortages and good drinking water availability, to name a few, are creating an environmental phenomenon of overwhelming proportions. Sustainability of Earth's resources and the future of life on our planet are no longer definite!

This is a meditation for persons like us who are aware of the underground stream of deep ecology; it recalls an awareness of catastrophic events of 65 million years ago when 95% of the species disappeared due to natural changes in the environment.

Our present time is even more critical because it is ourselves who are ending this 65 million-year-old Cenozoic Era and changing the course of Earth history. Looking back, however, we see that chaos brings order to our planetary life and to our personal lives if we are in tune with the Spirit who urges us onward. The Spirit today seems to be "knocking at our door" with the virtue of **HOPE** in a variety of areas. They offer food for our meditation during this Lenten season.



- "...in 2017," we have been forced to the midnight hour as the window of opportunity to address the present climate crisis shortens. Even in this time of trial, the **HOPE** of a coming morning remains. However, this **Hope** is not simply a feeling. It is an act of faith, and it is an act that comes with responsibility." (*Earth Letter*, fall 2017, pg. 8)
- "All it takes is one good person to restore **hope**." Pope Francis
- Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone in

their book entitled **Active Hope**, recall the story of the oyster in its shell which, when it is deeply involved in

trauma, grows a pearl. "We grow, and offer our gift of **Active Hope**."

What is this **Active Hope**? What responsibility does it bring? It is NOT enough to say, "**I hope**." How do we "**do HOPE**?" We Franciscans need to discuss just that – doing **Hope**. I received the book, **Active Hope**, by a very persistent and earth-centered woman. She insisted I read it and strongly felt this message needs to be shared. The book is It is a springboard for all those who are attracted by the gift of **HOPE**! How often did you/will you see this word **HOPE**? What ideas does it leave with you?