

Info Alert 119

October 18, 2016

"In selecting legislators, we must remember: The needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich. The freedom of the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful. The participation of marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of an order that excludes them."
-David Hollenback, SJ, Claims in Conflict

Education: Child Migration, Respect Life Month, Haiti

Opening the year's efforts for social justice, the team shares our theme/goal for 2016-2017. "The Social Justice Team encourages our sisters to respond to the call of Convocation 2016 of 'Encounter: Be the fire' as we uphold the life and dignity of the human person through prayer and dialogue that leads to transformative action, especially on issues such as: racism, poverty, abortion, human trafficking, educational inequities, immigration, domestic violence, reformation of the penal system, care for creation." (We rely on you to help us keep our commitment.)

Child Migration: According to UNICEF, there are 65 million children fleeing poverty, violence, and the impact of climate change for simple survival. Since elected in 2013, Francis has often highlighted the plight of migrants and refugees, particularly children. "I feel compelled to draw attention to the reality of child migrants, especially the ones alone. I ask everyone to take care of the young, who in a threefold way are defenseless: they are children, they are foreigners, and they have no means to protect themselves." Invisible and voiceless are children, said the pope. "Often, they are subjected to physical torture, violence, and psychological aggression, leaving indelible scars." Let us extend our respect for life to these victims.

Respect Life Month: The USCCB announced October as Respect Life Month and the start of the 2016-17 Respect Life Program, *Moved by Mercy*, with new resources available. The 2016-17 materials help Catholics understand, value, and become engaged with supporting the dignity of the human person.

Encouraging News: To coincide with this year's Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney announced the creation of a new position that will lead the city's efforts to combat domestic violence. The mayor described his vision of a comprehensive, coordinated city-wide approach to domestic violence, making the city a national model in responding to domestic violence. You might recall that we asked our sisters to take the "I Pledge" to stop domestic violence at the 2015 Regional Meeting.

URGENT: Tell DHS Secretary Johnson to expand protection for Haitians, including Temporary Protected Status (TPS). In September, at the end of a six-year agreement, enacted after the 2010 earthquake, Sec. Johnson announced that DHS (Dept. of Homeland Security) would resume detaining and deporting Haitians. The US government had committed to granting Haitians humanitarian parole here while Haiti recovered. Since Hurricane Matthew, Haiti's conditions have significantly worsened, yet DHS plans to resume the fast-tracking of Haitians when there is even a slight improvement of conditions. (See Phila. *Inquirer*, 10/18/16, Editorial page) **Call Sec. Johnson at 202-282-8000 to extend this critical commitment to the Haitian people.**

Prayer: *At least 1.4 million people are in need of aid in Haiti, according to the U.N., after Hurricane Matthew hit the nation, killing nearly 1,000 people. Now 350,000 Haitians are in desperate need.*

And so we pray:

Most Holy Creator God, Lord of heaven and earth, we bring before you today your people of Haiti. It is You who raised up the mountains of the Massif de la Hotte and Pic La Selle. It is You who made her people in your very image. Your people, O Lord, cry out to you. You are the One who answers the cries of the suffering. Speak now, O Lord, and help the Haitian people to bear this burden. As for us, Lord, who are far away from the rubble and the flood, from the sobbing and moans, but who hold them close in our hearts, show us how to lighten their load with our prayers, our aid, our resources. Teach us to work harder for justice in our country and for dignity in Haiti. Amen.

Action: Practice civil language in all conversations, especially those about the election.

The Covenant of Civility, given at last year's Regional Meeting, is included in this Alert as a separate attachment.

