

Info Alert 134

October 31, 2017

"What we do with our hearts affects the entire Universe." (Hubble photo) "Contemplation fosters knowing and seeing with our hearts. There is no room for compassion fatigue. In addition to the concrete actions in which we engage, there is the action of how we hold the suffering of our world; how we take a long, loving look at what is facing us and our Earth home; and how we embrace it in the spirit of healing. What we do with our hearts does indeed affect the entire Universe." -Nancy Sylvester, IHM (GSR, 9/28/17)

Education: Catholic Social Teaching and Consumerism

From the beginning of modern Catholic Social Thought in 1891, popes have cautioned that growing consumerism is a threat to Human Dignity, Solidarity, the Option for the Poor, and the Common Good. In an era of endless shopping, of desperation over inadequate wages to cover basic needs of families, of economic violence that creates and sustains poverty among the wider population, we recognize that a "culture of peace" can only grow when people strive to "live simply." Materialism, a by-product of the Industrial Revolution, has evolved into a modern consumerism, which often leaves "no room at the inn" for the welcome of God's children nor a respect for the sacredness of every person, as well as respect for Creation.

Pope Francis, like many of his predecessors, has been very vocal about a consumer culture that promotes hoarding possessions, images, and experiences but disregards human beings seen as having no economic value. Solidarity with others and the Common Good are devalued when individuals put all their focus and energy into amassing possessions of all kinds solely for their own benefit. Our "throwaway culture" is no longer sustainable. We must hear both the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. Justice issues related to consumerism are all connected. (See Action)

"Baby Jails": The Berks County Residential Center, a family detention center in Pennsylvania, continues unfairly jailing children and families seeking refuge and safety here. We must keep up the pressure on the Administration to say NO to locking up children and their parents at Berks or anywhere else in the United States simply for seeking safety. More than 60 fathers, mothers, and children are held at Berks right now, for seeking safety from violence and persecution. Call your Congress members about this grave injustice. (1-202-224-3121)

Johnson Amendment: The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from candidates seeking political gain and from donors exploiting the good will and integrity of charities and churches. More than 4000 Church leaders and good governance organizations are asking for a final push to keep Congress from bringing partisanship into churches and charities by eliminating or altering the Johnson Amendment in the proposed tax bill. Changes to this law could open the door to more undisclosed money in elections. Call your Congress members, urging them to keep the Johnson Amendment repeal out of the proposed tax package. (1-202-224-3121)

Prayer: In these tragic days of days of violence, let us remember that we walk with all our sisters and brothers. We are called to love one another. May peace be our way today and always. (A separate attachment has a prayer remembering victims of gun violence) --EFJ

Action: Celebrate the First World Day of the Poor (11/19/17) with Pope Francis by choosing one of your belongings to share or give away in a conscious effort to live simply.

Call members of Congress about the "Baby Jails," the Johnson Amendment, gun control, taxes

Upcoming events: Watch for the Social Justice insert on "Laudato Si" in the November Angelus. "Catholic Social Teaching and Criminal Justice Reform," Monday, 11/6/17 at Villanova U. AMERICA magazine (10/30/17) p.6 (gun control) and pp.12-13 (tax plan)