



Love Cannot Wait

By Eileen Reilly, SSND



“We, the School Sisters of Notre Dame are profoundly affected and challenged by the many divisions in our world and church today and by the social, economic and ecological crises of our time.”

Love Cannot Wait

This introductory sentence to the Directional Statement of the 23rd General Chapter truly sets the stage for all that follows. The five commitments in the statement can all be framed in this consciousness of the interconnections of the “social, economic and ecological crises of our time.”

I sometimes think that if only the needs of our world could be so conveniently separated into the categories of “social, economic and ecological,” perhaps we could find the way forward more easily. But they can’t be separated. We know, from our lived experience and from our growing global consciousness, that, for example, the economic disparities in our global village are impacted directly by the ecological crises of our time and the resulting social exclusion of those who are impoverished.

So where do we begin to address these situations? Is climate change the problem that frames them all? Is the growing economic disparity in our world the real issue? Should we be working to eliminate social and class distinctions?

As I reflect on the words from *Love Cannot Wait* I am prompted once more to see that there is not one starting point. If we truly believe that “Love Cannot Wait” then we know that we are called to allow the urgency implied in that statement to guide us in responding to the “many divisions in our church and world today.”

Barbara Zurine, a recently deceased member of the Atlantic-Midwest Province, reflected on this sense of urgency and wrote: “Love cannot wait for weeks, or month, or years – while we sit around a table to find solutions for the violence befalling our human race.

“Love cannot wait for answers before it does something, anything to comfort a hurting human being.

“Love cannot be stopped! It is always active, always creative, always on the move, always hoping, always giving, always desiring! It knows no bounds! It has no limits! It does not know discouragement, or fear!

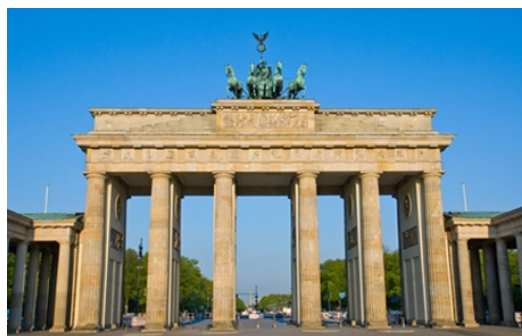
“The only thing that love cannot do – is wait!”

“Tumaini,” and “Tatendrang”

“Tumaini,” a Swahili word that means “hope and confidence,” and “Tatendrang,” a German word that means “a zest for action,” became the themes of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in Berlin, Germany at the end of June. I attended as the SSND UN NGO representative.

The GFMD is a voluntary, inter-governmental, non-binding and informal consultative process open to all States Members and Observers of the United Nations. This somewhat unique gathering, away from the formality of the UN headquarters in New York, provides a space for sharing concerns and solutions in the face of the refugee crisis.

The city of Berlin provided the perfect setting – a city that was home to one of the most notorious walls ever built. The conference began symbolically at the Brandenburg Gate where we were reminded that walls can be broken down.



This conference comes at a time when the member states of the UN are struggling to draft a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. This document will address the key issues such as unaccompanied children migrants, practices regarding labor recruitment, and smuggling and trafficking.

In addition, there is a growing recognition that this Compact must be based in Human Rights and must address the “drivers” of migration. There is also a growing need to address the reality of what is being called “Climate Induced Migration.” Both so-called “natural disasters,” and “slow-onset disasters,” such as droughts and sea-level rise threaten the homes of communities around the world.



The impetus for this document came from a growing recognition that the scope of the refugee crisis can only be addressed when true sharing of responsibilities among the nations of the world occurs. The UN has also launched **TOGETHER**, a United Nations campaign that promotes respect safety and dignity for refugees and migrants. Launched in September 2016, its aim is to counter the rise in xenophobia and discrimination.

Season of Creation

From September 1 to October 4, Christians around the globe will come together to pray and care for creation. We have participated for the past two years. You can learn more at www.seasonofcreation.org. Two years ago Pope Francis called for a special day for the Care of Creation to be held on September 1 each year. The season of creation begins that day and continues to the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4. During this time, it is hoped that people all over the world will take some time to pray especially for “our common home” and take some action, large or small to express their care for creation. The website can be read in German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. More information will be coming via email messages.



Introducing JCoR (Justice Coalition of Religious)

The Religious Congregations who, like SSND, have a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) representative at the United Nations (UN), have just completed a year-long project to study ways we might collaborate more effectively. Our informal group – Religious at the UN (RUN) – conducted a survey of our members in 14 countries to assess the interest and willingness of those members to engage in a global advocacy coalition. We have sensed, and the survey confirmed it, that we could do much more together.

Our advocacy work at the UN is strengthened when our members around the world are actively involved. We are committed to exploring ways to engage as many religious as possible in this effort. For now, the working name of the group is JCoR which we hope will get to the “Cor,” i.e. “heart of the matter” by engaging members around the world. More information will follow as we build this organization.

Asia/Oceania Branch meeting in Bandipur, Nepal

By *Kathy Schmittgens SSND*



Sisters Barbara Soete, Judith Kamada and Kathy Schmittgens met in Bandipur, Nepal for the Asia/Oceania Branch meeting in May. Sister Francine Perez, Connie Guerrero, and Sister Eileen Reilly were not able to attend in person. Sister Francine was recuperating from illness. Connie Guerrero submitted a country report for Guam. Sister Eileen Reilly gave a UN-NGO report via Skype. We were delighted that the electricity held for a good hour so we could interact as much as possible.

Along with the meeting time, we were able to see something of the ministries of our sisters in Nepal. Notre Dame School has about 850 students from pre-kindergarten to upper secondary school. Students gave a presentation to us even though they did not have school that week due to elections in the country. The program included singing and cultural dances.

We were also able to visit some Early Learning Centers which were begun in the low caste areas to assist the children in readiness for school. The dedication of our sisters and the teachers and staff was quite impressive. People in Bandipur are very proud of the school and the learning centers. They credit the schools with the improvement of the community. Blessed Theresa would be delighted!



Because of the general election and some disturbances caused by various political parties we finished our meeting in Kathmandu near the airport. The work of our sisters and the beauty and culture of the country left a lasting impression. Keep the people of Nepal in prayer as there is still much that has not been rebuilt since the devastating earthquake in 2015.

International Day of Peace –September 21

Once again we celebrate the International Day of Peace on September 21. A good resource to use for personal reflection is Pope Francis' World Day of Peace message on Non-violence. **It can be found on the Vatican website in many languages.**

It is a very good opportunity to create a prayer or a special program in your ministries to remember how important it is for each of us to become more personally peaceful so that we create a peaceful society and world.

Please send us pictures of any event that you create. You can also share what you do on our ***Shalom* Facebook page!**



You Are Sent, the UN Charter, and *Laudato Si'*

By Eileen Reilly, SSND

I often get asked, “What does it mean to represent SSND at the United Nations?” My simplest answer is naming three books: *You Are Sent*, the UN Charter and *Laudato Si'*.

Since its founding, 71 years ago, the UN has set up a system to consult with Non-Governmental Organizations – like SSND. When a group applies to be one of these NGOs, you must demonstrate that your organization has expertise in some area that is of concern to the UN. We SSNDs educate in more than 30 countries around the world – we know about education.

There are over 4,000 such NGOs registered with the UN and over 50 of them are religious congregations like us. We faith-based NGOs like to say we are the conscience of the UN. How does that work? In 2000 The UN made a commitment to promote universal primary education by 2015. As time passed, we raised the issue that although the percentages of children receiving primary education had risen dramatically, in some cases, children in rural areas, those children hardest to reach were not being educated. Or in other cases “son preference” dictated that the boys got the education and the girls stayed home to do household chores.

One of my favorite moments in my six years at the UN occurred in the summer of 2015. The ambassadors were very busy debating the details of the text of the new goals that would guide them for the next 15 years. It was a Monday morning; time was running out for them; the previous Friday Pope Francis had issued his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, on “caring for our common home.” Over the weekend, I had made a note on my to-do list to get a copy of that encyclical. You can imagine my surprise when Ambassador Kamau from Kenya stood up on that Monday morning holding a copy of the encyclical and said to the members of the General Assembly, “I know we are not all Catholic here. I am not a Catholic myself. But we must all read this document; it has a message for all of us!”

One of those 17 new goals calls for “gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” by 2030. That is what we SSNDs have been about since 1833.

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