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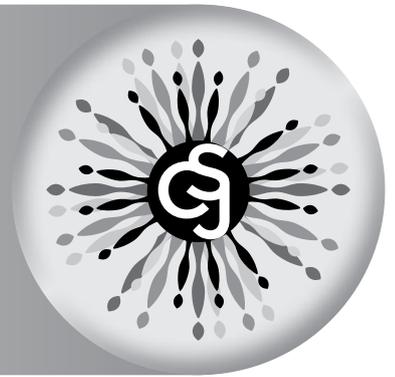
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GENERAL COUNCIL

Swimming Upstream



“PLACING OURSELVES IN A SPACE OF DISCERNMENT, WE LISTENED CAREFULLY TO EACH OTHER, AND TO THE SPIRIT WORKING AMONG US...AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS CONGREGATION WE WILL ADDRESS CAUSES THAT GENERATE INJUSTICE, INTOLERANCE, VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION.” (GENERAL CHAPTER 2015)

S. Sally Hodgdon
General Council

As I reflected on the events in our world and in our congregation during these past

six months or so, I was trying to see more clearly what we are being asked to be and to share with others in this New Year, that is almost two months old. Last May and June we watched as the President of Brazil was removed

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from office amidst allegations of corruption, and Great Britain voted by a narrow margin to leave the European Union. Then after a highly publicized and de-humanizing campaign, Donald Trump, an extremely wealthy man with a nationalistic focus, limited vision and deep biases, was elected President of the United States. His election followed a similar pattern of men with strong nationalistic views being elected to lead in Bolivia and in the Philippines. There are projections that the same could happen in France and other countries in Europe later this year. The perspective of these choices seems to be one of self-preservation or self-protectionism, values in direct opposition to who we are as women of communion striving for and working toward greater collaboration, inclusion, networking and global solidarity. Truly in these political realities, we are swimming upstream.

During these same months, some of our sisters have been engaged in preparation for and living through Chapters, exploring how in each particular reality we can live well the decisions of the 2015 General

Chapter. As I listened to the reflections and discussions in the various Chapters in India and the United States and on visitation in Ireland, I experienced a strong willingness among our sisters to participate more fully in the discernment process for both elections and for choosing areas of focus for the next few years. I saw a deeper commitment to listen attentively and discern where our presence is most needed now and to move to the new need. I heard a desire to learn more about Ignatian Spirituality and to share these programs with associates and others, as well as a commitment to learn more about the lives of refugees and the causes of migration.

After the hurricane in Haiti and the earthquakes in Italy, our sisters throughout the congregation offered assistance through prayer, notes, creative projects to raise money, and generous personal, community and congregational donations. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Saint Vallier in Haiti felt that we were one with them.

During the month of January alone, I saw several of our Chapter decisions in living color. Our sisters in Brazil hosted a seminar in Itu, Sao Paulo,

for the network of all Sisters of St. Joseph from Latin America and the Caribbean. The participants were sisters 60 years old and younger. They reflected on our charism and spirituality and shared dreams toward a common vision for the future. In the United States and in other parts of the world, our sisters and associates attended large peaceful gatherings or rallies reminding government leaders that the rights and dignity of all humans must be respected, regardless of culture, race, gender, sexuality or creed and that refugees and migrants must be welcomed. Now in February our focus has been on raising the awareness of human trafficking, of slavery. We must never stop witnessing to all of these injustices and we must walk with those who are the victims of these same injustices until they no longer exist. It is clearer now, that as we swim upstream in our various countries, that which keeps us afloat is the dynamic current created by those swimming near us. So what is it that God is asking of us in this New Year? I believe it is an invitation to those still on the shore to jump in and for others to move out to deeper waters.

PROVINCE/REGION/MISSION

NEW SAINTS

S. Lucinda Silveira Pereira (84)	Brazil	16.12.2016
S. Denise Triquet (92)	France	23.12.2016
S. Giovannina Carbone (94)	Italy	05.01.2017
S. Chiara Frallicciardi (82)	Italy	08.01.2017
S. Maria Sigrid Wittemberg (91)	Norway	16.01.2017
S. Xaveria Kanijirathinkal (86)	Tanmaya	24.01.2017
S. Louise Henriette Petit (90)	France	30.01.2017
S. Emilia Re (95)	Italy	03.02.2017
S. Maria da Paz (96)	Brazil	10.02.2017
S. Angela Theresa Parisotto (94)	Brazil	11.02.2017

UN Focus on Ending Poverty

S. Barbara Bozak

USA

The UN Commission on Social Development held its 55th session at UN headquarters in New York, February 1-10, 2017. As its theme “Strategies for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable development for all” indicates, development is truly sustainable only when poverty in all its forms has ended. This year’s meeting gave particular focus to the most vulnerable, in particular youth and those with disabilities. Although poverty is most frequently defined in economic terms, it is also a social reality, including lack of skills and social exclusion. It is a due to “structural injustices that privilege some while marginalizing others,” in the words of Guillermo Campuzano, the NGO representative of the Vincentian Fathers. Both UN Officials and representatives of Civil Society noted the importance of social inclusion for all people so that they not only have the basic necessities but also achieve true human dignity. The President of the Economic and Social Council of the UN said that while the UN can guide policy and give some orientations for action, the social and economic policies that address the root causes of poverty can be effected only at the national and local levels. This is the responsibility of each country. And it is civil society in each country that needs to hold its government accountable to achieve these goals. It is important to note that while extreme poverty has been greatly reduced which was the goal of MDG 1, relative poverty, or the gap between the rich and the poor, is growing.



Members of civil society engage in a discussion at the UN



Listening to the High Level Panel at the UN

This is true in all nations, be they rich or poor. Representatives of many countries spoke of the strategies they are using to reduce poverty as well as some of the problems they face in this regard. For the European Union, high unemployment of the younger generation needs to be addressed. Costa Rica and Panama spoke of the need for “social maps” to locate those living in poverty and help them access existing resources. Nigeria noted that programs to address poverty need to be local and deal with underlying factors.

While governments have the

responsibility to address and eliminate poverty, they must do so in partnership with local groups and individuals on the ground who know the reality and can mobilize the needed resources. Each situation is different, so the solution to the problem needs to be shaped by the local reality. Scholars, governments, civil society all recognize that policies must be tailored to the setting and local information is essential to accomplishing this. The conversation continues as the UN and Civil Society work with governments to achieve SDG 1: “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”.

Bearers of a Glorious Tradition

S. Eliana Aparecida dos Santos

Brazil

The city of Itu, in Brazil, cradle of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph in Latin America, hosted, from January 26 to 31, 2017, the first international meeting for Sisters of Saint Joseph under 60 years of age, novices, postulants and young women. The event, with approximately 90 participants from Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Haiti, United States and Brazil, was a major event in the history of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Latin American and Caribbean Network. The theme was, "Bearers of Tradition," and was directed by Sr. Griselda Martinez Morales (CSJ Lyon-Mexico) and Sr. Gloria Philip (CSJ Buenos Aires-Argentina).

The goal of the meeting, planned by the Commission of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Sisters of Saint Joseph, was to provide a deeper understanding of history to future generations, challenging them to have a Latin American perspective on the charism and spirituality of the Congregation, and to make them feel increasingly involved in its trajectory, by an updated re-reading, not one of 1650 or of 1859 (when the Congregation arrived in Latin America), but of TODAY. The desire is that, "together we can recognize and identify with the same tradition in the diversity of cultures and world realities. Present in 50 countries, we are challenged to

carry the treasure of the charism with reverence and respect. There were many opportunities to express the richness of the charism and realize, increasingly, that we are nourished from the same source."

The event allowed us to look at our Primitive Documents. We studied and prayed with the Eucharistic Letter and the Maxims in a whole new way, connected with our times. The words of Father Médaille have a mystical and spiritual meaning at every moment of history. Our mission today is to give a contemporary meaning to the words of our original texts. The appeal is to identify the mystical and spiritual meaning for us today.

The mystical expressed in our charism invites us to a profound experience of God, enabling an overflowing experience of communion and identification with the whole cosmos. In this encounter with God, I seek to meet others and experience connections and communion. This leads us to live with compassion and mercy in face of the apathy and discouragement that we find in the world today. We have a model that enables us to enter the fragmented realities of humanity and

be a presence of life. Our model is the Trinity. She is the image of the dance of life, the God of communion and total communication. All enter the wheel of life, in a give and take. We are all going to God, so we will live the project, "that all may be one." The directors asked us to dream God's dream as a dance of life, always in motion. The Sisters dreamed of a different religious life with a new boldness in formation, with more lightness in structure, organization and everyday life. They saw a common project in formation and in mission; creating inter-congregational communities; an itinerant religious life (with mobility between the Sisters and laity to create this type of experience); taking on new mission spaces and urgencies of the people; and continuing with international meetings in Latin America and missionary experiences in other countries.

The meeting was completed using the image of the first kitchen. To dream, we need to go back to the beginning, go back to our kitchen to keep our torches lit, to be fire, to be light, to be life for the life of the world as Bearers of Tradition!



Witnessing to our Charism

S. Linda Pepe

USA

Have you ever wondered what our true witness value is? Does it sometimes feel as if our presence is like one lost in the wilderness or a voice lost in a cacophony of sounds that no one can hear? We do have a witness value, and this short story will demonstrate the point.

On January 21, 2017, the day following the inauguration of President Trump in the US, women's organizations secured permits for marches in major cities throughout the United States. Many cities through the world held similar marches in support of women. These were marches, not demonstrations against the newly inaugurated President, but marches or rallies to remind our elected officials, from the President to our State legislators, that every law which is enacted should be for the benefit of all in our country. The marchers were sending a clear message to elected officials that the language of the past 18 months, the language used during the campaign for US President, had to change. People in the United States were tired of the divisive and demeaning rhetoric that fueled racism, prejudice and mistrust of one another. These marches were attended by women, men, young adults, and families with small children. The millions who marched sent a message that human dignity and human rights must take precedence over wealth and power.

Into this sea of humanity marched the Sisters of St. Joseph and their Associates, along with many other religious congregations of women. Did we make a difference by our presence? You be the judge. At the State Capitol



S. Barbara Mullen (l.) and Linda Pepe (r.) hold the banner with two associates

in Hartford, Connecticut, we unfurled a banner that read "Sisters of St. Joseph – Associates, Friends and Neighbors – Loving God and Neighbor without Distinction." As we stood behind our banner and joined the ten thousand who came to the state capital in support of human rights and human dignity, we were humbled by the number of people who approached us to say, "Thank you, sisters, for being here." As we passed by groups of people they applauded because they welcomed our presence at the march. What we did took very little effort, and only a few hours of our time, but all of us who participated that day walked away with one common thought – it was important that the Sisters of St. Joseph were visibly present at this march, not only because it was



Associate Clara Ryan at the rally

the right place to be, but because it manifested our Charism of right relationships and reconciliation. We should never underestimate the value of our presence when we stand in solidarity for human rights and human dignity. In most cases, it costs us very little except our time, but the witness value cannot be measured.

Visiting a Refugee Camp

Sister Graziella Zocchi, a member of the Justice and Peace Committee of the Italian Federation, recently visited a refugee camp on the border of Italy and France. In this article she reflects on her experience.



S. Graziella Zocchi

Sisters of St. Joseph of Cuneo, Italy

A Refugee Camp in Ventimiglia, Province of Imperia, Italy.

Until recently between 800 and 1000 people were living on the coast in a camp in Ventimiglia run by Caritas. Given the absurdity of the arrangement of the place, the Red Cross organized a field of shipping containers as shelters in Bévera, somewhat inland, for approximately 900 people. Seen from the outside, it is truly shabby and squalid.

In the parish that I visited, there are about 130 young women with children, mostly from Eritrea. Many of the women are pregnant. One of them was seven months pregnant, having arrived recently after a journey of four months from Libya, and in shock. Caritas had called emergency services for her, but, when the ambulance arrived, the girl refused the service because of fear, generated in the harsh experience of her journey. Some twenty of them are minors, victims of rape. Generally, they are sent to Europe by their own mothers or abducted and exploited. There were a



few men, an Afghan, some Syrians.

The residents live in separate areas, one for men, and one for women with children. There are only three bathrooms for everyone. This is a huge issue waiting for a solution. For the rest, there is an abundance of clothing, food and medical care. Caritas also provides on-site medical assistance. Residents take care of their own cleaning and that of the environment. They help in the various services. They can come and go freely (when they don't run away). A girl, a resident of this place who had decided to go to France, had died a few days

earlier, struck by a truck in a tunnel. Outside, in the churchyard, there are many asylum seekers, mostly young, who sleep there also, and for whom the camp, by order of the Mayor, should absolutely not provide any services, or be penalized. There are many camps like this in Italy and some even worse ones, because until now, it has not been possible to better manage the situation of asylum-seekers. We hope for rapid and effective action to put an end to these really dramatic, if not tragic, situations.

New Groups Experience the Charism

S. Iignes Cristina Malinoski,
S. Marilene Marcon,
Sabrina Rodrigues Ribeiro and
Alan Sampaio Dias
Brazil

A group of young people in the city of Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil is having a new experience. As associates of The Little Design for Youth, the group consists of young people between 15 and 22 years old. Most are university students; some attend high school. The group is guided by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Mãe Educadora Community, who are engaged in mission at the Colégio São José, in the city of Pelotas. These young people gather monthly motivated by the maxim of Jean-Pierre Médaille: "Assume courageously what God wishes."

The group is an open and welcoming space spreading the dream of Father Médaille and making it a reality in different ways. It is a cheerful space, in which life, hopes and dreams are shared, in the desire to make known and to deepen the experience and knowledge of the little design. A methodology of participation offers a new perspective on life itself, with challenges and opportunities that lead young people to develop relationships of love among themselves, with others and with God. All participants act as leaders in the Church community, as catechists, eucharistic ministers, group coordinators or in other pastoral services. Active participation in the community is one of the main features of this group.

The collaboration of Sister Arzila Pertile was instrumental in starting the group. She is a member of the team that coordinates the Laity of the



Little Design in the Brazilian Province. Sister Arzila suggested that the group have as a reference the document on Associates and other materials to develop the organization as a group in harmony with the journey already occurring in Brazil with lay adults. Two young people, members of the Group, spoke of their experience:

"We were challenged, from our participation in a meeting on vocations, to share the history and charism of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. I, Sabrina, was asked about my participation, because I was young and they thought that I would also be Sister, arousing the curiosity of those who were there. Soon, Sister Iignes Cristina introduced me as a layperson of the Little Design for Youth of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. With these words, young people were curious and interested in participating in this group. Since then, we are working on a project for meetings."

Sabrina Rodrigues Ribeiro
"The Group has been a profound experience of prayer, silence, reflection and sharing. I've been feeling, at

each meeting, my life become more open to the Creator, to the world and in a special way to the people. It is a unique opportunity for silence and to feel God acting in my life and in my story. In addition, the group has been strengthening my journey as one who is living his baptism and mission in communities. The challenge is to find time to participate in the meetings, given the rush of everyday life, to calm down and act according to the will of God, pursuing a life of prayer and, above all, forming unity with people. My expectations are that as the group grows and becomes more united, we can learn more about the charism, the experience and the Mission of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, and discover in each meeting the project of life which God has for each one of us." Alan Sampaio Dias

Both the sisters and the young people believe that it is possible to live missionary zeal and commitment in this group, to be a sign of communion, unity and motivation for the new Associate groups that may arise.

Platinum Jubilee in Itarsi

S. Staniya Kottuthundiyil

Pachmarhi Province

Seventy-five years was an important milestone travelled by the community of Itarsi, Madhya Pradesh, India. The platinum jubilee of the presence of the sisters in this place was celebrated from 23 to 26 November, 2016.

Rev. Mother Ludovic, with Sr. Tarsisius and Sr. Bernadette, reached Itarsi from France in 1942 to educate the railway employees' children. The community moved from one rented house to another and classes were partly run in the bungalow of Mr. George D' Souza, until they could purchase a plot of land for themselves. The sisters were actively involved in the socio-pastoral services, going house to house empowering the girl children. In order to cater to the refugees the medium of instruction was changed to Hindi in 1952. In 1956 for the first time they prepared children for Holy Communion.

In honour of the jubilee year several outreach programs were organised. These included the planting of trees in the town, the honouring of 75 poor widows and trips to the home for the aged with clothes and food. There was also medical camp and visits to the village adopted by the school as well as visits to 75 families by the community of sisters.

For the Jubilee celebration the students of the school presented a program which depicted the mission of the Itarsi community from its inception. The highlight of the program was a powerful message for the empowerment of women. "Every parent who comes on transfer to Itarsi wants their kids to be admitted in St. Joseph's school," said the Chief Guest who is a member of Indian Parliament. It is not the most sophisticated infrastructure that attracts them but the quality education and the presence of the sisters who are committed to value based education.

To honour the late Mr. George D' Souza



From right: Bp. Leo, Srs. Lilly, Alice and Annies at the house of Mr. D'Souza



Students enacting the arrival of the sisters in Itarsi.

and his family, who helped the pioneering sisters, the entrance procession of the Jubilee Mass began from his house.

The Eucharist was presided over by the Archbishop of Bhopal. He said that if this institution has been growing and expanding for the past 75 years it is because the sisters are fulfilling God's plan for the people of Itarsi and the sisters truly have brought transformation and tremendous growth to this particular locality.

In large numbers the ex-students came back to their alma mater. The seven and half decades gone by witnessed drastic changes and growth. Alongside the school, the sisters today are involved in empowering women through Jivan Vikas Kendre, where many poor women earn their livelihood and shelter. They also

engage themselves in pastoral care of the catholic population. In 2001 the mission of the sisters was extended to the railway platform children when Sister Clara, with the help of other agencies, established Jeevodaya Rehabilitation centre for platform children. This is now organized and managed as a separate community. At the request of the parents the medium of instruction changed to English in 2000. Due to lack of government aid the school was totally privatized. It was a great challenge for both the management and the staff to make this shift. To meet the demands of the board, in 2013 the high school was shifted to a new locality with more facilities under the same management. Thus the mission of Itarsi community keeps growing and expanding answering the needs of the time.

Working for Communion in Haiti

S. Mimose Santilibert

Congregation of St. Vallier

The Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Vallier have been present in Haiti since 1958 when four Canadian Sisters began to live the Little Design in the north of the country. Since that time the face of the community has changed, with only native Haitians ministering in their schools and dispensaries, responding to the needs of the people. Present in several cities and towns, including Cap-Haïtien, Saint Raphaël, Dondon, and Gonaïves-Saint Michel, all in the north, the sisters work tirelessly to bring hope to the people. In the outskirts of Cap-Haïtien, they have a school for more than 800 girl students, pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The majority of the students come from poor families, many single-parent families, who struggle to survive. The sisters give their attention not only to the students, but also to the parents who often need someone to listen to their story. In this neighborhood which has suffered from political and social instability and thus knows violence, the sisters try to spread love by caring for the “dear neighbor” with mercy.

In Dondon, besides running a school for almost 300 students, pre-kindergarten through grade 6, they have a dispensary which receives 50-60 persons daily. The people come from the rural area and nearby villages to be treated for AIDS and tuberculosis. Others bring their children who are suffering from malnutrition. In face of the extreme poverty the sisters try to give the children a meal at school. For some it is the only meal they have all day.



Besides their presence in schools the sisters have a positive impact in the parishes where they collaborate with the pastor to animate liturgies, prepare children for the sacraments and work with different groups. Among the needs to which they respond is caring for the indigent elderly, giving them food and medicine. They treat all with dignity and respect, honoring them as children of God.

Recently they were asked to take over a school which the Sisters of the Holy Union had run for almost thirty years.

They accepted this challenge, certain that it would open new paths for the future even though they need to work to be accepted by the people. This school welcomes 695 extremely poor children from pre-kindergarten through grade 9.

In general the sisters are engaged in very poor areas, offering education and support to those who have nothing. They consider their mission to be one of ecclesial presence, living the gospel where there is great need and living the charism in diversity.

Professional Training for Refugees

S. Maria Sizílio

Brazil

In 2016, the São José Education Center in São Paulo, in partnership with the Renner Institute and Caritas, opened an industrial sewing course for refugees.

The initiative for the course came from the Renner Institute and Caritas of the Archdiocese of São Paulo as part of the project, 'Empowering Refugee Women.' These two institutions believe that the education center is an environment that promotes acceptance of suffering people.

The São José Learning Center does social work, helping persons to manage their life project through professional qualification courses.

Candidates are in situations of social vulnerability. Annually, about 700 adolescents, young people and adults are served.

In addition to sewing classes, participants receive guidance on entrepreneurship, health and safety at work. In the courses on African braiding, manicure and pedicure, financed by the Global Mission Fund, we also welcome immigrants who come to Brazil in search of a better life.

Our goal is to empower youth and adults for the world of work in the area of fashion and beauty through techniques in each module (tailoring, hairdressing salon manicure and pedicure techniques, African braiding and aesthetics), enabling the participant, at the end of the course, to enter the labor market and increase family income.

The education center has maintained the level of courses available through the participants who tell friends and family about our services. Women from Angola, Congo, South Africa, Nigeria, Togo and Guinea Bissau are part of the sewing classes for refugees at the São José Education Center.

Students leave the courses with jobs, setting up their own business or working in salons. I believe this service that we offer to society is of paramount importance for social transformation, helping every human being to develop her personal and social empowerment.

It's a joy to provide this service on behalf of the Sisters of Saint Joseph who, sensitive to the plight of refugees who come to Brazil, also offer assistance through the Global Mission Fund.



JPIC Members of Lyon-Annecy-Chambéry Meet

S. Dorothy Beck

Tanmaya Province

Members of the JPIC from the three congregations of Lyon, Annecy and Chambéry held their first meeting in Nagpur in mid-September 2016. At the beginning Sr. Rojamani (Lyon) and S. Anitha (Annecy) shared their experience of participating in the U.S. Federation Event and Global CSJ JPIC Meeting, both of which were held in Florida in July 2016.

As a way of getting to know one another, the participants spoke of how each one makes the charism alive and relevant in and through her ministry. Listening to the different stories many of those present were deeply inspired to 'go and do likewise.'

Resource persons enlightened the group on diverse aspects of 'Community Based Monitoring & Planning of Health Care Systems.'

This created a deeper awareness of rights and duties, and pointed to the importance of communicating these so that all could draw full benefit from various schemes offered by the Government. This is part of the work for justice which is rooted in the gospel and the Social Teachings of the Church. Commitment to Justice and Peace, with its biblical foundation, is a way of life. Among the topics



discussed were the organization of the group and an action plan as we move forward together. We desire to keep connected with one another and to communicate with our sisters and friends regularly. It was also clear that, despite a lack of organization on many levels, many sisters are engaged in justice issues and are having an impact on the ground.

Since we are aware that it is not possible for everyone to address every issue, we organized ourselves according to ministries: pastoral,

formation, education, social, health and healing. Each group met for discussion and planning which was presented to the whole group as Action Plans.

At the end of the three days, the group noted the joy and benefit of coming together as a LAC family. There was great bonding and a family spirit. The deep sharing of those present motivated all to be more vibrant in their ministry. The participants left with a lit candle indicating they would carry their light to the ends of the earth.



Energized for Justice

S. Rose Marie Dubay
USA

The January 21, 2017 Women's March on Washington was begun by one woman, Teresa Shook, a grandmother in Hawaii. With the support of three women who are veteran organizers and others, the idea of a Woman's March spread throughout the world. My view from the sidelines was one of awe and hopefulness. Each group expressed an electrified energy that is possible when so many individuals raise a unified voice to bring to light a needed change or to protect a good. Some joined with a focus on Women's Rights, but Equal Rights for all humankind throughout the world was prominent in these marches. Obstacles to the well-being of humanity were addressed by a variety of speakers. Women's rights, civil rights, economic inequality, climate change, human trafficking, immigration were among the issues raised in this worldwide action. Is it too hard to believe that all people worldwide are created to be loved and cared for by one other with the help of those chosen to be our leaders in state, church and national governments? It seems to be getting more difficult



to elect those who care about the less fortunate in our world. So what should we do? Joining forces to peacefully protest as was done at the Women's March is one way. It is also important that we not let this energy die, as rights are taken away one by one. Silence can be a dangerous response. Are we willing to join together with courage against evil that slowly continues to erode the rights of others? Here in the US, there are several things we can do in the face of what is happening. We can pray daily that the heart of each government leader will be touched by the hand of God to act with loving care rather

than violence or hatred. Our prayers need to include all people, so they will grow to a deep understanding of their social responsibilities. Beyond prayers we can contact our legislators to oppose the erosion of human rights and to let them know we will continue to fight for justice. And some can support these issues by joining marches and protests. What is important above all is to stay energized for the cause of justice. Only by doing this, acting as one and seeking God's guidance in this endeavor can we continue to hope that God's love will prevail. Let our energies stay strong and true for the good of all humankind!

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