

## Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation May 2014 Update

**The Global Poverty Task Force** and its subcommittees, Alternative Investments, International Debt Relief, Food and Water, and Local Poverty carry out the direction of the 2011 Assembly while sowing seeds for the future, including the 2015 Assembly. It and the other task forces encourage sisters, associates and colleagues to grow in a deeper understanding, appreciation of and commitment to “action on behalf of justice from a contemplative heart”.



### **Global Poverty Members in Washington**

– Since our Congregation became a Member of Jubilee USA in 2012, the Global Poverty Task Force (especially the International Debt sub-group) has worked closely with Jubilee USA. When Jubilee USA invited three members of the Task Force to Washington D.C. in March for lobbying, Sisters Maryellen Blumlein, Mary Donagher and Regina Murphy were delighted to attend.

At the Jubilee offices, we found that we were part of a group of about 100 (many lay people, other Sisters, Ministers and Rabbi), coming from all parts of the country, Oregon to Maine. Eric Le Compte, Executive Director of Jubilee USA (pictured above with Regina, Mary and Maryellen), and the staff were our hosts. On Monday, we met one another and learned more about Corporate Tax Loopholes. The FACT Coalition( Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency), a group of faith leaders, small business owners, human rights advocates, tax experts and labor unions provided lobbying preparation and information about tax loopholes: twenty-six Fortune 500 companies paid no federal corporate income tax between 2008-2012 and others paid less than 10 percent over the same period. These used 'tax havens', e.g., 'offices' in the Cayman Islands where there are no taxes on companies. There is a single five-story building there which is home to 18,857 "corporations". The companies claim expenses such as licensing fees which do not exist. Senator Carl Levin has authored a bill -- Stop Tax Haven Abuse Act -- (S. 1533) that would close the most egregious offshore tax loopholes. A similar bill was introduced in the House by Rep. Lloyd Doggett (H.R. 1554).

Another area covered was Anonymous "Shell" Companies. Creating a US "shell" company requires less information than acquiring a library card. When someone sets up a company, there is no need to disclose the real people who control its activities (drug traffickers, arms dealers, tax evaders, corrupt foreign officials, etc). "Shell" companies are used to funnel secret campaign cash into Super PACs, to defraud Medicare and the government, and to avoid law enforcement. There is bipartisan legislation which would

bring secret "shell" companies into the light: The Incorporation Transparency and Law Enforcement Assistance Act, S.1465 and H.R. 3331.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, our group visited the offices of Rep. Carolyn Maloney(NY), Rep. Nita Lowey(NY), Rep. Joe Crowley(NY) and Rep. Eliot Engel(NY). In most cases we spent a significant time with the Representative's legislative aide, discussing the Bills. We were able to thank Rep. Maloney for being a co-sponsor of the House bill requiring companies to disclose their beneficial owner(s) when they incorporate. The program also included a panel with Senator Carl Levin and Congressman Lloyd Doggett who explained how their bills will curb tax havens and other tax loopholes.

Maryellen, Mary and Regina agreed that the lobbying experience was informative, energizing and, hopefully, productive in curbing tax loophole abuses.



**Sisters of Charity address climate change and related issues** such as safe renewable energy, fracking and pipeline extensions by joining with Catholic Climate Covenant, GreenFaith, ROAR, Grassroots Educational Outreach, Sierra Club Lower Hudson Chapter and other groups in various initiatives that focus on education and advocacy. The Global Poverty

Task Force co-sponsored a May 1 panel discussion, *To Till and To Tend: Energy Needs and Environmental Impact on Westchester's Communities*, at the Temple Israel Center, White Plains. The Sisters of Charity co-sponsored the May 5 GreenFaith webinar, *Catholic Perspectives on Fossil Fuel Divestment*. Heeding Pope Francis' call to challenge the disposable culture, the Sisters of Charity seek to increase their awareness on how personal lifestyle and congregational and national policies and practices impact Earth Our Home, those living in poverty and future generations. For information or resources in this area, contact Sr. Carol De Angelo. **You are invited to take the following actions – also encourage others.**

1. **Sign the St. Francis Pledge.** The Climate Change Subcommittee of Creation's Transformative Energy Task Force supports the signing on to the St. Francis Pledge found at [www.catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org). Since the April 5 Congregation Day (above picture) fifty sisters and one CMSV staff have signed.
2. **Call Governor Andrew Cuomo every Friday (518-474-8390)** – urge him to say yes to a frack-free future, to transition to safe renewable energy, and to say no to fracking. The Food and Water Subcommittee of Global Poverty Task Force continue to keep abreast of health related issues caused by fracking, pipelines and compressor stations.

**Pope Benedict XVI:** "The protection of the environment, and the safeguarding of resources and of the climate, oblige all ... to act jointly, ...promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the world" (Caritas in Veritate, no. 50)

Carol De Angelo, Director of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation, May 13, 2014