

Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation Update, January 2018

Join the Sisters of Charity of New York in our ministry of peace, justice and integrity of creation as we seek to be beholders who offer a contemplative gaze on our Common Home, Earth, its people and all communities of life. This month we focus on refugees, migrants, those enslaved in human trafficking, as well as decision makers responsible for the public good (that they may pursue policies of welcome).

Resources to behold with a contemplative gaze and lead us toward attitudes/acts of love:

1. Pope Francis' 51st World Day of Peace Message, <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/index.html>,
2. Pope Francis' January 14th World Day for Migrants and Refugees Message, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20170815_world-migrants-day-2018.html ,
3. Share the Journey, www.sharejourney.org, and National Migration Week (January 7 – 14th) resources.
4. National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month (January) www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org, especially the newsletter, www.stopenslavement.org.



In Pope Francis' World Day of Peace Message, we read, "The wisdom of faith fosters a contemplative gaze that recognizes that all of us belong to one family, migrants and the local populations that welcome them, and all have the same right to enjoy the goods of the earth ... A contemplative gaze should also guide the discernment of those responsible for the public good, and encourage them to pursue policies of welcome, "within the limits allowed by a correct understanding of the common good" – bearing in mind, that is, the needs of all members of the human family and the welfare of each. In the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees Message, Pope Francis voices the Church's concern for migrants, displaced people, refugees and victims of human trafficking, and calls us to welcome, protect, promote and integrate them as our brothers and sisters – to be in solidarity and share every aspect of the journey with them. *As I read these powerful words that call me (us) to see ourselves as one family, I wonder, How do I/we behold and gaze contemplatively as we watch and read the news and listen to the radio? For me, it involves acknowledging and honoring the feelings, anxiety, anger and fears that bubble up within my heart, as well as examining the images and thoughts in my mind that pop up. How might we help each other "see" the refugee or migrant as our brother or sister?*

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis has one section devoted to the gaze of Jesus. "The Lord was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder. #97 Pope Francis invites us in *Laudato Si'* to gaze contemplatively on our Earth, all its people and all creation. *As I reflected on resources above, I was reminded of Pope Francis' invitation to be like Jesus – in touch with nature so that we can look on it in fondness and wonder... to be a beholder and have a contemplative gaze on all of nature. This includes the crisis of migration – one of the biggest challenges of our day! According to the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 65.6 million persons were displaced in the world at the end of 2016. What*

might we do as people of faith to foster a contemplative gaze that recognizes all of us as one family? And that moves us to attitudes and actions of love?



Fred Branson in his article in *Orion Magazine*, *The Ecology of Prayer*, reminded me that Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* speaks of a caress of God, "Soil, water, mountains: everything is a caress of God." Branson speaks of Pope Francis as championing "the mysterious network of relations between things." and recounts a story of Saint Isaac of Syria: "An elder was once asked, 'What is a compassionate heart?' The elder replied: "It is a heart on fire for the whole

of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons and for all that exists." In this same article, Fred Branson quotes Elizabeth Johnson in *Ask the Beast*, describing the need for *beholders* – people who direct their contemplative practice toward the nonhuman world. *As I reflected, I was reminded that the network of relations "holds the world together" and invites all of us to let go, let be, and rest in the "gaze of Jesus" and the "caress of God". Being in relationship with all of life sets our hearts on fire and leads to sharing the journey together.*

No matter our age, health, status in life, we can behold and offer a contemplative gaze! Sisters of Charity of New York, Associates, Colleagues in mission and ministry (and all people of good will) are called to be the eyes, hearts, hands, minds and wills of charity – of living lives of love. The foundress of the Sisters of Charity, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton whose Feast Day we celebrated on January 4th, invites us to love God in all things. In the tradition of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, we see and meet God in all things, especially in the "poor" – those facing poverty, war, violence, inequality, the vulnerable and those on the edge. We are called to behold and stand with ... to be the voice, but more importantly, to allow the voices of "the poor", the voices of our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters and their stories to be heard ... to share and break bread with them, literally, liturgically and symbolically so that we truly are one bread and one body, the Body of Christ. We are the Body of Christ! We are the matter through which God is found – love-energy that births God consciously in our world. When we see the face of God in the eyes of our brother and sister, God is seen and known, touched and becomes real! Sister Ilia Delio, OSF in *Evolution and social Justice, nature itself* (part of the Global Sisters Report) says, "We are not to work toward justice: rather the justice of nature requires us to evolve toward authentic personhood. ...Our human self has a capacity for new relationships, new wholes and new communities, an inner capacity for unlimited growth which is the making of the world. When this growth is thwarted or stunted, the development of the world is stunted." *Might we ask ourselves, how does my/our meditation or prayer "wake me (us) up" to authentic personhood so that I/we might behold with a contemplative gaze? What supports me/us in "evolving towards authentic personhood" so that we are moved to stand with our refugee and migrant brothers and sisters?* Your suggestions and comments on how we might share the journey together are appreciated! Email to cdeangelo@scny.org

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