a MATTER of SPIRIT

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Economic Justice

At the end of each year, Oxford Languages releases the "Word of the Year" to show English speakers our most commonly used word. What is the 2020 word? When the lexicographers analyzed the data, they found there were far too many words used to narrow it down to one. By March, two of the most common words used were 'essential' and 'worker,' followed by 'frontline.' By April, the usage of 'furlough' increased. From May to December, the four most commonly used words were: stimulus, unemployment, layoff, and eviction.

A closer look at these words points to the stories we told of COVID-19: that ordinary people, essential and frontline workers, labored at great risk to themselves for the common good. They also endured tremendous challenges under an unjust economic system. In this issue of *A Matter of Spirit*, we look at how we can create a new reality—an economic system that is just, equitable, and sustainable. Meenakshi Rishi, PhD does a systemic analysis of our current economic system. Peter Henriot, SJ frames economic justice through Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* and the parable of the Good Samaritan. Kevin Schilling highlights the unseen burdens of essential workers and their sacrifices. The young adults of *Economy of Francesco* ask us to build a better economy. Judy Pigott considers what foundations might do for the good of our Earth and the future. Finally, Maria Bergh shares what economic justice looks like through the lens of the Catholic Worker Movement. We hope that this *AMOS* challenges you to pursue a more equitable and just world.

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# of our Economic System

BY MEENAKSHI RISHI, PHD AND JONATHAN MELLIN

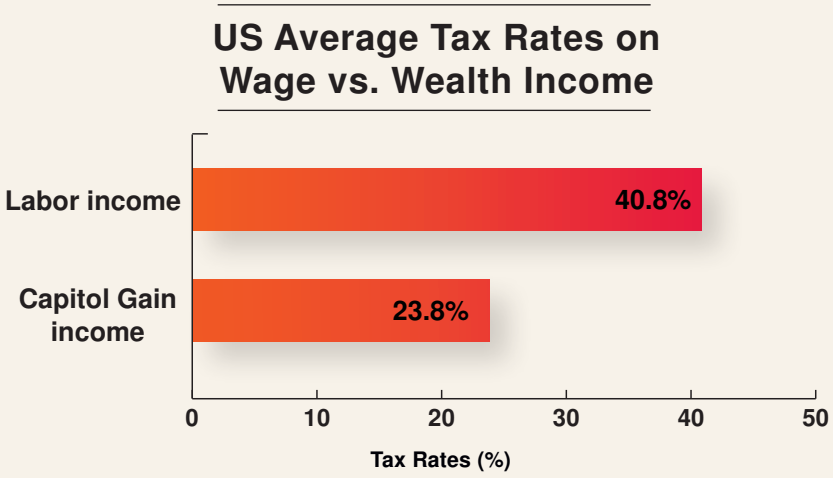
An economic system is a scheme of production, resource allocation and distribution of goods and services within a country. While much has been written about the structural inequities that characterize the US economic system, COVID-19 has visually laid bare the deep cracks in the economic foundations of this country. Even prior to the pandemic, Black net worth was one-tenth of White wealth, and the so-called best job market in US economic history was characterized by a Black and Latinx unemployment rate that was twice that of the White rate.

Among the employed, Black workers face large pay disparities relative to their White counterparts.[1] The intersection of race and gender imposes a dual wage penalty on Black women. In 2019, Black women were paid 33.7% less than their White male counterparts, which was a much larger gap than that faced by either White women or Black men. As is now known by all, essential and frontline workers are disproportionately Black and brown. We also know that a majority of them neither have access to health care nor do they possess retirement accounts. Most importantly these workers don't have sick days.

Since the killing of George Floyd in May, we are also becoming aware of the

[1] In 2019, the average hourly wage of Black workers was 26.5% less than that of White workers

disproportionate impact on Black and Brown bodies. Deep racial injustices and economic disparities that limit opportunities for so many in our economy are now front and center and demand our attention. Doing nothing has a cost as such inequities can engender higher rates of health and social problems, lower population-wide satisfaction and an even lower level of economic growth. In other words, Systemic Racism acts like a yoke that will drag down the US economy.[2]



Main Street USA is in a much different place than Wall Street USA, as the soaring stock market reminds us. While the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq continue to shatter records and post gains, the Dow Jones is at an all-time high of 30,045.84 and closed out its best month since 1987. Many have remarked on the startling disconnect between surging lines at foodbank sites and the surging rally of the US stock market. What is going on? For starters, it would help to understand that the stock market is not the economy. In fact, only 10% of Americans own nearly 87% of the stock market, which are also far more global than the typical American firm. Approximately 40% of the revenues of S&P 500 companies come from abroad. The main reason that the stock market is rising, even as 12 million Americans grapple with the loss of unemployment benefits, is that we are living in a "K-shaped" economy where industries like technology, retail, and software services are generating profits whereas travel, entertainment, hospitality, and food-service industries continue to struggle. The low-interest rate regime instituted by the Federal Reserve since March has sent people (with disposable income) scurrying into selective stocks or the housing market, driving their prices up and generating rallies. It is worth noting that stock and homeownership is exclusive to the richer segments of the population, who are least likely to feel the pain of an economic downturn.

On balance, it appears as though the owners of financial and real estate capital (e.g. stocks and homes) are gaining at the expense of mostly low-wage workers who do not have access to a market portfolio or the ability to purchase a home despite record low-interest rates. Of course, this discrepancy between "the haves and have-nots" is only amplified when one considers that the US tax code provides several significant tax breaks to income from capital gains (*wealth)* that income from labor (*work*) does not enjoy. Capital gains income is taxed at lower rates than income from work (at a rate of 23.8% instead of 40.8%, counting federal Medicare taxes). In addition, if the wealth owner holds on to the asset until death, any increase in value will *never* be subject to tax. These and related tax preferences enable households that already have substantial wealth, including fortunes accumulated across generations, to build still more wealth while others can never catch up! The resultant wealth gap widens the disparities and works as a barrier to upward mobility for many families.

Getting rid of these special tax preferences may be a first step to levelling this gap. Another possibility is to strengthen the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that subsidizes low-income working families. The credit equals a fixed percentage of earnings from the first dollar of earnings until the credit reaches its maximum. At present, the EITC does not fully support childless workers. Hence, one proposal is to expand the purview of the EITC to ensure that even if the market doesn't pay adequate wages, the take-home pay of low-income individuals makes sure that they don't live in poverty.

"An inclusive economy is a productive economy."

Education has historically been considered a great equalizer capable of lifting less advantaged groups out of poverty. But the top 40% of the population spends, on average, five times as much money on their children's education as those in the bottom 60% of the population. Additionally, only 40% of Black students get a degree, as compared to 64% of White students. Increasing access to wealth can improve access to education and to economic opportunities—particularly for Black and Latinx families. Policymakers should consider family wealth, not just income, in developing policies and programs to improve socio-economic mobility. If the US economic system deprives individuals of having equal access to opportunity, then it is denying these individuals the ability to fully participate in the economy. The opportunity costs of operating at less than full steam are significant—smaller workforce growth, slower productivity growth, and an eventual erosion in our standards of living. An inclusive economy is a productive economy.

[2] Raphael W. Bostic, President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

So, how can we reimagine our economy? We can start by redefining capitalism as more than an economic system and visualize it as an ecosystem that includes the interests of its various stakeholders, including the environment. Here are three concrete policy suggestions:

1. Consider a Universal Basic Income Policy (UBI)

Such a policy was proposed by Andrew Yang in his run for the Democratic Party Presidential nomination. The policy was based on a guaranteed income of $1,000 a month for every American adult regardless of financial circumstances. Radical as it may sound, such a policy is fast gaining favor with many. More recently, UBI has been promoted by tech leaders who believe that technology will replace many American jobs leading to social unrest. Some form of universal basic income that prioritizes those marginalized and vulnerable groups who experience exclusion and discrimination on a daily basis would act not only as a form of reparation but could be the first step of many in attempting to bridge the mile-wide abyss that is racial and economic inequality in the US. In May 2020 more than a dozen cities, including Atlanta, Los Angeles, Newark and Saint Paul, along with the Economic Security Project, launched Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, a network of mayors experimenting with UBI-like schemes.[3]

2. Student Debt Solutions

Forty-five million Americans are indebted to the federal government to the tune of $1.5 trillion (plus another $130 billion more to private lenders). The average student debt amount is $37,000, and despite making up more than half of the student population, women owe two-thirds of total debt. Approximately 10 percent of the borrowers are in default. As with the rest of the economy, racial disparities characterize the student debt crisis as Black students are more likely to take out larger loans and then have far more trouble repaying these loans.[4] Paradoxically, education can widen income gaps by race and contribute to the ongoing persistence of racial wealth inequality within our society. Among the solutions, researchers have called for policies that address employment discrimination and occupational segregation, and increased funding to historically Black colleges and universities. Debt forgiveness may be another avenue that is worth considering. Researchers have urged the Biden Administration to unilaterally cancel the student debt of those whose colleges have closed and of those who have been defrauded by their institutions.

3. Dismantle the structures of systemic economic racism

Ultimately, closing the wage, housing, education, business investment and racial gaps can help narrow the wealth gap, which is significant for facilitating homeownership, business, and job creation, as well as establishing a pipeline for intergenerational wealth accumulation. A Citigroup study by Dana Person and Catherine Mann[5] estimates that we have lost $16 trillion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 2000 due to racial discrimination, specifically in wages, education, housing, and investment. The authors of the study go on to say that if we close these structural gaps today, then we could add $5 trillion of additional GDP over the next five years, thus underscoring the point that racial fairness generates economic benefits while discrimination has real economic costs. As a nation we also have a moral obligation to end unjust and destructive practices in all segments of society.

[3] https://www.mayorsforagi.org/
[4] Racial Disparities in Student Debt and the Reproduction of the Fragile Black Middle Class
[5] CLOSING THE RACIAL INEQUALITY GAPS: The Economic Cost of Black Inequality in the U.S.
[6] The Three-Fifth Compromise is an agreement made during The Constitutional Convention (1787) between Northern and Southern states to count slaves 3/5ths of a person for purposes of taxation and congressional representation.

The history of our nation is rife with examples of systemic racism—slavery, federal law (consider the Three-Fifths Compromise[6] our founding fathers established to determine federal representation), sanctioned intimidation during Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws in southern states, redlining by bankers and brokers, segregation, voter suppression, and racial profiling in policing. By shining a spotlight on the inequities in our economic system, COVID-19 has also illuminated the best way forward and allows us to reimagine the economic system. This is a unique opportunity to build a more humane and more resilient economy—we must make the best of this moment in history.

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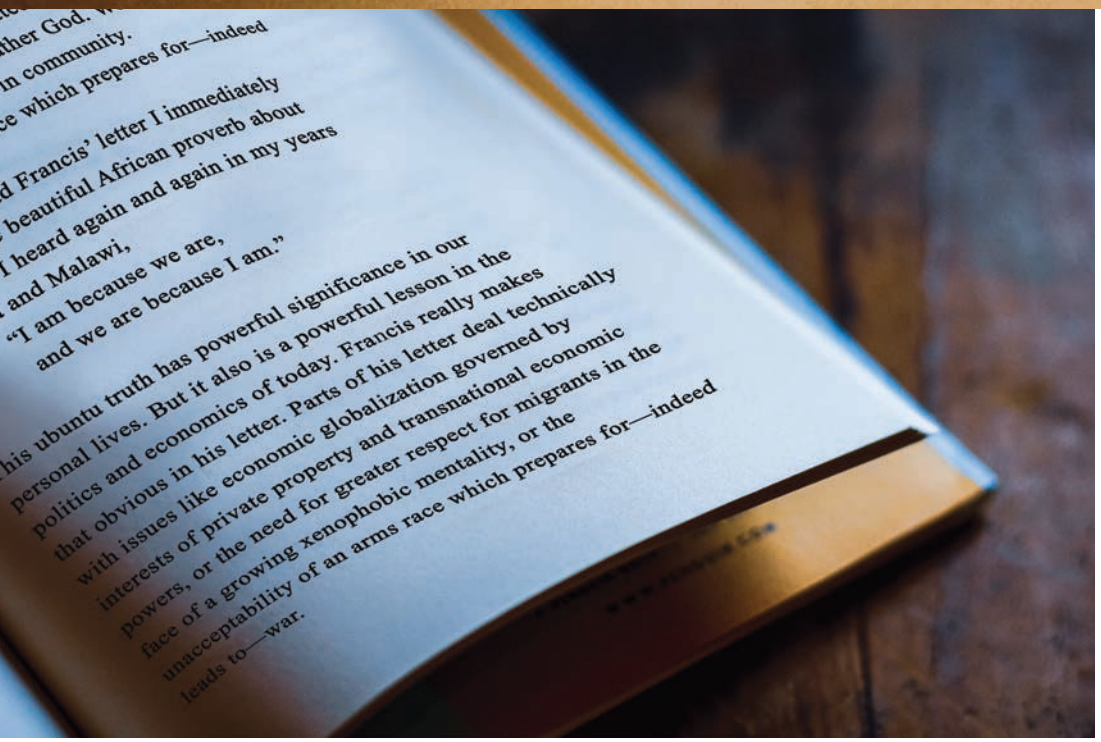
- *Jonathan Mellin studies Management in the Albers School of Business & Economics at Seattle University. He is a Research Assistant for the Economics Department and the Senior Music Editor of KXSU, SU's student-run radio station.*

FRATELLI TUTTI:

BY PETER HENRIOT, SJ



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economics of today. Francis really makes that obvious in his letter. Parts of his letter deal technically with issues like economic globalization governed by interests of private property and transnational economic powers, or the need for greater respect for migrants in the face of a growing xenophobic mentality, or the unacceptability of an arms race which prepares for—indeed leads to—war.

In all of his analysis in this letter, the Pope shows us how, as society becomes ever more globalized, it may make us neighbors but does not necessarily make us sisters and brothers.

"What do you think is the very best parable Jesus taught?" That question comes up often, both in personal reflection and in pastoral service. For me, that is really an easy question to answer. And it is especially easy to answer after reading Pope Francis' recent pastoral letter, *Fratelli Tutti (Sisters and Brothers All).*

I have always liked the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). And I've used it again and again in sermons, articles and (I hope!) in prayer! But that parable just bursts forth with life, new meaning and consequences for head, heart and hand as Francis explains it in an early chapter (nos. 56-86) of his powerful communication to us last October.

Sisters and Brothers All teaches simply what the title hints—every one of us is closely related because we are all children of the same Mother-Father God. We simply cannot fully live unless we live in community.

When I first read Francis' letter I immediately thought of the beautiful African proverb *ubuntu* that I heard again and again in my years in Zambia and Malawi, "I am because we are, and we are because I am."

This *ubuntu* truth has powerful significance in our personal lives. But it also is a powerful lesson in the politics and

> "I am because we are, and we are because I am."
>
> —AFRICAN PROVERB

To ground both his analysis and his recommendations of *Sisters and Brothers All* with solid scriptural foundation, Francis spends an early chapter exploring the meaning and consequences of the Good Samaritan parable. When I read the whole of the Pope's letter (90+ pages!), I was very glad that he had started out with his beautiful and challenging sharing of the meaning of this parable. It is surely easier reading and truly heart-warming!

I can imagine that most of the readers of this article know very well the Good Samaritan story. The main characters are easy to identify in real life: the robbed, the respectable religious, the rejected outsider. They play roles we read about in a daily paper these days. Unfortunately, the parable is all too real.

And so as we read the further chapters of *Brothers and Sisters All*, we can appreciate the challenge of Francis for us to be modern-day Good Samaritans. Our Pope is not a Nobel Prize

Sisters and Brothers

winner, but he relies on many astute experts to share a picture of national and global life where it is easy to imagine many lying on the side of the road while many walk by quickly because they don't want to see, don't want to get involved.

It is in the breaking of relationships, the fracturing of solidarity, that we globally experience disasters that slow down and even halt the realization of our dreams of future prosperity. Chapters of this great letter develop both theoretical analysis and practical examples of this dangerous reality.

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What especially impressed me is the ability of Francis to link the lessons of the Good Samaritan story to a diversity of social, economic and political issues facing us today: the environmental crisis, migration problems, our throwaway culture, nuclear threats, death penalty, and religious freedom.

Homilists speaking to the Gospel challenges posed by political transitions, teachers instructing youth about a lifestyle more sensitive to ecological issues, parents dealing with the inter-racial, inter-gender, inter-religious relationships of their children—*Sisters and Brothers All* does not give easy, ready-made solutions to issues but puts them into a Gospel perspective that is both enlightening and empowering.

In particular, I was struck by his discussion—brief but telling—of the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. He notes that this worldwide tragedy has "momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together." (no.32)

Is it stretching a point too far to urge that Francis' emphasis that "we can only be saved together" should be heard in all the heated debates about a social obligation to wear face masks during our COVID crisis?

During my almost three decades of living in the "developing countries" of Zambia and Malawi in Africa, I experienced first-hand the reality of the international consequences of lessons presented in Francis' reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In all too many ways, these so-called "Third World" countries were simply by the side of the road of the transactions of international economics and politics. Massive external debts—caused by some homegrown mistakes, yes, but mostly by foreign manipulations favorable to rich nations—paralyzed the potential growth and prosperity of so many countries.

It is therefore altogether appropriate, in my opinion, that a letter on the sisterhood and brotherhood of all should emphasize the tragic problem of the debt of poor countries and urge the logic that, "While respecting the principle that all legitimately acquired debt must be repaid, the way in which many poor countries fulfil this obligation should not end up compromising their very existence and growth." (no. 26)

On a personal note, I was very much involved in the "Jubilee: Cancel the Debt" international movement at the end of the 1990s and start of the 2000s. I really wish that we had *Brothers and Sisters All* in hand during those days of eager advocacy for justice!

As I mentioned at the start of this reflection, the story of the Good Samaritan has been my very favorite parable. Now following the challenging lessons of *Brothers and Sisters All*, that parable is even more central to my following of Jesus today!

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Essential Workers Essential Rights?

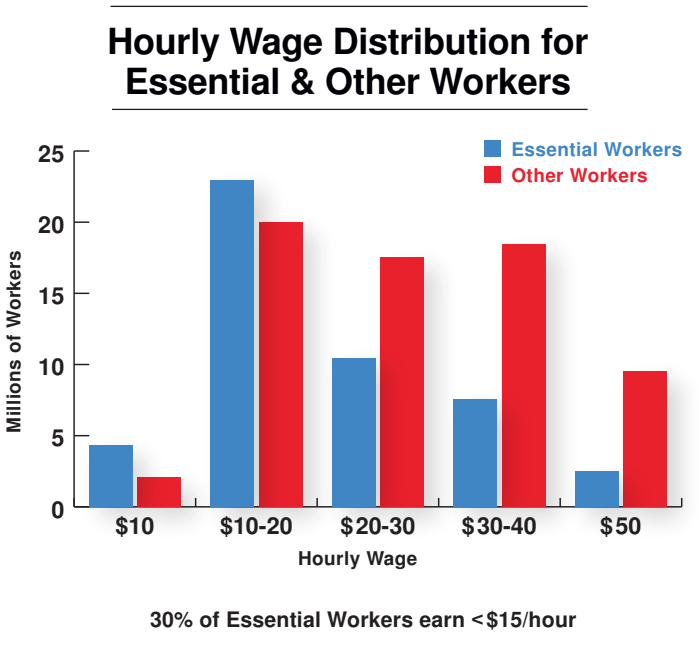
BY KEVIN J. SCHILLING

Miriam was the first person I knew to get COVID. As a hairstylist, she relies on a steady stream of customers in order to pay the bills. Lockdown forced her out of work. Eager to get back, Miriam made all the precautions necessary to return to work. What happened the first week back? She got COVID. I have known her my whole life; we lived down the street from one another in Burien, WA. When I heard that she got COVID the first week back on the job, I was empathetic to her situation.

Imagine that on top of a full day's work, you are a parent needing to accommodate to your kid switching to online learning. Imagine the stress of a single-parent navigating this new world order: prioritizing your need to maintain a busy work schedule to not miss out on a full paycheck, and the educational needs of your child, now entirely at home online. Imagine all the essential workers who stock grocery shelves, build our infrastructure, drive buses, deliver goods in the wee hours, grow and harvest our food, clean houses or hospitals, care for children and seniors, nurse the sick, and teach the next generation who became stressed beyond belief with the new requirements of our national situation. COVID reminds us that the economy should exist for people, not the other way around. Our country asked essential workers to sacrifice more than others, now what is our country going to do in return?

Overall, the US has a child poverty rate of 16% and women on average make 18% less than men annually. Women are the major breadwinner in almost half of all households with children and earn 30% less than men. This wage gap is widest for most mothers of color: 47% for Latina, 43% for Native American, 37% for Black, 21% for White and 10% for Asian women. Eliminate the wage gap, and women would have enough money for a year of child care, community college tuition, food, or six months of health insurance or mortgage payments.[1] This is not a difficult decision to make. It takes the courage and will of the government to implement these requirements and the private sector to pay their workers to ensure that mothers are paid equally for the sake of their families, businesses and the economy at large.

COVID has made evident that essential workers are the backbone of our economy. We need to reorient our government programs and private sector benefits to compensate workers commensurate with their essentialness. I acknowledge a pro-worker shift of our government and private sector is not something that will happen overnight and is certainly not an ideological movement that utilizes a monolithic philosophy. However, it is incumbent on us as local communities that form a national identity to decide through political power that it is time for us to provide a living wage for those that work to keep our social fabric together.



Source: Brookings Institution calculations based on Current Population Survey data. https://brook.gs/3qY509V

[1] National Partnership for Women & Families, "America's Women and the Wage Gap," September 2020, https://bit.ly/3gUBJZe

COVID-19 Death Rates are Higher for Indigenous and Black people
US Deaths per 100,000 by Race

Source: APM Research Lab's Data. Data through December 8, 2020.

"COVID reminds us that the economy should exist for people, not the other way around."

First and foremost, we need to prioritize education and childcare. The pandemic showed that the ultimate need of families is for the school system to provide the basic needs of children: education, nutrition, and social experiences. Without the in-person system in place, students miss opportunities and parents miss work. Our country needs to prioritize children and education by implementing universal childcare and education programs. Similarly, we need to make the necessary programs available for pregnant women and single-moms to know that they are a societal priority. Cities and municipalities should work with churches and nonprofits to orchestrate home visits and support for these women who ARE the backbone of any social framework. Linking these single parents to willing "grandparents" in their geographical and community faith groups could help lighten their loads and bring needed solace to their burdens.

These single-parents, as well as children who were depending on schools for learning, all have been enclaved in their homes for the past several months. That, of course, is only possible with a home to shelter them in. Counties and states, for the most part, recognize that housing is an essential right for all and adopted impressive rental assistance programs. Research shows that the number one way to keep people housed is to assist them in times of possible eviction. Rental assistance programs should become a natural and normal function of local governments for the future. Keeping parents and children housed reduces frequent moves and limits school transitions that contribute to difficulties in student learning, improves their health, and reduces the number of homeless individuals in our communities.

The argument of this article has been two-fold. The first is that the essential nature of these workers was not discovered in the pandemic but was highlighted. In doing so, society cannot retreat from our now established position that these workers sacrifice more and work hard to keep our nation functioning. Therefore, I argued for common sense government and private sector programs to ensure that benefits exist for single parents, working moms, and the underpaid to provide a living wage and safe and secure homes. The political will to recognize the vital importance that workers play in our social fabric requires communities to hold elected officials accountable for their decisions that help or hurt working people. Our political will needs to reflect our spiritual will that recognizes the dignity of life and work, so that single parents, women, and children can stay housed, employed, and fed, and never have to worry about losing access to basic human needs.

▲ *Kevin J. Schilling is a member of the Burien City Council. He attended Washington State University for his undergraduate degree, and Columbia University in New York and the London School of Economics and Political Science for graduate school.*

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Dear young people, good afternoon!

Thank you for being there, for all the work you have done, and for the efforts you have made over the past months…You did not lose heart…You brought to it all of your passion for the things that excite you, cause you concern, make you indignant and urge you to work for change.[1]

With this greeting Pope Francis convened the *Economy of Francesco*, a three-day virtual gathering of over 2000 young economists, entrepreneurs and global change makers all under the age of 35, to imagine a new economic system that benefits and prioritizes people, the poor and the planet.

A year before the event, Francis sent an invitation to young leaders to gather in Assisi, the birthplace of St. Francis who dedicated his life to those living in poverty. He urged them to imagine a new economic system that will guarantee "respect for the environment, openness to life, concern for the family, social equality, the dignity of workers and the rights of future generations."[2]

With great confidence, Pope Francis placed the responsibility of economic transformation in the hands of young people. He emboldened them saying, "Please, do not leave it to others to be protagonists of change. You are the ones who hold the future!"[3] They proceeded to follow his admonition, "No shortcuts! Be a leaven! Roll up your sleeves!" And they did not disappoint.

When the three-day gathering ended on November 21, 2020 the participants issued 12 points of action to guide a reanimation of the global economy.

"We *young economists, entrepreneurs and change makers* of the world…want to send a message to economists, entrepreneurs, political decision makers, workers and citizens of the world, to convey the joy, the experiences, the hopes and challenges that we have gained and gathered up…We are convinced that a better world cannot be built without a better economy and that the economy is so important for the lives of peoples and the poor that we all need to be concerned with it."[4]

For this reason, in the name of the young people and the poor of the Earth, ***we ask:***

1. Slow down the economic race that is suffocating Earth and the most vulnerable.
2. A worldwide sharing of the most advanced technologies to achieve sustainable production and climate justice.
3. Stewardship of common goods, e.g., natural resources, oceans, land, seeds
4. Economic ideologies should never be used to reject persons living in poverty, the sick, minorities, and all those living with disadvantages.
5. The right to decent work for all and the discouragement of business practices based on profit and exploitation.
6. The abolishment of tax havens.
7. The establishment of new financial institutions and the reform of existing ones that subsist on predatory financial operations.
8. The introduction of an independent ethics committee for all companies and banks.
9. National and international institutions reward sustainability and innovation efforts of entrepreneurs in the context of environmental, social and spiritual efforts.
10. States, large companies and international institutions work to provide quality education for every girl and boy in the world.
11. Economic organizations and civil institutions give female workers the same opportunities as male workers.
12. A commitment to ending war and no longer taking resources from schools, health care, our present and our future to build weapons and fuel wars.

"All this…we ask knowing that it is very difficult and that perhaps many consider it utopian. Instead, we believe it is prophetic and therefore that we can ask, ask and ask again, because what seems impossible today will seem less so tomorrow thanks to our commitment and our insistence. You adults who control the economy and businesses have done a lot for us young people, but you can do more. Our times are too difficult to ask for anything but the impossible. We have faith in you and that is why we ask much of you."[5]

Let the people say, Thank you for your faith in us. We will not disappoint you!

[1] https://rb.gy/0jztjl
[2] https://rb.gy/3u4zv9
[3] https://bit.ly/3npnxKo
[4] https://rb.gy/0jztjl
[5] https://rb.gy/0q6tr1

What Might Foundations Do?

BY JUDY PIGOTT

If 2020 has shown us anything, it is that we are all vulnerable to COVID-19 with its heartbreak, and that Black Lives Matter. When we face inequities, and understand how marginalizing anyone weakens us all, we can move from fear to action. There is something to be done by each of us, from wearing a mask and keeping safe distances, to changing accustomed holiday plans into those that might safeguard loved ones, to taking a larger role in creating a more balanced, equitable society—one in which we are fellow travelers, not conquerors.

With talk in philanthropic circles about the importance of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and what might help move us all, as a country, toward a more just, sustainable, and respectful life. It seems time to ask ourselves: What role charitable foundations might play? Well, we could get over ourselves. We, and I speak from a role I've held for many years within a family foundation, could start by letting go of a mistaken idea that the dollars we currently control are actually ours. We could see, instead, our task of stewardship as leading toward the creation of equitable access to rights, resources, and representation. This might include the following:

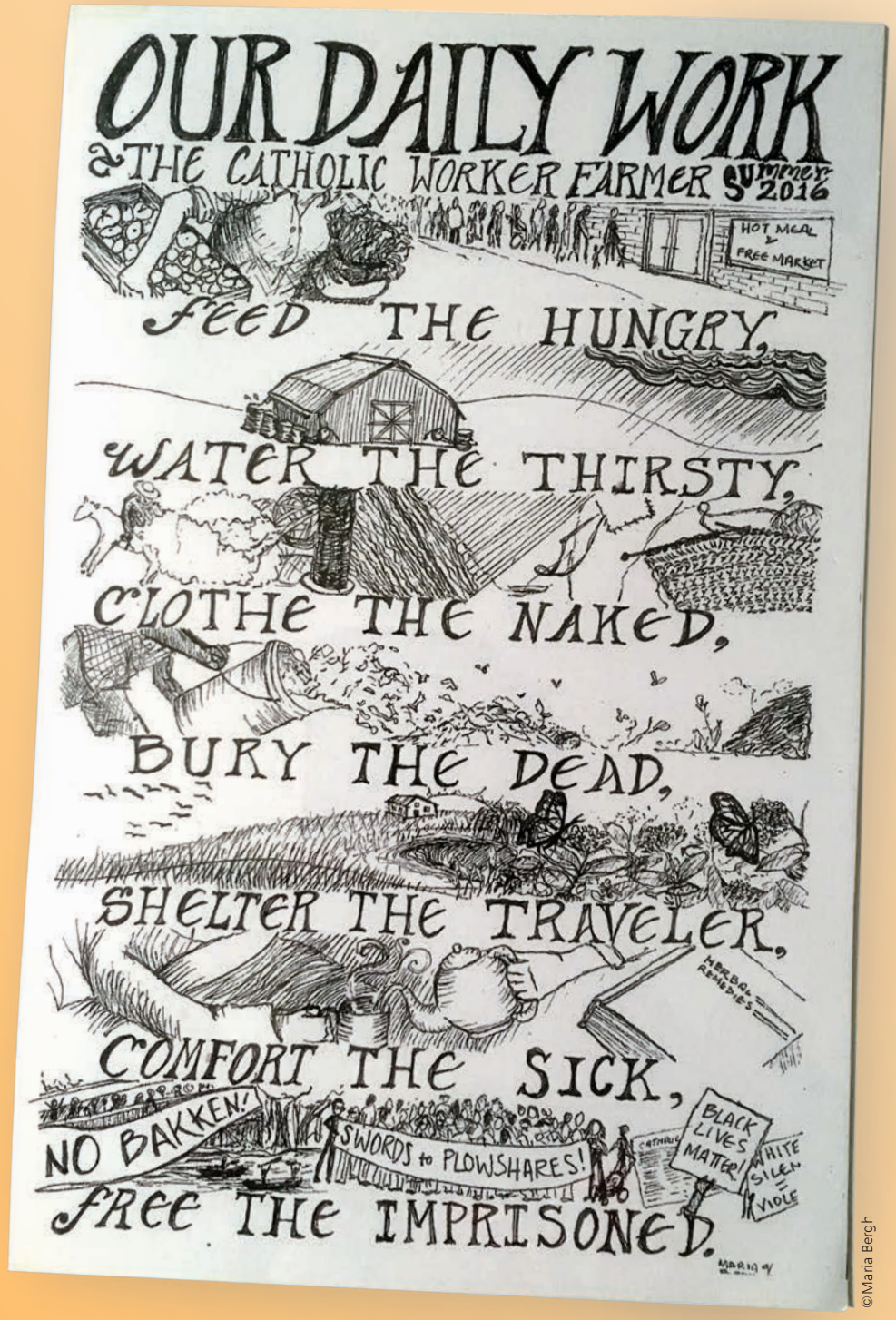
"When we face inequities, and understand how marginalizing anyone weakens us all, we can move from fear to action.

1. Recognize that financial wealth IS NOT OUR MONEY—the money no longer belongs to any individual(s), or foundation. It is community property to be administered for the common good.
2. Articulate values, vision and mission, then follow these. If the reason for establishing a foundation was based on tax avoidance, start over.
3. Exercise fiduciary responsibility fully, recognizing that this not only applies to financial decisions, but also, maybe more importantly, to ethical decisions.
4. Ask, "Who made up the rules for this?" Find out. Then use the values, vision, and mission to determine a better way.
5. Become accustomed to gaining insight and information by centering Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, taking direction from those most impacted by whatever injustice our mission leads us to try to address.
6. Acknowledge that current intergenerational wealth exists because of a system based on systemic racism, exercised throughout our history. Our Nation's Founding Fathers (read white, landowning, literate men) made the rules.
7. Wealth was made and accumulated through genocide of Indigenous Peoples, enslavement of African people, and the extractive practices related to many immigrant groups. Foundations have an opportunity to change this narrative.
8. The 501(c)(3) status, an IRS designation that allows charitable organizations to receive tax exempt donations, was enacted in response to a growing mega-wealthy class and the mobilization of community groups during the Civil Rights movement. The formal policies and restrictions that came with this 501(c)(3) status muzzled organizations while giving them a way to fundraise more effectively via tax breaks—a fundamental process of deradicalizing movements.[1]
9. Think of existing in perpetuity as a financial version of hoarding.
10. Cease and desist from first using our operating expenses as part of our IRS mandated minimum distribution, and increase this minimum distribution to 10% from the current 5%.
11. Get ready…for the good of our Earth and the future.

▲ *Judy Pigott has experience in teaching, facilitating and mediating, parenting, volunteering and advocating for communities. She is the co-author of Personal Safety Nets, a road-map to gathering and using support and resources to help make strong lives. She is focused now on family, philanthropy and community engagement. Her goal is to help build a better, more equitable world.*

[1] Cami Aurioles, Community-Centric Fundraising, https://bit.ly/3gKRySe

THE CATHOLIC



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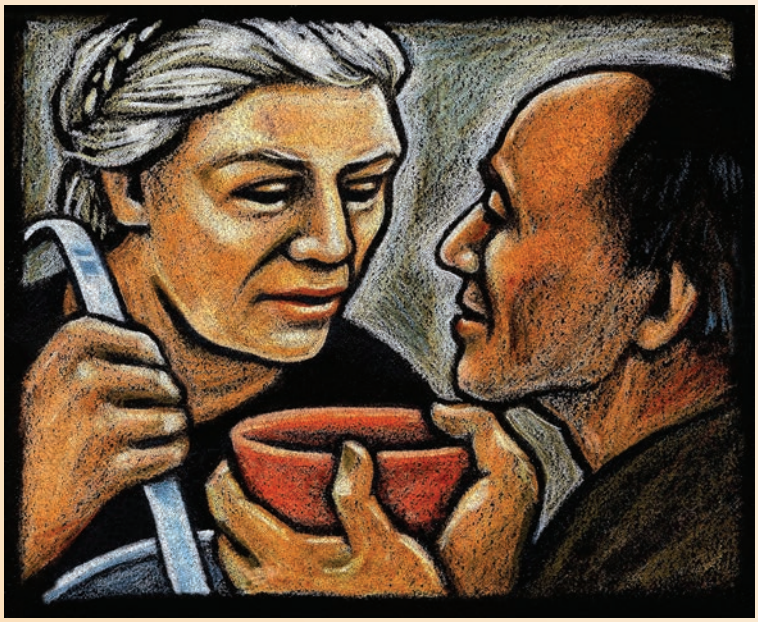
The Catholic Worker Movement was founded in 1933 during the Great Depression by social justice activist Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. It is best known for its houses of hospitality that welcome the poorest of the poor and seek justice for them. There are currently over 200 Catholic Worker houses in the US and globally.

I met Dorothy Day in the pages of her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, when I was 16. Her witness illuminated the shadowy mystery that was my family's deep Catholic faith, but it took me more than a decade to find the courage to admit (and commit) to a life of downward mobility. Joining the Catholic Worker Movement felt like trusting my Catholic roots as shelter to keep me dry. What does "shelter" call to mind? A roof overhead and walls against the wind? Isaiah writes of another shelter: solid earth, deep roots, hope for new growth. These can bring us through adversity as surely as a building keeps out a storm.

WORKER

BY MARIA BERGH

Prophetic Sharing in Community



Dorothy Day Feeding the Hungry © Julie Lonneman

At Su Casa Catholic Worker in the neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago where Saul Alinsky wrote *Rules for Radicals* and Upton Sinclair researched *The Jungle*, community life usually focuses inside the house. Daily routine consists of opening doors, answering phones, running from the kitchen to laundry room, to storerooms and playrooms, to the chapel, to the top two residential floors, and back. If housework slows, food donations roll in three times a week to be shared through a soup kitchen that has been run for 28 years by Frieda Holley. Right next door is the *Let Us Breathe Collective*, which helps support ongoing *Black Lives Matter* demonstrations in Chicago.

This summer, our community turned inside out under the weight of everything. We lost a dozen community members and prioritized reclaiming our half-acre garden. We dug up the well-established roots of weeds and shrubs, pruned, and saw fruit from a tree once cut to the ground. Our garden grows in the foundation of St. Augustine Catholic Church and we live in a former Franciscan friary, both emptied by White Flight. We seek peace and love that we have been denied, but believe our children deserve. The prophet Isaiah might have been writing about us, a remnant sheltering in the ruins of a vineyard, a shoot sprouting from the stump of people cut down (Is. 37:14).

Headlines this year—mutual aid, protests, social justice—share roots with the Catholic Worker Movement. Downward mobility is a fact of life for Millennials after two major recessions in a span of 20 years. Ironically, in this environment, Catholic Workers are privileged. Our choice to give up our own homes earns us a welcome in every city and many towns, and a lifetime of recession-proof labor. White, middle-class people choosing a downwardly mobile lifestyle to alleviate poverty inspires trust and financial support. Unfortunately, this is an example of the subtle racism that runs through our culture because people often find it easier to support us than Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-led ministries.

Grappling with this had led me to Su Casa, where I facilitated retreats, protests, and classes on racism and privilege. It now leads me to live my values beyond the house, claiming the Catholic Worker as my spiritual home. The movement's roots still shelter me. May these roots continue to bring forth shoots that will bear good fruit—not only in my life but in the lives of all who act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

▲ *Maria Bergh is a Catholic Worker, architect, writer, and farmer (not always in that order) based in Chicago.*

Economic Justice Examen

BY KELLY HICKMAN AND SAMANTHA YANITY

Readers are invited to use the following Examen to digest and reflect on the contents of this issue, and to move into action to bring about greater economic justice in their lives, and in our world.

"The society in which we live suggests in countless ways that the way to go is up. Making it to the top, entering the limelight, breaking the record—that's what draws attention, gets us on the front page of the newspaper, and offers us the rewards of money and fame. The way of Jesus is radically different. It is the way not of upward mobility but of downward mobility. It is going to the bottom, staying behind the sets, and choosing the last place! Why is the way of Jesus worth choosing? Because it is the way to the Kingdom, the way Jesus took, and the way that brings everlasting life."

—Henri Nouwen

1. Begin by acknowledging God's presence. Take time to quiet yourself and look inward. Take a couple of slow, deep breaths. Become aware of God's presence. Ask God to give you insight, to let you see as God sees.

PAUSE AND ALLOW YOURSELF TO ARRIVE AND BECOME FULLY AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE. TAKE AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED.

2. Enlightened by the Spirit, begin with a prayer of gratitude. Then consider the articles in this issue.

- Maria Bergh draws a parallel between the House of Judah in Isaiah and the work of Su Casa, "The remaining survivors of the house of Judah shall again strike root below and bear fruit above"(Is. 37:14). Where are your deep roots? What fruits will you bear?
- Where do you see God's grace in your economic circumstances?
- Where do you see abundance rather than scarcity in your life?
- What economic advantages are you most grateful for?

PAUSE AND REFLECT.

3. Pay attention to your emotions and reactions. Prayerfully go deep and reflect closely on what emotions come up for you as reflect on the following:

- Kevin Schilling writes on how we can use our political power to support those who weave the social fabric of society together. Peter Henriot, SJ reflects on *Fratelli Tutti,* comparing the Encyclical's theme to the African concept of *ubuntu*, "I am because we are, and we are because I am." Both writers draw us to into deeper reflection on our connection to community and the common good.
  - Reflecting on these concepts, what is the situation of your sisters and brothers, particularly those who are most vulnerable and often marginalized by poverty?
  - How can you draw closer to those pushed to the margins?
- What energizes you or brings you closer to God as you reflect on economic justice?
- What distracts you or makes you feel farther from God as you reflect on economic justice?

ALLOW YOUR HONEST REACTIONS, EMOTIONS, AND DESIRES TO SURFACE. PAUSE AND REFLECT.

© Juan Davila

4. Have a conversation with God asking for the wisdom to see as God sees, and recalling the gratitude you named at the beginning of this examen. Hold that grace as you bring your emotions and reactions to God.

- Judy Pigott challenges us to move beyond the status quo and look deeper into our relationship with money. She writes, "Recognize that the financial wealth, IS NOT OUR MONEY—the money no longer belongs to any individual(s), or Foundation. It is community property, to be administered for the common good." Sit with her words for a moment. Have a conservation with God.
  - What challenges you about this statement? What moves you? Do you disagree or agree? How are you bound to the status quo or egoic desires?
- What areas of your life as a consumer do you lament?
- What economic realities do you rejoice in and celebrate your fidelity to Gospel values?
- What is God's desire for people who are marginalized by poverty?

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION.

5. Look ahead to renewal and transformation.

- Meenakshi Rishi writes, "So, how can we reimagine our economy? We can start by redefining capitalism as more than an economic system and visualize it as an ecosystem that includes the interests of its various stakeholders, including the environment."
  - What are the ways in which society might redefine capitalism in these terms? How will you adjust your life to center and promote economic justice?
- Peter Henriot, SJ highlights the words of Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*, "…we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all. …no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together." Each of us, as both Henriot and Francis point out, is called to be the Good Samaritan, taking up the burden of others in humble regard and loving accompaniment.
  - What inconvenience (minor or major) will you endure or offer up for the sake of the common good?

As you move on from this Examen, may you hold the revelations, invitations and challenges with you and carry them in your heart with intentionality and contemplative action.

Intercommunity

Welcome
New Executive Director of IPJC!

We are pleased to welcome **William Joseph Rutt** who will become our Executive Director on January 13. Will joins us from Phoenix, Arizona where he was the Director of Justice Formation and Advocacy at Brophy College Preparatory, a Jesuit high school.

Will's experience of journeying with DACA students and organizing for racial equity have made it clear to him that his heart is in "walking with communities as they build a new vision, a new reality, by claiming power together to change structures that oppress and dehumanize." As IPJC marks 30 years this month, we celebrate that Will's mission resonates with our mission of systemic change. Together with Will and our IPJC community, we will continue building community and creating change!

Welcome
Dominican Sisters of Racine, Wisconsin!

In November the community became an affiliate member of IPJC. We are now sponsored by 23 religious communities!

Preparing for Lent

Is your parish or community looking for a resource for Lent? ***open wide our hearts—the enduring call to love*** is a zoom friendly 4-session process on racism. This study guide for the **USCCB Pastoral on Racism** is designed to enable faith communities to understand individual and systemic racism, listen to and respond to the stories of our sisters and brothers, unpack white privilege and work to end racism. Contact IPJC for a sample copy or to order copies.

Catholic Advocacy Day
March 23, 2021

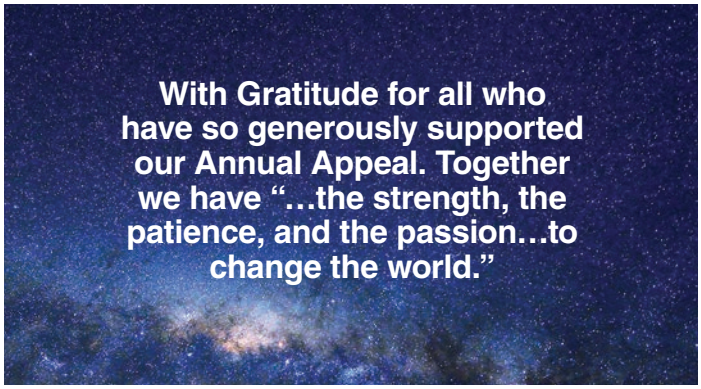
Plan to join us from all over WA State for our first virtual Catholic Advocacy Day! We hope to arrange zoom meetings with our legislators.

Registration opens mid-January at www.ipjc.org

Donations

In Honor of: Flora Bowers, Patty Bowman, William J. Boyd Sr., Hazel Anne Burnett, Judy Byron, OP, Charlene Hudon, SP, IPJC Staff, Patty Repikoff, Seattle University Jesuits, Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Tacoma Dominicans, Kay Van Stralen

In Memory of: Paula Ann Boyd, Lee Gowell



Peace & Justice Center

NEWS • ANNOUNCEMENTS • UPCOMING EVENTS

Washington COVID-19 Immigrant Relief Fund

IPJC was a member of the coalition of more than 400 organizations across the State that moved Governor Inslee to establish a $40 million Fund to provide economic relief to immigrants who were ineligible for federal stimulus funds or unemployment benefits.

In November, the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network contracted with IPJC to assist in distributing the funds. Giselle, our Justice for Women Coordinator, staffed the hotline and assisted community members in rural communities in filling out their applications. She shared that she learned tremendously from the community's strength and resilience.

Women's Justice Circles

Women in Mount Vernon and Everett, WA are meeting virtually to organize on justice issues impacting their families. In the New Year, Circles will begin in Olympia and Walla Walla, WA, Cusco, Peru (2) and St. Anthony Church in Tigard, OR.

2021 Shareholder Season

Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment

During the fall, NWCRI members filed 35 shareholder proposals and participated in over 30 dialogues with 20 companies. Many of our engagements focus on racial equity and the impacts of COVID-19. Highlights include:

Johnson & Johnson - conduct a civil rights audit to reveal ways to impact systemic racism.

Eli Lilly, Gilead Sciences, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Pfizer - report on how receipt of public money will affect access and pricing of COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines.

Chevron - report analyzing how the impacts of its business harm communities of color.

Walmart - report on whether and how racial justice goals and commitments align with the starting pay of associates.

Exxon Mobil - report describing how lobbying activities align with the goal of limiting average global warming to well below the Paris Agreement goal of 2° Celsius.

Facebook - adopt a policy requiring that the Chair of the Board be an independent member of the Board.

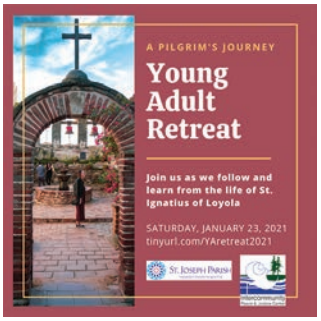
Young Adults

Retreat 2021

A Pilgrim's Journey—Follow & learn from the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola

January 23, 2021

IPJC is co-sponsoring this retreat with St. Joseph Parish Young Adult Community. **Register by January 17: https://bit.ly/2Lsjkrb**



Justice Cafés

Meet virtually to discuss our 2021 themes.

JAN **Essential Workers**

FEB **Health & Safety**

MAR **Criminal Justice**

APRIL **Earth Justice**

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A Prayer for Living *Fratelli Tutti*

By Cameron Bellm
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When our lofty words of love have been emptied of their meaning,
When our borders and computer screens have erected impenetrable walls,
When our minds are so quick to conflate "other" with "enemy,"
How will we find our common humanity?

It's never too late to make an earnest and tender start.
May we remove from our pockets the stones we intended to throw
And cement them together to build a home that welcomes all.

May we repent of our indifference and move into genuine encounter.
Instead of drawing battle lines,
May we draw our chairs up to a communal table,
Where we can feast in the knowledge of our shared dignity.

May God grant us the holy vision
To see in every human being a sacred mystery,
And may we love each mystery not abstractly, but concretely.

Just as Thomas touched the wounds of Jesus,
May we be unafraid to touch the wounds of our suffering neighbor.
May we lay down our arms and offer our outstretched hands,
Until there is no "them," but only "us,"
Until we are, at last, sisters and brothers, all.

Amen.

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