



## Martin Luther King, Jr. Day January 18th



The US Catholic Church joined with other churches to write a response and make a commitment to racial justice. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail* is the document from which a study guide for individuals and groups may be used for deeper reflection. Our response to racial injustice continues with study, reflection and movement toward action. We invite you to take a look at this [Biblical Study Guide](#), which was published in August 2020.

### Jan 11th is National Human Trafficking Awareness Day

Each geographic area of SND USA has a corporate stance against Human Trafficking and active ministry is taking place. In Toledo the STOP Committee is doing outreach. Visit these websites to learn more about what is happening in other areas:

[CAST](#) (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking) based in Los Angeles, CA

[Collaborative to End Human Trafficking](#).

[The Renee Jones Empowerment Center](#) in Cleveland

[Blue Campaign](#) which is a national public awareness campaign

[2021 Human Trafficking Prayer Calendar](#)--English

[2021 Human Trafficking Prayer Calendar](#)--Spanish

## Prayer to Mary, Woman of Listening

Mary, woman of listening,  
Open our ears;  
Grant us to know how to listen to the word of  
your Son Jesus  
Among the thousands of words of this world;  
Grant that we may listen to the reality in which  
we live,  
To every person we encounter,  
Especially those who are poor, in need, in  
hardship.

Mary, woman of decision, Illuminate our minds  
and our hearts,  
So that we may obey, unhesitating, the word of  
your Son Jesus;  
Give us the courage to decide,  
Not to let ourselves be dragged along,  
Letting others direct our life.

Mary, woman of action,  
Obtain that our hands and feet move "with  
haste" toward others,  
To bring them the charity and love of your Son  
Jesus,  
To bring the light of the Gospel to the world, as  
you did. Amen.  
~Pope Francis



## Spotlight On...



### **Sr. Rita Geoppinger, SND (Covington)**

As I move through the autumn of my life, I feel so blessed to be able to continue my SND outreach ministry. I had 50 wonderful years of active engagement as a Notre Dame educator. Now I am able to continue this ministry in my retirement years through JPIC and Association. Since my return from Uganda in 2014, I have taken an active role in these SND priorities. Both are powerful forces in bringing about the Kingdom of God and when combined they exponentially increase their efficacy.

In 2016 the General Chapter selected Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation as one of our Congregational priorities. In 2018, I had the privilege of attending a month long Conference at the Motherhouse on Bringing JPIC to Life in our regions.

Undoubtedly, the Sisters were committed to this focus: my goal was to encourage our Associates to join us in these efforts. After two years, I am thrilled with these results. The Covington Region now has a very dedicated Core Team of (4) Sisters and (4) Associates who have established sub committees for each of the social justice causes championed by the General Chapter. The majority of Sisters and Associates locally have joined one of these committees and they look for ways they can educate, advocate and take action on behalf of their issue. There is also opportunity for this Core Team to respond to immediate social justice concerns by mobilizing the entire membership when needed.

Now that we are SND-USA with a National JPIC Office, my hope for the coming year is to broaden the scope of our efforts and activities. There is strength in numbers. Despite COVID, our National JPIC outreach has more resources at its disposal and a wider sphere of influence. By working together across the nation, the Sisters and Associates will have a stronger voice to help bring about Justice, Peace and Integrity Of Creation for all who are most in need of these basic Christian values: namely, every one of God's beloved children.

### **SND Associates share their thoughts...**

We invited the SND Associates to reflect on this opening quote from *Gaudium et Spes*: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (1).

As Pope Benedict XVI says, "Joy must always be shared. Joy must be communicated. Mary went without delay to communicate her joy to her cousin Elizabeth. This is the real commitment of Advent: to bring joy to others. Joy is the true gift of Christmas." And so, I wish you joy, and joy in abundance. I wish you always to choose joy. May the coming New Year 2021 be one of joy for you. With love and affection.

~Annabelle Gordon, California

This year has dramatically changed my priorities and opened my eyes, ears, and heart to the needs of those in my community and world wide. It is time now more than ever to stand united with my fellow sisters and brothers to extend love, peace, charity and compassion to all. In the midst of the pandemic, I see heroic acts of love, courage, compassion and self-sacrifice. Every day people are showing by their example that hope and joy are alive and that we all can do our part to cover the world in love. I believe the future holds the possibility for the healing and growth that is needed to make positive changes in our hearts and minds to promote love and peace. ~Marianne Bitonti, Chardon



This saying speaks to how we are all called to be in community with one another and that means accepting the joys and the sorrows we each carry. If there was ever a time to embrace this call that time is now. In the midst of this pandemic we have all been challenged in new and different ways - and this presents many opportunities for being people of good will. I am blessed to work in an SND school community where we are called to embrace the dignity of each person as an image of God. This principle guides as we make daily decisions that affect the well-being of our students, faculty and staff. It also challenges us as educators to empower our students to look beyond themselves and find ways to bring Christ's message of good will and hope to others they encounter in their lives. Our hopes, joys, griefs and anxieties are all part of our human experience. May we always embrace those realities in ourselves and others to build faith filled communities that will always rise to the challenges of the day.

~Laura Koehl, Covington

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As followers of Christ, we are all connected in a real way sharing the joys, anguish and hardships of others. What this means, exactly, requires personal reflection. But not to be overlooked is the actual connection that our Christianity brings. As we remain in Christ, dwelling in his comforting embrace, we gain courage to interact with this world and each other. We are asked by Christ to do that. By praying and listening, we gain wisdom to make right judgments about what that interaction should look like. The new year gives the opportunity to reconsider how we will interact with our world and with each other to bring peace and justice. The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit are there to guide and instruct us with real ways and opportunities that will be seen through our prayer, our listening and then our actions. May God abundantly bless the sisters and associates of our Notre Dame community in the New 2021 Year. ~Rose Marie Stevens, Chardon

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My friend and spiritual mentor, Terry Hershey says, "people who love life embrace particularity. Particularity means not shying away from the detail." I believe we are all a part of what is sacred. Our particular circumstances are essential and I have become aware of the added stressor of the uncertainty, not necessarily the required change. People who pay attention live in the sacrament of the present, and they examine priorities, remembering what is most treasured and important. The life journey is what's important. We need one another. We are not on this journey alone. Ram Doss says: "We're all just walking each other home." Even the wounded world is giving us moments of wonder and joy. Service is our work; it gives meaning to our lives. We need our faith to call on our God, and those who pray are never alone. We must stay spiritually well to keep our hope alive. As followers of Christ, we need to maintain beauty, hope, compassion, and connection. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that." I firmly believe that tomorrow belongs to all of us and we should attend it with our best by continuing to be the visible light of our Christ for all the world to see.

~Lois Harrion, California

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In my role as a Parish Nurse, my ministry is journeying with my patients celebrating their joys and hopes and embrace their griefs and anxieties. Parish Nursing is a holistic approach to medicine encompassing the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual care. My outreach to the poor has always been woven in my practice. GOD Willing, I hope to continue walking in Our Lord's footprints. ~Heidi Madsen, Chardon



Advent 2020, of course, came during the middle of a deadly pandemic raging across the world, causing many of us to remain sheltered in place in our respective homes, isolated. I'm sure I'm not the only one grieving the loss of the human connection that personally is something I didn't realize I'd taken for granted until now. Every once in awhile, this feeling of loss overwhelms me, and through my weeping, I cry out to our Good God, begging for His mercy, His intervention, praying with tears and sorrow. I just want things to go back to the way they were. And then He's with me. He comes to me through a feeling, or a thought, a text, or a song, or some other seemingly tiny gesture, and His love fills me. I realize that pre-pandemic, I wasn't always seeking God in my life, but through this loss and mourning and isolation, I've relied on prayer, meditation and discernment more than anytime in my life. On Sundays, I'm attending Mass at the Covington provincial house virtually with my sister who lives 100 miles away from me, and we pray together every Monday and Tuesday morning. I'm virtually sharing with associates and sisters through monthly faith discussions, and I'm praying the monthly Family Rosary with our Lady of Lourdes Hospitality in New York. None of us know when COVID-19 will abate, or if things will ever go back to normal, but personally, I've learned joy can be present during times of difficulty and grief. And like the words found in the second reading (1 Thes. 5:16-24) on Gaudete Sunday 2020, I hope to, "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."

~Jane M. Bratton, Covington

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As I look forward to 2021, I will give thanks for the challenges and anxieties as well as the joys and hopes I experienced in 2020. Without those challenges and anxieties, my joys and hopes would be very different and perhaps not as focused on God's plan for me. When things go well, we forget about the struggles and anxieties of others. We become separated from the realities of those less fortunate; not on purpose, but by way of being content. I pray for heaven to bring that kind of peace of mind. But on earth, may we be always conscious of the hopes and dreams, joys and struggles of those around us.

~Laurie Hildebrand, Chardon

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This year has really been a gift for me. I have been doing 1st and now 2nd grade remote learning with my grandson, Liam. Although challenging (I now know I made the right decision to teach high school...) Liam and I have made so many special memories. I will treasure the times we laughed, created special projects, shared religious lessons, and got angry and frustrated with each other. I will always especially cherish the May Crowning activities we did. We took a trip over to St. Joseph Heights to see the Mary statue by the fountain. He wrote a little book for me in May called "Grammy Unretired". I am so grateful for having had this long time of solitude to reflect on my own life. I have had several "aha" moments that allowed me to make meaningful shifts in perspective. This time has had some scary moments, such as when my daughter got Covid in July, but mostly just made me aware of how blessed I am to have everybody and everything I need—and more! I pray for all those who have not been blessed with circumstances such as mine. Hopefully one outcome of the Pandemic will be God moving us all in the direction of being more compassionate, kind, and aware of those who need our help.

~Jan Ferguson, Covington

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These words from Gaudium et Spes, written 55 years ago, are as timely as ever. They say to me that then and now, we're all in this together as members of the Body of Christ. Like many, I've had my ups and downs during this past year but cling to hope for all of us. For G. K. Chesterton tells us, "...to hope means hoping when things are hopeless or it is no virtue at all." ~Carole Iseli, Chardon



The JPIC National Office is continuing to offer educational opportunities as we move forward in the corporate stance against racism process. We had a very good response for the November and December sessions in which 230 sisters and associates participated.

These are the remaining opportunities over the next two months.

### **Conversations on Rooting out Racism**

Each session will be one hour via zoom

*Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man (10-minute video)*

*Emmanuel Acho talks candidly about being a Black man in America*

Wednesday, January 13 Choose: 3 pm EST, 12 noon PST **OR** 6 pm EST, 3 pm PST **OR** 9 pm EST, 6 pm PST

Tuesday, January 19 Choose: 3 pm EST, 12 noon PST **OR** 6 pm EST, 3 pm PST

*Sr. Rose Falorio Conversation with Former Students (30 minute video recording)*

Tuesday, February 2 Choose: 3 pm EST, 12 noon PST **OR** 6 pm EST, 3 pm PST

Wednesday, February 10 Choose: 3 pm EST, 12 noon PST **OR** 6 pm EST, 3 pm PST **OR** 9 pm EST, 6 pm PST

Registration will be required and this information will be sent in advance of the month's topic, along with the required reading or video to be viewed before the session.

The recordings of the summer sessions are available as another way to be more informed on this justice issue. Please email us at [jpica@sndusa.org](mailto:jpica@sndusa.org) and we will forward the links.

A listing of book titles, films, videos, bishops' statements and scripture citations about racism, diversity and inclusion compiled by Sr. Charlotte Hobelman, SND, and others is available [here](#).

Questions? Please email us at [jpica@sndusa.org](mailto:jpica@sndusa.org).

### **National Migration Week**

For nearly forty years, National Migration Week (NMW) has been celebrated the week after the Epiphany in January. One of the primary reasons for the selection of these dates was due to the timing of the Pope's migration Day message, which was celebrated in mid-January.

In 2019, Pope Francis announced that the World Day of Migrants and Refugees would henceforth be celebrated on the last Sunday of September. To maintain the custom of aligning NMW with the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the Catholic Bishops of the United States recently decided to move National Migration Week to the last week in September. Given that we have already celebrated NMW 2020 in January of this year, the next National Migration Week that we will celebrate will be September 20- 26, 2021, with the Vatican's World Day of Migrants and Refugees taking place on Sunday the 26th.

#### **JPIC National Office**

Co-Directors

Ann Clark

Katie Drager

Co-Chairs

Sr. Joyce Bates, SND

Sr. Kathleen Ryan, SND

Sisters of Notre Dame JPIC National Office