



## MARCH 2024 MONTHLY DIGEST

*A resource to animate education, prayer, advocacy, and action among the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia, our Associates, and Partners in Mission.*

Below, you will find policy and advocacy updates, education opportunities, and ways to act on behalf of justice, some with our sponsored ministries and others with trusted collaborators. *We hope you enjoy this tool for learning, connection, and action!*

### POLICY UPDATE: U.S. Catholic Community Public Policy Initiatives

In his wide-ranging encyclical on human and natural ecology, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis calls on and challenges all people to protect creation and our common home. The Pope makes clear that our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together. Climate change is one of the principal challenges facing society and the global community. The Catholic Church brings a distinct perspective to the debate about climate change by lifting up the moral dimensions of this issue and the needs of the most vulnerable among us.

Founded with the support of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2006, and in partnership with 20 national organizations, Catholic Climate Covenant seeks to enfold creation care as an integral aspect of Church practices and ministries. Below is updated information about U.S. Catholic Climate Policy Priorities and Challenges which address key climate change and related public policy issues in the U.S. Catholic Community in 2024 and how to get involved in U.S. Catholic Advocacy efforts.

#### **U.S. Catholic Climate Policy Priorities and Challenges:**

**Use the link below to view the one hour recorded webinar.**

<https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/resources/u-s-catholic-climate-policy-priorities-and-challenges/>

## ADVOCACY & ACTION: Border Awareness Experience/Annunciation House

The Border Awareness Experience (BAE) is an immersion experience meant to raise consciousness about the issues facing the border, such as immigration, economic development, human rights, and social justice. For more than 50 years, NETWORK has stood in resolute solidarity with the many Catholic organizations that live out the Gospel call to welcome the stranger by providing desperately needed services to migrants at the southern border. One of those key providers, Annunciation House, offers migrants who have just completed the long and tortuous journey over our southern border temporary shelter, food, and safety in the El Paso, Texas area—but it is under vicious attack by Texas’s Attorney General, Kenneth Paxton.

Paxton has targeted Annunciation House with administrative enforcement and litigation plainly intended to shut down its shelters and services. Paxton bases these actions on the absurd grounds that Annunciation House engages in “human smuggling, and operating a stash house.” He is plainly emboldened by a new, legally suspect anti-immigrant law passed by the Texas legislature (SB4) that increased criminal penalties for “smuggling” to a 10-year mandatory sentence or more, and a five-year minimum sentence for operating a so-called “stash house.” By targeting Annunciation House, Paxton effectively likens their services for desperate migrants to the insidious kinds of human trafficking that these anti-smuggling laws were intended to address.

On Tuesday, February 20, 2024, “The Office of the Attorney General reviewed significant public record information strongly suggesting Annunciation House is engaged in legal violations such as facilitating illegal entry to the United States, alien harboring, human smuggling, and operating a stash house.” Texas’ attorney general wants to shut down the faith-based shelter targeting Catholic organizations and amping up the state’s own immigration enforcement operation. To date a judge granted a temporary restraining order to Annunciation House pending a hearing scheduled for March 7, 2024. Annunciation House Director Ruben Garcia released a statement following the lawsuit, saying “The Attorney General’s illegal, immoral and anti-faith position to shut down Annunciation House is unfounded.” Garcia went on to say, “if the work that Annunciation House conducts is illegal, so too is the work of our local hospitals, schools and food banks.”

### **Statement from Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso:**

Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso released a powerful statement of support last week, can be found here: [https://www.elpasodiocese.org/statement-in-support-of-annunciation-house.html?fbclid=IwAR3B7IxJgLB\\_PlxZ4GW94siXDXhKiNXZDZbSMfJjaC8iCh6VIsZAhrA8RM](https://www.elpasodiocese.org/statement-in-support-of-annunciation-house.html?fbclid=IwAR3B7IxJgLB_PlxZ4GW94siXDXhKiNXZDZbSMfJjaC8iCh6VIsZAhrA8RM)

### **ACTION Message to Department Of Justice**

You can support such a challenge to protect Annunciation House with a call to the Department of Justice urging action to protect Annunciation House and other providers of essential services to migrants at the southern border. The DOJ phone comment line is at **202-353-1555**, option 4, and online at [www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov), at “contact us”.

### **Sample information / background:**

“Texas officials have attacked the struggling migrants who cross our southern border at every turn. Now, they are using their laws to attack Annunciation House, a venerable Catholic organization that has long followed the Gospel tradition of caring for those in need at the border with temporary shelter and support. Texas has sued and threatened Annunciation House with closure and even years of imprisonment, calling their essential work “smuggling” and operating “stash houses.” I urge the Department of Justice to immediately challenge Texas’ illegal targeting of Annunciation House. Texas must be stopped in this shocking campaign that jeopardizes the network of Catholic organizations, employees, and volunteers who serve migrants, as well as people of good faith across Texas who reach out to provide essential respite for migrants.”

OTHER FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT: WOMEN’S HISTORY Month 2024
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The **National Women’s History Month’s theme for 2024 celebrates “Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.”** The theme recognizes women throughout the country who understand that, for a positive future, we need to eliminate bias and discrimination entirely from our lives and institutions.

Women from every background have long realized that an uneven playing field will never bring equality or justice. Many feel the critical need to speak up and work harder for fairness in our institutions and social interactions.

During 2024, we recognize the example of women who are committed to embracing everyone and excluding no one in our common quest for freedom and opportunity. They know that people change with the help of families, teachers and friends, and that young

people in particular need to learn the value of hearing from different voices with different points of view as they grow up.

Today, equity, diversity and inclusion are powerful driving forces that are having a wide-ranging impact on our country. As members of families, civic and community groups, businesses and legislative bodies, women are in the forefront of reevaluating the status quo. They are looking anew at what harmful social policies and behaviors exist and, often subtly, determine our future. In response, women in communities across the nation are helping to develop innovative programs and projects within corporations, the military, federal agencies and educational organizations to address these injustices.

It takes courage for women to advocate for practical goals like equity, diversity and inclusion when established forces aim to misinterpret, exploit or discredit them. Throughout 2024, we honor local women from the past and present who have taken the lead to show the importance of change and to establish firmer safeguards, practices and legislation reflecting these values. Following decades of discrimination, we are proud to celebrate women who work for basic inclusion, equality and fairness.

#### **Resources:**

National Women's History Alliance:

<https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org/2024-whm-theme/>

Women's History Month 2024

<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/womens-history-month>

National Women's Hall of Fame:

<https://www.womenofthehall.org/visit/>

OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network to Broadcast the National Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

***Ceremony will air on Sunday, March 24 at 8 p.m. during Women's History Month marking the Induction's first-ever broadcast***

<https://www.womenofthehall.org/own-oprah-winfrey-network-to-broadcast-the-national-womens-hall-of-fame-induction-ceremony/>

SPONSORED WORK HIGHLIGHT: World Water Day; Change for Global Change
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**The theme of World Water Day 2024 is 'Water for Peace'.**

As we prepare to celebrate World Water Day on March 22, 2024, it is important to think about the global water crisis and raise awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water.

Since 1993, the United Nations annually recognizes the observance of World Water Day to raise awareness and inspire action to tackle the water and sanitation crisis.

This year's theme for World Water Day 2024 is "Water for Peace." This year's theme reflects that, "when water is scarce or polluted, or when people have unequal, or no access, tensions can rise between communities and countries. More than 3 billion people worldwide depend on water that crosses national borders. Yet only 24 countries have cooperation agreements for all their shared water. As climate change impacts increase, and populations grow, there is an urgent need, within and between countries, to unite around protecting and conserving our most precious resource.

When we cooperate on water, we create a positive ripple effect – fostering harmony, generating prosperity and building resilience to shared challenges. We must act upon the realization that water is not only a resource to be used and competed over – it is a human right, intrinsic to every aspect of life.

This World Water Day, we all need to unite around water and use water for peace, laying the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow.

Since 2006, the Sisters of Saint Joseph established the Change for Global Change organization to address with urgency the global water crisis that exists in the world and to address the unmet needs of persons who are poor, marginalized, and vulnerable. For eighteen years Change for Global Change has awarded more than \$300,000 in grants to fund sustainability projects in India, Africa, Central America, Peru, Brazil, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and in the United States.

Currently Change for Global Change will be launching a special Spring Campaign during the season of New Life 2024 Easter fundraiser. This fundraising effort will focus on World Water Day, Earth Day, Easter and Environment Day. In launching the "Water is Life" campaign C4GC will continue their commitment in education and advocacy for sustainable practices that care for Earth and our dear neighbors all over the world. In addition, the C4GC organization is dedicated to providing educational awareness about the life-threatening global water crisis, and to provide grants for clean water, sanitation, and sustainable agricultural projects.

### **Resources:**

United Nations World Water Day 22 March, Water for Peace  
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day>

[Change for Global Change Video](#)  
[Small Change, Big Impact presentation](#)  
[Ways You Can Help](#)

FOR REFLECTION AND PRAYER
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**Women and Women's History Month Prayers**

Women's History Month is celebrated in the month of March to emphasize the accomplishments of women for contemporary and historical events.

[Prayers for Women's History \(xavier.edu\)](#)

**Quotes by and for Women/Top 10 Best Women's Quotes:**

Until we get equality in education, we won't have an equal society.  
- *Sonia Sotomayor, Supreme Court Justice*

[Jesuit Resource - Women's History Month Quotes \(xavier.edu\)](#)

LOOKING AHEAD...

- March 5, 2024 Sisters of Saint Joseph U.S. Federation Webinar; "**Joseph the Worker, Joseph the Migrant.**" Learn about the emerging realities at the U.S. Mexico Border. 7p ET | 6p CT | 5p MT | 4p PT

**Register in advance for this meeting:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUpcOyorz0uEtXKPNFrXe-3sSQapn1fO\\_gT](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUpcOyorz0uEtXKPNFrXe-3sSQapn1fO_gT)

- March 6, 2024 Georgetown University's Initiative on Social and Public Life.  
*Catholic Sisters Working To Eradicate Human Trafficking*

**Registration Link:** <https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/catholic-sisters-working-to-eradicate-human-trafficking>

- March 23, 2024 Synodal Discernment. Our Journey Toward a Listening Church  
12:30-3:30 pm. Rosemont College. Rosemont, PA.

**Registration Link:**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeEs6rgDjVt3xFW6YS7ysh-  
evy2mu9fTrxd8K7HOL8jH2C7Lw/viewform?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeEs6rgDjVt3xFW6YS7ysh-<br/>evy2mu9fTrxd8K7HOL8jH2C7Lw/viewform?pli=1)

- March 24, 2024 OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network to Broadcast the National Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony  
***Ceremony will air on Sunday, March 24 at 8 p.m. during Women's History Month marking the Induction's first-ever broadcast***

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