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THE OFFICE FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

Of the Archdiocese of Hartford

April 2020

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*Advancing Catholic social teaching by educating and preparing parishes
to work for social justice*

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From the Director

Dear friends,

I pray that you and your loved ones are well; that you are finding surprises from God each day.

One of my favorite quotes of Pope Francis is from when he was elected and said the Church should look like a field hospital.

"The thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. ... And you have to start from the ground up."

The crisis has revealed profound, longstanding vulnerabilities in the economic system. Before the virus, in this economy, four of 10 adults didn't have the resources on hand to cover an unplanned \$400 expense. The crisis also revealed inequities in our society.

We the people of God are the Church. Right now we are a field hospital. We are tending to the wounds of this pandemic and subsequent recession. We are providing charity and direct service. However, now is the time to look at that other foot of [Love in Action](#). There is no time like the present to be a part of a rebuilding of a future that is more healthy and just. In the last recession and recovery but the poor became poorer and the wealth inequality accelerated. Now

is the time to enhance our advocacy and work for economic and racial justice.

We're here to help you lift up the voices of the less powerful, build advocacy, and work for a better world!

Blessings,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn".

Lynn Campbell, Executive Director

Race and COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic is magnifying the many inequities that already exist when it comes to health and well-being. It is becoming ever clearer that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a disproportionate toll on people of color and immigrant communities.



The racial and ethnic data available in Connecticut seems to be aligning with national trends. Early data shows that black people have been nearly twice as likely as whites to contract the coronavirus, while Hispanic people have been more than one-and-a-half.

Why are there such inequities among the black and Latino populations?

The conditions the virus preys upon - crowded living conditions, work environments that expose employees to large numbers of people and pre-existing health conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart disease - are common among the black and immigrant communities.

Race doesn't make a group of people more vulnerable - the social conditions in which they live does. These conditions have grown out of years of racial injustice in opportunities and access to resources. It is this racism which the bishops of the Catholic Church in the U.S. address through their letter "Open Wide Our Hearts". This letter is the base for our year-long virtual conference series "Rooted in Faith, Opening Wide our Hearts"

For more information of the disparate impact of the coronavirus on black and Latino populations please see this [associated press article](#).

Save the Date

Bishop Peter Rosazza Social Justice Conference



Rooted In Faith, Opening Wide Our Hearts

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE SERIES ON THE US BISHOPS'

LETTER AGAINST RACISM

BEGINNING JUNE 6TH, 2020



"Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love," is a Pastoral Letter from the full body of bishops to the lay faithful and all people of goodwill addressing the evil of racism.

According to Bishop Shelton J. Fabre, Chairman of U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism: "The entire body of bishops felt the need to address the topic of racism, once again, after witnessing the deterioration of the public discourse, and episodes of violence and animosity with racial and xenophobic overtones, that have re-emerged in American society in the last few years".

The letter, released in Nov. 2018, calls for a deep individual conversion of heart, which then multiplies, will compel change and reform in our institutions and society. The conversions needed to overcome racism require a deep encounter with the living God in the person of Christ who can heal all division with the intention of offering a Christian response, full of hope.

Our virtual conference series will continue throughout the year with monthly webinars and events designed to help us develop and grow this conversion of heart.

Preparing, Educating, and Animating Parishes

Our mission is to advance Catholic social teaching by preparing, educating, and animating parishes to work for social justice. During this pandemic we have been doing just that with the Hispanic community. One example is the story of Flor Ossa and Father Mercado at St. John XXIII Parish.

At one of our Zoom conference calls with parish leaders we learned from Flor that a member of her parish was hospitalized and the wife was unemployed due to COVID-19. The family's 12 year old son was serving as interpreter to communicate with the landlord as his mother doesn't



speak English very well. This landlord was demanding rent. We directed Flor to speak with her pastor about applying for Catholic Charities emergency funding. We explained how the CARES ACT impacts immigrants to Father Mercado and Flor so that they can help the family work with the landlord. People are out there trying to take advantage of vulnerable people. How fortunate the parish family is to have Flor, Father Mercado, and other parish social ministry leaders who have undergone our training and understand the importance of maintaining relationships within the parish!



Give Voice to the Voiceless

To determine the impact of the public health emergency and economic crisis on domestic workers, the National Domestic Workers Alliance has been doing weekly surveys of subscribers to La Alianza, a media venture for Spanish-speaking domestic workers, since March 27. Recently released data show:

- * 80 percent of respondents who had a high volume of work (more than 10 jobs per week) reported no work or a loss of at least half of their jobs.

- * 94 percent report that their clients cancelled their jobs as a result of coronavirus, and 70 percent worry about being rehired after the crisis.

Domestic workers, many of which are taxpaying, are unfortunately usually not covered by existing labor laws. Because of their immigration status they largely excluded from the programs that are supposed to help workers who lose their jobs or have their work hours cut. This includes the federal stimulus payments, state unemployment benefits and federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and most temporary leave and disability payments.

Because many of these workers are undocumented, they are fearful to ask for help. They need your help! Our faith calls us to give voice to the voiceless. Their need for food and shelter are no less real than documented members of society. The nonprofit sector cannot do this alone. Please contact your state representative or senator and ask that CT take into consideration this population as it provides assistance to those impacted by COVID-19.

Proverbs 31:9 Open your mouth, judge justly, defend the needy and the poor!

[Contact your legislator here.](#)



Naugatuck Valley Project's Hospital Accountability Campaign

Challenging times surround the COVID-19 pandemic, but despite looming obstacles Naugatuck Valley Project has continued to move forward in their mission and campaigns. NVP is a recipient of a Catholic Campaign for Human Development grant, which helps this group to advocate for justice for all, including the poor and vulnerable. Specifically, NVP's Hospital Accountability Campaign has achieved much success amid the Coronavirus complications.



Waterbury Hospital is one of the most important hospitals in the entire Naugatuck Valley, serving a population of 359,431 - a region with a growing concentration of elderly residents, undocumented residents, and children living in poverty. For these reasons, Waterbury Hospital is an institution that must be stabilized and maintained for the long-term health of the region and is a medical facility that must be held to the highest standards of equal access to medical care for all.

Unfortunately, there has been cause for concern around these two mutually achievable goals over the last 3 1/2 years since Waterbury Hospital was bought by Prospect Medical Holdings (PMH), Inc., a for-profit California company, and its controlling private equity company, Leonard Green & Partners (LP&G). A serious concern arose when PMH sold Waterbury Hospital property to an Alabama Medical Properties Trust, providing short term cash flow along with more debt. While trying to find answers to serious financial questions, NVP was able to develop a relationship with Private Equity Stakeholders Project (PESP), a non-profit organization in Washington, DC, who established a [report on PMH and LP&G](#) that confirmed the concerns of NVP on the financial condition of Waterbury Hospital.

NVP was determined to meet with LP&G Board of Directors, but since meetings were held in distant states it seemed impossible. Then came along COVID-19, forcing board meetings to be held via telephone and video conferencing. This allowed NVP to submit a testimony at the quarterly meeting of the Florida State Board of Administration, along with our ally the Private Equity Stakeholders ([click here to view testimony](#)). Naugatuck Valley Project provides us a perfect example of continuing to work for the common good despite the current limitations.

To access more information on this important issue please [click here](#) .

ACTION ALERT from Catholic Relief Services



We are facing a pivotal moment. All of us are impacted by the coronavirus and encountering challenges. **Our brothers and sisters around the world who experience poverty, hunger and displacement are now even more vulnerable due to the threat of COVID-19.**

This is a moment for action. Today, while at home you can act to support our human family around the world by lifting your voice to Congress.

ACT NOW

As negotiations continue, urge your members of Congress to **provide lifesaving international assistance to support vulnerable families in upcoming COVID-19 supplemental packages.** This funding is critical for continuing the important work of providing food and other basic needs to communities experiencing hunger and poverty. It will also help prevent the spread of the virus by expanding educational outreach and support, particularly for vulnerable populations like refugees and others displaced from their homes.

Thank you for supporting our global family!

Laudato Si' Challenge

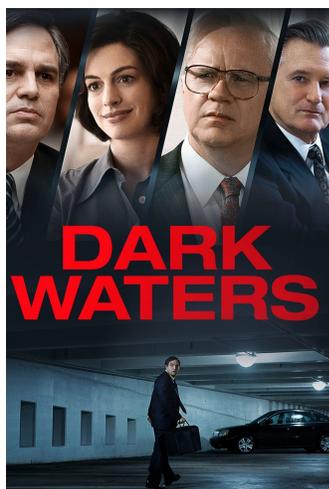
One of several schools to participate in our Laudato Si' Challenge, St. Gabriel School in Windsor was featured on the television program Crossroads Magazine on March 15, 2020. You can find the show in its entirety on www.ortv.org (Click on programming. Then streaming video. Then Crossroads Magazine.) That will take you to this link:

https://www.ortv.org/streaming/Crossroads_stream.htm



**Congratulations to the students, teachers, and parents!
You are an inspiration to us all!**

Dark Waters movie review



This film is inspired by true events of environmental attorney from Cincinnati, Ohio, Robert Bilott. Mark Ruffalo plays Bilott, who reveals the cover-up of Dupont Corporation plant in West Virginia as it knowingly dumped the dangerous chemical known as PFOA into water and landfill systems.

The extent of corporate greed in this film upset me. However, I did find inspiration in the illustration on how one person can make a difference. I also appreciated the positive Catholic references in the film, as we see Ruffalo saying grace with the family before meals, attending Mass, and sending his children to Catholic schools.

The film illustrates the relevance our Church social teachings of "Care for God's Creation". When we degrade the environment it has an impact on the human person.

"Industrial waste and chemical products utilized in cities and agricultural areas can lead to bioaccumulation in the organisms of the local population, even when levels of toxins in those places are low. Frequently no measures are taken until after people's health has been irreversibly affected."

[Here is a Link to preview this film.](#) Reviews of other environmental films can be found on our [Laudato Si'](#) resource page.

(Reviewer - Lynn Campbell)

From USCCB for Solidarity during the COVID-19 crisis

For all who have contracted coronavirus,
We pray for care and healing.



For those who are particularly vulnerable,
We pray for safety and protection.

For all who experience fear or anxiety,
We pray for peace of mind and spirit.

For affected families who are facing difficult decisions between
food on the table or public safety,
We pray for policies that recognize their plight.

For those who do not have adequate health insurance,
We pray that no family will face financial burdens alone.

For those who are afraid to access care due to immigration status,
We pray for recognition of the God-given dignity of all.

For our brothers and sisters around the world,
We pray for shared solidarity.

For public officials and decision makers,
We pray for wisdom and guidance.

Father, during this time may your Church be a sign of hope,
comfort and love to all.

Grant peace.
Grant comfort.
Grant healing.
Be with us, Lord.

Amen.

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