



# JUST Love

APRIL 2017



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF PEACE, JUSTICE AND  
ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH



## Call and Response: What Happens When You Phone Congress?

Many of us ask this question after years of responding to SC Action Alerts or alerts from other advocacy organizations. This question is addressed in an excellent article with this title by Kathryn Schulz in the March 6 issue of The New Yorker. You can read the entire article at this link <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/what-calling-congress-achieves> but here are some of the most interesting and important take aways:

- The first telephone (with the phone number “1”) was installed in the White House in 1877. Three years later one phone was installed in the House lobby. Today your call will likely be answered by a young Congressional intern – who number in the thousands.
- No matter how your message comes in – call, email, letter, fax – it is entered into a constituent management software system. Congress received 6.4 million letters last year. Every letter and email is read; every call is listened to. However not all communications have the same impact. The greatest impact come from – personalized email, personalized letter, and editorials in local papers. The greatest impact of calls is that they take up a lot of staffers time to answer if they are numerous and therefore get a lot of notice.
- Congressional representatives pay most attention to correspondence from their own constituents.
- Asking your representative to co-sponsor an existing bill is usually very effective and is an opportunity to educate them on an issue they may not be familiar with, e.g. it was constituents who educated Congress on America’s opioid crisis. It’s harder to change a representative’s mind on a current issue – they tend to pay more attention to lobbyists and the perspective of their party.
- However there are exceptions. Massive constituent feedback prevented Congress from giving itself a 50% pay raise in 1989; recently Congress backed off on gutting its ethics oversight committee because of massive protests. Most notably, Congress has back tracked on the repeal of the Affordable Care Act.
- There is a new spirit of citizen advocacy in America and Congress is taking notice a level of engagement outside the Beltway that Congress has never seen before. Some members of Congress have gotten 600 to 1000 unique calls in a single day. As some one said, “Protest is the new brunch.”

*“The telephone...is an excellent metaphor for participatory democracy and it reminds us of the rights we are promised as citizens... When we have to, as long as we need to, we can hold the line.”*

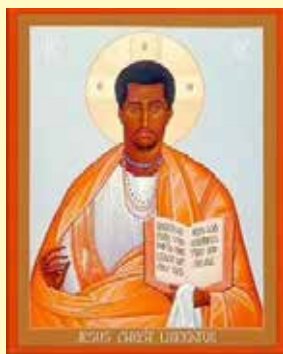
Remember to use our **Living a Laudato Si’** Lent Calendar  
<http://www.scnj.org/images/justicepeace/LENTCALENDAR2017.pdf>

## Our Continuing Series on the UN Sustainable Development Goals...

Climate change presents the single biggest threat to development, and its widespread, unprecedented impacts disproportionately burden the poorest and most vulnerable. Urgent action to combat climate change and minimize its disruptions is integral to the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

-Check out the Climate Change education resources on the SCNJ website <http://www.scnj.org/images/justicepeace/climatechange101.pdf>

-Watch the videos of the Oberlin College conference *After Fossil Fuels: The Next Economy*, a lineup of top minds in climate change, including some of the most innovative and influential environmental and political thinkers in the world. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-\\_GYB9Lj4U&list=PLT5vOXI-AasQTyGUXacrYWHIZNHZfTFms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-_GYB9Lj4U&list=PLT5vOXI-AasQTyGUXacrYWHIZNHZfTFms)



“When we remember the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, it is not just so we can rehash a past injustice, contemplate our part in it, and wallow in guilt. On the contrary, it offers the most sacred opportunity to commit to becoming

the kind of people God wants us to be. This is our chance to change the narrative of the sinner from a lost soul to one worthy of redemption. And, it asks us to uphold the principles of an ancient, radically spawned movement— Christianity. While on a tremendously smaller scale than that of Jesus Christ, the unjust deaths of people of color have arguably sparked both the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter Movement. Regardless of race, we cannot recall the deaths of these young men just to rehash the past, contemplate our part in it, and wallow in guilt. On the contrary, we should ask that our nation, whose laws are by and large founded on the principles of Christianity, to work harder to become the nation that God wants it to be. This Easter, as we gather in our churches, singing songs of praise and contemplating the sacrifice and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, let us also remember his boldness to speak the truth and the unstoppable movement that changed the world because of it.”

From *Easter: A Social Justice Holiday* by Joann Fisher



### Dates in April

- 4 Death of Martin Luther King (1968)** “I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.”
- 9 Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1945)** “We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”
- 10-18 Passover** The traditional Passover Seder involves the recitation of the ten plagues in Egypt. Some Seders include ten contemporary plagues: The making of war, the teaching of hate and violence, Despoliation of the earth, Perversion of justice and government, Fomenting of vice and crime, Neglect of human needs, Oppression of nations and peoples, Corruption of culture, Subjugation of science, learning, and human discourse, the erosion of freedoms.
- 21 Day of Silence Against LGBT Bullying** <https://www.glsen.org/participate/programs/day-of-silence>
- 23 Death of César Chávez (1993)** “If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him... the people who give you their food give you their heart.”
- 23-4 Yom HaShoah/ Holocaust Memorial Day** “Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions.” Primo Levi
- 29 Feast of St. Catherine of Siena** "Do not be satisfied with little things, because God wants great things!"
- 30 Death of Daniel Berrigan, SJ (2016)** “One is called to live nonviolently, even if the change one works for seems impossible. It may or may not be possible to turn the US around through nonviolent revolution. But one thing favors such an attempt: the total inability of violence to change anything for the better”.