

JPR News and Views

From the office of Mark Peters,
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I'm grateful for the opportunity to have been an observer at the **US Provincial Chapter** earlier this month. I got to meet many SCJs whom I'd not met in person before, hear **Fr. Steve's** take on "the state of the Province," and listen to the results of the "heart to heart" table discussions on the various issues facing the province. It was also fascinating to hear **Fr. John van den Hengel's** take on things from the international perspective as we sat at the observers table, alongside our formation students.

Near the end of the Chapter, a motion was made and accepted to issue a **statement** about the current crisis at our border (see News below). In researching the issue for the Provincial Council, I had the opportunity to read what the [US Bishops](#), [other Catholic orders and local bishops' conferences](#), and various [other church groups](#) have to say about the crisis. Most lay stress on the horrible conditions these children are fleeing, and beg our leaders to respond with generosity and charity. But the question could be posed: Is this primarily a matter of charity or of justice? If, as many insist, the current conditions in Central America have [much to do](#) with US interventions and policies like NAFTA, then it would appear we bear a good deal of moral responsibility for the situation. The Leadership Council of Women Religious in their own statement ask us to consider "the unintended consequences of US foreign policy that contribute to rising violence and poverty in the region including: US trade policy; the war on drugs; training and support of local security forces [and to]end support for governments that engage in human rights violations, including illegal land grabs, and the persecution of indigenous and grassroots leaders."

Meanwhile, Catholic parishes and agencies across the country (including [Milwaukee](#)) are **responding** to the humanitarian disaster by opening their doors and their hearts to house, feed and clothe children while they are processed by our country's legal systems. Catholic Charities is asking for [donations](#) to help with housing and has issued guidelines for people or institutions who want to help. Any parish, group or individual wishing to offer shelter is asked to **email FEMA-UAC-Shelter-TF@fema.dhs.gov**. You'll receive requirements that must be followed in order to be approved.

Notes from our recent **Justice Peace and Reconciliation Commission** meeting should be available to you soon. No new developments on the [Youth Promise Act](#). I'm working on content for a social justice **web page** on the PoSH website that will eventually

include background on Catholic social teaching, Fr. Dehon's social writings and current issues, as well as resources for parishes and social justice committees. If you have suggestions or needs, please let me know.

Social Justice News This Month:

Crisis at the Border: Apprehensions of unaccompanied children are up a staggering 92 percent this year, with growing numbers of children coming from [Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras](#). Since October, 52,000 children have come to the US without an adult, largely to escape [violent gangs](#). The administration asks for \$3.7 billion in emergency funds to help pay for temporary detention centers, increased border security and additional immigration court judges to process asylum cases more quickly. TX Governor Rick Perry pens a WSJ [op-ed](#) calling on Obama and Congress to take leadership and says the "[most humanitarian thing](#)" we can do is to deport these children as quickly as possible. But advocacy groups insist this is not a border security issue, but rather a [refugee crisis](#) demanding a [humanitarian response](#). TX Congresswoman suggests we should do what we're asking [Jordan and Turkey](#) to do. Pope Francis issues [statement](#). US religious leaders [respond](#) with words, action.



Many in Congress want to strip away legal protections granted in **the Trafficking Victims Reauthorization Act (TVPRA)**, passed unanimously by Congress and signed into law by then President George W. Bush in 2008, which allows children from Central America an opportunity to seek asylum – Church groups ask people to **take action** to keep the law in place. Meanwhile, others [warn](#) that most Americans now live in "[Constitution-Free Zones](#)."



Economic Justice: July job figures look great, or [are they?](#) Is minimum wage [wrong](#) solution to poverty? Are there good reasons to [oppose](#) public labor unions? Utah bishop says [Medicaid expansion](#) is pro-life issue; more cities [criminalizing](#) homelessness; Detroit takes [heat](#) for shutting off citizens' water, faulty water systems called "[catastrophic](#)" for urban poor; [Catholic theologians](#) take issue with Cardinal Dolan's defense of capitalism (May).

Our Divided Body Politic: What does being a "servant of reconciliation" mean in this context – over 1/3 of Republicans and more than 1/4 of Democrats now [believe](#) the other party is a threat to the nation. Have progressives and conservatives both lost what they [cared most](#) about the last 50 years?

International News:

Conflict in Gaza: [Darkness falls](#) on Gaza; FAIR asks "[when does the 'cycle of violence' start?](#)" Israeli peace activists asks "[Who's Winning?](#)" Times examines Israel's [difficult choice](#) and [questions](#) as civilian death toll rises.

Iraq: Unembedded reporter describes how US policies [sealed](#) Iraq's fate; professor reminds us, "[It's about the oil!](#)" NY Times Public Editor [slams](#) paper's coverage of the new war. Meanwhile, [last Christians in northern Iraq](#) flee their communities of 2000 years as deadline passes and they must either convert to Islam, pay a special tax or be killed.

Syria: *You think the US has an immigration crisis?* In 5 years, Syria has gone from the 2nd-largest host of refugees to the second-largest [producer](#) of them.

Local/State Social Justice News:

Wisconsin – [Gov. Walker's tax policy](#) benefits wealthiest the most, poorest the least.

Texas – Perry to deploy National Guard to Mexican [border](#), plans to bill Washington.

Mississippi – [Governor](#) to Obama: Don't send immigrants here. Race relations set back 50 years by recent GOP primary candidate's [outreach](#) to Black voters? Local commentator says ["no."](#)

South Dakota – Nearly 700 Native American children a year are being [removed](#) from homes, sometimes under questionable circumstances.

Illinois, Florida, Mississippi and South Dakota all make top 10 ["most corrupt"](#) list. A large majority of people living in the Deep South supports the Medicaid expansion in the Affordable Care Act, even though their governors and representatives oppose it, according to a new [poll](#).

Books of the Month: [Christian Faith, Justice, and a Politics of Mercy: The Benevolent Community](#) by James E. Gilman (argues that benevolence should be promoted by government as well as justice); [935 Lies](#) by investigative reporter Charles Lewis (explores the many ways truth is manipulated by governments and corporations).

New at SHSST Library... Toward a Theology of Migration, Gemma Tulud Cruz: <http://us.macmillan.com/towardatheologyofmigration/GemmaTuludCruz>

It's Not All Bad: 12 year old boy on mission to [help](#) Detroit's homeless.

Thought for the Month: *"Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public."* Cornel West

Fr. Dehon Quote of the Month: *"There are certain categories of workers whose wages are fair and whose circumstances are prosperous. But there are others who are exploited by a capitalism that is selfish, demanding, harsh, greedy, and unyielding.... Therefore it is necessary to examine closely the claims of the working class and the social reforms which they desire. We must be boldly present to our own times... and show that religion is a powerful and indispensable factor for social progress...."* (Address to alumni of College St. Jean, 1907)