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# Journey for Justice

## Listen! Learn! Act!

From the Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care

### Winter 2025 Issue

*"Out of deep respect for those who have cared for these lands since time immemorial,  
we are committed to tread lightly on the land, protect water as sacred, and affirm  
our desire for right relations with all Indigenous Peoples."*

- From our [CSJ Land Acknowledgement](#)



SISTERS of ST. JOSEPH of TORONTO

# Introducing a Journey of Essential Truths

By Leah Watkiss

This issue of *Journey for Justice* comes at a troubled time for our planet and in our fields of social justice, peace, and creation care. As all of us work through a challenging period, we hope to share with you:

## **Signs of the Times | Page 4**

Our principles of respect and solidarity with people in need, especially our dear neighbours in marginalized communities and populations.

## **Harvest Justice | Page 7**

An exciting stage theatre project that will explore the spectrum of exploitation and what is needed to make Canada a more equitable place.

## **Discerning our Vote | Page 10**

A path of spiritual and contemplative political engagement for making difficult decisions in elections.

## **Turn Debt Into Hope | Page 12**

A campaign calling for global change in how our society treats countries entrenched in debt;

## **Tread Softly... | Page 14**

As humanity wanders further from the natural world, the planet is struggling.

## **Words of Hope | Page 17**

Perspectives to carry into today and tomorrow.

# Signs of the Times

By Leah Watkiss

In these uncertain times, life can be overwhelming. Whether it's the news cycle, your social media algorithm, or conversations with friends and colleagues, most of us are feeling extra anxious at the moment with the rapid changes taking place in the world around us.

In our team and our work, the Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care is holding fast to some basic Catholic principles informed by the Sisters' charism to help us get through the days and weeks ahead.

1

The basic dignity of the human person. **ALL** of us are made in the image and likeness of God, and are deserving of basic human rights. We commit to focus on language, work, and approaches that humanize, rather than dehumanize.

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**The Ministry for Social Justice Team: Leah Watkiss, Sabrina Chiefari, Florence Ampomaa Osafo.**

## Signs of the Times (cont'd)

**2** Preferential option for those who are poor and oppressed. Throughout his life, Jesus consistently chose to stand **WITH** those who were on the margins, even when that put him in direct conflict with those who held power. We similarly seek to stand beside and uphold the voices of those who are on the margins.

**3** Caring for the dear neighbour. This applies to **ALL** of our neighbours: Indigenous communities, newcomers, refugees, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, undocumented people, students, those with addictions, those who are homeless or precariously housed, and more.

**4** Act out of **SOLIDARITY**. Recognize that we are all in this together. Reject us/them ways of thinking and embrace the understanding that a threat to human rights anywhere threatens human rights everywhere.



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## Signs of the Times (cont'd)

With these principles in mind, consider where you can have the greatest impact. For those who are able to, voting is one of the easiest ways to make a difference.

But there are many other ways to get involved: meet with your local representative or send them a handwritten letter; show up at community organizing events; participate in marches; if you have funds to spare, consider donating to a worthy cause; create art that expresses your feelings and dreams of a different world; and pray for the change you want to see in the world.

The earliest Sisters of St. Joseph were six women who, in the face of insurmountable odds of poverty and despair, came together to make a difference. They used prayer, service, and lace-making to contribute to the ongoing work of world-building God's dream for us all. Let us channel their optimism and commitment and continue their work for change in today's world.



# Harvest Justice

By Leah Watkiss

Every year, responding to pressure to work outside their home countries, temporary migrant workers come to Canada to complete essential work that sustains the Canadian economy and communities. In 2023, statistics report that 184,235 migrant workers entered Canada through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). These workers harvest produce, care for families, construct houses, cook meals, and more.

The immigration system is designed in such a way that many of these workers end up experiencing abuse, harassment, and exploitation. But most Canadians have no idea these conditions exist. [Collaborative Network to End Exploitation](#) (CNEE), administered by Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, seeks to address this gap by educating the Canadian public about the conditions these workers face and the kinds of policy changes that are needed to make Canada a more equitable place for all.

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## Harvest Justice (cont'd)

Previous projects include our short CNEE animated video outlining the key issues, our podcast documentary series, and our Migrant Worker Exercise. This year, we are partnering with **Mixed Company Theatre** (MCT) on an exciting new project with the working title *Harvest Justice*.

*Harvest Justice* will use **Forum Theatre** - an interactive, participatory, UNESCO recognized tool for communal dialogue, learning, and catalyzing social change - to tell stories and highlight the root causes of injustices migrant workers face, equipping audiences with the tools they need to join the migrant worker movement for a more just, equitable, and sustainable Canada. Over 25 current and former migrant workers have agreed to contribute to the project so far.

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**MIXED  
COMPANY  
THEATRE**

**40 years**

## Harvest Justice (cont'd)

Audiences will experience MCT's interactive approach that catalyzes the audience to develop real-time strategies for empowering social change around the challenges faced by migrant workers. In an MCT production, a story with no resolution to the challenges presented is performed. The story is then presented again—only this second time, audience members can intervene in the story, as “spect-actors,” to develop new attitudes, knowledge and to create a positive alternative ending.

In fall of 2025, the play will be presented to audiences in Guelph and Toronto. In the spring of 2026, we hope to take the production on the road and tour communities in southern Ontario.

**[Click here to sign up to receive updates on this exciting initiative!](#)**





# Discerning our Vote in Politically Charged Times

By Sister Sarah Rudolph, ibvm

*Deeply aware of the polarized division surrounding politics these days, our ministry joined several Catholic partners on December 10, 2024 to offer a space for collective contemplation and dialogue on political engagement. We thank Sister Sarah Rudolph, ibvm, for contributing the following summary.*

**- Sabrina Chiefari, Integral Ecology Specialist**

Within the context of the anticipated provincial and federal elections in Canada in 2025, representatives from Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto, Catholic Conscience, Centre Oblat, Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice, Mary Ward Centre, Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology, Regis College, and the Sisters of St Joseph of Toronto - Ministry for Social Justice, Peace and Creation Care hosted a webinar entitled *Discerning our Vote in Politically Charged Times*. (You can [click here](#) to view the recording.)

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**Sister Sarah Rudolph, ibvm**

## Discerning our Vote in Politically Charged Times (cont'd)

In a 2013 homily Pope Francis said, "Good Catholics meddle in politics... according to the Social Doctrine of the Church, [politics] is one of the highest forms of charity, because it serves the common good." Consequently, our purpose was to learn about the concept of contemplation and political engagement and to actively practice the skills of contemplative listening, reflective conversation, and discernment in a communal setting.

Over 60 people registered for the event, which was targeted to partners' respective networks and the broader Catholic community in Toronto and across Canada, comprising a small but committed cohort intent on reflection and discernment ahead of the elections.

Ted Penton, SJ, former Secretary of Justice and Ecology for the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, gave an overview of a resource produced by the Conference entitled **Contemplation and Political Action: An Ignatian Guide to Civic Engagement**. He said the resource is intended not to provide a moral stance on social issues but to help Catholics answer the questions "Why and how should we engage in political life?"

Since no single party or politician fully represents all Catholic Social Teachings, it is necessary for Catholics to take the time to prayerfully reflect when casting a vote during an election.

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## Discerning our Vote in Politically Charged Times (cont'd)

Following the talk, participants spent extended time in 'listening circles,' a structured process of reflection and sharing on several questions:

- 1** What election issues will likely determine my vote?
- 2** What do I find influences my vote (ie. social media, podcasts, television, newspapers/magazines, friends, faith community, etc)?  
What do I feel should not influence my vote?
- 3** How can I be more prayerfully discerning during election times? What prayers or faith rooted practices could help me to see God at work in politics?



Participants were energized by the richness of the sharing, the emphasis on prayerful action, and hope for political engagement. Follow up webinars are being planned for February, March and April to explore specific social issues in more depth, including poverty and affordability, housing and employment, and care for creation.

# Jubilee 2025: Turn Debt Into Hope

A Jubilee is a special year for pilgrimage, repentance and forgiveness, with Jubilees historically being recognized with slaves being freed and debts being forgiven.

For this Jubilee, Canadians have the opportunity to join a global movement to end the global debt crisis in which more than 3.3 billion people live in countries spending more on debt repayment than climate action, health, education or infrastructure. Some heavily indebted countries are so entrenched in debt that they will never be able to devote their resources on the well-being of their populations.

KAIROS Canada is leading a campaign calling on world leaders to cancel unjust debts and establish a United Nations mechanism with a multilateral framework to resolve debts and support global financial reform to prevent ongoing cycles of crushing debt.

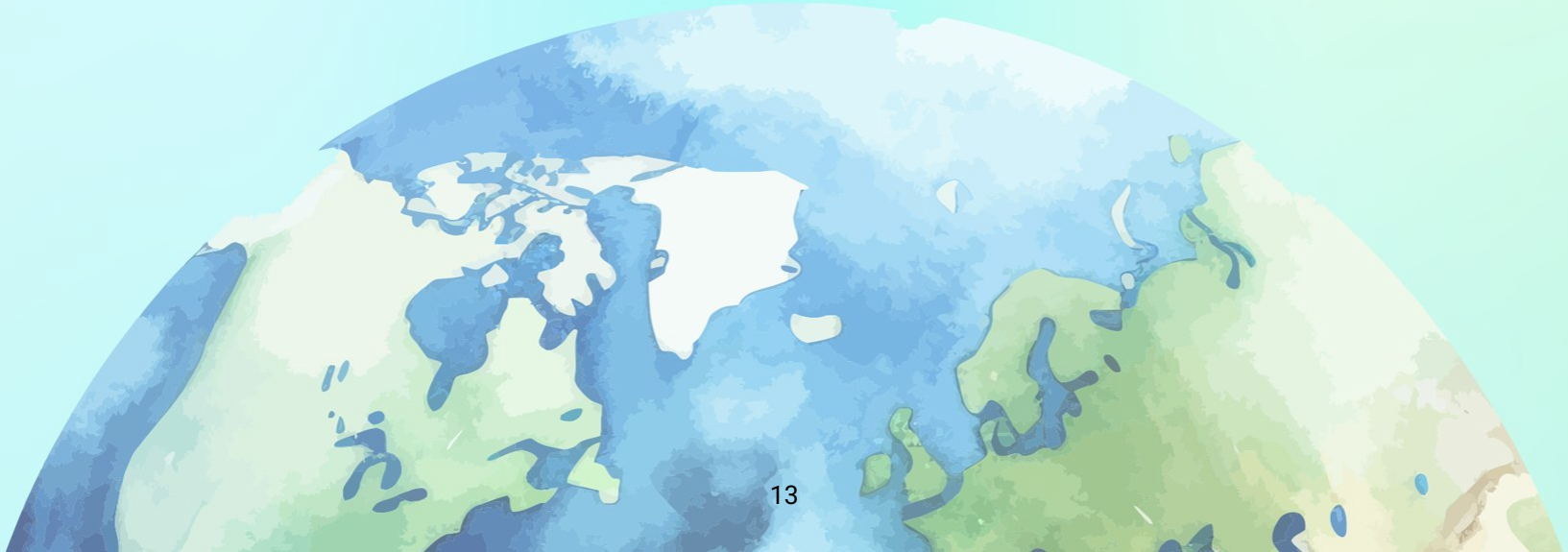
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## Jubilee 2025: Turn Debt Into Hope (cont'd)

If you believe that society should focus on the health and well-being of its people and our planet over profit and enriching creditors, please consider [clicking here](#) to sign the KAIROS petition.

The petition was developed with Citizens for Public Justice, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada and The Canadian Council of Churches. The campaign also highlights Indigenous rights and justice as a vital factor in economic justice, ecological justice, and debt reform.



# Tread Softly...

By Cécilia Meunier

*We all belong...*

In 2020, United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Gutiérrez warned that “humanity is waging war on nature,” and nature is “striking back with growing force and fury.” Consequently, “making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere.”

Somewhere along the way, humanity has chosen a relationship of greed and control over one of coexistence. We have come to our relationships with a sense that we are superior, a mindset that has permitted human trafficking, genocide and cultural annihilation. Just as our sense of dominance has perpetuated crimes against our own species, it has engendered similar egregious offenses against nature. The misguided belief that nature’s sole purpose is to submit to our demands has provoked habitat destruction, created climate change, increased pollution and leads to extinction. As humanity wanders further from the natural world, the planet is struggling.



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## Tread Softly... (cont'd)

Embedded in nature, we find answers. When we witness how animals and plants interact and coexist, we gain insight into the delicate balance of ecosystems and the primal harmony that reinforces life. The alligator, in an act that defies hunting instinct, allows the Plover to clean its teeth. The goby fish lives in burrows dug by the pistol shrimp. In return, the fish acts as a guide for the near-sighted shrimp. Decomposing tree stumps are recycled, returned to the soil and back into the food chain.

There is a growing awareness that the root of our discord is humanity's fractured alliance from the natural realm. Thankfully, individuals are stepping in to redress the imbalances we have precipitated and restore harmony. When we respect nature, nature nurtures life.

Florida's beaches are home to numerous marine turtles. Often, the hatchlings, disoriented by artificial light, fail to reach the safety of the ocean. By adopting an ordinance which prohibits light from reaching the beach, policy makers and residents have collaborated to safeguard the turtles' future.

Hope for Wildlife is an organization that rescues, rehabilitates and releases injured and orphaned wild animals. The organization hopes to reconcile people with wildlife. The survival of nature is in our choices.



[hopeforwildlife.net](http://hopeforwildlife.net)

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## Tread Softly... (cont'd)

By relinquishing our preconceptions, we transform the way we see and interact with the other. The key to restoring a peaceable relationship with the world we live in, hinges on our willingness to let go and genuinely connect with nature. Everyone, everywhere has to be concerned by the ramifications of clear-cutting forests, damming rivers and displacing wildlife for our benefit. We should be alarmed that toxic chemicals and plastic waste are shattering an intricate balance. We need to care enough to diminish our material consumption, prioritize recycling and composting, use rain barrels, plant native gardens and choose eco-friendly products. We need to believe we will make a difference.

Learning from the quiet lessons that surround us, we acknowledge that we are as much a part of the natural world as the Plover and the alligator. We see, in rivers and trees, our brothers and sisters and appreciate the strength of each to shoulder the other. As we honour each other through the seasons of life, we discover the power of collaboration. We step softly forward into the elaborate web of life and walk in partnership with all creation. Together, we make peace our top priority, a peace that echoes throughout the universe.





# Words of Hope...

## **Father Jean-Pierre Médaille, SJ, *Maxim #97***

“Be the one you hope to see acting for the good of Earth.”

## **Richard Wagamese, *Embers***

“Walk gently on the Earth. And do each other no harm. I've been considering the phrase ‘all my relations’ for some time now. It's hugely important. It's our saving grace in the end. It points to the truth that we are all related, that we are all connected, that we all belong to each other.

“The most important word is ‘all.’ Not just those who look like me, sing like me, dance like me, speak like me, pray like me or behave like me. All my relations. That means every person, just as it means every rock, mineral, blade of grass, and creature. We live because everything else does.

“If we were to choose collectively to live that teaching, the energy of our change of consciousness would heal each of us – and heal the planet.”

# Subscribe to Our Newsletter

We hope this newsletter will inspire our readers to listen, learn and act to create a just and equitable world.

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If you have any suggestions or want to connect with us, you can email us at [lwatkiss@csj-to.ca](mailto:lwatkiss@csj-to.ca).

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