



# The UN & You

BY DR. JIMMY WALTERS – JANUARY 2023

## From the NGO Desk

Each month, I will offer a short reflection on my experiences at the United Nations as NGO Representative for the Sisters of Charity Federation. The goal is to share the spirit of this role, to provide more insight into who I am as we get to know one another, and to affirm the important work that we do together for our human family and planet.

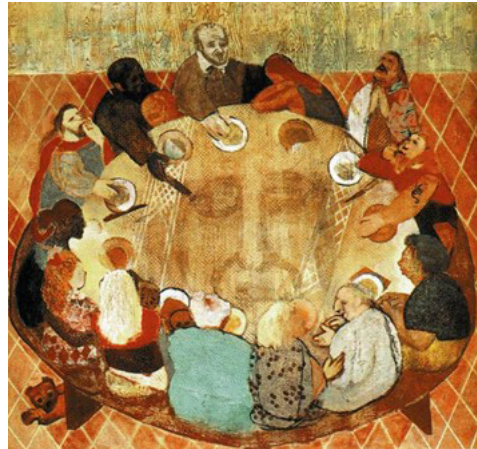
*Imagine, if you will, a long rectangular table that is large enough to hold over 20 people. Those who gather are some of the more extraordinary leaders, visionaries, advocates and activists in our Catholic and human history.*

The Vincentian family is well represented: St. Vincent de Paul, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, and St. Louise de Marillac are there. Other notable figures join them: St. John Bosco, Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, Mother St. John Fontbonne, St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, St. Dominic, Sr. Mary Rohodes, among many others.

Here, they gather to discuss the issues of their time: human rights, the many injustices in society, and the care for the planet we call home. Together, they pray, share, cry, laugh, love and find and give support. They discuss strategies to influence political leaders and prepare educational material to guide companions who seek justice and peace.

*Imagine what it would be like to witness such a gathering.*

On my first day at the United Nations, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, I entered the basement of the Salvation Army on East 52nd Street in Manhattan and found such a community. Around the table were the spiritual descendants of the many holy and extraordinary men and women of our faith. I was moved by the passion, kindness, and focus of the various NGO



“Vincent at the Table of the Poor” | Kurt Welther

representatives. This meeting, appropriately called RUN (Religious at the UN), gathers on the first Wednesday of each month.

“The United Nations is a Gospel space,” one sister shared during the morning prayer. “We are the conscience of the UN,” another brother added. Others offered their insights, challenges, and hopes. As I soaked it all in, I received a spiritual confirmation that I was meant to join this community—to continue the important work of Sister Teresa

Kotturan, SCN, and all the federation’s NGO representatives before her. I suddenly found a faith community that shared a commitment of contemplation and action, unconditional love of neighbor, and a fierce belief in human dignity and rights for all. Simply put, I was home.

I am quite blessed to be in this role and to also be in communion with you, the federation. I have a deep love for the Vincentian family and charism (as does my wife, Suzie, and two young daughters, Shea and Lily), and a special connection to St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (Suzie and I spent the first 10 years of our marriage in an apartment complex named after Mother Seton and greeted her photo each day in the lobby). St. Elizabeth Ann Seton wrote, “All God asks of us is the heart.” Please know that I give my heart not only to God, but to you.

I am truly fortunate to not only join the UN NGO community, but to also find a home with the federation. Your outpouring of support and prayers, as I enter this role, is felt and appreciated. I look forward to continuing to learn all the important and impactful ministries of your congregations, the stories of those you serve, and your personal vocation narratives. As one



of my heroes, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, said, “I would like to embrace the whole world in a network of charity.” I am grateful to join you in this vocation of charity and love.

Finally, in a special way, I am grateful to Sister Teresa for preparing me for this role. After eight years as NGO representative, we joked she was offering a “crash course on the UN” over the past four months. As Blessed Rosalie Rendu taught Frederic how to serve the poor in Paris, Teresa taught me how to advocate for those in need at the United Nations—all in the name of the federation.

It is one of my greatest honors to now sit at that impressive table representing the Sisters of Charity Federation, along with some of today’s faith and justice leaders. I look forward to all that will be.

In the words of St. Vincent, I pray this for them, for you, and for myself, “I ask Our Lord to be your light and strength in all the events of this life.”

## 61st Commission on Social Development

### Overview

The 61st Session of the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD61) will take place Feb. 6-15 in a hybrid format at the UN headquarters in New York. It will be available to view online at [UN Web TV](#). The opening session is Feb. 6 at 10 a.m. (EST).

The priority theme is “Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

**We call on member states to:**

- Ensure affordable access to quality and life-long education so that all people can reach their potential as individuals and contribute to the transformation of a peaceful, prosperous, and human-rights based society.
- Ensure a safe working environment and decent pay for educators, and a safe, equitable, inclusive, and healthy learning environment for students.
- Promote universal access to the internet and digital technology, as a public good and a right for all.
- Provide digital training and mobile technology for all, including persons with disabilities, women and girls, and older adults to eliminate the digital divide.

#NGOCSocD61

### Civil Society Response at the Commission for Social Development

The NGO Committee for Social Development has prepared a [Civil Society Declaration](#) which calls for a renewed social contract and cross-cutting policy approaches to promote decent work and full employment for a dignified life for all in inclusive societies. The declaration focuses on the need for formalized employment, social protection systems, quality education, and digital education skills training as means of providing productive employment and decent work.

This [Declaration](#) is open to public signatures until Feb. 1, 2023. [Sign](#) to support the Declaration.

Do keep in mind that you can take up the Call to Action issues in your advocacy at the national and local levels. Below are the Advocacy Points generated by the NGO CSocD.

**5 Advocacy Points**

- Address growing economic & social inequality through universal social protection, wage policies, and formalization of work.
- Enact inclusive, people-centered & gender-sensitive policies and programs
- Provide education, skilling, up-skilling, & digital training.
- Invest in initiatives & policies for human capital creation and redistribution.
- Highlight and energize the movement towards a Renewed Social Contract & the World Social Summit in 2025.

### Civil Society Forum

During the UN Commission for Social Development, the NGO Committee for Social Development is dedicated to raising awareness on the Priority Theme and bringing the voices, experiences, and recommendations from the grassroots. The NGO Committee holds a [Civil Society Forum and other capacity-building and network events](#) on the occasion of the commission. Visit the above link often for more information.

### Justice Coalition of Religious (JCOR)

For your meaningful participation in CSocD60, the Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR) at the UN prepares schedules for the UN events, Civil Society Forum, side events, links to the UN website and a social media guide for Twitter. Visit the [JCoR web site](#) for updates before and during CSocD60.