



The UN & You

BY DR. JIMMY WALTERS – DECEMBER 2023

From the NGO Desk

Pope Francis writes, “May Christmas be an opportunity for all of us to rediscover the family as a cradle of life and faith, a place of acceptance and love, dialogue, forgiveness, fraternal solidarity and shared joy, a source of peace for all humanity.”

As we journey through this Advent season, motivated by the words of the Holy Father, we can first look at our own families and communities. By prayer and generosity, may these words of hope be fulfilled.

This season also invites us to reflect on those beyond our four walls and nearest communities, and how we are called to bring those qualities of acceptance, love, dialogue, forgiveness, solidarity and joy, to our larger human family and all of creation.

I find myself pondering many things this season, especially all that you have shared with me from your local and grassroot ministries. I marvel at your dedication, passion, and authentic living of the Gospel that gently nudges and inspires me to continue to open my eyes and my heart. Combined with the ever-changing global reality, including all the personal and collective stories, advocacy points, and statistics of injustices, I wonder how God is using me and us as the Sisters of Charity Federation to move forward together.

With two young children, I am presented with an almost daily opportunity to reflect on the Nativity scene as my girls creatively move around the figures at the manger that rests in our living room. This year, it is the Holy Family that continues to draw my attention.

I cannot, and should not, separate the Holy Family from all of today’s refugees, those seeking safety for themselves and their families. Be it due to war, famine, violence, or any other unjust reasons that forces families to separate and leave their homes, we must ask, will we say there is no room in the inn as others did 2,000 years ago to Mary and St. Joseph?

Or will we find the courage to answer the knocking on the door of our hearts, asking us to care, to help in charity and advocacy, and to create space for the comfort and joy of stranger and neighbor?



“La Sagrada Familia” by [Kelly Latimore](#)

In addition to these prayerful questions, here are a few more that capture my imagination this Advent season (perhaps you are asking yourself some of these as well):

1. How might we better work creatively and collaboratively to address the root causes of injustice that forces one to seek refuge?
2. When violence, division, and indifference cause deep wounds to our planet and all who call it home, will we allow prayer to give us continued strength for our charity and advocacy?
3. Will we allow prayer to fill our soul and community with a peace that can reflect to the world something different, something worth replicating? As St. Vincent wrote, “if God is the center of our your life, no words are necessary. Your mere presence will touch hearts.”

In writing this reflection, I am reminded of two

quotes that keep me grounded (and hopeful) this Advent season. The first is from the Book of Psalms: “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10). The second is from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton: “Keep well to the grace of the moment... do your best and leave the rest to God.”

As we quickly approach Christmas, may we strive to be like all those gathered around the manger, instruments of God to bring love and peace into the world. Let us prayerfully insert ourselves into that holy scene, and find a renewed purpose and direction, and an even deeper trust in our God who brought us all together to serve, to advocate, and to be God’s beloved.

Merry Christmas, and be assured of my continued gratitude and prayers for you all.

COP 28

As this was going to print, the United Nation’s Climate Body released the latest draft text of the deal that it was hoping to reach before the COP28 summit concludes on Dec. 12. This may change slightly, but the urgent concern is that there was no direct mention of phasing out fossil fuels, the key demand of the European Union and many NGOs and advocacy groups.

Mary Robinson, Chief of the Elders, and former president of Ireland, posted this response on social media shortly after the draft text was revealed, and it captures the frustration and concern:

- “It is not good enough to say you recognize and respect the science but then fail to take heed of its dire warnings in the collective action you commit to.
- It is not good enough to note with “alarm and serious concern” the findings of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report and the damage being caused by climate change but then fail to put in place the steps the science recommends.
- It is not good enough to say you reaffirm the Paris

Agreement but to then fail to commit to a full fossil fuel phase out.

- It is not good enough to use weak language or to permit loopholes for the fossil fuel industry to continue to contribute to the very problem countries are meant to be committed to tackling here in Dubai.
- Adequate time and opportunity still lie ahead, provided that nations promptly return to the negotiating table, equipped with the resolve required for a crisis of this magnitude and a readiness to undertake the necessary measures. This current version of the COP28 text is grossly insufficient.”

Commission for Social Development

The annual Commission for Social Development (CSocD62) occurs in the UN from Feb.4–14.

The priority theme is: “Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication.”

The NGO CSocD is offering two key events that all can participate. The first is a virtual orientation on Sunday, Feb. 4 and the Civil Society Forum (CSF) on Friday, Feb. 9. The CSF will have some key components available on UN Web TV.

We are expecting a strong representation of the Sisters of Charity Federation at the commission. If you wish to join us in person, please contact me as soon as possible as registration concludes in early January.

Dr. James Walters, EdD, represents the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO at the United Nations. Jimmy educates federation members and the public on the services and activities of the United Nations.
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CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM 2024
SAVE THE DATE

The Civil Society Forum, organized by the NGO Committee on Social Development in collaboration with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the UN Department of Economic Social Affairs, is a unique platform for the grassroots voices to be heard. It is a space for members of civil society to gather, learn, discuss, and strategize on the themes and deliberations of the UN Commission for Social Development.

VIRTUAL ORIENTATION SESSION Sunday, February 4, 2024 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM ET <i>via Zoom</i>	OPENING PANEL & THEMATIC SESSION 1 Friday, February 9, 2024 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM ET UNHQ, Conference Room 4	NETWORKING & ENTERTAINMENT SESSIONS Friday, February 9, 2024 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM ET UNHQ, next to Conference Room 4	THEMATIC SESSION 2 & CLOSING SESSION Friday, February 9, 2024 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM ET UNHQ, Conference Room 4
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