

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours



A Place to Call Home

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"How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?"

This is a case of exclusion." (Pope Francis)

This month we commemorate both World Habitat Day, with the theme *Housing for All*, and World Homeless Day to raise awareness of the housing crisis throughout the world. Both commemorations invite us to reflect on the state of our towns and cities, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. It is estimated that approximately 1.8 billion people, or more than 20 percent of the world's population, lack adequate housing. As COVID-19 spreads around the world, billions of people have been told to stay at home. However, this simple preventative public health measure is impossible for people who live in homelessness, or in unsafe or overcrowded housing.

At Chapter 2019, the Congregation of Bon Secours made a commitment to address displacement, an issue that affects people in all the countries where we minister. As you read this issue of JPIC News, allow the graphics, statistics and quotes to move you to be in solidarity with all those people who yearn for a place to call "Home."

Homelessness

France: According to France's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), more than 12,000 people sleep on the streets of France. In 2018, 566 homeless people died nationwide, according to the charity Les Morts de la Rue. More than 100 of these were in Paris alone. (Source: EuroNews)

Ireland: There were 8,700 people homeless during July 2020 across Ireland. This figure includes adults and children. The number of homeless families has increased by 232% since July 2014 when the monthly figures started being published. Almost one third of people in emergency accommodation are children. (Source: Focus Ireland)

Peru: Among the homeless people in Peru are an estimated 700,000 people who were made homeless due to landslides and floods caused by unusually heavy rains in 2017. There are also more than 560,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Peru (Source: UNHCR, 2018).

COVID-19 is a 'crisis within a crisis' for homeless people.



USA: Almost 600,000 people are homeless in the United States and up to 40 million Americans could face evictions in 2020 due to loss of income during COVID-19 and an inability to pay rent. (Source: NLIHC)

October
JPIC Days of Remembrance

October 4
Feast of St. Francis of Assisi
World Animal Day

October 5
World Habitat Day

October 10
World Homeless Day

October 11
International Day of the Girl Child

October 16/17
World Food Day/
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

October 24
United Nations Day

October 24 – 30
Disarmament Week



“ Homelessness can vary from simply the absence of adequate living accommodation to a lack of permanent residence that provides roots, security, identity and emotional well-being.”

Jean Quinn, DW
Executive Director,
UNANIMA International

Family Homelessness, Displacement and Trauma: Statement from UNANIMA

For over 18 years **UNANIMA International** has focused on Women, Children/Girls, Migrants and Refugees in their work at the United Nations. These groups disproportionately comprise the homeless populations of our world, though are often hidden statistically and otherwise overlooked. It is our mandate to ensure these groups are able to achieve a better quality of life through having their voices heard at the international level.

This was exemplified most recently at the United Nations (UN) 58th Commission for Social Development where UNANIMA International presented research and advocated for the issue of Family Homelessness to be given the necessary concern and attention by Member States, Civil Society, and all political actors alike. Our statement in response to the COVID-19 crisis comes after reflection on the lack of attention to Family Homelessness within the pandemic’s global media coverage and international politics. As the situation worsens, it is wise and ethical to consider a sector of society still marginalized; people experiencing homelessness in all its forms are vulnerable. Combined with often poor nutrition and other health issues largely linked to economic standing and issues of access, they are at great risk of contracting the virus. This risk has been escalating as inequalities between and within nations are increasing in accordance with disjointed governmental responses.

We have, as a society, a duty to care for all people. Adequate housing is a human right. The provision of adequate housing and accompanying actions for prevention and in response to family homelessness, are essential to the realization of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and other social, economic and cultural rights and international laws.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, we must recognize and act towards meeting the needs of the homeless, especially homeless and housing insecure families.

- We assert all homeless services globally must adopt holistic, trauma-informed care.
- We reiterate UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ call for governments to make addressing domestic violence a key part of the pandemic response.
- We call for specific consideration of homeless families as part of response plans relating to COVID-19, as well as all humanitarian response plans.
- We call for ensuring technology access to homeless and low-income children and families for educational, informational and support purposes.
- We reiterate the importance of a coordinated approach to address the needs of homeless families during this time of crisis; we call for governments of all levels to obtain and maintain meaningful partnerships with civil society and organizations who are already addressing the needs of families and individuals affected by the crisis and who are systematically left behind. *(Source: UNANIMA International)*

UNANIMA International is a Coalition of 22 Communities of Women Religious, including the Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours, serving in 85 countries with 25,000 members.

Prayer for people who are homeless

They are on our streets, on buses and subways, in classrooms, in shelters, in doorways, in alleys, lost, invisible, hungry and hurting. Loving God, give us the eyes to see your children without the security of calling a place Home. Help us remember that Home is more than four walls and a roof. It is warmth in a cold time, comfort in a difficult world and safety for their children. Help us know that to be homeless is a hurt to the heart. Call us all to a place of solidarity – call us home. Amen. *(Source: Education for Justice)*



Reflection

Source: Kindness blog by Mike O’Connor

When you see a homeless person, do you look the other way and keep on walking? Do you avoid making eye contact? Is there a sudden selective deafness when you ‘hear’, or don’t, their requests for help?

If you do ignore a request for help, just how quickly does the incident evaporate from your mind? Seconds? Minutes? Hours?

What is your honest opinion of these people who are teetering on the very edges of our society?

Does your suspicion that some of these people might be pulling a con and actually making good money by pretending to be homeless and begging, stop you from helping any of them?

Or do you help them, smile, offer something, anything, buy them food, stay there for a moment and engage in a conversation?

Imagine being homeless day after day. How would you manage?



“The meaning of the other and love have disappeared from this society. Without money, people do not exist.”

Jean, a 33-year-old homeless man living on the streets of Paris

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