



NewsNotes

July 2023

Among the books I am reading is one called "We are the Middle of Forever," a series of interviews with mostly young Native Americans who are asked about their experience of environmental change. Some remind readers that this is not their first experience of climate change, as their ancestors were moved from Florida to Oklahoma. Likewise, several said the decline in the environment started from the moment of "first contact" with white colonizers.

I particularly appreciated an interview with a young woman, Rachel who was born on September 11, 2001. Like many they were not thrilled with education at the hands of white people because they know from their traditions that what was being taught as history was (to be polite) not the full story. Rachel fell out of love with school but, later, she did fall in love with learning by reading.

In light of Independence day, I found her reflections interesting.

I think my rights stem from my obligations versus a colonial mind-set where your rights free you from obligations. You know, that being a human on this Earth means that I have obligations. It also means I have rights but one comes first. If I can fulfill my obligations and my responsibilities, from there my rights come, my rights of freedom and my rights of finding happiness...I should want, as a human being, to be obligated to my [extended] family and to be obligated to my loved ones.

As people who need to grow into our interdependence, we would do well to consider her reflections.

Frank

Frank McCann
Peace through Justice Facilitator
Congregation's NGO Representative to the UN



Corporate Court's negative impact on climate action

Corporate Courts, also known as investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), are a controversial aspect of international trade agreements. These courts allow multinational corporations to sue governments over perceived violations of their rights.

In 1951, Iran's parliament voted to nationalise the country's oil sector, which was under the control of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the precursor to BP. Iran's Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh was overthrown in a US-British coup. From this point, Britain started inserting Corporate Courts into investment deals with countries.

The lack of transparency and accountability in Corporate Courts raises concerns. When a corporation brings an ISDS claim, a private arbitration tribunal is set up. ISDS can only be used by foreign investors. Domestic companies and governments cannot bring claims. Three arbitrators are selected for the tribunal, one by the corporation, one by the government and one jointly. The arbitrators are private lawyers paid by the case, not judges. It is common for them to act as arbitrators in one case and then represent a client in another. They are specialists in investment arbitration law and are often unfamiliar with other areas of international law. Corporations can claim not just for the money they have spent or the existing value of their investment but also for future expectations of profit.

When it comes to Corporate Courts, the government's responsibility to uphold human rights and international environmental laws is not taken into consideration. Arguments regarding these obligations and references to national laws are dismissed as irrelevant to the case. The courts do not attempt to find a balance between public and private interests. Instead, the tribunal uses its own legal system, which prioritises the obligations to investors as outlined in the trade or investment agreement. Sadly, this often leads to the neglect of the state's responsibility to protect the common good.

The use of Corporate Courts to oppose environmental protections has raised concerns among activists and environmentalists worldwide. These courts provide a platform for corporations to challenge regulations and policies aimed at safeguarding the environment. By prioritising corporate profits over environmental sustainability, these mechanisms undermine efforts to combat climate change and protect natural resources. Governments may hesitate to implement necessary measures to protect the environment which could harm corporate interests and lead to an ISDS claim being made. This creates a power imbalance where corporations can exert undue influence on policy-making processes and hinder progress towards sustainable development.

In recent years, there have been numerous instances where Corporate Courts have been used to challenge environmental protections. For example, [German energy giant RWE sued the Dutch government](#) for €1.4 billion euros in compensation from the Netherlands for banning the use of coal in electricity generation from 2030.

This system not only hinders governments from taking necessary actions to protect the planet but also sustains the profits of the most irresponsible sectors of the fossil fuel industry.

There are concerns about the fairness and justice of Corporate Courts, as they do not prioritise the common good. It's important for economic activities to benefit both individuals' dignity and society's well-being. Legal frameworks should prioritise human rights, social justice, and sustainable development instead of narrow corporate interests. The Catholic Church is recognised for promoting social justice and human rights. When it comes to Corporate Courts, the Church offers a unique perspective that takes into account both economic realities and moral principles.

What can we do? Sign this petition <https://stopids.org.uk/>

Further information :

<https://waronwant.org/news-analysis/corporate-courts-v-climate>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/8/2/corporate-courts-vs-the-environment>

How Corporate Courts threaten climate action-

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OKvNQBS79k&ab_channel=GlobalJusticeNow

Contemplating nature and sharing your photos



This photo speaks to me of Nature's continuing cycles of life-death-rebirth to new life. It makes me consider how different aspects of my life are in different phases of life-death-rebirth. I also consider my own place in the larger circle of life.

The Ecological Conversion team has asked Sisters and Associates to share photos as they spend time in nature this summer. We are encouraged to take a photo of something in nature that grabs our attention, due to its beauty or to what God might be saying to one of us at this time. Submission of the photo and a sentence or two about its meaning can be submitted to the Peace through Justice Facilitator by [email](#) or at the address contained at the bottom of NewsNotes.

At the beginning of the Season of Creation, September 1- October 4th, we will begin to share those photos and thoughts so we can all see and hear what our sisters and brothers found in nature. After the Feast of St. Francis we will schedule a zoom call to share our thoughts and thanks for what has been shared.



UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) prepares for SDG summit in September

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will be held from Monday, 10 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2023, under the auspices of the [Economic and Social Council](#). This includes the three-day ministerial segment of the forum from Monday, 17 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2023 as part of the High-level Segment of the Council. The last day of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC will be on Thursday, 20 July 2023.

The Global community is behind in achieving many of the goals set for 2030, largely, though not completely, due to the pandemic.

The theme will be "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels". Participants in the presentations are upper level ministers from countries, usually those actually involved in the work of achieving progress in the SDGs.

In the forum, participants will be able to further discuss the effective and inclusive recovery measures to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and explore actionable policy guidance for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at all levels.

The HLPF in 2023, without prejudice to the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs, will also review in-depth Goals 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

Following 40 presenters will carry out voluntary national reviews (VNRs) of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the forum: [Bahrain](#), [Barbados](#), [Belgium](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Brunei Darussalam](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Cambodia](#), [Canada](#), [Central African Republic](#), [Comoros](#), [Chile](#), [Croatia](#), [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), [European Union](#), [Fiji](#), [France](#), [Guyana](#), [Iceland](#), [Ireland](#), [Kuwait](#), [Liechtenstein](#), [Lithuania](#), [Maldives](#), [Mongolia](#), [Poland](#), [Portugal](#), [Romania](#), [Rwanda](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Singapore](#), [Slovakia](#), [St Kitts & Nevis](#), [Syrian Arab Republic](#), [Tajikistan](#), [Timor-Leste](#), [Turkmenistan](#), [United Republic of Tanzania](#), [Uzbekistan](#), [Vietnam](#), [Zambia](#).

The HLPF is in preparation for the SDG Summit to be held in September.

Please [click here](#) for more information.

Video from the UN on where we are with the SDGs

We cannot include YouTube videos in NewsNotes but I would encourage you to watch this 35 minute video "Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times" when you have a chance.

<https://youtu.be/xVWHuJOmaEk>

World Refugee Day Message from Pope Francis



Pope Francis penned the Message for the 109th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2023 which will be celebrated on September 24th this year.

The message he wrote tells of our responsibilities to help people stay where they are living as that is their right, how ever to welcome, protect, promote and integrate those who are forced to move. Francis wrote his message before the death of almost 600 migrants on the aging ship, Adriana, which was carrying

This is the largest single death toll of migrants in a year with the most migrant crossings and deaths.

Initial news stories by the Greek Coast Guard blamed the smugglers who crowded so many onto the aging and unfit fishing boat at an average of \$4,000.00 per person. Later investigations reveal that the Coast Guard knew the ship was in trouble for at least thirteen hours before it capsized, knew it was carrying migrants, but would not organize a rescue. The coast guard did send a ship manned by armed men wearing masks, that stayed alongside the Adriana for hours, but did not draw close enough to allow migrants to board.

The Greeks may be to blame here but most of Europe has become an anti-migrant fortress with the cruelty displayed in this incident meant to deter others from fleeing. The problem is if the migrants are facing death to stay where they are what more is there to lose by trying to cross into Europe?

Francis uses the text of Matthew 25:35-36 to remind us that migrants are not just brothers and sisters to us, but are Christ himself in need. "*In whatever place we decide to build our future, in the country of our birth or elsewhere, the important thing is that there always be a community ready to welcome, protect, promote and integrate everyone, without distinctions and without excluding anyone.*" [p. 7]

[Read the entire document here.](#)

The following prayer was appended to the Pope's message:

PRAYER

God, Father Almighty,
grant us the grace to work tirelessly
for justice, solidarity and peace,
so that all your children may enjoy
the freedom to choose whether to migrate or to stay.

Grant us the courage to denounce
all the horrors of our world,
and to combat every injustice
that mars the beauty of your children
and the harmony of our common home.

Sustain us by the power of your Spirit,
so that we can reflect your tender love
to every migrant whom you place in our path,
and to spread in hearts and in every situation
the culture of encounter and of care.



CSJPs distribute charitable gifts

On June 20th the Leadership Team announced its approval of recommended charitable donations to sixteen mostly international charities that would serve the need of the poorest. The recommendations came from the Laudato Si Charitable giving team led by Melody Maravillas, the congregation's CFO. They have engaged The Philanthropic Institute to assist with proper due diligence regarding grant applicants.

The following priorities, based on our most recent chapter acts, were set in considering what organizations to fund:

Peace through justice: explicit nonviolence, systemic change, violence prevention, violence interruption, and reconciliation-based peace initiatives.

Care for Creation: creative and adaptive efforts toward environmental justice and the acknowledgement and repair of ecological wounds.

Empowerment of low income, marginalized persons, especially women: community organizing and cooperatives that help persons develop skills and increase income.

Radical hospitality: refugees, welcome of immigrants, anti-racism, inclusion, and interculturality.

Religious life: global sisterhood, care of elder members, and newer communities in active ministry with people on the margins of society.

Grants were made to: Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project, Beyond Borders, Changing the Way We Care, Climate Refugees, Grandparent Friendship Bench, International Union of Superiors General, Lutheran World Relief, Muslim Women's Council, Prosperity Catalyst, RefuShe, Sakala Haiti, Spark Microgrants, Verbum Dei USA, Water with Blessings, Windle International, Women's Climate Centers International.

This distribution was the first recommended by the LS Charitable Giving Team but followed work done by an earlier team after our previous chapter. It is expected that there will be two distributions made annually going forward.

Degrowth to social justice

by David Richardson

Many people believe that a country's main focus should be on achieving economic growth, as measured by its GDP. While GDP is a useful indicator of the size and performance of an economy, it fails to provide a complete picture of a country's standard of living or overall well-being. This is because GDP assigns a positive value to all products, regardless of their usefulness. It is, therefore, important to question whether relentlessly pursuing economic growth is truly beneficial. Such an approach has negative consequences causing environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, and exploitation of developing countries. Degrowth is a set of theories which aim to promote a society that prioritises the welfare of the environment and society rather than corporate profits, overproduction, and excessive consumption.

The majority of excess emissions, approximately 92%, are attributed to wealthy nations in the Global North. Conversely, the Global South, which includes regions such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America, is only responsible for a mere 8% of emissions. The current ecological crisis has been primarily brought about by the excessive consumption of resources and energy by affluent nations, who have mostly sourced them from less developed countries in the Global South. The capitalist expansion of the Global North has been sustained by suppressing the income of the Global South, thereby keeping supply prices low and ultimately driving profits upwards.

Governments have been ineffective in challenging this injustice, but many social movements are advocating for global justice through a [Global Green New Deal](#), which includes the idea of degrowth in the Global North. Degrowth is a developing collection of thoughts and ideas with no agreed definitive roadmap. If implemented appropriately, degrowth in the Global North could provide the Global South with greater opportunities to use their own resources, improve their living standards, and reduce the impact of industrialisation on the environment.

Pope Francis stated in a [Tedtalk 2022](#), "The economy itself can not be limited to production and distribution. It must also consider its impacts on the environment and the dignity of all people."

Degrowth does not have to mean a lower standard of living, as economic growth does not always mean increased benefits. Several countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and Portugal, have achieved higher life expectancy with significantly less income than countries with higher GDP.

Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si'", on Care for Our Common Home, highlights "environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces." Degrowth is an opportunity for us to explore and engage in our spiritual tradition. It offers an avenue in which the Church's teachings on socio-economics can be demonstrated.

[Alex Mikulich](#) writes Perhaps paradoxically, degrowth is not about living in Scrooge-like misery, it is about living in the radical abundance of God's

creation. There are scriptural visions of degrowth, principally the Hebrew law of jubilee (Leviticus 25), which calls for the cancellation of debts every seventh year. Degrowth offers a different way that celebrates the radical abundance of the whole of God's creation while caring for all of our human and nonhuman kin.

So what can you do? Go to the Global Alliance for a New Green Deal website, read about the work they are doing, and see which of the 300 parliamentarians from 44 nations have signed the Declaration and show your support.



Upcoming Waterspirit Events



Wet, Wild and Wonderful Adventures at the Plainsboro Preserve

Monday, July 3, 2023 9:00 AM

Friday, July 21, 2023 3:00 PM

Plainsboro Preserve

80 Scotts Corner Road Cranbury, NJ, 08512 United States ([map](#))

Join Waterspirit for a week full of daytime adventures at the Plainsboro Preserve. During "Wet, Wild and Wonderful." children will enjoy searching Devil's Brook for aquatic life, watching frogs in the pond, and visiting a real beaver lodge.

We will enjoy water games and some wet and wild craft activities too.

Age: 9-12 Dates: July 3-7 (closed 7/4) Fee: \$250

Or

Age: 6-9 Dates: July 17 – 21 Fee: \$250

10 Year Anniversary Lac-Mégantic Rally/Press Conference

Thursday July 6, 2023

- 5:00 PM 6:30 PM
- Across from the CSX rail line and Teaneck Volunteer Ambulance Station) ([map](#))

To sign up, please visit: <https://bit.ly/remember-lacmégantic>

Join speakers from Lac-Mégantic and the East Palestine areas, first responders, rail workers, legislators, community advocates, and the Solidarity Singers as we rally to support preventative measures to enhance rail safety in New Jersey.

Mark the 10th Anniversary of the Tragedy of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, when a train carrying volatile Bakken crude oil derailed and exploded like a bomb, killing 47 children and adults, and destroyed the downtown.

Call for the passage of A5606, new Rail Safety legislation for New Jersey, because trains carrying petroleum, vinyl chloride and other hazardous materials travel through towns, cities and rural communities here in New Jersey, putting us at great risk.

Here is the link to the Facebook event and sign up: <https://fb.me/e/2HXSDaA4v>

Rain Barrel Workshop

Wed, August 9, 2023 6-7:30 PM

Families and friends will gather for this special workshop to learn how to make and use a rain barrel of your own. We at Waterspirit know the value of water. Water Is Life. Registration Required. Groups can work on one or multiple barrels, cost is \$35 per barrel.

Join us! [REGISTER HERE](#)

Waterspirit book club

- Tuesday, September 5th 2023
- 2-3 PM

[Join Waterspirit's Book Club for our Aug 28 meeting as we discuss the book Finding The Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest By Suzanne](#)

10 Step Eco-Anxiety Support Group info session

- Tuesday, September 5, 2023
- 2-3 PM
- Online via zoom.

[REGISTER](#) for this informational meeting that will outline what this 10-week support group entails, explain the course's suggested donation, and answer any question you might have prior to committing. The group will meet on zoom from 9/12-11/14 at 2-4 PM ET.



Meditation for Earth



Please join Waterspirit for a 30 minute "Meditation for Earth" in-person in the Sanctuary at the Rumson Presbyterian Church 4 East River Road, or

livestreamed on Waterspirit's YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFzJckCctU22hEjrmoLitwQ>

[Find the Meditation on the Waterspirit YouTube Channel.](#)



Let Justice and Peace Flow

Season of Creation 2023

A Mighty River
Amos 5: 24

The Season of Creation 1 September 1 until 4 October

Stay tuned to the Season of Creation 2023. Theme of this year "*Let Justice and Peace Flow*". The symbol is a Mighty River. "The urgency grows and we must make visible peace with Earth and on Earth, at the same time that justice calls us to repentance and a change of attitude and actions. As we join the river of justice and peace with others then hope is created instead of despair" (Season of Creation, 2023).

Anyone interested in planning an event for that time should contact Frank McCann



Upcoming webinars with NETWORK begin in September

Our CSJP Congregation is one of the congregations in LCWR Region 3 that will be sponsoring and taking part in an "issues" course with NETWORK, the Catholic Sisters' social Justice Lobby. There will be four sessions starting in September and continuing the third Wednesday of the month in October, November and January. All sisters and associates are welcome to attend as we hope to be updated on critical issues for the 2024 elections. Sessions will begin at 6:30 PM ET. More information will follow.

International Days for July

- 03 July [International Day of Cooperatives \(A/RES/47/90\)](#)
- 07 Jul [World Kiswahili Language Day \[UNESCO\] \(UNESCO GC 41 C/61\)](#)
- 11 Jul [World Population Day \(A/RES/45/216\)](#)
- 12 Jul International Day of Combating Sand and Dust Storms ([A/RES/77/294](#))
- 15 Jul [World Youth Skills Day \(A/RES/69/145\)](#)
- 18 Jul [Nelson Mandela International Day \(A/RES/64/13\)](#)
- 20 Jul [International Moon Day \(A/RES/76/76\)](#)
- 20 Jul [World Chess Day \(A/RES/74/22\)](#)
- 25 Jul [World Drowning Prevention Day \(A/RES/75/273\)](#)
- 28 Jul [World Hepatitis Day \[WHO\]](#)
- 30 Jul [International Day of Friendship \(A/RES/65/275\)](#)
- 30 Jul [World Day against Trafficking in Persons \(A/RES/68/192\)](#)

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