



The UN & You

BY DR. JIMMY WALTERS – MARCH 2023

From the NGO Desk

It is good for us to be here.

This is the title of a 2015 book that was handed to me during my first week by my predecessor, Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN. This important resource captures the history and value of Catholic religious NGOs at the United Nations.

As I continue to orient myself to this role, I often find myself thinking that yes, it is good for us to be here.

In my experience of the Vincentian charism for over the past two decades, it was charity that I related to most often. The call to find Christ in those living in poverty and on the margins of society guided the many service experiences that I led and participated in as a Campus Minister at St. John's University. St. Vincent and St. Louise serving the poor of France became an image that I would resonate with in prayer and reflection.

Over the past few months, a different image has emerged as I enter the global arena: St. Vincent presenting the needs of the poor to those with power and influence. As a member of the royal Council of Conscience and having influence with both King Louis XIII and Queen Anne of Austria, St. Vincent was a moral conscience for the monarchy.

Is this not what we try to do at the United Nations?

Yes, it is good for us to be here.

Just this past month, we advocated for the rights of women and girls and the need for clean and sanitary water for all. Next month, we will give voice to the indigenous communities, as we continue other advocacy points related to our climate, migration, and the enhancement and eventual achievement of the 2030 sustainable development goals. Ongoing committee work reflects the grassroot efforts by our



Saint Vincent de Paul Preaching to the Court of Louis XIII on Behalf of the Abandoned Children. Artist: Paul Delaroche (French, 1797-1856)

congregations as we learn, reflect, and act.

How we do all this is shaped by our Vincentian and Setonian spirit.

In my own reflection on how to live this spirit as I continue to listen and learn, I am being guided by two sources of inspiration.

The first are these words from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton: “The charity of our blessed Lord had three distinct qualities which should be the model of our conduct. It was gentle, benevolent, and universal.”

These words tug at my heart strings, as they are remarkably consistent with my experiences with the Sisters of Charity. I find these characteristics to be true and authentic which is becoming more than rare in our society. What a blessing it is

to join you in this way of being.

The second source of inspiration comes from Fr. Rob Maloney, CM, former superior general of the Congregation of the Mission. In his book, “Turn Everything to Love,” he provides three forms of language to live our Vincentian charism:

- Through the language of works—performing the works of justice and mercy which are a sign that the Kingdom of God is really alive among us.
- Through the language of words: speaking sincerely and truthfully... announcing with deep conviction the Lord's presence, his love, his offer of forgiveness and his acceptance of all.
- Through the language of relationships: being with the poor, working with them, forming a community with them that shows the Lord's love for each individual; developing genuine personal bonds based on respect for the personal dignity of others.

How blessed we all are to be here, to



animate this charism and spirit in our work, both on the local and global levels. I pray that together, by God's grace and will, we will continue to reveal God's love by making our world a more just and peaceful place for all.

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The 22nd session of the [UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#) will take place at UN Headquarters, New York, from April 17–28, 2023.

The priority theme of the session is: “Indigenous Peoples, human health, planetary and territorial health and climate change: a rights-based approach.”

According to its [mandate](#), the forum will:

- Provide expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programs, funds and agencies of the United Nations, through ECOSOC.
- Raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities related to indigenous issues within the UN system.
- Prepare and disseminate information on indigenous issues. The Permanent Forum holds annual two-week sessions.

Visit the Justice Coalition for Religious (JCoR) as the Forum approaches for a [handy guide](#) to participate virtually. Please also follow [@ngoscfederation](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) for more information.

NGO Liaisons

Since early January, the NGO Liaisons and I have met both individually and collectively to build relationships, assess our communication, and plan for the future. I am very grateful for this community as they share grassroots updates that inform my committee work at the UN. In return, I provide updates and information that hopefully inspires your justice ministry on the local and global level.

The Liaisons are a wonderful blessing to me. I



am inspired by their passion for justice, their love for service and justice, and their deep care for the sisters, associates, and all our brothers and sisters that their congregations serve.

We will meet collectively every other month to explore issues and to seek opportunities for collaboration and to review best practices. We will continue to strategize ways to connect our charity and mission, both locally and globally.

Meeting with SC Federation Board

Earlier this month, I was fortunate to meet with the Sisters of Charity Federation board of directors at the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, Maryland, to give a report on the first months of my tenure as NGO Representative. In addition, I was able to learn more about the federation and the ministry of the Shrine. I also had time to pray by the National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes.

I visited Lourdes, France four times before, including leading university students in service to the sick on three separate occasions. Lourdes is a sacred space that has formed me as a person, and I am grateful for the many prayers that were answered during my time there.

As I visited this grotto in Emmitsburg, I sensed the same spirit that I did in Lourdes. My soul found rest and as I stared out at the lower landscape from where Mother Seton once looked, I felt connected to this heroine of our faith and inspired for our ministry.

