



# JUST Love

OCTOBER 2022



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF PEACE, JUSTICE AND  
ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH

## WORLD HOMELESSNESS DAY

October 10 is World Homelessness Day. The Sisters of Charity at their 2019 General Assembly have made people experiencing homelessness a special focus of action and advocacy. There are many myths and misconceptions about those who are homeless. Silver School of Social Work professor Deborah K. Padgett, a leading scholar on homelessness, debunks some of the most common homelessness myths:

### 1. Most are mentally ill.

Decades of epidemiological research reveals that one-third, at most, have a serious mental illness.

### 2. The majority abuse drugs and alcohol.

It is believed that only about 20 to 40 percent of homeless have a substance abuse issue. In fact, abuse is rarely the sole cause of homelessness and more often is a response to it because living on the street puts the person in frequent contact with users and dealers.

### 3. They're dangerous and violent.

Homeless persons are far more likely to be the victims of violence than the perpetrators. Of course, some homeless individuals may commit acts of violence beyond self-defense but such acts rarely affect the non-homeless individuals they encounter. To put it another way, any violence by homeless persons is either self-defense or due to the rare violent perpetrator who preys on other homeless people. Non-homeless need to understand this.

### 4. They're criminals.

Homeless persons are more likely to have criminal justice intervention. However, this is primarily because many of their daily survival activities are criminalized—meaning they might be given a summons or arrested for minor offenses such as trespassing, littering, or loitering.

### 5. "Bad choices" led to their homelessness.

Everyone makes mistakes, but the descent into homelessness is not necessarily the direct result of "choices." Far more often a sudden illness or an accident, losing one's job, or falling into debt leads to eviction—or doubling up with family or friends becomes untenable.

### 6. They prefer the freedom of life on the street.

There is no evidence to support this notion that homeless persons are "service resistant." Since "Housing First" began in New York City in 1992 at the nonprofit Pathways to Housing, Inc., it became clear that the offer of immediate access to independent housing with support services is welcomed and accepted by most homeless. People on the



street often reject the option of crowded, unsafe shelters—not housing in general.

### 7. They spend all their money on drugs and alcohol.

Interviews with street homeless persons show that most of their money goes to buying food and amenities such as socks, hygiene products, and bottled water. Although some do spend money on alcohol or drugs, the same can be said of anyone.

### 8. They just need to get a job.

A significant portion of homeless people do have jobs—they just cannot afford to pay rent. Some receive disability income due to physical or mental problems but still cannot afford rent. For those wanting to work—a common refrain among those interviewed by my research team—the complications of applying for a job with no address, no clean clothes, no place to shower, and the stigma of being homeless (or having a criminal record), make such individuals far less competitive in the low-wage job market.

### 9. The homeless are not part of "our community."

Surveys have shown 70 to 80 percent of homeless persons are from the local area or lived there for a year or longer before becoming unhoused.

### 10. They live in unsanitary conditions because they don't care.

Living outdoors means having no regular place for bodily functions, to dispose of trash, to store food safely, or to bathe. A homeless person who "cares" has few alternatives. Our research shows that lacking access to a shower is one of the more humiliating aspects of being homeless.

Check out the SCNJ website for more information about the Sisters of Charity focus on those experiencing homelessness <https://www.scnj.org/peace-justice-ecological-integrity>

## SISTERS OF CHARITY MARK THE SEASON OF CREATION 2022



Sister Joan Eileen Butler, SC (left) admires the Burning Bush, the symbol of the Season of Creation 2022, designed by Director of Communications Donna Sartor. The Burning Bush was displayed outside Holy Family Chapel with a prayer intention for each day of the Season of Creation. Sr. Roberta Feil also organized weekly gatherings for the motherhouse community to mark the Season. Sr. Roberta Feil, SC (right) displays a Care of Creation bag that she designed.



You are invited to join the SC Ecospirituality Group which meets monthly by ZOOM for prayer, study, and reflection. Here are the themes and speakers for the next few months. If you would like to receive the ZOOM link email [tmoran@scnj.org](mailto:tmoran@scnj.org)

October 3, 2022

Dorothy Calvani will share on last summer's Sisters of Earth Gathering: **Shamanic Journeying into Earth's Wisdom - Building Strong and Loving Relationships with the Earth Community**



November 7, 2022

**Hope is Not Optimism: On Faithful Practice in the Anthropocene**

Professor Christopher Haw, University of Scranton

December 5, 2022 **Where are your brothers and sisters? Mutual Aid is our responsibility in a time of catastrophic**

**climate change.**

Dr. Anna Brown, St. Peter's University

## JPIC Date to Remember in October

**1 Feast of St. Therese of Lisieux** "Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms." ~ Pope Francis

**4 Feast of St. Francis of Assisi** "He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace." ~ Pope Francis

**10 Indigenous People's Day** Learn about the world's Indigenous Peoples at the website of Amnesty International <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/>

**12 National Farmer's Day** Pray for the people who bring the food to your table. Patronize your local Farmers' Market.

**24 United Nations Day** Send an email of thanks to Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN who is finishing her term as the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO representative [scfederationunngo@gmail.com](mailto:scfederationunngo@gmail.com)

**31 Halloween** In the Celtic tradition on this day the veil between this world and the next is thinnest today. Who are models of peace, justice, and care of creation who have passed beyond the veil? Talk to them today and ask for their spirit.