Voices of Sisters
Spirituality
Social Justice
Migration



Ceidy, an asylum-seeking migrant mother from Guatemala, kisses her 3-month-old baby Bridget while waiting to be escorted by the U.S. Border Patrol agents after crossing the Rio Grande into Roma, Texas, April 7, 2021. (CNS/Reuters/Go Nakamura)



by Sr. Mary Shaw

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## Join the Conversation

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This May we celebrate the sixth anniversary of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter: "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," and were introduced about seven months ago to his new Encyclical Letter, "*Fratelli Tutti*: on Fraternity and Social Friendship." With these in the background as a mirror, one is left to ponder what light is reflected on the issues that seem to be dominating the air waves.

We are hearing a lot of news now about asylum seekers, especially children, who are involved in the crisis at the U.S. border; brutal attacks on Asian Americans; random acts of gun violence leading to many deaths. The encyclicals I mentioned give us some assistance amidst these crises and the ongoing pandemic.

As long as we can recall, there has been trouble at the border — not caused by those seeking asylum but perhaps by our antiquated, inhumane policies that deny our shared humanity. One thing is for sure, there is an absence of human dignity at the border.

Francis helps us to see that an "integral ecology calls for openness … that takes us to the heart of what it is to be human" (*LS* 11). Pope Francis reminds us of his spiritual namesake, Francis of Assisi, who spoke the language of fraternity and beauty, and saw each and every creature as a sister or brother.

If we lose this fraternal language, "our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on our immediate needs" (*LS* 11). We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. We are called to hear the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor.

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Ponder: Do I see people at the border as part of the "throwaways" because they have a different language or color than I do? Do I see these individuals as "them," coming here to take our jobs or bringing diseases, and fail to see them as brother and sister?

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis relates the timeless story with which we are all familiar: the good Samaritan. But now we are seriously asked to enter into the story. Take a few minutes and watch the scenes at the border, or other acts of violence that flash across your television screen, and ponder, "Each day we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders" (*FT* 69).

Will we be the one who passes by, or will we be the one who stops to help? The cries — no matter who utters them — call us to leave our comfort zone, our clean, antiseptic way of living and to respond to the one in need. Because it is the one in need or hurt who helps me to see where I am in my spiritual growth.

Who can deny the cries of the past few weeks of Black mothers, sisters and brothers, crying out because a loved one was "executed?" They were bitten by what I call *The White Serpent*. Oh yes, our Easter lilies, still somewhat fresh and trumpeting the news of Life, are still threatened by this rare species, seemingly protected in this country.

This serpent has been slithering through the fabric of our country since its inception. From the terrible lynchings and the "barbecues" of those who threaten the serpent, to the more subtle, insidious "smokeless" burnings by some forms of law enforcement in modern society. Oh, the serpent must be protected.

Ours is a paschal identity: the Blood flowing in the streets of America also announces with screams … do I hear it? It screams, and we say: *We are better than this, this is not us.*

Oh, but it is us! It is since the beginning! Let the screams pierce our deafness, remove our cataracts. Who are we? Whose are we? Ours is a paschal identity" but these others …?

Precious Body, Precious Blood of George Floyd … Have mercy on us.

Precious Body, Precious Blood of Daunte White …  Have mercy on us.

Precious Body, Precious Blood of Adam Toledo … Have mercy on us.

Precious Body, Precious Blood soaking the fabric of this country … Be merciful to us.

If we listen to and dialogue with the other, we just may see that the white threat

looks better if dyed crimson, reflection of a garment of diversity.

Oh yes, ours is a paschal identity…! And theirs?

May we see ourselves as those afflicted by the *White Serpent* see us … after all, the serpent can also be a sign of healing. Yes, may their precious blood and precious body be our source of liberation and peace, robing us in the garment of the peaceful, diverse kin-dom of Isaiah 11. And the ugly bulbs of our Easter trumpets bloom after being buried for three years … announce and symbolize resurrected life.

I may be able to quote the Bible, speak about good books — but what about my actions? Do the cries of another disturb me enough to pray, to advocate on their behalf, and to bind their wounds? If not, why not?




A man in New York City begs on his knees as people walk past him in Times Square May 10, 2021. (CNS/Reuters/Carlo Allegri)

Let us recall Jesus' preferential option for the poor, then let us petition our legislators to formulate just policies that seek to empower the less fortunate. The grief and pain of any one of us is really that of all of us — for we have only one common home, and all of us are connected; all of us are brothers and sisters with one Father.

Are you, am I willing to be a neighbor to all? Read the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) and ask yourself, how are you like each character? What can you do to assist those fleeing unjust systems to find a safe home to rear their children, have a decent shelter, and gainful, just employment? Pondering Luke 10 just may be a transformative moment for us, one that will empower us to live and to experience the joy of the Gospel.

May the cries of Creation and all creatures, and the wounds of suffering humanity, be conduits of grace to us, and enable us to take action to improve the lot of the less fortunate. May those at the borders around the world help us to recognize our common humanity: *Fratelli Tutti.*

The pandemic may have "incarcerated" us, but it gave us a few lessons: We are all connected; my acts or lack thereof impact your life; only together can we mend the garment of humanity; and what we see played out on our television screens daily are calls to us to respond with charity. So let us go and make a difference! Let us pause long enough to encounter the other.