Blog
Social Justice



U.S. President Joe Biden walks to deliver remarks on the election results and the upcoming presidential transition of power, in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington Nov. 7, 2024. His speech took place the day after Republican President-elect Donald Trump was declared to have been elected the 47th president of the United States. (OSV News/Reuters/Elizabeth Frantz)



by Dan Stockman

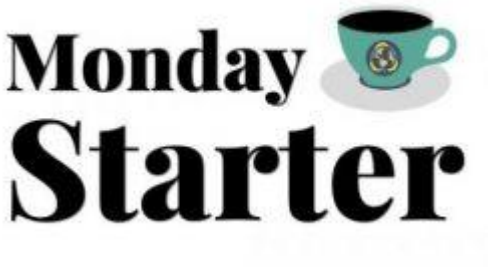
View Author Profile
dstockman@ncronline.org

Join the Conversation

January 13, 2025

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Editor's note: *This story has been updated to add two breaking news items.*



The 16 congregations that make up the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph had a call to action Jan. 9, asking its nearly 3,000 sisters, plus associates and others, to call or email President Joe Biden on immigration matters.

With Biden set to leave office on Jan. 20, and with the President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration promising a hard line on immigration, advocacy efforts have become urgent.

The call to action asked participants to advocate for the release of any detained immigrants who are not a public threat, to close Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facilities that have been alleged to have violated human rights, and to enhance and expand the Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure programs. Temporary Protected Status allows individuals from certain countries to remain in the United States past the time when they would be required to leave because their home countries are too dangerous to return to, such as Haiti, while Deferred Enforced Departure is similar but made by presidential discretion.

Those participating were asked to call, text, email or mail the White House, noting that Biden would want to leave a legacy of care for immigrants, as the lifelong Catholic would "want to live your faith" and that he should "follow your deep convictions."



The National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, Md., is seen in this undated photo. The shrine kicked off its 50th anniversary celebration of the canonization of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Jan. 4, 2025. (OSV News/CNS file/Courtesy of the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton)

Seton's shrine celebrates anniversary of her canonization

The National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton has kicked off a yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary of Seton's canonization.

Seton, the first native-born American to be canonized a saint in the Catholic Church, founded what would become 13 congregations of Sisters of Charity. She was declared a saint Sept. 14, 1975.

The events in Emmitsburg, Maryland, began with a Mass on Seton's feast day, Jan. 4, and the opening of a new exhibit in the shrine's museum dedicated to her canonization.

The year's events include an outreach program to the more than 200 parishes and schools under her patronage; a series of pilgrimages, including a 14-day, 218-mile walk across Maryland to the shrine; and a "Day of Joy" celebration Sept. 14.

The shrine attracts more than 50,000 visitors each year.

Advertisement

Network webinar plans for 'The First 100 Days'

Network Catholic social justice lobby will host a free webinar Jan. 15 at 7 p.m. Eastern time to give an overview of what officials expect from Washington over the next year and how to resist policies that go against Catholic social justice teaching.

Called "The First 100 Days: Strategy & Action," officials note that those whom Catholics are called to serve — including immigrants, those in poverty and at the margins of society — are also those most likely to be harmed by the policies the new administration has proposed.

"Together, we will continue to build a bold, Catholic movement of justice-seekers equipped to resist policies that dehumanize, demean, and damage," the webinar's announcement says.

Officials said registering for the event, even if you cannot view it live, will allow you to see the recording afterward and receive any materials.

Network names new interim executive director

Network Catholic social justice lobby has a new leader.

Officials announced Jan. 13 that Executive Director Mary Novak had resigned Jan. 3 after nearly four years heading up the organization known for its Nuns on the Bus campaigns. Joan Neal, who had been serving as deputy executive director and chief equity officer, has been named interim executive director.



Joan Neal (Courtesy of Network)

Neal has been at Network in various roles for more than a decade.

"Joan has served NETWORK faithfully, and we are grateful for her willingness to guide this essential political ministry during the transition period," Network Advocates Board Chair Leslye Colvin said in the announcement.

Novak, a lawyer, chaplain, activist and associate with the Congregation of St. Joseph, became executive director April 1, 2021, after the retirement of Social Service Sr. Simone Campbell.

"We appreciate Mary's work with us over the last three and a half years, thank her for her service, and extend our best wishes to her in the future," Colvin said.

Holy Names of Jesus and Mary Sr. Catherine Ferguson, board chair of Network lobby, said the organization is in good hands.

"We are confident in Joan's leadership during this critical time in our country and as the 119th Congress begins," Ferguson said.

Sister forms new theological and formation center in Namibia

Thanks to a Catholic sister, theological and spiritual formation is now available for religious superiors in Namibia.

Sr. Anne Arabome, of the Sisters of Social Service, has founded the Sophia Institute for Theological Studies and Spiritual Formation in Windhoek, Namibia, the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano reports.

While vocations continue to grow in Africa, so has the need for formation programs.

"The charism of the Sisters of Social Service empowers members to grow in their awareness of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's action in the world by engaging actively in the social mission of the church," Arabome told the paper. "The Sophia Institute is an embodiment of this charism."

She said women who are giving their lives in service to Christ deserve a solid foundation in theology, Scripture, spirituality and leadership skills.

Arabome spent many years ministering in the United States, including eight years as associate director of the Faber Center for Ignatian Spirituality at Marquette University in Wisconsin, but felt a new calling.

"I have always had a strong sense of being called by God; this call has brought me back to Africa, specifically Namibia and southern Africa," she said. "The religious women in this area of Africa have limited opportunities for formation in theological studies and spirituality. There are so many gifted, talented, and competent women religious who are passionate about the mission of the church — bringing the light of Christ to others."