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# “Just Us”

News & Notes from Sisters of St. Joseph  
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## Reflections on a Christmas Tree

We have witnessed a terrifying event this week. Why now, you ask, would I reflect on a Christmas tree as we take down our tree and move on? What does one event have to do with another?

The tree reminds me of the Haudenosaunee, the indigenous tribes who inhabited NYS before the arrival of the first white settlers. It was the Onondaga who kept the peace symbol among the tribes that is symbolized by the white pine tree. For the Iroquois people, it symbolizes the Great Peace that united their separate nations into an enduring League. The Peace Tree is related to the Tree of Light, a central symbol of Iroquois cosmology.

The Christian custom associated with the Christmas tree was said to have begun with the monk, St. Boniface in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century who likened the shape of the tree to the Trinity.

When I gaze at a Christmas tree, I see its beauty enhanced by lights, sometimes of many colors, sometimes only white. If we follow the tradition of our native ancestors, we see the tree as symbolizing the unity and freedom we have used to describe our nation, likening it to a beacon on a hill, the seat of democracy. We have carried the myth of democracy in our hearts for generations. We have forgotten that the story is only real if we work at it! The beauty of the tree symbol is in the light that each one brings so a community of light is created, and its beauty attracts others.

Going forward, will we form our own tribes trying to outshine others, or will we build the new community based on dialogue, compromise, and desire to represent all the people, again a light shining on the hill?

Phyllis Tierney, SSJ

## U.S. Federation Condemns the Violence in the Capitol

The U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph joins with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in praying for peace after witnessing the violence and terrorism yesterday in our nation's Capitol. We are deeply concerned about the state of our country and the future of our democracy. Our hearts ached as we watched white nationalists participate in these despicable actions that threaten not only to destroy our government but to rend the bonds that unite us. We commend and thank the members of Congress who courageously continued their service to the nation last night even amid the chaos, as well as the law enforcement who helped protect and secure the building so the members could resume their responsibilities.

In our increasingly divided nation, we are saddened but not surprised by the predictable outcome of yesterday's events. The Federation renews our Gospel Charism and commitment to being a unifying presence in the world through appreciation of diversity, transformation, and healing.

At this time, we feel each of us are asked to pause, reflect, and grapple with the history and legacy that brought us to this historic moment of white domestic terrorists attempting to take over our legislative branch. As Christians, we cannot ignore the images of the cross and flags bearing Jesus' name that peppered yesterday's scene. We cannot ignore the juxtaposition of the law enforcement response to yesterday's violence at the Capitol versus the violence inflicted on Black Lives Matter protestors in June. We invite all people of good will to reflect on the next steps we must take to repair our democracy, eliminate white privilege, and contribute to the work of building a more perfect union.

## January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month

January 11 is National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. This day seeks to increase understanding among Americans that human trafficking happens in states and communities across the United States. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery and occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor or services against his/her will.

Participate in **#WearBlueDay (January 11)** Blue Campaign's #WearBlueDay raises awareness of human trafficking by inviting the public to take photos of themselves, friends, family, and colleagues donning blue clothing to share them on social media, along with the #WearBlueDay hashtag! The Blue Campaign is the Department of Homeland Security's national anti-trafficking public awareness campaign, designed to educate the public on how to recognize the indicators of human trafficking and safely report it.

**Learn More About Child Labor Trafficking-** Watch *The Price of Free*, livestreamed at <https://priceoffree.com/watch-the-film/>

*The Price of Free* is a thrilling look at Kailash Satyarthi's inspiring efforts to free every child from slavery. The film won the 2018 U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

**Rochester Regional Coalition vs Human Trafficking (RCAHT)** will hold a virtual proclamation event this year. Registration is limited to 100. Register here: You are invited to a Zoom webinar. When: Jan 11, 2021 09:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada) Topic: 2021 Proclamation Event Register in advance for this webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/>

SSJ Website [www.ssjrochester.org/](http://www.ssjrochester.org/) and links to Facebook!

Find us on Facebook: [facebook.com/SistersofSaintJosephofRochester](https://www.facebook.com/SistersofSaintJosephofRochester) (CTRL & Click)

**Brazil link: Copy & Paste:**



### Actions Needed!

#### Call-In Day to Congress moved to Monday:

With the advent of a new administration and a new Congress we have a chance to pass the [For The People Act \(H.R. 1\)](#), the most sweeping set of democratic reforms in a generation. Momentum is building and we need your help to urge Congress to make these transformative reforms by passing the *For the People Act* which would:

- A) Drive big money out of politics;
- B) Restore voting rights and offer new protections for voters;
- C) End gerrymandering so that electoral districts are fairly drawn; and
- D) Hold government officials accountable with new ethics standards.

#### Please join us and take these two actions to stand with the people and support the *For the People Act*:

Sign [NETWORK's petition](#) urging Congress to prioritize and pass the bill early in 2021 and share it with others!

Call your U.S. House Representative Monday (Congressional Switchboard **202-224-3121**) to urge her or him to support the passage of *For the People Act* as a first order of business in the new Congress. (See sample script below)

Suggested Script for calls to your U.S. Representative:

*As your constituent from (name your city or town) and a person of faith (or Catholic sister), I am deeply concerned about the state of our democracy. Harmful Supreme Court decisions and lack of Congressional action to address them have disempowered voters and threatened our democratic systems. The For The People Act (H.R.1) is a comprehensive reform bill that targets the corrupting dynamics that are endangering our democracy. H.R.1 would protect voters' rights, limit the influence of money in politics, shore-up our election systems, strengthen ethics rules for government officials and end partisan gerrymandering. Passage of the For the People Act must be a first priority in 2021. Does Rep. (name of your Representative) support bold comprehensive democracy reforms and will s/he vote in favor of H.R.1 when it comes to the floor later this month?*