

Promoting Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation at the Heart of the Mission of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

"To follow Jesus in a preferential option for the poor and to live [their] mission of liberating education in fidelity to the prophetic charism of Marguerite Bourgeoys," the sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame participate actively in the transformation of society for a more just world.

Always in the footsteps of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys, the sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame are faithful to their commitment to the poor and the oppressed. In the eight countries where they are present, they work to promote social, economic and ecological justice through education, awareness raising and taking a public stance.

Liberating education is a term used often by the Congregation to describe the philosophy motivating its mission of education. Liberating education considers each individual and is always conscious of each one's dignity. It is an education which aims to develop people's full potential, preparing them to become agents of their own transformation and responsible citizens of the world, concerned and involved in the transformation of society and the care of our planet.

The Social Justice Network of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

In order to strengthen their work in the advancement of liberating education in view of making the world more just and equitable, the sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame decided to create the Social Justice Network which has become a structure responsible for the promotion of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

The Social Justice Network of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame was created in 1991 at the request of the general conference¹ and in response to the call, since then continually renewed, of the 1990 general chapter², for "solidarity with the poor and the oppressed."

From 2004, there has been a person responsible for the Network on a full-time basis.

First Mandate

"This network will encourage initiatives likely to make us increasingly aware of questions related to justice in our milieu and in the world; it will stimulate reflection as well as action and will assist us in taking a common stand in situations where rights and justice are compromised."

Mission of the Social Justice Network of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

The Network's mission is to support the sisters in their efforts to help the poor and the oppressed.

This occurs by encouraging dialogue, informing, raising awareness and by promoting new initiatives or sustaining existing ones.

The Network is a critical component and an important resource of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame. The information it provides allows participation in movements of solidarity and promotes involvement.

Objectives of the Social Justice Network of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

- Contribute to spiritual development; reflect on issues pertaining to social analysis and the transformation of society
- Constitute a resource for the Congrégation de Notre-Dame in the analysis of critical situations in our society
- Encourage commitment to actions aimed at eradicating the causes and the consequences of poverty and injustice.

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Main topics addressed by the Social Justice Network of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

Once a year, all members of the Network meet in congress in Montreal to define the new priorities requiring action for the coming year. These priorities are inspired by local concerns and the situation in the world today.

For some years, the Social Justice Network has concentrated its efforts on the following causes:

- The status of women
- The trafficking of women and children
- Environmental issues and human rights: in relation to mining, environmental protection and rights of indigenous populations
- Equitable sharing of the earth's resources

Sisters, associates and friends of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame participate annually in the World March of Women where they advocate for rights to better the lives of women and their families.



Congrégation de Notre-Dame Sisters from the United States participating in a "Nuns on the Bus" event supporting an immigration reform

The sisters are also concerned with the impact that mining companies have on the environment and on indigenous populations: Mountain top removal in the State of Virginia (USA), open-pit mining, etc.

Many letters are sent by the Social Justice Network on behalf of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame to government members to ensure that laws regulating mining companies are maintained and to denounce these companies' abusive practices in Canada, the United States, Central America and in Cameroon.

The issue concerning human trafficking also prompts concrete actions, for instance, letter-writing campaigns against trafficking at the time of important sporting events (Olympic Games) and awareness-raising activities (distribution of pedagogical material in schools and parishes.)

Structure of the Social Justice Network of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

- A person responsible for coordinating the Network's activities
- A coordinating committee which contributes to define strategic priorities
- A Congregation representative against human trafficking
- A Congregation representative to the United Nations
- A representative for each Congregation province and region (administrative entities)

¹ The general conference gathers the Congregation's leadership teams from all the administrative entities (provinces and regions).

² It addresses questions pertaining to the community's spiritual and apostolic leadership and also discusses current matters. The general chapter is called every five years; it gathers delegates from throughout the Congregation to decide on the orientations for the next five years in addition to electing a Congregation leadership team. It is the Congregation's highest decision-making entity.