JSRI Future Activities

JSRI staff and associates—working from home—will continue monitoring local, state, and federal administrative, legislative, and judicial actions regarding our priority issues and the impact of COVID-19; participating in advocacy communications with authorities; recommending resources on our website and by social media; researching and writing for our publications; and activating our advocacy network as appropriate.

JSRI Recent Activities

July 15
Fr. Fred Kammer, SJ, did an on-line presentation for the Jesuit Communities of the Central and Southern Province on the history and meaning of “Jesuit Justice” in the light of Catholic Social Teaching.

July 16
Dr. Sue Weishar met with a member of Senator Bill Cassidy’s staff to advocate for humane and just asylum policies in a Zoom meeting organized by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition.

July 28
The JSRI staff and associates had their monthly meeting virtually, their last with Dr. Nik Millet, who completed his contract on the July 31st and whose office moved to begin teaching at the University of Kansas.

July 29
Dr. Dennis Kalob attended the meeting (virtually) of the Care for Creation Commission of the U.S. Central and Southern Jesuit Province.

August 4
Dr. Weishar participated in a Zoom meeting of the Board of Directors of El Pueblo, a Biloxi-based nonprofit that serves vulnerable migrants in central Mississippi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

August 9
Fr. Kammer’s first of seven essays on key themes of Catholic Social Teaching was included in the print bulletin of Holy Name of Jesus Parish here in New Orleans.

August 11
Fr. Kammer submitted to Dean Maria Calzada notice that he will be “taking” from JSRI at the end of this academic year (July 31st) to inform staff and the Advisory Board as well. His plans include a writing sabbatical, then a new Jesuit assignment. A search committee will begin interviewing within thirty days and information on application processes published as soon as feasible after that.

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Today, in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, I find myself with the same sense ofds for our number of enrolled students continues to rise, we need to make sure that each and every one has access to an exceptional educational experience. We can’t do it without your help.

By Dennis Kalob, Ph.D.

From Katrina to Corona

Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the region in late August of 2005. We are now approaching the 15th anniversary of this catastrophic event, which wrought 80% of the Crescent City underwater and killed hundreds of our citizens. I was not living in New Orleans at the time, but I watched it unfold on television and the horror I felt has never left me.

Today, in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, I find myself with the same sense of horror and foreboding, sadness and anger.

Katrina. We knew for years that a major hurricane could cause catastrophic damage, particularly through a failure in the flood protection system. It’s like that old joke about the weather. Everyone complained about the city’s vulnerability, but nobody seemed to be doing anything about it. And we faced the consequences. Flood walls collapsed from the weight of a medium-sized hurricane. We watched with immense frustration as the waters poured into the city and nobody was able to respond. There was no preparation, it seemed, for the (inevitable) collapse of a flood protection barrier. But there was more horror to come.

People by the thousands were left stranded at their homes, at the Convention Center, at the Superdome, and on bridges waiting for rescue which seemed like it would never come. Again, feelings of frustration…then anger at the inaction. Vulnerable people were left to suffer. A rich and powerful nation like it would never come. Again, feelings of frustration…then anger at the inaction.

What has happened to our nation? For an answer to that question we need to look to these words from Ronald Reagan in his first inaugural address (January 20, 1981): “Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.”

Reagan was the head cheerleader for the strongly anti-government conservative movement that has largely been in ascendency since the late 1970s. This movement has used its power to dismantle government and challenge the very idea of collective action for the common good.

The public sector has been neglected and marginalized. The results of this decades-long attack on the public sector can be seen in our impotent and lack of readiness. Like waters pouring over a fallen flood wall, the virus has poured over our nation, taking with it not hundreds of lives, but tens of thousands. Like Katrina fifteen years ago, the COVID-19 crisis drags on without an adequate plan for dealing with it or for rebuilding our hurting nation. We will rebuild, but the difficulties, pain, and suffering will be much greater than they should have been.

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