

# JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

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## The Audacity of Hope

What sustains us in the face of injustice?

by Fred Kammer, S.J.

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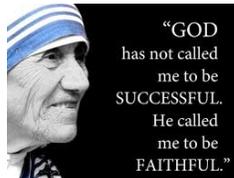
### JSRI Upcoming Events

**May 16**

JSRI staff planning day.

**June 10-12**

Fr. Kammer will give a retreat on the Gospel of justice and peace to the Ignatian Volunteers Corps members in St. Louis, MO.



### JSRI Recent Activities

**April 14-22**

Dr. Mikulich's op-ed "Louisiana Legislature Protects Business that Preys on the Poor" was published in the *Shreveport Times*, the *Lafayette Advertiser*, the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate*, the *New Orleans Advocate*, and the *Louisiana Weekly*.

**April 29**

Dr. Weishar spoke on the issues impacting immigration reform to a group of eight journalists from Central and South Asia visiting the U.S. as part of a State Department tour.

**May 2-3**

Fr. Kammer coordinated a two-day social justice orientation for Jesuit novices. Dr. Weishar and Ms. Price contributed.

In the past two weeks the Louisiana Legislature rejected regulation of payday lending that would have protected working poor families from predatory loans, refused to extend federally-funded Medicaid coverage to hundreds of thousands of workers unable to afford health care, and determined that our lowest paid workers did not deserve a raise. Legislators in other Gulf South states made similar decisions on so many fronts, decisions driven not by care for their own people but by special interests, business lobbyists, prejudice, and, yes, virulent opposition to President Obama and the Affordable Care Act.

For overwhelmed advocates for the "least among us," it has not been a good year. For the poor and working poor, it has been more of the same mean-spiritedness and lack of compassion that has left this region at the bottom of almost every indicator of educational achievement, health status, and economic well-being.

For those of us who work from the framework of Catholic Social Teaching, who see Catholic and other legislators bluntly rejecting the fundamentals of human dignity and the common good, the outcome can be very disheartening. It is then important to remember that what we do for justice is not some political party's platform or flash-in-the-pan social movement that is here today and gone tomorrow. It is instead the long-term labor that in its own time will bring to fruition the Reign of God which Jesus preached and his followers must pursue.

Facing legislative obstinacy or the "sheer mendacity" of those who fabricate facts or data to maintain exploitation of the least among us, what do people of faith do? What can they do against the odds and against those who are far better funded and often far more numerous?

They can hope. If fact, hope is called a "cardinal virtue" (with faith and love) because it is so central to the Gospel and so critical to living that Gospel in hard times. Hope, Jesus so often pictures, is about planting seeds—over and over again and over the path, the rocks, the thorns, and the good ground—that only God can bring to harvest. Hope is the close companion of the Easter faith that believes in what is not seen. It persists despite the odds, despite the polls, despite calls to "be reasonable" and, in effect, "be quiet" about poverty and racism and hunger and families and human rights.

Hope, said the Czech poet-later-president Vaclav Havel, is "an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart." It is not the same as joy that things are going well, he said, "but rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed." Not optimism, he continued, but hope is "the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out."

It is this same hope that allows us, as Mother Teresa taught, to respond to God's call, not to be successful, but to be faithful.

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