

“Cry out as if you have a million voices, for it is silence that kills the world.” -St. Catherine of Siena.

Dominicans at the UN

Dominican Leadership Conference

Fall 2016

Election 2016 Crisis or Opportunity?

Margaret Mayce, OP

The great crisis among us is the crisis of “the common good,” the sense of community solidarity that binds all in a common destiny—haves and have-nots, the rich and the poor. We face a crisis about the common good because there are powerful forces at work among us to resist the common good, to violate community solidarity, and to deny a common destiny. Mature people, at their best, are people who are committed to the common good that reaches beyond private interest, transcends sectarian commitments, and offers human solidarity. Walter Brueggemann, Journey To the Common Good

These strike me as very timely words of wisdom that aptly describe the post-election state of our country and of our national psyche. Not once have we heard anything that remotely resembles a concern for the greater world in which we live, and in which we are one player among many.

Regardless of what our standing may be among the world’s leading powers, we are still only one player – with an enormous amount of responsibility for the way things are; and even greater potential to turn the tide and make this world a more peaceful, hospitable place for all. Will we go through the next four years without any acknowledgement of anything beyond ourselves? It is a chilling thought, and a recipe for disaster.

In her concession speech, Hillary Clinton reminded us that we owe our new president “*an open mind and a chance to lead.*” She then went on to describe her campaign as having been about “*building an America that is hopeful, inclusive and big-hearted.*” And I would add to this - *not only for our own sake as a nation, but for the sake of the world; for the sake of the common good.* In the midst of great crisis, herein lies great opportunity. The question is whether or not we are up to the challenge.
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(Election 2016, continued)**A new isolationism?**

If we can be honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that there has been a great disconnect in our political discourse in the run-up to the presidential election and in its wake; namely, the sense that we can do here, in the United States, whatever we want to do, regardless of what the implications might be for the international community or for our one, common home, *Earth*. As we wait in anxious anticipation of what lies ahead for us as a nation, we also must consider what awaits the global community, which will either suffer from policies and decisions which are reversed, or benefit from policies which will reflect America's true greatness; that is, its understanding of its place in the larger scheme of things, and the contributions it has to offer *for the common good*.

Of all the very real crisis situations in our world today, climate change and the massive movement of peoples are among those which are most polarizing and which pose the most serious threats to us all.

In his encyclical, *Laudato, Si*, Pope Francis invited us into a "new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. The environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all." He goes on to remind us that "as Christians we are also called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion; as a way of sharing with God and our neighbors on a global scale."

On September 19th, world leaders gathered for the first ever **UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants**. The resulting **[New York Declaration](#)** expresses the intention of world leaders to protect the rights of refugees and migrants, to save lives and share responsibility for large movements of people on a global scale. According to the UN Population Fund, in 2015, 244 million people lived outside their country of origin. The majority of migrants cross borders in search of better economic and social opportunities; while others are forced to flee crises, most of which are not of their own making. The current mass movement of refugees and displaced persons has given rise to xenophobia, to racism and to calls for tightening borders. But is there any connection between these men, women and children on the move throughout the world, and us? Do people fleeing Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Somalia, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico - do these people make any claims on the way we live our lives? Or are they simply an affront to our way of life?

Here in the United States, the movement for comprehensive immigration reform ground to a stunning halt months ago, and it now seems to have been replaced by the even more stunning suggestion that a wall be built along our border with Mexico. While there is an indisputable need for wise and prudent policies, this turning-in-on-ourselves as we close out the other, whoever that other might be, not only alienates us from one another, but also weakens international relations.



What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us?

As a nation, we have the ability to make our world a safer, more hospitable place; so we cannot pretend that we can simply chart our own course and be oblivious to the needs of God's people and of God's good Earth. A nation's true strength; a peoples' true strength lies in its understanding of its connection to something larger than itself, and of its responsibility to contribute toward the common good. The disconnect that blinds us to this truth is part of what Pope Francis refers to in his probing questions:

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us?

What is the purpose of our life in this world?

Why are we here?

What is the goal of our work and of all our efforts?

What need does Earth have of us?

(Election 2016, continued)

While it is eminently clear that these questions will not be the guiding force behind the new administration's climate policy decisions, they can be ours. The Paris Agreement, while not a perfect solution to the issue of climate change, sends a strong message that the world is clear about the impending danger of simply proceeding with business-as-usual in a fossil-fueled world. The climate policy put in place by President Obama and his support for the Paris Agreement have not been the whim of one individual. Rather, these policies reflect careful consideration of the impact of what we do here on the rest of the world. In a sense, isn't this the United States at its best?



During the campaign, our President-Elect threatened to eliminate the Clean Power Plan as well as new regulations that limit methane leaks from wells and pipelines. Rumor has it that members of the transition team are suggesting a reduction or elimination of basic climate research at NASA and other agencies. This would not be the United States at its best. However, in a recent interview with the New York Times, Mr. Trump did admit to "some connectivity" between humans and climate change, and that he would "keep an open mind" regarding the Paris climate agreement. Do we dare ask the incoming administration, *what kind of world do you want to leave to those who come after you?* To engage in serious reflection on this question would be the United States at its best.

Crisis or Opportunity?

Several other critical areas of concern to the UN and to the international community may also be in jeopardy. These include the Iran Nuclear Agreement, which Mr. Trump has threatened to scrap, despite its unanimous endorsement by the Security Council; Human Rights, which would be severely compromised by a proposed registry of immigrants from countries where terrorist groups are active, as well as a possible shift regarding torture; the Arms Trade Treaty, which was overwhelmingly adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013, but has come under severe criticism from the National Rifle Association, which has vowed to block its ratification in the Senate. Yes, we do owe our new President

*an open mind and a chance to lead. But the leading must be done within a context larger than ourselves. Or as Walter Brueggemann might say, **Mature (leaders), at their best, are people who are committed to the common good that reaches beyond private interest, transcends sectarian commitments, and offers human solidarity.***

There is a crack in everything....

Just about a month ago the poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen passed away. In light of our new political context, I have been haunted by the refrain from his poem entitled **Anthem:**

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

The great temptation now would be to think that there is nothing we can do to steady what many feel is a sinking ship of state. But nothing could be farther from the truth. Domestically, what has become more evident than ever is just how divided we are as a nation and how fickle our political system has become. Internationally, there is a greater need than ever for mature leaders who can place national self-interest within the greater scheme of things. That there are cracks all around us is indisputable. But one's perspective makes all the difference in the world. So, what do you see? Crisis, or opportunity? Do you see only an irreparable, hopeless state of affairs? Or can you detect glimmers of light that signal greater clarity regarding what our particular contribution at this critical moment in our nation's history? This is a question we each will need to answer for ourselves as the days and weeks unfold. But of this much we can be certain – to withhold what is ours to offer to the healing of our national divisions and to the cause of deeper global solidarity at this moment in time, will be a terrible loss for us all.



William J. Perry Project

On October 24, former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry [spoke](#) at the All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in New York about the [William J Perry Project](#), an effort to educate and raise awareness on the threat of nuclear warfare. Mr. Perry believes that now, more than ever, the world is on the brink of nuclear war. North Korea has built up its nuclear arsenal and might now possess weapons capable of reaching our shores. Tension between Pakistan and India, both of which possess roughly 100 nuclear weapons, is at an all-time high. Terrorist groups such as Daesh, Al-Qaeda, and others seek constantly to obtain the materials necessary to create atomic weapons, or to steal the existing weapons in the countries they occupy. Regional tensions and terrorist-related threats are at an all-time high. Mr. Perry gave the harrowing account of his own experience on the brink of nuclear war, in which simple human-error almost led to a tragic and catastrophic reaction. This fear inspired his new project, which will target and hopefully engage people of all ages and backgrounds in the fight against nuclear weapons, primarily through free online classes designed to educate about how the tensions of the Cold War never truly went away.

The United Nations member states have agreed to begin talks on negotiations to ban nuclear weapons, but it is unsurprising that major powers, including the United States, Russia, Israel, Australia, the United Kingdom, and France, voted in opposition to these negotiations.

The world is always just one misstep away from disaster, and nuclear weapons make the consequences of disaster significantly graver. We must hope and pray that the 123 member states that are open to negotiations will lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons, and we must act to urge the member states in opposition to reconsider their stance.

Katherine Maloney, DVUSA



The Gift of DVUSA

Over the past six years, I have been richly blessed with the assistance of Dominican Volunteers. My work as the main representative of the non-governmental organization **Dominican Leadership Conference** at the United Nations covers a wide range of issues that impact our Dominican Sisters and Brothers and all those with whom they live and minister. The assistance of a Dominican Volunteer has made it possible for the Dominican voice to be present in ways that could never happen if I were here by myself! Typically, my Volunteer follows the NGO Committees on the Status of Women, Migration, and Trafficking in Persons; as well as the Working Group on Girls. They have each shared their insights and experiences in articles for the bi-weekly Domlife Updates, and have provided me with invaluable expertise in publishing a quarterly newsletter. As I have already said, I could not do it without them!

The young women who have graced this office have come with a deep desire to make the world a better place, and I have no doubt that this is exactly what they will do. They have each come well-versed in issues of justice and peace from their respective institutions of

higher learning: the University of Notre Dame, Ohio Dominican University, and my current Volunteer, Katherine Maloney (Katt) from Molloy College. They have also come with a deep desire to understand more fully our Dominican way of life and our search for Truth. It has been a special grace for me to have mentored such wonderful young women. I am deeply grateful for their generous spirits and for their unique contributions to the Dominican effort at the United Nations.

So after their experience at the UN, where do they go, and what do they do? Here are two former DVs who have taken the time to share what they are up to (**continued on page 5**).

Thank you, DVUSA, for the opportunity to be part of this wonderful program!

Margaret Mayce, OP



Former Volunteer, Abby Smith

Like the circular rhythms of nature, I am beginning to see my own purpose take shape and the serendipitous interconnections which laid the foundation for where I am today. Since completing my year as a Dominican Volunteer, I find myself pursuing issues which I first engaged with during my time at the Dominican Leadership Conference.

I spent two years working in the corporate social responsibility and philanthropy space in Oklahoma, which was a grounding opportunity to understand more deeply the social and economic needs of nonprofits as well as the low-income communities they served. From health metrics to data on food access, it was clear that environmental justice played an integral role in the systemic nature of inequalities which directly impacted these vulnerable communities.

In an effort to tackle something more tangible and manageable, I founded and led a corporate employee resource group called the Green Team which facilitated the development of projects to reduce my company's carbon footprint. Through communications and events, the Green Team began to engage coworkers in conversation about environmental stewardship. While we did have some success in resource conservation initiatives, there seemed to be a gap in understanding between individual actions and larger-scale environmental justice issues.

I see this disconnect replicated across scale and geography, and am certainly no exception myself. When we are estranged from our natural environment and the tangible repercussions of our actions, it becomes easier to deprioritize our abstract interpretation of climate change and environmental responsibility on a daily basis. With pressing social, economic and political issues, the environment may be pushed to the backburner. However, as is becoming more clear with the frequency of natural disasters and environmental refugees, our society and the international community can no longer afford to ignore our participation in this crisis and responsibility to forge a new sustainable path grounded in dignity and justice.

I am now in my first semester as a Master of Environmental Management candidate at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. Dominican sisters have shaped my trajectory to this point in ways that have only become clear in retrospect. From Sister Janet Stankowski appointing me Recycling Coordinator in my Notre Dame dorm freshman year, to Sister Didi Madden supporting me during a summer internship at Harmony Farm, to working with Margaret Mayce as an NGO Representative on the UN Working Group on Food & Hunger, and Sister Margaret Galiardi's spiritual direction, I have been forged by the wisdom and earth literacy embodied by these women and their communities.

As a current Research Assistant to Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker, I continue to contemplate the overlap between cosmology and ecology. The focus of my studies is on agroecology and climate change mitigation, with particular emphasis on opportunities for carbon sequestration through agroforestry. Integrative and small-scale growing practices grounded in resource conservation and ecological principles are, in my view, the most hopeful opportunities we have for increasing the resiliency of our food system while simultaneously addressing the urgency of climate change. Agriculture accounts for an estimated 25% of greenhouse gas emissions, yet current international responses and funding for mitigation are squarely focused on technological innovation and energy solutions. However, by redirecting our approach to agriculture from industrialized monocultures with heavy chemical inputs, and instead advocating for perennial growing practices which regenerate soil health while supplying food in resilient polycultures, sustainable agriculture and agroforestry can become solutions to the climate change challenge we now face. These ecologically integrative methods, symbolic of the interdependence of community life, give me hope.

- To learn more about carbon sequestration through agriculture, check out [this video](#).
- If you're interested in the intersection of cosmology and ecology, consider enrolling in or auditing the [Journey of the Universe course series](#) through Coursera, which I have been involved in implementing through my work with Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker.



Former Volunteer, Kati Garrison

My time as a volunteer with DVUSA proved an integral experience that empowered me to attain the position I hold today as the Program and Advocacy Associate, and representative to the United Nations, at the Mennonite Central Committee UN Office. This role has aken me, quite literally, around the world to visit programs and initiatives in locations from the Middle East to Africa and the Caribbean to acquire the necessary expertise and perspectives from the grassroots in order to carry out advocacy on international policy within the UN community. This work encompasses topics ranging from the right to food and food security to peacebuilding and the rights of migrants and refugees. In the future, I hope to continue to work to achieve a healthier humanity – in both the physical body and in relationship with one another – and if these endeavors lead me to a position abroad, that would make my inner sense of wanderlust extremely happy!





Dominican Leadership Conference

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Coming Up at the United Nations: December 2016-February 2017

December 1—World AIDS Day

December 2—International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

December 3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 5—International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, World Soil Day

December 7—International Civil Aviation Day

December 9—International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and the Prevention of the Crime, International Anti-Corruption Day

December 10—Human Rights Day

December 11—International Mountain Day

December 18—International Migrant Day

December 20 –International Human Solidarity Day

January 27—International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

February 4—World Cancer Day

February 6—International Day for Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

February 11—International Day for Women and Girls in Science

February 13—World Radio Day

February 20—International Day for Social Justice

February 21—International Mother Language Day