One need not be a sociologist, statistician, or an economist to know that the systems in the U.S. are seriously off balance, out of touch with the lives of real people and in essence broken.

The human dignity of those who lack the economic necessities for a stable life is being chipped away daily by those who have more, want more, and feel they are entitled to more. In short, the poor are getting poorer because the rich are getting richer. Our politicians, rather than being attracted to and led by the common good of the communities they are sworn to represent and serve, are lured by special interest groups, pseudo partisan politics, and the lust for power.

Racial justice remains a dream and an ideal for those who view life from both the inside and outside. The June 2013 Supreme Court decision removed the heart of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (which was re-authorized in 2006). The Supreme Court declared Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act unconstitutional: a slap in the face for anyone who believes that the right to vote is guaranteed by the Constitution for all citizens, and that intimidation, fear, and threats should not occur, let alone deter one from exercising that right. (Currently, 18 states require photo ID and 33 states have non-photo requirements.) The Supreme Court’s ruling presents a moral challenge to us and in particular to those of us who are living in states which are now free to introduce more and tighter voting restrictions making it more difficult for the poor and people of color to vote. How will you respond?

More recently on Saturday, July 13, 2013, George Zimmerman was found “Not Guilty,” and therefore acquitted of all charges related to his killing of 17 year old Trayvon Martin. Today, many African-American mothers and fathers will fear for the safety of their sons and daughters. They will be filled with anxiety when their children are out at night and that anxiety won’t be quieted until their children return home alive. How do these parents help their children to navigate through life with a sense of hope when the on-going actions of our judicial system underestimate their personhood, denigrate their humanity and treat their God-given lives as disposable? Similarly, the acquittal increases the pressure on young African Americans who may dress differently or be in places where they are not expected to be, to be more vigilant and less the care-free young adults they have a right to be.

When was the last time you felt the precariousness of people’s lives in those communities forced to live on the margins of our society? We at Pax Christi USA need to ask ourselves serious questions, pray for guidance, and act courageously so that ‘liberty and justice for all’ is not just lip service. We are called to examine the forces/systems in the U.S. that make economic and racial justice a myth.

Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN  
Executive Director, Pax Christi USA  
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Washington, D.C.—Pax Christi USA has recognized Mary Meg McCarthy, Executive Director of the Heartland Alliance’s National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC), as the 2013 recipient of the Teacher of Peace Award. PCUSA first gave the award to Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, in 1978 and has since recognized some of the most significant U.S. Catholic activists for peace and justice of the past 4 decades, including actor Martin Sheen; poet and priest Daniel Berrigan, S.J.; and Dead Man Walking author Sr. Helen Prejean, C.S.J.

“I am pleased that Mary Meg McCarthy is the recipient of the 2013 Teacher of Peace Award,” stated Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, Executive Director of PCUSA. “She has a passion and a driving commitment to uphold the human rights of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the United States and to journey with these individuals, who are often at the fringes of our society, to access justice.”

Under McCarthy’s leadership, NIJC, one of the nation’s leading immigrant and human rights advocacy organizations, serves 10,000 non-citizens each year through an unparalleled network of more than 1,000 pro bono attorneys. Through its unique combination of direct service, impact litigation and advocacy, NIJC promotes due process protections before the U.S. Supreme Court, Congress and the Administration.

In 1998, aware of the impact that she could generate by dedicating her professional skills to human rights, McCarthy left a promising private bar career to direct what is now NIJC. Understanding the need to teach the legal community about often hidden injustices within the immigration system, she brought the compelling life stories of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to the private bar, creating and cultivating a network of more than 1,000 pro bono attorneys who provide legal consultations, representation, and strategic litigation services to thousands of clients of all races and nationalities each year.

“McCarthy is a pillar of support to the Sisters of Mercy in our ministry with immigrants in detention,” wrote Pat Murphy, RSM and JoAnn Persch, RSM, in supporting the nomination of McCarthy for the award. “When we described the heartbreaking deportation of a young mother, Mary Meg took our testimony to a hearing at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. Because of NIJC, immigrant voices are heard and decision-makers are finally beginning to understand that systems, actions, and decisions that relentlessly separate and harm the people of God cannot be tolerated.”

Cathy Crosby, chair of the committee which considers nominations for the award, pointed out that McCarthy’s commitment to peace with justice began during her student days at Notre Dame, where she co-founded the Center for Social Concerns, and was strengthened during her time in Chile helping to safeguard the rights of individuals living under the Pinochet dictatorship.

“I am honored to be the recipient of this award,” stated McCarthy upon learning of the recognition. “It belongs to the immigrants and refugees whose courage is truly an inspiration to all of us as we work to build a more just and humane world. We are in a critical moment for immigration reform and now is the time to act to create a new system that respects human rights.”

The Teacher of Peace Award will be presented at Pax Christi USA’s annual Momentum event in Washington, D.C. on October 25, 2013 at Trinity University. For more information on this event, visit www.paxchristiusa.org.

Mary Meg McCarthy, Executive Director of the National Immigrant Justice Center, is the 2013 Teacher of Peace (Photo from the NIJC site)
Pax Christi USA National Conference celebrates 40th anniversary

Atlanta—Pax Christi USA celebrated its 40th anniversary at its national conference in Atlanta, Georgia, June 14-16. The organization started in 1972 at the initiative of a handful of U.S. Catholics, primarily lay people, led by Eileen Egan, Gordon Zahn and others. The Atlanta conference was the culmination of a year of regional dialogues between members of Pax Christi USA’s National Council and national staff and the organization’s grassroots members, regions and local groups from across the nation.

“As we celebrate the culmination of PCUSA’s 40 years of working for peace through non-violence, we chose Remembering the Past with Gratitude; Living the Present with Enthusiasm; Embracing the Future with Confidence and Hope as our theme for the conference,” stated Sr. Patty Chappell, SNDdeN, PCUSA Executive Director.

Keynote speakers for the national conference included Bishop Tom Gumbleton, one of the co-founders of Pax Christi USA, and Rev. Bryan Massingale, author of Racial Justice and the Catholic Church. Workshops on drone warfare, the death penalty, human trafficking, and more were offered. Participants also made a special pilgrimage to the MLK Center where a prayer service took place.

“Our time together at the Dr. Martin Luther King Center commemorating the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington as well as the 50th anniversary of Pacem in Terris reminded all of us of our call to continue the mission for which Pax Christi was founded,” said Sr. Josie Chrosniak, HM, chair of the Pax Christi USA National Council.

PCUSA National Council welcomes three new members at summer meeting

Two new council members were elected and one current member re-elected to the Pax Christi USA National Council.

From the at-large slate of candidates, Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace Fr. John Rausch, glmy, was elected and current council member Kimberly Mazyck was re-elected. Both will serve three-year terms.

Rausch is the director of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, where he lives and worked for over 35 years. A strong environmentalist, he speaks out against the devastation of mountaintop removal and advocates for sustainable economic development. He writes a monthly syndicated column called “Faith and the Marketplace” that appears in diocesan newspapers.

Mazyck will begin her second three-term following her re-election. Mazyck lives in Washington, D.C. and has worked for Catholic Relief Services since 2005, where she coordinated CRS’s Africa Rising: Hope and Healing campaign before serving as the Church Relations Manager, maintaining and supporting a number of CRS’ partnerships with U.S. organizations.

From the regional slate of candidates, Charles (Chuck) Michaels was elected. Michaels lives in Baltimore and has been the coordinator of PC-Baltimore since the chapter was founded. He has been on the regional council for Pax Christi Metro D.C.-Baltimore for several years and was the Justice and Peace Coordinator of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.
Pax Christi USA Official Statement on the U.S. Supreme Court Decision on the Voting Rights Act

The following statement was issued on July 19th in response to the Supreme Court’s decision on Shelby County v. Holder. In that decision, the Court ruled that Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, originally passed in 1965, is unconstitutional. John Schwartz of the New York Times, in explaining the decision, writes, “The decision in Shelby County v. Holder revolves around Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, which establishes a ‘coverage formula’ to determine which states and local governments fall under Section 5, and therefore need to get approval before changing their voting laws. The justices ruled that Section 4 is unconstitutional, and that the formula used for decades — revised and extended several times by Congress — can no longer be used to establish those ‘preclearance’ requirements: ‘The conditions that originally justified these measures no longer characterize voting in the covered jurisdictions.’”

Schwartz goes on to write, “Chief Justice John G. Roberts, who has previously expressed skepticism about the continued need for parts of the Voting Rights Act, delivered the majority opinion. ... Chief Justice Roberts opens his opinion by stating that ‘the Voting Rights Act of 1965 employed extraordinary measures to address an extraordinary problem,’ using the ‘strong medicine’ of applying heavy requirements on some states and not others to fight suppression of voting rights. He then suggests that those rules have outlived their usefulness.”

On June 25, 2013, the United States Supreme Court overturned a key provision of the landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act by a 5-4 decision. Due to the Court’s decision, unless Congressional action is taken, the 1965 Voting Rights Act has no effective means of enforcement.

Pax Christi USA finds this decision deeply saddening and very troubling. People of faith and goodwill must call upon Congress to remedy this wrong.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act is one of the crowning legislative achievements of an ongoing struggle for freedom and justice in this country. Reaffirming and enforcing the 1965 Voting Rights Act is a critical way that the nation should celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 50th Anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and “I Have a Dream” speech. Such re-affirmation and enforcement would honor those who suffered ridicule, intimidation, incarceration, and acts of violence in the struggle for American freedom. Too many have already given their lives for this right. Voting rights have been earned time and time again through the sacrifice of ordinary citizens.

This movement endured for many years due to repeated attempts to prevent and discourage voter participation through poll taxes, history tests, and intimidation tactics. As Justices Ginsburg, Breyer, Sotomayor, and Kagan wrote in their dissenting opinion, Congress reaffirmed the Voting Rights Act in 1982 and 2007 with overwhelming bi-partisan support.

The Voting Rights Act was successfully utilized in 2012 to block partisan voting laws designed to suppress minority voting in states covered under the provision (Texas, Florida, and South Carolina) and not covered (Ohio, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania). The Court’s decision paves the way for an onslaught of voter restrictions designed to restrict participation of poor, rural, and disabled voters, as well as voters of color, while having little effect on voter fraud. Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and North Carolina are already working to enact new ballot restrictions. These laws have been passed at a time when our country is examining a potential pathway to citizenship for some 11 million immigrants, and statistics are showing an increase in voter participation from communities of color. Voting restrictions also violate Catholic Social Teaching regarding freedom of civic participation and responsibility.

Voting is one of the most fundamental ways that we, as citizens, can express our opinions about issues that impact our lives and our pocketbooks. This civil and human right is imperative for a free and democratic society. As society changes and grows, so do the voices of that society. All members of a democratic society must be allowed to have our voices heard and our views expressed in order for ours to be a truly functioning society.

Pax Christi USA calls upon Congress and all people of faith and goodwill to honor the historic struggle for civil rights and reaffirm universal voting rights with an effective enforcement provision.
Economic Justice in the United States: A Tale of Two Economies

By Beatrice Parwatikar
PCUSA Ambassador of Peace

This is the tale of two economies: one for the rich and one for those with lower income. It is the best of times for the rich and the worst of times for those with low incomes. When I think of the haves, I am focusing on the top 20 percent income which has 80 percent of the wealth with the top 2 percent holding most of that wealth.

The five groups of income listed by the U.S. Census are $0 – $25,000 (28.22% of population); $25,000 – $50,000 (26.65% of population); $50,000 – $75,000 (18.27% of population); $75,000 – $100,000 (10.93% population); and $100,000 or more (15.93%).

In the last six months there have been a few articles written about income disparity. In “How Income Inequality Is Damaging the U.S.” (Forbes 10/02/12), Joseph E. Stiglitz said: “Inequality in America has reached its highest level since before the Depression.” These kinds of headlines usually are found on the back pages of newspapers or in economic journals.

We also had “Occupy Wall Street” that brought a lot of attention to the income disparity.

In reality we have had an economic shift where the rich keep getting richer while the the poor are getting poorer. We have also decreased the size of the middle class.

Another problem that has happened with this reversal of fortune has been that power has also moved to the wealthy. They live isolated lives from the reality of day-to-day living for most of the population of the U.S. They also use their power, with the help of their wealth, to protect themselves from any changes that would allow a more equitable economy for the vast majority of the population. They have their hired foot soldiers, the lobbyists, which they let loose in large numbers to defeat anything that would cause harm to their wealth or their ideology. They have the “Citizens United” ruling in 2010 by our corporate friendly U.S. Supreme Court that gave corporations the right as individuals for free speech. This has allowed unlimited amounts of money to be placed in political and policy PACs to put forth their agenda. The rich own most of the media outlets which also helps them to put forth their agenda.

This is the most protected group in our society at this time. They have their protectors in Congress with the philosophy that every problem can be solved by a tax cut for the wealthy. They have protection by using their power to get people elected who agree with their philosophy. We have watched some in Congress fight vigorously to protect cuts in corporate taxes, inheritance taxes and personal taxes. The top two percent are mainly the CEOs of large corporations, media empires, insurance companies, drug companies, banks and investment companies, giving them a lot of power over the day-to-day life of the rest in society but giving them protection from the hardship others suffer.

We, the rest of society, must come together to form alliances to work to remove some of the power and the wealth of the top two percent. The Occupy Movement had a good points but they were not broad enough in their agenda to fit the vast majority of people. We all remember the statement by Mr. Romney in the presidential campaign about the forty-seven percent of the population: “There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what ... who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims. ... These are people who pay no income tax. ... and so my job is not to worry about those people. I’ll never convince them that they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives.”

I do not believe this view is only held by Mr. Romney: this is the unspoken view held by the protectors of the top two

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Pax Christi USA Momentum event in DC in October
All Pax Christi USA members are invited to attend the annual Momentum event, taking place in Washington, D.C. at Trinity University on October 25, 2013. At the event, Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace for 2013 Mary Meg McCarthy of the National Immigrant Justice Center will be honored. The evening event will include dinner and the presence and voices of leaders within the DREAM Act movement. Check the website for more information including how to register.

Report from Haiti on the Sakala Project
Amy Watts and Manuel Padilla, Haiti Project co-coordinators, spent several weeks with their Haitian colleagues in the Sakala program in June. They wrote, “One of the goals this year is to provide training and support in Pax Christi Port-au-Prince’s (PCPAP) desire to be more intentional about their program planning and evaluation. While they have been working tirelessly on their various programs at SAKALA, rarely have the staff taken the time to map out their goals and work plans on paper. Many of us know just how challenging this can be in our own organizations. This week, we had the opportunity to meet with various program managers and their teams (sports, education, ecology, and logistics) in order to go over the importance and process of program planning and evaluation. Our discussions were rich; in the process of discussing the nitty-gritty of goal-setting and program description writing, broader questions surrounding topics of organizational structure and communications came to light and the staff were empowered to ask questions and start a dialogue with the administrative staff.” For a full report, visit the Sakala webpage on the PCUSA site.

PC Long Island uses art to lessen gun violence among youth
Pax Christi Long Island members have joined with other concerned people to form the InSight Campaign Against Gun Violence. One of the projects has been to work with high school and elementary school students to use art to express their feelings about guns and what has been happening around our nation. These works have been compiled into a PowerPoint presentation which is accompanied by the Sandy Hook children singing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” See the presentation at http://paxchristilongisland.org/.

PC Michigan celebrates the prophetic leadership of women
(from PC MI coordinator Joan Tirak) “What a great way to celebrate our hard-working, self-giving, dedicated women! Some 225 participants enthusiastically gathered on April 20, 2013 for Pax Christi Michigan’s 32nd Annual State Conference in Farmington Hills. They came for many reasons, but the primary draw was the theme ‘Prophetic Leadership of Women: Justice from the Margins’ along with the main speakers, Barbara Reid, OP and Elizabeth Walters, IHM. They also came to support the Leadership Conference of Women Religious whom we honored with our 22nd Annual Purple Ribbon for Peace—a tradition that PCM started in 1991 in response to Pax Christi USA’s National ‘We Shall Not Be Silent’ Campaign…” You can read a full report on the Pax Christi USA website by searching for “Pax Christi Michigan.”

PC-Memphis members use the pen
Over the course of one month during the Spring, letters to the editor appeared in the Commercial Appeal, Memphis’ major daily newspaper, written by three members of Pax Christi Memphis—all advocating social justice in Memphis’ civic community. Two letters addressed the cuts to Pre-K funding, and one dealt with school discipline. Additionally, an article featured efforts by continued on p. 7...
PC Massachusetts on the marathon bombing
Pax Christi Massachusetts released a statement following the Boston Marathon bombing. It reads, in part, “Chaos, destruction and death visited Boston on Marathon Monday, bearing witness to the perverse power of violence to shatter families, annihilate hope, end dreams, and engender great fear in our hearts. We members of Pax Christi Massachusetts, the Catholic peace organization built on the foundation of gospel nonviolence, and deeply committed to the Way of Peace of Jesus, wish to express our profound sorrow at what has come to pass in our beloved city of Boston. We mourn with the victims and families, and claim kinship with all who will carry their suffering far into the future. We pray for the healing of bodies and spirit and cling to the hope that in this city of great diversity, we remain united in a spirit of compassion and clear thinking...” The entire statement is on the Pax Christi USA website. Search for “Pax Christi Massachusetts.”

PC Phoenix participates in Nevada Desert Experience
(From Margaret McChesney) “Three members of Pax Christi Phoenix took part with over fifty others in this year’s Nevada Desert Experience (NDE). The Sacred Peace Walk (SPW) is an annual event conducted by NDE to demonstrate honor for the Great Basin Desert while respecting all life, supporting environmental justice everywhere, and making strong nonviolent statements regarding the misuse of the desert. NDE’s Sacred Peace Walk focuses on ending violence by stopping the research and development of nuclear weapons at the Nevada National Security Site and stopping the drone warfare conducted at Creech Air Force Base. ... The Nevada Desert Experience is held every year during Holy Week. Please see their website for information concerning the Sacred Peace Walk and other endeavors: http://www.nevadadesertexperience.org.”

PC Phoenix meets with representative on immigration reform
(From Tom Cordaro) “On February 20th members of Pax Christi Phoenix organized a religious leaders delegation to urge Congressman Bill Foster (D-IL) to support Comprehensive Immigration Reform. The delegation included ministers and representatives from the Jewish, Muslim, Christian (Catholic and Protestant) and Unitarian faith communities in the 11th Congressional District. The group urged Congressman Foster to embrace key principles that should be included in any immigration reform legislation; family unification, a pathway to citizenship, worker protections and an immediate moratorium on all deportations. The group was well received and will continue to work with local immigrant communities to advocate and organize in support for these principles.”

PC Metro DC-Baltimore leads anti-drone effort
PC Metro DC-Baltimore led the effort to have a sign-on letter that the Pax Christi Anti-Drone Grassroots Task Force put together published in the August 16 edition of the National Catholic Reporter. Bishop Gumbleton, Kathy Kelly and Marie Dennis along with 315 other individuals and organizations.

News Briefs and Upcoming Events
Pax Christi Illinois has a new page on Facebook. Search for them and “like” their page. ... Pax Christi Dallas has a new website, www.paxchristidallas.org. ... Hudson Valley Pax Christi will celebrate a Peace Mass on Sept. 21, the International Day of Peace, at Sacred Heart Church in Newburgh, NY. ... Pax Christi Santa Fe (NM) held their annual Sackcloth and Ashes action at Los Alamos on Aug. 4. ... Pax Christi Metro New York will hold several events this summer and fall including the annual summer picnic on Aug. 17, a Peace Mass on Sept. 21, and the Fall Assembly on Nov. 2. Visit their site at www.nyapaxchristi.org for more info. ... Tom Casey is new Pax Christi Western New York Regional Coordinator. Tom is a former candidate for both Congress and the NY State Legislature. ... Pax Christi Staten Island held its 21st annual Dorothy Day Pilgrimage in Pleasant Plains, June 15, visiting the site where Dorothy’s cottage stood.
A Tale of Two Economies, continued from page 5...

percent in Congress. This is why we see a lack of protection for this forty-seven percent of the people. These are the families earning under $50,000. It is very sad to me when I hear some people who fall in this forty-seven percent group who are receiving some government assistance complain about others that aren’t deserving of that same assistance because they’re lazy. This is when I know how well the message from the top two percent is working in dividing the people against each other. We have seen people vote against their own best interest because they think that the legislation that will only help the rich and hurt the poor doesn’t include them because they deserve their government assistance. This is the power of media hype.

Those in the $50,000 to $150,000 may have their homes still after the mortgage crisis and may be still holding on to their jobs, but they are wondering about educating their children or what will happen if someone became seriously ill in their family. They may own some stock through their 401k plans but they don’t have any power over the corporations holding their investments.

If the $0 – $150,000 people would ban together to change the society in the U.S., their agenda would more closely fit the needs of most of the population. There needs to be improvement in our educational system, increases in HeadStart to assist children with an early start in their education, early intervention remedial reading assistance, math and science emphasis, relevant vocational training and support of post high school education. A good educational system will help us as a country face the global challenges of today’s economy. It has been said that early intervention in education for those who are struggling would decrease single motherhood, the prison population and it would add productive people to our society.

Affordable housing will not only give housing but it would also help to create jobs. We need to look at doing more for the environment: this would not only create better life for our children but an industry of new jobs with cleaner energy for our families.

We are busy working on our 2013 Advent Reflection booklet and will be bringing you reflections this year based on our spirituality of Nonviolence priority initiative. See what authors like, Dr. Darleen Prys, Professor of History and Christian Spirituality at the Franciscan School of Theology, GTU Berkeley; and Dr. Alex Mikulich, Professor of Theology with the Jesuit Social Research Institute of Loyola University have to share on the daily readings. Dr. Mikulich is also a member of the Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team. Kim Mazyck of Catholic Relief Services and a Pax Christi USA National Council member is also joining our compilation team so it should be an amazing reflection resource for you. More to come soon!

Beatrice Parwatikar is a Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace and a founding member of the Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team.

Consumerism Packet: Through the Eye of A Needle

This packet is a five-week process focused on affluenza, overconsumption, sweatshops, the environment, and simple living. Suitable for use by small groups as well as individuals, each session contains prayers, reflection questions and action suggestions. Great for introducing social justice issues to your parish or small group. Two-pocket folder with 19 inserts. $5.00 plus s/h.

Place your order on our website at www.paxchristiusa.org or by calling our Resource Office at 814-520-6245. You can pay using cash, check, money order, credit card or PayPal. Contact Lori via email at sales@paxchristiusa.org.

“I believe that, yes, the times talk to us of so much poverty in the world and this is a scandal. Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons.” - Pope Francis