

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

# JUST *Words*

**Finding common ground  
for the common good**



# THE CONTEXT

The theme of this edition of *JUST Words* is seeking common ground for the common good. The image of St. Dominic and the innkeeper on the cover reminds us of the night Dominic spent in conversation with an innkeeper who had lost his faith. All night they engaged one another in an authentic search for Truth. I can only imagine Dominic's deep respect for the man, recognizing that he had a kernel of the truth to be recognized and nurtured. No one would stay engaged all night if not in a conversation that sought and uncovered common ground that led to new understanding and deepened faith. As the light of morning dawned, so did a new light of faith in the innkeeper—and, surely, in Dominic himself. Seeking common ground is a mutual benefit; it engenders the common good.

Here you'll read of the basic listening skills learned from a grandmother, the mutuality of enriched faith learned while planting a garden together in the Sahara Desert, the difference between argument for the

sake of truth and argument for the sake of victory. We're reminded how Synod conversations move hearts toward the common good and how dialog is a necessary skill to be learned and practiced in a world in desperate need of healing. Each encounter pulls us out of our narrow world to cross boundaries of judgement and misunderstanding—and shed new light on our faith.

Seeking common ground begins with respectful listening that acknowledges the God-given giftedness of the other and humility that recognizes we all have something to learn from the encounter. It leaves each participant changed and renewed. The common good—as uncommon as it may seem sometimes—is a fruit of mutual effort and faith-filled seeking what we all share: the love of God who is Mystery beyond our understanding.

*Sister Kathlyn Mulcahy, OP, is a member of the Dominican Sisters' leadership team and the director of Bethany House, a home for women asylum seekers and their children, in Chicago.*



Mission Statement:  
Called by God  
into right relationship with all  
creation and graced by  
Dominican life and mission, we  
compassionately preach the Gospel  
of Jesus Christ.

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# "The joy of our hope"

By Sister Sharon Zayac, OP

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." ~ Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

Dickens could be speaking about today.

And it is surely easy these days to get stuck talking about the worst of times, isn't it? We are barraged with what is going on here at home and around the globe: escalating climate disasters, wars, the rise of authoritarianism, the upheaval of millions who are displaced from their homes and seek to find safety and security elsewhere. We grapple with planning for our futures as everything changes around us. All of this, even as we respond to many efforts for creative and effective collaboration to address these calamities.

How do we respond in a sane, hope-filled, and courageous manner? Where do we find the perspective that gives us a context that holds all of this and helps us make sense of it?

## What's the Story?

Where do we find that bigger picture that teaches us about who we are and how we are to be, together, in this grand evolutionary journey? One that holds everything together, even in the chaos? Is there a Story big enough to give us that context? Both science and our faith in a loving Creator offer us such a Story.

Remember the first part of that quote? The one we so often glide right over? It is the best of times. There is evidence of that everywhere,

as well. Are we open, willing to find new ways to look at our world and see differently?

Over this past century, science has been revealing to us the story of the incredible journey of a Universe still evolving after its momentous beginning 13.8 billion years ago. It speaks of the dynamics that make the Universe what it is. These dynamics are totally interrelated. Each of them only works in tandem with the others. The Universe is the story of birthing, of each subject alluring the other into becoming all it can, of collaborating (not competing), of constantly changing and thereby making the whole new. These universal dynamics are also the dynamics that work within us humans.

## Earth and Creation teach us

The evidence is everywhere! Earth teaches us. The prairie

burns and wildflowers emerge. The whole prairie is new. Trees communicate through their collaboration with fungi and through

that, protect their offspring and warn one another of danger. The whole forest is new. We too are in constant interaction with everything and everyone around us. We are literally

new beings with each interaction. And as each of us becomes new, the whole of humanity is changed. Each of us has the power to make the kinds of changes we wish to see in the world.

Creation teaches us that. Physics provides us the evidence for that. As we grow in our understanding of that total interrelatedness, the whole of creation is transformed. We will not allow "our struggles and our concern for this planet take away the joy of our hope." (Laudato Si', p. 244)

*Sister Sharon is an internationally sought-after speaker and teacher on eco-spirituality and eco-justice. She is on the team at Jubilee Farm, Springfield, Ill.*

# Walking backwards



Dr. Margaret Lombe, front left, with her students at the Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya.

## Seeking common ground in a Kenyan refugee camp

By Margaret Lombe, PhD.

My reflection centers on my engagement, along with six students from Boston University School of Social Work (BU-SSW), with refugees in Kenya: dignified-citizens-turned-objects-of-charity by conflict and civil unrest. The largest refugee camp in the world, called Kakuma, lies on the edge of the Sahara Desert in northwestern Kenya.

Kakuma holds about 350,000 people displaced from 21 African countries including Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Djibouti. Most people in the camp have fled violence, civil war, conflict, human rights violations, persecution, droughts, food insecurity, and government instability.

In the Summer of 2023, working in collaboration with Jesuit Refugee Services, my students and I embarked on a project to engage with refugee women who had experienced gender-based violence. The project, which centered on planting a vegetable garden, was developed in consultation with the women. The goal was to help bring healing and a sense of community to the 10 women who had endured sexual violence, trauma, and displacement. We found common ground despite our differences in background and experiences. For my students and me, the push was our commitment to social justice and human rights. For the women, their engagement

with us was from a sense of curiosity and appreciation for the strangers who wanted to accompany by planting a garden on the edge of the Sahara Desert. For several days the hot Sahara sun beat down our sweat-drenched bodies as we, alongside the women, dug, raked, and sowed vegetable seeds.

We later learned that for the women, planting the garden was more than just growing vegetables. It was an act of witness, accompaniment, and deep solidarity. It was also an act of claiming the land for themselves and their children. On our last day of working with the women, I recall the women saying to us, “You stood by our side and made a garden with us. Your sweat and our

# Reflections on cross-cultural ministry

A sister and an associate talk about their ministry in cross-cultural settings

By Carolyn White

## Indigenous Americans

Sister Barbara Bogenschutz recently returned to Fort Belknap Reservation, Mont., where she first began her ministry among Native Americans in 1999. Since then, she also served as a pastoral leader among the Anishinaabe at Red Cliff, Wisc., and among the Lakota in Oglala, S.D., on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Sister Barbara says she has grown to appreciate the perspective she's gained from accompanying parishioners in these Indigenous communities.

She finds Native Americans to be deep-thinking, thoughtful, prayerful, and reserved people. "In their prayer, silence and nature bring them closer to Wankan Tanka, the Great Spirit," she said. "Their prayerfulness is shown throughout their daily lives."

"Different tribes speak of death in different ways, such as being swept up into the Milky Way or the journey of crossing over," Sister Barbara explained. Through nearly a quarter-century of ministry among

Native American peoples, Sister Barbara says "The challenges are many and the blessings abundant."

## Immigrant AIDS patients

In 2017, Dominican associate Damarias Cuyubamba Rivera, who lives in Lima, Peru, was diagnosed with cancer. Today, in good health, she pays it forward by accompanying persons who have AIDs, many of them Venezuelan immigrants who've come to Peru in search of a more secure life. Damarias says her organization doesn't discriminate between Peruvian and Venezuelan clients but treats all of them with dignity. Her role is to support them in their journey and sometimes dress their

wounds. "Persons with AIDS are often discriminated against," she said. "That is why I try to support them and share with them what I learned: That God is love, peace, and hope, and before God we are all the same."

In the twelve years she's accompanied her clients, she has had to say goodbye to 27 people who have died. As difficult as that is, she says "I have the satisfaction that they were not alone. I feel called to continue in this work for all the years that God will give me."

*Carolyn is a Springfield Dominican Associate and a member of the JUST Words Editorial Board.*



Sister Barb Bogenschutz and Peruvian Dominican associate Damarias Cuyubamba Rivera.

# Seeking Veritas in the Media Age

By Catherine Becker

The Dominican motto *Veritas*—truth—permeates the Dominican pillars of community, preaching, prayer, and study. We reveal truth as we build relationships. We speak truth as we preach. We pray for wisdom and truth to be revealed. And our exploration of many varied subjects is a search for truth. But in our contemporary society, much like in Dominic's tumultuous time, truth can be hard to discern. Our media-saturated lives can make us feel like fish swimming in the water looking for the ocean. We just don't know that we are surrounded by biased media because we are living within the bubble of biased media. Truth means many things to many people. But to the Catholic Christian it means everything! Jesus is Truth. He doesn't simply tell the truth, and he doesn't only reveal the truth. He IS Truth. He says it directly with no hesitation or ambiguity: "I am the way, the truth and the life". (John 14:6). When we say Jesus is the truth we are using "truth" not just as an adjective to describe him like "the apple is red" but as a verb which gives Jesus



Catherine Becker

identity, movement and trajectory, and urgency. It tells us who he is to his core and it means we have the perfect litmus test with which to evaluate the media reports we encounter on our screens and in print. Jesus' truth embodies faithfulness, integrity, goodness. It is real, meaning it is reality itself; unchangeable, holy and life giving. Jesus' truth is love.

Jesus' truth as the test for truth in a media report, world event, or local news may seem a simple assessment. Is the event or issue good? Real? Faithful? Does it embody integrity? Does it have a sense of holiness? Does it contribute to the common good, love of neighbor, preferential option for the poor, care of creation? These questions make it easy to evaluate a situation when the choice is between something clearly wrong and clearly right. But often we are choosing between two more ambiguous positions. Then what?

## Dealing with "fake news"

What if media reports are skewed or only half-truths? Or what if the report is a good report but we are told by opposing parties that it

is "fake news"? What if the accusation of "fake news" is actually the fake news?! How far down the rabbit hole can we go? How can we possibly apply Jesus' Truth assessment to the issues when we can't get to the heart of the matter?

This is when becoming media literate is essential. We need to become savvy consumers of media and understand the reality of media bias. All media is biased. Every media message was created by someone, for some purpose, with a particular point of view. Even this publication is biased. *Just Words* has a very particular platform and message.

## Becoming media literate

"Media literacy is the ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending. (We) take in a huge amount of information from a wide array of sources, far beyond the traditional media...There are text messages, memes, viral videos, social media, video games, advertising, and more. But all media shares one thing: Someone created it. And it was created for a reason. Understanding that reason is the basis of media literacy."

(<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/what-is-media-literacy-and-why-is-it-important> accessed 8/30/24)

Being media literate means we start asking critical questions in our search for truth as we consume media.

Try using these questions to analyze the media you consume to see if it passes the Jesus Truth Test:

Who created this? Why did they make it? Was it to inform you of something that happened in the world (for example, a news story)? Was it to change your mind or behavior (opinion)? Who is the message for? Was it for a specific group, age, gender, or party? What techniques are being used to make this message credible or believable? Does it have statistics from a reputable source? Does it contain quotes from a reliable subject expert? Is there direct evidence of the assertions it's making? What details were left out, and why? Is the information balanced with different views—or does it present only one side? Do you need more information to fully understand the message? How did the message make you feel?

(<https://www.common sense media.org/articles/what-is-media-literacy-and-why-is-it-important>)

With a media culture that panders to our labels, party divisions, ethnicities, and social classes, it can be hard to remain in the Truth. When we restrict ourselves to a narrow view, the danger is we will blind ourselves to our neighbors, perhaps even to God. We

## 3 Types of MEDIA BIAS

**1 Spin**  
Dramatic, vague, emotional language. Unverifiable facts, imprecision that clouds the truth.



**2 Unsubstantiated claims**  
Report includes no statistics, evidence, or facts to back up the information. Reliable sources not included.



**3 Opinion-as-fact**  
Fact and opinion are obscured. Facts are verifiable by evidence. Opinions state value.



**There's More!**  
To become a media bias expert visit [springfieldop.org/JW](http://springfieldop.org/JW) or use this QR code for fast access.



can become defensive when we consistently feed on media that only supports our perspective, creating our own version of truth, and fearing perspectives that differ from our own. We can be pressured to believe we need to fight in order to remain relevant, in power, or on top. This is the antithesis of Jesus' Truth, the truth that is absolutely necessary for

Jesus' reign.

Dan White, author of *Love over Fear: Facing Monsters, Befriending Enemies, and Healing Our Polarized World*, posted on social media recently:

“When you live in Culture War Mode there is always a battle to fight, a side to take, and people to fear.... When you live in God's Kingdom there's always a stranger to welcome, a neighbor to befriend, and an enemy to love.” (Twitter (x) July 28, 2024)

Many of us do seek out the truth in the media we consume and strive to remain in truth. As we attempt to build God's reign in our relationships, preaching, and service, we need to be diligent and critical even in our own communications. Because, ultimately, being people of Truth is what defines us as Catholic and Dominican.

Catherine is the youth minister at St. Agnes Parish, Springfield; a Dominican Associate, and a member of the *JUST Words* editorial board.

# Diverse thoughts about divisive conversations

These four friends tell us how they stay present when tensions flare

## Ann Garrido: Remaining in conversation

It has not been easy! Even though I regularly offer workshops on managing challenging



conversations, I still find it difficult to be in the middle of them myself! What keeps me “hanging in there” is an experience I had at twenty years

old. I spent six months as an exchange student in Sierra Leone on the edge of that country’s civil war. Not long after I left, the country descended into violence. I lost all connection with my Sierra Leonean college friends and the places I loved

were destroyed. I realized that no matter how difficult life is with one another,

being in dialogue is always a better option than being at war.

This experience led me to study negotiation science with members of the Harvard Negotiation Project and to integrate content about managing difficult conversations into the courses I teach for people of faith. How can I pray at Mass for Israelis and Palestinians or Russians and Ukrainians to be at peace if I won’t even try to remain present in my own tough conversations? Do I think my argument with

**“...no matter how difficult life is with one another, being in dialogue is always a better option than being at war.”**

my husband or co-worker is harder to figure out than the issues they are dealing with?

When I “right-size” my own tensions in proportion to the

struggles others face, it nudges me toward de-escalating situations rather than escalating them. I remind myself that remaining in conversation is an act of solidarity with those who are trying to do so in far more dire circumstances.

Ann Garrido is associate professor at Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, and author of *Redeeming Conflict*. Learn more about Ann [www.anngarrido.com](http://www.anngarrido.com).

## Father Joe Brown: Distracting from the pain

As is true of so much in my life, the social training I received from my grandmothers and parents has equipped me with some basic skills that have helped me not only survive some potentially toxic conversations, but to be able to bring the temperature down to a level that allows for true engagement with the other person. The secret? To listen with one’s eyes. Many highly trained

behavioral psychologists would agree that listening is often the best technique for averting or lessening contentious interactions. My grandmothers? “Come here; and sit down, and tell me what’s bothering you. And you want some cookies and some milk?” My mother? “Let me see....you are angry/upset/concerned about something. What’s going on?” My father? “Get in the car. Let’s go for a ride...

I think I can see what’s bothering you.”

The social justice apostle, Ruby Sales, has spoken about her strategy for engagement, often. Her starting point is to ask, “Where does it hurt?”



Divisive conversations

## Rabbi Arthur Stern: Truth, not victory



This question immediately brings to mind what *The Talmud* says in *Mishna Avot* “Which is an argument for the sake of Heaven? The argument between Hillel and Shammai. Which is an argument not for the sake of Heaven? The argument of Korach and his company.” Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks tells us “The argument between Hillel and Shammai: In their debates, one of them

would render a decision and the other would argue against it, out of a desire to discover the truth, not out of cantankerousness or a wish to prevail over his fellow. An argument not for the sake of Heaven was that of Korach and his company, for they came to undermine Moses, our master, may he rest in peace, and his position, out of envy and contentiousness and ambition for victory.” The Sages were drawing a fundamental distinction between two kinds of conflict: argument for the sake of truth and argument for the sake of victory. With this in mind I must

remember what *The Talmud* tells me in *Pirkei Avot* and be sure that I am only seeking the truth and not trying to win an argument. This is critical to remaining present in a divisive conversation. It is incumbent on me to remain open minded. When I am trying to win I don’t leave the door open for collaborative conversation. The goal should not be to be victorious. The goal is to understand the other person and to seek the truth.

*Rabbi Arthur Stern, PsyD, is the rabbi at Temple Israel in Springfield, Ill.*

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## Father Mateo Garr, SJ: Consensus as a cure for division

Polarization of beliefs is growing in many people and institutions. It has reached the point where, instead of seeking together what we have in common, we have moved into a world in which it is not enough to express a different opinion. It seems we must also attack people who have different ideas. Dialogue has disappeared. We find this in the Church as well.

We find some examples of this in last fall’s first synod session: the ordination of “righteous” men who could serve in remote parts of the Amazon. The ordination of women as deacons, and the possibility that LGTBQ people might celebrate the

sacrament of marriage in the Church. A large number of delegates asked for these changes.

The pope, who wrote the encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* on the importance of dialogue, removed them from the agenda. Why? By doing so, he reminded us that the Church is not a democracy (nor is it a purely vertical institution). Pope Francis wants to avoid divisions that have led to schisms in other churches.

The Church makes its decisions by consensus, not by democratic means. The best way to describe

consensus is the text from Luke 24 about the meal at Emmaus when the couple exclaimed “Were not our hearts burning?” Decisions are enacted when a large majority of the members strongly feel the consolation that occurs when the Holy Spirit moves their hearts.



*Padre Mateo is a U.S. Jesuit priest who has served many years in Peru.*

# Diversidad de ideas

Cuatro personas una pregunta: "¿Qué te ha ayudado a mantenerte presente en conversaciones conflictivas?"

## Ann Garrido: Permaneciendo en la conversación

¡No ha sido fácil! Aunque ofrezco regularmente talleres sobre cómo manejar conversaciones difíciles, ¡a mí todavía me resulta difícil estar en medio de ellas! Lo que me permite "mantenerme en ellas" es una experiencia que tuve a los veinte años.

Pasé seis meses como estudiante de intercambio en Sierra Leona cuando el país estaba al borde de la guerra civil. Poco después de salir, el país se sumió en violencia. Perdí toda conexión con mis amigos universitarios de Sierra Leona y los lugares que amaba fueron destruidos. Me di cuenta de que, no importa cuán difícil

sea la vida con los demás, estar en diálogo siempre es una mejor opción que estar en guerra.

Esta experiencia me llevó a estudiar Ciencias de Negociación con miembros del Proyecto de Negociación de Harvard y a integrar bien el contenido sobre cómo manejar conversaciones difíciles en los cursos que imparto para personas de fe. ¿Cómo puedo rezar en la misa para que los israelíes y los palestinos o los rusos y los ucranianos estén en paz si ni siquiera intento permanecer presente en mis propias conversaciones difíciles? ¿Pienso que mi discusión con mi esposo o compañero de trabajo es más

**"... no importa cuán difícil sea la vida con los demás, estar en diálogo es siempre una mejor opción que estar en guerra".**

difícil de entender que los problemas que están enfrentando? Cuando "equilibrio" mis propias tensiones en proporción a las luchas que enfrentan los

demás, reduzco la tensión en lugar de intensificarla. Me recuerdo a mí misma que permanecer en la conversación es un acto de solidaridad con quienes están tratando de hacerlo en circunstancias mucho más extremas.

*Ann Garrido es profesora asociada en el Instituto de Teología Aquinas, St. Louis, y autora de Redeeming Conflict. Obtenga más información sobre Ann en [www.anngarrido.com](http://www.anngarrido.com)*

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## Padre Joe Brown: Distrarse por el dolor

Como sucede con tantas cosas en mi vida, el entrenamiento social que recibí de mis abuelas y padres me ha equipado con algunas habilidades básicas que me han ayudado no solo a sobrevivir algunas conversaciones potencialmente tóxicas, sino también a poder bajar la temperatura a un nivel que me permita interactuar verdaderamente con la otra persona. ¿El secreto? Escuchar

con los ojos. Muchos psicólogos conductuales altamente capacitados estarían de acuerdo en que escuchar es a menudo la mejor técnica para evitar o disminuir las interacciones conflictivas. ¿Mis abuelas? "Ven aquí, siéntate y dime qué te molesta. ¿Quieres unas galletas y un poco de leche?" ¿Mi madre? "Déjame ver... estás enojado/molesto/preocupado por algo. ¿Qué está pasando?"

¿Mi padre? "Súbete al auto. Vamos a dar un paseo... Creo que puedo ver qué te molesta".



La apóstola de la justicia social, Ruby Sales, ha hablado a menudo sobre su estrategia para entrar en contacto con otros. Su

Continúa en la página 13

## Padre Mateo Garr: Superando La División

La polarización de creencias va creciendo en muchas personas e instituciones. Ha llegado al extremo que, en vez de buscar juntos lo que tenemos en común, se ha pasado a un mundo en que no basta expresar una opinión distinta sino atacar a las personas que poseen ideas diferentes. El diálogo ha desaparecido. Esto encontramos estos también en la iglesia.

Unos ejemplos actuales son algunos de los puntos que fueron presentados durante la primera sesión del Sínodo: la ordenación de varones “probos” que podrían atender en las partes alejadas de la Amazonía. Otro se trata de la ordenación de mujeres como diáconos, y

la posibilidad de que las personas LGBTQ puedan celebrar el sacramento del matrimonio en la Iglesia. Altos números de los y las delegados pidieron estos cambios. Pero fue el mismo Papa Francisco que quitó estos temas de la agenda. El Papa que escribió la carta encíclica Fratelli tutti sobre la importancia del diálogo es él que los eliminó de la agenda. ¿Por qué? Entonces, el Papa nos hizo recordar que la Iglesia no es una democracia (tampoco es una institución puramente vertical). Esto ha llevado a cismas en otras iglesias. Y esto es lo que el Papa



Francisco quiere evitar.

La Iglesia toma sus decisiones por consenso, no por vía democrática. La mejor forma de describir al consenso es el texto de Lucas 24 sobre la comida en Emaús cuando la pareja exclamó “no ardían dentro de nuestros corazones”. Las decisiones se toman cuando una gran mayoría de los miembros sienten fuertemente la consolación que ocurre cuando es el Espíritu Santo mueve sus corazones.

*El Padre Mateo es un sacerdote jesuita estadounidense que ha servido muchos años en Perú.*

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## El Rabino Arthur Stern: Verdad, no victoria

Esta pregunta inmediatamente trae a mi mente lo que dice el Talmud en Mishna Avot “¿Cuál es un argumento que beneficia el Cielo? El argumento entre Hillel y Shammai. ¿Cuál es un argumento que no beneficia el Cielo? El argumento de Koraj y su compañía”.

El Rabino Lord Jonathan Sacks nos dice: “El argumento entre Hillel y Shammai: En sus debates, uno de ellos emitía una decisión y el otro argumentaba en contra, por un deseo de descubrir la verdad, no por mal humor o por el deseo de prevalecer sobre su compañero.



Un argumento que no beneficiaba el Cielo fue el de Koraj y su compañía, porque vinieron a socavar a Moisés, nuestro maestro, que en paz descansa, y su posición fue por envidia, contienda y ambición de victoria”.

Los sabios estaban haciendo una distinción fundamental entre dos tipos de conflicto: la discusión en pos de la verdad y la discusión en pos de la victoria. Con esto en mente, debo recordar lo que el Talmud me dice en Pirkei Avot y asegurarme de

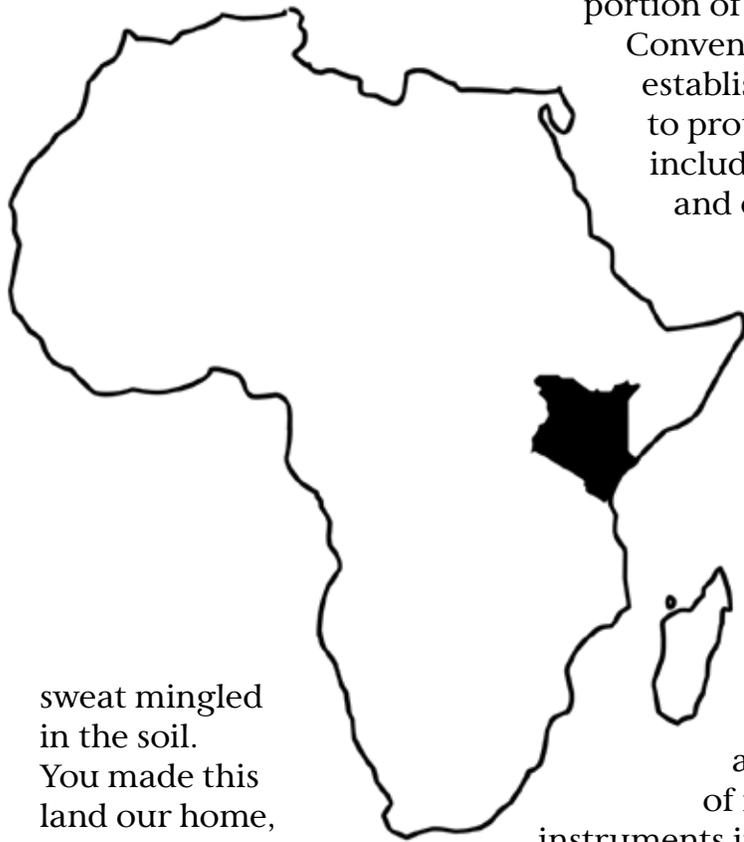
que sólo estoy buscando la verdad y no tratando de ganar una discusión. Esto es fundamental para permanecer en una conversación difícil. Me corresponde mantener la mente abierta y, cuando estoy tratando de ganar, no dejaré la puerta abierta para una conversación de este tipo.

El objetivo no debe ser salir victorioso. El objetivo es comprender a la otra persona y buscar la verdad.

*El rabino Arthur Stern, PsyD, es el rabino del Templo Israel en Springfield, Illinois*

## Seeking common ground in a Kenyan refugee camp

continued from page 4



sweat mingled in the soil. You made this land our home, and you made us feel a sense of belonging.” These women had endured so much! Imagine yourself crying for help in the face of atrocity and the only sound you hear is the echo of your own voice!

We were all crying as we said our goodbyes. At a time when the world seems to have turned its back on them, the women found solidarity in each other and in the hearts of strangers, privileged women from across the Atlantic.

When we started working with the women at Kakuma Refugee Camp, our goal was to look at the human rights

frameworks, especially the portion of the Geneva Conventions that was established in 1977 to protect civilians—including women and children (the United States has signed but not ratified this portion). Our experience at Kakuma revealed the impact of conflict and war on women and children, and the limits of international

instruments in protecting these vulnerable groups. Indeed, in 2022 alone, the United Nations reported that more than 114 million people had been displaced from their homes. That number does not include people made vulnerable by the Israel-Hamas War.

In normal situations, about one in five women are likely to experience gender-based violence in their lifetime—the situation is more dire during conflict and war. Why? In times of war, women experience erosion of the layers of protection that surround them—they experience loss of community, breakdown of rule of law, and loss of other

forms of support, feeding into the normalization of violence, and making women extremely vulnerable. It’s a phenomenon scholars have said turns women’s bodies into an “extension of the battlefield.”

As we were leaving the camp to return to Boston, my students and I made a commitment not to turn our backs on the women; we walked backwards to symbolize that we will never forget them and the experience they shared with us. This symbolism is something I continue to struggle with. How does one stand with-and-for in the midst of so much suffering? How does accompaniment transcend culture/experience when one has the luxury of returning home? How is the person who returns home transformed, and how can she continue to witness and accompany?

*Margaret is associate professor of social work at Boston University and director of their BRIDGE program specialization in global health, social policy, and poverty. She is a Springfield Dominican Associate. This trip was supported by Boston University School of Social Work Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health. Plans to return to Kakuma in 2024 were scuttled by civil unrest in Kenya.*

**Fr. Joe Brown cont.**

are often—maybe, almost always—indicators of a deep hurt that is being avoided by creating arguments that distract the other. Jesus is also a great example of how to deal with divisiveness. His encounters with people who were often defined as “culturally other,” teach us how he remained calm,

no matter the subject or the source of the contention. He met anger with questions and with acceptance. His lack of fear spoke of how nothing could shatter his peacefulness. When there is no resistance, the storm can pass over.

*Fr. Joe is a Jesuit priest and professor of Africana Studies at SIU-Carbondale. He was taught by the Dominican Sisters of Springfield in East St. Louis.*

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**Distraerse por el dolor continuado**

punto de partida es preguntar: “¿Dónde te duele?”. Las conversaciones que generan conflicto son a menudo –quizás, casi siempre– indicadores de un profundo dolor que se está evitando, al crear discusiones que distraen al otro. Jesús es también un gran ejemplo de cómo lidiar con las divisiones. Sus encuentros con personas

que a menudo se definían como “culturalmente diferentes” nos enseñan cómo él mantenía la calma, sin importar el tema o la raíz de la disputa. Respondía a la ira con preguntas y con aceptación. Su falta de miedo hablaba de cómo nada podía quebrantar su paz. Cuando no hay resistencia, las tormentas pasan.

*El padre Joe es un sacerdote jesuita y profesor de Estudios Africanos en SIU-Carbondale. Fue alumno de las Hermanas Dominicas de Springfield en East St. Louis.*



**Season Four is here!**

**Don't miss out! Shows drop the fourth Thursday of each month and can be found at: [flowcastlisten.org](http://flowcastlisten.org). There you can subscribe to receive each episode in your inbox.**

# CONGRATS

## Certified in Permaculture Design

Sisters Kristin Crawford and Sharon Zayac received their certification in permaculture design through Midwest Permaculture, located in Stelle, Ill.

They completed a 72-hour online course, which included project work. Their project is a permaculture design for an area at Jubilee Farm where they are creating a “permagarden.”



## IN MEMORIAM

Please pray for the repose of the souls of these sisters and associates who have died in the peace of Christ.

**Sister Patricia Stark, OP, July 8, 2024**

**Jane Hurshman, associate, July 8, 2024**

**Dietgard Hunsley, associate, August 6, 2024**

**Patricia Grady, associate, September 5, 2024**

**Aurelio Guardamino, associate, September 21, 2024**

Visit <https://springfield.org/donate> to make a gift in memory of a sister or associate who has died.

# PARTNERS IN MISSION

## Monthly donations helps keep focus on values

By Sister Kathleen Anne Tait, OP

Susan Hickman didn't realize that a working relationship with one Springfield Dominican would open her life to a long and meaningful relationship with the Springfield Dominican community. However, as Susan and her friend, Catherine



Susan Hickman

Leyser, enjoyed the spiritual exchange and friendship in a prayer group with Sister Barbara Blesse, Susan began to realize her interactions with Sister Barbara felt like home to her.

Susan and Catherine were first hooked into our Dominican community when they helped move Sister Barbara to Springfield and came regularly for visits. The two of them became associates in 2012, and though Catherine died in 2017, Susan still considers the sisters "family" and

a wonderful source of spiritual and emotional support. In turn, Susan serves on the Justice & Peace & Integrity of Creation Committee and is an active member of SDART, our antiracism team. It was our approach to social justice through the lens of the Dominican charism

that first drew Susan to the associate program. She also has spent time collecting our sisters' oral histories for the archives and loves visiting with the sisters. They certainly enjoy being with her. These meaningful relationships and shared interests made it a natural for Susan to support our efforts "to compassionately preach the Gospel." She became a monthly donor when the program first started.

Susan says the capacity to integrate the donation with her monthly

financial planning and the convenience of automatically supporting an important cause are key reasons she chose to become a monthly donor. "It's a way to keep my focus on the values I hold and the good I want to bring forth," she said.

For us, the program accomplishes some of the same goals. We can integrate the monthly amounts into the budgeting program for the congregation and count on the regular payments. If you want to join the Bearers of the Flame monthly donor program, simply indicate that when you make an online donation or check the box on the envelope included in this *JUST Words*.



Sister Kathleen Anne is the Director of Development for the Dominican Sisters of Springfield.



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On the cover: Peace Dominican Sister Thoma Swanson's interpretation of St. Dominic's encounter with the innkeeper. Used with permission.



## Dominican Sources

"One of my principal missions in Algeria is to...enrich relationships, always, everywhere, and with everyone. We must take Christ as an example; He opened dialogue with all of humanity. Anything that hinders dialogue is in fact against Christian love...."

—Blessed Pierre Claverie, OP,  
martyred Aug. 1, 1996

## DATEBOOK

October	13	Sacred Heart Convent Chapel Tour ✱
	11	Indigenous People's and Columbus Day
	31	All Hallows' Eve
November	1	All Saints' Day
	2	All Souls' Day
	5	General Elections
	7	Springfield Sisters' Armchair Tour ✱
	11	Veterans' Day
December	15	Feast of St. Albert the Great, Dominican scientist and Theologian
	28	Thanksgiving
	9	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, observed
	12	Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas
	13	O, Come let us adore Him: Advent adoration ✱
	25	Christmas Day

\* Public events requiring preregistration at [springfieldop.org/events](http://springfieldop.org/events)