



May these flowers,  
the promise of fruit to come,  
be a sign of the fruit of our commitment  
"to choose, together, life  
for ourselves and for the world".

## Meeting of the Social Justice Network from February 22 to 25, 2008

Urgent action required! Informed that the staff of the Social Justice Office would be stepping down in June, the General Commission in October 2007 “asked the current Office and Network members to study various modes of operation at all levels and to make recommendations to the members of the general commission at their next meeting to be held in March of 2008” (General Commission, October 15-20, 2007). It was therefore a matter of urgent necessity to move up the annual meeting of the Network. This meeting was held February 22 through 25. Here are the people who were there during the four days:

### Participants



Sr. Carol Proietti  
(Saint Marie)



from left to right:  
Sr. Alberte Madore (Esther-Blondin)  
Sr. Denise Leroux (N.-D du P.-S)  
Sr. Denise Breault (Esther-Blondin)



Sr. Madeleine Lanoue  
Sr. Céline Dupuis  
(General Administration)



Sr. Denise Caron  
Diane Boudreault  
(Social Justice Office)



S. Sheila Moss  
(Saint Joseph)



Sr. Rita Larivee  
(UNANIMA International)



### Interpreters



At left: Isabelle Martiliani et Hélène Cloutier

At right: Steven Kaal et Alionka Skup

Absent on the photos: Scott Eavenson



### Ressource persons



At left: Norman Lévesque  
(Environment)

At right : Marlène Rateau  
(Social Haitian Context)



Friday, February 22, kicked off the four-day meeting, which took place in an atmosphere of prayer and discernment:



Veni Sancte Spiritus!!!  
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Initially, representatives from the provinces' social justice committees shared what had gone on in their respective milieus, limiting themselves to activities related to the current year's themes. For 2007-2008, the Network had chosen to maintain the congregation's commitment to the fight against **TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN**, with a particular focus on eliminating demand.

further explore them and find a way to respond to them more effectively and more in keeping with the reality of each milieu. From this sharing, questions arose concerning the effectiveness of "Just News". Is this newsletter meeting its goal, which is to be a training and information tool? Is it readily available to all sisters now that it can be accessed only from the website? (cf.: survey)

In addition, each province was free to choose a second theme relevant to its reality and its needs. In local houses and at the provincial level, among both the SSA and the people they are in contact with, the theme of the environment definitely struck a chord, resulting in decisions based on the seriousness of the situation – such as recycling at the Motherhouse, community actions and small, concrete personal efforts, an awareness campaign, etc. This wide range of efforts prove once again that the SSA are not indifferent to the major problems of the world today.

As anticipated, most of the agenda for Friday and Saturday was devoted to discerning how the Social Justice Office should be organized. The "seeing" aspect had been done by an ad hoc committee which explained to Network members the three scenarios sent to them for study. The "judging" aspect developed as discernment continued: prayer times, listening to one another, discussion, personal reflection, clarification questions, personal investment, etc. We brought everything to the Eucharist that closed the day.

This first plenary session encouraged us to review the provinces' expectations in order to

To allow a resolution to emerge from the previous days' discernment, the program for Sunday called for quiet reflection.

First we welcomed Norman Lévesque, a meteorologist, who spoke to us for an hour and a half about climate change and its negative impact. The participants were impressed with



this young academic who seemed to be very comfortable with both faith and science. With discernment and most appropriately, he prefaced his brief talk with a Bible passage that he wanted us to consider. A

witness that did not go unnoticed!

Until noon, Mr. Lévesque yielded his place to Haitian-born Marlène Rateau, who had been in Quebec for a number of years and was a member of the "Concertation pour Haïti", an organization focused on Haiti and its needs. Her love for the land of her birth, her objectivity and her commitment to work for the Haitian cause made her both a credible speaker and an interesting person to converse with. Ms. Rateau ended by assuring us that at the end of March, different organizations dedicated to defending Haiti would be deciding on concrete action. She hoped that all SSA would get behind this action in solidarity. To be continued!

Sunday afternoon, Sisters Marlène Gérard and Rachel Agnes Bushey joined the group. They came to hear Sr. Rita Larivée present the toolkit prepared by UNANIMA International to facilitate leading an anti-demand campaign (i.e., against trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation). Rita brought some files to the meeting and distributed them to Network members, who read them with great interest. Did you know that the SSA helped support the production of these materials?



The Network will make good use of these materials when it joins in the international campaign mounted by all religious communities in fall 2008. This theme is certainly likely to be integrated into the orientations for the upcoming general chapter.

The evening of Sunday, February 24, and all day on the 25th, the members of the Network gathered to continue the discernment begun during the first few days. Introduced by the rhythm of the mantra to the Holy Spirit, the periods of listening and discussion culminated in a consensus of all participants that was to be presented by Sister Denise and Diane Boudreault to the members of the General Commission on Monday, March 10.

Network members took advantage of this final meeting to pay tribute to the staff of the Social Justice Office, inspired by Paul's letter to the Philippians: "We thank our God every time we remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of our prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1:3-7) To show their gratitude to Denise and Diane, they gave each woman a special blessing. "May our God be for you the source of your joy, for as long as your pilgrimage shall last!"

Thank you to each and every one of you, dear Sisters Céline and Madeleine, Alberte and Denise Breault, Denise Leroux, Carol, Rita and Sheila for your messages and tokens of affection so artistically presented in your souvenir card!



Memorable and happy remembrances!

The session ended with a rite of dismissal rooted in the orientation for the general chapter of 1992: "Gospel women, let us dare to live a prophetic presence..." To help the sisters carry this process forward, the Social Justice Network, throughout its 16 years, has urged them to broaden their prayer and take concrete action, however small, to respond to the cries of a world seeking justice! Its members sowed the seed in the earth. And so it is with the Kingdom of God: "...someone would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself..." (Mark 4:26-32) As a token of recognition for helping to bring about "a more just and caring world" and in thanksgiving for what God has done through us and without us, we each received a plant as a symbol of mission accomplished! May we, like Blessed Marie-Anne Blondin, be always available for the greater glory of God, and like her,

***"let us choose, together,  
life for ourselves  
and for the world" !***



## Environment

The environment is everyone's business. Here is what Sr. Claire Racine has to say about it, all the way from the Congo: "Here in Kilembe, we have been using candles for the past six months. We are also working to promote the use of solar energy. In Kinshasa, the sisters talk about it a lot, and people are listening. It's an appropriate way for our country to capture the first energy created. Let each sister in every region shine a light on her own conscience."

*And us ???*

*Did we celebrate Earth Hour  
on March 29  
by turning off our lights?*

### ***A gesture of solidarity***

Here is a message received from Enrique Correa, one of our Spanish translators, when we published "Just News" last December. Instead of sending us an invoice, he sent this message to Sister Madeleine Lanoue: *Given the work done by the Social Justice Committee and the high esteem I have for Sister Denise Caron and the mission of the congregation, I have decided to bring my little "grain" to the work being done to "fight against all that threatens life". It is for this reason that, from now on, all translation done for this office will be done free of charge. In this small way, I join my efforts to yours in the fight against the trafficking of all human beings.*

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