



Sisters of Saint Joseph
U.S. FEDERATION

United in Mission - Loving God and Neighbor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 5, 2019

CONTACT:

Kristen Whitney Daniels, Assistant Director

kdaniels@cssjfed.org, 203-560-5039

Jenny Beatrice, Director of Communications, St. Louis

jbeatrice@csjstl.org, 314-372-1586

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH PARTICIPATE IN ACT OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE FOR IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AT CATHOLIC DAY OF ACTION EVENT IN NEWARK

Over 30 sisters, associates, St. Joseph Workers, and partners in mission from the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph joined with over 400 individuals in the Catholic Day of Action for Immigrant Children, part of a “Stop the Inhumanity” campaign designed to increase the visibility of the Catholics who are willing to take risks on the issue to increase pressure on the U.S. government to end child detention.

Among this group, were five sisters who participated in the non-violent act of civil disobedience to protest the traumatizing abuse of immigrant children and their families. These sisters — joined with 50 other participants who prayerfully decided to risk arrest as part of a nonviolent action — prayed in the streets of Newark for the end of child and family detention. The five sisters included Sr. Patricia Johnson, sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet- St. Louis and executive director of the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph; Sr. Joan Gallagher, sister of St. Joseph of Brentwood and co-chair of the Federation’s Leadership Council; Sr. Janet Kinney, sister of St. Joseph of Brentwood; Sr. Erin McDonald, sister from the Congregation of St. Joseph; Sr. Susan Wilcox, sister of St. Joseph of Brentwood.

Sister Patricia Johnson said she discerned and ultimately decided to participate in the non-violent civil disobedience because “this action by Catholics is so important to call attention to the life-threatening and developmentally damaging impact on migrant children that our country’s detention policies are causing.” She said it was important to “stand with my sisters, associates, and partners in mission to decry this terrible injustice and to invite others to join us in this effort to stop detaining migrant children. When normal efforts to call our government to provide humane treatment to those who are vulnerable fail, it is incumbent upon us to act boldly to call attention to this immorality.”

The event was organized by a coalition of 13 Catholic organizations, with both national and local New York/New Jersey area groups participating. Hundreds of sisters, priests, brothers and activists participated, including the Archbishop of Newark Cardinal Tobin. “The point of today is to be able to show the real face of children who are incarcerated,” he said.

After a prayer service at St. Mary's Church, the protesters processed through the city chanting phrases such as, "No cages, no walls," and "Let our children go, now." Many of them displayed the photos of the faces of the seven detained children who have died in custody since 2017.

As the sounds of church bells faded, sirens took their place as a police presence accompanied the protesters to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Federal Building where a peaceful protest was organized. Speakers gave testimonials on their experiences as immigrants or those working with them.

Sister Ann Scholz, SSND, associate director for social mission of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which represents 38,000 Catholic sisters, spoke of the sisters' legacy serving in solidarity with migrants, and she condemned the Trump administration's policy of detaining children and separating families. "The Gospel commands and the values of this nation demand that we act for the dignity of every human person," she proclaimed.

This was the second Catholic Day of Action event. The first was held on July 18 in Washington, D.C. at the Russell Senate Office Building where 71 Catholic leaders were arrested, including two Sisters of St. Joseph. A third Catholic Day of Action Event is planned for October at the border in El Paso, Texas, with a teach-in on Oct. 11-13 and a nonviolent direction action on Oct. 12.

Kristen Whitney Daniels, assistant director of the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, said "The Federation is thankful for the participation and prophetic witness of so many of our sisters and partners in mission at this historic event." Whitney Daniels, who participated in the Catholic Day of Action for Immigrant Children both in July and September, said "In my time working with the Sisters of St. Joseph, it's been impressed on me the importance of living out our mission to serve to the 'dear neighbor' through word and action. I am thankful to work for an organization that continues to bear this tradition through our physical presence at the Catholic Day of Action and the spiritual solidarity of our sisters and associates at congregations throughout the United States."