

“We seek to empower others, especially the poor and oppressed, to achieve a quality of life in keeping with their human dignity.”

— Mission Statement

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul have worked diligently since the founding of the congregation in 1861 to address the root causes of poverty. In the early 1990s the congregation officially established a Justice and Peace office to identify and take nonviolent action on issues that affect the poor. This action includes being a voice that challenges all — from members of the congregation, to elected officials, to the general public — to become more aware of the impact our decisions have on all members of society. Jamie Swift is the director of the JPIC office and Tara Kainer is the executive assistant to the director.

Silent Vigil

Every Friday since November 1995, members of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office and other citizens of Kingston, Ontario, have gathered in front of City Hall for a silent vigil protest.

Originally a means of urging the Ontario government not to cut taxes until it addressed the root causes of poverty, the vigil continues to act in solidarity with



the hardest-hit and weakest citizens, the women and children who bear the brunt of cuts to public provision for the public good. The vigils are silent and powerful so that prayer and meditation focus on the issues.

General Superior, Sr. Pauline Lally

(one-time director of the Justice and Peace Office)

“We need to walk with the two balanced feet of charity and justice. We need to ask why are there poor? Why do we have so many poor, homeless, hungry men, women, and whole families in Canada, one of the richest countries in the world? Because the first step in justice work is always awareness, and one of the first things I learned while working in the Justice and Peace Office is that poverty is very political. Poverty just doesn’t happen by chance. Policies of our governments and multinational corporations affect people and the planet.”



Goals and Objectives of the JPIC

Education:

To have a congregation of Sisters and Associates that is well informed about justice and peace and ecology issues and committed to addressing them.

Networking and advocacy:

To be mutually informed, supported, directed and challenged through working with other justice groups — on a local, provincial,

national and international level — within the church and society.

Non-violence and peacemaking:

To raise public awareness of the evils of war and violence and to promote non-violence and peacemaking.

Friday Silent Vigil:

To continue the vigil as long as the vigil keepers and the congregation feel it is necessary as a means of keeping the plight of the poor — as well as other social justice injustices in our world today — before the public.

Globalization/global injustice:

To grow in our awareness of global injustice and to promote awareness in the community at large.

Ecology:

To raise public awareness of the often neglected social justice aspects of the environmental crisis by acting in solidarity with the victims of environmental damage.



1976 — Sisters became involved in Canadian Religious Conference-Ontario Region (CRC-O) Social Justice Office.

1980 - 1989 — Sister Martha McKenna carries out a social justice letter-writing mandate

1988 — Social Awareness Committee is established

1991 — Office of Justice and Peace is established

2000 — Sister Shirley Morris establishes office for Ecology and Environment

2007 — Ecology and Environment now known as Integrity of Creation becomes part of the Office of Justice and Peace. This follows the example of Canadian Religious Conference (CRC).



“Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage. Anger at the way things are and the courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.”

— St. Augustine

“The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.” — Jane Addams



Silent Vigil Prayer

We long for a world that respects all of humanity and all the earth. And so we stand in silent, non-violent solidarity with those affected by government and corporations that put profits before human kind and indeed before all creation. Together in this vigil we bring before us injustices affecting our world. In gentle awareness we present these concerns to the Divine Light which permeates the universe. Thus, we stand in hope. Let us leave this place of prayer sharing with one another a gesture of hope and solidarity. Let us go in peace.

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Justice and Peace & Integrity of Creation



*Sisters of Providence
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Kingston, Ontario