

For Immediate Release

November 30, 2016

Statement of Solidarity with the Native Peoples of Standing Rock

As people committed to justice, nonviolence, unifying love and communion with the Earth Community, we, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, representing 1,102 vowed sisters worldwide, stand in solidarity with our Native American sisters and brothers, especially of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

We believe that Creation is a sacred trust given to the whole Earth Community. As people of faith in relationships with Native American peoples, we are sensitive that the Dakota Access Pipeline project will pass through sacred treaty-protected land of the Sioux people and under the tribe's major source of water, the Missouri River. An earlier proposed route of the project was rejected due to threats to the city of Bismarck's water supply. We support and affirm the dignity of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in their peaceful efforts to protect their sovereignty, water, culture, lifeways, and sacred sites.

We are deeply concerned with the dangerous and potentially lethal force used on water protectors/peaceful protesters at the Oceti Sakowin/Sacred Stones Camp. We support a peaceful resolution and a commitment to formal consultation with the leadership of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council for their input concerning this pipeline project. We are particularly sensitive to the fact that any resolution of the current pipeline project is connected to the historical lack of tribal consultation in the 1960s when the Oahe dam and Army Corps' land of the Oceti Sakowin/Sacred Stones Camp was created by the federal government without the consent of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. This federal action forced people from their homes by submerging towns, burial sites, and sacred places under water.

We join in solidarity with the Native Peoples of Standing Rock through our faith-filled response to their urgent appeal asking churches "to be aware of the rapidly escalating dangers facing this peaceful gathering. Please come and bear witness" ([Urgent Appeal for International Observers](#), August 23, 2016). We encourage others to raise awareness about this important struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and environmental justice.

We are challenged by Pope Francis in his latest encyclical: "It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture" ([Laudato Si'](#), 146).

We stand with the community of Standing Rock and the Oceti Sakowin/Sacred Stones Camp in their opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline and their peaceful efforts to protect their water and sovereignty. Our charism as Sisters of St. Joseph, calls us to "Love God and love the Dear Neighbor without distinction" and to discern "how does this decision/action impact the Earth Community?" We will not distinguish people by religion, color or creed when they cry out for mercy. Let us all respond to our Dear Neighbors with love in their hour of greatest need. We turn to the God of all of creation and ask that we may be instruments of unity, peace and care for all creation.

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