



September 22, 2015

Dear Senator or Representative

As we anticipate the historic visit of Pope Francis to address the Congress of the United States of America, we pray that all our government leaders will listen with mind and heart to his moral and practical concerns for the earth and all its peoples, especially for persons living in poverty.

The Ladies of Charity of the United States of America (LCUSA) is a volunteer network of over 6,000 women in more than 200 communities acting together against all forms of poverty. We have served the basic needs of poor women and families in this country since 1857 and trace our roots back to St. Vincent de Paul who began this organization in 1617 in France. Last year we raised over \$2 million in direct aid and volunteered almost 58,000 hours, a value of \$21,000,000 for our communities as we worked in soup kitchens and pantries, thrift stores, and programs to support literacy and economic empowerment of women.

The Ladies of Charity adopted a resolution at the National Assembly on September 19, 2015 standing with the Holy Father in his call to protect our common home and address climate change through our personal actions and through political action. The Congressional resolution introduced on September 17 by several Republican members in the House of Representatives is a hopeful sign that dialogue will begin with motivated Democrats. We need our government along with civil society and all people to address what Pope Francis calls in *Laudato Si* "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day."

In the hope that Congress can work together to protect our environment, let us also work together to protect the human dignity of all who live here. We are concerned for the women and children suffering in poverty, the frail and the elderly who have inadequate care and feel they are burdens. We must find ways to support family caregivers. We must also share our bountiful resources with the migrants and refugees who flee violence and poverty, especially the victims of human trafficking.

As Ladies of Charity of the USA, we willingly respond to Pope Francis' challenge, "Among our tasks as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor." (2013) May his moral leadership animate all and especially our government leaders, to govern our nation so human dignity can flourish and peace will be the legacy of justice.

Sincerely,

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