



ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM

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SR. SIMONE CAMPBELL

***LAUDATO SI:
A CALL TO CONVERSION***
**IBEW HALL
DETROIT, MI**

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Introduction

During the last few years a couple of people have received notoriety for riding on a bus (Laughter). One of them was Pope Francis when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires. He used to ride the public transportation to go to what he called the peripheries to visit the poor and homeless. The other was Sr. Simone Campbell who became famous in the United States for being a nun on the bus, and invited other nuns to travel with her throughout the United States, for being a nun on the bus, and got other nuns to travel with her throughout the United States to raise awareness about the need to develop legislation about justice for the poor. Now we couldn't get Pope Francis here, (Loud Laughter) but we do have Sister Simone; (Applause) and I am very honored to introduce her.

Bishop Tom Gumbleton

She was born in Santa Monica, California; and I think most of you know that tomorrow is her birthday. We



should be congratulating her on that. (Clapping) She joined the Sisters of Social Service, an international community of women religious that is in the Benedictine tradition. In 1964 she entered and then took her final vows in 1973. During that time she received a Bachelor's Degree from Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles. Subsequently she went on to receive the degree of *Juris Doctor* from the University of California at Davis; and while she was there, she was the editor of the law schools *Law Review*. The following year she founded the Community Law Center at Oakland, California; and she spent 18 years as its lead attorney, practicing family law and struggling for the needs of the working poor of her county in probate court. Between 1995 and 2000 Simone was the leader of her community, and oversaw its activities in the United States, Mexico, Taiwan and the Philippines. I'm sure she had to travel a lot then, but I think she has travelled even more now. She's everywhere!

In 2004 she was recruited to lead NETWORK, which, as I am sure you all know, is a lobbying organization sponsored by religious congregations of women here in the United States; and Sr. Simone has given extraordinary vitality to that NETWORK. In March 2010, when the United States Congress debated reform to health care, and passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, she began to lead NETWORK in its efforts to promote health care reform; and she asked the leaders of Women's Religious Orders to sign the letter that would be distributed to every person in Congress to pass that legislation. Sixty heads of religious orders, an umbrella group, and other groups signed the letter that was sent to all the Congress. Now on the other hand, the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops opposed that legislation; so that put Sr. Simone in a little bit of difficulty, but nothing that she couldn't handle. (Laughter) And, in spite of the USCCB, that legislation passed, as you know, and we finally were able to implement it effectively over the past couple of years. In fact, Sr. Simone was invited to attend the signing of the legislation when President Obama signed it; and she received a welcome from the President. (Applause)

It was after that that Sr. Simone began her *Nuns on the Bus* tours, which have been going on since 2012; and, as you know, in an effort to travel across the country to spread the word about what legislation in Congress really affects the poor and needs to be passed. And the first year especially she confronted the Ryan budget that was passed by the House and was before the Senate; and it was a budget that took funds away from the poor that was unjust, this legislation. And she has continued to promote the *Nuns on*

the Bus every year since. Now, very recently, she agreed to write a memoir; and it's called *A Nun on the Bus*. I urge you to read it. It's very, very good; but it's also very challenging. She says about it, "I hope people see the book as a call to action, and know that we are in this together. Politics has become too much of a spectator sport. If we're going to have democracy, we have an obligation to participate; and we have an obligation to make room at the table; for all called to integrate our faith and values into action." (Applause) That is the challenge that she brings to us today; and I am very happy to bring you Sr. Simone Campbell. (Applause)

A Call to Conversion^{1/}

Thank you. That is really dear. My biography, as I am about to celebrate a birthday, my biography is getting longer and longer; (Laughter) but, as you probably know, I joke about bus things. But, when I look at my life, I think, "Oh yes, lead a quiet life in the convent." (Laughter) But I have to say, Tom, that the reason that the bus got started was because of the consequence of our Affordable Care Act; and as one of the signers told me, I shouldn't worry about it, because what had happened was: the boys played the girls; and, for once, the girls had won. The boys were still upset. (Loud laughter and applause) So what was happening in 2012, when the censure of the U. S. sisters came out, they gave our little organization, NETWORK, as being a bad influence on the Catholic sisters, because they worked too much for people in poverty, and didn't work enough on abortion and gay marriage. So, since our mission was to work for people in poverty, I felt like it was a seal of approval.

Sr. Simone Campbell



And then, what happened was, my prayer led me to realize we had too small of an imagination at NETWORK. We had been doing this work for 40 years; and we had too small of an imagination for how we could respond to this huge media interest. We were getting calls from the Italian press, the Filipino press; the Spanish newspaper sent a reporter down from New York. I mean, it was ridiculous. So I wondered how we can use this moment for mission. And what happened was, that, what came to me, we asked our secular colleagues for help. And on May 14, 2012 we had 35 people gathered proudly into our little conference room; and it was like Pentecost, because no one knows who first said, "road trip." At the end of the meeting we were going on the road; we were pushing back against the Ryan budget; and we were lifting up the works of Catholic sisters. And they told me we had to go on a *rap* bus; and I had no idea what a *rap* bus was. And so, I was terrified that a *rap* bus had something to do with RAP music. (Laughter) As it turned out, that it was wrap; and that the wallpaper we have on the bus was a glorious design of the billboard. I was so relieved. (Laughter) But, for me, it demonstrates the work of the Spirit, because the whole thing has been about the Holy Spirit being alive, and well, and making mischief, as I got to tell Rachel Maddow. And the fact is, we wondered at the office, should we send the Vatican a thank you note? (Laughter) But, it is the profound spiritual truth that, even in the pain of our times, that all things work to the good. Now sometimes I think it takes geologic time to see that evolution, but the neatly contemplative truth is, that we are all connected; and it all works to the good.

Now Pope Francis, and his encyclical *Laudato Si*, does an amazing job of laying out that deep contemplative reality in a way that is quite accessible. Now, I'm sure that some of you in this crowd have read other Vatican documents, which are usually a cure for insomnia (Laughter). How many of you have read *Laudato Si*? Fabulous! It was so exciting to me that I stayed up really late reading it. We had a rapid response idea at NETWORK, divvying up the chapters. We were all going to read a different chapter - five of us worked on it - I had Chapter One; and then everybody was going to read the last chapter. That's the theory. We all got so captivated, we all read the whole thing; and by the time we met in the afternoon the day after it was released, we were weary eyed but rejoicing in what was said. Before the document was released, I was talking to the press and one international reporter, I forget where he was from - was it Europe? And he said, "Well sister, but do you believe that the Pope will address the fact that being homocentric is not a good idea for our planet? Will he see that human beings are only a part of creation? Will he get that, do you think?" I said, "Well, you know, my beloved Church is a little slow." He said, "Well, my church is not."

Do you know what? Pope Francis gets it that we are all creation together; that the reading that we had, about this is yours to dominate, doesn't mean that we get to exploit according to *Laudato Si*. We cannot suck the life out of our planet, and think that we are doing only what Genesis told us to do. Pope Francis makes it abundantly clear that we are creatures with the rest of creation; and we hold a responsibility, not just to me, mine, but to future generations, and to all of creation. This is quite a radical thought for most

Roman documents; and I wondered if we are going to have to read Genesis in new ways, when we hear that God saw that it was good. Because, I think, what Pope Francis raises up is the question: "Would God see it as good, what we are up to these days?" and, as he says, "Our common home is becoming to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." That doesn't exactly sound like Genesis, does it? And maybe the meaning of Genesis is: can we care for the earth in a way where God can say it is good; we can say it's good.?

I want to spend some time talking about why Pope Francis did this. And in §19 - I just love it - in the last sentence, he says, "Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering, and thus to discover what each of us can do about it." That means, we have to have the courage to let our hearts be broken open by what is going on. And I don't know about you, but some days I'm just not up for it. Hear what I said? So I would rather just avert my eyes. Oh, I know I should recycle; but the recycle bin is way over there, and I'm not going to look. One in the trash can doesn't matter, does it? You ever been there? Oh, yeah, yeah, food, saving food: "I have got food in my refrigerator that I should eat" - this one gets me all the time - "Oh, I should hustle; I should cook it up and freeze it;" "Oh, I'm too tired;" and the next time I come back, it's not edible.

Being conscious, letting what's happening to our world break our hearts open, is hugely challenging. And what I have come to think of is that, this challenge of breaking our hearts open, is really a part of the reason why Pope Francis lifted up Thomas Merton when he spoke to Congress. In lifting up Thomas Merton, when he spoke to Congress, he spoke of Thomas Merton's deep contemplative connection with all of Creation; we can't be separated from anything. And that Thomas Merton entered into dialogue with those that saw things differently. It is that challenge, that opportunity, that call, to be significantly engaged, and let our hearts be broken open. That is a serious, serious challenge. So, what we have is the challenge to be like Merton, and explore the edges of our spirituality, to journey into that surprising place where God is, and we are out of control. The biggest challenge is that the spiritual journey means: it's not about us; but, rather, it is the about the discovery of God live among us. Now, when we look at God alive, we get a little horrified.

On our most recent bus trip worried me. We started in St. Field superfund cleanup site. clean-up has been a toxic War II. Now, since I am about that is longer than I have been toxic site for a while; and for have been arguing over who's what it is, is: it is the leftovers atomic bomb. So they have covered over there; but what years is that that radioactivity ground; and a low income around it. Now they are still suppose to clean it up; and we it has now caught fire; and it is Missouri River. Now, I don't I am not a scientist, I just they are still arguing over The children in the area: I've got these two moms, who have these two children who have been diagnosed with brain cancer; and there is a 300% increase in childhood cancers in these areas. Now you would think that one would begin to get concerned, don't you think? But what's happened is: the apprehension about the cost of the cleanup is controlling the fact that no one is doing it. The cost is more important that the value of these kid's lives.



we saw a few things that Louis, and heard of the West The West Field superfund site dump for ever since World to celebrate a birthday, and alive, you know it's been a about the last 30 years, they supposed to clean it up. And of where they made the just a little bit of radioactivity has happened over these 70+ has emitted it's toxicity in the neighborhood has grown up having arguments over who is understand that in the ground, working its way towards the understand how all this works- receive the information - but who's going to clean it up.

This is what Pope Francis is talking about. When our earth, and the exploitation of our earth, and the exploitation by the economy, both sap the life out of our world, out of our nation, and out of our people: and so, what the West Field superfund site is all about is: that the economy doesn't want to deal with the consequences of control. Now, I don't want to say much, but there are some consequences we have to deal with. We have to accept responsibility for actions; but then we have a responsibility to the future to clean this up. Now the challenge is that Pope Francis says that, when we are going to engage these issues by reducing green house gases, cleaning up toxic waste, it requires honesty, courage and the

responsibility, above all on the part of those countries that are more powerful and pollute the most. Honesty? Hmmm! Courage? "Oh no! Not us!" Responsibility? Those are the hallmarks of a Christian engaged in the spiritual journey, isn't it? Honesty, where we know our limitedness as human beings, where we are willing to accept, yeah! there are problems. Courage, where we are willing to say the truth out loud. And then, to accept the responsibility to make a difference. The West Field superfund is exhibit A of how we as a nation are failing our people and our faith. We the people need to make sure in the coming election cycle that honesty, courage, responsibility, become the hallmark of our democracy. It seems to me it is sort of the antithesis. We've got spin, convenience, and, "Well, it's their fault." It's kind of how politics is done, right? But it is because we let them get away with it. Pope Francis is challenging us to change that language.

Now, I talk about the toxicity of this environmental disaster; but, you know, there is another toxicity that Pope Francis speaks of here, and that is how the economy exploits our people. On the bus, we were in Fayetteville, Arkansas, the home of Wal-Mart, the company - I used to say hate; but now I have learned not to hate; I dislike with a fair intensity; how's that? And what we learned is that Wal-Mart is considering - they announced that they were, but that haven't done it yet - raising the wages for their associates. But what we heard was, while they are raising wages, they are cutting hours. Then we heard from the local food pantry in Fayetteville that Wal-Mart contributes five million dollars every year, so the food pantries and various places where Wal-Mart services, can have staff, come to Wal-Mart to sign up the associates for food stamps. It's cheaper for Wal-Mart to pay food pantries five million dollars than to pay their associates more so they don't need food stamps. What's wrong with this picture?

What I realized over time - and I may have talked about this before - but what we know is that our wages are not sufficient for about 40% of the population to support their families. The current estimate is, 60% of our working families that have adults between the ages of 25 and 62, have no savings. For many, such as the 45 to 65 crowd, they're the sandwich generation. They are the ones who are caring for kids and caring for parents; and for some of us, we are the parents they are caring for. Or, we ourselves have the experience of caring for kids and caring for parents. Well, what's happening is, that the low wages, the stagnant wages, and the extended needs of families, are taking all the savings. Now what's going to happen to the next generation, or to later baby boomers, as they retire, is that there are not that many options; and Pope Francis says that this is an economy of exploitation. The economy is more important than our people. And that needs to change. He says that the economy should support its workers so that workers can have leisure enough to enjoy their family, and to be able to recognize the Divine in nature around them.

Two stories from the bus...



One was: we were in Memphis, Tennessee on the bus this fall; and we were doing: "What is the divine; and how do we move forward?" and having dialogue; and a seven year old had come along with her dad. And so the seven year old in the back of the bus raises her hand; and so I gave her the microphone, because I was curious what's the divine the seven year old sees? And she said that parents have to work too long hours; so they don't get to spend time with their kids. That's what will happen, you know. "Cause my mom had to work tonight, she doesn't get to spend with me." How often is that true for our families? Pope Francis says that that is being exploited by the economy; that the economy is not serving our people. Add that as a campaign issue would be really interesting, wouldn't it? "Mr. Trump. "How are you going to raise wages? When are you going to raise wages?" I can hardly wait. (Laughter)

Then the second example was in Kansas City. We were at St. Anthony of Padua; and a school mom was telling us that her husband had died unexpectedly; her kids were adults; and she had been a stay at home mom; but she had gotten an In Home Care Certificate. So she started working for a home health agency. She worked for two home health agencies 20 hours a week in each; so she didn't have any benefits. So then, she worked three 12 hour shifts on the weekend in order to try to make ends meet. She had done that for almost three years - two and three quarter years - when she got sick about a year ago - it was in November of last year - and she was in the hospital a few days. It was the first time off she had had in over two years. These stories get repeated over, and over, and over.

Now, here is the challenge Pope Francis puts to us is that, this is about an economy, where we are all complicit. He says, "We are created with a vocation to work. Work is a necessity, part of our meaning on this earth, a path to growth, human development, and personal fulfillment." But then, he says, "The loss of

jobs also has a negative impact on the economy through the progressive regression of social capital.” That’s our relationship with each other: the network of relationships of trust, dependability and respect for rules, but all of which are indispensable for any form of civil coexistence. Isn’t that the erosion of our economy? the fact that work doesn’t pay, eroding our trust in each other? eroding our sense of community? eroding our idea that we can count on each other to make a difference? Then, he says, “To stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short term financial gain, that it’s bad business for society.” Don’t you love it? Bad business! Okay, I ask you, isn’t that a campaign slogan? We should cut up this encyclical and spread it around for all our town halls that are coming up, and just say, “Well do you agree with Pope Francis and his bad business for society that exploit our people?” What a challenge. So, what we have here is a critique of the exploitation of our earth; we have a critique of the exploitation by the economy; and what Pope Francis sees is they both go together. Okay, so then, what? Pretty depressing! All right! Buckle down. Be depressed. Pull up the drawbridge. Take a rest. Hide out.

But what Pope Francis says is that we can’t do that. He says that what we need is a politics that controls the economy and ends the exploitation of our earth. Pope Francis says, “Politics has a serious responsibility to make change.” And when Pope Francis spoke to Congress - I got to be in the Congressional session. It was amazing! But what you had to see was: here’s the scene: it’s all lined in walnut; so it’s all dark wood, and above where the Vice President and Speaker Boehner were sitting it says, “In God We Trust;” and then it’s dark wood. And then comes Pope Francis in his white outfit - stark white outfit - and he has the audacity to tell Congress he believes they can get the job done. Now, no one has told Congress they believe they are capable of doing much of anything in a long period of time. (Much laughter)

And so what happened in Congress - I was sitting in the first row in the gallery, and I was sitting next to Cindy McCain, who told me that her husband, Senator McCain, is so distraught about what is happening in the Republican party, that he can hardly stand it - and I thought, “Oh dear, if he’s worried, then I am really in trouble.” But what happened was: we were sitting more on the Republican side, which were all dark suits. It’s the Republican side. And then on the Dems’ side, a whole bunch of women that had on very colorful outfits. But here’s what happened. Pope Francis would say something about economic justice; and the Democrats would jump up, and applaud, and agreed they’d all get up together. And then the Republicans would slowly get up (gesturing polite applause). So that went on a couple of times. And then Pope Francis says those key words: “The dignity of all life,” and the Republicans get up and cheered; and the Democrats limply give grudging approval. And then, pope Francis says, “That’s why I made it the purpose of my papacy: the global eradication of the death penalty.” But if you could just hear both sides of the chamber: “Ugh!” (Much loud laughter)

But, if you go back and look at everything that Pope Francis did is, he transformed the code words from being those short ended divisive words, to being about the deeper spiritual truth that we’re in it together. It was an amazing job. So, I was terrified that he was going to give the talk on religious liberty. But, you know, when he spoke about the needs of family, and how religion can’t be used as a club, and cannot be used to intimidate others, maybe we should learn something. And then, when he spoke of family, he didn’t speak about how families are born; he spoke on the sanctity of that relationship, and the needs of children. So, he broke open all of these code words.

Well, that is what he is saying in his encyclical, is that we have got to break open our easy acceptance of an economy that’s divisive, of an economy that’s oppressive, about an economy that controls our people. And, once again, we have to say, “We have to create a politics of inclusion in order to get an economy and an environment that is respected by all.” In § 57 it says, “What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action, when it was urgent and necessary to do so?” I believe, that’s why John Boehner resigned, because John Boehner was crippled by his lack of courage, his lack of honesty about what’s going on, and, in the end, had a sense of responsibility that he felt the only way forward was to have someone else in leadership. And, I think, John Boehner had to say, “I’m not holding on at this stage only to be known for not accomplishing anything; and maybe in this month of October we can get something done.” But I don’t think so. (Laughter)

So what do we need? How do we create this politics? Well, Pope Francis says, § 197, is: “What we need is a politics, which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral, and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of crisis. Often, politics itself is responsible for the disrepute in which it is held on account of corruption and failure to enact sound policy.” And then he goes on and says that, “A strategy for real change calls for rethinking processes in their entirety; for it is not enough to include a few superficial ecological considerations, while failing to question the logic which underlies present-day culture. A healthy politics needs to be able to take up the challenge of exploitation and consumerism.” “Yes, Mr. Cruz, how would you take up the challenge of exploitation and consumerism?” “Dr. Carson, tell

us what is your approach?" Secretary Clinton, could you give us a sound bite?" See how tough that is? The challenge is that we have got to really change how we have been doing our business. And it's a huge challenge before us.

Four Actions Recommended by Pope Francis

So what do we do? Well, Pope Francis has these four ideas of what we should do, and thanks God he has some idea of what we should do about this other than relent. But they are tough things to do. He's got four actions; and then I am going to talk about my four virtues for the 21st century, which is sort of like his, but not quite. But since Bishop Gumbleton put me together with pope Francis, both riding buses, maybe we handle both.

1. But the first thing he says is, that in order to do this, we have got to build peace among ourselves in order to address these problems. Part of the challenge is that we are all silent. We all have our separate places in getting news; and we don't talk to each other. On the bus we do these bus questions; and one of the questions is, "Who in your family is difficult to talk to about politics, and why?" Everybody has got somebody in their family; and so I developed this idea, because I have this brother, Jim. And so, he's a firefighter; so he wears one of those shirts that has a dress pocket on it. So I thought we should make a library of difficult relatives where, come holidays, you could check out my brother, Jim, and I'll check out your difficult family member. (Laughter) We will all get along a lot better, right? But what Pope Francis says is, that we've got to find a way to dialogue with those who think differently. That means: I have to have an authentic interest in what they think. And on the good days, I can be interested; and then on the bad days, I know I am right. (Lots of laughter) The challenge Pope Francis puts up for us is that we cannot protect our turf if we really want to create this new way forward. The measure cannot be my opinion only; but rather, the dialogue we find in the new way forward.
2. The second thing he says, which is consoling, is that everyone hungers for unity. And I have an example from my childhood - it's a story from my family, - is that of my Great Aunt Lilly and Great Aunt Lou were having a fight for a long time. So, when I was a little kid, my family would go to Denver to visit. You had to go spend time at Aunt Lilly's house; and then you had to spend time at Aunt Lou's house. And Aunt Lou's house was way more fun because she had a grassy hill in the back, where we could roll down as a kid. And Aunt Lilly lived in an apartment; and you couldn't jump around, 'cause she was on the second floor, and it would upset people. So I was all for just going to Aunt Lou's, and not having to go to Aunt Lilly's. So, as a kid - I don't have my own memory of it, but it's a family story - and I finally said to Aunt Lilly, "Aunt Lilly, why aren't you talking to Aunt Lou?" And Aunt Lilly kind of said, "Well it's because ... I'm not sure". (Much laughter) And, as it turned out, it had been going on for so long, they both had forgotten why they were mad at each other. And the story goes that because I asked the question, they were somewhat flustered; we only had to go to Aunt Lou's house. But that hunger for unity, for coming together, was my childhood desire not having to visit my great aunt's house, or spending time where I couldn't play; but what I think it is also is that we hunger for unity. Now I thought that was a really nice thing. Yes, I hunger for unity; but then I realized that the corollary of that is that you have to give up your desire to win. Ew! If we are going to hunger for unity and build peace then, I have to make sure that it's not just on my terms, but rather that there is room for everyone.
3. The third thing that Pope Francis says is, if we want to build peace, is that realities are more important than theories. And I experience this the times I have negotiated with Paul Ryan, my favorite Congressman to interact with. Paul Ryan has a theory for everything. Now, have you ever noticed - since some of you are academics - you can argue theories forever; and you are never going to convince anyone? But if I tell you the reality, the story of someone I've met, and say, "How does that fit your theory?" "What about reality?" "Well, that doesn't fit." "Well then, let's change the theory." "Oh, no! The theory's still good; that was an exception." "Could you tell me one more?" "Like, if we give tax breaks to the wealthy, then we are going to get more high paying jobs." "Excuse me! We've been doing that for 30 years. Do you know that Robin is working full time for minimum wage? Been there working for a year at her minimum wage job' and she told me that she lives in the DC area; and she can't afford rent in the area; so she has to live in a homeless shelter, even though she is working full time. How does that fit with your theory?" Her story is more powerful than the theory. So what we need are more stories of real people.
4. And finally, Pope Francis says, "The whole is greater than the parts." Oh, we knew that; but what he says is, "If you're missing one of the parts, you can't create peace." Now this is a fairly radical

statement for someone who is the head of the Roman Catholic Church; (Laughter) and he wrote it, that the usual recent historic response to someone who disagrees is to say, "My turf is right. I will win. My theory of what is the spiritual journey is more important than the reality; and I will vote you off the island." Do you notice? It is the antithesis of what Pope Francis is saying. What Pope Francis is saying is a radical new direction for the 20th century Church, and the 21st century. And so, I think much of the push back that is happening is because our leaders, got to be middle management, adopted middle management - some exceptions apply - but got to be middle management by being certain, protecting their turf, knowing that they could win, having a theory, and saying that it was only the table that agreed with them that mattered. So they are losing their whole world view if they take this in. This is not something small. This is saying, "Oh my God, have I been wrong." To have the courage to face that, to have the honesty to face it, and then take responsibility for doing something different. When you've worked all your life to get to the top, only to have it revealed, that it's not the top you're supposed to be at. That's hugely challenging.

On the bus, one of our sisters, Sister Ilene Riley, this little sister of Notre Dame, was in Rome this summer. She is our social justice coordinator at the U.N. So, she was there at an international meeting; and they had some poobah reception, where a couple of the security people for the Pope; and Ilene said she was talking to one of the security guys; and he was saying the Pope is impossible to guard, just impossible to guard! And described - I think it was like July; they were out in a square, someplace in Rome; and it was the afternoon; it was hot - and somebody thrust into Pope Francis' hand a glass of some cooling liquid. And Pope Francis goes to drink it. Well, the security guy she was talking to said he was wrestling with the Pope, trying to take it away from him. (Laughter) And it was recorded that Pope Francis looked at him with a twinkle in his eye, and said, "It's not from the cardinals." (Much loud laughter)

Four Virtues from Sr. Simone Campbell

So what do we do? How do we act in this time? How do we ordinary people cure the earth, and care for each other, and try to change the economy, create politics of inclusion, and not exclusion, so we can have an economy of inclusion, and have an environment that is cared for? Well, I have four virtues that I would like to recommend to you for the 21st century; four virtues that will maybe have been overlooked in this time. And these four virtues, I think, are really in what Pope Francis calls, "Love overflowing with small gestures of mutual care that is also civic and political; and makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity, which not only affects relationships between individuals, but also macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones. It's that love and respect that creates what he calls the civilization of love. So I'm all for a civilization of love in these challenging times. And so I have these four simple virtues. You ready? It's catechism time. And I think it's appropriate, being a Sister, speaking of virtues. (Laughter)

1. The first one is joy. We need to have the virtue of joy, especially those of us with graying hair, because we have the tendency to get to the "hell in a hand basket" theory. (Laughter) I really thought, if I gave my life to this work, our world would be in a much better place than it currently is. Right? What happened? What did I do? And what I have always marveled at is those of us that share a more progressive view, we get so grim, miserable; and then we invite people to join us. (Loud laughter) One of the reasons I think the bus has caught on so is because it is joy. It is joy in the face of criticism and foolishness. I mean, it is the most ridiculous title ever: *Nuns on the Bus*. It wasn't supposed to be the formal title. I chose a serious title; it was: *Nuns Drive for Faith, Family and Fairness*. (Loud laughter) But our designer creatively joked around calling it *Nuns on the Bus*. But our designer thought it was a tag line; so she has this beautiful sign, *Nuns on the Bus*. And when I saw it, I thought, "Oh, you're right! Who could be serious in the face of this?" So having a mind of joy, and letting the spirit be alive in us, which causes us then to think periodically: "What's giving me joy? Where do I find joy? When did I last laugh?" Those are important questions if we are going to do this hard work of peace building. Because what joy does is open up our hearts. When our hearts have been broken open, joy lifts it up, and makes room for more folks. It means we're in control, and that we're part of a whole. And have you noticed with joy, you usually don't go off and giggle by yourself. It's a community virtue. We've got to do this together. So the first I recommend is joy.
2. The second I recommend is holy curiosity; holy curiosity, where I want to know about other people. I'm willing to ask other people, "How do you see it?" Holy curiosity also requires that you stay quiet enough to listen to the answer. You can't just go asking the question so that you can give your speech. So, what I do is, recommend is, grocery store missionary work. I don't stand in line very often; but I do at the grocery store. So you say to the person in front of you or behind you,

"Gee, you know, I'm really worried about racism in our country; it really has to be terrifying. Have you thought about that? What do you think?" And what I've found is that people have thought about it. People have ideas but nobody ever asks. Or, "I'm really worried about minimum wage. Folks are working for minimum wage and they can't support their families. Are you worried about that?" It turns out people are. And sometimes you hear things you may not want to hear. Like being in a restaurant and asking the wait staff, "Are you getting paid enough to support your family?" We did that by bus; and what turned out was this one wait staff; she was terrified she wasn't going to make enough tips to be able to buy milk on her way home for her kids to have breakfast. She made \$2.13 an hour; that's the minimum wage for tip workers. That's wrong! Well, here's the challenge: we have to ask the questions. We have holy curiosity. You find out stuff you might not want to know.

3. So then that leads to the third virtue: sacred gossip. Once you found out something with your holy curiosity, you have a responsibility to share it; because, what we are missing is the community that knows what's going on around us. On the bus, this time, we were in Little Rock, Arkansas; and we got talking about the divides, and how people don't know folks in their neighborhoods; and they started saying: well, they thought that the divides started when everybody got a private back yard. And then somebody else added, "It was also the creation of the garage that you pull into with a clicker that goes directly into the house, so you never see anybody." So, in Little Rock, they decided they are going to try, some of them in the neighborhood were going to try, a front porch ministry, because their holy curiosity took them to find out who else was in the neighborhood; and could they ever talk to anybody? I mean, isn't that interesting? How separate we have become.
4. So, we have joy, holy curiosity and sacred gossip. And then finally, the final virtue is: the virtue of doing one thing. Do your part. Now your part is not feeling like you have to answer every email, you have to call every congress for everything. I'd like to think you did; but you don't have to. You don't have to be a member of every organization, though obviously being a member of the Elephants is a good thing, but figure out what are you called to act on. Because, what we have lost sight of is, if we're community and everyone does their part, it all gets done. And where you are, I am; and where I am, you are. Within the Christian tradition, we have St. Paul telling us we're one body, right? And some people are ears, and some are eyes, and hands, and feet. We're not all the same; but we all have a part to play. That's how we make change happen.

So my meditation is - I meditated on what part of the body of Christ am I - well, I came to this insight that I think my current role is: being stomach acid, (Much laughter) stomach acid, because I in a large quantity am probably toxic. But my board is just doing my biannual review, I think I am a little toxic sometimes. But the fact is what do I do, I go around being toxic; I serve energy; I use stories to metabolize free energy. I get people talking to each other and look books up. That's my job. But I can't do the direct service that I did when I practiced law. I can't do St. Vincent DePaul, that I get involved in a wide variety of other ways. I can't even call your legislators and pretend that I am a constituent. But you all can! And the peace that is required is that we come to that quiet space within to know where we are, each called to action, and share the results with friends; not in a way that says, "You've got to do my thing." No! No! No! Sacred gossip means you share what you are experiencing. But everybody does their part. Does that make sense? And if we all do it, then we can realize the challenge that Pope Francis has put before us: that we can act with honesty, courage and responsibility for our part; and that will heal the economy; that will change us from exploitation. It will end our consumerism, because we will have a bigger, wider view.

And with a bigger, wider view, then we can build peace with each other, because we will need each other to do that. Until we need the most annoying people - right now on my list is Donald Trump - I actually hate him - (Much loud laughter) that's our challenge! But we take it small steps at a time. And the good news, as we continue to live and breathe, is that we have continuing opportunities for conversion. So he's my down the road opportunity for conversion; and in the meantime, we'll keep working at it together. We are called to live the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, that's what it is about; and together, in a love that respects all of us, we can build this peace, and know that each one of our stories is critical for building up this one body.

Conclusion

I want to end with one of my poems. It's called *The Incarnation*. Some of you have heard it. It is just so dense. This is the story of the us. And it goes like this.

INCARNATION

*Let gratitude be the beat of our heart,
pounding Baghdad rhythms, circulating
memories, meaning of the journey.
Let resolve flow in our veins,
fueled by Basra's destitution, risking
reflective action in a fifteen-second world.
Let compassion be our hands,
reaching to be with each other, all others
to touch, hold heal this fractured world.
Let wisdom be our feet,
bringing us to the crying need
to friends or foe to share this body's blood.
Let love be our eyes,
that we might see the beauty, see the dream
lurking in the shadows of despair and dread.
Let community be our body warmth,
radiating Arab energy to welcome in the foreign
stranger—even the ones who wage this war.
Let us remember on drear distant days,
we are a promised Christmas joy
we live as one this tragic gifted life—
We are the Body of God!*

Thank you so much. (Applause)

Transcribed by
Bev Parker
20151109

- 1/ Laudato Si, §217: "The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast. For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an "ecological conversion", whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience"