



## The Risks in Taking A Stance!

By S. MaryAnnette Gailey, CSFN

If not us, then who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?"

A question was raised among some of the sisters that taking a community stance has various sides and could be risky. I would like to respond to this question: I absolutely agree. Taking a stance together may reveal many sides or factors of a particular issue - and it does involve risk.

Let me share some passages that came to mind as I reflected on these risks:

"Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." (*GK Chesterton, Brainy Quotes, www.brainyquote.com*)

"Now someone approached him and said, 'Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?' He answered him, 'Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He asked him, 'Which ones?' And Jesus replied, 'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother'; and 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The young man said to him, 'All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions." (*Matthew 19:16-22*)

"I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." (*Rev 3:15-16*)

As Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth,  
we stand opposed to the abuse of children  
and vulnerable adults."

(General Chapter, 2010 Decree 5)



"First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a communist;  
Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a socialist;  
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a trade unionist;  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a Jew;  
Then they came for me—  
and there was no one left to speak out for me."

*( Martin Niemöller, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia,  
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007392> )*

"We are stronger together than we are alone." *(Walter Payton, Good Reads,  
<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/17482-we-are-stronger-together-than-we-are-alone> )*

We live in a litigious society, so it is an act of prudence for the Leadership Team to seek legal council with regard to risks involved in taking a stance (as noted in the policy). Yet when it comes to living our faith in action and following Christ whole-heartedly, we will be led to the Cross. "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt 16:24). In some instances, taking a particular stance together may call us to actions that embody the spirit of Veronica, who risked tending our Lord on the road to Calvary. On other issues, we may find ourselves compelled to actions that embody the spirit of Simon who was forced to help carry our Lord's cross ... and was brought to conversion in the process. We do not have to look far back in history to find examples of faith in action, some even heroically (Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, Immaculee Ilibagiza, Mariam Yehya Ibrahim).

Allowing our faith to penetrate our thoughts, decisions, words, and attitudes will necessarily lead to actions of witness ...'taking up the cross.' If we do not take up the cross, we risk not only our moral integrity; we risk missing an opportunity to participate in the climax of the paschal mystery: the Resurrection.

