

Contact: Joanne Gallagher, CSJ  
[Joanne.gallagher@csjboston.org](mailto:Joanne.gallagher@csjboston.org)  
617.746.2110

## **Sisters of St. Joseph Hold Impromptu Prayer Vigil Outside the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando**

In an impromptu call for healing and peace, a group of Sisters of St. Joseph and supporters gathered outside the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL, on Monday afternoon to hold a prayer vigil in the wake of the recent violence and mass shooting that took place at the site.

Members of the group are among the more than 700 Sisters of St. Joseph and affiliates who are in Orlando for the U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph Event 2016. Members gather every five years to engage in prayer, conversation, and reflection on how they can make a difference in the world as a unified voice and by their actions and prayers.

The prayer vigil was not planned as part of the conference schedule, but some attendees felt “moved by the Spirit” to offer first hand spiritual support and presence to the Orlando community, according to Sr. Judy Molosky, CSJ, Los Angeles Carondelets.

“We don’t believe that it is a coincidence that our gathering is taking place in Orlando,” said Jane Stoecker, SSJ, St. Augustine, FL.

“As Sisters of St. Joseph and ministry partners, we believe that our mission of unity and reconciliation is an important and necessary part of the healing process. Many of our attendees had a desire to go to the Pulse Nightclub to pray and reclaim the site to non-violence,” said Patty Johnson, CSJ, Executive Director of the Federation.

The Federation event opened Saturday on a somber note as the group prayed for the Orlando community, especially those directly affected by the violent acts at the Pulse nightclub. In addition, the Federation issued a statement in response to the Orlando shooting:

### **U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph Statement on the Mass Shooting in Orlando, FL**

*We, the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, with a mission of unity and committed to protecting the rights and dignity of all people, decry the horrific mass shooting of innocent victims at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando. We believe that all people are made in God’s image and likeness and are deserving of unconditional love and respect.*

*We are astounded by this tragic loss of human life. Believing that each person is loved by God, we stand in solidarity with our LGBTQ sisters and brothers. We extend prayers and heartfelt sorrow to the families and friends of those who were killed in Orlando as well as first responders, medical personnel, the people of Orlando, and our Muslim sisters and brothers. We are one. All are our “dear neighbors”. All worship the same God and believe in a loving and peaceful world.*

*Our nation has witnessed too many lives lost due to the availability of assault weapons. We raise our voices to the U.S. Congress echoing the words of Pope Francis and ask: “Why are deadly*

*weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society? Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade.”*

*Together, with all people of goodwill, let us work together to eliminate gun violence and eradicate every form of discrimination, so that the peace for which Jesus lived and died may be realized on this earth.*

The U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph was formed in 1966 to deepen relationships among member congregations within the United States, and to unify efforts to address spiritual, social and environmental issues, both locally and globally. The U.S. Federation is composed of more than 4,400 Sisters, 2,900 Associates and 26 Agrégées of 16 Congregations throughout the United States. The Congregations of St Joseph worldwide enjoy general consultative status at the United Nations through their Non-Governmental Organization [NGO].

During the gathering in Orlando, participants will also focus on awareness of and advocacy for labor trafficking and the exploitation of farmworkers. This initiative will include a call to action urging the Wendy’s restaurant chain to join the Fair Food Program launched by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers [CIW] in 2011. They will urge Wendy’s to stop contributing to slavery and protect the fundamental rights of the people who work so hard to put food on our tables. Catholic teaching states, “When workers come from another country or district and contribute to the economic advancement of a nation or region by their labor, all discrimination as regards wages and working conditions must be carefully avoided.”

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