El Paso, Texas: A Composition of Place
Introduction

What does it mean to be “Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice”? In urging all Jesuits to a renewed emphasis on the mission of reconciliation and justice, the 36th General Congregation reminds us that “reconciliation is always a work of justice, a justice discerned and enacted in local communities and contexts” (GC 36, d. 1, no. 21).

This document intends to invite Jesuit communities and works to engage in that discernment and enactment, sensitive to the ways in which God labors in their local context. By bringing to light the call for reconciliation in all its forms, “reconciliation with God, with one another, and with creation” (GC 36, d. 1, no. 21), we hope to help bring about the “profound spiritual renewal” of the Society to which God invites us in this and in all times (GC 36, d. 1, no. 18).

The study comprises two parts. Part I takes a deep look at the social and economic dimensions of El Paso, a look that “allows us to understand reality more deeply and thus to serve more effectively” the people of the city (GC 36, d. 1, no. 33, quoting Adolfo Nicolás, SJ). The data below are meant to train our eyes of faith on the daily “suffering, vulnerable faces of people, indeed in the suffering of creation” in El Paso (GC 36, d. 1, no. 20).

Part II presents questions that are meant to inspire reflection on how we can know and follow God’s will for us in light of the social and economic challenges of El Paso set forth in Part I. By holding up the reality of the city to the call of the Gospel to attend to the cry of the poor and the earth, these questions are meant to promote “apostolic audacity” and a “generous personal response” as a life and mission (GC 36, d. 1, no. 19).
PART 1: Local Context

Population

The City of El Paso is the sixth largest city in Texas with a population of a little over 678,000. It is part of El Paso County, which has a population of more than 833,000. Latinos/Hispanics make up more than 80% of the city’s and county’s populations.

Figure 1: El Paso Population: 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Change From 2005</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
<th>Youth Share(^1)</th>
<th>Female Share</th>
<th>Foreign-born Share</th>
<th>Limited English Proficiency Share(^2)</th>
<th>Married Share(^4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Paso:</td>
<td>+14.6%</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>31.1%(^3)</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas:</td>
<td>+18.3%</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2016 5-year Averages, U.S. Census Bureau’s Statistical Atlas, and LEP.gov.
Notes: 1 – Figure represents the proportion of the population that is under 18. 2 – Figure is for households reporting limited English proficiency, 2014. 3 – Figure is for El Paso County. 4 – Figure includes persons 15 years and older.

Figure 2: Population by Race/Ethnicity

El Paso | Texas | United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>El Paso</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic(^1)</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2016 5-year Averages and the Census Bureau’s American FactFinder.
Notes: 1 – Latino/Hispanic persons are not included in any other category.
Religion

The number of Catholics in El Paso County decreased by 1.1% from 2000 to 2010. Furthermore, their share of the population of the county dropped from 51.5% to 43.2%. Despite the decline, Catholics are still the largest denomination in El Paso. They number some 346,000. The data further indicates that a major change from 2000 to 2010 was in the number and proportion of Evangelical Protestants. A more than 70% increase in their numbers (to over 87,000) means that in 2010 they made up about 11% of the population of El Paso County (up from 7.5% ten years earlier).

Figure 3: El Paso County Religion: 2000 and 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>“Nones” Share</th>
<th>All Denominations</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Congregations</td>
<td>Adherents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>800,647</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>462,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>679,622</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>431,115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 – Data from the decennial Religion Census is provided by county. 2 – “Nones” refers to those respondents who did not identify with any of the 236 religious groups in the survey. So this number includes non-believers, as well believers who are unaffiliated with any particular faith/denomination (at least among the 236 identified in the survey).

Education

In El Paso, only about 4% of children (5-18) are in private/parochial school (see Figure 4 right). As is typical across the nation, white children are more likely than children of color to be in private schools. In El Paso, about 11% of white children are in private school, but only 3.5% of the very large population of Latino youth are in private school. The number for African-American youth is under 2%. Diving deeper into the data, we find that 22% of all private school students are white, comprising only 8% of all school-age children in the city.

Figure 4: El Paso Private/Parochial School and Public School Enrollment Rate: 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public School</th>
<th>Private School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2016 5-year Averages.
Notes: 1 - The percentages refer to the proportion of all children ages 5-18 in El Paso County.
Most noteworthy concerning educational attainment in El Paso is the gap between whites and Hispanics. One in 4 whites, but 1 in 2 Hispanics have no more than a high school diploma. On the other end of the educational spectrum, 38.5% of whites have a Bachelor’s Degree or higher, whereas only 17.4% of Hispanics have attained that level of education. This is a stark difference due to several factors that include:

- Lack of quality educational opportunities for those with limited financial means or who face discrimination.
- The expense of higher education.
- The significant foreign born population (24.4%), which likely would have had even more limited educational opportunities in their native countries.

Figure 5: Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity, El Paso County

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2016 5-year Averages.
Note: 1 – Survey of adults 25 and older.

Today’s prime educational objective must be to form men-and-women-for-others'...who cannot even conceive of love of God which does not include love for the least of their neighbors. – Pedro Arrupe, S.J.
The median household income for non-Hispanic whites in El Paso County is nearly $56,900. This is significantly more than the median income for Black/African-American households, which stands at just under $46,000. For Hispanics/Latinos—a group that constitutes more than 80% of the population—it is a mere $38,000.

Regardless of race, we know that almost half of all the income earned in El Paso County goes to households in the top 1/5 (quintile) of income earners. The bottom 1/5 saw just 3.4% of the income in El Paso County (similar numbers are found nationally). This income inequality significantly impacts people’s lives and life chances. Figure 6 further summarizes the overall income distribution in El Paso County.

Figure 7 shows the percentage of racial groups in the top 20% and the bottom 20% of income earners. About 30% of all white households have incomes in the top fifth, whereas only about 17% of Hispanic households have incomes at that level. Conversely, only about 10% of white households have incomes in the bottom 20% of income earners, but over 22% of Hispanic households and over 15% of black/African American households have incomes in the bottom 20%.

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2016 5-year averages.
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the annual average national unemployment rate for 2017 was 4.4%. The rate was nearly the same for the state of Texas, 4.3%. El Paso county had an unemployment rate of 4.6%.

A report at governing.com in 2017 places Texas 25th of the 50 states in median hourly wages. Specifically, they looked at state data from May of 2016 and found Texas had a median hourly wage $17.06.\textsuperscript{1} The state’s minimum wage does not help in this regard. It sticks to the federal rate of $7.25 per hour. (A majority of states at this point have enacted a higher minimum wage.) A person who works 40 hours a week for 52 weeks a year at minimum wage will earn an annual income of just $15,080. This is not enough to get a family of 2 above the official poverty threshold in 2018. The last time the federal minimum wage was raised was in 2009.\textsuperscript{1}

Texas is a “right to work” state, which means that workers are allowed to not join a union or pay union dues even if they benefit from a union contract. Such laws undermine unions and union wages, which are generally higher than non-union wages.\textsuperscript{2}

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic Policy Institute, and governing.com. Note 1 - Data on median hourly wages are for May 2016. Note 2 - For people in El Paso who wish to be involved in the fight for economic justice, one place to start would be to check out the El Paso Central Labor Council (https://www.texasaflocio.org/el-paso-central-labor-union/about-us).

The official poverty threshold (a level of income below which you would be identified as “poor”) was set decades ago and has only been adjusted for inflation. The original formula is widely seen as outdated, causing a gross undercounting of the population that is truly living in poverty. For example, a family of 4 in 2016 would have to have an income below $24,300 to be considered officially poor. This is ridiculously low. Yet even by this standard, millions of Americans and over 180,000 people in El Paso County are living in poverty.

People of color are substantially more likely to be poor (see Figure 8). This is true across Texas and the United States. This is rooted in a history of racism/discrimination at the individual and structural levels.

### Figure 8: Poverty Rate\textsuperscript{1} by Race/Ethnicity – El Paso County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Below Poverty—All Ages</th>
<th>Child Poverty (under 18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2016. 5-year Averages. Note: 1 - The numbers are five-year averages and represent the percentage of the respective populations living below the official poverty line established by the U.S. government.
Discrimination based on race/ethnicity has been found to exist both in the past and today in virtually all areas of economic and social life—when applying for a loan, negotiating the criminal justice system, or pursuing an education, for example. Such experiences necessarily lead to more difficult economic circumstances, including a greater likelihood of living in poverty.

Of all age groups, children are the most likely to be living in poverty. Furthermore, child poverty, as Figure 8 shows, is higher in the Hispanic and Black communities than it is in the white community. In fact, 1 out of every 3 Hispanic children in El Paso lives in poverty as defined by the federal government.

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The El Paso Coalition for the Homeless (www.epchomeless.org), based on their most recent point-in-time count, estimates that there are about 1394 homeless individuals in El Paso. (“Homeless” refers to people who are in shelters, transitional housing programs, or found to be unsheltered.)

The problem of homelessness persists in the El Paso area and across the nation and is due largely to the lack of affordable housing. Also, for a number of homeless, their previous homes were seen as unsafe or unwelcoming.

The data in Figure 9 include three measurements that depict special challenges faced by many young people and families in El Paso. Typically, single-parent families must make due with less income and have one parent do the household and childcare work that can be challenging even for two parents. Single-parent families, then, tend to be poorer and more stressed.

Disconnected youth are by definition not in school or employed and ultimately are at greater risk of future economic hardships.

Many El Paso families are considered to be “housing burdened”—meaning that they are paying more than 30% of their income on rent or mortgage. That means less money to spend on all of the other essentials of life.
The Social Welfare System

In El Paso County, fewer than 16% of poor families received cash assistance, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). About 40% of poor families did not even get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly called “food stamps”). The bottom line is that people living in poverty receive little to no public assistance.

If somehow a family was able to access welfare assistance, the maximum TANF benefit in Texas for a family with one parent and two children is just $290 per month or $3,480 per year, only 17% of the poverty line ($20,780 in 2018).

Note: 1- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a program available to low-income disabled and elderly individuals who meet certain specific eligibility requirements.

Health

Texas has the highest uninsured rate in the nation: 17.3% (see Figure 10). This has a great deal to do with the state government’s refusal to expand Medicaid coverage as provided for by the Affordable Care Act. It has been estimated that well over a million Texans would benefit from Medicaid expansion. Analysis also indicates that such an expansion would be a boost to the economy of the state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Paso County</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: 1 – County data on the uninsured rate is for 2016 and supplied by the Small Area Health Insurance Estimates Program of the Census Bureau.

Birth Indicators

Rates of unintended pregnancies, abortions, and teen births have been on the decline for a number of years across the country and are at or near record lows. However, the unintended pregnancy and teen birth rates are much higher in Texas than in the nation as a whole. On the other hand, the abortion rate is much lower.

• About 54% of all pregnancies (to women 15-44 years of age) in Texas are unintended. The national percentage is 45%.1
• The abortion rate in Texas is 9.8 for every 1000 women, ages 15-44. Nationally, the abortion rate is 14.6.2
• The teen birth rate in Texas is about 31 births for every 1000 females, ages 15-19. The national rate is 20.3.3

Sources: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Guttmacher Institute.

Notes: 1 – Share of all pregnancies for women 15-44 years old. 2 – Per 1,000 women 15-44 years old. 3 – Births per 1,000 women 15-19 years old.
**Infant Mortality**

Infant mortality refers to babies that do not live to their first birthday. The reported rate is the number who die for every 1000 live births. Infant mortality rates for the nation and for Texas remain high when compared with virtually any country in the “developed world.” Texas’ rate is slightly better than for the U.S. as a whole. Encouraging is the fact that El Paso County has a significantly lower rate than the state as a whole. In Texas, the African American infant mortality rate (9.8) is double the rate for whites (4.9). The Hispanic rate is 5.2.

**Figure 11: Infant Mortality Rates (2016)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>El Paso County</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kids Count Data Center of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Note 1 - According to the CIA’s World Fact Book and the Population Reference Bureau, there are well over 40 nations with a lower infant mortality rate than the United States and we continue to fall behind. (Examples from the Fact Book: Japan, 2.0; Ireland 3.6; Cuba, 4.4; Canada 4.5).

**Maternal Mortality Rate**

Maternal mortality refers to deaths due to complications from pregnancy. The rate is the number per 100,000 births. The United States has the highest maternal mortality rate (20.7) in the developed world. Texas’ rate of 34.2 is significantly above the national average. In fact, it ranks 43rd of the 50 states. There is a significant racial gap in Texas’ maternal mortality rate, which is presented in Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Maternal Mortality Rate by Race/Ethnicity in Texas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CDC and United Health Foundation.

Note 1 - The rates presented here are 5-year averages, 2011-15.

**Drugs**

Texas, like every other state, has problems with drugs and addiction. However, looking specifically at overdose death rates, we see that Texas has much less of a problem than we find nationally (see Figure 13), ranking among the states with the lowest rates. Experts are warning, however, that things can change, as in these words of caution from the Texas Health Institute (www.texashealthinstitute.org/blog) last April: “While illicit drugs laced with fentanyl are driving a recent wave of overdose deaths nationally…Texas has been insulated from the lethal impact of fentanyl primarily because the most commonly used type of heroin in Texas, black tar, is harder to mix with fentanyl than the white powder heroin most prevalent in the Midwest and Appalachia. (continued on next page)
Drugs (continued)

But that could soon change. According to experts, white powder heroin use is increasing in Texas, drug suppliers are developing new ways to mix fentanyl with black tar heroin, and fentanyl is increasingly being mixed with drugs other than heroin. An uptick in opioid overdoses and deaths in Texas becomes more likely under these conditions.

Incarceration

Texas has higher incarceration rates than the nation as a whole (see Figure 15). In the state, just as in the nation, there is a significant racial gap. In Texas, the black/African American incarceration rate is more than four times the rate for whites. The Hispanic incarceration rate is also higher than the rate for whites.

Firearm Death Rate

The United States has by far the highest firearm death rate in the developed world. In 2016, the rate was 11.8 deaths per 100,000 of the population from all firearm related causes—suicide, accidents, homicide. Texas’ rate of 12.1 was somewhat higher than the national average. (Alaska had the highest rate at 23.3 and Massachusetts the lowest at 3.4.)

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Violence and Crime

Overall, crime rates in Texas are above the national average (see Figure 14). Homicide is a notable exception. The city of El Paso, specifically, has crime rates significantly below the rates found in the state, as a whole, or the nation. Street crime in El Paso or most anywhere in America is largely a confluence of poverty, racial inequity, and limited educational and economic opportunities. Around the country, crime in general has been in a significant long-term decline, though there does appear to be a recent rebound in crime rates.

Figure 14: Reported Crime Rates (per 100,000): 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Property Crime Rate</th>
<th>Violent Crime Rate</th>
<th>Homicide Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>1,819</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>2.8 (actual #: 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>2,563</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>5.0 (actual #: 1,412)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2,362</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>5.3 (actual #: 17,284)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 - The rates in this chart represent the numbers of crimes reported to the police and recorded by the FBI per 100,000 of the population. Most crimes go unreported, it should be noted.
2 - The property crimes here refer to Burglary, Larceny-Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft and Arson.
3 - The violent crimes are Murder/Non-negligent Homicide, Forcible (not Statutory) Rape, Aggravated Assault, and Robbery.

Figure 15: Incarceration Rates (per 100,000): 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Prison Incarceration Rate¹</th>
<th>Jail Incarceration Rate²</th>
<th>White Imprisonment Rate³</th>
<th>Black Imprisonment Rate³</th>
<th>Hispanic Imprisonment Rate³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>1,844</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>1,408</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sentencing Project.
Notes: 1 - Figures typically reflect sentences of 1 year or more. Rates are for 2016. 2 - Figures typically reflect jail sentences of less than 1 year and served in local city or county facilities. Jail inmates also include those awaiting trial. Jail incarceration rate is for 2013. 3 - Rates by race/ethnicity are for 2014.
El Paso is a major entry point to the United States. In fact, it is second only to San Diego in terms of the numbers of border crossings by land each year. Most cross over and back daily to work, shop, and study, illustrating the effective unity of El Paso and Juarez. Increasingly, migrants are coming to escape violence and/or extreme poverty. They come seeking asylum and/or to be reunited with family. Now, the federal government is moving to severely limit their ability to enter this country, including those who have very legitimate asylum cases. For many years there have been organizations working to help these desperate individuals and families. Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center (www.las-americas.org) and Annunciation House (www.annunciationhouse.org) are two such organizations.

Recently the Hope Border Institute opened (www.hopeborder.org), as described on their website:

Hope Border Institute (HOPE) is an independent grassroots community organization working in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez-Las Cruces region, that seeks to bring the perspective of Catholic social teaching to bear on the social realities unique to our region. Through a robust program of research, reflection, leadership development, advocacy and action, HOPE develops and aligns community leaders engaged in the work of justice from across the Mexico-US border to deepen solidarity across borders and transform our region.

Finally, The Encuentro Project opened in 2019. It offers “programming and lodging for immersion and encounter experiences in the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez region which include: direct work with asylum seekers, migrants, immigrants and/or refugees; education in Catholic Social Teaching and on border/migrant realities and projects through site visits; evening reflection and spiritual accompaniment.” The Encuentro Project is a joint effort of The Society of Jesus, the Marist Brothers, and the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Family. The Director of the Project is Fr. Rafael Garcia, S.J. He can be reached at rafaelgarciasj@gmail.com.
Civic Engagement

Voter registration and voter turnout rates in Texas lag behind the national rates, except African-American voter registration. Latino/Hispanic voting rates are quite low nationally, but particularly so in Texas. While white voter turnout in Texas is 62.9%, Hispanic turnout is 40.5%.

Figure 16: Texas Civic Engagement: 2016

Voter registration and voter turnout rates in Texas lag behind the national rates, except African-American voter registration. Latino/Hispanic voting rates are quite low nationally, but particularly so in Texas. While white voter turnout in Texas is 62.9%, Hispanic turnout is 40.5%.

Among El Paso’s most serious environmental problems is air pollution from transportation and industry. Many homes and schools sit close to heavily trafficked roads, which is particularly dangerous. This situation is negatively impacting public health. Water and land pollution are also issues. Industrial and agricultural sources are the culprits.

El Paso, like the rest of the world, is also facing climate change. Temperatures are heating up and rainfall will lessen as the years go on. This will put a strain on agriculture and on clean water availability. It will also put a strain on the human body, as people will have to deal with long periods of excessive heat. The financial toll will also be significant.

Pope Francis, in his Encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, reminds us of the importance of caring for God’s creation: “Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.”

Note 1 - Among the rich Jesuit resources available on the environment is the International Jesuit Ecology Project. Their educational materials can be found at: www.luc.edu/ijep. Also, the Carmelites have created a useful high school curriculum and an adult study guide to teach *Laudato Si’*. Interested individuals, schools and parishes can check it out at www.laudato-si-for-all.com.

Sources: El Paso Times (EPA is failing El Paso on air pollution, so we’re suing by Hilda Villegas and David Baake, August 3, 2018); The Fourth National Climate Assessment, 2018; *Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home*, 2015).
Many national, state and local authorities, businesses, and other organizations make policies that profoundly affect the people of El Paso whom we strive to serve in the name of Jesus. As we think on these data, we might reflect upon how we as individuals, Jesuit communities, and ministries can become more effectively involved in decisions bearing upon the common good.

*So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead* (James 2:17).

*What is it for which you are spending your life?*  
– Sr. Joan Chittister, O.S.B.

## Questions for Reflection

1. In view of the fact that about 42% of the El Paso population is unaffiliated with any religious denomination (“nones”), and considering our significant Jesuit resources, in what new ways are we called to reach out beyond our ministries to bring the reconciling Good News of Jesus Christ?

2. Given the significant educational inequalities that exist in the El Paso area (not to mention many other social injustices), are we doing all that we can to challenge these injustices in word and deed and to promote greater reconciliation?

3. Pope Francis has urged us “to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” What exactly does this demand of us in the El Paso context?

*Never, never be afraid to do what’s right, especially if the well-being of a person...is at stake. Society’s punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way.*  
—Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.