

# CHARITY EARTH NETWORK NEWSLETTER



## Feast of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, January 4, 2017

Welcome to the third issue of the *Charity Earth Network (CEN) Newsletter*. With this issue we complete our first cycle of publication – our inaugural issue for Earth Day, 2016; our second for the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, September 27, 2016; our third for the feast of Elizabeth Ann Seton, January 4, 2017. Over 200 sisters, associates and coworkers have signed up as members of the CEN and many others receive the newsletter through them or from their Congregation's communications office. In this issue, Maureen Wild, SC Halifax reflects on the ecospirituality of Elizabeth Seton in her article, *The Charity Charism Within a Living Cosmology*. Greening Charity features ecological action and reflection around the Federation Congregations. As always we include a prayer service – many thanks to Vivienne Joyce, Sister of Charity of New York, for letting

us adapt a prayer service she first prepared for her community in 1999 – a sign that interest in seeing Vincentian-Setonian spirituality through an ecological lens is nothing new!

January 20, 2017 will also witness the inauguration of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States of America. Much of his campaign rhetoric was not encouraging for those of us looking for efficacious political leadership on climate change, loss of species, and transition to sustainable energy. The mission of the **Charity Earth Network** is more urgent than ever, "supporting one another in our efforts to advocate for a more sustainable Earth community." Please share your reactions to the *CEN Newsletter*, offer to write an article, or let us know hopeful news from your Congregation. The Charity of Christ, Incarnate in Earth, urges us on!

**The Charity Earth Network is an organization of sisters and associates of the Congregations of the Sisters of Charity Federation who are interested in**

- reflecting on ecology/the new cosmology/sustainability from the perspective of the Vincentian/Setonian charism;**
- sharing information and resources**
- supporting each other in our efforts to advocate for a more sustainable Earth community.**



## ***The Charity of Charism Within a Living Cosmology***

***Maureen Wild, SC Halifax***

It's not unfamiliar language now to ponder the significance that we live within an unfolding and living creation story. We can also clearly see our own life as a kind of micro-evolution within this macro context. We are stories within stories within stories ... all stories revealing a sense of the spiritual DNA emblazoned from within the grandest story of cosmic creativity with its unwavering drive to self-emergence, self-expression, and to fulfillment. The fulfillment of love ...

One spring day, when she was about 15 years old, Elizabeth Ann Bayley hopped onto a horse-drawn wagon going from New Rochelle, NY, to the nearby countryside. The boy driver needed to do an errand, but on route Elizabeth was free to retreat into nature. In her own words (*Collected Writings I*, p. 264-265):

In the year 1789 when my Father was in England I jumped in the wagon that was driving to the woods for brush about a mile from Home. The Boy who drove it began to cut and I set off in the woods -soon found an outlet in a Meadow, and a chestnut tree with several young ones growing round it, attracted my attention as a seat, but when I came to it found rich moss under it and a warm sun -here then was a sweet bed. The air still a clear blue vault above, the numberless sounds of Spring melody and joy -the sweet clovers and wild flowers I had got by the way and a heart as innocent as a human heart could be filled with even enthusiastic love to God and admiration of his works -still I can feel every sensation that passed thro' my Soul -and I thought at that time my Father did not care for me -well God was my Father -my All. I prayed -sung hymns -cried[sic] -laughed in talking to myself of how far He could place me above all Sorrow -Then layed[sic] still to enjoy the Heavenly Peace that came over my Soul;

and I am sure in the two hours so enjoyed grew ten years in my spiritual life ...

I love this particular account from our foundress. It speaks volumes to me of her knowing God as a comforting blanket of peace while rich moss was her bed and the sun's rays warmed her, and birdsongs and sweet fragrances of wildflowers delighted her spirit. Her praise, gratitude and love were all ignited in the experience. And I was amazed by the revelation expressed in her last words, "I am sure in the two hours so enjoyed grew ten years in my spiritual life."

What this communicates to me is the 'charism of love' being fully encountered within the living community of creation, within a living cosmology. Young Elizabeth is directly encountering 'a universe' that is, at the same time, transforming her. For two hours she is dwelling within a sublime and perfect encounter with creation that 'grows' her spiritual consciousness, a consciousness of a Living (Father-like) God - a context that also empowers her to live more fully, letting go of suffering.

As companions in the ongoing emergence of the charism of love, what encounters strengthen us to really know this Living God, within a living, moving, breathing, magnificent (as yet unfinished) creation that transforms us from the inside out - blessing our whole being with renewed, charged 'enthusiastic love?' It's in our cosmic DNA to love this Living God in and through the entire creation, with all people in our life journey! This is 'charity charism alive and well within a living cosmology.' It's new and not so new 'language' truly soul-felt and 'known' by Elizabeth in 1789 and by each of us in 2017.



Maureen Wild is a Sister of Charity of Halifax who is an international speaker, educator and retreat guide with a focus on Sacred Ecology – the weaving of spirituality, justice, ethics and Christianity with insights from new cosmology, ecology and contemporary theology. Find out more about Maureen at her website <http://www.paxgaia.ca/index.html>



## Greening Charity: Ecological Action and Reflection around the Federation



Exploring the Environment Through Art EarthConnection – a ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati devoted to learning and reflection about living lightly on Earth - recently offered “Eco-Art for Adults”. The program centered around artwork created by those concerned with the state of our environment. Eco-Art is designed to re-envision our relationship with nature and creatively proposes new ways for sustainability, healing and coexistence. For more information on the programs of EarthConnection <http://www.scearthconnection.org/>



The *Leavenworth Times* interviewed Therese M. Horvat, Director of Communications of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, on their recent installation of solar panels at their motherhouse. The solar panels, installed over a parking lot, will generate power for heating and cooling the new Ross Hall skilled nursing center on the motherhouse campus. <http://www.leavenworthtimes.com/news/20161123/q5-transfer-of-energy>



The Sisters of Charity of Halifax have developed Carbon Footprint Reduction Strategies for their sisters and associates. Find the document at the link below. A particular strength of their strategies is that it includes not just suggested action steps but also gives clear indications of what these action steps can accomplish. <http://www.schalifax.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Carbon-Footprint-Reduction-Strategies-Nov-2015-for-web.pdf>



The excellent article *The Ecological Spirituality of Elizabeth Ann Seton* based on Volume One of Collected Writings by Sister Sung-Hae Kim, General Superior of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, can be found online at this link. The reading in the prayer service is taken from this article.

<http://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1429&context=vhj>

You can also watch a lecture on the ecological spirituality of Elizabeth Seton given by Sister Sung-Hae Kim at De Paul University, Chicago at this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBJuAmTkne8>

Mount St. Joseph University, Cincinnati has recently honored Sister Sung Hae Kim, SC, Th.D., with the St. Elizabeth Seton Medal for her contributions to theology through her research of Elizabeth Seton.



In faithfulness to the Vincentian charism that attempts to see everything through the lens of those made poor, several Federation communities are combining sustainable farming with providing organic food to ministries that serve the marginalized. **Seton Harvest** is a community-supported agriculture initiative sponsored by the Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise. The certified Naturally Grown farm uses the land in a just and environmentally conscious way by sharing locally grown food with shareholders and persons who are financially poor and hungry in our community.

<http://www.setonharvest.org/>

Located in Dutchess County, New York, **Sisters Hill Farm** is a Community Supported Agriculture not-for-profit farm sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of New York. Since 1999 we've grown and shared over 1 million pounds of the freshest, most delicious produce with our members and charities. <https://www.sistershillfarm.org/home.html>

The Sisters of St. Martha Antigonish, Nova Scotia through **Bethany Garden** entered into partnership to begin an apprenticeship program in gardening. The focus is vegetable production that is economically viable and environmentally friendly. The Sisters of St. Martha are providing the land (one acre) and the support structures for season extension growing. They also underwrite the educational costs of the program. After a long history in traditional education, the Marthas are sponsoring education in new way of Earth/human relationship. <https://bethanygarden.wordpress.com/>



Collaboration with other ecological organizations is an essential value for many Sisters of Charity Congregations. One example is the Charity involvement in ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River) – a coalition of a number of religious congregations and other organizations that educate and advocate for the integrity of the Hudson River bioregion, its lands and waters. Sister Carol De Angelo (SCNY) and Fr. Terry Moran (SC St.E) are both active members of ROAR. Current activities include protest against oil pipelines and fracking in the Hudson River valley; education on *Laudato Si'*; and the planning of a biannual convocation that brings together local environmental activists to reflect on the spiritual roots of advocacy. At this link find an article on ROAR from *Maryknoll* magazine <http://maryknollmagazine.org/index.php/magazines/591-building-one-earth-community>



Carol De Angelo, SC shares this attractive brochure that explains the mission of the Sisters of Charity of New York Creation's Transformative Energy Task Force [http://www.scnj.org/images/justicepeace/CTE\\_TF.pdf](http://www.scnj.org/images/justicepeace/CTE_TF.pdf)

#### **NEW RESOURCE:**

Watch online Leonard Di Caprio's excellent documentary on climate change *Before the Flood*  
<http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/before-the-flood/videos/watch-before-the-flood-for-free-everywhere/>



## **COSMIC EUCHARIST: A PRAYER FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON**

*(Environment for Prayer: a picture or statue of Elizabeth; a candle; a loaf of bread that will be shared during the prayer. Before the prayer begins, the leader assigns readers for the various readings.)*

### **Opening Prayer**

1. In the Company of Charity, let us reflect on our charism and the cosmos, as we pray...
2. In a spirit of communion with all that is, we seek to learn together how to learn from Earth and the entire cosmos, Who you are, O Creator of all life's wonders.
3. We hold in memory our Soul Friend of another generation, Vincent de Paul.  
Seeing the suffering of the poor, he fell on his knees in prayer: "My God, I did not know!"
4. In our time too we cry out, as we see with the eyes of our times what we did not know; that the patterns of human exploitation of Earth, which increase the suffering of the poor, are the result of our personal and communal failure to understand our place in the universe.
5. Lead us in helping one another to learn new ways to be inspired by your Inventive Love as it is manifest in all created things.

All:  
Weaver of Life, Receiver of Death,  
You teach us Time and Eternity and the Blessing of Change.  
May our hearts open to a deepening realization  
of the interdependence of all that is.  
May our reverence for all creation  
energize deeds of affective and effective love.

Reader: A Reading from “The Ecological Spirituality of Elizabeth Ann Seton,” by Sr. Sung-Hae Kim, SC:

Understandably Elizabeth did not have the same ecological concern as that of our contemporaries because her historical period did not experience the crisis of climate change, water and air contamination, and destruction of the soil and living species; nevertheless, we find an amazing, constant insight in her writings that the natural and the human world are interwoven in the life, order, and beauty of God, the Creator. She saw an inseparable interconnection between nature and human life and perceived both life and death as the necessary cycle of creation. She was convinced that we humans have a special calling, like the corals in the ocean, to be transformed by sufferings and hardships, through which we learn to trust God and attain the freedom of heart or the state of holy indifference. Thus, Elizabeth Seton’s ecological sensitivity will enrich our understanding of providential interdependence between nature and our human life.

In her writings from age 19 to 34, the following four characteristics emerge as constitutive elements in her ecological spirituality: first, the beauty of nature was the space where her encounter with God and friends always took place; second, when she felt abandoned, Elizabeth identified herself with the surrounding natural environment and there experienced consolation and God’s mercy; third, Elizabeth saw God’s equity in nature and learned ecological balance that accepts both life and death, joy and suffering; and fourth, while recognizing the rhythm of time in nature, Elizabeth realized the importance of living in the present and learned to be content in all situations by acquiring the virtues of moderation and harmony.

#### Questions for Reflection and/or Sharing

1. Which of the four characteristics of Elizabeth’s ecological spirituality resonate most with you? Which is the one that is the greatest challenge for you?
2. Which of the four characteristics of Elizabeth’s ecological spirituality are most evident in your Congregation? Which is the greatest challenge for your Congregation?

#### Closing Ritual:

Leader: In the deep silence of your courageous heart,  
Elizabeth Seton, Soul Sister and Friend,  
the Magnificat bubbled up from the depths of your soul  
as you fed on the bread of the Eucharist for the first time.  
May this melody of Justice, of righting wrong relationships,  
become the song of the universe, as we move ever further away  
from silent agreement with patterns of domination,  
to cherish Earth and celebrate our kinship with all creatures.  
Elizabeth, as you changed your understanding of Eucharist,  
you changed your life.

*A basket of bread is passed and each participant takes a piece.*

Leader: Reflect that in the bread you hold in your hand, you hold the entire history of the cosmos. This bread holds atoms that came to birth in the first moments of the universe. It holds other atoms that were birthed in the fiery explosion of a star. It holds the energy of the sun in the form of food. Every act of eating is Eucharistic. It reveals our union with our Creative God and with all beings with whom we share this miraculous planet. Let us eat with gratitude conscious that we are eating the universe. Like Elizabeth, as we change our understanding of Eucharist, we change our lives.

All: Like Elizabeth, as we change our understanding of Eucharist, we change our lives. Believing in the communion of saints and the communion of all creation, recalling the words of our dying foundress and friend: “Be grateful. Be grateful,” we look to the generosity of the cosmos to teach us the ways of grateful loving.

*All eat the bread in a spirit of gratitude.*

Leader: We conclude our prayer by sharing with one another a sign of peace.



Thanks to Sister Vivienne Joyce, Sister of Charity of New York for permission to adapt her prayer service for the *Charity Earth Network News*.



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