

CHARITY EARTH NETWORK NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the April 2018 Earth Day edition of the *Charity Earth Network (CEN) Newsletter!* With this issue the CEN Newsletter begins its third year of publication. This issue includes an article by Cecilia Hudec, SCH on a congregation-wide program of contemplative reflection and dialogue on *Laudato Si'*; a spotlight on a few of the many greening efforts that are going on in Federation Congregations; some resources that our members might find inspiring or helpful; and a prayer service for Earth Day which looks at this year's theme *End Plastic Pollution* from the perspective of the Vincentian-Setonian charism.

The current political climate is certainly a difficult one for people committed to Earth-justice and it is easy to feel overwhelmed and get discouraged. We need to be heartened by the message of a current book *Joyful Militancy: thriving resistance in toxic*

times by carla bergman and Nick Montgomery (AK Press, 2018). It reminds us:

"Freedom" and "friend" share the same early Indo-European root: fri, or pri, meaning "love." This root made its way into Gothic, Norse, Celtic, Hindi, Russian and German. To be 'free' was not to be unrestricted, but to be a friend among loved ones ... "Friend' and 'free' in English come from the same Indo-European root, which conveys the idea of a shared power that grows. Being free and having ties was one and the same thing. I am free because I have ties, because I am linked to a reality greater than me."

Surely that is what the Company of Charity has been for us - freedom rooted in love, being a friend among loved ones, experiencing a power that grows, being linked to a reality greater than ourselves.

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.**



Use of Contemplative Dialogue Format to Reflect on Laudato Si'

Cecilia Hudec, SCH

The Sisters of Charity Halifax chose at their 2017 assembly to use contemplative prayer and to reflect on *Laudato Si'* together in order to be accountable to one another and all creation.

“Our explicit choice to engage in contemplative prayer will be strengthened through our study and reflection on *Laudato Si'* and through service to those who are living in poverty, are marginalized, and through our care of creation.”

The Contemplative Dialogue format with its three movements of creating a sacred space, spending time with a question that matters and listening for the sense of the group (Spirit in our midst) was chosen to be the structure we would use to reflect on *Laudato Si'*. A committee surfaced questions under each movement for each Chapter and distributed them to the Sisters and Associates.

All were invited to gather in small groupings, including community, area, cluster, zoom calls and any configuration which would facilitate our reflection together. We were tentative in getting started as it seemed daunting. Some had already read *Laudato Si'* and did not see the value of gathering to reflect together. Gradually, however, groups took shape encouraged by others whose experience was positive. Creativity in gathering and using other materials to supplement were being used. The Committee gathered poetry, music, articles, YouTube videos which Sisters and Associates could use in prayer and reflection between their gathered times.

Facilitators guided the process encouraging silence before speaking and deep listening for common threads. A sense of reverence grew as we listened to each other and bonds of communion deepened. Vulnerable feelings began to be expressed like “I feel frightened” rising from feelings of helplessness. Hope was experienced based on our capacity to build stronger relationships with each other and with creation. There was a growing sense that this time of generativity in our lives and history is a time to hone wisdom which is non-violent and loving. We are becoming more aware of our capacity to ask deep questions and think through implications for the whole community of life.

It was expressed that globalized indifference is something we all identify with and reflecting together will assist us in addressing paralysis. One group noted that “we are responding to the needs for the times as Elizabeth Seton did. It gives us new hope.” We hear these common threads among us: We have great love and respect for the Earth, we believe in the urgency of the Earth’s plight, we believe that our words and actions do matter and that there is a re-energizing of our commitment. We believe in the interconnectedness of all life. Another group felt that we must hold true to our values as



Sisters of Charity, to our integrity and to the power of love. In the face of destruction, we must not take the power of love for granted. We must not be afraid of speaking the truth and acting with courage. There is growing in us a deeper accountability to each other, the planet and to future generations.

I feel that the contemplative dialogue format was a good choice for us in the reflection of *Laudato Si'*.

Sister Cecilia Hudec serves on the leadership team of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax.



GREENING CHARITY

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE FEDERATION

♥ The Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth have two ecospirituality reflection groups that meet each month – one during the day for the retired sisters in the Villa and one in the evening for other sisters, associates, and friends. The groups have studied and reflected on Laudato Si', the Earth Charter, the work of Joanna Macy on Transforming Despair, Mary from a cosmological perspective, “greening the vows” and watched videos on the islands of plastic waste in the oceans, Al Gore’s An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power. The group also sponsors an annual retreat day at Genesis Farm in Blairstown, NJ. It is an especially rich experience to reflect on these realities from the perspective of Vincentian-Setonian spirituality and to find insights and energy in our charism for facing the global climate crisis.

♥ The Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise are responding to climate change by having a complete eco-audit of the provincial office in St. Louis, MO, a 30,000 square foot building. They have added LED lighting, a TPO (Thermoplastic Polyolefin) roofing system, and solar array installation. They now power the entire building with solar, alternating seamlessly with the utility company when necessary.

♥ The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati are working hard toward net-zero energy at their motherhouse, beginning with solar panel installation on six residential buildings.

♥ The Sisters of Charity of New York Sisters Hill Farm, Stanfordville, NY is almost completely subscribed for the 2018 growing season. Each member receives from 4-15 lbs. of food per week. This provides enough veggies for an average size family.



- ☀️ Renowned peacemaker, Fr. John Dear, turns his attention to growing in a relationship of nonviolence with Earth in his new book *They Will Inherit the Earth: Peace and Nonviolence in a Time of Climate Change*, (Orbis Books, 2018).
- ☀️ Sister of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, PA Mary Elizabeth Clark offers 30 lessons for religious educators or families in her book *Teaching Kids to Care for God's Creation: Reflections, Activities, and Prayers for Catechists and Families*, (Twenty-Third Publications, 2018).
- ☀️ The Creation Care Team of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio offers *Laudato Si' – Creation Care Guide* <https://oppeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CreationCareGuide.pdf> with resources on sustainability for parishes and homes.
- ☀️ The Laudato Si' Committee of the Sisters of Charity Federation offers *Six Weeks With Laudato Si'*, a resource for six weeks of study and reflection on LS with suggestions for prayer and action for each day. http://www.scnj.org/images/justicepeace/SIX_WEEKS_WITH_LAUDATO_SI_2.pdf

Ecology Job Opportunity

Mercy Ecology at Mercy Farm is seeking a full-time team member. Mercy Farm sits on 39 acres in Vermont's Champlain Valley with a beautiful mix of woodland, meadows, and a small pond. They grow a variety of vegetable crops, using organic practices, and donate a portion of this produce weekly to the neighboring Food Pantry in Fair Haven. If interested, please contact S. Nancy Audette, executive director, at naudettesm@gmail.com.

Sisters of Earth 2018 conference

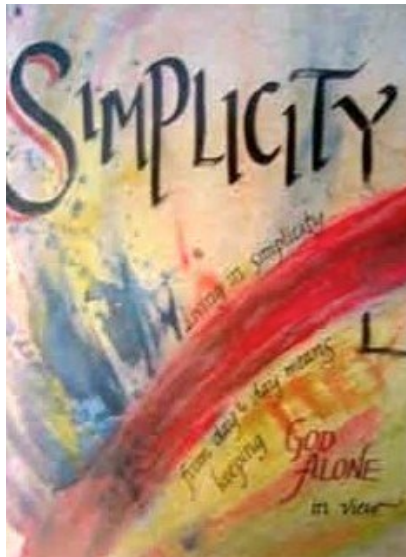
“Sharing the Wisdom, Shaping the Dream: Creating the Future We Want”

July 12-15 at Mount St. Joseph University, Cincinnati

For more information, contact Colleen Kammer, 937-275-0303 x 116

Sisters of Earth is an informal network of women who share a deep concern for the ecological and spiritual crises of our times and who wish to support one another in work toward healing the human spirit and restoring Earth's life support systems. Founded in 1994 by several Catholic Sisters from the U.S. and Canada.





Call to Prayer:

Leader: We join with people all over the world to pray and reflect on the theme of Earth Day 2018 *End Plastic Pollution*. We do so through the lens of the key Vincentian virtue of simplicity. In a way, our addiction to one time use plastic implements was intended to make life more “simple”. It’s “simpler” to use and toss plastic items than it is to care for, store, wash and dry permanent plates and utensils. For Vincent simplicity is a way of seeing – of seeing the whole truth about something, about not hiding the inconvenient truth, about seeing as God sees. We begin our prayer by singing the Shaker song *'Tis a Gift to Be Simple*:

'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free
'Tis a gift to come down where I ought to be
And when I am in the place just right
I will be in the valley of love and delight
When true simplicity is gained
To bow and to bend I will not be ashamed
To turn, to turn will be my delight
'Til by turning, turning, I come 'round right.

Leader: As we listen to these facts about plastic pollution, let us listen with God’s ears, see them as God sees them, feel them as they are felt by the heart of Boundless Charity:

One or several readers reads the facts, pausing briefly after each one:

- 160,000 plastic bags are used globally every second!
- 5 trillion plastic bags are produced yearly. Side by side, they can encircle the world 7 times.
- The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which is a floating landfill of garbage in the Pacific twice the size of Texas, is mostly composed of plastic.
- In 2008, a sperm whale was found beached in California. It died due to the more than 22 kilos of plastic found in its stomach.
- Plastic will only start degrading after 700 years and will only fully degrade in 1000 years. This means that all the plastic that has ever been produced has not degraded yet.
- Only 1 to 3% of plastic bags are recycled worldwide.
- Plastic bags cause the death of many marine animals when they are mistaken for food.
- Plastic bags are produced using petroleum, natural gas and other chemicals. Their production is toxic to the environment.

- Plastic bags are so lightweight and aerodynamic, that even if we dispose of them properly, they can escape with the wind. They escape from our trash cans, garbage trucks and landfills and they go where the wind takes them – polluting our environment until they finally find their way to the ocean and kill birds and animals.

Leader: We listen to these readings from our Vincentian tradition:

One or several readers reads the facts, pausing briefly after each one:

- God gives me such a great esteem for simplicity that I call it my gospel. I have a particular devotion and consolation in saying things as they are. Vincent de Paul
- The problem which divides people today is not a political problem, it is a social one. It is a matter of knowing which will get the upper hand, the spirit of selfishness or the spirit of sacrifice; whether society will go for ever increasing enjoyment and profit, or for everyone devoting themselves to the general good, and above all to the defence of the weakest. Frederic Ozanam
- I know that you are combining all your efforts so that you may be of but one heart and one will and may thereby act only with the desire of accomplishing the will of God. Louise de Marillac

Leader: Let us claim the energy that is in our charism – the ability to see and say things as they are; to the spirit of sacrifice over selfishness; of having but one heart and one will in seeking the common good and to the defence of the weakest – humans, animals, ecosystems. I invite you now to place one hand on your heart, where the charism of charity lives. Look at the graphic *12 Tips to Reduce Plastic in Your Daily Life* and, confident in the strength of the charism of Charity, choose a few that you will put into practice.

If the prayer is done in a group, people might share which practice they have chosen and why.

Leader: We pray together the closing prayer:

Saint Vincent de Paul, you saw the face of Jesus in those broken and made poor. With your courage and zeal, may we heal our broken Earth. Mother Seton, you delighted in nature, radiant with God’s presence. Give us discernment to see God’s presence in Earth. God of Boundless Charity, you invite us to live simply, to live sustainably, and to live in solidarity with the poor. Help us to respond to that invitation with conviction and generosity. Amen.

