

# CHARITY EARTH NETWORK NEWSLETTER



## Feast of St. Vincent de Paul September 27, 2020

We hope you noticed that the usual April Earth Day issue of the *Charity Earth Network Newsletter* did not appear! At the time when we would have been working on that issue, we were in the midst of the lock down occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. Surely many of the activities we had planned for celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day were cancelled or went virtual. We are living in a radically different world than the one we knew when the last issue of the *CEN Newsletter* appeared. Our ongoing crisis starkly illustrates, if further proof were needed, the prophetic character of the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* "Given the scale of change, it is no longer possible to find a specific, discrete answer for each part of the problem. It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions that consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution

demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." (*Laudato Si'*, 139)

In a recent interview on NPR, Bill McKibben, founder of 350.Org and one of the most public faces of the movement to face our climate catastrophe, was called by the interviewer the author of the most important current writing on climate change. McKibben replied, "No! That would be Pope Francis." This issue of *CEN Newsletter* marks the 5th anniversary of *Laudato Si'* by sharing stories of how Charity communities have responded to *Laudato Si'*. Since the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul falls during the September 1-October 4 Season of Creation, our prayer service focuses on the 2020 theme of the Season, "Jubilee for the Earth."

As always we welcome feedback, news items, and articles from the Federation Congregations. As we observe the Season of Creation, we blow the Jubilee horn of celebration for the countless ways in which the Company of Charity engages in care for our Common Home.

Carol

Cj

Terry

**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 Company of Charity Responds to *Laudato Si'**

## *Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth...*



The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth have an ambitious plan to have 100% of our electricity supplied by renewable energy by the end of this year for our Motherhouse and the University of St. Mary next door. The first phase was a solar array installed in late 2016 over our south parking lot. The next phase is our contract to buy the remainder of our electric power needs from a new Kansas wind farm now being built in Nemaha County.

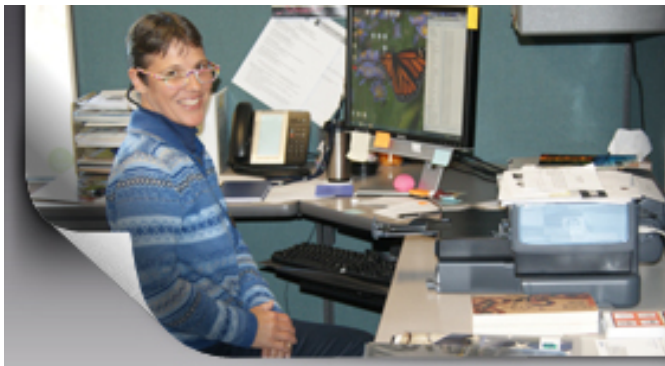
It is difficult to say just how much influence *Laudato Si'* had in these decisions since our community has been attuned to Earth's suffering for quite some time. But without doubt, the papal encyclical was a strong motivator for us. Our 22-member Care of Creation group of sisters and Associates is promulgating a public statement echoing forceful points in *Laudato Si'* including:

- Urging our elected leaders to recognize the scientific evidence of the human causes of climate change and to act boldly in support of climate-friendly legislation.
- Since we all live in the same earthly neighborhood, justice demands that this nation collaborate with all other nations to protect Earth's peoples and creatures.
- Replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources on behalf of all of us, all future generations and the poor who are most affected.

We pray in this new ecological age for all to awaken to the sacredness of nature and join with its creating spirit to heal our Earth.

Sister Rejane Cytacki, Chair, SCL Care of Creation Group

## *Sister of Charity of Nazareth...*



*Laudato Si'* helped spur the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (SCNs) to intensify efforts in addressing the destruction of natural resources and the environmental crisis. Since its publication, SCNs created an Office of Ecological Sustainability and have committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2047 across the congregation. Additionally, SCN reflections have led to deeper oneness with Earth as our common home and a deeper consciousness and commitment to care for ecosystems knowing that these impact poor and

marginalized individuals the most. This is demonstrated in the movement towards eliminating single-use plastics, managing SCN land to provide more wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration, eating a more locally grown plant-based diet and advocacy efforts. SCNs created a program, *Care for Our Common Home*, to inform individuals and organizations about specific actions they can do in solidarity with caring for Earth.

Sister Joetta Venneman, PBVM, Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Office of Social and Environmental Justice

## *Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth...*



*(Sisters of Charity join students of Saint Elizabeth University and the Academy of Saint Elizabeth for a joint Earth Day prayer service and tree planting.)*

I remember distinctly where I was when *Laudato Si'* came out; in Emmitsburg at an Ecospirituality retreat given by Maureen Wild, SC, *Cosmic Symphony of Love Unfolding*, for participants of all the Federation congregations. A journalist who had been given a pre-publication copy of *Laudato Si'* broke the Vatican's embargo and released the Italian text to the world early. I read the encyclical in one sitting. An environmental activist since the first Earth Day in 1970, I never

dreamed that a document like *Laudato Si'* would ever come from the Vatican; that my faith and environmental commitment would both be affirmed so robustly by our church's highest authority. The next day in my homily at the liturgy, I shared what was for me one of the most revolutionary lines of *Laudato Si'*, "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience," (LS, #217). I think the deepest way in which LS has influenced the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth is expressed in that line. Something much deeper than simply recycling, driving a hybrid car, and avoiding petroleum products, LS has enabled us to see that our relationship with Earth is inseparable from our relationship with God. We have formed two Ecospirituality Reflection groups in which sisters and associates reflect on our relationship with Earth through the lens of our Vincentian-Setonian charism. One of the groups is for our retired sisters in the Villa. It's beautiful to see women in their 80's and 90's responding



invariably to any issue of ecological crisis, “What can we do?” Often all they can do is sit with our broken Earth in the presence of the God of Boundless Charity – and that is perhaps the most important thing of all.

Fr. Terrence Moran, Director, Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity

## *Sisters of Charity of New York...*



*(Sister Carol De Angelo enjoys a delicious vegan lunch at a retreat day at Genesis Farm, Blairstown, NJ)*

Experiencing the wonder and beauty of creation... Conscious use and reverence of water... Advocating for safe clean renewable energy and against pipeline expansion and new infrastructure that supports fossil fuels. Sisters of Charity of New York, Associates and Companions took these actions before *Laudato Si'*. Now, an understanding of “interconnectedness of all life,” “relationship and interdependence,” “integral ecology,” and “ecological conversion” has grown deeper and has found its way into conversations, meetings, committees and prayer ...

even into our revised Constitutions. As members of ICCR (Interfaith Center and Corporate Responsibility) and IASJ (Investor Advocates for Social Justice formerly Tri-CRI), we have consciously looked at our investments from the framework of climate justice and racial inequality. We address poverty, hunger, homelessness, migration, human trafficking, climate change, racism and other issues from the lens of integral ecology, aware of the intersection of issues. Public witness through vigils, sign-ons to letters and statements to legislators, public officials and corporations address water, air, land quality; rights of nature and of humans, at local, national and global levels through the lens of *Laudato Si'* and integral development. As active members of ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River) and the Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement we promote *Laudato Si'* and take concrete actions to bring it to life. MNY CCM, a grassroots movement, supports and networks with interested Catholic leaders and parishes. It is instrumental in letting Metro NY area Catholics know about *Laudato Si'*. The Sisters of Charity of New York Leadership Team is looking at how to strategically integrate and implement *Laudato Si'* these next three years. We are on a journey of ecological conversion in caring for our Common Home and its communities of life, human and nonhuman.

Sister Carol De Angelo, SC, Director of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation

De Paul University invites you to participate in ***Leading with Values: Vincentian Family Contributions to a Sustainable World***, October 9 - 10, 2020. The event is free but you must register. Use the link below for more information and to register:  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/leading-with-values-vincentian-family-contributions-to-a-sustainable-world-registration-94499110383>

Responding to climate change is nothing new for the Company of Charity. We've been doing it since the beginning. Did you know that the Vincentian charism began as a response to climate change? Vincent and Louise worked for people who were impoverished because of the social and agricultural consequences of a mini-Ice Age! Learn more about that mini-Ice Age from this YouTube video



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=15&v=YF8AAJSTJoM&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=15&v=YF8AAJSTJoM&feature=emb_title).

Global Sisters Report on April 27, 2020 in their article “With congregation-wide commitments, sisters are active in sustainable living,” profiled *Earth Connection*, an ecology ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/earthbeat/spirituality/news/congregation-wide-commitments-sisters-are-active-sustainable-living>

Sister of Charity of Cincinnati Cj Willie, well known to us as former Federation NGO representative and program Director of *Earth Connection*, has done a series of ZOOM webinars on ecological themes. Cj is happy to do them again for any interested group. Find below the themes of the webinars. If you are interested, contact Cj at [cjwilliengo@gmail.com](mailto:cjwilliengo@gmail.com) Available Webinars: Ecospirituality; Climate Change, Poverty and Migration; The Earth Charter; Journaling with Nature; The Realities of Climate Change and How to Understand and Respond to Climate Change Deniers; Laudato Si': Blueprint for the 21st Century; Praying All Ways with Nature.



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## *A Company of Charity Prayer Service for the Season of Creation 2020*

*Environment for Prayer – A photo of Earth from space; an index card or a slip of paper of the same size for each participant; a statue or picture to St. Vincent de Paul.*

**Opening Song:** Prayer for Creation by Cathy Yost (Sung to the tune of “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee.” If there are concerns about singing because of COVID-19, the song may be recited)

O, Creator of the cosmos,  
We present our hearts in prayer.  
We are awestruck by your glory,  
Which surrounds us everywhere.  
From the birdsong of the morning  
To a stormy sky at night,  
You reveal yourself in Nature,  
In its gentleness and might.  
Through each rainbow that you send us  
You renew your covenant  
With the earth and all life on it,  
Telling us of your intent  
That each living thing should flourish,  
In its own way, in its place.  
You call us to new awareness  
Of our neighbors and their space.

In our eagerness to prosper,  
We have ravaged what was good.  
Using more than what was needed,  
Taking everything we could.  
We have changed the gentle order  
You intended for the earth.  
Now we humbly ask the wisdom  
To be part of its re-birth.  
We seek mercy, we seek vision,  
And the courage we will need  
As we work to help the victims  
Of the sins of human greed.  
By our choices, in our actions,  
May we be part of your plans.  
Help us gently till the Garden  
You’ve entrusted to our hands.

**Leader:** The theme of the Season of Creation 2020 is Jubilee for Earth. Jubilee is a theme that is dear to the Company of Charity since Vincent de Paul found his inspiration for the spirituality of the Company in the passage in Luke where Jesus sees his own vocation in terms of the Jubilee.

**Reader:** Jesus stood up in the synagogue and read the passage from the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of God has swept over us. Waves of the oil of God’s tender choosing have been lavished over us: to announce amazing plenty to the poor; to set prison doors swinging open on their hinges; to dazzle darkened eyes with light; to lead shackled legs to dance in wild freedom; to proclaim that our time and place, all time and every place, can rest in the gaze of God’s delight.” He gave the scroll back to the attendant and proclaimed, “Today this passage has come true for you.”

**Leader:** Today, as a global pandemic rages, as the effects of climate crisis are felt all over the world, we are aware, in a way that St. Vincent wasn’t, that Earth itself is oppressed, longing for Jubilee freedom. As Pope Francis says so pointedly, “If you ask me who is the poorest of the poorest of the poor, I would say Mother Earth. We have plundered her. We have abused her.” I invite you to enter a time of silent reflection, to call to mind an abuse of Earth that particularly pains you and to write it on your card. After the time of silence, I will invite you to share what you have written with the group and to place the card on the photo of Earth.

### *Time of Reflection and Sharing*

**Leader:** Vincent wrote, “Jubilee means joy and jubilation; and the Jubilee Year means a year of joyfulness.” I invite you to take back your card, to hold it in your hands for a period of silent reflection. What is an action you would like to take to proclaim Jubilee to Earth? What is an act of Earth-healing you would like to undertake in order to bring joy to Earth and her creatures? Write your resolution on your card. After the silence, I will invite you to share your resolution with the group.

### *Time of Reflection and Sharing*

**Closing Prayer: All:** St. Vincent de Paul, you saw the face of Jesus in those broken and made poor. With your courage and zeal, may we proclaim jubilee to our broken Earth. Mother Seton, you delighted in nature, radiant with God’s presence. Give us discernment to see and reverence God’s presence in Earth. All our ancestors in the Company of Charity, with imagination and creativity, you met the needs of your age. May we respond to the needs of our time and the cries of Earth and Earth’s children. God of Boundless Charity, you invite us to live simply, to live sustainably, to live in solidarity with those made poor. Help us to respond to your call with conviction and generosity.