

CHARITY EARTH NETWORK NEWSLETTER

April 2022/Earth Day



As the Earth Day issue of the *Charity Earth Network Newsletter* goes to press, the world watches in horror the tragic unfolding of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Vincentian Family joined the world in prayer and fasting on Ash Wednesday for a cessation of violence and peace in Ukraine. We are increasingly aware that there is nothing that does not have an ecological dimension and the war in Ukraine is no exception. Bill McKibben is the co-founder of the global climate justice group 350.org and Third Act, a new group focused on activism by older people (perhaps of special interest to religious congregations in the global north, given our median age). McKibben writes in *The Guardian*, "If you want to stand with the brave people of Ukraine, you need to find a way to stand against oil and gas." He says that the way to bring down "petrostate autocrats" like Vladimir Putin is for the U.S. and Europe to quickly slash their dependence on fossil fuels. McKibben points out that it's hardly possible for an invading army to travel around smashing solar panels and chopping down wind turbines.

The theme of Earth Day 2022 is *Invest in Our Planet: What Will You Do?* The theme reminds us that the future of our planet is too important to leave in the hands of politicians and industrialists. A new, mutually flourish Earth/human relationship is the responsibility of each of us. This issue of the CEN Newsletter focuses on the way the Charity Federation Congregations are taking up this challenge. In ways large and small – from the influence of our Federation NGO at the United Nations, in our socially and ecologically responsible investing, in the efforts each of us makes to avoid plastic use and lessen petroleum-guzzling air travel-the Company of Charity is responding with imagination and zeal.

We're also very happy to welcome John Shively. Lead Coordinator of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Office at Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, to the Steering Committee of the Charity Earth Network. Thanks to John for his generosity in joining this collaborative effort.

Carol

Cj

John

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.

Caring for Our Common Home, Sr. Mary Ann Garisto, SC

The main goal of the fall 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, commonly known as COP26, was to avert the most catastrophic consequences of climate change by limiting the planet's warming. By holding the temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial times (1850–1890) by 2040 or sooner, we could collectively escape severe climate change. Scientists say that not doing so will put millions at risk of extreme weather conditions and numerous health issues. Another goal of the conference was to hold countries accountable for their pledges to the Paris Agreement in 2015. Wealthier countries pledged to give \$100 billion annually to developing nations to cover losses and damage already caused by climate change. Wealthier nations failed to fulfill their pledges. The average global temperature has already risen 1.1°C, resulting in rising sea levels, declining sea ice and more extreme weather conditions. Projections of present global actions may result in an increase of 2.7°C. Scientists have warned that to maintain the 1.5° C goal, countries must cut emissions by at least 45 percent by 2030. Warming does not occur uniformly. Some regions have already experienced temperature rises above 1.5°C. Risks from climate change become worse for vulnerable populations, especially those dependent upon agricultural and coastal livelihoods. Those who suffer most from climate change have done the least to cause it. The results of the conference have been disappointing. Critics say that although some progress was made, it is not enough. The final agreement is called the Glasgow Climate Pact. Some of the provisions are: » Countries are required to deliver new plans to cut emissions annually. » Countries must provide financial assistance to the most vulnerable countries. » Countries are accountable for reducing methane, ending deforestation, accelerating the phaseout of coal, speeding up the switch to electric vehicles and encouraging investment in renewable energy. What happens next will determine the actual outcome of COP26. The United Nations highlighted the importance of religious organizations and faith groups in following the agreement.

What will you do?

- » Keep informed.
- » Hold our elected leaders and policy makers accountable for the pledges that have been made.
- » Urge your pastors who have authority over parish physical plants to take every action they can to reduce emissions and transition to clean energy now.
- » Join organizations and visit websites that are committed to integral ecology actions such as: » Laudato Si' Action Platform: <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org> » Riverkeeper: <https://www.riverkeeper.org> » Food & Water Watch: <https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org>
- » Consider giving alternative gifts from non-profit organizations such as: Heifer International: <https://www.heifer.org> World Wildlife Fund: <https://gifts.worldwildlife.org>
- » Continue to reduce your carbon footprint.

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LAUDATO SI'

Action Platform

The Congregations in the Sisters of Charity Federation are embracing with enthusiasm the call of the Laudato Si' Action Platform. Many Congregations have made public commitment statements to the seven goals of the Platform and are engaged in development of annual goals to measure progress. We share here a few of the commitment statements; others will follow in future issues of the CEN Newsletter. Beside containing aspirational commitments rooted in the Charity charism, most of the statements are also visually beautiful. Unfortunately formatting issues don't allow us to share the statements in their beautiful variety. Most Congregations have also posted their Commitment Statements on their websites.

Sisters of Charity of New York Praise God for the Wonders of Creation!

In all our deliberations we must be mindful of the impact of our decisions on the seventh generation to follow ours. Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Seventh Generation Principle

In this, our third century of responding in love to those in need, we, the Sisters of Charity of New York, grieve over the ailing condition of the home we share with our sisters and brothers throughout the world. Creation is God's gift and first revelation, to be received gratefully and tended respectfully. Instead, our common home and all who dwell in it are dangerously close to cataclysmic change, if not extinction.

Believing in the interconnectedness of all life, we open ourselves to a conversion process that will align our hearts, minds and practices with this integrated vision. We join with others across the globe who seek the flourishing of all life and who are determined to be part of the solution to our catastrophic situation.

From September 2021 through August 2022, we commit to educating ourselves on what more we might do to alleviate the cries of the earth and the poor and develop a contemplative view of our life on this planet. In this year, we will involve ourselves and our partners in choosing the specific ways we will work over the next five years:

- to renew our common home
- to grow into this contemplative mindset
- to combat poverty
- to restore dignity to the excluded
- and to simplify our lives.

Joining the global Church in the Laudato Si' Movement, we make this public statement to invite others to join us on this sacred journey and to hold us accountable to our promises.

Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth

Our Foundress Mother Mary Xavier Mehegan, S.C. and our early sisters met the needs of their age with creativity and zeal. In faithfulness to our charism of moving toward Boundless Charity, we hear the urgent call to respond to the cry of Earth, called by Pope Francis, “the poorest of the poor.” Therefore we commit ourselves as a Congregation to the Laudato Si’ Action Platform and join in its seven-year journey towards integral ecology. In collaboration with the Seton Associates, our partners in mission, and others, we commit ourselves to deepen our reverence for the presence of God in creation, to ecological education and advocacy, and to promote sustainable lifestyles.

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth

As women and men devoted to living out the call of the gospel, we, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and Associates undersigned here, commit to developing a Laudato Si’ Action Plan and continuing the lifelong journey to ecological conversion. We recognize our duty to care for the Earth, which is given to us by God, as well as the responsibility to share the Earth’s abundance and resources equitably. We also recognize that, despite the abundance of creation, there are human and ecological limits to the use of its resources that must be respected and protected. We pledge to use the gifts of creation with moderation, gratitude, and dependence. Rooted in our charism of charity and the spirit of our heritage, we also commit to continue to hear the cry of those who are poor. This work calls us to care for people experiencing poverty, as well as addressing the unjust social systems which allow poverty to persist.

We commit to integral ecology. This is the understanding that many of the crises we face, whether they be environmental or social, are the result of the belief that individual freedom is limitless and that there are no duties or obligations to the common good. We recognize, as Pope Francis does, “how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.”

Lastly, in the spirit of Laudato Si’, we commit to undertaking this journey with others – the whole of the human family – because the crises we face today urgently affect us all. We invite anyone interested to join us to be companions on this journey.

Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception

Cherishing Earth and all Creation, we commit to the Laudato Si’ Action Platform through prayer, awareness and advocacy.

We recognize and lament that cries of Earth and of those made poor are one. Those who are least responsible suffer the worst effects of the climate crisis caused by human activity. They also bear the greatest burden arising from serious global inequalities.

Faithful to our charism, we commit ourselves to:
Embrace personal and social transformation, ensuring

the whole of creation has priority over pursuit of wealth and power;
Choose simple lifestyles and sustainable options to help protect and regenerate the planet;
Listen to those who are excluded, oppressed and/or living in poverty;
Seek just relationships with Indigenous peoples and heed their wisdom rooted in oneness with Mother Earth;
Partner with those dedicated to compassionate outreach, human rights, social and ecological justice and peace.

Trusting in the Creator and in Jesus—who is One with us—we open ourselves to the Spirit’s inspiration and guidance along this journey of hope and grace.

resources

flamingotext.com

A JOURNEY TO INTEGRAL ECOLOGY: THE SEVEN GOALS OF THE LAUDATO SI’ ACTION PLATFORM.

The Sisters of Charity of New York, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, and ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River) joined in a successful collaborative project: A JOURNEY TO INTEGRAL ECOLOGY: THE SEVEN GOALS OF THE LAUDATO SI’ ACTION PLATFORM. The seven-month series drew 70-100 participants to each session, with hundreds more watching the videos posted on YouTube. Each ZOOM session included prayer, a presentation, and opportunity for conversation. Find below the titles and speakers of each session and the YouTube link where the videos can be viewed. We’re delighted to report that the video with the most views is the one of Carolyn Cromer, Director of Sustainability for the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth!

Response to the Cry of the Earth Eric Anglada and Brenna Cussen-Anglada. Eric and Brenna are co-founders of St. Isidore Catholic Worker farm in southwest Wisconsin. Brenna is also a member of the 4 Necessity Valve Turners direct action against pipelines.

Response to the Cry of the Poor. Daniel Cosacchi is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Peace and Justice Studies program at Marywood University, Scranton, PA.

Ecological Economics Jillianne Lyon is the program lead for the Climate + Dignity initiative, of Investor Advocates for Social Justice.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles Carolyn Cromer is Director of Ecological Sustainability for Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky.

Ecological Education Lydia Wylie-Kellerman, editor of *The Sandbox Revolution:*

Raising Kids for a Just World and her father, Bill Wylie-Kellerman, popular educator and community organizer on ecological issues in Detroit.

Ecological Spirituality Kathleen Deignan, CND, Director of The Deignan Institute for Earth and Spirit, Iona College, NY.

Community Engagement and Participatory Action Nancy Lorence, Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement.

All the presentations are archived here <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCImrLRD1M>



The Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station, NJ display a banner in the reception area of the motherhouse with our Commitment Statement to the Laudato Si' Action Platform and photos of the four seasons on our community properties.

-At this link find the beautiful statement of the Sisters of Charity of New York for International Rivers Day on March 14 and a prayer service celebrating rivers that can be adapted to other occasions as well

https://scny.org/sisters-of-charity-of-new-york-statement-on-international-day-of-action-for-rivers/?fbclid=IwAR3VKdqrIr6ljK34qTeatWh1oMcVyUZdCHhYt4yqO5-JW8PLj_EBeGhE-6Q

-Check out the powerful Climate in Crisis Statement of the Care of Creation Interest Group of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth <https://www.scls.org/wp-content/uploads/Climate-in-Crisis-Statement.pdf>

-Wonderful resources are available from the Sisters of Mercy in their *Awakening to a New Consciousness* — an Institute-wide theological reflection to listen deeply to the experiences of those most impacted by extractive industries; to engage in theological reflection and social analysis; to prepare for deep transformation as individuals, as community and as an Institute.

<https://www.sistersofmercy.org/homepage-awakening-new-consciousness-extractivism/>

-The Office of Ecological Sustainability of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth offers numerous resources and inspiring examples of what has been accomplished <https://nazareth.org/office-of-ecological-sustainability/>

-Webinars from EarthConnection of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati:

April 21, 2022 - “Ecospirituality through the Eyes of an Artist” – Part I

Presenter: Imogene Drummond, international artist, and filmmaker (New York)

April 28, 2022 - “Ecospirituality through the Eyes of an Artist” – Part II

May 12, 2022- “Explorations into the Life and Spirituality of Hildegard of Bingen” Part I Presenter:

Maureen Wild, SC (Gabriola Island, Canada)

May 26, 2022 - “Explorations into the Life and Spirituality of Hildegard of Bingen” Part II

All presentations are offered at 1 p.m. Eastern Time Zone

Webinars are free, but registration is required. For more information and to register go to:

www.scearthconnection.org.



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*INVEST IN OUR PLANET:
WHAT WILL YOU DO?*

Leader: The theme of Earth Day 2022 is *Invest In Our Planet. What Will You Do?* The theme takes a word that we usually associate with finances and deepens it. How will YOU invest? The sweat of your brow, the strength of your arms, the zeal of your spirit, the stirrings of your heart – how will each of us invest them in the future of our planet? As we begin our prayer, I invite you to center yourself for a few moments by gazing at this drawing of Vincent and Louise. Pray for their insight into the needs of those made poor and our beleaguered planet and the systems that cause poverty and environmental devastation. Pray for their zeal, inventive to infinity, in order to respond as they did.



From our contemplative silence, we raise our voices in joyous song:

At the Dawn of Your Creation, Carolyn Winfrey Gillette
HYMN TO JOY 8.7.8.7 D ("Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee")

At the dawn of your creation, God, you spoke, "Let there be light!"

You divided earth from heaven, you created day and night.

You made sunbeams dance with shadows, you created energy!

Peaceful evenings, bright tomorrows, all began with "Let there be..."

By your word, you formed creation: dry land, water, ocean breeze.

Soon there burst forth vegetation — plants with fruit, majestic trees.

Rain and snow and changing seasons, creatures filling land and sea —

God, your very good creation all began with "Let there be..."

When you made us as your children, sending us throughout your lands,

You commanded, "Have dominion — care for earth; it's in your hands."

Yet we hurt this world you've given; we harm earth and sky and sea.

We forget it's your creation — you, who once said "Let there be..."

At this joyful celebration, may we hear your word anew: *

May we care for your creation, knowing it's a trust from you.

Just as daily there's a dawning, bringing light to all we see,

So we daily hear your calling — you, who once said, "Let there be..."

A reading adapted from the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 30:

“Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster. For I command you this day to love your God and to keep God’s commands by walking in God’s ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the Holy One will bless you and the land. Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving your God, and committing yourself firmly to God’s way. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the God of Boundless Charity, you will live long in the land God swore to give your ancestors: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel; to Vincent and Louise, to Mother Seton; to all the Company of Charity, forever and ever.

Leader: Sally McFague in her article, *Kenosis, Climate Change and Christianity* invites us to see global climate change as a moral and spiritual issue. She also suggests that our spirituality is a special gift we can offer to the world that is looking for sources of strength and encouragement to face the challenge of global warming.

Reader 1

Their special gift—the millennia-old paradoxical insight that happiness is found in self-emptying, that satisfaction is found more in relationships than in things, and that simplicity can lead to a fuller life—is urgently needed today. I consider these words to be marching orders for religions.

Reader 2

Can religions make a contribution by sharing their profound, countercultural, and often unpopular message that abundant life at both personal and public levels is found not by expressing one's ego as our market-oriented, individualist culture encourages, but by losing one's ego in service to others?

Reader 3

We need to change our images of God, from seeing God as king and master over the world to imagining the world as within God, like a baby in the womb. We live and move and have our being within God. We need to wake up from the lie of the current worldview of individual, selfish fulfillment through consumerism to the reality of fulfillment by sharing with needy fellow creatures and the earth itself. Religious understandings of limitation, detachment, self-emptying, and compassion can help us do this.

Questions for Reflection/Journaling/Discussion:

1. Can I think of a passage of Scripture or a story from the Vincentian-Setonian tradition that inspires me and energizes me to invest more deeply in the future of our planet?
2. What aspects of our experience as Sisters of Charity might be a gift to the world as we mobilize together to act on global climate change?

A period of sharing may follow.

Closing Prayer:

God of Boundless Charity,
at the beginning of time
you joyfully shared yourself, invested yourself, in creation
in all its breathtaking beauty and wonderful diversity.
Help us to choose life
that we and all Earth's creatures might live.
We call on heaven and earth to witness the choices we make.
We call on Vincent and Louise,
we call on Mother Seton, we call on all our founders.
We call on our kin, all Earth's creatures to witness the choices we make.
For the sake of Earth,
for the sake of those made poor,
we, the Company of Charity,
choose life!

From contemplation to action...

Visit this website for suggestions for a deeper investment in the future of our planet and all its creatures
<https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-tips/>

