

CHARITY EARTH NETWORK NEWSLETTER

September 2022



When you receive the St. Vincent de Paul issue of the *Charity Earth Network Newsletter* we will be well into the celebration of the Season of Creation, September 1 - October 4. Established by Pope Francis in 2015, the Season of Creation was actually an initiative of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew starting in 1989. Every year the Season is catching on in popularity. Would that it would become as much part of the Catholic imagination as the Seasons of Advent and Lent.

This issue of the CEN newsletter shares the text of a talk by Fr. Terry Moran given to the Sisters of Charity of New York at their summer Congregation Day devoted in large part to the Congregation's participation in the Laudato Si' Action Platform. We also include some more the the commitment statements of the Federation Congregations to the LSAP. It's unfortunate that formatting issues don't permit us to share the statements as they were issued since they are as visually beautiful as they are inspiring.

Thanks to two NY Sisters of Charity for their contributions to this issue: Mary Ann Garisto, SC, one of the matriarchs of environmental consciousness and action in the Federation, who shares another of her excellent articles printed in the SCNY magazine VISION; Carol De Angelo who prepared the beautiful prayer service for this issue *Earth's Desire for Us ... the Company of Charity and the Children*.

As always, we welcome submissions of articles, news items, and photographs for the CEN. The next issue will be Earth Day, April 22, 2023. Send submissions to tmoran@scnj.ig We hope this issue provides material to inspire you to both reflection and action. Certainly the Federation Congregations are responding with deep listening and impressive action to the cry of Earth and the cry of Earth's poor.

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.



The Company of Charity Embraces Earth: The Sisters of Charity and the Laudato Si' Action Platform

On June 11, 2022, the Sisters of Charity of New York devoted a large portion of their Congregation Day to reflection on the Laudato Si' Action Platform. Part of that day was the following reflection by Fr. Terrence J. Moran, Director of the Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth. A fuller account of the day and photographs can be found at this link <https://scny.org/congregation-day-highlights-laudato-si-actions-and-planning-for-2023-assembly/>

I was behind a priest in a collar in Shoprite and he was buying hundreds of bottles of water. I said, "Father, don't you know how bad bottled water is for the environment? Haven't you read Laudato Si'?" He replied, "You've been listening to too many nuns." He had no idea how right he was. And he had no idea how grateful I am. I would not be the person I am today if I hadn't listened with great profit to many nuns over the years. We all remember exactly where we were on certain landmark dates -when JFK was assassinated; on 9/11. I remember exactly where I was when Laudato Si' came out; at Federation ecospirituality retreat in Emmitsburg given by Maureen Wild, SC Halifax. A few weeks before the official release of LS, a copy was leaked by the press. I read it in one sitting, riveted by what I

read. I remember in particular the line: “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” (217). As we just heard Bill Hurley say in the video, these were words I was longing to hear from my Church.

Have you heard the news that there’s a religious charism that was founded to respond to climate change? And to minister is a particular way to climate refugees? It’s your charism – the Vincentian charism. The Company of Charity began in the midst of the little ice age that was at its sharpest beginning in 1570- eleven years before Vincent was born and lasted until about twenty years after he died. It had profoundly disruptive effects on agriculture and failing harvests sent scores of peasants into cities like Paris where they became the urban poor that Vincent, Louise, and the Company of Charity served. So my friends, we’ve been here before! And you have already been responding out of the energy of the charism – as the video so beautifully demonstrates – the Sisters of Charity of New York had a Laudato Si’ Action Platform before there was a Laudato Si.’

Sr. Mary Maher is a theologian and the former superior general of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (the community that educated me). She has said that a religious charism is like a Buddhist meditation bell. The charism is the bell and the mallet is the needs of the world. The bell only sings when it is struck by the needs of the world. Pope Francis has said that the poorest of the poor is Mother Earth herself. So the Laudato Si’ Action Platform is not just another project. It is the mallet that will make the charism of Charity ring again; in new and beautiful and transforming ways.

Therefore, our engagement with the LSAP must be first of all be contemplative. Brian Swimme, the cosmological physicist who worked closely with Thomas Berry, says that the problem is not lack of information about climate change. The information is plentiful and clear. The problem is that the information doesn’t transform the human spirit. It cannot penetrate minds and hearts because it’s blocked by the dominant story of Western civilization. In Laudato Si’ Pope Francis identifies this dominant story as “the technocratic paradigm.”

THE TECHNOCRATIC PARADIGM

-a model of confrontation and control

Does this not typify our political and cultural discourse these days?

-based on the false notion of unlimited growth

In biology, unlimited growth is cancer. But is there any politician, of any country or party, who does not promise “unlimited growth” of the economy? A fatal delusion.

-reduces everything to a question of science or technology

I’m sure you have heard people say that science will find some technology to take care of climate change. When the real issue is learning a new mutually enhancing human/Earth relationship.

-dominates economic and political life

-sees profit as the only criterion

As long as shareholders' profits are increasing, the economy is doing well. It doesn't matter how the people on the bottom are faring.

-fosters a kind of specialization that blinds us to the big picture.

This is the bane of higher education at the moment. Even Catholic universities are gutting the liberal arts, philosophy, theology in favor of lucrative programs that will prepare students to occupy increasingly narrow specialized niches.

This all points to the crucial importance of Goal # 6 of the LSAP, Ecological Spirituality

If in living the LSAP we just consult scientists and technicians we won't get to the heart of the matter. Consult your spiritual directors who can teach us the skills of listening to Earth; consult your artists who can help release new imagination. Tragically, the main story tellers in our culture are corporations. Often when talking to the students at our Saint Elizabeth University, I show them a slide of ten corporate logos-the NIKE swoosh, the Apple apple. They can identify all of them with no problem. Then I show a slide of trees and plants on our campus. It's a rare student that can identify any of them. How corporate America has colonized their imaginations! Consult your teachers and preachers and poets for the skills about how to give voice to the beauty and pain of earth. Consult Indigenous peoples. Stan Rushworth, a Native elder from the West, points out, "Native peoples believe we were born into heaven. Christians believe they were kicked out of heaven." For Native people, life on this planet IS paradise. For Christians, life on this planet is exile from paradise.

I offer the icons of Angela Manno as an example of this new imagination.

<https://angelamanno.com/iconography> She began as a traditional iconographer who made a series of icons of endangered species. Let's just gaze contemplatively at each one for a moment. Do you remember years ago when Mel Gibson's movie on the Passion of Christ came out and the news showed people leaving theaters sobbing? The fact that people don't sob at these images of endangered species speaks to the truth of Brian Swimme's assertion about the tragic blockage in Western minds and hearts.

All of this can seem overwhelming to us – trying to change the dominant story of Western industrial culture! We were all schooled in Newtonian physics that taught us that the only thing that can resist a body in motion is an equal and opposite reaction. It is exhausting and often paralyzing to think that is what we have to come up with. But systems theory tells us another and more hopeful and energizing story. Small significant changes in a system can have disproportionate effects system wide. As an example, think of the impact Pope Francis made when we first saw his beat up old black shoes peeking out from under the papal cassock after years of seeing Benedict XVI and his red Prada shoes. The image of the papacy was changed profoundly just by a choice of shoes! And I'm sure when Francis got up on day one of his pontificate, he didn't think about changing the papacy when he put his shoes on. He did it because of who he is – and thereby changed one of the oldest and frankly most intractable institutions in the world. Perhaps the Company of Charity, just by unselfconsciously being who we are, can be that small change that alters the system profoundly.

As Francis points out in *Laudato Si'*: “There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity.” (LS 211)

Your beautiful Constitutions speak about “interdependence with all life,” and a “call to live in relationship with all creation.” In your next assembly: What voice will the Hudson River have? How much will its vote count? Will its vote even be solicited? When someone asks you how big your community is, will you reply with the number of sisters and associates or will you give the number of the millions of vital micro-organisms in the soil under your feet? If we believe in interdependence with all life, they are just as much a part of your community as each of you is. There’s a British climatologist named Jem Bendel who tells us, “If all your efforts toward ecological sustainability just get a microorganism in the Amazon another hour of life that it otherwise wouldn’t have had – it was all worth it.” Do you remember St. Therese of Lisieux and her little way? There is an incredible depth of spirituality in this ecological “little way.” And it calls for a profound ecological conversion from all of us to live it.

It's crucial to realize that we are not taking on the LSAP as just another task in already task-filled lives. We are taking it on because the charism compels us. In the worlds of Teilhard de Chardin “Love is the most universal, the most tremendous and the most mysterious of the cosmic forces... the physical structure of the universe is love.” Think of that - the physical structure of the universe in your charism!

One of the most remarkable works of popular theology ever to be written in the US is the Appalachian Peoples’ Pastoral from 2015, *The Telling Takes Us Home*
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e0ebce33d6a6002f3105cc7/t/5e1df76b71426f2f292296fb/1579022281302/The+Telling+Takes+Us+Home.pdf> You may remember that there were two previous Appalachian pastorals that were commissioned by the bishops of the region. By 2015 bishops has lost interest in such things and an enterprising group of lay people took up the project and conducted listening sessions the length and breadth of the region. Here is some of what they said:

“Our survival on this planet, and in the places we call home, depends on our ability to become attuned to the mystery at the heart of creation. That is, to become mystics.”

“For mystics in tune with the sacredness of Earth, destruction of creation is not merely an ecological problem or a moral issue, but sacramental sin, a sin against the very presence of God. For today’s mystics, the pollution of a river, and of the water that is the source of life, is an act of desecration no less severe than pouring poison in the Eucharistic chalice.”

There was a wonderful young Canadian Jesuit, Jim Profit, who died young of cancer. When he would give ecospirituality retreats at their center in Guelph, at the penitential rite of the liturgy, he would take a full trash can and dump the contents on the altar. I’m not sure I would be brave enough to do that but I certainly understand what motivated him – a visceral way of experiencing that polluting the body of God that is the universe is a sacrilege.

We are fond of focusing on our diminishments in religious life – our rising median age, our decreasing numbers, our limited finances. We must be equally cognizant that we live in a time of great blessedness in the history of religious life. We are being called to a contemplative depth perhaps unparalleled in the history of religious life. So we live in a time of tremendous privilege in religious life. For some reason unknow to ourselves, God and the evolving universe thought we are just the ones to meet this daunting challenge and to plumb these contemplative depths.

Our engagement must be collaborative. For me one of the most important of the 7 goals of the LSAP is the 7th - Community Resilience and Empowerment. We think LSAP is going to mean shorter showers and less meat eating and those are important – because real change involves the body, not just the head. But the fact is that every Congregation in the Federation could become carbon neutral tomorrow and it would have relatively little impact on the climate catastrophe. In the famous words of folk singer Utah Phillips, “The earth is not dying, it is being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses.” These slides show the names of the CEOs of the top companies who are killing the planet. It’s easy to think of these companies as anonymous monoliths – but they are run by men, and it’s almost always men, who have names and addresses and hearts and minds that need to be called to ecological conversion. Our collaboration with other groups to nonviolently disarm these murders is crucial. When climate activist Bill McKibben is asked, “What can one individual do?” he replies, “Stop thinking you are an individual.” That why the work that our congregations do in corporate responsibility and monitoring investments is so crucial. Equally important is your “arm chair advocacy” – sending those emails, calling those politicians is crucial. I heard a CEO say once-there’s nothing more fearsome than a nun with an iPhone.

As Sr. Margaret O’Brien said in the video - there is a sense of empowerment in being in a common project with 1.2 billion other people around the world. I encourage you to read a wonderful document that got regrettably little attention; from the Interdicasterial Working Group of the Holy See on Integral Ecology: *Journeying towards Care for Our Common Home: Five Years after Laudato Si.* It contains hundreds of examples of remarkable things Catholics are doing all over the world to achieve sustainability. We see in the news examples of religiously motivated violence in Africa. We never hear

that Catholics, other Christians, Muslims, and animists in Africa have formed Laudato Si' groups that recognize that the theological ideas that divide us are not as important as uniting for the healing of the land, air, and water that we all share. And we need in a special way to be in collaboration with environmental groups lead by Black, Indigenous and Peoples of Color.

You may be familiar with the Canadian journalist Naomi Klein and her 2014 book, *This Changes Everything*. She points out that the climate catastrophe is in one sense good news. If we join forces to face it (and we know this is a very big "if") we will also solve every other intractable human problem – income inequality, food insecurity, racial and gender prejudices, inadequate access to health care, etc. because they are all rooted in uncontrolled global capitalism. This is exactly what Pope Francis means by integral ecology and he is about the only world leader who is making this connection – the cry of Earth and the cry of those made poor are one cry.

Naomi Klein talks about the moments in the past when ordinary people have mobilized to “exercise their utopian muscle.” Humanity is at its best when it faces seemingly impossible odds. She references:

- the labor movement. Certainly there is still manifest injustice in the world of labor. But at one time 7 year old children worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week, in mines in the United States and thanks to the labor movement that no longer happens.
- the Civil Rights movement. Racial inequity and white supremacy continue to be America's original sin but if someone told an enslaved person in 19th century America that in a few generations a person of African descent would be the president of the country that enslaved them it would have seems like a cruel joke – but it happened.
- the women's movement: In the lifetime of every person in this room, a woman in the US could not get a credit card in her own name but only through her husband. There still exist sinful inequities based on gender but there has also been incredible progress in a short time.

All this came from ordinary people exercising the utopian muscle. I had the privilege a number of years ago of visiting the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta where Martin Luther King was pastor. What most impressed me was not the beautiful sanctuary where Dr. King preached his fiery sermons. I was most moved by the church basement. It looked like every church basement that we have all spent hours in – beat up folding tables, uncomfortable metal chairs, green linoleum floor, big coffee urns. It was there that ordinary people exercised their utopian muscle; there they prayed, strategized, dreamed, planned, and came back again to keep planning after defeats. As Ella Baker said, “Martin didn't make the movement. The movement made Martin.”

You may recall the famous photo of Greta Thunberg when she led a climate walk out from her school...and no one followed her. The dejected girl sitting alone on the sidewalk outside her school with her banner. And you may recall as well, a year later Greta was addressing the United Nations. What a stunning icon of an ordinary person exercising her utopian muscle. And another example of how a small shift in a system can have exponentially large results.

I have some homework for you to do. It's very Vincentian homework. Vincent met a theologian whose spirit was in turmoil because of great temptations against his faith. Vincent was so moved by his distress that, in prayer to the Lord, he offered to undertake these doubts himself in place of this tortured soul. And that is what happened. The theologian has his peace of mind restored, but now Vincent was overwhelmed with doubts about the faith. His way of coping with these was to write out the Creed on a piece of parchment and to place a copy of the Creed in a pocket near his heart and touch it at moments of exceptional stress. This cloud was to hang over him for about four years, and only lifted after he promised God that he would dedicate the rest of his life to serving the poor. Vincent generously took on the experience of the suffering of another as his own. I invite you now to reflect in silence – Think of the victims of the planetary climate crisis. Whose suffering especially touches you? – dolphins who wash up on beaches, their stomachs filled with plastic; farmers who can no longer maintain their farms because of irregular weather patterns; Indigenous peoples whose waters are privatized; children who can no longer marvel at the stars because of air and light pollution. Write out on a piece of paper these words from the Earth Charter that Pope Francis quotes in *Laudato Si'*, #207 (you can look them up – this is a devious way to get you to dig out your copy of *Laudato Si'*).

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

Put it in your pocket as a creed; touch it in times of stress when you feel overwhelmed; but also touch it in times of joy, when you feel the ancient love energizing you for the great work of our time. As our brother Francis reminds us at the conclusion of *Laudato Si'* : May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope. Let us sing as we go.

Laudato Si' Action Platform Commitment Statements

We continue our sharing of the commitment statements made by Federation Congregations to the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform. True to our tradition, they are rooted in the charism, beautifully expressed, and “inventive to infinity.”

Sister of Charity of Seton Hill

We, the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, an international apostolic congregation, reverence the dignity of each person and of all creation. We commit ourselves to work for the protection of human rights and for the preservation of nature, affirming that action on behalf of peace and justice is fundamental to the mission of the church (Constitutions Art. 6)

We publicly commit to join the worldwide Catholic community in responding to Pope Francis' appeal to participate in a seven-year journey toward sustainability and integral ecology by developing a *Laudato Si'* Action Platform. This is a deepening and a renewal of our recent General Chapter (2019) Statement:

The Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill move beyond frontiers to witness charity and justice to our wounded world.

We advocate for and serve with those who live in poverty.

We model interculturality and reconciliation.

We restore and protect the earth.

This commitment is made in faith, hope, and love, recognizing that the Charity of Christ urges us, knowing that we are participating in God's work of transformation, "for we know that things can change." (LS 13).

Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati

Because we Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati dwell in this house of love and encounter God, we commit ourselves to choose to live simply in a complex world committed to the healing of our global home" (SC Vision Statement). We hear the summons of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* "to profound interior conversion; a reexamining of our relationship with the Creator, with creation and with our brothers and sisters" (LS217).

As a Congregation, we embrace the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform and commit ourselves to journey together towards ecological conversion. We recognize that we have entered a new age, one which thrusts us into a new relationship with God and with the community of all of creation. This new understanding, this new sense of communion with planet Earth, has entered our minds and hearts. Reading the signs of the times we see the intersectionality of the devastation of Earth, poverty, racism, migration and other social injustices.

We will enter into this process of ecological conversion through education, advocacy efforts, use of renewable energies, and the responsible use of our resources for the benefit of Earth and all creation. Imbued with a deep faith in the active presence of God, we will continually seek to integrate our spirituality and sustainability as we prayerfully commit to allowing the awareness of the sacredness of all creation to guide our actions.

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth

We, Sisters of Charity of Nazareth and Associates, grateful to God for all Creation, reverence the sacredness and interconnectedness of all and commit ourselves to a sustainable relationship with Earth. This commitment builds upon the work begun with our Mission Statement of 1995 when we pledged to "care for the earth," and an additional statement in 2000 as we pledged to "scrutinize carefully our own lifestyle and our environmental practices and policies in each culture in which we live."

We again hear the urgent call to respond to the cry of the Earth and the economically poor, and joyfully and earnestly commit ourselves as a Congregation to the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform. We join in its seven-year journey to continue our efforts to transition into integral ecology and to intensify our efforts

to address the destruction of God’s creation, acknowledging that as the environmental crisis worsens, so does its impact on the economically poor, women, and the other species with whom we share our planet home.

This commitment marks our willingness:

- to listen and respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor by making them Congregational priorities;
- to further our ongoing ecological conversion by assisting our members to come to a greater understanding of our socio-ecological vocation within the spirit of the Vincentian charism;
- to integrate each of the seven Laudato Si’ goals into our life and mission by developing a systematic process to transition into an integral ecology;
- to take bold concrete actions in the spirit of Laudato Si’ to address the multiple crises afflicting our common home; and
- to practice nonviolence as we reconcile and heal the pain in creation and sow hope for the planet.

We will collaborate with others in this urgent task, working with them to exchange ideas, in advocacy and policy intervention, and sharing with them our gifts and resources. This commitment is made in faith, hope, and love, knowing that we are participating in God’s work of transformation.



Sisters of Charity of New York place cards expressing their commitment to the Laudato Si Action Platform in a unique “earth bowl,” a large glass globe depicting the earth, hand-painted by Gary Finelli, a retired art teacher in Wassaic, N.Y.



At this link you can find the recording of the most recent webinar of the Charity Earth Network: *Full Reservoirs Spilling Out The Company of Charity and the LSAP*. Sisters and Associates gathered from across the Federation to hear Sr. Margaret O'Brien, Sisters of Charity of New York, and Sister Caroljean Willie, Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, discuss their Congregations' experience with the Laudato Si' Action Platform so far.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKZ_s6ThCaE



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

The Creation's Transformative Energy Committee (CTEC) of SCNY has committed to reducing plastics in our lives, and we invite you to do the same. We can begin by reflecting on how our habits contribute to what Pope Francis calls a "throwaway culture." "We cannot allow our seas and oceans to be littered by endless fields of floating plastic," said Pope Francis. When Pope Francis spoke these words, he was referring to the three large islands of plastic rubbish and microplastics that have ended up in the Pacific Ocean. Food packaging accounts for more than 40% of this waste. Many sea and land animals are suffering and dying because of microplastics. What are microplastics? They are fragments of plastic less than five millimeters in length that are difficult to recycle-reuse, and, as plastics of all sizes, do not readily break down. Like single-use plastic, less than 10% of microplastics are recycled, over 75% end up in landfills or oceans, and nearly 10% are incinerated. Microplastics are found in a variety of environments. Marine animals, fish and birds often ingest the plastics, resulting in neurological and reproductive toxicity, and work their way up through food chains. They have been detected in drinking water, food products, seafood, table salt, human tissues and organs, and human blood. Scientists are presently exploring the impact on microplastics on humans. They also have been found to be a source of air pollution. Microplastics are also produced commercially in the form of microbeads, which are found in cosmetics, synthetic clothing materials, plastic bags and plastic bottles. More information microplastics is available on the Wikipedia, Britannica or National Geographic websites. Another way to reduce and eliminate use of plastic is by becoming an aware consumer. The CTEC has sent out specific calls to action, recommending consumers to take the following steps: » Take an inventory of the food you buy and its packaging. Consider asking the store manager if there are efforts to reduce use of plastic in food packaging. » Learn how your municipality handles plastics in its recycling stream. Near the Mount, for example, tours are held at the Yonkers Material Recovery Facility

(off the N.Y.S. Thruway near the Stew Leonard exit). » The Beyond Plastics website, www.beyondplastics.org provides a wealth of information on the topic. The national project, based at Bennington College in Vermont, pairs environmental policy experts with college students to build an anti-plastics movement. The site includes many studies, fact sheets, and reports. And if you haven't done so already, please consider replacing your water bottle with a stainless steel or glass bottle. According to Beyond Plastics, "one million single-use plastic bottles are bought around the world every minute and more than half-trillion plastic bottles are sold annually, but less than one-third of all plastic bottles will ever be recycled." Keep watching this space for more suggestions on how to lower your carbon footprint.

This article by Sr. Mary Ann Garisto, SC is reprinted with permission from the Summer 2022 issue of VISION, the publication of the Sisters of Charity of New York. To read the entire issue <https://scny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Vision-Summer-2022-web.pdf>



The Charity Earth Network Newsletter is published three times a year - January 4, April 22, September 27. Editors: Carol De Angelo, SC, Fr. Terrence Moran, John Shively, Caroljean Willie, SC. Layout: Donna Sartor, Director of Communications, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth.



Earth's Desire for Us ... the Company of Charity and the Children

Preparation: Prepare an environment for prayer if you wish. On it place a picture of a child and an object that connects you with the energies of Earth or one of her creatures.. Invite a favorite tree, flower, plant, or animal into the circle of prayer.

Leader invites someone to read *Prayer to the Children*.

Let us dedicate this time of prayer to the children:

To all the children.

To the children who swim beneath
The waves of the sea, to those who live in
The soils of the Earth, to the children of the flowers
in the meadows and the trees of the forest,
To all those children who roam over the land
And the winged ones who fly with the winds,
To the human children too, that all the children
May go together into the future in the full
Diversity of their regional communities.

Thomas Berry, Thomas Berry Foundation

Leader: As we pray for all the children, we begin by invoking Saint Vincent de Paul and the Company of Charity who have gifted us with the legacy of Charity. May the spirit of Vincent inspire us to listen and respond to Earth's Desire and Dream ... for us, for all the children, for the healing of the Earth and all its communities of life. Together, we believe that "love is inventive unto infinity."

Side 1: We gather as Company of Charity inviting the Earth to dream in us. We believe the Vincentian virtues of humility, charity, simplicity, and zeal, gifted to us personally and communally, will open us to listen to Earth's Desire and Dream.

Side 2: We trust Earth's infinite psychic energies will show the way to "love inventive unto infinity." Laudato Si' calls us to see ourselves as one with nature, not separate from it, and to take sabbath time so we can see with the gaze of Jesus and awaken to the beauty, wonder and awe of Earth and her energies.

Time to read and reflect silently on two passages from Thomas Berry.

Thomas Berry's poem, Earth's Desire. (Also available on YouTube with Thomas Berry reading it. <https://thomasberry.org/thomas-berry-recites-earths-desire/>)

What does the Earth desire? I will put it in just a few short sentences.... To be admired in her loveliness, to be tasted in her delicious fruits, to be listened to in her teaching, to be endured in the severity of her discipline, to be cared for as a maternal source from whence we come, a destiny to which we return. It's very simple."

"The capacity to wonder is the deep experience of life and its grandeur. It's the highest experience we can have. It's the moment when a person, or a thing, or a mountain, or a tree, or whatever it is, overwhelms us with delight. It's an ecstatic moment, you might say. When we see a butterfly dance its way over a meadow, it's a kind of ecstatic joy experience. Watch children. They wade in a stream or sit in a mud puddle; it's such a great experience. They like to chase a butterfly. It's kind of an ecstatic moment. OR simply to run over a field after being cooped up for a while. Let a two or three or four-year-old child loose, and they just run into the distance, to the universe, to the larger self of their own being." Thomas Berry

Reader: Let us listen to Thomas describe "A single sacred community," Thomas Berry | June 2017 (Vol. XXX, No. 6) from CREATIVE ENERGY.

It is my hope that all the children, the children of the deer and the wolf, the whale and other marine forms of life; the children of the osprey and the bluebird and the butterfly; the children of the oak and the pine and the dogwood; the children all together with the human children will go into the future in oneness "as a single sacred community." ... The human is less a being on the earth or in the universe than a dimension of the earth and indeed of the universe itself. We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth, and the imperatives of our own being. Each of these has a creative power and a vision far beyond any rational thought or cultural creation of which we are capable. Nor do we think of these as isolated from our own individual being or from the human community. We have no existence except within the earth and within the universe.

Take a few moments to notice "What is stirring within you?"

Leader: We yearn for beauty, wonder and awe that will awaken Earth's Dream in us so that we will go into the future "as a single sacred community." We want to be there for the children – all the children of the Earth. We invite Earth to dream in us that we may incarnate the energies of Love, personally and communally. Let us take a few minutes to read silently these familiar quotes of Vincent with the intention that we draw on their wisdom and on the faith of those who have gone before us in this new moment in the life of the Company of Charity.

Quotes of Vincent to be read silently

In prayer... the heart receives renewed strength, feeling energized by a courage it hadn't experienced before. *Saint Vincent de Paul, Conference, "Mental Prayer," May 31, 1648.*

Our vocation is to go ... all over the world ... to set people's hearts on fire, to do what the Son of God did. He came to set the world on fire in order to inflame it with his love ... Now, if we're really called to take the love of God far and near, if we must set nations on fire with it, if our vocation is to go throughout the world to spread this divine fire! ... If we had only a little of that love, would we stand around with our arms folded? *18 Saint Vincent de Paul, Conference, "Charity," May 30, 1659*

Let us leave here matters to God ... Remember that God will take care of you everywhere. *24 Saint Vincent de Paul, Conference, "Trust in Divine Providence," June 9, 1658.*

Let us stand fast, for love of God; ... Let us do the good that presents itself and do it in the ways you have mentioned. I am not saying that we have to go to extremes and undertake everything indiscriminately, but to do the things God shows us that he wants us to do. We belong to Him and not to ourselves; if he increases our work, he will also increase our strength. *25 Saint Vincent de Paul, Conference, December 6, 1658*

If time allows, share how we the Company of Charity are being invited today to live into Earth's Desire and Dream so we are there for all the children.

Opportunity to offer Prayers of Hope, Healing, Intercession or Petition.

Closing Blessing – say together or alternately

May the wonder of the night sky take away our fears and help us walk untrodden paths.

May the depths of the ocean and all that lives within it open us to the unfolding mystery of life.

May times of dawn and dusk open our hearts and minds to the gift of change in our lives as we also honor both the light and darkness in our lives.

May the healing power of water refresh and strengthen us.

May we see reflected in the beauty and majesty of God's Creation our own beauty.

May we reverence and respect ourselves and each other, for the sake of the healing of the Earth and for the children, all the children here now and those yet to be born.