

CHARITY EARTH NETWORK NEWSLETTER



Earth Day April 2024

Did you miss the January/Elizabeth Seton issue of *Charity Earth Network Newsletter*? Well, there was no rash of anxious emails or phone calls looking for it! With the way the Christmas holidays fell this year, it was impossible to get the Elizabeth Seton issue out in time. In fact, it has been a challenge every year so the Steering Committee has decided to move to a twice a year publication schedule for the CEN Newsletter – September 27 for St. Vincent de Paul and April 22 for Earth Day. We intend no slight to Mother Seton who is a founder or patron for many of the Congregations in the Federation. And we hope to focus on her love of creation in other ways.

Our 2024 Earth Day issue reports on the Foodprint/Food Justice orientation that emerged from the historic Joint Assembly of the Sisters of Charity of New York and Saint Elizabeth in April

2023. We also share a talk that Sr. Carol De Angelo gave at an October 2023 *Truth, Reckoning and Right Relationship with the Great Lakes* Conference. In many ways one of the most important efforts that we make is our collaboration with secular ecological groups who so often express their gratitude for the faith-based perspective that we bring to the table. We invite you on an ecotour of several Federation Congregations to take a glimpse of their sustainability efforts. Thanks to Cj Willie, SC for the lovely Earth Day prayer service.

On Earth Day 2024 may the Federation echo the words of the Earth Charter, quoted by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* (2017) “ 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.”

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.

Sisters of Charity on Both Sides of the Hudson Deepen Their Commitment to Laudato Si'

In April 2023, the Sisters of Charity of New York and the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth held an historic Joint General Assembly. One of the decisions of the Assembly called the two Congregations to renewed action on climate change: “Together in Charity, meeting our graced future, we commit to continuing our legacy of Charity by living into the vision of Laudato Si’. We ask both our Congregations, Sisters and Associates, and invite others to reduce our carbon foot print with a focus on food print.” A team was formed to oversee the implementation of this decision: Sr. Sheila Brosnan (NY), Sr. Carol De Angelo (NY), Fr Terrence Moran (SE), Sr. Mary Morley (SE), and Sr. Margaret O’Brien (NY). Here are some of the implementation activities that the two Congregations have undertaken, jointly and individually, in the past year:

Joint NY/ Saint Elizabeth Actions:

- changed the name of the team to *Joint Assembly Climate Crisis Implementation Team* to reflect sense of urgency about climate in *Laudate Deum*.
- sponsored two ZOOM session with input on *Laudate Deum* and solicited suggestions for implementation from sisters and associates. These sessions can be watched here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ytj6JqTrs5U>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxapJVdv0sc>
- produced and distributed a climate crisis holy card – art by Donna Korba, IHM; prayer by Fr. Terrence Moran



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.
Creator God, you looked with pleasure on everything you
made;
Jesus, you delighted in the flowers of the field and the
birds of the air;
Spirit of wind and flame, you are the energy of Charity that
fills the cosmos.

We, your Company of Charity, give ourselves to respond to the climate crisis
with imagination, courage, and hope. Amen.

- hosted a ZOOM discussion group on *The Meal that Reconnects: Eucharistic Eating and the Global Food Crisis*. About 25 participants at each session and rich discussion.
- We have been investigating the options for composting; watched Mariandale video [Earth to Earth-Mission training on composting \(vimeo.com\)](#); We will sponsor a ZOOM webinar on composting, The Spirituality of Soil, on May 6, 6:00 PM EDT - Eric Anglada, St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm, Cuba City, WI; Peggy Linehan, NYC composter. All are welcome! <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88948289073?pwd=ZkxUV1Zvc3ZPdmlsMVdwa1VYRCtFUT09>
Meeting ID: 889 4828 9073 Passcode: 1HBabb
- Viewing of movie, *Common Ground*, on April 22nd Earth Day evening at 6:30 pm EDT <https://interfaithpowerandlight.org/faithclimateactionweek/2024-featured-film-common-ground/>
- both Congregations shared Lenten Calendar “Transformation Begins at a Table” focused on foodprint.
- At the suggestion of the SCNY Voting and Anti-Racism Committee, both Congregations took up a collection meeting to benefit Soul Fire Farm, a black and indigenous-owned farm in upstate New York, which works for food justice and promotes agriculture based on ancient and regenerative practices. <https://www.soulfirefarm.org/>
- Hosted two ZOOM Prayer Services at which sisters and associates committed themselves to action in implementing the Assembly goals. The prayer service can be watched here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6Veavb6jGc>

Saint. Elizabeth Initiatives:

- SC Saint Elizabeth Motherhouse new banner at gate: “Less Meat/Less Heat”



SCNJ.org

**Less Meat,
Less Heat!
Eat more
vegetables
to fight
global warming!**

- in consultation with Motherhouse Food Committee and kitchen staff, on-going efforts to address foodprint; Meatless Mondays (in addition to Fridays); elimination of single use plastics, e.g. plastic wrap on rolls; switched to cardboard rather than plastic milk cartons; eliminated single use condiment packets.
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New York Initiatives

- An extensive energy audit has been conducted for the entire Mount St. Vincent campus and implementation is ongoing.
- Sr. Margaret O'Brien has met with convent kitchen staff and is gratified with the many efforts taking place.
- A recent Congregation Day focused on Eucharist and its relation to the Pascal Mystery/natural cycle of dying/rising.
- Laudato Si' Committee is working on cartoon-type reminders about food to publish in Focus, the internal Congregation publication.

While no one went into the Joint Assembly expecting a focus on food, we all agree that it was a movement of the Spirit that has given new energy to our ongoing efforts to deepen our engagement with *Laudato Si'*.

Fr. Terrence Moran is the Director of the Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth and a member of the Steering Committee of the Charity Earth Network.



At the October 2023 *Truth, Reckoning and Right Relationship with the Great Lakes (Part 1)* Conference sponsored by CELDF (Community and Education Legal Defense Fund) and several of its partners, Sister Carol De Angelo was asked to speak on the impact of religion on rights of nature. Carol named her presentation, *A Person of Faith's Testimony and Perspective: Learning and Listening to See Anew*. [Click here](#) to listen to Carol's presentation. Carol was invited to present because of her and ROAR's (Religious Organizations Along the River) involvement with Rights of Nature and Hudson River. If interested, [click here](#) to view the 10 minute video that gives a brief overview of each presenter. [Click here](#) to find the links to all the presentations.

The Impact of Religion: A Person of Faith's Testimony and Perspective - Listening and Learning to See Anew,

I begin my testimony with three quotes from Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*.

"...our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life..." (LS#1)

"We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of earth (Gen2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters." (LS#2)

"Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it." (LS#139)

Imagine, if we / I truly believed and lived these statements! How might the Great Lakes, the land, water and air around us be thriving rather than facing threats and harm. Pope Francis is very clear on the harms we have done and are still doing to our Common Home, Earth.

Though Pope Francis and leaders of other world religions acknowledge the harm we are doing, as well as our responsibility to change attitudes and actions, we have a long way to go to connect religion and faith with our responsibility to repair and heal, and even more to see ourselves as intimately connected with the air, the water, the land...to see ourselves as one with nature.

Pope Francis invites us to a new way of seeing, being and acting which is no easy task. So that is why the title of my testimony includes, Listening and Learning to See Anew. World religions are inviting us to "see" in a new way our relationship with the Earth and our responsibility in caring for it.

I mention three areas where I believe religion has impacted our relationship with nature, very often causing harm. I speak as a person of faith grounded in the Roman Catholic religion and as a peace, justice, and care of creation practitioner.

I Sacred Scriptures, especially our Creation stories. Understanding our sacred writings is critical. There have been times when we use them to cause and justify harm. Think of the two Creation stories in the Book of Genesis. While the first Creation story in Chapter 1 emphasizes that "God looked at everything he made, and he found it very good", we also read in that same chapter, "God blessed them saying ... fill the earth and subdue it... have dominion over the fish ..., the birds ... and all living things." Yet in Chapter 2 of Genesis, the second Creation story speaks of man being formed "out of the clay of the ground" and tilling the soil. One creation

story emphasizes dominion over earth. The other reminds us that we are made from the dust of Earth and invites us to care for and tend it.

Which story inspires us and moves us to act? If we see ourselves as part of Creation, as part of the earth, the soil, the dust of the earth, would our mindset and actions be different than if we took the word of Genesis 1 to heart, that we have “dominion” over all creatures? Two words, dominion (as it is understood in Scripture), and stewardship (as it is understood in the body of religious teaching) are important for us to grapple with as we move forward in the rights of nature movement.

II Image of God / Relationship With God

The second area that impacts religion is our image of God and how that affects our relationship with God and others. I believe how we image God is connected to the harming or healing of Earth and her peoples. A difficult topic to delve into, I mention it here since religion and image of God are intertwined, though in reality different. I think of Isaac Newton, who lived in the late 1600’s, early 1700’s, who thought of God as Clockmaker, a God of a Mechanical Universe, a God who set things in motion and the world just kept going! And, I wonder how many people still “see” God as looking over them, controlling their destiny. Yet a very different way of imaging God grew out of a cloistered monastery 600 years earlier in the 11th Century, where Abbess Hildegard of Bingen in her healing images of God spoke of *viriditas* – “greenness” - the cosmic life force infusing the natural world. For Hildegard, the Divine manifested itself and was apparent in nature. Two different ways of imaging and knowing God, leading to two different ways of seeing the world and acting in it!

When I was in elementary school, the image in the religion books was that of the triangle with God at the top and in descending order, man, then woman, then child, then animals, then trees and plants, then rocks and so on. That image has influenced laws, policies, norms. Today, the image in my “mind’s eye” and many people of faith is one where we – the sun, water, land, tree, animals and plants and farmer tilling the soil - are all connected and interdependent, part of a web of life. So, one image I have of God is a Living Presence and Energy of Love permeating all of Creation inviting me / us to co-create with God a healthy sustainable future.

III History/Knowledge of how religion has played a role in shaping events and history is critical. I can only touch on this briefly. The early Church, built on the faith of Christians who were martyred because of their beliefs, changed drastically in the 4th Century when Constantine converted to Christianity, became emperor, and declared Christianity to be the religion of the Roman Empire. When Christianity became the dominant religion, it was closely connected to political structures and thus, it was difficult to separate Christianity, from the nations that formed. You might remember studying the Theory of the Divine Right of Kings in school.

It was just over these past few years that I became aware of the history of and harm caused by the Doctrine of Discovery. My involvement with several groups called me to delve more deeply into racism, white privilege, the legacy of Native American Boarding Schools in USA and Canada, and ultimately the Doctrine of Discovery. Through webinars and conversations, I listened and learned and came to “see” how the Doctrine of Discovery (DOD) has impacted our way of thinking, our legal system, and ultimately, who got to own the land and be master of It.

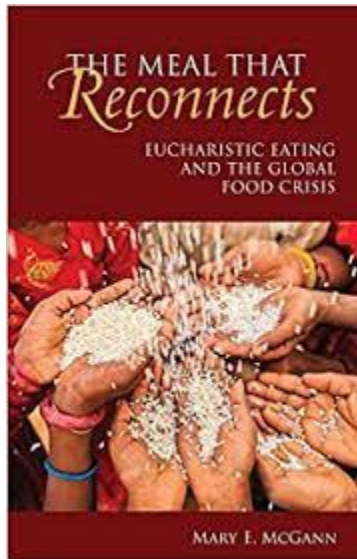
My “eyes” were opened to the devastating impact that the Doctrine of Discovery (DOD) had on the world, in particular here in the United States. I “saw” how our connection to land, water and nature, and the laws that have come about, are tightly wound up in the complex Doctrine of Discovery (DOD).

At its heart, the DOD history is the power and influence of the Catholic Church in the 15th and 16th Centuries. Three Papal Bulls, that are not considered official Church teaching, gave license for nations in the “new world” to take control over both people and land. People’s dignity, their land, rights and freedom were taken away.

The U.S. Supreme Court legal decision in the 1823 case Johnson v. McIntosh was based on the Doctrine of Discovery. Chief Justice John Marshall's opinion in the unanimous decision held "that the principle of discovery gave European nations an absolute right to New World lands." In essence, American Indians had only a right of occupancy, which could be abolished. Out of this 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision, a two hundred years’ history emerged in our country that has legalized how we come to look at land, and the absolute right to own and control it.

I believe we are at a new moment and are part of a movement that is articulating and acting to reduce harm. I know many people of faith committed to repairing, healing and transformation. As ROAR we have immersed ourselves in a new Creation story, which complements the Creation stories in Genesis. We are part of a 14 billion year unfolding ongoing development of a universe which reveals that we are all connected and interrelated. We recognize that conscious awareness, networking, collaboration, addressing root causes and seeing the intersectionality of issues are critical if we are to move forward from our adolescence as humanity to becoming a humanity that is mature and conscious of our collective power to co-create our future.

Sister Carol De Angelo, SC is the Director of the Office of Peace, Justice, and Integrity of Creation for the Sisters of Charity of New York and a member of ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River).



Sister of Charity of Saint Elizabeth Mary Morley reflects on a book group of the Sisters of Charity of New York and Saint Elizabeth on *The Meal That Reconnects: Eucharistic Eating and the Global Food Crisis*. The book group was one response of their Congregations to the decision of their April 2023 Joint General Assembly to focus on foodprint/food justice.

Over the past three months a group of sisters, associates, and partners in mission gathered on ZOOM and engaged in a discussion of the book by Dr. Mary E. McGann, RSCJ. Each week we addressed a different part. Part I addressed *Eating as Relationship*; Part II – *Broken Relationships: Dining in Industrial Food System*; and Part III - *Eucharist – the Meal that Reconnects*.

The discussions were rich and very engaging. New insights were shared, many challenges and new perspectives were raised. As mentioned in the book, food is a gift and when we share a meal it is a source of fellowship. We are called to see Christ's continual presence in the breaking of the bread. There are so many people in the world who never have enough to eat and food is central to life. One question was, "Do the needs of future generations influence your choices about food: what, where, and how much do you eat? If not, what new insight and responsibility emerge with more awareness of their potential needs?"

When we read the Scriptures, they are full of meal stories (e.g., the accounts of the loaves and fishes.) Jesus called us to an inclusive table where all were invited and welcomed and yet all are not welcome in our church today. Let us think about who is excluded. In Part II, the author addressed the question of broken relationships. Do we think about where our food comes from? Or about the farmers who struggle to make an existence? Processed food has become a large part of our diet and yet this does great harm to farmers. Human hunger is rising and is alarming. What is our responsibility? Perhaps we need to re-evaluate what we buy, where we buy it and what we eat. Do we support local farmers? Have we thought about a garden - plant the seeds, work with

the soil? Did you know that 70% of the world's food growers are small farmers, and most are women? There are many questions to ponder as we move forward.

In Part III, the chapter begins with this statement: "Laudato Si", promulgated by Pope Francis in 2015, is a clarion call, a strong and heartfelt plea to people around the globe to wake up, recognize the global emergency that surrounds us..." Do we/you believe that we are facing a global emergency? God owns the planet and all its riches – it does not belong to us. All the earth is for the common good - we need to accept the challenge to address these critical issues and to commit to making changes in our own lives and attitudes.

This book is a "must-read" for those of us who are committed to changing structures and attitudes.

Sister Mary Morley is a Sister of Charity of Saint Elizabeth who lives in Convent Station, NJ

Ordering information for the book <https://litpress.org/Products/6031/The-Meal-That-Reconnects>



An Ecotour of the Federation:

A glimpse of the activities of the Federation Congregations in care of Earth, our Common Home
Sisters of Charity of Halifax

We believe that all creation is sacred and interconnected and interdependent ... We believe that a small group of committed persons can help change the world.

Our ministries and values reflect much that is found within the Earth Charter (which we endorsed) and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, and within Pope Francis' *Laudato si*.

We have had this agenda for a very long time. To name a few endeavors:

- Our Corporate Stance statements on Debt, Water and Human Trafficking
- Our water projects for the people of Peru and the Dominican Republic
- Creating workshops that show the connection between our present economic system and the devastation of the earth and the poor
- Congregational donations to areas of devastation

- Our educational work around climate change
- Providing resources such as videos and readings on care of the earth and our right relationship with all created life
- Economic and social justice and peace-making efforts
- Sponsoring retreats focused on the New Cosmology and the work of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme

Daughters of Charity – St. Louise Province

Corporate Stance on the Environment Heeding Pope Francis’ call in Laudato Si: Care for our Common Home, The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology, as well as the 2030 United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of the United States and Canada adopt a stance toward protecting and sustaining Mother Earth on a local, national, and global level. We will animate this stance by:

- Educating ourselves on environmental issues affecting our local cities, North America and the World;
- Fostering a consciousness of care for the environment within our local communities and ministries and implementing alternative behaviors whenever possible;
- Participating in the Laudato Si’ Movement and other partnerships to support changes in governmental, corporate, and personal practices which impact the care of “our common home”;
 - Advocating for and supporting legislation that aims to protect Mother Earth from further degradation and promotes environmentally friendly processes;
 - Praying that all people care for “our common home” by living in solidarity with Earth, its creatures and natural resources.

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth

Eliminating single-use plastics

Plastic waste is threatening waterways, aquatic habitats, and the ecological balance of our global communities. The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth are doing our part to eliminate our consumption of single-use plastics through refusal to purchase plastics, reuse of materials, and the production and use of more sustainable materials.

- We are eliminating plastic waste from our congregations in India.
- We are eliminating single-use plastic materials on our campus at Nazareth, KY.
- We are intentionally eliminating plastic waste and use from our communities in Louisville, KY.
- We hope to alleviate global plastic waste by empowering communities in which we serve to reduce plastic consumption.

Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati

The newly formed Earth Justice Circle which includes Sisters, Associates, and members of other congregations interested in environmental sustainability aims to:

- Support recycling efforts at the Motherhouse and Mother Margaret Hall

- Keep community members informed about environmental legislation at the local and national level.
- Provide educational sessions on various topics related to ecological degradation and earth justice.
- Continue to provide reflections and prayer services.
- Continue to dialogue with other justice circles to recognize the intersectionality among many of the issues and to find ways to collaborate.
- Explore new ways of integrating eco-spirituality into our activities and programs.



The Charity Earth Network Newsletter is published two times a year - April 22 and 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 Day Prayer Service

Opening Song:

A few suggestions:

“For the Beauty of the Earth” by John Ritter

“Canticle of the Sun” by Marty Haugen

“All Creatures of Our God and King”

“All the Earth, Proclaim the Lord”

On YouTube:

“Canticle of Creation” by Dan Schutte <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8Xz4u5jpXE>

“For the Beauty of the Earth” - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTcJ_SQRuHE

“Creation Calls” - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjXugh1yeXY>

“Canticle of the Sun” - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_ZkWVBg7k0

“Look at the World” - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxr8QBPq1z0>

Opening Prayer: Good and gracious God, we thank you for the beauty of creation. At this difficult time in the world help us to remember your love and care for each of us. Gift us with the sight to see the beauties of spring all around us...colors bursting forth on trees and flowers. Let us recall the words of Pope John XXIII, “We are not on Earth to guard a museum, but to tend to a flowering garden of life.” Help us to remember that each day you are calling us beyond ourselves to imagine Earth as you created it to be. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen

Psalm 8 (adapted by Nan Merrill)

Side 1: O Love, my Beloved,

How powerful is your Name in all the Earth

Side 2: You, whose glory is sung in heaven by the angels and saints,

Who with the innocence and spontaneity of a child,

Confound those who are mighty and proud.

You quiet the unloving and fearful.

Side 1: When I look up at the heavens, at the work of Love's creation,

At the infinite variety of your plan.

What is woman that you rejoice in her,

And man that you delight in him?

Side 2: You have made us in your image,

You fill us with your love;

You have made us co-creators of the planet!

Side 1: You call us to care for all your creatures,

To tend the land, the sea, and the air we breathe.

All that you have made, You have placed in our hands.

Side 2: O Love, my Beloved,

How powerful is your Name in all the Earth!

A reading from Laudato Si'

“In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters...

A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries.

The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. Christians all need an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.”

Silent Reflection on the Reading

An Ecological Examen (One person read aloud slowly.)

1. Gratitude I give thanks to God for creation and for being wonderfully made. Where did I feel God's presence in creation today? (Pause)

2. Awareness I ask for the grace to see creation as God does – in all its splendor and suffering. Do I see the beauty of creation and hear the cries of the earth and the poor? (Pause)

3. Understanding I ask for the grace to look closely to see how my life choices impact creation and the poor and vulnerable. What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation? How can I turn away from a throwaway culture and instead stand in solidarity with creation and the poor? (Pause)

4. Conversion I ask for the grace of conversion toward ecological justice and reconciliation. Where have I fallen short in caring for creation and my brothers and sisters? How do I ask for a conversion of heart? (Pause)

5. Reconciliation I ask for the grace to reconcile my relationship with God, creation and humanity, and to stand in solidarity through my actions. How can I repair my relationship with creation and make choices consistent with my desire for reconciliation with creation? (Pause)

Intercessions

That we may hear the cry of our sister Earth because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her, we pray...

All: God help us to hear.

That we might recognize that the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all and make the changes of lifestyle, production and consumption in order to combat global warming, we pray...All: God help us to recognize and understand.

That God may open our hearts to both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, we pray...

All: God, open our hearts.

For a deep reverence toward creation, that we might experience everything: soil, water, mountains, as a caress of God, we pray...

All: God, help us to know that we are one in creation with you.

Reflection and Sharing:

Reflect in silence about one action you would like to undertake to do your part in caring for God's creation. If desired, share this action aloud. When each person has had the opportunity to share, the group responds with St. Vincent's words: "What you are about to undertake is a great work. We pray that our Lord will bless your leadership."

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. Our founding Sisters, with imagination and creativity, met the needs of their age. May we respond to the needs of our time and the call of Earth and Earth's children. God of Boundless Charity, you invite us to live simply, to live sustainably, and to live in solidarity with the poor whose lives are most impacted by climate change. May we respond with open hands and open hearts. Amen.

Closing Song:

Choose one of the songs listed above or one of your own choosing.

The prayer service was composed by Sister of Charity of Cincinnati Caroljean Willie.

