

The Way of St. Francis



Caring For Creation

The Way of Saint Francis

FALL 2018, Vol. 23, No. 3

on the cover

Nancy Earle: *Br. Francis: A Canticle to Creation*, 24" x 36", acrylic. (1999).
Artist Nancy Earle lives in Bangor, Maine and belongs to the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, based in Woodland Park, NJ.

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Prayer, Fraternity, Joy, Service



The Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara are members of a Roman Catholic religious order, from a diversity of backgrounds and cultures, dedicated to serving the poor and promoting justice, peace, care of creation, and reconciliation in the joyful and prophetic spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

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Caring For Creation

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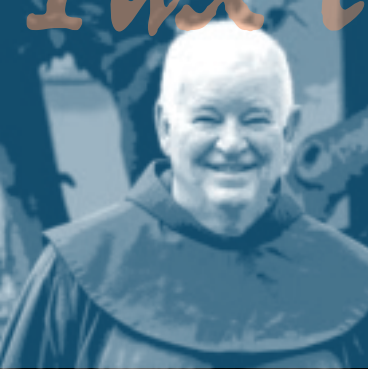


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Let us know by sending an email
to TheWay@sbofm.org

Catholic Climate Covenantsm
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

dear friends...

Pax et Bonum!



In the Franciscan tradition, care of creation and respect for its integrity extend far beyond the headlines and warnings of impending ecological disaster. In his ecstatic poem/prayer of praise, Canticle of the Creatures (1225), St. Francis of Assisi himself embraces the material universe—brother and sisterhood of all that God has made—and blesses it (ref: inside back cover).

The recent encyclical of Pope Francis, Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home (2015), addresses our shared environmental responsibilities: "This sister ("Mother Earth"), now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her." (LS 2).

This issue of The Way highlights ways in which Franciscans respond to the tradition of St. Francis as well as the teachings of Pope Francis. Brother Keith Douglass Warner OFM provides us a global perspective on Franciscan responses to ecological challenges (pp 11–13). Professor Maureen K. Day, a member of faculty of our Franciscan School of Theology, California outlines a Franciscan position on the care of creation from a theological perspective (pp.14–15).

The Catholic Climate Covenant has captured the attention and imagination of church communities and individuals throughout the United States (pp.16–17). This sense of reflection leading to action is also expressed in Brother Scott Slattum's engaging report on the activities of the Care of Creation team at St. Mary's Basilica parish, Phoenix, Arizona (pp. 20–22). Father Daniel Barica OFM describes the efforts of his parishioners to encourage the talents and creativity of children in expressing their concerns and insights. The splendid results of the parish visual arts competition (pp.18–19) clearly demonstrate the interest, awareness, and engagement of kids today.

The Franciscan response is both vital and integral to forging solutions. The commitment and response of the talented and focused people shown here is a testimony to the strength and vibrancy of that tradition. ❖

Father David Gaa, OFM

Provincial Minister, Province of St. Barbara



by the way

OCTOBER

Embodied Earth Prayer: Aloha Qigong and The Franciscan Legacy Day Retreat

**10/6 · 9:30am–4:00pm ·
San Damiano Retreat,
Danville, CA**

Presenters: Rev. Steve Harms, Kaleo & Elise Ching
Drawing from Judeo-Christian and Taoist practices and grounded in Franciscan awareness, this retreat invites you into a daylong experience of embodied prayer. Through reflection and dialogue, we will explore the ethical dimensions of eco-spirituality, environmental stewardship, and inequality.

Cost: \$40.00

More information:

www.sandamiano.org or
925-837-9141

Blessing of the Animals 10/6 · 10:00am–12:00pm · Mission San Luis Rey Parish, Oceanside, CA

Bring your pets to join the Franciscans and the community of Mission San Luis Rey Parish for this annual blessing of the animals to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

More information:

www.sanluisreyparish.org
or 760-757-3250



Blessing of the Animals

**10/6 · 2:00pm–2:30pm ·
San Damiano Retreat,
Danville, CA**

Bring your pets to join the Franciscans and the community of San Damiano for this annual blessing of the animals.

More information:

www.sandamiano.org or
call 925-837-9141

9th Annual Friends of St. Francis Center Event

**10/6 · 5:30pm–8:30pm ·
Cathedral of Our Lady of
the Angels, 555 W. Temple
St., Los Angeles, CA**

Dinner and silent auction benefiting St. Francis Center's programs for homeless and extremely low-income families and individuals in the Los Angeles area.

Tickets: \$100/person

More information:

www.sfcla.org or
213-747-5347

Blessing of the Animals 10/7 · 1:00pm–2:00pm · St. Mary's Basilica, Phoenix, AZ

Bring your pets to join the Franciscans and the community of St. Mary's Basilica, for this annual

blessing of the animals.

More information:

<https://saintmarysbasilica.org> or 602-354-2100

NOVEMBER

Franciscan Spirituality and Integral Ecology: Relational Bases vs. the Throwaway Culture

**11/3 · 9:00am–11:00am ·
Franciscan Renewal Center,
Scottsdale, AZ**

Presenter: Martín Carballo
Núñez, OFM

In the light of both the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and Franciscan spirituality, we will focus on the need to revise the dualistic anthropology that has led to the throwaway culture and contributed to a dynamic of permanent conflict at all levels. (Part of Franciscan School of Theology's Franciscan Vision Certificate Program).
Cost per unit: \$83.50
More information:
www.thecasa.org or
800-356-3247

Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution (Movie Screening and Discussion)

**11/9 · 6:00pm–9:00pm ·
Franciscan Renewal Center,
Scottsdale, AZ**

Sponsored by the Care for Creation Ministry team at the center. Pre-registration required: call Amy (480-948-7460 ext. 132) or go to <https://frc.retreatportal.com/events>
Cost: \$10.00 (includes light dinner)

snapshot

The First Pepper Tree in California

Old Mission San Luis Rey
Oceanside, California

Photo taken by Peter Jordan

The Mission quadrangle, a four-sided patio approximately 500' square, is home to the oldest living Pepper Tree in California. The first pepper trees in Alta California were planted by Fr. Antonio Peyri using seeds brought to San Luis Rey in 1830 by a sailor from Peru. The buildings that surrounded the quadrangle included workshops, living quarters, a kitchen, infirmary, winery and storage areas.

The first Pepper Tree (right) can be seen through the original carriage arch. The quadrangle looks different today due to the building of a smaller, inner quadrangle and convento after 1892 when the Franciscans returned to San Luis Rey. Called the O'Keefe Building and Sacred Garden, the smaller quadrangle is the center of the current Friary. The larger area, now a Retreat Center, was built as a seminary college in 1950 on the foundations of the original quadrangle. ❖



the word

Seen But Unseen:

Matthew 20:6-16

By Father Warren Rouse, OFM

TO THEIR CREDIT, some cities and towns have labor exchanges or at least street corners where day laborers huddle, I hope. They arrive early in the morning and hope against hope that they will be chosen for a job that day. Their wages, ever so little, may get them and possibly their families through the night.



PHOTO: © DREAMSTIME STOCK IMAGES

So they wait. Prospective employers come to the exchange early to grab up the healthier, stronger men. And so it goes on down the line until, by late afternoon, only a sorry handful of the dejected and rejected begin to leave. And then it happens: a van pulls up and its sliding door opens. The poor souls pile in, their hope rekindled. A passage in Matthew's Gospel (20:6-16)

describes a similar scene with a land owner: "Why are you wasting the whole day here doing nothing?" he asked them. "No one hired us," they answered. "Well, then, you go and work in the vineyard," he told them." Then, in the early evening all the workers return to receive their wages. And the grumbling begins: the latecomers are paid first. "You paid them the same as you paid us!..." And the employer's answer: "Don't I have the right to do as I wish with my own money? Or are you jealous because I am generous?" Jesus summarizes the story: "So those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last."

If only that were true in our own lives. Oh, we certainly give—usually in the Sunday collection—to the poor, but lack real contact with them. We don't see their struggles, despite their efforts. And so they are forced to beg. Each beggar, each transient, has a story gone wrong. We are accustomed to looking at, but not really seeing them. Recently I saw a woman—maybe in her 60s—pushing a grocery cart full of all her meager belongings. She was shuffling along with nothing but some clothing and a blanket. I was not sad, I was angry. How can this happen in our society? And what brought her to this life? And didn't she have any relatives who could have helped her? "This," I said to myself, "is not right. It is deplorable, tragic." I always keep some money in my pocket for transients, and I gave her all I had. But I could not forget that heart-breaking old lady. Alone. ❖

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Father Warren Rouse, OFM, former pastor, teacher, and retreat director, is the author of Words of Wisdom. He lives at Serra Retreat in Malibu, California.

donor profile

Dennis Hock:

A Poet for Justice

By John Feister

DENNIS HOCK MAY not be officially vowed, but still, he says, “I’m a Franciscan.” A retired English teacher, poet, and long-married, he credits the Franciscans with showing him the way to remain within the Church while at the same time challenging it. “Franciscanism has evolved into the main spirituality in my life,” he explains. “That was a kind of an evolutionary thing, but it started way back in my mid-twenties.”

Now 72, Dennis, a native of Sacramento, California, is still a peacemaker at heart, and a lover of creation. After wrapping up 35 years of teaching some years back, he headed for the Covenant Program, a chance to live among the friars as a layman, participating in the life of the Franciscan community. His yearlong program, in 2004-2005, was spent at San Damiano Retreat in Danville, California.

“I was lucky enough to be assigned to be kind of a grounds-keeper, so I was outside a lot,” he says. This man, now known for his poetry, clearly sees a lot from a little. It was his career teaching English that led to his becoming a poet—not unlike St. Francis himself in that respect. In his poetry Dennis touches on the integrity of all creation, as you can see in his poem that accompanies this article.

His year at San Damiano Retreat was formative for that stage of his



PHOTO: COURTESY, D. HOCK

Dennis Hock at 2017 reading, *100,000 Poets for Peace*, Sacramento, California.

life. Thirteen years ago, Dennis might even have stayed there on a long-term basis, he says, but he knew his place was in the world rather than in seclusion. “It was a great experience. Somewhere along the way, I picked up a pretty strong link between a sense of justice and the integrity of creation.” Indeed, he picked up on the Franciscan insight that they all are of the same cloth.

Awareness started for Dennis in high school, where he was guided by the Christian Brothers. There they engaged in social justice projects, working among people living in poverty. “It had a profound impact on me,” he recalls. That was in the mid-1960s, during the federal anti-poverty programs, the Vietnam war, the assassinations of Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy, and all manner of racist violence. Dennis took it all in and took a stand as a conscientious objector, working in a hospital for two years. (Alas, as in the case of St. Francis, his commitment was the source of major conflict with his father.) When he returned to Sacramento, Dennis

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FRANCISCAN OPTIMISM REQUIRES
CREATIVITY AND COURAGE



PHOTO: ©DREAMSTIME STOCK IMAGES

CREATIVITY & CONVERSION: EVANGELIZATION IN LIGHT OF *LAUDATO SI'*

By Brother Keith Douglass Warner, OFM

FRANCISCAN FRIARS from around the world gathered recently in Nairobi, Kenya (June 12–26, 2018) to reflect together upon how we could best live and share our spirituality today. The eco-spirituality encyclical written by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, was a recurring theme. It uses a Franciscan approach to analyzing the twin crises of global economic injustice and environmental degradation. With *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis has challenged all of us to undergo ecological conversion and to respond with creativity to the needs of all creation.



PHOTO: COURTESY, OFM CURIA

Latin America, *Laudato Si'* pilgrimage.

Some of the friars at our meeting shared their own creative responses to the “good news” inspired by *Laudato Si'*. The Latin American Franciscan family, for example, organized a hemisphere-wide *Laudato Si'* pilgrimage, with icons and prayer services beginning in Mexico and Chile, and concluding in Colombia. In both India and Indonesia, friars have sponsored rural sustainable development centers where peasant farmers learn about productivity and stewardship. Franciscans in France offered an “ecological journey” event, combining testimony, experiential education, prayer, and reflection.

I am struck by the potential of my home state, California, to help to fulfill the vision of *Laudato Si'*. The West, and California in particular, host cultures remarkable for their creativity, ingenuity, and social innovation. Social innovation is the intentional creative design of technology, ecological processes, and human organizations and behavior to achieve social justice goals.

I believe this can guide us in our journey into ecological conversion.

Born in northern California, I was raised to look askance at the movie and TV industry. Yet Hollywood is an important creative force. It has, to a considerable degree, taken control over our myths, the stories we share and live by. But movies and TV can also tell stories that can make us feel and think more profoundly about our lives. Think about your favorite movie, how it put you in touch with your own humanity, and made you reconsider some of your own views. What if Hollywood could tell more stories about cultural creativity and ecological conversion?

I work in Silicon Valley. It is the world's most entrepreneurial ecosystem—one that has created dramatic technological innovations that have improved the lives of millions of people. In many places in the developing world, for example, mobile phones now provide for the exchange of vital information essential to health, education, and economic opportunity. At Santa Clara

University, I teach social entrepreneurship—a form of social innovation that develops organizations pursuing important social objectives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This approach can blend the innovation and entrepreneurship of Silicon Valley with the vision of Pope Francis. What if Silicon Valley could devote even more of its creativity to fulfill the vision of *Laudato Si'*?

Innovation and creativity abound in California's Great Central Valley as well. I conducted my doctoral research among networks of growers and scientists who were quietly working to enhance the sustainability of California agriculture. They were borrowing numerous ideas from innovative growers—some of them organic farmers—and mainstreaming them in certain crops. I also spent some time collaborating with the Diocese of Stockton's Environmental Justice Initiative, which educates Catholics about the Church's teaching and the links between social justice and environmental protection. This kind of initiative actually anticipated the teaching of *Laudato Si'* by about 15 years. What if the Catholic Church in California could take this kind of approach statewide?

All of these “what if” questions are grounded in eight centuries of Franciscan optimism and moral imagining which cannot not be dismissed as naïve idealism. St. Francis himself was gifted by God with a profound journey of conversion throughout his life. We Franciscans continue to present our founder Father Francis as an example par excellence of God's love shining forth through a fallible human being. Given his dramatic and wholesale transformation, the “what if” questions we pose do not

appear so fanciful after all. They point us to a path that is both morally ambitious and attainable.

Pope Francis calls us to conversion, not depression. His encyclical invites us to change our hearts, and to practice ecological virtue: in other words, to act justly and lovingly without pursuing personal reward. This universal love is what the pope has termed “integral ecology.” Pope Francis also calls us to exercise our collective moral imagination. This, too, is profoundly Franciscan, for it asks: “How can I act in such a way as to allow God's goodness and love to shine forth? How can I reimagine my actions and life choices as a person of faith, so as to fulfill the vision of *Laudato Si'*?”

Do we have the necessary moral courage to undergo a true ecological conversion? This Franciscan optimism requires of us the creativity and courage to guide human society toward a more equitable and sustainable common future—what Pope Francis terms as “ecological conversion.” It's good news indeed! ❖

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Brother Keith Douglass Warner, OFM is Senior Director, Education and Action Research at the Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California.



Brother Keith Douglass Warner OFM.

PHOTO: BONNIE HARDWICK

Caring for Creation: Franciscan strategies for solutions

By Maureen K. Day, Ph.D

WHEN I BEGAN STUDYING about the Franciscan intellectual tradition two years ago, it did not take long for me to realize that the Trinity lies at its core. Compared to St. Thomas Aquinas—the vast majority of whose writings emphasize the oneness of God—St. Bonaventure devotes much of his writings on God to articulating God as Trinity. This shifts our imagination, helping us see God as ontologically in relationship. And, as Francis and Clare demonstrated so beautifully in their own lives, a theology of God as relationship should have deep implications for the way we live our lives and understand our world.

This is no less true as we consider care of creation. Within the Franciscan tradition, we often make reference to the three “books” of created life: the book of Creation, the book of the Holy Gospels and the book of one’s interior life. The book of Creation signals that Creation itself reveals God to us. Francis and Clare were humble enough to know that their finite minds would have trouble grasping an infinite God. However, they realized that the contemplation of God’s Creation would illuminate God’s goodness. Francis’ *Canticle of Creatures* emerged from his observation that Creation is already praising God. And we see that Creation is a web of relationships, filled with animate and inanimate creatures connected to one another.

Finally, a God who is perpetually creating remains intimately connected with our world. The simple, yet profound conclusion to all this is that we respond to God's love by loving what God loves and loving that which reveals God to us. Loving creation, therefore, is a natural response to God's love. I would like to outline a Franciscan position on caring for creation through a proper understanding of relationship, specifically through justice.

PEOPLE USE THE word "justice" in a variety of ways, ranging from restoration to revenge. A biblical understanding of justice is rooted in "right relationship," that is, each person or community living in fidelity to the context of the shared relationship. Justice, then, requires right relationship with God, right relationship with neighbor and strangers, and right relationship between communities of people. Justice has significance, then, at both the personal and the social level. In terms of the environment, this warrants a holistic approach to climate change that attends to its different aspects and effects together—what *Laudato Si'* refers to as "integral ecology." Pope Francis writes, "We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but actually with a single, but 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." (LS 139) Just solutions will consider the whole of human life.

This quote elevates the socioeconomic component of climate change, and it is the disparity in the lived reality of climate change that



PHOTO: © IJZ SCHULTZ 2018

Maureen K. Day, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor, Franciscan School of Theology, Oceanside, California. She is currently completing a book for publication by NYU Press on Catholic civic engagement (NYU Press)

most obviously illustrates the need for justice. The first disparity is that the wealthiest people and countries are producing the most greenhouse gases. In examining the amount of air we can safely "use," Global North nations have consumed more than three times their share of the atmosphere while the poorest 10% have consumed less than 1%. Second, the most vulnerable people and countries are most acutely feeling the effects of climate change. In the U.S., this typically refers to people of color and those of lower income. Abroad, in addition to race and class, women and children are also more vulnerable. For example, of the 140,000 killed in the 1991 Bangladeshi cyclone, 90% were women or children. Third, the policies designed to manage climate change have unequal consequences and are not formulated with consideration of the poor and powerless. A Franciscan approach would bring back the relationality that has been neglected at these policy-making tables, emphasizing interdependence

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contemplation



The Catholic Climate Covenant: Care for Creation, Care for the Poor

By Charles Christopher

ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY CATHOLIC CLIMATE COVENANT (CCC)

It's getting hot here, thanks to people, if you believe the scientists. Dan Misleh and the Catholic Climate Covenant are encouraging the faithful to listen to them.



Dan Misleh, Founder, Director
CCC.

PERHAPS MOST FAMOUSLY, global warming understanding gelled around the insights of retired NASA physicist James Hansen, who in the late 1970s assembled the first comprehensive data on climate change and its effects. By 1988, Hansen was asked to present his information before the U.S. Congress. The debate which ensued has subsequently picked up the intensity of a typhoon over the decades. The energy lobby had immediately sought to refute Hansen's findings, birthing the global-warming denial movement. This small, but well-financed, group then set out to sow seeds of doubt about



the “bad-for-business” scientific community. Meanwhile, over the latter part of the century, scientists grew to embrace unanimously the global-warming theory. But the public wasn’t so sure.

Enter Dan Misleh and a few of his colleagues from the social justice arm of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, or USCCB. Responding to the confusion being sown, Dan and company determined that developing support for both the truth of global warming and the political will to do something about it was a cause worth devoting one’s career to pursue. In 2004, they initiated the Catholic Climate Covenant, “... an organization of organizations,” as Misleh tells it “an umbrella of Catholic activities on the issue of climate change.” Dan is both its founder and executive director of the group. The staff is tiny— just four full-time employees, plus contractors—but CCC has had an impact far beyond its modest resources.

“We work to try to inspire and equip Catholics to act on the issue of climate change at both institutional and individual levels,” Dan reflects. Institutionally, there are 17 national partners, including the USCCB, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Health Association,



Catholic Climate Covenant™
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

and others. In some ways, though, Catholic Climate’s highest impact work has involved empowering local parishes across the country. Dan claims about 30,000 members on the national mailing list he uses to keep people informed about resources, programs, and timely political issues.

The group’s website, www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org, is an



Integrity of Creation Committee, Our Lady of Peace in Arlington, VA planting a garden on parish grounds.

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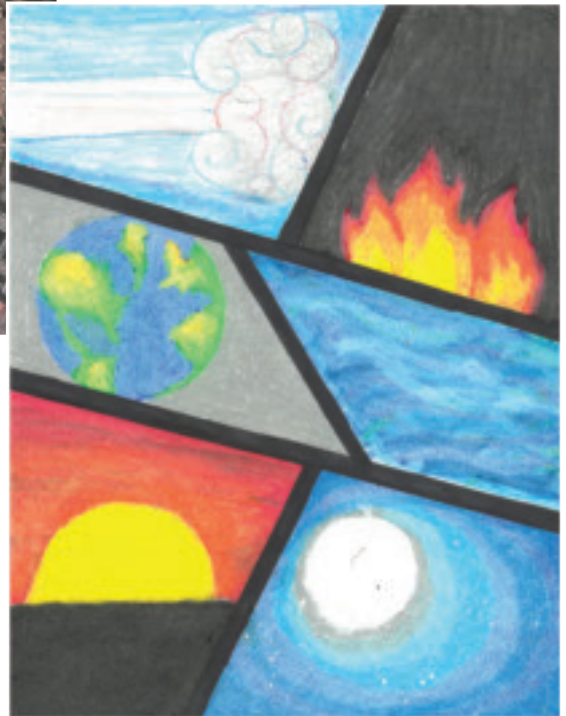
creative spirit

INARTNATE

THE WORLD BECOMES ART

Saints Simon & Jude Parish visual arts competition celebrating the arts with children

By Father Daniel Barica, OFM



Top right: Best of Show by Elyse Stracham

Middle right: Kindergarten through 2nd Grade First Prize by Emily McGowan

Middle left: 3rd Grade through 5th Grade First Prize by Emileigh Saldana

Above: 6th Grade through 8th Grade First Prize by Vynam Nguyen
View all the winning entries at www.ssj.org/incartnate

THE CHILDREN at Sts. Simon & Jude Catholic School and Faith Formation Classes in Huntington Beach, California were asked to create pictures based on anything relating to the Franciscan charism. Many wonderful works of art were submitted. Winning entries were framed and displayed in the church gathering area and were sold at a silent auction during the weekend of the Festival of the Arts. That event coincided with a special parish-



sponsored theatrical production, *A Beautiful City*—a musical celebrating the spiritual awakenings of Sts. Francis and Clare—and performed May 18 and 19, 2018. All proceeds from the Festival of Arts benefitted the parish “Paving The Way” campaign, which updates and renovates the campus and, most particularly, the newly named Fr. Christian Mondor Plaza. ❖

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Father Daniel Barica, OFM, is Pastor of Sts. Simon & Jude Parish, Huntington Beach, California.

community profile

Caring for Creation at St. Mary's Basilica, Phoenix

By Brother Scott Slattum, OFM

ON MAY 24, 2015, Pope Francis promulgated *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*. Immediately, St. Mary's Basilica went right to work. We formed reading groups, held lecture series and panel discussion to explore its content. After reading the encyclical together, we formed a Care of Creation Team. We began the prayerful work of Pope Francis' call to care, a message we would proclaim to the whole parish and beyond.

Pope Francis begins his encyclical with the words "*Laudato Si, mi' Signore*"—"Praise be to you, my Lord"—from the beautiful canticle of Saint Francis of Assisi. They remind us that our common home is like "a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us." Inspired by these words, our Care of Creation Team began to understand our call to care as a work of compassion. The Hebrew word for compassion is womb. To be compassionate is to be as loving as a mother to the child in her womb. Our call was not only to care, but also to be compassionate. The late Father Loren Kerkof, OFM shared with me that the biblical understanding of justice about



The Care of Creation Team volunteer with the Rio Salado Audobon Center in Phoenix to build shelters for burrowing owls.

PHOTO: ©PETER JORDAN PHOTO 2017

PHOTO: SAINT MARY'S BASILICA FACEBOOK PAGE

right-relationship. Our earth suffers because we do not live in right-relationship. Humankind suffers because we do not live in right-relationship. The restoration of justice will come when we learn to be compassionate. To be as loving as a mother to the child in her womb.

PHOTO: SAINT MARY'S BASILICA FACEBOOK PAGE



The Care of Creation Team visit the Japanese Friendship Garden in Phoenix to enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

A Call to Action

Laudato Si' became our call to action. Melanie Canua, a parishioner of St. Mary's Basilica, felt inspired by the words of Pope Francis and said, "As Catholics, we just can't sit and wait for the work to be done." The work began with her leadership and that of Brother Sam Nasada, OFM. They began with simple actions to help restore right-relationships in Phoenix, Arizona. Last Lent, for example, the parish fasted from carbon. Parishioners were given one task a day to help reduce their carbon footprint. They were also given meatless Friday recipes to reduce meat consumption—a contributor to carbon—and asked to share their savings with Catholic Relief Services. In this way, the connection between care for the earth and care for the poor was made clear. "What we are teaching is that it is the culmination of all of our little differences and behavior changes that make a big difference," said Melanie Canua. Earth Day became our day to highlight these efforts.

The Care of Creation Team took over the religious education classrooms, engaging students in care

of creation projects on Earth Day. Student planted trees, flowers, and bushes to create a wildlife corridor at St. Mary's Basilica. Liberty Wildlife brought a peregrine falcon, a harris hawk and a great horned owl to teach parishioners about the importance of wildlife. We collaborated with Westech Recyclers to provide an opportunity for parishioners to recycle their old computers and electronics before and after Mass. Little did we know that these simple calls to care would become a call to conversion, too.

A Conversion through *Laudato Si'*

Julie Murphy Erfani, one of our Care for Creation ministry members, was not Catholic when she first learned of the pope's encyclical. Julie is the director of the master's program in Social Justice and Human Rights at Arizona State University. A graduate student in her class told her about *Laudato Si'*. The young Catholic student then pointed her towards the Franciscans. "I started to read it (the encyclical) and was so taken aback by everything



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MELANIE CANTUA

Members of the St. Mary's Basilica "Care of Creation" ministry at Earth Day event in the plaza, April 22, 2018

it stated," Murphy Erfani remarked. "Not only is it erudite, it is hopeful." Motivated by the document, Julie then began to take "a spiritual interest in "Franciscan" Catholicism. After a few inquiry classes in the RCIA program at St. Mary's Basilica, she subsequently decided to become a Catholic and was accepted into the Church at Easter Vigil, 2017. Julie credits her journey of faith in part to *Laudato Si'*: "I found the encyclical inspiring because it is pretty lofty critical theory and very sophisticated. Yet it is also intelligible to most people." The influence of *Laudato Si'* has helped shape Julie's own work with graduate students both in the US and internationally as she prepares a new generation of global leaders to care.

Final Thoughts

Who would have thought that a simple call to care would call another to Christ? *Laudato Si'* is not just another ministry of St. Mary's Basilica. It is at the heart of what we

do as Catholic Christians: love. It is the commandment that Jesus gave to his disciples. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34)

The restoration of justice will come when we learn to be compassionate. To be as loving as a mother to the child in her womb. Let us take up this task and learn to care and in the process restore right-relationship between earth and humankind. A society of justice. As Pope Francis reminds us: "We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family." ❖

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Brother Scott Slattum, OFM is Director of Faith Development, St. Mary's Basilica, Phoenix, Arizona.

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started to attend St. Francis Parish there, a community served by the friars until just recently. “That’s when I fell ‘under the influence,’” he notes, tellingly. “There is a generous spirit in the Franciscan tradition.”

His college education under the Jesuits developed “the cerebral part (of me),” Dennis says. But it was the Franciscans who brought forth the poet in him. “It was part of my midlife crisis. I turned 50. I’d been teaching for a little over 20 years then. I was having trouble,” he explains. He went to the wilderness for a while with some friends after one of their shared friends had committed suicide, and came back a poet. “The poetry came,” he recalls. “It was always there, but it was pretty contained.” He’s since had several books published,

and today is very involved in Sacramento’s poetry community.

“I do tend to become enmeshed in politics,” Dennis says, an outgrowth of his work a few days each week at Loaves and Fishes, a Sacramento based shelter cum dining room and advocacy center for people struggling against homelessness. Brother Mark Schroeder, OFM, animator of Justice and Peace for area Franciscans, is a friend and coworker. “These days, with so much injustice, it stirs my passions,” he says. That follows from what Dennis calls the “liberating spirit of Francis.” It’s a spirit that fuels his own liberating work as well as his liberating poetry. ❖

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John Feister, former editor at large for St. Anthony Messenger, lives and works in the Cincinnati, Ohio area.

Caring for Creation: Franciscan Strategies: *continued from 15*

in all things: human to human, country to country, and humanity to the rest of creation. Justice pushes us to the margins in a posture of prophetic witness.

A justice-based approach to climate change creates connections in rich and meaningful ways. It demonstrates that climate change is the responsibility of a variety of communities and interests, and is connected to a host of other concerns. Justice also provides a common language and shared frame to talk with both those belonging to and outside the Christian tradition. Solidarity reminds us that we must speak boldly as we stand alongside those most affected. Inclusive dialogue amid difference will help us to discover together what is best for the common good. Justice forges bonds between different people and groups while connecting climate

change to other social issues.

A Franciscan understanding of climate change helps highlight the centrality of relationships within the climate change issue as well as the way Christians engage or otherwise stand with those on the margins. The words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’* are compelling and insightful here, “The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures” (LS 240). Just as St. Francis enjoyed expansive and inclusive relationships in his life, Pope Francis also encourages us to enter into a deeper and more committed relationship with our Lord, our sisters and brothers, and our common home. ❖

“easy to mine” collection of resources that can be used in bulletins, catechetical programs, homilies, social action programs—almost anywhere else a person’s involvement touches the local Church. In a parish, for example, Dan says, “We would encourage people to form a Creation Care Team. We would encourage them to recruit some like-minded individuals and approach the pastor. Get his support in projects involving everything from encouraging recycling to putting bulletin inserts into the weekly bulletin, to switching from Styrofoam to paper cups at parish meetings.” It’s about thinking globally and acting locally, of course. Efforts might include the parish school as well: “How do we get the students more engaged in the issue?” is the question. Dan also encourages parishes to find ways to integrate messages on Catholic care for creation into family activities, “as well as liturgies.”

Every year, the Catholic Climate Covenant augments parish programs with a special resource packet in October, in time for the Feast of St. Francis. This year’s theme is “Who is My Neighbor in a Climate-Threatened World?” Their advocacy, as does *Laudato Si’*, makes the connection between climate change, destruction of the earth, and worldwide poverty. The St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor, introduced in 2004 as part of the group’s first national program, has been designed to garner commitment for



environmental activism at the grassroots. Today their “Catholics Are Still in It” campaign is a direct response to US withdrawal from the Paris Agreements on greenhouse gas.

All of these and many other activities of the Catholic Climate Covenant (see the website) are in the context of a broad-based religious activism to protect the earth. Every faith tradition, observes Dan, has a creation story and considers the beauty of creation as a gift from God. “This is more than the ‘birdbath’ St. Francis,” says Dan, echoing Franciscan author Richard Rohr. “This is actually appreciating the wonder and awe of creation, and allowing that appreciation to inspire us to care for it.” ❖

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Charles Christopher is a Midwest-based journalist and friend of the Franciscans.

at last

Canticle of the Creatures*

St. Francis of Assisi, 1225

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor and all blessing.

To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no human is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day, and through whom You give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
and bears a likeness of You, Most High one.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather,
through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

to Si,

Praised be You, my lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed those who endure in peace,
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

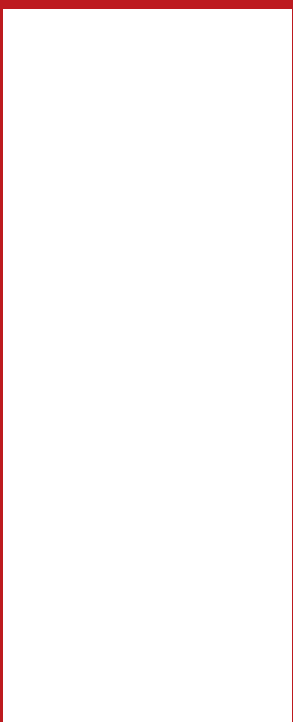
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.



* From: Armstrong, Regis J., Hellmann, J.A. Wayne, & Short,
William J., (Eds.), *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*,
New York: New City Press, 1999

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