



Tending the Tree of Life: Voices from Holy Cross

“Now is the time to repent, to be converted and to return to our roots. We are beloved creatures of God, who in his goodness calls us to love life and live it in communion with the rest of creation.”

Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 1 September 2019

“Never before have there been more powerful motives for zeal in God’s service than those inspired by the events taking place around us.”

Blessed Basil Anthony Moreau

When the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its fourth assessment report in 2007,ⁱ the world took notice. The most comprehensive study of climate change to date had declared that not only was climate change occurring, but it was being driven largely by human activity, as the world’s peoples and economies were becoming increasingly dependent on the consumption of fossil-based fuels (e.g. petroleum, coal, and natural gas) and plastics. Projections of elevated global temperatures, glacial melting, rising sea levels, and converging global crises—such as water and land scarcity, forced migration, conflict, poverty and mass extinctions—also loomed on the horizon. Recognizing these findings as a sign of the times, the four congregations of Holy Cross, through the auspices of the Holy Cross International Justice Office, came together in 2009 to publicly declare their commitment to responding more deeply to climate change, with carbon neutrality as their ultimate goal.

The urgency of this issue has only increased with time. Thanks in large part to the influence of Pope Francis—through his encyclical *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (2015) and his recognition of the Season of Creation (September 1-October 4)—awareness has increased as well, and moral voices have been raised on climate change and care for creation. In 2019, the United Nations’ IPCC released a series of reports on the implications of global warming of 1.5°C on land and food security and melting frozen zones and rising sea levels; their findings anticipate that hundreds of millions of people could be displaced by the impacts of climate change if drastic measures are not taken globally.ⁱⁱ All life, all of creation, stands on the brink of disaster. The time to act is now.

On Care for Creation, Authentic Integral Human Development & Human Solidarity

Sadly, throughout modern history, governments and social institutions have often been slow to act in the face of terrible suffering. Indeed, little has changed since Pope Paul VI articulated the essential conditions for human flourishing in *Populorum Progressio On development of the peoples* (1967). A man of his times, Paul VI

was responding to an era of extreme conflict and hope—a world marked by inequity, greed, discrimination, and indifference that threatened humanity and creation; while decolonization, civil rights and the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican promised a new dawning of justice and renewal. In *Populorum Progressio*, he asserted that new ways of thinking and behaving were needed to create more just systems, affording all persons the ability to develop as whole persons (e.g. spiritually, economically, politically, socially, culturally, etc.). Building on this message in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis called upon us all to recognize that this *authentic integral human development* and the call to promote the common good are one in the same. Indeed, Pope Francis tells us that the common good is inextricably linked to human solidarity and unity and can only be realized if we “promote stewardship of the network of life of which we are part.”ⁱⁱⁱ The care for creation, then, is an integral part of human development and flourishing.

The Time for Action is Now

“[H]ope for tomorrow is not a noble sentiment, but a task calling for concrete actions here and now. We owe [young people and future generations] real answers, not empty words, actions not illusions.”

Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 1 September 2019

On the tenth anniversary of the Family of Holy Cross Statement on Climate Change (2009), the congregations of Holy Cross seek to deepen their collective response to this great challenge of our time, and we invite all persons of good will to join us in this renewed commitment. In *Tending the Tree of Life: Voices from Holy Cross*, which commemorates this seminal statement, we explore four key calls found within *Laudato Si'* and the rich tradition of Catholic social thought: accompaniment; intergenerational justice; kinship with all creation; and ecological conversion. Each of the following sections is enriched by international Holy Cross voices of experience and action on climate change and concludes with reflection questions, prayer, and a call to action. Each section has been written as a standalone piece which can be used individually, communally, or in ministry (e.g. pastoral and educational settings and groups). We recommend that you allow time for separate periods of personal and/or group reflection, gathering with others to share insights, commitments to action, and prayer.

Over the next year, the Holy Cross International Justice Office will embark on a year of celebration, prayer, and action on climate change in honor of the tenth anniversary. We invite all persons engaged in this important work to share their stories, actions, and suggestions with us, as the Family of Holy Cross seeks to live into its climate change commitments more deeply. Please send your comments, stories, photos or artwork, and suggestions to:

Holy Cross International Justice Office

Mary Turgi, CSC, Director

Dana Taylor, Assistant Director

403 Bertrand Annex - Saint Mary's

Notre Dame, IN 46556 USA

574-284-5500 (phone); 574-284-5596 (fax)

E-mail: hcijoperspectives@gmail.com

www.holycrossjustice.org



@HCIJO (Please tag posts #HolyCrossClimate)

Family of Holy Cross Statement on Climate Change

"We must recognize our grave duty to hand the earth on to future generations in such a condition that they too can worthily inhabit it and continue to cultivate it. This means being committed to making joint decisions...aimed at strengthening that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God..."

Benedict XVI, *Caritas In Veritate*, 50

Earth and the life it sustains are precious gifts of God, now radically threatened by climate change and ecological exploitation. Safeguarding these sacred gifts for future generations is a moral responsibility integral to the mission of the Family of Holy Cross.

Climate change is already destroying Earth's life-support systems, and endangering human health and security. Those least responsible and most affected are poor people and nations. For people of faith, response to this crisis is not an "option"; it is a matter of justice and solidarity.

Therefore, we

Marianites of Holy Cross,
Priests and Brothers of Holy Cross,
Sisters of Holy Cross, and
Sisters of the Holy Cross

will work together to:

- Foster an ethos of care for God's creation in our members, colleagues, institutions, and those we serve.
- Resist the culture of consumerism and foster models of development that respect the rights of the whole Earth community.
- Reduce energy consumption, increase efficiency, and employ renewable technologies to achieve carbon neutrality in our congregations by 2050.
- Ensure that ecological sustainability is integral to our congregational planning, decision-making, and practices.
- Utilize our financial and human resources to support the development of an ecological economy.
- Urge governments and industries to adopt policies that successfully mitigate climate change and reduce its impacts on those most vulnerable.
- Promote interdependence, right relationship and commitment to the common good, countering a culture of individualism, greed, exclusion and exploitation.

Pierrefonds, Quebec, Canada, 30 September 2009

ⁱ IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K and Reisinger, A. (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 104 pp.

ⁱⁱ IPCC. (2019). <https://www.ipcc.ch/2019/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Pope Francis. (1 September 2019). [Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#) (2019).



on *Ministry and Accompaniment*

"Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming ... Sadly, there is widespread indifference to such suffering ... Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*: On care for our common home, para. 25

The Book of Genesis suggests that "human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*: On care for our common home, para. 66

As fundamentally spiritual and social beings, humans possess an innate desire to live harmoniously in their environments, to have a sense of tranquility in their daily lives, to exist in right relationship with others. We long for communion with God, each other, and creation. This is where peace resides.

To live in right relationship with our brothers and sisters requires us to move away from indifference and to develop what Pope Francis refers to as a *culture of encounter*¹. That is, we accompany our sisters and brothers. We first open our eyes and ears to understand their circumstances, and then we open our hearts, allowing ourselves to feel and express true compassion for our brothers and sisters.

—Article continues on reverse side—

Congregation of Holy Cross: *Lessons from Bangladesh*

At the far end of the Hill Tracts in the southeastern corner of Bangladesh, along the border with Myanmar, lies Thanchi, home to the Tripura tribe, and one of the remote parishes in Chittagong Archdiocese where Holy Cross serves. While visiting there two years ago with the pastoral team of the parish staffed by Holy Cross, we had a celebration with the priests, sisters and lay leaders, most of whom are catechists. I wanted to hear the story of the parish catechists and their work.

The leader of the group, Mr. Brindachandra Tripura, is a true teacher. I asked him what the biggest challenge he faced in his ministry was, expecting to hear "lack of money", "time to give them" or "more resources." He explained how he and the others walk for days as they journey out to the villages, sometimes a distance of one or two days' walk between, to bring the Word of God to the people. His answer, direct and without hesitation, was "The greatest threat to my ministry is climate change"!

The fact is that the people he served and evangelized were living in lands drastically reshaped by the impacts of climate change. Some villages were less accessible via water, others inundated entirely by the changing flow of rivers. Communities become divided: families, tribes and faith communities.

—continues on reverse—

We render ourselves as gift to them, and through this exchange each of us is transformed.

As the Congregation of Holy Cross story suggests, when we engage in accompaniment, we find ourselves no longer able to ignore the suffering of our brothers and sisters. We understand that action is required of us and that we can no longer be complicit in suffering. We are forever changed, as are our daily lives and ministries.

Suggested Reflection Questions

- *How has climate change or other ecological degradation disrupted relationships or communities in your country or region?*
- *How have humans become so estranged from Earth as to threaten the very home on which we depend? How might we begin to heal that alienation from our common home and from others in our societies?*



Prayer

Compassionate God, you call us to communion with one another and with you, yet too often the changes in our common home we are bringing upon ourselves disrupt and ravage not only our natural surroundings, but also our connections with one another. Teach us to how to overcome and heal our estrangements from Earth and one another, to live in right relationship with all our surroundings and to accompany those we encounter who suffer most from Earth's climatic change. Amen.



Action

Develop a plan for accompanying those whose lives and relationships have been disrupted by ecological deterioration. This might include prayer and advocacy, as well as personal interaction.

Croplands were destroyed, forcing farmers to follow where the land and water is best for their livelihood. Indigenous groups, too, must move to fertile lands. The faith community tears apart as drastic changes in the landscape limit access to one another. The impact has been great.

Now, about two years later, we have seen the epic monsoon season with much greater rains, flooding, and destruction in this very same area of the Thanchi parish. We have seen horrific pictures and heard the pleas for help.

Our hearts open to their need, our prayers becoming our mantra. Yet, it is they who must live in the face of climate change every day.

My hope is that, as we stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers, we will also see that caring for our environment has an impact on our relationships with one another and with God.

SUBMITTED BY: Michael McGrath DeLaney, CSC
Director, Holy Cross Mission Center (HCMC)

The Congregation of Holy Cross consists of over 1,200 perpetually professed religious brothers and religious priests. Through our vowed religious life, our apostolic work, and our conviction that "the cross is our only hope," we strive to be men with hope to bring in the 16 countries in which we live and serve. For more information, visit <http://www.holycrosscongregation.org/>

¹ Pope Francis, "For a culture of encounter," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13 September 2016.

Climate change in Ghana is one of the defining environmental challenges of our time, as recurrent extreme weather issues such as droughts and floods have a devastating effect on the economic, social and environmental systems in Ghana. In this regard the Holy Cross brothers and other religious in Ghana are educating schools and communities on global warming and the importance of combatting deforestation and soil erosion through the planting of trees. *(Francis Afeletey, CSC)*

Each year the summer months have been getting hotter, over 110 degrees or more for weeks. This has had a negative impact on the general health of the people, as well as affecting the rainy season's fruitful cultivation of crops. We try to address climate change in our own small ways. *(Suellen Tennyson, MSC)*

The Sisters of Holy Cross in Burkina Faso organized consciousness-raising sessions with the villagers of their new neighborhood in Sogden. They facilitated dialogue on climate change and on the cosmos with young people there. With their help, the sisters planted trees—especially species threatened with extinction—on their newly acquired land.

(Yvonne Kabore, CSC)



Due to climate change and the massive melting of ice at the north and south poles, the threat of rising sea levels is very real and is projected to cause countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives to go underwater. At the same time, both the lack of rain and untimely rain cause damage to crops and halt their production. This leads to food scarcity and starvation for many people as the price of food becomes too expensive. Yearly, flooding from excessive rain causes many people to lose their homes and livelihoods. The spread of disease related to these natural disasters also causes great suffering, as many people and cattle die.

(Prince Rudolph Macfield, CSC)

The number of hot days in Vietnam has increased more and more each year. In April 2019, the country experienced the hottest record temperature of 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.4 Celsius). The heat has been a brutal! It is not just uncomfortable; it is hard for many people to carry on with their daily activities. This has created severe hardships for those for whom agriculture is their major source of income, as is common in Vietnam.

(Becky Do, CSC)

God you are the Creator of Earth and giver of life. You have blessed us with the beautiful gift of creation: Sun, moon, water, rain, fruits and flowers. Though we depend on these gifts, we continue to misuse them and contribute to climate change. We ruin your gifts both for us and for future generations. God, give us a clearer consciousness of how we can cherish these gifts and ensure their proper use. We want to leave a better world to live in for our younger ones and those to come. We make this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

(Royne Costa, CSC)





on *Intergenerational Justice & Empowerment*

"Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. . . . Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*: On care for our common home, para. 159

To achieve the common good—a core principle of Catholic social thought—society must be organized in a way that affords all persons and communities the opportunity to achieve authentic human development. This idea of the common good, according to Pope Francis, cannot be separated from the concept of *integral ecology*—the practice of understanding global systems and problems in the context of their many dimensions (e.g. social, economic, environmental, cultural) (LS 156). Neither can we be said to work for the common good if our plans and solutions for society fail to ensure the sustainable human development of both present and future generations.

Just as we are called to defend and promote the common good, so too are we called to be multi-dimensional and intergenerational in our approach to problem solving. Diverse voices, knowledge, and perspectives must be brought to bear on the global crises that threaten humanity and all of creation. In addressing climate change and environmental

Sisters of Holy Cross: "CRA Aiming for Cape Verde" and for a Green World

Located in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti, the Collège Regina Assumpta (CRA), a school led by the Congregation of the Sisters of Holy Cross, is exposed to natural disasters. Surrounded by mountains that have been stripped and dotted with helter-skelter constructions everywhere, the city has, for several decades now, continued to deteriorate—a situation that is both sad and extremely distressing. To find solutions, discussions are being held locally, though without much success.

Given the vulnerable location of the College, it is often the first victim of such disasters, since it takes but ten minutes of rain to flood the city. With increased awareness of circumstances that periodically threaten the school, and encouraged by their social science teacher, two ninth grade girls met with the principal in October 2015 to engage in a discussion about future threats to the city.

Carrying the same concerns as her students about the environmental problems that threaten the country, their teacher shared how she felt about seeing them engage in projects capable of providing solutions to this situation. Joining with like-minded students, together with the principal, they founded *CRA Vers Cap Vert* ("CRA Aiming for Cape Verde") (CVCV).

--continues on reverse--

—Article continues on reverse side—

degradation, such voices and perspectives are not just desirable, they are essential.

Persons and communities suffering most acutely from the impacts of global problems such as climate change and environmental degradation have both the right and the responsibility to participate in the solution-making process. Otherwise, interventions developed in the absence of “the active participation of all members of the community” carry the risk of “overlooking the complexities of the local problems” (LS 144). Those impacted by these crises intimately understand the cost of society’s failure to act, and it is they and future generations who must live with the consequences of that failure. As this inspiring account from the Sisters of Holy Cross suggests, local experiences and passion can become the driver of real change, even in the absence of government intervention.



Suggested Reflection Questions

- *How can you – individually and collectively - best instill reverence and active care for creation in persons around you?*
- *In Laudato Si’, Pope Francis asks “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us? (160). What steps can we take together today to ensure social and environmental justice for future generations? For what policies should we advocate?*

Prayer

Ever-present God, help us to recognize creation as an outpouring of your love, your first revelation of yourself to us. Guide us in healing the damage we as a species have inflicted on your sacred gifts and help us to instill reverence for these gifts in others. May we always approach all forms of life and beauty as both precious and fragile and safeguard them for future generations. Amen.

Action

Take measurable steps to reduce your personal and/or institutional carbon footprint; e.g. engage in or support reforestation projects, reduce or eliminate air travel, limit face-to-face meetings by using technology, purchase carbon offsets and renewable energy credits, divest from fossil fuel companies and invest in renewable energy sources.

With the help of her former students, the principal offered a training session to the group members in September 2016. The girls were taken to Plan Sierra de Las Matas in San José, an organization responsible for reforestation projects in the neighboring Dominican Republic. There, they met people working in that domain and benefitted from a time of training.

Following this training, a nursery of about 5000 seedlings was prepared that would help to revive the flora in the Cape. Repairing the damage done to the environment, these plants have an exceptional ability to grip the earth—protecting against soil erosion—and to act as a carbon sink, absorbing tons of CO2 emitted daily. With CVCV, Regina Assumpta College aims to lead Cape Haitian towards a Green Haiti and a Green world for a better tomorrow.

SUBMITTED BY: Vierginat Andre, CSC [Haiti]

The Sisters of Holy Cross, an international congregation of women religious, arrived in Montreal, Canada in 1847 and presently minister in Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Haiti, Mali, and Peru. As faith-filled apostolic women religious, rooted in the spirituality of our founder, Blessed Basile Moreau, we, the Sisters of Holy Cross dedicate ourselves to “Education for Liberation” among children, youth, women and those who are underserved in our society.

God of love, you chose to share your blessing of Existence in that explosion of love-energy some billions of years ago. Today, the initial spark has evolved and we, children of Earth stand before the grandeur and beauty of Creation.

However, all is not well. We have failed to understand and to care for your gift. In ignorance and carelessness, we have unconsciously put too many species at risk. We have allowed ourselves to act as masters of Creation rather than as brothers and sisters of an expression of your Love the Divine. We are now face to face with the reactions of a nature betrayed. Only a profound and real conversion can save us from the consequences of the violent changes that we have already come to face and fear.

Creator Spirit, God of love, touch our hearts, awaken our understanding, arouse our wills and gather us together to take up in earnest, this holy work of becoming loving caretakers of the holy heritage you have given us in this our home, our Earth.

We ask this in the name of the Cosmic Christ, and of the divine Creative Energy who dwells in us and in all Creation.

Amen.

(Diane Villeneuve, CSC)

Creation Poem

The Divine infusion of goodness into the void,
Life dancing in motion, a lattice of spirit and matter.
Humans mythologize a linear supremacy, and thus the
Warp and weft of biodiversity's tapestry is severed,
exalting greed's inequality transforming subjects into objects.
Can the virtuous dare thwart humanity's senseless destruction
and again unearth earthen sacredness?
Or devolve goodness into nothingness.
(Joan Comeaux, MSC)

Curve in the Journey

Fear
Comfort
Challenge
Forward
Discernment
Wisdom
Prayer
(Marie Noël, MSC)





on Kinship With God's Creation

"[E]ach creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us ... Jesus says of the birds of the air that 'not one of them is forgotten before God' (Lk 12:6). How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm?"

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*: On care for our common home, para. 221

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis urges us to recognize that "the world is God's loving gift" (220). From our earliest childhood memories, are we not taught to receive gifts with a sense of gratitude for both that which has been given and for the generous spirit which accompanied it?

For many of us, gifts also come with a sense of obligation and reciprocity. We cherish and care for the gift, as a symbol of the gratitude and love we have for the giver. In this way, our individual and communal actions for the care and protection of creation become the fruits of our reverence and love for God. They are the prayers of our hearts manifested in our present reality.

Like most precious gifts, creation is meant to endure, to be passed on from generation to generation. And, so, it must be handled with delicacy and care. Thus, "we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes ... to respect creation and its inherent laws" (LS 69). No longer can we ignore "*the cry of the earth and the cry of the*

Sisters of the Holy Cross: Where do our consumer choices land?

Park City had a great winter—lots of snow, great skiing. Deep snow is hard on wildlife though, especially yearlings. The Summit County landfill found in its vicinity 26 deer carcasses, mostly does, who were drawn to ferret out food from the landfill because of deep snow obscuring their other food sources.

They may have died of starvation. But the county landfill manager suspects that ingesting plastic bags may have contributed to the numbers of dead. Plastic bags that are thrown in the garbage and fly out of waste service trucks. The loss of beautiful animals due to the waste that we generate causes great sorrow, here on land and in the oceans.

That we by our choices participate in their deaths is a reality that we need to face, apologize for, and rectify through corrective action. The movement to ban plastic bags becomes more personal, as do other ways I impact the health of the planet: my beef-eating habits ensure my participation in deforestation in the Amazon—trees being felled to provide grazing land or grow soybeans for cattle feed—and in animals' lives being cut short. My dislike of bugs and use of pesticides and herbicides participate in the decline of pollinators. We could all think of other practices in which we participate that diminish respect for Earth.

--continues on reverse--

—Article continues on reverse side—

poor” (LS 49). Rather, the time has come for us to act as the true stewards God called us to be.

The reverent stewardship of creation requires change and commitment in several aspects of our lives. We must, as the story from the Sisters of the Holy Cross demonstrates, reflect on the impacts of our personal actions and make changes that reflect our morals and ethical principles. This alone, however, is not enough.

We must open our eyes to recognize the state of creation in our midst and work for its salvation. We must engage in public advocacy, through personal and communal efforts with our political representatives and community service organizations. A communal response requires us to know and embrace our neighbors, as well.

In all these efforts of transformation, we must deepen our awareness and raise our collective moral voice. This is only possible if we commit ourselves to personal and communal conversion, a topic discussed in the concluding article on *ecological conversion*.

Suggested Reflection Questions

- *How well do your daily choices embody the reality of our kinship with all creation? In what areas might you be called to deeper conversion?*
- *What experiences or daily practices might heighten your sensitivity to your interconnectedness with all that is?*

Prayer

Ever-creating God, deepen our consciousness of your presence in all that you bring into being. You are the One who binds all that you make into kinship. Give us the wisdom to recognize our profound interconnectedness with all creation as your design for the universe and to live in a manner that honors that awareness. Amen.

Action

Take steps to move toward a plant-based diet, eliminate petroleum-based fertilizers, and utilize only pollinator-friendly pesticides.

Being conscious of a single action or habit does make an impact. Gathering plastic bags and taking them to a facility which collects them specifically—like grocery stores or some recycling centers—is a way for them to be recycled. Getting and using reusable grocery bags and not using a plastic bag for each fresh vegetable selection are simple things to do.

Empathy is a great motivator. For our brothers and sisters who don't have basic needs. For our animal brothers and sisters who give us beauty and connect us to another world of being. For our plant friends, for the dirt of Earth.

Let's ask God to make us more conscious every day of the indwelling we share with all God continually creates, that we—with great love—commit to realizing our impact on our common home, its sustenance and future.

SUBMITTED BY: Mary Ann Pajakowski, CSC [Utah, USA]

The Sisters of the Holy Cross joyfully participate in Jesus' mission by proclaiming God's transforming love for all creation. Sisters live and minister in eight countries on four continents, serving peoples of many cultures. For more information, visit <https://www.cscsisters.org/>



EDITOR'S NOTE: At this moment in time, we are witness to the enormity of a terrible union: climate change and environmental degradation.

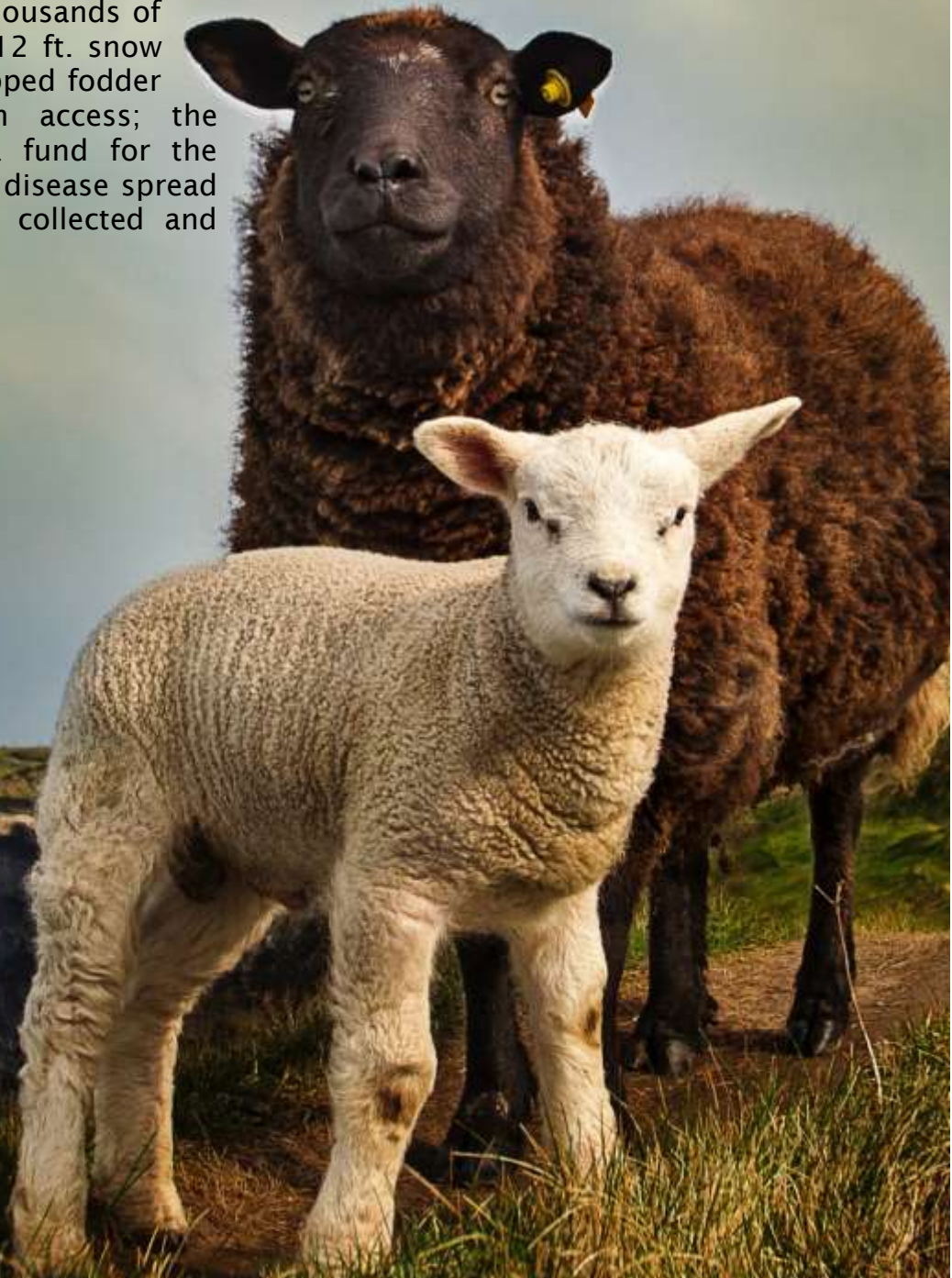
Nowhere is this more visible than in the case of plastics, which are conventionally derived from fossil fuels. As Sister Mary Ann observes, plastics fill our oceans and landscapes like a cancer, polluting our drains and waterways and threatening the lives of God's creatures.

At the same time, the [Center for International Environmental Law \(May 2019\)](#) reports that, if the world continues its plastic use and production at the same rate, the emissions impact will be equivalent to that of creating “295 new 500-megawatt coal-fired power plants” by 2030. To put this in perspective, United Nations Secretary General António Guterres has called for an end to all new coal-fired plants globally by 2020 in order to reduce environmental impacts that worsen climate change ([Associated Press \[AP\], May 2019](#)).

Inspired by Greta Thunberg, every Friday afternoon, students from St-Laurent College take to the streets of Montreal when school is in session—along with hundreds of other students, teachers, parents and grandparents from other schools—to demand action on climate change. The college was the first institution founded by Holy Cross after its arrival here in 1847. *(Richard Renshaw, CSC)*

Fracking is an industrial process that breaks apart rock formations deep underground to extract fossil fuels. Fracking is dangerous but profitable, and attractive to fossil companies, but damaging to the environment and human health. The Marianites of Holy Cross have taken a stand against fracking. In Shreveport, LA there are acres that we are often approached to sell; but our Stand remains consistent... if fracking will occur NO SALE. *(Ann Lacour, MSC)*

Climate Change in Northern Ireland brought about an unprecedented snowfall and deep freeze in Antrim and Down. Thousands of sheep and wee lambs died in 12 ft. snow drifts. Military helicopters dropped fodder where farmers couldn't gain access; the Agriculture Minister created a fund for the collection of dead animals, but disease spread from dead animals not being collected and disposed of properly. *(Kate McCarney, MSC)*





In 2014, the General Leadership team established the Carbon Footprint Reduction Fund (CFRF), allocating \$10,000 (USD) annually, to which is added \$15 per metric tonne of carbon emitted by travel at the General Level. Each year, Sisters may apply to the CFRF for grants supporting projects in local communities and sponsored ministries which increase energy-efficiency and reliance on renewable energy sources and decrease dependence on fossil-fuels, harmful refrigerants, and/or deforestation. In 2015, Brazil's Salvador Community House received funding for solar power installation, eliminating sisters' dependence on coal-generated electricity and providing opportunities for education locally.

(Sisters of the Holy Cross)

In South America, dealing with climate change is part of the struggle for life, so that millions have nourishment, the environment is not sacked by multinational interests, and indigenous cultures continue caring for nature, particularly the Amazon, without which we would suffer chronic drought. In Holy Cross schools and parishes, we make care for the environment and spiritual ecology a priority!

(Diego Irarrazaval, CSC)

For nearly two decades, Haiti has seen the impacts of climate change in the disappearance of certain species of birds, rodents and plants; drying up of rivers and springs; increased, violent rains and hurricanes; drought in some areas, accelerated erosion, and flooding of cities; famine and misery. That is why, we at l'Ensemble Scolaire Père Basile Moreau have developed an environmental training program. Some of the program goals include providing education issues such as the limits of natural resources, garbage collection and separation, and the protection of trees and biodiversity, and inviting experts to lecture on these topics. We also seek opportunities for outreach in our neighborhoods, cities, and beyond.

(Dr. Jean Molière Elarion, CSC)



on *Ecological Conversion*

"[Ecological] conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works ...

It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*: On care for our common home, para. 220

Ecological conversion leads us to a renewed spirituality, which sees creation and our place and responsibility within it more clearly. Through this conversion, we attain a new-found inner peace and balance to daily living (LS 225). This transformation requires both "profound interior conversion" (LS 217) and "community conversion" (LS 219) of mind, heart, and spirit.

Through personal conversion, we become more compassionate for creation and develop the zeal for its protection. This zeal motivates, inspires and informs our actions regarding creation and the global crises that threaten all life on Earth. Conversion begins with reflection on the ways in which we have failed to be stewards: failing to be awed by the

Marianites of Holy Cross: Women of Fire, crafting their legacy sustainably

Our 27th General Chapter called us to be "Women of Fire—Seeing with New Eyes" in all our spheres of influence. "... Sustainability in light of our available personnel and resources" is one of its challenges, reinforcing current actions and inspiring new ones.

Climate change education and action are essential to instill love of the Earth. More and more Sisters and Associates who give presentations, lead retreats, offer spiritual direction, write articles and just plain talk to people, open minds towards the needs of the Earth by simply using Earth-inclusive language. In making critical decisions they speak not only of how humans will benefit or not from proposed ideas and actions but also judge how Earth and all her creatures will be affected.

To reduce carbon emissions, the Congregation has purchased several hybrids for the Sisters' use, especially for those whose ministries demand extensive travel by car. One Sister received a master's certificate in Earth Literacy and is involved in climate change education and reflections as are many of our Sisters. Our leadership has sent several Sisters to JusticeCraft, a week-long workshop on justice leadership, created and sponsored by HCIJO and the Sisters of the Holy Cross.

--continues on reverse--

—Article continues on reverse side—

miracle and beauty of creation, inflicting harm, and living in indifference to its suffering.

Through this personal shift, we are moved to new and more creative forms of response. Yet, individual improvement and action, while vitally necessary, is insufficient. To ensure that creation thrives for present and future generations, we must also transform our communities and institutions.

Community conversion requires a new ability to appreciate the value of creation and all life, and their importance in the development of the whole person and whole, healthy, and sustainable communities. This also entails recognizing that our social systems—which include our governments and social institutions—are multidimensional, interconnected, and intergenerational, requiring solutions that take all such aspects into consideration. Such conversion is rooted in an ethic of solidarity and dignity and respect for all persons and cultures.

The Marianites of Holy Cross, as their story illustrates, are deeply engaged in ecological conversion. By animating sisters in this work and making deliberate institutional choices that embrace this spirit, the Marianites are building a legacy of compassion and care for creation that serves as a model to inspire present and future generations.

Suggested Reflection Questions

- *To what new actions will you commit to deepen your own personal ecological conversion?*
- *What societal attitudes and habits need to change to assure a communal ecological conversion? What new steps could you take to promote such a conversion in your society?*

Prayer

God of the Universe, inspire us to see with new eyes the rapidly changing needs of Earth and vulnerable peoples in all our spheres of influence: in our own hearts, our local communities, Congregations, ministries, families, friends and political arenas. Fill us with clarity and wisdom to make critical decisions that advance sustainability far into the future. May we live the call of Pope Francis to “Ask Jesus what he wants of you and be brave” (Regina Coeli, 21 April 2013). Amen.

Action

Cultivate seeing all of creation with new eyes: eyes of gratitude and gratuitousness, eyes of awareness of relationship and interconnection, eyes of concern. From within this new vision, review the commitments made in the Family of Holy Cross Statement on Climate Change (2009) and formulate personal and communal action plans for deepening your response to the calls of *Laudato Si’*.

We continue to distribute the pamphlet “Earth Dolors,” written by a Marianite, that links the suffering poor and suffering Earth through meditation on Mary’s seven sorrows. Many Sisters challenge ecclesial and governmental leaders and institutions where they live and work and the boards on which they serve, to recognize the effects of climate change and alleviate them. Of course, we are all encouraged to read, reflect, study and live *Laudato Si’*.

As the Congregation continues to plan its legacy, leadership will make every effort to craft decisions that will impact care of the earth for years to come.

SUBMITTED BY: Gretchen Dysart, MSC [Louisiana, USA]

United with Mary, standing at the foot of the cross, the Marianites of Holy Cross are apostolic religious women of prayer and compassion. Called to be a prophetic presence in an ever-changing world, the Marianites, headquartered in Covington, Louisiana, resolutely stand with those who are excluded. For more information, visit <http://www.marianites.com>.