



PROPOSITUM

October 2024

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis,

The year 2025 is a year of celebration for the Church at large and for Franciscans in particular. The Jubilee Year of 2025 has at its theme “Pilgrims of Hope.” For Franciscans, the celebration of the centenary continues with the year 2025 as we celebrate the Centenary of the Cantic of the Creatures.

St. Francis serves as a true example of a Pilgrim of Hope. Throughout his life, he witnessed a deep love and reverence for God, all humanity and all God’s creatures. He taught us that we must not treat creation as something to possess but as our brother or sister. In *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis echoes these words of St. Francis in challenging us to care for our common home.

We are called to challenge ourselves and others to find “the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world” (*Laudato Si’* 11).

In this edition of the Propositum, we have asked our members to share how the Cantic of Creation and *Laudato Si’* has touched their lives and has called them to respond to the care for our common home. In the variety of essays, poems and artwork, we witness the impact of the words of St. Francis and Pope Francis on our Third Order brothers and sisters. As we read their reflections and pray with their artwork, may we recommit ourselves to the praise of all Creation and care for our common home.

“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 like-
ness of You, Most High One.” (*Cantic of the Creatures* 3-4)

Peace and all Good!

Sr. Frances Marie Duncan, President IFC-TOR

Sr. Daisy Kalamparamban, Vice-President

Sr. Beatriz Vásquez Mayta, Councilor

Sr. Maria Luisa García Casamián, Councilor

Sr. Rute Almeida Guimarães, Councilor

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A CORRECT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND ALL CREATION

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Original language: English

I would like to begin with the painting of The Canticle of Creatures that I created, which visually incorporates the ideas from St. Francis in his writing of the Canticle of the Creatures. The cross is central in the painting. Francis totally immersed himself into the life of Jesus Christ crucified. He was passionately in love with Christ. Francis was a man who lived close to the earth, and in the natural world he found the glory of God revealed. He saw all creation radiating from God. It was because of this that he could call all creatures good.

In today's world, our relationship to the elements of nature is often dimmed and not a part of our awareness. What a pity to lose sight of this sensual reality that Francis was able to turn into mystical experience.



I have portrayed the four elements: fire, water, air and earth. These elements are a part of Francis's vision of God, creation, and the human soul. In Francis's own words, "I wish to compose a new hymn about the Lord's creatures, of which we make daily use, without which we cannot live, and with which the human race greatly offends its Creator", he gives the basis for his hymn. Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Water, Sister Air, all become his companions in praising God.

From the explanation of my painting, I would like to emphasize two points. The first is Francis's total immersion in the life of Christ Crucified which allowed him to see all creation as GOOD - as radiating from

God. He never put himself up as a god but understood our correct relationship with God our creator. We are God's creatures. To me this is important in relating this poem to LAUDATO SI'. All Creation being good means we are to respect all creation and be good stewards of God's tremendous gifts to us in nature and in one another. Without this respect for others we cannot work for the common good but can become selfish and possessive of what is to be shared with all people. All people have a right to clean drinking water, decent food and clothing, a just wage and so on. The Christian Social principles come into play here and as Christians we are to promote these principles.

The second point is based on Francis's own words, "I wish to compose a new hymn about the Lord's creatures, of which we make daily use, without which we cannot live, and with which the human race greatly offends its Creator" Climate change has been going on for millions of years and will continue. Greenland was indeed green in the past; Antarctica was once a rainforest. This does not get us off the hook, however. Polluting our water sources and air needs our attention. In trying to decrease carbon dioxide emissions, we are turning to mining lithium which is used for electric car batteries. However, this mining has several environmental impacts. These include polluting water sources, increasing carbon dioxide emissions, misusing gallons of water, and depleting fertile land. Efforts are being made to correct some of this.

I commend laboratories that are developing what they hope will be the plastics of the future— materials that work like regular plastic, but don't spoil the environment because they can degrade when people are done with them. Styrofoam is also considered a form of harmful plastic. We need more of this type of working together for solutions for all peoples especially for poorer countries. These initiatives must be humanitarian and not become political which seems to add to divisions, self-interests, and exploitation.

I conclude by saying we need to have a correct relationship with God. God has made us in his image and given us the responsibility to be good stewards and to honor his creation which is intended for the good of all people. Let us address our culture of consumption and waste and look to the needs of future generations.

CANTICLE OF CREATION PICTURES

Sr. Jo Goolish

OSF

School Sisters of St Francis

USA Province



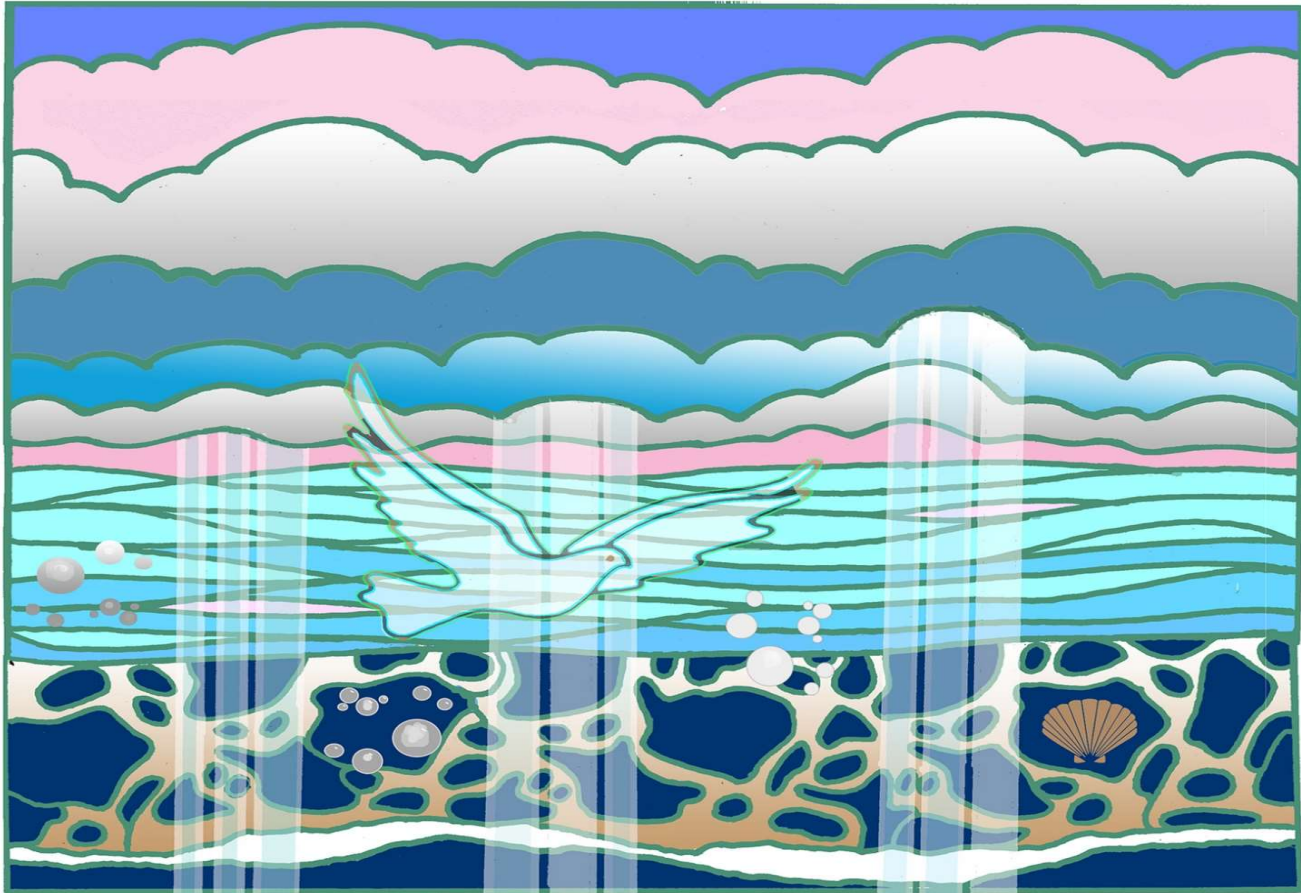
Brother Sun

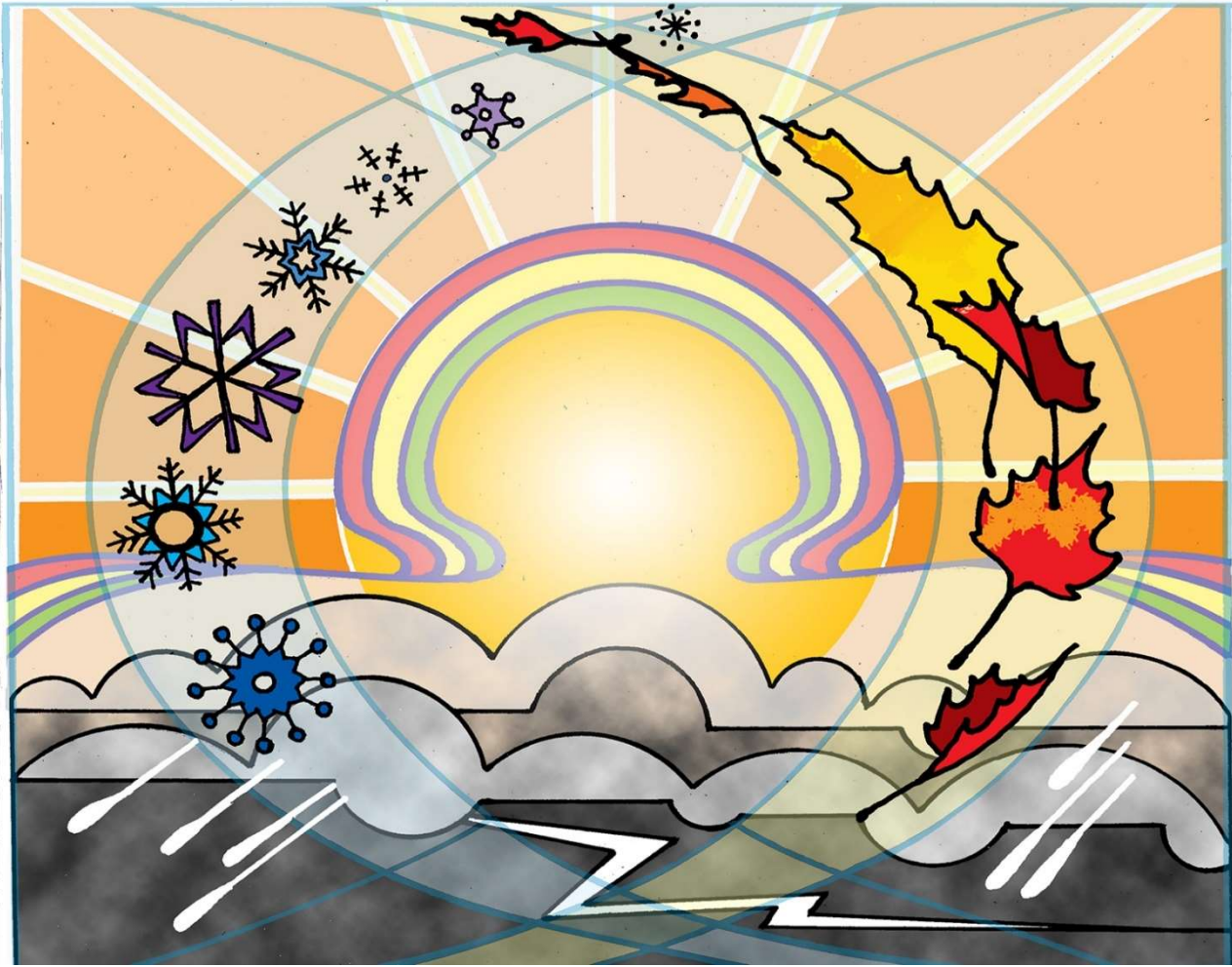


Sister Moon



Sister Water





LAUDATO SI': OURS TO PRACTICE AND TO PREACH

Sr. Elise Saggau

OSF

Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls

Minnesota, USA

Original language: English



On March 13, 2013, a man came out onto the balcony of St. Peter's in Rome and announced clearly and positively that he had chosen as his papal name "Francis." Franciscans throughout the world received this news with a sense of wonder. What would this mean? With the publication in 2015 of his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, we got our answer. Here was someone who understood for our times what St. Francis of Assisi understood for his time—we must love and cherish and give thanks for the wondrous world and universe into which we have been born and with which we experience a profound interdependence. In article 11 of *Laudato Si'* (slightly paraphrased), we hear Pope Francis say: *"If we approach nature and the environment with openness to awe and wonder, if we speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis gave rise to something quite radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled"*.

The Pope's words echo Eric Doyle, OFM, who remarks that St. Francis of Assisi loved and revered created reality in such a way that he might be considered one of the most mature and responsible human beings ever to have lived. He understood that every single thing carries such intrinsic value that dominating it would be enslaving it. And there is nothing more calculated to destroy the value, dignity, and uniqueness of a creature than enslaving it in any form.*

* *The Song of Brotherhood and Sisterhood*, (Franciscan Publications: St. Bonaventure, NY, 1997) 58.

St. Francis of Assisi witnesses to a sense of unity with all creatures in their proper response to the Creator. He has a profound sense of kinship with all the works of God's hand. He sees them as his brothers and sisters. He invites them to sing with him the praises of the good God. And, while the *Canticle of the Creatures* is often taken to exemplify Francis's love for the natural world, it is actually a charming and hearty invitation to all created reality to share his exuberant love for God.

While it is true that he admires the sun, moon, stars, wind, water, fire, and even death, St. Francis never confuses them with their source. He cherishes them precisely as gifts. Thus he points out to us that, whether on earth or in the universe, matter itself is never so unimportant or insignificant that it cannot join the choir. He calls us and all created reality to a profound reverence for what God's love has wrought. He reminds us humans that we have a great responsibility for all that is kin to us in this common reality we know as "creaturehood."

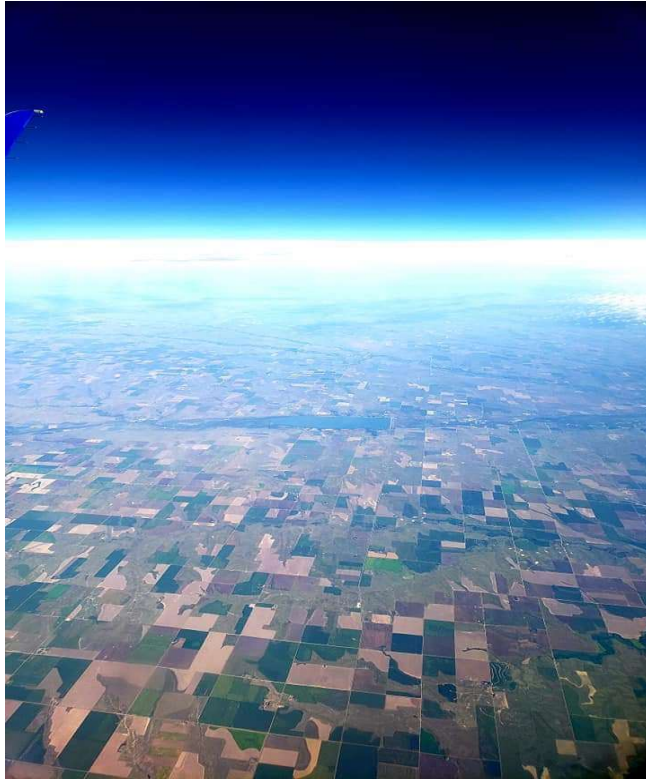
Pope Francis, in his turn, places this truth before us at a critical moment of human history. And now this truth is ours to practice and to preach.

PHOTOS

***Sr. Janice Burns-Watson**
Sisters of St. Francis
Tiffin, Ohio
USA*







THE CANTICLE OF CREATION *ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI*

Sr. Marianne Saieg

OSF

Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

Joliet, Illinois

USA



Original language: English

Francis began to compose the Canticle of Creation while he was ill and blind. He saw with his inner eyes. The Earth spoke to Francis of God's love, care and presence among all God's creatures. It was with an expansive vision and a magnanimous heart that Francis expressed his inner longings, his welled-up heart and his inspired outpouring of this prayer-poem.

Overwhelmingly, the words spilled out as a waterfall on the antique parchment. Written in 1224 we have been working at integrating this into our lives for 800 years.

Imagine, the inner transformation embedded in the soul of Francis to realize and know for sure that we are all ONE. In the tiniest insect, the lumbering elephant, the flutter of a butterfly, the howling cry the wolf, the whimper of an infant, the energy of youth, the growing adult and in the wisdom of the sages. Ecstatic!

If I put my ear to the ground, would I hear the heartbeat of God? Or the pulse of God in the encounters of my day? Or in the darkness, as I tunnel for light would I see beyond this narrow opening? In Francis's dimmed eyes he had a rare semblance of what ignited his spirit beyond his blindness. In my darkest hours what have I composed of the beauty of the earth that speaks to me of resurrection? What might be rising out of the sorrows of this world's groanings of War, displacement, poverty? What cries to hear that beckon me to respond? The oneness of creation amid what seems disjointed and unrelated smolders like a burning ember all around us.

Mother earth is reaching out for our care as she feels drought, floods, fires and the weeping from the charred oaks that reach to the heavens.

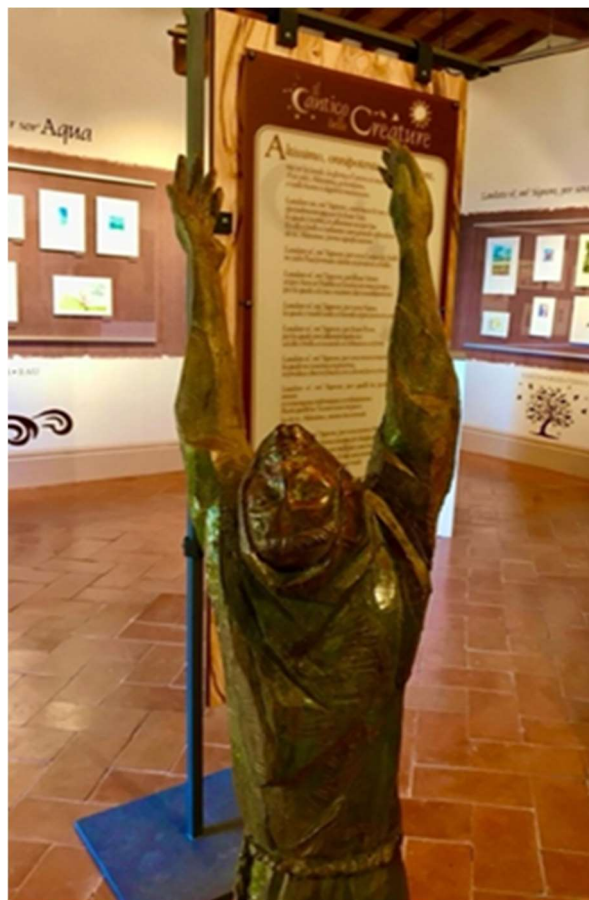
*"We know that the whole of creation is groaning in labor pains
Even until now, and not only that, but we ourselves groan within
as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies..."*

Romans 8:22-23

There is a Litany echoing in the world around us begging for our prayers to rise up like incense. Recall Francis's inner strength while his eyes dimmed. In the Canticle of the Creatures his words formed a prayer of praise, gushing forth as a waterfall that cannot be interrupted. Francis followed the stream of grace within him that reached beyond his blindness.

He saw with the eyes of his soul. O Divine One, reached into our dimmed vision and widen the lens of our focus so we too, will allow the stream of grace to enter our depths and sing praise to you with hope in our hearts, no matter our circumstances.

*“Praise be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
Especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom you give us light.”*



*“Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all blessings.”*

CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES

[*lit. Song of the Sun; original title of the prayer: "Sonnengesang," which is the German title of St. Francis' Canticle of the Creatures.*]

Sr. Gudrun Schellner

Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother

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Original language: German

Refrain:

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

Praised be You, my Lord, through Your creation,
so beautiful, so mighty and so tender,
a parable of Your glory.

Praised be You, my Lord, through all friends,
image of Your constant care,
so precious and so unique.

Praised be You, my Lord, through all people
whom You have created and enlivened,
an expression of Your greatness.

Praised be You, my Lord, in all that I am,
received as a gift from You,
You are Yourself revealed here.

Praised be You, my Lord, in all my paths,
whatever our position,
a road will lead us to Your Home.

Praised be You, my Lord, in all the little things,
however insignificant and often overlooked,
the signs of Your humility.

Praised be You, my Lord, in the sufferings of the world,
for all that seems inexplicable,
and which You have shed light upon by Your death on the Cross.

Praised be You, my Lord, by all who seek,
who yearn for meaning and hope,
and to whom You will give fulfilment.

Praised be You, my Lord, through word and silence,
which are only stammering attempts,
You are the tender and faithful God.

Lord, be praised through life, decline, and death,
expressions of our being created;
at the end of time You, God, are the glory.

Refrain:

Praise and glorify the Lord with thanksgiving,
serve him with great humility.



ART WORKS

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Laudato Si - Cosmic Francis and Clare Cross

Francis and Clare lived out of a consistent encounter with creation at eye level. Love instead of exploitation. The pure natural materials, e.g. earth, gold, precious stones - represent the stardust from which all creation is made.



Laudato Si - Cosmic Cross

Natural pigments (gold leaf, copper, lapis lazuli, turquoise, earth, champagne chalk, rose quartz) on natural canvas and spruce wood frame. 60 x 120/30 x 30 cm, 2024.

Clay figurines

Laudato Si - Clare and Francis

The two clay figurines are not 'smooth'. Their roughness is a sign of the radical depth, strength and clarity of their decision in life to love creation, not to dominate it.



Francis
20 x 12cm, Ton, 2024



Clare
20 x 12cm, Ton, 2024

In her abstract paintings, the artist works with pure natural pigments, i.e. with plant and spice colours, rock flours, precious stones such as lapis lazuli or precious metals such as gold, silver and copper, most of which she produces herself.

The abstract paintings have an effect not only on an emotional and rational level, but also on a physical and somatic one. This is because in harmony with the composition, special painting techniques and colouring, the materials, which are present in minute traces in the human body, also contribute to the impact and thus touch deeply on a cellular level. In this way, the paintings promote emotional and psychological development: a psychosomatic, holistic approach. The paintings are landscapes of the soul that speak to each viewer individually. They accompany people like a reliable friend, a trusted therapist through their lives on the adventurous path to their own self.

LIVING THE MESSAGE OF LAUDATO SI' – AN OUTFLOW OF THE CANTICLE OF CREATURES

Sr. Shirley Aeria

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Original language: English

The Canticle of Creatures by St Francis of Assisi speaks to me of the significant Franciscan value of right relationship with every aspect of creation. *“Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, ,,,. This sister 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”.* (Laudato Si’ (LSI) 1-2). The timely message of Laudato Si’ spurs me on to live it.

To live this message effectively, there are salient areas to consider: ecological conversion, living sustainably and be more involved in community activities addressing environmental issues.

“The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast”... (LSI ch6:217). Pope Francis amplifies the importance of experiencing a deep ecological conversion in order that we can develop a certain sensitivity to our planet and have a right relationship with all aspects of creation.

I have found that being on the journey of ecological conversion, it has impelled me to choose a sustainable lifestyle. Living sustainably is both gratifying and challenging. Gratifying in knowing that I am contributing in some way to address the climate issues. Challenging in facing the opposition and indifference of some and the need for commitment, perseverance and sacrifices in continuing with my sustainable option.

Living sustainably is an effective way to use the earth’s resources, so abundantly provided by Brother Wind, Brother Sun, Brother Fire and Sister Water, both responsibly and wisely.

Living in a ‘throwaway culture’ impacts us both consciously and unconsciously. It is ever more important that we adopt sustainable practices to combat the prevalent culture. When we live sustainably, we reduce our carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, and protect biodiversity. By minimizing waste generation and implementing efficient energy use, we contribute to the preservation of ecosystems and alleviate climate change.

(LSI ch 6:229) “We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world,” We cannot seek to redress the ecological imbalance alone. Courage and firm determination are vital to ensure that we garner support from the human community so that various aspects of our common home are brought to the attention of governments and other influencers resulting in practical measures which can be initiated to bring about positive change.

Being a member of the Laudato Si’ Movement and trained as a Laudato Si’ Animator have enabled me to be involved in both their campaigns and other environmental activities. Participating in our parish’s rewilding project and engaging in conservation ministry both in the local park and in our garden have further added to my attempts to help tackle environmental issues as a community.

In living the Laudato Si’ message as effectively as we can, we are preserving both the dignity of and reverence for all aspects of creation as expressed so beautifully in the Canticum of Creatures.



THE CALL OF THE COSMOS TO ITS CARETAKERS

Sr. Stella Jeas

FCC

Franciscan Clarist Congregation

India

Original language: English



“God saw everything that He Had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Gen 1/31). According to the first story of creation in the Book of Genesis, God first prepared a wonderful habitation for human beings and then created human beings male and female. He created them in His own image and placed them in the beautiful Garden of Eden to till it and keep it (Gene 2/15). He shared His creative energy of love with human beings as they are His own image. God entrusted the earth to our care, yet it continues to belong to God (Lev 25/23). It demands the art of being in fellowship with nature rather than dominating or plundering its resources and being able to hand over the earth to the future generation with all its blessings. The Garden of Eden was a place where God walks with human beings shoulder to shoulder, and there was perfect peace, joy and freedom. The words of Lady Poverty to Francis about this Garden are very striking: “ I was at one time in the paradise of my God, where man went naked; in fact, I walked in man and with man in his nakedness fearing nothing, doubting nothing and suspecting no evil. It was in my thoughts that I would be with him forever, for he was created just, good and wise by the Most High and placed in that most pleasant and most beautiful place. I was rejoicing exceedingly and playing before him all the while, for, possessing nothing, he belonged entirely to God” (Sac. Com. 25).

Francis of Assisi was a man in total harmony with God and the entire creation. He remains even today as the greatest inspiring model for an integral relationship with the entire creation. His embrace of the evangelical life gave him tremendous freedom to associate with the world of creation with an attitude of gratitude and without possessing it. In Jesus, the first born of all creation, he understood the connectedness to all creation. He could consider all his fellow creatures, as kith and kin; as members of the great family of God. The Canticle of Creatures is an awesome expression of his cosmic liturgy and provides a new world vision to the modern consumerist humanity. According to St. Bonaventure, Francis was an intense lover of God who could see the vestiges of creator in everything.

On this occasion of the 800th anniversary of the Canticle of Creatures, the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and its second part *Laudate Deum* are extremely important to remind the urgency of conversion of human beings. *Laudato Si'* appeals to us to see the sacredness in creation, so that we may not look at it with utilitarian attitude. In *Laudate Deum* Pope Francis tells us that our harmony among men and women should also be extended to creation in a sense of responsibility (67).

The environmental degradation is often connected to the sinfulness of humanity, their greed and selfishness. Pope Francis clearly shows that ecology is not just a social or political or economic question but a serious moral and spiritual issue. The Book of Genesis reveals that the result of sin is alienation of human beings from God, oneself, one another and nature. To solve the ecological crisis, the first thing is to renew and heal the human hearts and get reconciled with God the creator so that one receives a new perception of fraternity to His creation.

The problem of extinction of different species of creatures is a result, to a great extent, of human selfishness in terms of so-called development. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis invited all of humanity to become aware of the need to make changes in our lifestyle to counteract Global Warming. *Laudate Deum* says that the uncontrolled way of increasing Global Warming warns us that humankind itself becomes an endangered species (28). All our developments should be for the wellbeing of humanity, care for nature and for world peace. *Laudato Si'* very sadly reminds us that the poor are the ones most vulnerable in the exploitation of nature. They lose safe air, water, homes etc. God asks, "I had entrusted my creation to rational beings to be good stewards, what have you done, O men?"

St. Paul affirms the truth that sin has destroyed the order of nature so that the whole creation is groaning and looks forward to its liberation (Rom 8/19-22). At the same time, the salvation of humanity in Christ is a sure hope also for creation. The Holy Spirit continually calls us to conversion, to a change in lifestyle in order to resist the degradation of our environment.

The synod for a Synodal Church highlights that "walking together" is a significant call. In the Logo of the synod, I would like to add creatures such as birds, animals, plants, rivers, mountains, stars etc. Our journey on earth is not an isolated one but a journey together with all our brothers and sisters. We Franciscans take the challenge to have true ecological conversion and to be a model and example to protect our common home, a sacred gift from our creator, by committing to recycle, separate garbage, plant trees, avoid "use and throw," etc. It is a peak time to take the pledge to have conversion from our self-centeredness and to become good guardians and protectors of our common home. "Praise God for all His creatures"- This was the message that St. Francis of Assisi proclaimed by his life, his Canticle and all his actions. "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!" (Ps 150/6).



LAUDATO SI': CALLING ALL FRANCISCAN CONGREGATIONS

Sr. Renée Mirkes

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USA

Original language: English



The physical world—Mother Nature—is an astute teacher. We humans, uniquely all members of Franciscan communities, would do well to absorb and apply nature’s prosocial lessons displayed in the hymn of St. Francis, *Laudato Si’* (*Praised be you, my Lord*). The very principles Pope Francis foregrounds in his encyclical of the same name: those sterling attitudes and virtues that will help “every person on the planet” to meet the challenges of sustaining our common home, assuring its survival for the delight and livelihood of generations to come.

To wit, we must, like St. Francis, root ourselves so deeply in God’s created world and his creative power, that we see our interrelationship or communal bonds with the environment so clearly, through the purest humility, that we, too, can echo Francis in calling the sun, moon, plants and animals ‘brother’ or ‘sister’. So clearly that we’re better able to see, hear, and grasp that, alongside the evolutionary force of natural selection which involves selfishness, waste, and death, there is another counter-principle—Divine Love—the heartbeat beneath all creation, promoting the success of evolution and the sustainment of our planetary life via cooperation, community, and altruism.

Belief in this prosocial, divine evolutionary force has led me to hope that the efforts of my congregation, the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, to share their property, lake, and natural beauty with others will steadily crescendo. Answering the call of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*, I pray we will continue to acknowledge that our care of the Motherhouse environment and, particularly, protecting biodiversity in its ecosystem, is not an option, but an integral part of our faith (#64).

We need to keep in mind the following. In the spirit of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis has petitioned world leaders to convert 50% of the earth’s arable land to build a biodiverse natural climate by 2030, all in the interests of mitigating the world-wide bee crisis and other environmentally erosive conditions.

In their March, 2023 response, the Irish Bishops Catholic Conference asked their bishops to donate 30% of their respective diocesan/parish property to encourage a biodiverse ecosystem in Ireland.

Following the example of what some Irish bishops have already done to carry out the mandate, the FSCC would need to: (1) assess our grounds and map out an area with a view to returning 30% of the property to nature by 2030; (2) engage with local expertise from gardening centers and horticulturalists as well as our Sister-experts with their green thumbs and hands-on-know-how about growing, planting and embellishing the environment and (3) brainstorm the ways the FSCC might help to mitigate our worldwide biodiversity crisis by doing things as simple as putting rainwater planters at the end of gutters; planting pollinator-friendly bulbs; reducing pesticides or herbicides in the area; installing bee hotels; sowing shrubs and flower beds; planting vegetables and fruit trees; encouraging the Sisters and our neighbors or local community to reconnect with nature by listening, looking, feeling, and praying in God's 'book of nature' and, finally, inviting our neighbors to share any flowers or food harvested from our efforts.

Recognizing everything as a gift and thanking God for what has been the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity's bountiful lot for over 150 years should surely, almost naturally, lead to sharing those riches with others as Scripture and *Laudato Si* encourage us, especially during the 2025 year of Jubilee.

CARE FOR CREATION

Sr. Delores Wisnicky

OSF

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity

USA

Original language: English

Care for Creation

Is vital to our Vocation...

We are called to hold sacred

All the Earth, God created!

For Creation speaks powerfully of our God

His closeness, His presence, imagination

So much beauty and individuation.

We have brought harm to Mother Earth,

We see violent storms, fires, and all that is hurt...

Take notice in how we care

Come, be more aware.

For Nature is a wondrous gift

One that makes our hearts sing, gives a lift!

Our bold little hummingbird was here today---

Let us see her, come to our window and say

Thank you for the food!

And truly affected our mood...

Our old diseased maple tree had to come down

We mourned her death, her huge crown

Little Hummer would go there often to sit

I wondered then, if she would quit.

Creation calls us to honor the cycle of life

Helps us be grounded when facing death, strife;

The beauty, the stillness, the movement of water

Let us catch our breath and not falter.

Lord, thank you for the gift of creation

Francis experienced it with great elation.

For he saw all life praising You

All life is connected to You!

Can we do the same---

As we call on your holy name?

Can we be in Awe---

As we live out this amazing Call!



ST. FRANCIS IN MY SOUL AND ENVIRONMENT

Sr. Bupe Salome Chileshe
Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi
Zambia
Africa

Original language: English



Francis had his own time and space. There's a reason I call him Francis rather than Saint Francis, during our conversation, I want him to feel that we're getting to know each other better. He was not the saint we extol today, but rather a devoted Christian who expressed his respect and insight about creation.

Francis! Francis! Hoo Francis, if only you would come back to check on how things are going. Men and women still hold the same beliefs about colour, states, sex, and material possessions, but there is only one human race with all of its diversity and beauty, just as there is only one earth with all of its vegetation, animals, insects, birds of the air, and aquatic life. As you are aware, the equilibrium of an ecosystem depends on all living forms. Hoo Francis, inspire us once more say something.

You asked deep question which had answers in loving all creation as you called each creature brother or sister depending on its quality of life. I say life yes even water has life just life another creatures. You understood that creation is the first born of humanity.

Hoo Francis, why are you so silent now speak to me? You said what we have been repeating for 800 years. You possessed a deep comprehension of the attraction that humans have for the creator, their intelligence, and their unwavering desire to care for the planet. You captured, with wisdom and feelings, what others had to learn to understand. We must convert if we are to survive; else, we will destroy our future by becoming satisfied with our outward looks and forgetting that we are spirit, breathing the same air as the rest of creation.

Francis, speak to me! Yesterday in my country, I sobbed to witness the merciless stoning of strayed lion to death but you assured me that if we would pardon, we would be pardoned. I couldn't understand their dread, because human beings are endowed with a second reality that is sensible or intelligent.

To preserve the animal's life, would have been an alternative. We have harmed the environment by use of fossil fuels, which pollutes our waterways, we cut trees causing deforestation. All those cause soil erosion, low air quality, and undrinkable water are all results of climate change.

Francis, holler out! Why do you keep quiet? This year, there will be hunger and change of temperature in my county. The rich will always look for ways to exploit the poor, and the poor will only get poorer. Only a select group of people who are vicious and self-centered still call this place home. You knew that there is a direct correlation between the earth that is, that everything is interrelated. Beware of us who have forgotten to criticize new paradigms and technologically derived forms of power; to seek out alternative viewpoints on the economy and progress; to properly value every creature; to understand ecology from a human perspective; to hold open and honest discussions; to recognize the serious responsibility of both domestic and international policy; to reject the disposable culture; and to suggest living a different way.

The environment is highly valued in all religions, and it is the source of inspiration for all spiritual works. Why do we exchange the planet for money that was created by the planet itself? We become so gratified that we lose sight of the fact that clean air is essential to our children's health. Until the mind, spirit, and body are connected, as they are in creation, mankind, and technology, there will be no quiet in this house only turmoil. Since 800 years we have been attempting to make decisions that are healthy for the environment, according to our own satisfaction. Hoo, Francis, so tell us what has to be done to guarantee the future and redeem the past. We must educate the present on the harm we have caused on mother earth. Hoo! Francis, say something! We need mother earth, big brothers and sisters, and most importantly, to accept our cousin death, who will carry us to our Father, the immovable move.



Lake Chifunabuli Luapula province Lubwe Mission-Zambia

A ONCE MORE WAKE UP CALL TO LISTEN TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH

Sr. Dorothy Odundo

Franciscan Sisters of St. Anna

Kenya

Africa

Original language: English



In 2023, I visited my county; the Western part of Kenya, Kisumu ‘Dala’, a region nestled along the shores of Lake Victoria, in the heart of Kenya. Kisumu is renowned for its picturesque landscapes, vibrant culture, and the majestic expanse of Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa. This visit was not only an opportunity to witness the natural beauty of the area but also a chance to reflect on the profound lessons of environmental stewardship highlighted in Pope Francis’s encyclical "Laudato Si’." This visit also came as a result of the Laudato si championship that I already did in the Abysinia- Ethiopia and now was my turn to see what my country men were doing along the beautiful shores of Lake Victoria.

One serene morning, I found myself standing on the banks of Lake Victoria, the gentle lapping of waves against the shore creating a symphony of tranquility. The lake, shimmering under the golden rays of the rising sun, stretched out to the farthest hills I could see. Fishermen in traditional wooden boats dotted the horizon, their silhouettes against the morning light painting a timeless picture of harmony between humanity and nature.

As I wandered along the lakeside, I encountered a group of local children playing near the water. Their laughter and joy were infectious, but I couldn’t help but notice the litter scattered along the shore—plastic bottles, bags, and other debris. It was a stark reminder of the pervasive issue of pollution that plagues even the most beautiful and remote parts of our world. This scene brought to mind the urgent call of "Laudato Si’" for an ecological conversion, a transformation of our hearts and practices to better care for our common home.

In Kisumu, the local community relies heavily on Lake Victoria for their livelihoods. Fishing, agriculture, and tourism are integral to the economy and culture of the region. However, unsustainable practices and pollution threaten these vital resources. Reflecting on this, I realized the importance of integrating traditional knowledge and modern sustainable practices to protect and preserve this natural treasure.

The Lake Victoria tour was a catalyst for deeper introspection and prayerful reflection on my role in caring for creation. It became clear that every action, no matter how small, contributes to the larger picture of environmental stewardship. Inspired by the resilience and resourcefulness of the local community, I committed to adopting more sustainable practices in my daily life and advocating for policies that protect our natural resources. I am yet to achieve this through the Laudato Si' committee in the Archdiocese of Kisumu. We still have a long way to go.

One of the significant challenges faced by Kisumu and many other regions is plastic pollution. The community has made strides in addressing this issue through initiatives like organized clean-up drives and campaigns to reduce plastic use like the polythene wrappers and the plastic water bottles that are thrown anywhere and everywhere after use. Supporting and participating in these kind of initiatives can amplify their impact and foster a culture of sustainability.

Another challenge would be ensuring the sustainable use of Lake Victoria's resources. Overfishing and pollution have led to a decline in fish populations, impacting the livelihoods of local fishermen. Promoting sustainable fishing practices, such as regulated fishing seasons and the use of environmentally friendly nets, can help restore the lake's ecosystem and ensure the long-term prosperity of the community.

By taking time to connect with the natural world and seek guidance, we can find the strength and inspiration to take meaningful action. "Laudato Si'" reminds us that we are all interconnected, and our individual efforts can collectively lead to significant change.

My tour along the shores Lake Victoria, Kisumu County was a profound experience that underscored the beauty and fragility of our natural world. It highlighted the urgent need for us to care for creation, not only through individual actions but also by supporting and learning from communities like those along Lake Victoria. By embracing sustainable practices, fostering a sense of collective responsibility, and engaging in prayerful reflection, we can honor creation and ensure its preservation for future generations. It's not late, all is not gone. 'WE CAN DO IT!'



WATER, LIFE AND MISSION

Sr. Carmen Lúcia de Almeida
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Óbidos
Brasil

Original language: Portuguese



Water in my daily life and mission

Water has always played a special role in my life, connecting memory and learning. It is a precious and indispensable commodity for the life of our common home.

One of the most extraordinary experiences of my life was when, in February 2017, I sailed for the first time on the waters of the Rio Tapajós and the Amazon River to a new mission in the Diocese of Óbidos - Pará, where I met the people of the rivers, who in their daily lives live a relationship of love and care for the rivers, lakes and streams. Water is what keeps alive the hope for a life of quality, justice and peace.

During this experience, I learned among the small riparian communities that the river becomes a means of transportation, just as the lakes are the natural reservoirs of food. I have become a stronger person and more committed to social-environmental causes through my contact with the power, mystique and life of the river. These waters nourish me in faith and mission. Sacred waters that touch the earth and create life, life that, as it moves through the every day of history, transforms reality and fulfills the lives of God's sons and daughters.



Observing nature with respect and awe, I thank the Creator for such a precious gift. Living with these people, I realized that the water that washes the weary body is the same water that navigates the canoe that takes us to the mission where it is needed, facing the strong currents that challenge us every day. It is the water that nourishes life and keeps people strong to live, to dream, and to worship the beauty of the Creator. It is a fact that there is no living thing in the world that can survive without water, so I can say **THAT WATER IS LIFE.**



In this age in which we are exposed to so many impacts, I believe it is necessary for us to take care of its sources, because we run the great risk that one day this liquid will be lost to us.

While living and sharing the mission, I learned from water the importance of the flow of life, of accepting change and learning to adapt to different circumstances. This connection with water is not only physical, but also spiritual. Water is not only an essential resource for life, but also carries a strong symbolism of purification, renewal and healing in various cultures and traditions.

I would like to point out that water has a very strong symbolism in the Bible and appears in several passages that reflect the physical and spiritual importance of this element. In the book of Genesis, water is mentioned at the very beginning when God creates the world. It is also seen as a blessing from God in Psalm 1: *"The one who does not walk in step with the wicked [...] is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season."* In the New Testament, Jesus speaks of "living water" in John 4:14. Speaking to the Samaritan woman, Jesus says, *"Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst"*, referring to eternal life. Water has a unique ability to heal us physically and spiritually. It is as if it reminds us of the importance of connecting with the world around us.

"Praise be to you, my Lord" sang St. Francis of Assisi, a man who was faithful to the Sacred Scriptures and who proposed that we recognize nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and communicates to us something of his beauty and goodness. From the beauty of the creatures we can see, by analogy, their Creator. *"Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure."*

The following poem reflects some of my lived experience in daily life and mission.

Water is life, life is existence!

It's not a simple formula created by science.

It is God's gift of such perfection.

It flows in the womb of the earth.

It is life in transformation.

Like blood that flows through the veins and makes the heart beat.

In the forest, water irrigates the soil and makes it sprout.

Its cycles can be described,

but who can live without water?

Nature's precious liquid.

It brings life wherever it goes.

Oceans, rivers, lakes, streams or the taps in our homes.

It's sad to see so much pollution causing destruction.

The destruction of life by sheer greed.

Water is life! Life in abundance.

God's gift to all creation!

Mixed with our being, the source of salvation.

THE CANTICLE OF CREATION - IN LIGHT OF LAUDATO SI'

Sr. M. Leonarda Rakhiba

Franciscan Sisters of Siessen

Assisi Mission, Fort Savage Farm, Marseilles

South Africa

Original languages: English and Sotho



St. Francis loved creation, was aware of its beauty and formulated “The Canticle of Creation;” he saw God in all things. It is salient to take care of our common home, to be responsible for it, to protect the poor and the mother earth. St. Francis saw God’s creation as brothers and sisters. He was in touch with what God has created. Pope Francis is also emphasizing care of creation and the poor.

In the beginning God created man and his creation. The Book of Genesis tells us about “The creation of the world,” after each and everything that He created “God saw it was good” (Gen 1:12). God was pleased by what He has done then He created a human being in His image. After all this He gave humans a mandate to take care of all things, to be stewards of all living creatures and not to misuse them. The Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis addresses the ecological crisis.

Caring for the environment is seen as a challenge for all of humanity, it is a common issue and a universal duty, that we should respect our common home. We are called to be responsible stewards by God and as stewards of God’s creation we are supposed to be living in harmony with God’s creation. We need each other because we are connected. (Cf. LS 42). The crisis of climate change challenges us as Franciscans to read the signs of the time; remind us of our identity and helps us to contemplate about God’s Creation.

In our South African Province, the formation (novitiate) is involved in the project of helping the poor and taking care of creation. It is essential to care for creation because we are all connected, we need each other. “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.” (LS 217).

We are going through a difficult time, where environmental crises escalate daily. We experience droughts in our surrounding area, cutting down trees and not re-planting them is not seen as a crime and the Government is doing nothing about it whilst the earth suffers along with the vulnerable. And in some areas in South Africa many people also died due to floods and the poor are mostly affected. This remains a challenge to all who wish to be good stewards of God.

“A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products” (LS 206). In our apostolic life we are entitled to be the voice of the voiceless and set an example in our way of life.

We also contribute to safeguarding of creation by planting trees, reusing, recycling and reducing the misuse of God creation. For vegetable gardens we avoid using chemical fertilizers and we evangelize by teaching people in the neighbouring area to use natural manure; by continuous explanations to children about climate change we encourage them to take care of creation and to avoid all kinds of pollution. We sign petitions for the fossil fuel projects that are in the pipeline to prevent them to take place.



*Fort Savage Farm, Marseilles
South Africa*

ALL MY LIFE IS THIS

Sr. Barbara Ann Webster

OSF

*School Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis
USA Province*



Original language: English

All my life is this,

Like the fresh rain in the desert,

That drops then disappears,

All my life is like this,

Like the forest filled with sunshine and shadows,

That play with the trees,

All my life is this,

Like the morning sunshine,

That plays hide and seek on my window,

All my life is like this,

Like the smell of a great fiesta meal,

That puts a smile in my mouth,

All my life is like this.

Why?

Because You are the fresh rain in the desert of my difficult situations,

You are the sun in my forest of doubts and frustrations,

You are the brilliant sun every day of my life,

You are the fiesta meal that puts meaning to my actions,

Yes! All my life is this

Why?

BECAUSE YOU ARE MY LIFE.

ART WORK

Sr. Gemma Fenbert

Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Charity

Tiffin, Ohio

USA





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