



International Franciscan Conference TOR

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL GOD'S CREATION

March 2015

Sisters and Brothers,

The Lord give you peace!

On November 29, 2014, Franciscan brothers and sisters around the world celebrated the 35th Anniversary of the naming of St. Francis as the Patron of Ecology. In 1979, Pope John Paul II, declared that "Francis deserves special consideration for this. For he, in a special way, deeply sensed the universal works of the Creator and, filled with a certain divine spirit, sang that very beautiful "Canticle of the Creatures." Through them, Brother Sun most powerful and Sister Moon and the stars of heaven, he offered fitting praise, glory, honor and all blessing to the most high, all-powerful, good Lord."

This anniversary celebration is a fitting beginning for the input for *Propositum*, 2015, focusing on the theme, Responsibility for All of God's Creation. The articles submitted bring our attention to the Statement of the General Assembly, 2013:

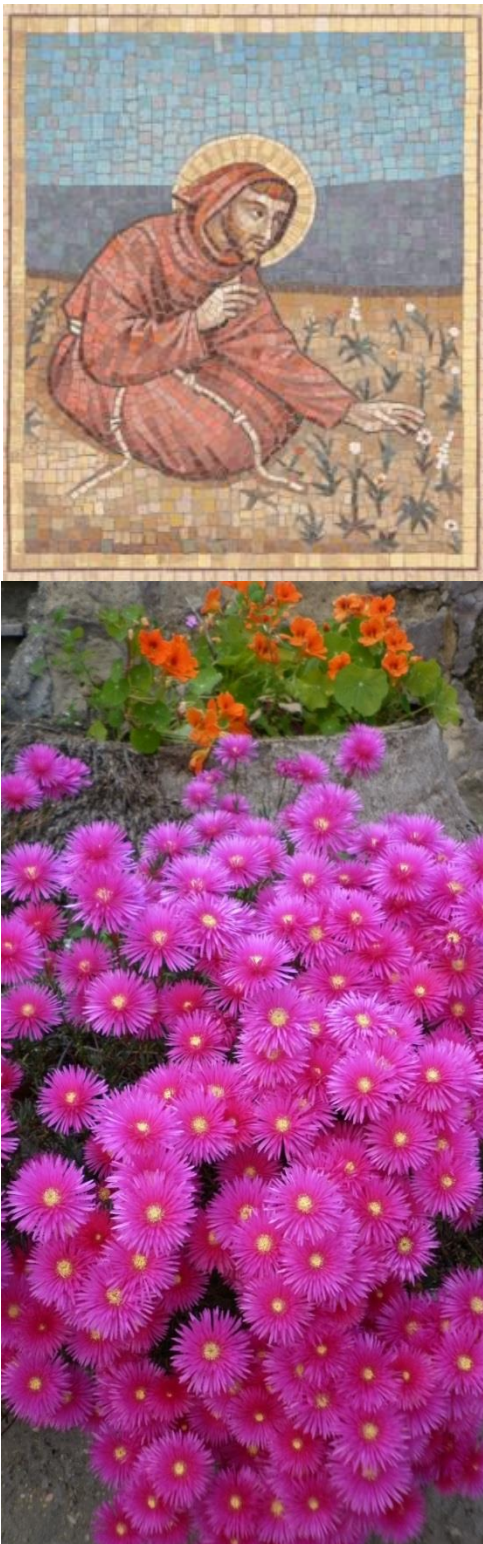
***Recognizing the challenges of today's world,
we accept our responsibility for all of creation.
In contemplation and through prophetic action,
we dream, explore and take new risks.***

The website, [Franciscans for Ecology](#), was launched on March 22, 2014 and was created by Romans VI, a group of JPIC directors for the Franciscan family: Capuchins, Conventuals, Third Order Regulars, Secular Franciscans, IFC-TOR, and members of the Order of Friars Minor. Available in 12 languages, it continues to be an excellent resource for prayers, reflections and other resources centering on ecology.

Let us be inspired as we pray and serve our Mother Earth and all creation, especially in the context of the worldwide concern for the future of our universe.

Let us go...Let us begin!

Sr. Deborah Lockwood, President IFC-TOR
Sr. Celestine Giertych, Vice-President
Sr. Klara Simunovic, Councilor
Sr. Maria do Livramento Melo de Oliveira, Councilor
Sr. Marianne Jungbluth, Councilor
Sr. Sinclare, FCC, Councilor



FRANCISCANS FOR EARTH

*Sister Cheryl Kemner, Assistant Minister General
Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
335 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, Missouri, USA
Original Language: English*

The Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help chose as our focus care of earth with **Franciscans For Earth** as the tagline. This focus is accomplished by way of education, collaboration and advocacy.

In our Community declaration we declare that living in the awareness that Christ is Brother to all creation, we embrace Franciscan fraternity: we strive for responsible stewardship for all creation, we challenge each other to conversion of heart, and we seek to be a transforming presence, co-creating a world that is more human and more divine.

Franciscans For Earth has many aspects. We educate through eco-documentaries, discussion groups, days of reflection, and speakers on ecological topics. We've shown films ranging from "Food, Inc.", "Truck Farm", to "Kilowatt Ours" and "I Am." Our speakers' topics have included vermiculture, melting glaciers, cooking organically, raising chickens in the city, and organic farming. The **Northwest Earth Institute** has

been the source of materials for discussion groups. One discussion group covered the topic of simple lifestyle. We collaborate with the group **Get Healthy De Soto** when showing documentaries in De Soto. We have collaborated with the Franciscan Sisters of Mary to get the QuikTrip gas stations to recycle 95% of their trash. We sponsored seed swaps, the De Soto farmers' market, contributed to the herb garden and De Soto community garden. We've hosted cosmic walks, a concert by Jan Novotka, and an event with Sr. Ilia Delio. We've been instrumental in getting recycling bins at the St. Louis International airport.

Our demonstration garden which is cultivated using sustainable methods has allowed us to serve healthy local food to our guests on the days of reflection. We have savored the deliciousness of heirloom tomatoes, okra, squash, potatoes, peas, beans, pepper, and cucumbers. We sell produce at two farmers' markets and contribute to two food pantries in Jefferson County.



At our demonstration garden, we've held a tomato tasting event to allow our guests to enjoy the approximately 20 different varieties of tomatoes grown. We've also hosted a potato dig for grandparents, parents and children through which children experienced the joy of finding potatoes. Digging in the dirt for potatoes was enjoyed by 32 attendees.



Many people have commented on the importance of what we are doing and how it has changed their lives and their appreciation for God's good universe.

"It has made me aware of caring for our environment, natural resources and the earth. The films have made me aware of the magnitude of the many gifts we have been given on this earth and how I am being invited to reverence them." Anonymous

"Environmental sustainability is one of the primary concerns in my life, and I enjoy opportunities to get together with others to learn about and discuss new initiatives and activities that support social change toward more sustainable living. For the generations to come!" Aaron Mathers, University City, MO

*"You keep me remembering the **Big Picture** of God's creation that we are called to take care of...Modern life tends to tempt us to distance the person from the truth that we're all created from stardust and connected to everything else on this earth. These evenings keep me mindful of stewardship & not taking for granted God's gifts!" Sr. Honora Remes, DC*



We believe that through our focus of **Franciscans For Earth** we can carry out our mission of being a transforming presence in society through witnessing Gospel values as we strive to see the face of Christ in all creation.

AFFIRMING GOD'S GIFT OF BROTHERHOOD/SISTERHOOD

By Sr. Janice Jolin, smic
Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception
Woodland Park, NJ, USA
Original Language: English



Recently I read in Richard Rohr's (OFM) daily meditations something that strikingly broadened my understanding of our Franciscan spirituality and its link with creation spirituality. He said: *"The eternal Christ Mystery began with the Big Bang where God decided to materialize as the universe."* What an impact that thought brings to us about creation and its consequent way of engaging our relationship with creation.

As Franciscans we have long understood the mystery of the Incarnation in Jesus, the Christ, as centering factor of our spirituality. This visible manifestation of the presence of God among us, Jesus, lovingly understood the dream of the Father in making us sons and daughters and came to awaken us to the consciousness that in creation we are all connected as brothers and sisters with one another.

Considering that the Incarnation first began at the beginning of time when God's abundant love shown forth in creation, then this visible reality must also hold our reverence and protection. For so long humankind believed we were the only ones meriting God's indwelling life, now we see a bit more clearly that we are only part of the whole mystery of incarnational reality.

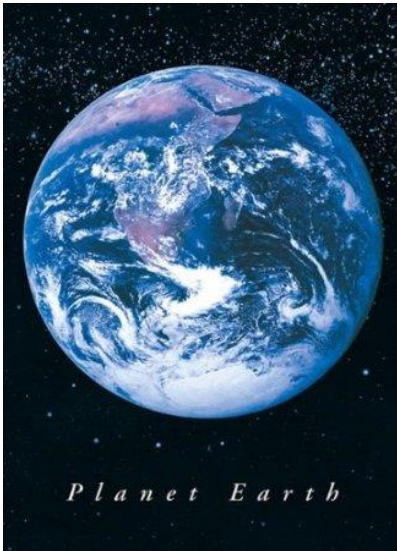
The dream then, is to bring into conscious awareness this relationship and to preach it at all times, with words when necessary, to a world whose behaviors are far from respect and reverence for the simple, vulnerable, and indefensible species of the universe.

Concretely, our Congregation manifests our relationship with creation in its actions of protest against the world wide trafficking of human persons, through its appeal to the Brazilian government to stop the Belo Monte Dam project with its consequent displacement of hundreds of river communities in the Amazon Region, in politicking against fracking and its damaging effects to nature and to humans and in its responding to the many more generic cries inviting our support for life. Beyond efforts of protest, we also seek ways to constantly open ourselves to service among the poor and marginalized, promote ecological awareness through the education of children and adult populations and to work in collaboration with the various organizations committed to the same ends.

We believe in a continued exploration to discover ways to address the Father's dream which lies within our own creative genius as persons, communities, congregations spread throughout this small planet already imbued in cultural variations of habitual practices. Can it be that the East can teach the West reverence, the West mentor the South with courage, the South persuade the North with patience and the North become borderless? Then, our world will have become transformed and our prophetic actions will have blessed all of creation with the compassionate experience of Emmanuel.

BEING A FRANCISCAN

Sister Martha Herkness, O.S.F.
Original Language: English



The other day I was reflecting on the gift of being a Franciscan. We are called to follow the Gospel as are all. Yet I feel as a Franciscan we are unique. We each bring to our day unique variation of gifts, talents, and limitations. We, Franciscans, are called to bring them to the table of the Lord each and every day.

When most people think about Franciscans, they think of animal lovers.

Yet we are more...

We are also thought of as caretakers: social justices, environmental issues, and peace advocates.

Yet we are more...

We are relationship builders: God, people, and Mother Earth. We are called to be part of the greater whole and humble enough to help the leper among us.

Yet we are called to be more....

To open ourselves to God, one another, and the universe, we need to be strong people of prayer. Perhaps the poem I have written will call you to deepen your gift of being Franciscan as well as your own spiritual journey.

Lub...Dub....Lub...Dub

The Indian drum is a sacred instrument.

It calls upon us: to slow our pace, rejoice, dance, and raise our voices and spirits to the Great Spirit.

Does the drum beat of your own heart beat in harmony with Mother Earth?

Does your heart beat allow you to be in relationship with all things: Plants, animals, insects, and all two legged creatures surrounded by the Great Spirit?

Or does your drum beat to the chaos and imbalance of a society running,

Not knowing where they're running to or from? Beating faster and faster driving you to always feel disconnected and alone.

Perhaps you are with a thousand others, each playing a different beat?

Be still...listen; connect with your own heart beat that is naturally in harmony with Mother Earth.

Close your eyes and feel the lub...dub, lub....dub, lub.....dub within your own being.

Be aware of the "thisness" that surrounds you,

Feel its vastness and yet, the smallness of each particle!

You are one with it and it is one with you.

You are in relationship!

Ponder how you will journey in this relationship: *Lub...Dub....Lub...Dub*.

May you be in harmony on your journey!



CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES

Essayist: Sister Martin Flavin, OSF, PhD
Artist: Sister Mariella Erdmann, OSF, MFA
Original Language: English

In the pastor's horse-drawn cart borrowed for the trip, Mother Gabriel and her companion approached the sun-sparkling Silver Lake where it was her custom to stop a bit on her journey from the newly established motherhouse to the small village where she had grown up, some twenty miles west. These quiet acres would be the perfect location from which the new community could travel to share dedicated lives, having taken vows and being readied to teach the little ones of parents newly come to this unsettled farm land of a "new world." Here, for 145 years, the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity have continued to "recognize the challenges of their world and accept responsibility for all creation in contemplation and, through prophetic action, dream, explore, and take new risks."

As did our patron, Saint Francis of Assisi, the Sisters strive "to fulfill our mission as ecclesial women through a life of contemplation and action, making every effort to integrate these elements so that we will become truly religious persons whose lives are rooted in prayer and whose prayer is rooted in life." (Constitutions I C) We Franciscans have been given the grace and wisdom to become immersed in both our Beloved and His creation. Through years of contemplation, our Father Francis was able to express the beauty and unity of all creation; he surrendered himself to His Beloved and responded to all creatures and every form of life. His "Canticle of the Creatures" is the perfect expression of the experiences Francis realized through both his prayer and his interactions with all of God's creation.



Sister Mariella Erdmann's oil painting, "Canticle of the Creatures," presented here and exhibited in the Franciscan Center for Music Education and Performance at Silver Lake College of the Holy Family, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, visually incorporates the ideas expressed in Saint Francis' poem. As the artist reflects, "Today we are often unaware of our relationship to the elements of creation. It is unfortunate that we lose sight of this sensual reality that Saint Francis was able to turn into mystical experience."

The four elements – fire, water, air, and earth – are portrayed by the artist in her "Canticle of the Creatures." These elements are a part of Saint Francis' vision of God, creation, and the human soul. In Francis' 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, Brother Fire, and Sister Earth all become his companions in praising God. With Francis, the artist would have us all pray, "Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility" as we contemplate her interpretation of his hymn.

GROWING IN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

*By Sr Jean Sliwinski, USA.
Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice
Original Language: English*

Pope Francis, in his audience of May 21, 2014, stated, "Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude." The Congregation of St. Felix of Cantalice (Felician Sisters) has taken the call of the Church to care for creation seriously especially since environmental devastation directly affects the poor to whom the sisters have a commitment in ministry.

Accepting our responsibility of care for the earth in a manner that would decrease the harmful effects of human practices requires an adjustment of lifestyle and mindset in daily living. Not only is it necessary to convey this message to those to whom we minister, but it is vital that we as sisters embrace the call to environmental stewardship at congregational, provincial, and individual levels. At the 23rd General Chapter of 2012, the Chapter Body affirmed the goals of the Congregational Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation which included, "Advocacy for the care of creation and for the responsible stewardship of the environment."

In North America, each sister was asked to complete a carbon footprint quiz to determine how many earths it would take to upkeep her personal lifestyle. Through this exercise, it became evident that the requirement of more than one earth to sustain us was an impossibility and a commitment was made to explore how to reduce that footprint. Each region participated in a workshop on Eco-Spirituality since our Franciscan roots clearly include our relationship to the created world in a communal sense.

Practices that were brought into greater awareness included recycling, composting, and using green cleaning products. Some areas utilize renewable energy such as solar power for water heating and geothermal energy production.



Sisters in New Jersey prepare to sign the St. Francis Pledge during an Eco-Spirituality Workshop.

Expanding renewable energy use is being explored, especially utilizing solar power.

The sisters in Poland have made efforts to become involved in recycling programs sharing their enthusiasm with students and young people by accompanying them to clean up trash in neighborhoods especially as part of Earth Day projects. Consumption practices have been reviewed in order to reduce waste and to save electricity and water. Renewable energy, such as solar power, is being used in some locations.

In Kenya, the sisters are working on a Biogas project that will utilize animal wastes, in an environmentally friendly way, to be used as cooking fuel. The waste would also become a source of organic fertilizer that would improve soil productivity in the area. This project would benefit the entire community and neighborhood.

These steps have marked the beginning of the work of environmental stewardship; much more is needed to be done. The biggest challenge is to make those personal changes necessary to reduce our carbon footprints as individuals and as a congregation. As we work to make those changes, care for creation can grow within our ministries and with all the people that we touch daily. What a great way to energize the Church and our world to care for the earth!



Biogas project; Felician Sisters Formation House, Kenya, Africa

RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS CREATION

*By Sr. Polonca Majcenovič, Slovenija
Suore Scolastiche Francescane di Cristo Re
Original language Slovena*

God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish, of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth.'
(Gen 1:28)

In the relationship with creation, we can assume an attitude similar to that of the relationship with our neighbor. It is difficult to love your neighbor when that one is not welcomed in the own life as a gift of God.



St. Francis, my great friend and model, has deeply appreciated the creation. He had the courage to preach to the birds, to speak with stones. Maybe these are just allegorical stories, but they carry on an important message: the need for a fraternal attitude of respect towards all that exists.

My selfishness, my sin, the neighbor can somehow stop, withdraw, fight, or, at best, to confront. The creation instead may not behave like humans.

The consequences of the destruction we cause may occur, often indirectly, even many years later. I am more and more convinced that everything that is not in favor of life, sooner or later leads to devastation. For example, the synthetic estrogen birth control pills, which end up in the sewer system and, finally, into the water supply, can cause breast cancer and infertility. Really, we do not realize how blinded is our society that is losing respect for life and sinks in diseases caused by pollution?

Before entering the religious community, I was very concerned about widespread hostility toward the environment. I wanted to give my contribution and live adopting a simply lifestyle. I decided to study chemistry to work in the future in the field of environmental protection. My intentions were completely reversed by the Lord who called me to follow Him. I welcomed the creation as His gift, and I have found my way not as an activist committed to the fight for a clean environment, but as His beloved daughter, eager to accept all that exists as His gift.

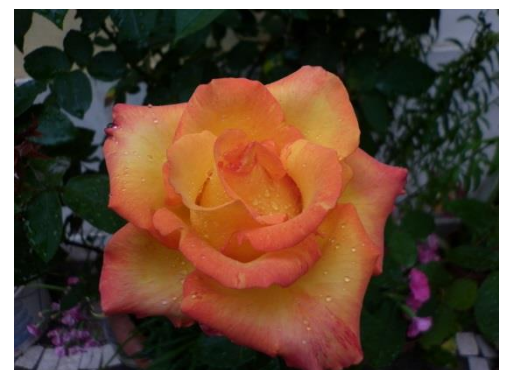
Very soon I realized that I will not achieve great responsibility in the society so I started working on myself. I began to understand that Jesus, St. Francis and others were not asking me for anything extraordinary, but were inviting me to the conversion of heart. In my life I have kept the curiosity for everything that is related to the protection of creation. In the past I used to read books and tried the best solutions. Today my care for creation is expressed in owning only the essentials. I am proud when I look in the closet, where nothing is superfluous, but at the same time I do not miss anything.

In stores I prefer not to buy items wrapped in several layers of plastic. As for transport, I ponder whether it is more appropriate to choose public transportation or private car. I prefer to spend more rather than pollute inappropriately. Public transport is in every case. Consumerism has affected us so much that we no longer see the consequences of our purchases. For years, I no longer use the liquid soap, shampoo, toothpaste and various cosmetic creams. Nowadays, there are so many natural products alternative to the "chemistry". It just takes a bit of good will. The same thing can be said for detergents that serve to clean the house. I am a great friend of soda and vinegar. All of these approaches "eco" seem demanding only at first glance. Must overcome an initial resistance in deciding that not everything has to be immediately at hand. I remember, when I proposed to a nun a choice in this direction, I have always received a reaction, if nothing else, a great surprise. This is also why I pledge myself to have, as far as possible, a respectful attitude towards creation, without imposing it on anyone. I think this is something prophetic: live and with my life invite. My heart desire is that we, as a community of Franciscan nuns, we take time to reflect and have the courage to change something in our lives in this direction.

I dream that future generations can still exclaim:
"Lord, our Lord, how great is your name throughout the earth." (Psalm 8:10)

What may however they wonder if we will continue to live as we live today with polluted rivers, distorted Seasons, decimated humanity by disease?

My hope goes in the opposite direction, in the direction of the God's trust in the human being and in the fact that He has given us the freedom and with it responsibility.



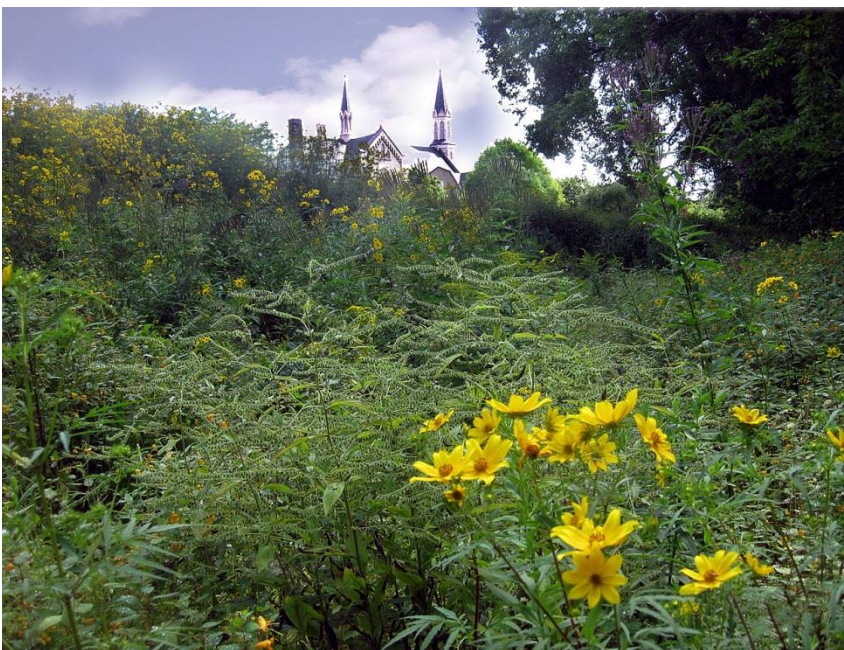
CREATION: LOVE IT, REDEEM IT, RETURN IT TO THE CREATOR

*Sr. Florence Deacon, OSF
St. Francis, Wisconsin, USA
Original Language: English*

Call and Response, the official document of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, identifies three specific ways we are to witness to the “*Responsibility for all of God’s Creation*”:

- “As sons and daughters of God, we Christians acknowledge our responsibility toward all creation: to love it, to redeem it, and to return it to the Creator. This work, begun by Christ, continues in the Church through the mission and ministry of all the faithful.”¹
- “Our lifestyle in this faith community flows from our unique relationship with God, with one another, and with all creation.”²
- “As Francis manifested his relationship with God through his reverence for all creation, so we express our love by using God’s gifts with reverence and detachment.”³

Besides witnessing to our responsibility for creation with our life style, we “love it and redeem it” in a very concrete way at our Motherhouse which adjoins Milwaukee, a city of 600,000 people. Several years ago we had an Environmental Resource Assessment of our Motherhouse property to help us create an environmental model of sustainability and Earth Healing for our ecoregion. In addition to practicing good stewardship of our environmental resources, we eradicated invasive plants in our valley that were up to 10 feet tall, and planted the reclaimed wet lands with native trees and wild flowers that attract birds and butterflies.



We are revitalizing our 100 year old grape arbor, and have begun keeping bees. Our new vegetable garden provides fresh fruits and vegetables for our sisters, as well as an opportunity for many of our retired sisters to keep close to the earth. Our newly planted urban forest leads to a reflection area where we have plans to create a reflection pool. We have begun a series of Earth Echoes Education Programs beginning with “The Greening of Religion,” which gave an overview of Church teaching on the environment.

We also have adopted a congregational corporate stand on “*The Sacred Web of Life*” which opens with a description of how all of creation is an interdependent whole revealing the Divine. Because everything is sacred and to be protected, “Decisions concerning how we live our private and public lives and acquire and use resources are to reflect our care and concern for the well-being of the whole of creation.” We conclude,

“We believe we are to relate to Earth, to one another, and indeed to the Cosmos, in mutually sustaining ways and that all of our systems of learning, technology, healing, economics, governance, politics, and religion, including our Christian faith and Franciscan charism, must be in harmony with the basic ecology and laws of the Universe.”

Creating this statement was a several year process with many revisions by the congregation. We have given framed copies to each of our sponsored ministries so it can be displayed prominently as a reminder of *the sacred web of life*. These are just a few of the many ways we “acknowledge our responsibility toward all creation: to love it, to redeem it, and to return it to the Creator.”

¹ *Call and Response*, para 11.

² *Call and Response*, para 26.

³ *Call and Response*, para 35.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL GOD'S CREATION

by: Sister Mary Ann Stoffregen
Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, Oldenburg, IN (USA)
Original Language: English

My favorite paragraph in our Constitution, VISION AND JOURNEY, IS #11, "Our intimate union with the Creator shows itself in our delight with all creation, in reverence for persons, in responsible use of earth's resources and in freely sharing the gifts entrusted to with those in need." Each day I find myself challenged by this ideal and I feel that our community as a whole continually works toward it.

We have studied with, listened to and learned from leaders in ecology, environmental sciences and creation spirituality. We've introduced recycling and composting and worked at making our buildings and grounds more eco-friendly; our 300+ acres of farmland have been revitalized and produce healthy food for ourselves and our neighbors; many sisters, associates and other participants take part in education and actions around sustainable agriculture. An ecology committee continues to teach and remind us of more ways we can live in harmony with nature. Many of our community retreats have helped us focus on our call to experience the beauty of God's creation and our responsibility within the web of life.

For some of us this has been a sort of homecoming. Many of our sisters grew up on farms or in big families where gardening was a necessary part of feeding the family. Most of our families "made-do" and were resourceful in using the gifts of creation. Our ever-faster ways of living and separation from the natural world have often caused us to lose track of that kind of wisdom, which we now find ourselves reconsidering. More careful use of water, turning off lights in rooms not being used, canning and food preservation, more meatless meals, creative use of left-over food, hanging laundry outside to dry, using cloth handkerchiefs instead of paper tissues are a few of the concrete ways I've seen sisters try to lessen their impact on earth's resources.

For more than 20 years I've been blessed to live and minister with Native American peoples. From them I've learned much more about living in touch with creation and the Creator. They know that every creature has spirit, that everything is connected, that all is sacred. Prayer is not something separate but is like breath, part of every moment, vital to life. From their ancestors they have learned that nothing is to be wasted. While many of these "knowings" have been covered over in the process of adjusting to changes thrust upon them, the wisdom is still there waiting to be uncovered. That is why when a spirituality center for women was planned it was very important that it be as earth-friendly as possible. Features that have been included are water-catchment barrels, solar and motion-activated lights, solar panels, wind-generator, recycling system, composting, raised-bed gardening, greenhouse, geo-thermal heating, and straw-bale construction.

While it often feels that these efforts are so small in a world that faces such big problems -- climate change, air and water pollution, disposal of nuclear waste... --what I hope is that these small things add up to something much larger -- wider world-views, deeper understanding of the universe, and ultimately to hearts that are changed.



ESPOUSING THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

by Sr. Catherine Serafica, sfc, Philippines
Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
Original Language: English

The Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (SFIC) Philippine South Province, on its establishment and declaration on April 30, 2010, has since then considered its Provincehood as God's Gift and in return, as *an SFIC grateful response towards an Earth Community of Just and Lasting Peace*. Thus, runs its avowed theme.

Cognizant of the mission shift this vision-mission goal would require from all of us, the new Province started with an eight-day Spiritual Retreat that revolved around the Cantic of Creatures of St. Francis. This was followed through and deepened in monthly recollections and concrete program of activities for the whole term 2010 – 2014 and currently on-going for the term 2014 – 2018 with the same over-all theme. Changing consciousness from a very anthropocentric worldview to one that embraces the whole of creation from the head to the heart is indeed a long and arduous journey to undertake.



The Sisters come together annually for a two-week Renewal Program that includes an eight-day Retreat, updates on different ministries, Earth Day Celebrations, organic gardening, tree planting and like activities culminating in an Earth Day Eucharist celebrating life with all of God's creation. To keep the fire burning with love for God's creation, we dedicate a day weekly focusing our prayers on creation/ecological concerns. An earth hour is observed one day a week in all our communities.

Convinced that consciousness has to be translated into concrete actions, we embarked on converting three of our bigger areas into ecological sanctuaries with the following components: places for stillness in an ambience of beauty and harmony, organic gardens and orchards, vermi-composting, organic goat breeding, zero-waste management and tree nurseries for sharing with others. These places serve as exposure areas for students, teachers, farmers, retreatants and other interested individuals and groups.

To ensure wholistic formation for our teachers, students, administration and staff, Creation Liturgies and Spirituality have been integrated in school curricula and highlighted on

special occasions or events such as on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Earth Day Celebrations, Spiritual Retreats and Recollections and other programs.

In the spirit of solidarity and networking, we join groups for signature campaigns on various ecological/environmental issues and concerns such as mining, logging, quarrying and host of others and unite our voices against all that are detrimental to the environment and to the lives of peoples.

Five years yet going..., the journey has just begun. There is so much we still dream of for and with God's creation. We commit ourselves to move on with mind, heart, hands and feet for a world of just and lasting peace.



HOW WE THE SISTERS CAPUCHINAS MOTHER OF DIVINE PASTOR ARE WITNESSING THE CHARISM OF THE THIRD ORDER IN OUR LIVES

*By Hna. Martha Patricia Serrano
Capuchina de la Madre del Divino Pastor
Original language: Spanish*

I. Praying with simplicity, personally and in community

Being aware that we can do nothing if not with his grace, we dedicate ourselves unreservedly to prayer, **"because before all things, we must possess the Spirit of the Lord and His holy operation and pray to Him continuously with a pure heart."**(RCI 10 9-10). We want our heart focused in Christ, we are in solidarity with the sufferings and bring them in our communal prayer.



We cultivate the praise and thanksgiving, in imitation of our Father San Francisco, blessing the Lord from whom all good things come to us. We welcome the Word of God, recognizing its centrality in our lives.

We gather daily around the Altar for the Eucharistic celebration, worshiping and blessing Him for his love and strength.

II. Giving a renewed response to God and the Church from the fraternal dialogue based on discernment.

We continue our ongoing formation constantly; from dialogue and discernment, together, we decide how to serve in the best way the Lord in the present times trying to be **"open to the Holy Spirit adapting our missionary activities and education of youth to different historical moments and their social context, cultural and ecclesial."** (Const.118).

We try to witness to Faith, keeping in mind that this is the first visible form of apostolate, as in the words of St. Francis: **"When we carry our Lord Jesus Christ in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience we give birth to him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others."**

(1 LtF1.10) (First letter to the faithful)

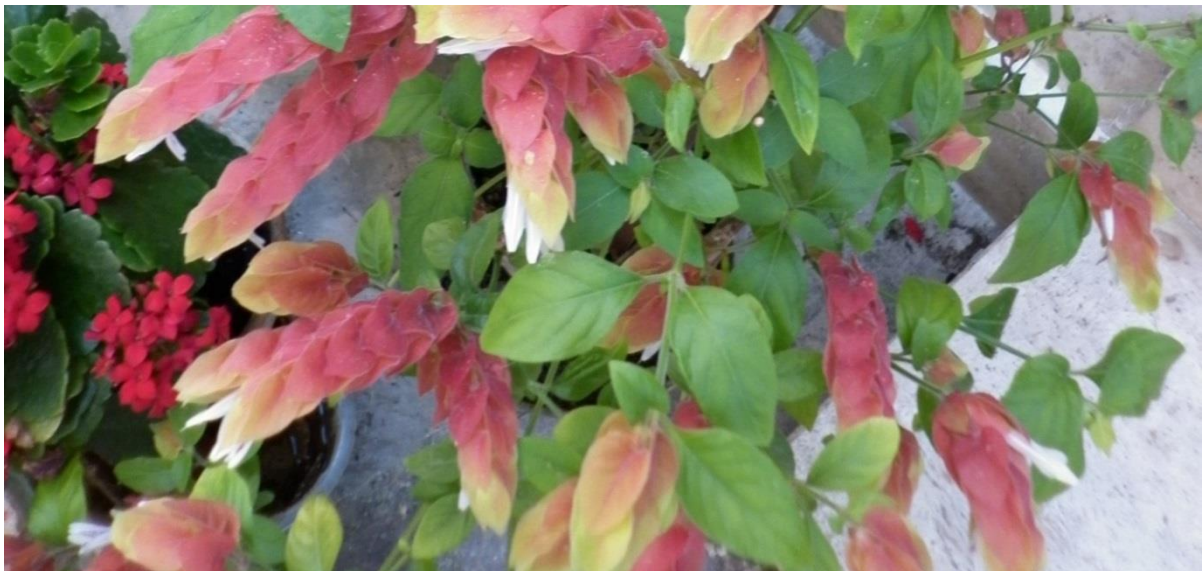
III. Sharing the challenges of the apostolate

Safeguarding the Community dimension in all pastoral activities, assuming that every sister in the community is part of the apostolate, according to her ability, age and health, all of us is trying to progress on the path of ongoing personal, as our Father St. Francis at the end of his life said: **"Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up to now we have done little or nothing."**(1 Cel 103) (*The first life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano*)

Our specific charism is education of children and youth. In our poverty and limitations, we assist the middle class of population and also children and youth **"disadvantaged of our educational communities, whether physical, emotional, intellectual or moral"** (Const . 72).

We make concrete steps of unity with laity who share our charism, based on the awareness that our spirituality has dimension of ecclesial communion and, therefore, show openness and collaboration by sharing the treasure of the charism received for it to grow and recreate with the diversity of its members.

Religious communities seek to respond in faith, promoting evangelization not only in educational communities, but also in areas where the integral education deserves particular attention.



CONGREGATION OF THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE

By Sr. Zdravka Gverić, CSFI
Sibenik, Croatia
Original Language: Italian

United in the Franciscan simplicity and joy, as instruments of God,
we participate in the transformation of the world.

The Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate, known as "The Franciscan Sisters of Sibenik", belonging to the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi, is one of the oldest religious communities of Croatian origin. The congregation was founded under the leadership of the foundress the Servant of God Mother Klara (Mara) in Žižić 1673, Sibenik, Croatia.

It was a time when Sibenik was threatened by the Turks, while the city of Sibenik was under Venetian rule. Mother Klara was born in 1626 under the Promina- the parish within the area Dalmatian between Knin and Drnis. In Sibenik she arrived following the "call of the inhabitants of the city of Sibenik" and settled in a poor little house in Varoš, a poor district of Sibenik unprotected and outside the walls of the city, among the people who lived on the run from the Ottomans, near the Lazaretto for lepers and other sick people. Sister Serafina (Kata) Burmaz from Primina, was the first to entered the community, other followers came after. Under the auspices of the Franciscan Province Bosnia-Argentina and the approval of the bishop of Sibenik Ivan Dominic Callegaria, Klara, along with Sister Serafina, received the monastic habit on the feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. November 17, 1679, began the religious life according to the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi. This rule was confirmed by Pope Leone X with his apostolic decree *Inter cetera*, 1521.



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As a particular expression of life of penance of the first Sisters, the oldest sources emphasize humility, poverty and begging, always connected with the works of love, trusting completely in God's providence. Goods received were by Sister Klara with the needy. Showed hospitality, offering lodging non only to the citizens, but also to those coming from Turkish territory. This practice was alive until the second half of the 20th century. Sisters took care for the sick and the dying, sewing and weaving. Sisters taught to the girls from the poorest households. Hospitality is one of the main characteristics that still is cultivated in the Congregation. Since 1900 in their homes opened kindergartens. The work in parishes is longstanding practice in our Congregation.

The bright path of life of our foundress Mother Klara is deeply present in the various institutions of our Congregation and her example to date is very much alive in all our activities.

In written sources is underlined her commitment toward to the Rule, the Commandments of God and the Church, to the works of charity and holy life (*sanctissime vixit*). She died on September 21, 1706, and was buried in the Franciscan Church of San

Lorenzo in Sibenik. It was written that when she died in Varoš the whole city pitied. Her remains, just like a candle, were shining of humility and good works.

According to the guideline of the Council Vatican II, the Congregation has undertaken intensive efforts to renew itself deeply and adapt its activities to the new challenges and needs of the Church.

"The Church has accepted our consecration, so in its necessity we recognize the voice of God. Trusting in the omnipotence of God, the religious will engage themselves, in accordance with the purpose of the Congregation, where the Church will need them".
(Constitutions, no. 3)

Our Community today is present in various fields at home and abroad:

- The education of children in kindergartens;
- Teaching children religious education in schools and parishes;
- Serving the Liturgy, and decoration of churches;
- Organizing spiritual retreats for girls and young people;
- Guiding the kitchen in the parishes;
- Caring for the sick and infirm in hospitals and nursing homes;
- Sisters direct the Catholic primary school; are active in social media and teach at the Catholic Theological Faculty.

Our daily prayer, our work and ministry of love, have a significant contribution in the construction of the Christian life of our people and the Church in which we live. Our desire is to witness to the joy of the Gospel as followers of St. Francis and of our foundress the Servant of God Mother Klara Žižić.



HE MAKES THE WHOLE OF CREATION NEW

by Sr. M. Elizabeth Pesenti
President of the Italian Federation - "Mary Star of Evangelization"
Franciscan Nuns TOR
Original language: Italian; Italy

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We want to give also our contribution to *Propositum* by sharing our experience in living the responsibility towards the whole of Creation. To share how the Nuns of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Assisi are dedicated to contemplation in the cloister. We have a specific way to express our attention to the Creation. Through information we open ourselves to the knowledge of the current problems related to the whole Universe that was entrusted by God to our hands. Our contribution is channeled through prayer and by offering of our lives to support the various initiatives for the integrity of the Creation.

Following the spiritual attitude of Saint Francis, we are committed to be in harmony with all creatures, which "bear the likeness" of the Most High (FF 263), to consider them brothers and sisters, to appreciate them and protect them with love; in this sense, they become an object of contemplation for praising the Creator.

In one of our three monasteries, during a prayer meeting shared with the faithful in the church, a Saturday evening we prayed the Rosary of the family at 20:45 p.m. At the fifth mystery we meditated: *God invites us to cherish the wonders of creation.*



From the Gospel according to Matthew: "Why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields, observe how the lilies of the field do not labor or spin. Yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was robed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will He not much more look after you, you men of little faith?" (Mt. 6,25-30).

Reflection: In nature we feel the fragrance of God. You have taught, Holy Mary, to your son the passion for nature and the beauty of creation. To it in the Gospel Jesus looks with the innocent eyes of a child and marveled. The everyday life tells us that everything comes from the Father: as the Giver of life, will also give the food, as He gives the body, will also give the dress. The life and the body are given since the beginning. The rest, offered

daily, is always His gift, even if mediated by our hands. Those who know the love of God breathe its air deeply, without worrying... deal with everything with confidence, receive the gifts and continue to donate them.

Sign: flower bed garden (we watched the Nativity, crib in church)

Reflection: Not every house has a garden; but when it is there it expresses directly the encounter with the creation. At the beginning the human being was placed in a garden: "*The Lord God planted a garden in Eden.*" Eventually, at the end, our body will be placed in a garden too. "... *there was a garden, and in this garden a new tomb.*"(Jn. 7,41) But not be afraid, the scent of God "... makes the whole of creation new".(Ap. 21, 5).

We, the *Franciscan Nuns TOR*, support your work with our prayer, and we greet you with brotherly affection and with the wish of Peace and Good!

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF OUR LADY APARECIDA

Sister Edi Nicolao
Irmãs Franciscanas N.S. Aparecida
Original Language: Portuguese



During the Assembly held in 2014, we have concentrated our reflection on how to live with new ardor our consecration to the service of the Kingdom. We reaffirmed our decision challenged by the reality of the world, the Pope's appeals in this Year of Consecrated Life. We have chosen to *"Orient the life according to the Gospel, open to audacious decisions, leave the 'nest', we uninstal and unite tenderness and mercy"* because we realize that *or we are signs of Jesus Christ or we will be unfaithful to our vocation.*"¹

'New ardor' has become for us the approach that is a source of illumination and provocation, especially since the beginning of 2015. It is part of the theme that has guided our General Chapter ***"Consecrate to the service of the Kingdom, with new ardor, new relationships and new prophecies."***² In this four-year period, we want to deepen all of these aspects so that they may illuminate our lives and our action, as we are driven by the desire to take up with renewed force the charism of the Congregation,³ together with the Franciscan Family.⁴

We know that the ***"new ardor requires determination and perseverance to take on the daily journey of personal and communal conversion, and that we must be ready to scrutinize with faith beyond the present, fueling dreams that drive us to live the Gospel in a radical way."***⁵

The decision to be faithful to the Franciscan Charism and of the Congregation, encouraged by the Holy Father, to *"get out ..."*,⁶ invites us to continue to act in Brazil/RS among children with hearing impediments, in the capital city, especially in the suburbs; in the Central West region of Brazil we carry out the mission among the Indians sharing their struggle for land, working in favor of human rights; in Bolivia, Guinea Bissao, in the diocese of Nampula in Mozambique we are among those most in need, assisting them humanely and preaching in communion with the Church and Franciscans.⁷

The Gospel inspires this our way of life, and also the common heritage of the Franciscan Family about the mission to announce the conversion, the peace and the integrity of Creation. Discipleship of the Divine Master, the Eucharistic Presence, give life to our action and / or contemplation in our life of Bethany, making us Martha and Mary. *"This way of being and living comes from the source of inspiration of the charism and spirituality of the Congregation", and connects us to the Franciscan Spirituality.*⁸ *"Our way of being in the world has as its source the only Master, Who we recognize in the person of the sisters and brothers. Through faith and prayer, we are invited to create the culture of interiority, of welcome/acceptance, of listening and generous apostolic service."*⁹

Aware that the Church invites us to give witness lived in fraternity, that Mother Clara expects us to witness a life characterized by charity, we take her words as our ongoing goal: **'New life every day'¹⁰ with renewed ardor!**¹¹

¹ Assembly 2014; Cfr. RgTor, 12.30s; Cfr. Pope Francis, Exhortation to Religious and Sri Lanka, 14-01-15

² Cfr. TOR Rule ,1

³ Cfr. Annual Plan, Life in Betania

⁴ Cfr. TOR Rule, 3

⁵ Annual Plan, 2015; Cfr. TOR Rule, 2

⁶ Cfr. TOR Rule, 3

⁷ Cfr. TOR Rule 3, 30s

⁸ Cfr. TOR Rule 9.20; Cfr. Constitutions of the Congregation, Ch 1; Document on Spirituality 48.

⁹ Cfr. TOR Rule 28; Cfr. Constitutions Ch 1, 3, 4; Cfr. Four-year Plan 2013-2017.

¹⁰ Foundress Mother Clara Marie

¹¹ Cfr. TOR Rule 3.23; Cfr. Congregational Plan 2015.

THE STORY ABOUT A SMALL GATHERING

By Sr. M. Dolores Caneo, SFMA, Assistant General Minister
Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi
Original Language: Italian

The **Congregation of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi** ("*Suore del Giglio*") is one of the women's religious institutes who was born in Umbria, Italy. Its foundation in fact dates back to 1702 in the city of Assisi by Father Joseph A. Marcheselli, OFM Conv, and Angela M. Giglio, a Franciscan tertiary of the Basilica of St. Francis.

In an age in which the Franciscan Third Order had lost its original freshness, the Marcheselli proposed to her spiritual daughters the high ideal of holiness, that is, the full participation in God's life, full compliance to Him in love, a not only return to the origins of the Franciscan ideal, but to the very origins of the early Church.

Today, in continuity with the fervor of the origins, we are committed to make every kind of service in charity, in the style of minority, simplicity and Franciscan joy. We welcome, take care of, and support the needy families, the sick, the lepers, the disabled, the elderly, the education of children; but we are also active in church and youth ministry. We live in simple dwellings among the people, especially among the poor, supporting the woman in places of social exclusion. We feel even more spurred to go to the "*peripheries of the world*" by the Magisterium of Pope Francis.

We dedicate ourselves to all of this with the desire to embody today the essential of the Gospel, that is, the following of Christ poor and crucified in the various local Churches in which we operate and in different cultures.



The first 200 years of the Institute were lived in Assisi at the service of the Basilica of San Francesco and at some charitable and social works of the town. The missionary activity started in 1902. The Institute has begun to spread first in some regions of Italy and then in many nations of the world. Currently we are 556 religious distributed in 92 communities spread across continents. Europe: Italy, Romania, Croatia, Russia, Germany, the Republic of Moldova. Asia: Japan, Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines, China, Indonesia. In the Americas: Brazil, USA, Mexico, Argentina, Cuba. In Africa: Zambia, Kenya, Malawi.

Following Jesus, we live brotherly love, mercy, humility, poverty, hospitality, joy, peace, trust in Providence, prayer of praise and thanksgiving. In particular we provide healthcare for the poor and needy in the peripheries of the world.

The healthcare is for us a value to live, "because Assisi, the Tomb of St. Francis, are the places that inspired our Founders. Next to the Basilica of St. Francis in fact began our Institute and for two hundred years has grown and nurtured by the spirituality of this place. Here our origins: a place of memory and living source of our charism. We carry the name of this city that we spread around the world. Here we meet, from various countries, to strengthen us in the spirit and grow in the universal brotherhood".

We carry out this mission in collaboration with the Friars Minor Conventual in Assisi, in the Papal Basilica of St. Francis and in the pastoral with young people, but also in the world where we are present. Within the universal Church, we feel a living part of the Church of Assisi in which we started our existence as a congregation, and in which we serve with our presence in various forms (parishes, *Comunità Maria famiglie del Vangelo*, Diocesan Synod, Oratory for Pilgrims; through the daily Eucharistic adoration we offer our prayer and a place of spiritual refreshment for those who daily pass through the streets of the City, etc.). In Assisi we also have our Secretariat for missions offering also collaboration to the diocesan Caritas organization. Finally we give hospitality to pilgrims in our guesthouse and in our House of Prayer "Hermitage of the Trinity", we welcome for spiritual Exercises and Retreats.

And, as to remember always our roots, in Assisi we have our foundational house and the General Curia, where live numerous religious from the several continents. Presently the general minister is Mother Juliana Malama, so far 7 years of service, coming from Zambia.