

## The Richness of Pope Francis' Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, *On Care of Our Common Home*

Compassion, relationality, love and selflessness — these are just some of the virtues that Pope Francis calls us to exercise in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, *On Care of Our Common Home*. In the eight years that the encyclical has been existent, people across the world have been challenged and inspired to utilize these virtues to improve their relationships with God, with creation and with one another — in equal measure. Understanding our interconnectedness and acting to bring these relationships into true balance is the heart of the message of *Laudato Si'* and of our trinitarian existence.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame embody these concepts in their daily living. In our Congregation's Directional Statement, *Love Gives Everything*, we commit to deepening our trinitarian consciousness and collaborating with others for the dignity of life and the care of all creation.

Our formal commitment to being a *Laudato Si'* congregation in May of 2021 and organizing our work through the seven-year *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (LSAP), demonstrates again, our love and deep desire to attain that oneness in Jesus Christ that leads to transformation - a new world order. One that addresses and prevents the human, societal and environmental crises of our times.

This new order or relational model, rooted in local communities, must consider the common good. One where we meet one another, share suffering, contribute our talents and resources, and make sacrifices for the benefit of all. A model where nature and life are not commercialized and commodified.

As a requirement of our Catholic faith, we respect, promote, and defend human dignity. Defending human rights requires that we hear the cry of the oppressed and the vulnerable. The SSND do this actively in many ways, such as accompanying Haitians affected by gang and other violence through our partnership with Beyond Borders, providing educational assistance to Hispanic people at Corazon a Corazon in Chicago, helping women move from dependence to independence at Marian House in Baltimore, and of course, educating our youth to be who God calls them to be.

Respecting human life means respecting all God's creation, of which we share a universal communion, united in love. "When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one," (L.S. 92).

Cardinal Peter Turkson, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences, said that creation is an act of God, and because it is, we are invited to consider how creation leads us in our worship and our recognition of who God is. The natural world is a continuing revelation of the Divine. "Paying attention to this manifestation, we learn to see ourselves in relation to all other

creatures: 'I express myself in expressing the world; in my effort to decipher the sacredness of the world, I explore my own,'" (Paul Ricoeur, quoted in L.S. 85).

As the SSND continues its engagement with the Laudato Si' Action Platform in year two of the seven-year journey, this is a time for us to grow in faith and spirituality, perhaps in ways we have not yet explored. It is also a time for our Church to be a model for sustainable growth, so that all people may have the freedom to become who God intends them to be and so that creation may flourish.

As the world celebrates Laudato Si' week May 21-28, let us remember that the encyclical's message is a light of hope in the challenging times that we experience. We take comfort in knowing that "The God who created the universe out of nothing can also intervene in this world and overcome every form of evil. Injustice is not invincible" (L.S. 74).

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