



School Sisters of Notre Dame  
AMSSND JPIC Department



### AMSSND Four Commitments Lenten Fast

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls us to adopt a paradigm of integral ecology, which recognizes that concern for the vulnerable means concern for the environment and for every being in the cosmos. He writes, “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis. ... Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (LS 139). Considering the case of Haiti is helpful in demonstrating this link: According to USAID, “If overall rainfall declines [in Haiti] ... as predicted, and as temperatures continue to rise and storms intensify, the yields of subsistence farmers will likely decrease, adversely affecting nutrition, limiting the ability of families to earn a living, and potentially impacting children’s ability to attend school,” all of which exacerbate displacement (forced migration) and *restavèk* slavery (a form of child labor to which 1 out of 8 Haitian children is subjected).<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis urges us to respond holistically to crises such as this, emphasizing, “How inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace” (LS 10)!

Unfortunately, ours is a consumeristic culture that prizes individualism and balks at the notion that one’s personal actions could be constrained by what is good for another; it is a culture of relativism that denies objective, *holistic*, truth in favor of limited facets of truth. In the words of Pope Francis,

**The culture of relativism is the ... disorder which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects, imposing forced labour on them or enslaving them to pay their debts. The same kind of thinking leads to the sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests. It is also the mindset of those who say: Let us allow the invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy, and consider their impact on society and nature as collateral damage. In the absence of objective truths or sound principles other than the satisfaction of our own desires and immediate needs, what limits can be placed on human trafficking, organized crime, the drug trade, commerce in blood diamonds and the fur of endangered species? Is it not the same relativistic logic which justifies buying the organs of the poor for resale or use in experimentation, or eliminating children because they are not what their parents wanted? This same “use and throw away” logic generates so much waste, because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary. We should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient to prevent actions which affect the environment because, when the culture itself is corrupt and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided (LS 123).**

This Lenten Season, the AMSSND Office of Justice, Peace, & Integrity of Creation invites you to participate in a journey of prayer and fasting for a conversion of heart and habits. As we forego some of the staples of our consumeristic framework to focus on the four commitments of our province (Sustainability and Access to Water, Justice for Immigrants, Ending Human Trafficking, and the Development of Haiti), may we experience a transformation of consciousness and begin to embody the integral ecology paradigm, which “is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness” (LS 230). While integral ecology is at odds with contemporary culture, let us bear prophetic witness to “that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent” (SSND Directional Statement) – recognizing, with Pope Francis, that “everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of [God’s] creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth” (LS 92).

Climatelinks, “Climate Change Risk Profile: Haiti,” USAID, accessed October 3, 2018, [https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017\\_Cadmus\\_Climate-Risk-Profile\\_Haiti.pdf](https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_Cadmus_Climate-Risk-Profile_Haiti.pdf)

