



THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

God looked at everything he had made and found it very good. (Genesis 1:31)

They have made it a mournful waste, desolate before me, Desolate, the whole land, because no one takes it to heart. (Jeremiah 12:11)

Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. (Romans 1:20)

We recognize and reverence the intrinsic value of all God's creation. (Constitutions 4:43)

Embracing a radically simple lifestyle through honestly examining our needs and wants in response to the cry of those who are poor and of Sister Earth. (Directional Statement 2008)

With Jesus Christ as Brother, we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family, and with all creation (Mission statement (1986))

SISTERS TAKE CORPORATE STAND ON CARE FOR CREATION (2017)

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, affirm the intrinsic value of all creation. Care for our common home is deeply rooted in our Franciscan spirituality as indicated by our 1996 Constitution and 2008 Mission Statement "...we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family, and with all creation." Recently the 2008 and 2014 Chapter Directives reflect our understanding of the evolving ecological crisis and our call to "intensify efforts to care for Earth" especially on behalf of those most affected by our unsustainable practices. In *Laudato Si: On the Care of our Common Home*, a papal encyclical released in May 2015, Pope Francis describes the critical moment we share with the Earth community: "This sister (Earth) now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods which God has endowed her...this is why the Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor..." *Laudato Si* (2).

For over 20 years, our congregation has recognized the importance of human responsibility to address environmental and ecological concerns, especially given the Franciscan core value of care for all creation. Some of the programs and activities we have initiated include the following:

- 1996-2000: The appointment of an Environmental Task Force (ETF) followed the 1996 chapter. The work of the ETF included an environmental video sent to all local communities, two environmental audits of the motherhouse grounds, research that resulted in 16 environmental initiatives, and in 2000 the appointment of a manager to facilitate the implementation of the Environmental Initiatives.
- Red Hill Farm, one of the initiatives, began with one farmer and six acres. It is a community supported farm (CSA) where members join each year, vegetables are grown organically, and other practices (e.g. solar powered electricity and drip irrigation) demonstrate sustainable farming.
- 2001-2002: monthly prayers related to care for creation sent to local communities
- 2004: How Earth-friendly Are You? A personal lifestyle audit continues to serve on the www.osfphila.org website.
- 2010: Every member of the congregation received *Care for All Creation*, a publication of the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center in Seattle (IPJC). Sisters in area chapters were encouraged to discuss and act on the topics.
- 2011: A Franciscan supplement to *Care for all Creation* was sent to each sister.

- 2015: Members received copies of IPJC's *Climate Change: Our Call to Conversion* and an online supplement, *Laudato Si* Reflection Guide.
- 2000-present: Ongoing updates on environmental challenges posed by Keystone XL, pipeline and hydraulic fracturing featured regularly in our internal newsletter, *Community News*.
- 2000-present: Sensitivity to ecological balance and care for creation are high priorities for the Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Justice Grants committees as well as the Ecology and Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Committees. These committees use congregational resources to promote social and ecological policies and practices from a moral and ethical perspective.
- 2016: The Directive #4 from the 2014 General Chapter—Care for Creation— workgroup posts prayers and educational materials on OSFConnect, our internal website.

RATIONALE

Today we are witnessing environmental changes to our planet that harm Earth and the quality of life of her inhabitants. Warning signs are all around us. The beauties of nature are being lost. The contamination of our lakes, rivers, and oceans by wastewater from households and industry; the toxic air we breathe from harmful chemicals used in manufacturing; the destruction of rain forests to make way for development; fracking of the land for fossil fuels; the extinction of species who experience loss of habitat; the overuse of natural resources; and the exploitation and disregard of native peoples' land for economic gain—all affect whole ecosystems that will not recover unless immediate action is taken.

We, as a human species, have distanced ourselves from the Earth and all its creatures. Pope Francis tells us that "*we have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters (Laudato Si, 2).*" Earth and all creatures are entrusted to humankind by the Divine Creator to enjoy, tend, nourish, and protect. Earth is precious and sacred. With gratitude, we Franciscans will do our part to confront the ecological crisis, work to reverse the harm done to this precious gift, and by our witness, encourage others to tend and care for our sister, Mother Earth.

STATEMENT

The Sisters of St. Francis take a corporate stand on Care for Creation by which we commit to ecological education of ourselves and others leading to concrete actions both individual and communal.

ACTION STEPS (*Some Suggestions*)

- Nurture a sisterly relationship with all creation.
- Incorporate special environmental issues in prayer and worship.
- Read and reflect on *Laudato Si: Care for Our Common Home*.
- Eliminate the use of bottled water.
- Support access to safe and clean water as a human right.
- Limit use of water (brushing our teeth, shorter showers).
- Reduce meat consumption, especially beef, to conserve water and land.
- Purchase energy from renewable resources if possible.
- Use teleconference and other alternative communications to avoid travel.
- Oppose hydraulic fracking and Excel Pipelines.
- Respond to alerts about current legislations and take action when appropriate.