



# Saint Katharine Drexel Region

## Secular Franciscan Order (USA)

### Justice, Peace, & the Integrity of Creation

May 16, 2020

*“An interdependent world not only makes us more conscious of the negative effects of certain lifestyles and models of production and consumption which affect us all; more importantly, it motivates us to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries.” (Laudato Si, no. 164)*

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### JPIC Reflection

For more than two months, our Secular Franciscan region, like the whole world, has been affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Not only do we appreciate our vulnerability and our need to trust in God, but we also experience the depth and breadth of global solidarity as so many people work together to alleviate suffering, food shortages, and offer consolation to those who have suffered great losses, especially to the poor, those without health care insurance, and all those who have lost their employment. Faith, hope, and charity empower us to reach out to others, seeing in them the image and likeness of God.

As Secular Franciscans, we should be grounded in Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which flows directly from the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ and is where we learn who our neighbors are and how to love them. Solidarity is one of the seven themes. On the US Catholic Conference of Bishops' (USCCB) website, there is an excellent overview of this important theme for us:

#### Solidarity

*We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope [Saint] Paul VI taught that if you want peace, work for justice.<sup>1</sup> The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.*

Last month (April 22<sup>nd</sup>), there was a national celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. When the city of Philadelphia marked that first event in 1971, there was great local concern over air and water pollution in the Delaware Valley region. Fifty years later, we can look at the good that came about from more focus on ecology, and yet we must also address where we still have responsibilities to take action to be responsible stewards of the precious resources that God has entrusted to us for wise use. As this reflection started with thoughts on solidarity, that social theme provides the foundation for what we celebrate as a Church in May:

#### Care for Creation (USCCB description - Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching)

*We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.*

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<sup>1</sup> St. Paul VI, *World Day of Peace*, January 1, 1972 (Rome)

## **Laudato Si Week (May 16-24, 2020)**

In early March, Pope Francis invited the world's 1.2 billion Catholics to mark the fifth anniversary of the encyclical *Laudato Si* by taking part in *Laudato Si' Week*, saying, "I renew my urgent call to respond to the ecological crisis. The cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor cannot continue." The theme for the week is "everything is connected," a central message in the encyclical made all the clearer as the novel coronavirus has raised dramatic consequences for all aspects of life around the world.

The best resource to consult for information on how to celebrate the week is: <http://www.laudatosiweek.org>. This website has numerous links to Catholic agencies who have promoted study and action on the encyclical over the past five years. One of the links is to the USCCB's *Laudato Si Study Guide*, which has detailed instructions for groups to use for prayer, Scripture reading, study, and dialogue, as well as actions to take. The thirteen topics in the study guide are short: ½ to 1-page in length). Three of the topics are directly related to solidarity:

- Integral Ecology (p. 8)
- Creating a Culture of Solidarity, Encounter, and Relationship (p.10)
- Global Solidarity (p. 11)

During this *Laudato Si Week*, perhaps Secular Franciscans in our St. Katharine Drexel Region could take time to reflect on some questions from the USCCB study guide:

- **Integral ecology** links care for people and care for God's creation. How is our concern for our fellow human beings connected to our concern for the environment? (cf. *Laudato Si*, no. 139)
- As Pope Francis points out, we live in an **interdependent** world. What is our responsibility to other members of the human family, given this interdependence? (cf. *Laudato Si*, no. 164)
- How is the principle of the **common good** an immediate summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters? (cf. *Laudato Si*, No. 158)

At the end of the study guide, there are additional resources that provide supporting links that can help us deepen our appreciation for what "fraternity" means. On p. 19, there is a link to an excellent YouTube video on Catholic Social Teaching (CST 101) for Care for Creation (3:04 minutes in length).

Another interesting and inspiring JPIC link for individual/group use on the *Laudato Si Week* website:

**Saint Kateri Habitats:** provide the benefits of increasing faith in God while preserving wildlife, saving energy, reducing climate change, and protecting land and water for future generations. Our habitat program provides opportunities for evangelization, education, and recreation, while establishing places of peace and beauty. The program takes aim at the very heart of today's ecological problems and addresses the profound moral crisis of which the destruction of the environment is but one troubling aspect. Ultimately, ecological problems are not in the first place environmental, nor can the solution to them be found in technology, economics, or politics alone. They are rather profoundly theological and moral. **Our initial objective is to have at least one Catholic person or family in every parish in the USA participating in the program.** There are more than 70 million Catholics in the USA. That is a lot of potential Saint Kateri Habitats! Catholics around the world are also invited to restore healthy habitats. The website has suggestions on what to do to make a habitat in the spirit of Saint Kateri, a Native American woman who learned in her traditions to care for God's Creation. If a fraternity wanted to take on creating one, it would become such a teachable moment wherever the habitat made its home.

## Day of Prayer (Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup> – 12:00 Noon)

Pope Francis has asked people to gather at noon (local time) on Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, to pray in solidarity for care of creation, remembering that we are all connected. We are encouraged to use social media and any means possible to promote this prayer. As a region, we have had conference calls to pray the rosary and the Stations of the Cross. Now, let us gather in the spirit of *Laudato Si* to pray for God's Creation and how we are connected to one another. This day of prayer is an opportunity for local and regional fraternities to join the Church in prayer for an intention that is at the core of our Franciscan way of life. Parishes have been encouraged to promote people to take the:

### St. Francis Pledge: I/We Pledge to:

- PRAY and REFLECT on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- LEARN about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
- ASSESS how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
- ACT to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
- ADVOCATE for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.



### Additional Information

Along with this JPIC newsletter, there are helpful attachments for personal and fraternal use:

- USCCB bulletin insert "On Care for Our Common Home",
- USCCB *Laudato Si* Discussion Guide (on pp. 16-17 of the study guide, there are helpful tips on how to take action at home, in our parishes, at schools, at work, in our states, and on a national level.)

### **Franciscan Action Network (FAN)**

On April 14th, Teresa and I participated in a Zoom conference call with other FAN members on solidarity tables. There are different stages of development across the US on these regional advocacy groups. The focus of this call was on Earth Day (50th anniversary celebration) and ministry to migrants at border entry points, with reports from Sr. Marie Lucey and Sr. Maria Orlandini, OSF.

### **FAN Webinar on Care for Creation**

On April 24th, FAN hosted a webinar celebrating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the 5th anniversary of the release of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*. The keynote speaker was Sr. Joan Brown, OSF, the Executive Director of NM's Interfaith Light. Sr. Joan talked about how we must work for justice **and** the care for creation because inequities show the real time is here for change. She invited us to BE the imagination! She reminded us that just as St. Francis was called by Christ to rebuild His Church, we must discern what we are to do. New wineskins are required. During a 9-day retreat with yeast, Sr. Joan told us about new insights on becoming bread to feed the world, keeping in mind kinship, praise/gratitude, deeper appreciation of Sister Death, and humility.

### **Ecumenical Advocacy Days**

On Monday, May 27th (what would have been the lobbying day of the annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days), there was a webinar with the theme "Imagine! God's Earth and People Restored!" The two keynote speakers were Canadian Episcopal Archbishop Mark MacDonald and Dr. Betty Holly. After sharing an ancient Ojibwe story, Archbishop MacDonald spoke about how we can learn much from indigenous cultures about how to respect creation and our interdependence. Reading from the Prophet Micah, he reminded everyone about our call to act with justice and kindness, serving each other as we remember that we walk humbly with God. This forum inspired all of us to look at things differently and seek alternative solutions.

### **National Fraternity JPIC Conference (May 7-8, 2020)**

Prior to the actual virtual conference, the National JPIC Commission provided questions to the regional animators to answer:

- What was your takeaway from last year's 2019 JPIC conference?
- What do you hope to see come from this conference?
- Where do you see us going from here?

The conference began on Friday with two Zoom sessions in the afternoon and evening. Each session had approximately 34-36 attendees. After introductions and prayer, the Commission divided into small groups of 5-6 members. At the first session, we focused on our respective takeaways from last summer's JPIC Conference in MO. Each of us shared briefly at what point in our lives had JPIC become important to us. I traced my JPIC connection to growing up on a dairy farm in SD. The second session on Friday evening focused on where we hoped to see JPIC go. There was much discussion about how JPIC needed to be a vital part of initial formation. National formation materials are presently being revised. There were three videoconference sessions on Saturday, which focused on where did we hope to see JPIC go in the future. During the small and large group discussions, members shared the need for good listening and respect for where members are on their spiritual journey. Animators acknowledge that there are widely differing opinions on what JPIC is. When the conference concluded, JPIC made a commitment to form two groups to work on immigration and care for creation issues.

- **Apostolates:** In the large group discussions, the commission members discussed the importance of apostolates within local fraternities. While it may be impossible due to fraternity size and advancing age of members to have a common apostolate, the fraternity can certainly be enriched by the individual apostolates of its members to promote justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. There was very good dialogue about how promoting JPIC issues can sometimes challenge us to leave our comfort zones to advocate for the poor and the vulnerable of society. JPIC members shared the value of using the resources on the US Conference of Catholic Bishops website and from the Vatican library.