

CHARITY EARTH NETWORK NEWSLETTER



Feast of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Edition
January 4, 2020

Welcome to the first issue of *Charity Earth Network Newsletter* in a new decade! We probably share the sense of frustration expressed by Pope Francis in his *Message to the Participants in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*: "We must seriously ask ourselves if there is the political will to allocate with honesty, responsibility and courage, more human, financial and technological resources to mitigate the negative effects of climate change, as well as to help the poorest and most vulnerable populations who suffer from them the most." When we are frustrated and even tempted to despair, it's helpful to look back at the progress that has been made in the past decade. The climate crisis has gone from "an ecological issue" to center stage in political and cultural discourse. In 1999, Jeff Bezos was *Time* magazine's Person of the Year. In 2019 it was Greta Thunberg. In 2015, Pope Francis made ecological sustainability an essential element of Catholic Social Teaching with his landmark encyclical *Laudato Si'*. A radio interviewer recently credited activist Bill McKibben with having produced the most important writings on climate change in the

Carol

past decade. "No," McKibben replied, "that would be Pope Francis." 2019 also witnessed the Synod on the Amazon, the first synod that ever attempted to listen to the voice of land, water, and other than human species. And every Congregation in the Sisters of Charity Federation has grown significantly in cosmological consciousness and sustainable living in the past ten years.

This issue of the CEN newsletter offers an article on the very creative way in which the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth are promoting sustainability in their homes and ministries; two statements in which Federation Congregations advocate for the Amazon; a prayer service "Elizabeth Seton: Cosmic Eucharist" in which Elizabeth's experience as a mother and her love of the Eucharist invite us to a cosmic perspective.

Our hope for the new decade is beautifully expressed in the words that conclude the Earth Charter: Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

Cj

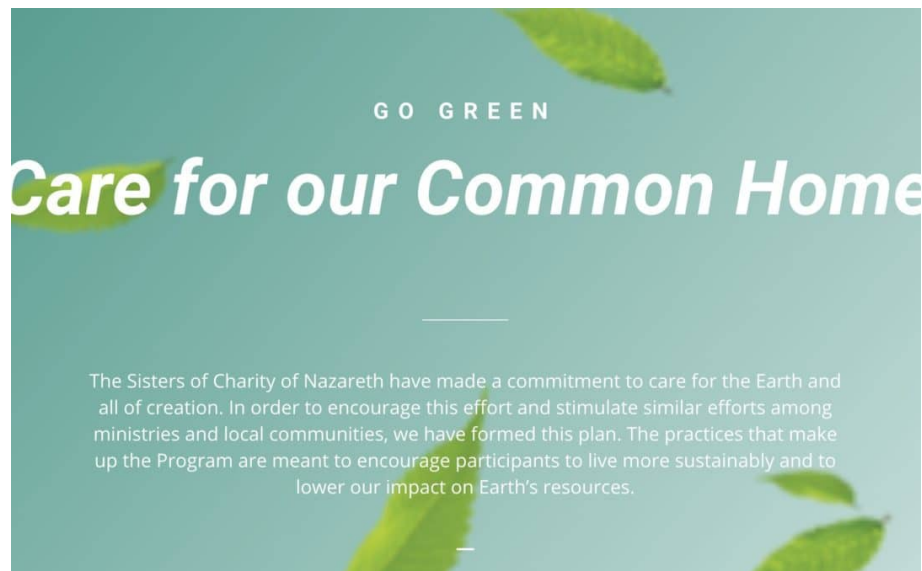
Terry

The Charity Earth Network is an organization of sisters and associates of the Congregations of the Sisters of Charity Federation who are interested in

-reflecting on ecology/the new cosmology/sustainability from the perspective of the Vincentian/Setonian charism;

-sharing information and resources

-supporting each other in our efforts to advocate for a more sustainable Earth community.



Sisters of Charity of Nazareth's Care for Our Common Home

The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth have a mission that includes a commitment to care for Earth. In this spirit, *Care for Our Common Home* is meant to encourage SCN ministries, small local communities, and sisters to “intensify efforts across the Congregation to address the destruction of natural resources and the ecological and environmental crisis.” **SCN General Assembly Directive 4B**

The *Care for Our Common Home* program, which can be accessed at this link <https://scnfamily.org/gogreen/>, invites participants to choose the level of engagement that is right for them: sisters may choose between a Basic and Advanced program, and ministries will select the “Ministry” program. Within each program are three levels of activities, representing an increasing level of effort: First Level- Roots; Second Level- Branches; Third Level- Canopy. Each level offers action suggestions in three areas: Prayer and Daily Practices; Education and Advocacy; and Surroundings. For example, one of each from the Basic Level:

- Decorate your prayer space with a reminder of care for Earth.
- Watch at least one environmental film or TED talk twice a year and discuss with others
- Add a bird feeder to your yard or make peanut butter pinecones to hang on tree for birds

Once participants have completed a level, they submit the Level Completion Form to the Director of Ecological Sustainability, along with photos and other documentation. They receive an award for each level completed and are recognized in SCN Communiqué.

Statements on the Amazon and the Amazon Synod

Find below the Statement of the Leadership of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth on the fires in the Amazon region and a statement of support for the Amazon Synod From ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River), a Hudson bioregion education and advocacy group to which the Sisters of Charity of New York and the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth belong.

Sister of Charity of Cincinnati Caroljean Willie was commissioned to prepare a prayer service for the Synod based on Brazilian martyr Sr. Dorothy Stang, SND de Namur. Cj would be happy to share the prayer service with anyone who would like. Contact her at cjwilliengo@gmail.com.

In April, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, shared the feelings of horror and grief of the world as we watched the devastating fire of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Paris holds a special place in our hearts as the home of our spiritual family founded there by Saint Vincent de Paul. Once again we are deeply grieved by the ongoing fires raging in the Amazon, the green cathedral at the heart of the Americas. Home to many indigenous peoples, a region rich in biodiversity, a place of incredible beauty – the destruction of the rainforest is a crisis of planetary proportions. We echo the words of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America, “If the Amazon suffers, the world suffers.”

We commit ourselves, in collaboration with the Sisters of Charity Federation Nongovernmental Organization at the United Nations, to advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples and for protection of the Amazon region. We have made a contribution to an organization dedicated to protecting the Amazon rainforest and we urge others to do the same. Conscious that much Amazonian deforestation is due to land clearance for grazing cattle, we commit ourselves to moderate our consumption of meat. We look with hope to the upcoming Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, October- 6 to 27, 2019, *Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*. May the world unite around the goal of Pope Francis, “to find new ways for the evangelization of that portion of the People of God, especially the indigenous, often forgotten and without a perspective of a good future, also for the cause of the crisis of the Amazonian forest, lung of fundamental importance for our planet.”

The Leadership of
the Sisters of
Charity of
Saint Elizabeth

Statement of ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River)
on the Special Synod of Bishops on the Amazon

ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River) wishes to express its joy and solidarity with the October 6-27 Special Synod of Bishops on the Amazon, *New Pathways for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*, called for by Pope Francis. We are heartened by the willingness of this body to listen to a river, its lands, and its peoples. Our organization and its members advocate for the region of another river, the Hudson. We recognize that all the waters of Earth are one and inter-connected. In our listening to the Hudson and our advocacy for its well-being, we have discovered the truth of the words found in the working paper for the synod: "Territory is a theological place where faith is lived, and also a particular source of God's revelation: epiphanic places where the reserve of life and wisdom for the planet is manifest, a life and wisdom that speaks of God," (*Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*, #19). Just as the world has failed to listen to the voices of the indigenous peoples of Amazonia, we confess that our work has not attended to the voices of indigenous peoples of the Hudson River Valley. We commit ourselves as an organization to a deeper listening and a closer collaboration going forward. Together may we work for "a full and integral life, a life that sings, a song to life, like the songs of rivers," (*Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*, #11).



ROAR, initiated in 1996, is a network of religious congregations and organizations concerned with the sustainable and regenerative use of land in the Hudson Valley Bioregion.

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September 20, 2019 College of Mount Saint Vincent Climate Walkout Sr. Carol De Angelo, Sister of Charity of New York

The Sisters of Charity of New York joined with College of Mount Saint Vincent students in the youth led Global Climate Strike on September 20th. CMSV sophomore, Wantoe Teah



Wantoe, and CMSV junior, Jennifer Puac, organized and held the CMSV Climate Walkout on the Great Lawn facing the



Hudson River. The CMSV Millennial Fellows presented a Compact outlining recommendations to CMSV Administration on ways to address the Sustainable Development Goals and to reduce the carbon footprint at the College.

Sisters of Charity of New York and the Catholic Climate Movement



The Sisters of Charity of New York are proud to be part of the grassroots *Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement* (MNYCCM), a chapter of the *Global Catholic Climate Movement* (GCCM). Since 2014 the Steering Committee has focused on networking and supporting Catholic parishes and leaders in the metro New York area in multiple ways to raise awareness, educate, and respond in hope to the call of *Laudato Si'* to celebrate God's Creation and listen to the cries of the Earth and its people. Through connections with MNYCCM and GCCM, the Sisters of Charity of New York and several CMSV departments hosted the CMSV event, *The World on a Metro Card*, with main speaker Allen Ottaro, Founder and Executive Director of Catholic Youth Network for Environmental

Sustainability in Africa. Over 50 CMSV students participated. The theme that surfaced from several of their questions was: how do we engage young people in addressing climate and environmental concerns? The Sisters of Charity of New York support the *Laudato Si'* Generation. Our Creation Transformative Energy Committee is exploring ways to promote intergenerational dialogue at College of Mount Saint Vincent.

Elizabeth Seton



Cosmic Eucharist

Environment for prayer: a statue or picture of Elizabeth Seton; candles and flowers; a loaf of bread. One participant is chosen to be leader of the prayer; three to be readers.

Reader 1: The photo above shows the altar in the White House in Emmitsburg, an early home of the Sisters of Charity. Elizabeth Seton herself designed the altar and intentionally placed the outline of the manger of Bethlehem as the base of the altar. While the Eucharist is usually seen in terms of the Last Supper, Elizabeth connects it to the “First Supper” – the first nourishment Jesus received at the breast of his mother. Elizabeth is one of the few canonized saints who had the experience of bearing children, of feeding a child in her womb and at her breasts. She even went so far as wanting to serve as a wet nurse for children of immigrant women in New York whose mothers could not nurse because of ill health and the trauma of migration; she was prohibited from doing so by her doctor father. Unquestionably this experience formed her spirituality. The intimacy of one human being feeding another from her own body; the intimacy of a God who nourishes us with the divine flesh and blood in the Eucharist. She would have deeply resonated with these words of liturgical theologian Marianne Sawicki:

Reader 2: “Hunger is now designated as the baseline competence for hearing God’s word and for access to the Risen Jesus. You can see him only by coming into contact with hunger: by being hungry and by feeding the hungry. You can enter the kingdom only if you root and snuffle around for it like a hungry infant wanting to nurse. God’s kingdom is imaged as a table where there are places for everyone, and everyone has the place of honor, and everyone gets enough. The only table like that is a mother’s breast, the table where someone smiles and says, Eat my body, and where the little child has the place of honor forever.”

Reader 3: We are growing in consciousness that we live in a sacramental universe; all beings feeding and being fed. Every bite of food we take is the product of the vast cosmic generosity of countless beings. Every meal is Eucharistic. Every meal empowers us to be Eucharist for others – to give of ourselves that all might have life and have it in abundance.

Leader: I invite you to extend your hand in a gesture of blessing over this bread and to respond to each phrase of the litany of blessing with the words: We give thanks and praise.

-For the privilege of living in a vast communion of life; countless beings feeding and being fed...

-For Elizabeth Seton, our model of Eucharistic self-giving...

-For the many ways in which the Company of Charity has created tables of plenty for the hungry...

-For our holy desire to do even more to extend ourselves to feed the hungers of body, mind, and spirit...

I invite you now to take and eat a piece of bread. We eat with gratefulness for this nourishment. We pray to be strengthened by the bread to give ourselves in service.

Participants each take and eat a piece of bread.

Leader: To conclude our prayer, we raise our voices in song:

Come to the feast of heaven and earth!
Come to the table of plenty!
God will provide for all that we need
here at the table of plenty.

