



The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one:
Statements on Care of Creation

Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth

Toward Boundless Charity

We see our whole life as sacramental, growing out of our baptismal commitment and strengthened by the consecration of our vows. This sacramental perspective calls us to responsibility for the earth and for all who live on it. (*Toward Boundless Charity*, D8)

Recognizing our interdependence, we commit ourselves to a disciplined consumption of earth's limited resources and a stewardship of material things marked by compassion and responsibility. (*Toward Boundless Charity*, D 34)

Acts of the General Assembly 2003

The Revelation of the Earth

Given our growing awareness of our place in the broader earth/universe community, we invite the General Superior and her Council to find ways to enable the membership to deepen a sacramental spirituality consistent with this view; examine our own patterns of consumption with the spirit of promoting a simple life style; use this lens to study our use of our land to ensure its appropriate use; and use this perspective in our corporate advocacy as we address questions of global justice.

Acts of the General Assembly 2007

Reverence for the Earth

Present Reality: Recognizing the crisis affecting Planet Earth, we need to deepen our understanding of the Universe story and our place in it. We are coming to realize that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one. We need to see ourselves as co-creators of the future. In order to do this we desire to integrate these learnings into our spirituality and our actions in a way that honors the sacredness of all creation. We are cognizant that this represents an individual and communal challenge to move out of our comfort zone.

We commit ourselves, in intentional and creative ways, to make reverence for Earth an integral part of our daily living, our spirituality, our ministries, and our use of Congregational resources.

1) We call on the General Superior and Council to establish ways to promote reverence for Earth which involve Sisters of Charity, Seton

Associates and others to:

- initiate education on Earth literacy and eco-spirituality
- promote specific actions on behalf of Earth,
- draft corporate stand statements on key Earth issues,
- adapt and expand the Environmental Policy and Statement of Principles.

2) We call on all Sisters to hold themselves accountable for the commitments reflected in *Toward Boundless Charity* D34: “Recognizing our interdependence, we commit ourselves to a disciplined consumption of earth’s limited resources and a stewardship of material things marked by compassion and responsibility.”

General Assembly Direction Statement, June 2011

Eco-Spirituality and Kinship

To deepen our understanding and commitment to reverencing Earth, we commit ourselves to:

- Probe the relationship between eco-spirituality and Vincentian-Setonian spirituality
- Change how we consume material resources to be in solidarity with those most in need around the world
- Advocate for issues related to ecology grounded in our growing understanding of eco-spirituality
- Develop a land ethic for real properties and consider a land trust for Maris Stella.

Environmental Policy and Statement of Principles

Preamble

Our growing knowledge of our place in the universe and of the earth’s limited resources, their inequitable distribution to the world’s poor, and the widespread destruction of the environment compels the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth to respect and heal the earth, live sustainable social and economic development in the world.

Policy

In accordance with our call to mend and to preserve the integrity of creation by the right use of natural resources, it will be the policy of the

Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth to make every effort to conduct its activities as responsible stewards of the environment, while continuing to meet the needs of those whom we serve.

The Congregation is committed to seek new and better ways to meet environmental challenges and minimize waste and pollution through conservation, recycling, reduction and reuse procurement programs. It is its policy to manage its operations in a manner demonstrably protective of human health and the environment and the preservation and enhancement of green space.

Principles

To carry out this policy, the Congregation will use these principles to make consistent, measurable progress in its effort to respect and protect the earth for all peoples and future generations.

1. We will reduce and make continual progress toward eliminating the release of any substance that may cause environmental damage to the air, water, or the earth, or persons.
2. We will make sustainable use of renewable natural resources. We will conserve nonrenewable natural resources through efficient use and careful planning.
3. We will reduce and where possible eliminate waste through source reduction and recycling. All waste will be handled and disposed of through safe and responsible methods.
4. We will conserve energy and improve the energy efficiency of our internal operations. We will make every effort to use environmentally safe and sustainable energy sources.
5. We will strive to minimize the environmental, health and safety risks to our employees and the communities in which we operate through safe technologies, facilities and operating procedures, and by being prepared for emergencies.
6. We will reduce and where possible eliminate the use of products that cause environmental damage or health or safety hazards.

7. We will make property decisions with ecological consciousness.
8. We will conduct education and training programs in implementing these principles. We will conduct an annual self-evaluation of our progress in implementing our environmental policy.

A LAND ETHIC FOR REAL PROPERTIES

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH

The energy of Christ impels us, roots us, inspires us, frees us!

The land we possess is inherently sacred, both as an expression of God's creative and sustaining action and as part of the patrimony of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth. We are moved by reverence for the natural world, recognizing that the beauty of Earth sustains and refreshes the human family. Decisions about the land should be based on current and future ministries and needs of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, as well as a growing understanding of the land's vulnerability in the face of global climate change.

We acknowledge our sacred responsibility to care for our land and to make proper use of the resources it provides. We will exercise our role as stewards of this land

- By recognizing a call to live justly, a call that extends to developing right relationships between humanity and other species that call Earth home
- By educating ourselves about the ecology of the land and surrounding waters in order to make prudent decisions
- By altering how we use nature's resources in order to be in solidarity with those most in need around the world
- By advocating for issues related to ecology, grounded in our growing understanding of eco-spirituality
- By utilizing land trusts, land conservancies, open space and other methods, when possible, to preserve Earth for present and future generations.

Approved by the Land Trust Committee
January 23, 2013

**Vincentian Family of North America
Social Justice Representatives Collaboration
Climate Change Statement**

We, the social justice representatives of the Vincentian Family of North America, invite us all to respond to the crisis of global climate change as one of the central ethical issues of our time.

Faithfulness to our charism challenges us:

- To efficacious compassion toward the brokenness of Earth and its life systems;
- As Vincent de Paul challenged us, to see persons living in poverty and on the margins as Christ and to understand that they suffer first from the effects of global climate change;
- To learn to discern and celebrate the presence of God in Earth;
- To evaluate our lifestyle choices;
- To integrate this heightened awareness in our consciousness, congregational documents and actions.



FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION...

In order to become soundly virtuous, it is advisable to make good practical resolutions concerning particular acts of the virtues and to be faithful in carrying them out afterwards. Without doing that, one is often virtuous only in one's imagination.

From a letter of St. Vincent de Paul to Saint Louise de Marillac

As I read these statements on care of creation, what good and practical resolutions do I want to make in the area of...

Knowledge Base

- Do I have a basic familiarity with ecological science, global warming, etc.?
- What are things that I can do regularly to learn more and keep up to date?
- What practical things can I learn to be more ecologically responsible?

Consumer Practices

- food consumption
- personal purchasing and community purchasing
- water usage
- energy usage
- technology usage

Caretaking Practices

- recycling habits
- composting of waste
- gardening/eating local foods
- modeling respect for Earth and speaking about it

Spirituality

- Do I bring the care of creation and the needs of all Earth's creatures to prayer?
- Do I make connections between our Vincentian-Setonian spirituality and care of creation?
- How do I see care of creation as part of the mission of Charity?
- How can I re-envision the Vincentian virtues of simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal from an ecological perspective?