



# Loretto Earth Network News

## ONE EARTH

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### *Enfleshing the Dream of Earth*

*By Jeanne Clark, OP*

**E**arth is in need of so many things these days. One of these, I believe, is the active presence of elders. I am one of these who, at the age of eighty-one, find myself not winding down, not ready to retire and take a cruise somewhere, but one who is awake and alive to the times I am living in, knowing that I was born into these times with something only I can give by being who I truly am.

Being who I truly am is a life-long journey of disconnecting from a culture that sees me and everyone around me as a consumer, one ready to compete, to go to war with anyone who threatens the lifestyle I have become accustomed to – a culture disconnected from Earth and her wisdom, focused on the individual human. To be my true self in such a culture demands a great deal of leaving and grieving. But there is also a great deal of joy.

Thomas Berry, the Passionist priest who knew at a very early age that what was good for the meadow was good and what was bad for the meadow was bad, has had a tremendous impact on my life. His book “Dream of the Earth” still guides me when I lose my way. He gave to me the deep



*Jeanne Clark with the children*

understanding that we as humans are the Universe conscious of itself; that we are connected to everything that is. And that has made all the difference.

Many years ago, I became part of a group of women dedicated to understanding and living out their lives following the teachings of Thomas Berry. They had named themselves Elderberries since they were elders and followers of Berry. They asked me to facilitate a retreat for them each year in Vermont. We spent time looking at and trying to comprehend the new learnings given by the scientist Brian Swimme, reflecting on what it all meant in our lives.

Just recently one of the women in our group of Elderberries called to ask if we could have a meeting of

the group to talk about her feeling that we were losing our focus and in need of a new coming together. It was for me a time to reflect on the direction of our group in relation to all that is happening today and Earth’s need for elders, especially Elderberries. Earth needs elders who still believe that the Ecozoic (the term Thomas used to define the time when the human and natural world would go into the future together as one sacred community) is still possible. It would seem that all the evidence is leading us to believe that the Technozoic is taking over (the belief that all our problems will be solved through technology).

The vision of the Ecozoic has been leading me since 1992 when I studied at Genesis Farm with another Dominican, Miriam MacGillis, who incorporated the work of Thomas Berry into all of her endeavors. My time at Genesis Farm and my immersion in Thomas Berry’s thought synthesized and connected for me all the threads of my personal journey which had led me to that moment when I realized that I had to come home to the place where I was born and had lived for most of my life. I had to come home to Long Island and plant the seeds of the Ecozoic. It was here on Long Island that Homecoming Farm was born at the Motherhouse of the Amityville Dominicans.

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"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." 1 Cor. 13:2.

In this issue we read of love at work in service to Earth, God's Earth writes Mary Bookser. We come home when we learn from ministry that this place, our origin place, is sacred and to be shared in love, writes Jeanne Clark, OP. And Gwen Garcelon writes of our calling to participate in the healing of ourselves, others, and the living Earth. Love knits us back together where we are wounded.

Recently I took an online course structured to conform with the evolutionary theory of Arthur Young. That form required us to face our current predicament. So we read the October 8 *Global Warming of 1.5°C, an IPCC Special Report* alerting us that 2030 is the absolute deadline to stop adding greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere. Compare that report to the recent federal rush to reverse regulations that had taken some steps toward responsible world leadership. And now the president-elect of Brazil plans to privatize the Amazon, "the most horrific thing" described in meteorologist Eric Holthaus' Tweet the week of the election. "With just 12 years remaining to remake the global economy and prevent catastrophic climate change, this is planetary suicide," he wrote.

I really needed to find Charles Eisenstein's beautiful book, *Climate: A New Story*. It felt like Thomas Berry for a wider audience. Eisenstein cautions

us against putting all our eggs in one basket – climate – for the sake of Earth. He challenges us to delve deeper into the paradigm that has gotten us into this mess and cautions us not to perpetuate it by the way in which we advocate for a course correction. A war mentality (fighting climate change) and an over-reliance on technology ("Our American Way of Life is non-negotiable") miss the point. The current crisis calls us to an ecological conversion, just as Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Sí*.

When the Loretto Community made the commitment last summer to significantly mitigate our impact on climate and ecological devastation, many of us were thinking primarily about climate. Yet we also know that living forests need nurture to survive, that grasslands need ruminants to regenerate the soil, that soil needs living microbes, roots at depth need *mycorrhizae* to hold water, that baby whales need oceans free of plastics to stay alive, and that the climate needs the whole biota to be working together as one living body. All creatures need habitat, role, and existence and not just for their own intrinsic worth, but to help unfold the purpose of the Creator in an evolving Earth. Before human activity devastated the ecological balance, the whole living Earth was able to maintain a fairly consistent global temperature. We need to be aware that "fighting" climate change by using technology alone to reduce the level of CO2 and its equivalents in the atmosphere is not enough. Even when we meet those climate goals, if we have not changed our ways and helped the whole Living Earth to regenerate, we will not have fulfilled our uniquely human role as

## **Editor's Note:** **Libby Comeaux CoL**



co-participants in the Mystery of Life that we have inherited.

Along the way, we would do well to listen to the voices that Indigenous Peoples are raising on their own behalf and for the whole Earth community. They persist! Conversation and dialog – traits that women's religious congregations have long studied and practiced – continue with the Vatican. Let us hope and pray for a shared path forward, an ecological conversion that powers the paradigm shift that Earth and all of us living here need to bring us to our senses.

### **Loretto Earth Network News**

**A publication of the  
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**Enfleshing the Dream of Earth**

It is a CSA (a community supported agricultural project) that is committed to the understanding that the human and natural world are one sacred community of life. We attempt to live that belief by connecting adults, teenagers and children to the land, to seeds and soil, worms and bees, butterflies and insects of all kinds and discover together that we are all one sacred community of life.

Like most women religious in the United States, we are presently an aging community. Often we ask, "Does our congregation have a future?" I think it is the wrong question. When the question becomes "Does the human species and the life in all the beings around us have a future?" we will be the elders Earth needs, elders beginning to understand and en flesh the Ecozoic visualized by Thomas Berry. This is The Dream of the Earth waiting to be fulfilled as humans make it their own. The choice and challenge are ours.



*Sister Jeanne Clark, an Amityville Dominican, is the founder of Homecoming Farm. She has been a teacher, a campus minister, a pastoral associate in parishes and a long-time activist for human and Earth rights. She attributes her coming home to the land to the Salvadoran people whom she accompanied to El Salvador during the war in the 1980's.*

**Biodiversity For A Livable Climate...**

is an organization that educates on the power of the natural world to stabilize the climate and to restore biodiversity to ecosystems worldwide. Collaborating with organizations around the globe, they advocate for the restoration of soil, and of grassland, forest, wetland, coastal and ocean ecosystems – along with the associated carbon, water and nutrient cycles – to draw down excess atmospheric greenhouse gases, cool the biosphere, and reverse global warming, for the benefit of all people and all life on Earth. They are planning a film tour to screen *Symbiotic Earth*. The movie features Lynn Margulis, an innovator not only for her revolutionary theories on evolution, but also for women in science.

<https://bio4climate.org/symbiotic-earth/>

**High-Impact Personal Actions**  
from [www.drawdown.org](http://www.drawdown.org)

1. Reduce Food Waste. Shop carefully to avoid overbuying perishable food, and when you have to throw something out – throw it in the compost pile!
2. Eat a plant-rich diet. Limit meat intake to sources that have helped drawdown carbon into the soil through managed grazing and are free of hormones and pesticides that could hurt you and Earth's living waters. Skip meat at least one day a week.
3. Regenerate the soil. Soil with more humus hosts more tiny living creatures in it, absorbs more carbon and water, and yields more nutritious food. Add compost; mulch with cover crops, wood chips or leaves. Save earthworms from flooded sidewalks and place them in the soil where they can resume their natural life-giving relationships.

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# ***We Are Not Alone: Cincinnati Charities Address Carbon Impact***

**By Mary Bookser SC**

**J**uly 12-15, 2018, the biannual Sisters of Earth Conference was held at Mount St. Joseph University, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. This conference is a means for passionately committed women to address concerns about the ecological/spiritual crises of our times, and to network and support one another as we work to restore Earth's balance and thus heal the human spirit. The meeting included presentations on ecological sustainability efforts, along with rituals of song, dance, anointing and blessing. As part of this event two Sisters of Charity, Marge Kloos and I, were asked to do a presentation on the work of our Congregation as we 'green' our Motherhouse campus.

Concern for what is happening to God's Earth and the changes we need to make started with the work of Sister of Charity and biologist Paula Gonzalez. Her prophetic ministry began in the mid-1970s when she called us and many others throughout the US and other countries to become aware of the probable disastrous consequences if we did not live in a more ecologically sustainable manner. To show that one could live sustainably yet comfortably, she transformed a large chicken coop on the Motherhouse grounds into a passive solar home. In the 1990s she repurposed a garage into a 3900 square foot Earth education and eco-spirituality center called EarthConnection. The building features an experimental solar heating system, solar electricity, natural lighting, super-insulated walls and windows, floor tiles made of waste glass,



***Paula Gonzalez SC***

a wall made of aluminum cans and carpeting constructed from recycled plastic bottles. It's a beautiful and well used facility.

In 2015 at a general Chapter Assembly, the Sisters of Charity identified our relationship with Earth as a guiding consideration for our decision making. At this time the Sisters had developed a vigorous recycling program, super-insulated several buildings and had established an option for green/natural burial in our Motherhouse cemetery. But we knew there was much more which needed to be accomplished.

Partnering with Melink Industries in Milford, OH, we conducted an energy study of our Motherhouse and grounds. Based on Melink's recommendations, we began the labor-intensive process of replacing over 10,000 incandescent lightbulbs in the Motherhouse with LED lights. We learned that our incandescent lights have been emitting 512 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually. Making this one change significantly reduces our carbon footprint and makes a cost savings of about \$62,000 annually. At Melink's suggestion, we also

replaced our kitchen ventilating hood which reduced the ecological cost of kitchen ventilation systems by about 24,640 KWH per year.

A foray into a small geothermal system for two Sisters of Charity local communities results in an ecological savings equivalent to 9,290 pounds of coal burned or 222 tree seedlings per year. The houses are very comfortable now in all Earth's seasons.

We installed a solar array that provides electricity for 5-6 Sister-residences on the Motherhouse grounds, including the houses that are already utilizing geothermal technology. These houses draw electricity from the same electric pole and we have tracked that they basically operate at a "net zero" electrical usage each year. We anticipate ecological savings to be equivalent to almost 120,000 miles driven by an average passenger vehicle, 54,000 pounds of coal burned, or 1291 tree seedlings planted, all annually.



***Earth Connection***

Our solar and geothermal systems are quite durable, and more importantly for us, the large solar display makes a statement about Sister of Charity values, and our

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commitment to help God's Earth through using sustainable energy sources.

In his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis makes a compelling statement about our interconnectedness with God's Earth: "We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen. 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters."



**Entry to Earth Connection**

"The Universe unfolds in God who fills it completely. Hence there is mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. . . . The ideal is . . . to discover God in all things." (233)

These words capture the essence of what it means to the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati to continue to explore ways to live more sustainably and to lighten our carbon footprint, as we help ourselves and many others to awaken to this reality.

*Mary Bookser is a member of the Leadership team with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. She was one of the volunteers in the early 1980s who helped Paula Gonzalez build the passive solar 'La Casa del Sol' where they lived until Paula's death in 2016.*

## Climate Change (and the Fossil Fuel culprit)

**By Maureen Fiedler SL**

**T**he scientific definition of climate change goes like this: "Climate change is a change in the statistical distribution of weather patterns when that change lasts for an extended period of time (i.e., decades to millions of years). In other words, *this is not "weather,"* which refers to short periods of time. But it affects weather every day, every hour.

We hear a lot about climate change these days... at least if we travel in circles where environmental topics come up with regularity. That's because there is a scientific consensus that human activity... specifically the emission of greenhouse gases... is the major cause of increasing climate change.

Greenhouse gases are emitted by the burning of fossil fuels, whether that is oil to heat a home, or gasoline in our cars. That is why environmentalists are counselling us at every turn to reduce our use of fossil fuels.

But how does one do that? Not many of us can use bicycles, and even if we could, what would we do with the groceries or other items that we buy? But maybe we can consolidate trips for groceries and other items... or hitch a ride with a friend.

There are, of course, cars on the market that do not burn fossil fuels... so when it's time for a new one... maybe one might consider this?

Then, there is solar power for buildings. A few years ago, I replaced fossil fuel energy in my house with solar panels on the roof. And solar power is great! It is efficient, reasonably priced and consistent in its supply of energy.

But something all of us can do: encourage our legislators to promote (and maybe even subsidize) the use of clean energy. When we make this an election issue, the possibilities for wide spread change increase.

*Maureen Fiedler, SL, is a blogger, an author, a radio host, board member and co-founder of nonprofits. Watch out, world! She has just entered her "retirement" and who knows what will happen next!*

**Please save the dates for the 2020  
Sisters of Earth Conference: July 16-19  
in St Louis. Visit [www.sisters-of-earth.net](http://www.sisters-of-earth.net)  
and stay tuned for more.**

# Indigenous Youth and Elders Return to the Vatican and Repeat Their Request

Excerpts from Report by the Haudenosaunee representatives with help from Clan Mother Freida Jacques

Following decades of advocacy for the restoration of their original rights, two delegations visited the Vatican on May 7, 2018, to renew the long-standing request for official action from the office that issued the 15<sup>th</sup> century papal bulls. Their meeting was scheduled to last three hours, but Father Augusto Zampini Davies, Area Manager who lead the discussion, and 5 others from the Dycastery of Human Development, met with them for four and a half hours.

**See next page for the youth's message.** The Haudenosaunee (Six Nations Confederacy) made up the other delegation, sharing the roots of their beliefs, values, and cultural identity. They recited the Thanksgiving Address and shared elements of the Haudenosaunee world view. Father Zampini indicated that he found similarities with his own tradition.

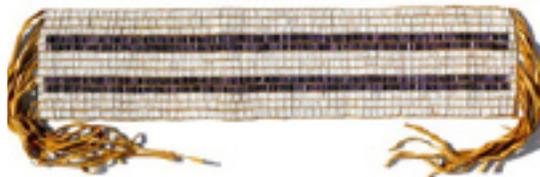
They shared a document written by the Haudenosaunee's External Relations Committee and Dr Robert Antone (deceased). Seven points toward reconciliation provided the heart of their request:

A new and full **retraction** of all Papal Bulls that have been interpreted or used to disenfranchise Indigenous Peoples from their lands, nation status and freedom of travel and right of their own citizenship.

A direct communique be sent to nation states of United States of America, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and its Supreme Courts directing them that the Church

does not support the inclusion within their legal system of the use or reference of the **Doctrine of Discovery**.

The Holy See or His representatives assist in meeting with these Nation States and Indigenous Peoples in the development of a process of retracting, removing, dismantling, rejecting of all use of **case law** that unjustly oppresses Indigenous Peoples.



**Two Row Wampum:**  
**two nations travel the same river in separate vessels, each respecting the other's sovereignty.**

The Church assist Indigenous Peoples to seek **relief from the impact of the Marshall Trilogy** (US Supreme Court rulings that justify US ownership of the land by reliance on the Papal Bulls) by establishing diplomatic relations with settler states to secure the right of Indigenous Nations to be rightful owners of their own lands protected from any form of occupation; the original governance system of Indigenous Nations be acknowledged and recognized; and that settler governments will remove the threat and act of plenary power. The Church will assist in the dialogue and agreement of securing the **freedom to travel** the original territories of Indigenous Nations that have been divided by international boundaries imposed by settler states.

The Church assist the work in the United Nations for Indigenous Nations to secure **Observer Status**. The Church and Indigenous Peoples establish a forum to **protect the natural world** including meeting the challenge of climate change and destruction of key elements like clean water as a human right.

Fr. Zampini verbalized that he understood that the initial actions of those who arrived on the Western Hemisphere's shore were terrible and caused great harm. The Haudenosaunee delegation helped him see what the Papal Bulls started – Settler Colonialism and ongoing efforts to annihilate the original occupants of the Western Hemisphere. They endeavored to help him understand the continuing present-day impacts of the Papal Bulls and the Doctrine of Discovery. He committed to studying the seven points and said he was grateful that they were structural.

The delegation also requested assistance with the Canadian Council of Bishops. When Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau asked that Pope Francis make an apology for the impact the residential schools had on First Nations peoples, the Canadian Council of Bishops recommended that the pope not apologize. At the delegation's request, Father Davies indicated he thought the Vatican could help them communicate with the Canadian Council of Bishops.

# 2018 Rome Assisi Conference

By Beth Blissman CoL

Not only did the 2018 Rome / Assisi Conference promote the ecological conversion that Pope Francis began to articulate in *Laudato Si* (LENN Autumn 2018, p. 7), we also explored other resources for solving the challenges of climate change and overconsumption. Here I discuss the Earth Charter and some sharing that challenged my white, western worldview: Indigenous Spiritual perspectives.

The Earth Charter emerged from civil society through a decade-long, worldwide, cross-cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. It shows how to build a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life, and future generations.

Since its launch as a peoples' charter in June 2000, it has provided a guiding ethical framework, internationally recognized as morally binding on nation states, motivating them to enact similar, legally binding laws. The Earth Charter Global Movement invites your participation; youth projects are especially supported. Join in at [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org).

Participants from various Indigenous perspectives helped us to see how the series of Papal Bulls in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (later embedded in US law as the Doctrine of Discovery) led to oppression of Earth and Indigenous Peoples through

legal and governmental systems today. Cardinal Turkson and Father Zampini engaged us with vigorous conversation on related themes from *Laudato Si*. A study group posts many resources to understand this ongoing tragedy. [www.doctrineofdiscovery.org](http://www.doctrineofdiscovery.org)

The two Indigenous groups represented at our gathering were from Sukyo Mahikari (Japan) and the Otomi-Toltec elders (Meso-America). Forum 21, the action arm of Sukyo Mahikari, co-sponsored the Conference. Forum 21 promotes ecological spiritualities that recognize the sacredness of Earth, the life community, and special sites. In partnership with UNESCO and the Center for Earth Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in NYC, their Sacred Sites Program recovers and preserves sacred sites throughout the world. This work furthers the vision of the Otomi-Toltec elders of Meso-America, shared by all Indigenous cultures, to Heal and Restore Mother Earth. For more, visit [www.forum21.co/general](http://www.forum21.co/general).

Forum 21 also promotes education for spiritual and sustainable development, emphasizing new measures of well-being to replace GDP and new trusteeship structures to care for the whole community of life and future generations. Of increasing importance, they support a spiritual understanding and motivation for accomplishing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, described on the UN website, provide a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable



Beth Blissman CoL

future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice. The Goals interconnect and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve each Goal and target by 2030." Search "Sustainable Development Goals" to learn more.

*As Loretto UN-NGO representative, Beth thanks LEN, LWN, and Loretto Finance Committee for their support of the conference and her participation.*

In March 2018, the Vatican received an **American Indian Youth delegation** from Minnesota. They discussed inter-generational trauma from historical events that broke up the traditional family and tribal units, implicated in Indigenous youth suicide being four times the average, and Indigenous Peoples' life expectancy being the lowest in the U.S. They spoke of cultural programs for native language and spirituality that have helped begin some healing. Search "American Indian Teens Head to Vatican Hoping to Overturn Historic Papal Decrees." And view PBS' *Dawnland* for more on inter-generational trauma from the boarding schools.

# Finding Our Way

By Gwen Garcelon

If we only have 12 years to turn things around on the planet, and there is no evidence that that has any potential of happening on a significant enough scale, what do my actions mean? Does it matter if I recycle, buy food from a local farmer, commit my life to any major change effort?" I have been deep in this inquiry, personally and with the groups I serve as a coach and consultant.

Here's what I know – there is no "right" or "best" action that any of us can take to co-evolve the world, except that to which we are called. We are called to our calling, the unique blueprint for why we are here at this time on the planet. It is tempting to look at others whose service we admire and think, "Wow, what they are doing seems really important and influential." But it is when we are fulfilling our own "why", expressed through our own talents and passions, that our lives find their integrity.

We know we are onto our calling when it is self-sustaining AND regenerative. Self-sustaining means that we can't keep ourselves from it. It is just who we are, and it is a central source of our interest, energy and creativity. If it is a calling, it is also regenerative for self and the common good. Through our unique calling the evolutionary impulse of the Universe expresses through us. Thus, we contribute to the common good in ways we may or may not be able to measure or quantify, but the presence of the "good, true and beautiful" in our calling exerts an unimaginable evolutionary ripple effect.

Another central part of calling is connection to the land, to Mother Earth. We are all being called to find our way back to a lived experience of "interbeing" with the natural world as source, nourishment, and guide to our lives. Research shows that children don't develop fully – cognitively, socially and physically – without regular play in nature. The same is true of adults. We cannot hope to restore wholeness to our planet without an engaged and passionate relationship with it.

This doesn't mean that our calling needs to be to clean up rivers or plant trees. Whether we are called as addiction counselors, teachers, or business leaders, the depth of our relationship to the natural world, and the personal healing and guidance we find there, are crucial to our ability to lead and serve.

In a 2008 talk on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Dalai Lama lauded change efforts that are non-violent, evoke ethical and spiritual values, and uphold human dignity. He highlighted human responsibility to care for the planet's living ecology. He reminded us that our own freedom and well-being occur in relationship to that of the rivers, creatures, plants and atmosphere from which we are not separate.

Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hahn taught "interbeing," and that is where I find the potential for miracles now on the planet, even as quantum science grounds the concept in reality. We are not separate from the grasslands and insects; we are inextricably



**Gwen Garcelon**

one with every distant galaxy and extraterrestrial form of life. We are not separate from the damage that has and is being perpetuated around us, and we are not separate from the answers.

A sense of deep humility is normal in the face of this profound reality, yet it cannot paralyze us.

Through acting in alignment with our deepest calling, we engage in the most powerful collaboration with our higher power - a co-creative partnership that our own developing consciousness has now made possible. When we are aligned with our calling, we feel the infinite healing power of love moving through us and guiding us. And that is both the greatest joy and the greatest source of peace amidst all that is uncertain.

*Gwen Garcelon has been a movement builder and grassroots organizer on the global and community level. As coach and consultant, she serves leaders and organizations in building cultures of resilience and creativity, so they may deliver their deepest contribution during times of great restructuring and uncertainty. [gwen@highlifeunlimited.com](mailto:gwen@highlifeunlimited.com)*