



The Director's Message

By: Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM



I am impressed by Pope Francis' encyclical letter in many ways but first; I want to encourage people to read it. Do not just listen to me or newspaper comments about the

encyclical. It is long, 246 paragraph with 172 footnotes. But it is worth reading!

The first thing that strikes me about the encyclical is the scope of Pope Francis' letter to us. He has drawn on wisdom from the history of religious tradition, environmental sciences, social sciences, and human experience in a way that is respectful and insightful. But the Pope is addressing the Church and the world community and he uses language that is understandable to explain his concern for mother earth, the poor, and how we everyday people have been influenced to think about the world in which we live.

I was impressed by the way he talked about the earth, our home, as needing to be cared for and respected as we would one another. As odd as that might seem at first, the pope places that understanding in the context of how we care for others who are vulnerable and either being exploited, ignored or nurtured. That to draw a line between some that I will nurture and some others that I will ignore and let them fend for themselves is to take on the role of God.

I find myself pondering again and again is how we use technology. His description triggers in me an association with the process of addiction. It begins with having a benefit, a desired effect. But as we use it we want more and more of whatever it is that is becoming addictive. There comes a point when we lose the ability to choose and our life becomes more and more centered around the substance or behavior

November, 2015

Volume 1, Issue 3



Our E-Newsletter:

The Focus of this issue is on St. Francis, Franciscan Spirituality, and Care of the Environment. Several readers share their experiences.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The Director's Message	1
Laudato Si	2
Pope Francis is asking us to consider the way we live and the very way we inhabit God's creation.	
Additional Web Resources	2
How "On Care for Our Common Home" Affects Me	3
Pope Francis fills me with hope in this world beset by violence, war, poverty, anonymity, abuse and neglect.	
2015 Video Contest Winners	3
Testimony	4
Each of us must take Pope Francis' words very seriously.	
Upcoming Retreats	5
Next Issue	5

that has become our addiction. At some point gradually that to which we become addicted has power over us and controls our lives. Pope Francis did not say that technology is addictive but he did say: "The technological paradigm has become so dominate that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilize them without being dominated by their internal logic." (paragraph 108)

Lastly, the encyclical is an exhortation to look at our relationship to our mother earth. The tone of the letter is respectful, encouraging, and an invitation to reflect on how we are living and the impact it has on ourselves, others and our common home. The respect Pope Francis asks of us is mirrored by the respectful tone of the (delete the) Laudato Si' itself.

Laudato Si

By: Br. Edward Tverdek, OFM

Francis of Assisi gave us much to think and pray about regarding our care for God’s creation, but it encourages much more than that. Pope Francis’ recent encyclical Laudato Si (On Care for Our Common Home) fosters similar prayer and reflection, and his call to action is even more explicit than that of his namesake. The Holy Father makes reference to “lifestyles” 22 times and to cognates of the word “consume” over 60 times throughout the document. Clearly, Pope Francis is asking us to consider the way we live – our daily habits, our choices as consumers, and the very way we inhabit God’s creation – and to make some changes. For most of us, our material impact on the world is far removed from our day-to-day field of vision, as compared to people in less industrially developed nations and even as compared to our own ancestors. Where did my dinner last night come from? Who grew the vegetables and grains? Where were they grown?... Our world insulates us from these matters and, until recently, has permitted us to let other people worry about them on our behalf. Pope Francis is urging that this situation cannot continue as it has, and that we must take greater responsibility for the effects we each have upon God’s creation...

Additional Web Resources

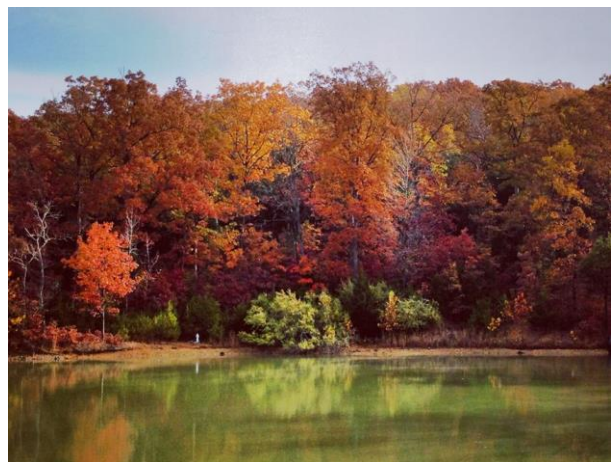
The intention of the e-newsletter is to provide a resource for the spiritual life and a place for people to share their personal experience, which serves as a spring board for others. We invite your comments, suggestions, and personal reflections. Use the following links to start a thread on our [Community Forums](#), or to send us an [email](#). In addition, we have [additional articles](#) on our website for your spiritual nourishment.

COMMUNITY FORUMS!



... Pope Francis reminds us in Laudato Si that “the exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty” (#27). We must, Francis explains, “hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (#49).

It’s tempting to gather and discuss Pope Francis’ encyclical and to spend time in prayer discerning whether we have a “stewardship relation to nature” or a “kinship” one, as many people have suggested we do and as is undoubtedly necessary and potentially fruitful. Doing only this, however, would arguably defeat the purpose of the document. We are called unambiguously by Laudato Si to examine our lifestyles and to change them to better conform them to a more sustainable world. One way to begin this is to assess what environmentalists call our personal “carbon footprint” – the amount of carbon emissions our personal lifestyle is responsible for... With a little time and patience, it can be remarkably easy to estimate our own carbon footprint. ... (the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, also has a good one). Try calculating your carbon footprint and see where the ecological effects of your lifestyle and daily habits stand in comparison to other students, to other citizens in the U.S.



Learn more about our [e-newsletter contributors](#). We would appreciate your [feedback](#).

How “On Care for Our Common Home” Affects Me

By: Pat Miller

In just the first chapter Pope Francis says that the earth (our common home) is like a sister who opens her arms to embrace us. When I read that I could picture a tree without leaves with its branches (arms) outstretched ready to embrace me. This picture makes me see what a wonderful place God created. This earth is here not only for us to enjoy its beauty and pleasures but also to care for, we all need to do our part. Pope Francis’s analogy makes me want to do what I can to cause less litter. I am currently taking paper to our school’s recycle collection site and plastic to the recycle center. Reading the Pope’s encyclical is causing me to look for additional ways to preserve our beautiful earth. I am moving from a home I have lived in for over 30 years to live with my son. I will be going from a two bedroom house with a basement to two rooms. I have accumulated lots of

things that I need to find someplace to donate or take to a recycle center. Reading Pope Francis’s encyclical has given me the initiative to look for places to donate more of the items I need to find a home. I have found out that some books can be donated to the library others can be donated to Good Will. My bank had a Saturday that they took electronic items to be recycled. I found another organization that would take the furniture, clothes, and household items to help the less fortunate.

I have found the Pope’s encyclical very enlightening it has opened my eyes to a wonderful new way of looking at the earth as well as all the plants, animals and peoples who inhabit it. Thank you Pope Francis for a new and better way of life.

2015 Video Contest Winners

To mark the release of Pope Francis’ recent encyclical Laudato Si, friends of IL RITIRO Franciscan Retreat center were invited to create an original, five-minute video about Care of the Environment, Franciscan Spirituality, and St. Francis.

Contest entrants were asked to create and produce a five-minute video to be judged based upon content, thought, presentation, and creativity, especially in terms of the connection made between St. Francis, Franciscan Spirituality, and Care of the Environment.

Winners of the contest are: First place, \$500: “Canticle of the Creatures by St. Francis of Assisi” by Clare Elizabeth Ferris from Muscatine, Iowa; and Second place, \$250: “Saint Francis” by Stephanie Fisk from Olean, New York. The Franciscans for Justice from the St. Barbara and Our Lady of Guadalupe Provinces received an “Honorable Mention”.

Thank you to our contest participants and to the friends of IL RITIRO that made the contest possible!





"My hero is St. Francis of Assisi because he understood the connection between spirituality and the environment. He understood the way God communicates to us most forcefully is through the fishes and the birds and the trees and that it is a sin to destroy those things."

- Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

Testimony

By: Sister Rose Mary Brueggen, CSJ

My connection, appreciation and love for our Earth began nearly 70 years ago as a child. I grew up the oldest 10 children on a farm outside of Montgomery City, Missouri. Because I was the oldest, I had lots of responsibilities placed on me. We had several gardens in our 60 years on that farm. (When our parents died my sister, Dottie, inherited the farm and the Brueggen clan is always welcome to "come back home").

Everything we grew in our gardens came from and/or was brought to our table of blessings for meals. Some vegetables like celery and Brussel sprouts we didn't grow. As we grew and/or needed celery we bought it at the local IGA store. To this day I don't have much taste for celery and for sure none for brussel sprouts.

As a young child I loved – and still do – raising flowers. I had my very own flower garden with rocks from the creek being the edging for different sections. I spent hours in my flower gardens when I wasn't in the vegetable garden harvesting or doing housework or helping prepare supper. It was work but the beauty and growth I witnessed and experienced was worth every minute I was allowed to commune with Mother Nature. She was my childhood friend and has remained loyal to this day.

I take pride in several gardens I care for on the

Oleatha median just west of Kingshighway. I am thanked often by passersby who appreciate the work I am doing or have done. Even after a full day of work I am energized by my gardens.

And recycling...I have been recycling metal cans, glass, aluminum cans and newspaper not just since it became "fashionable" or the "in thing" to do, but for 40 to 50 years. When I worked in the Dietary Department at Nazareth Living Center (in South County St Louis) I recycled all the glass, aluminum or steel metal containers in which the food came and cardboard which piled up quickly in the storeroom. Often on Saturday I'd be able to borrow a friend's pickup truck and pile the bed of it with recyclables and off I went to Southside Recycling Plant on Bayless. I became almost an employee there as I was there so often.

Sister Bernetta Meyer, rip, and I recycled soda/beer cans for the Boy Scouts of St Margaret Mary Alacoque Parish just down the road from Nazareth. It was never a money making business, but a blessing to care for our Mother Earth. It's not unusual to this day to see me out for a walk with my plastic bag in my hands picking up trash including recyclables. I hope and pray that others will join the Green Team so Mother Earth will be around for a long time. Each of us must take Pope Francis' words very seriously.



IL RITIRO E-Newsletter and webpage is made possible by a grant from Jefferson County Memorial Foundation.



"But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind."

- Job 12:7-10



Upcoming Retreats

Retreat Name

Date

<u>Stations of the Nativity Retreat: Celebrating God in our Midst</u>	Carol Bauer	Dec 3 or 5
<u>Pre-Christmas Franciscan Hermitage Retreat</u>	Father Paul Gallagher, OFM and Sister Marlene Geppert, OSF	Dec 21-23
<u>Celebrating the Gifts of our LGBT Community</u>	Sister Marge O'Gorman, FSM	Jan 30
<u>Delighting in God's Presence</u>	Sister Marlene Geppert, OSF	Apr 2

Private Retreats Can Be Scheduled Anytime

IL RITIRO offers scholarships to help those in difficult situations care for their spiritual lives.

Call us at 636-274-0554

[Register Now](#)

Next Issue

In our next e-newsletter, we would like to devote articles to the role of mercy in relationships, and we would like to include some of your reflections. What are your reflections on mercy and its manifestations in your relationships? We would ask you to keep it short, personal, and practical so that your thoughts can be spring board from which others might begin their own reflection. Send us an [email](#) with Mercy in the subject line.



Sunday Gospel reflection questions are available on our webpage or can be sent to your e-mail each week. [Click here!](#)