



On Care for our Common Home

by Sister Cathleen Real, CHM

On June 18th, the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (Praise be to You) of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home became public. As we read the encyclical, we look for and take to heart especially the core teachings on our relationships to God, to one another and to all of creation.

Never have I anticipated a papal encyclical as much as this one on "integral ecology." While this phrase is not a household term, it is important, especially at this time, that we become familiar with the concept and study its theological basis. What is the relationship between human beings and the rest of creation? Between human beings and Earth?

The encyclical gives greater depth and meaning to "care of Earth," which has been in the CHM mission statement for several decades. In the past, CHMs took care of Earth by gardening on a small scale with flowers and vegetables and on a larger scale

with apples, grapes and strawberries. We saved many things, from scraps of food to scraps of fabric. We didn't travel far, staying close to home. But our lives have changed as the times changed. Our ministries became more diverse and expanded. Our locations broadened. Many began working more directly with the poor. Life has become more complicated and less "green."

Pope Francis has directed us to take care of Earth while looking out for the poor. Both tenets fit very well into what our CHM mission and ministries are all about.

"Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.

-Pope Francis

An internationally developed document, *The Earth Charter*, shows that many aspects of life can contribute to quality of life on Earth. Sr. Bernadine Pieper and Sr. Adrienne Marie Savage, both lovers of Earth and an inspiration to the sisters and associates, encouraged the distribution of *The Earth Charter* to all CHMs and their associates. *The Earth Charter* includes four sections important to the sustainability of humans on Earth: 1) Community of Life, 2) Ecological Integrity, 3) Social & Economic Justice and 4) Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace. The charter can be found at www.earthcharterinaction.org.

In 2007 and 2008 this broad based document was the basis for a CHM conference that coincided with national plans for Earth Charter Summits throughout the country. We brought in speakers and vendors to educate participants on what we as individuals could do in our personal lives as well as how to make our voices heard to effect systemic change—changes to ensure a healthy future for all creation.

The CHM Earth Charter Summits spurred the establishment of the CHM Care of Earth Committee, of which I am the chairwoman. A survey revealed that there are sisters and associates recycling, using low wattage light bulbs, gardening and driving fuel efficient cars. The committee saw its role as broadening the knowledge and experiential base of the congregation. Today, ongoing activities planned by the committee include the annual Holiday Movie and RE-Gift Swap, a spring environmental speaker series, monthly environmental films and an Earth Day prayer service.

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The Flame is published three times a year for the Congregation of the Humility of Mary and friends.

Our Mission: We, the members of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary, call one another to live the Gospel with simplicity and joy following the example of Mary.

Like our founders, we strive to be attentive to the call of the Spirit in the signs of our times, especially the needs of the poor and the powerless.

We commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to work for justice within the human family and to care for the earth itself.

Colossians 1: 19-20

“God wanted all perfection to be found in Christ, and all things to be reconciled to God through Christ— everything in heaven and everything on Earth— when Christ made peace by dying on the cross.

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Taking time to enjoy nature's beauty - the Mississippi River in Davenport, Iowa. CHM Communications Director Lisa Martin, CHM President Johanna Rickl and CHM Administrative Assistant Kelly Bell. Photo credit: Brian VanSpeybroeck.

Dear Friends,

What better time than now to spend a few moments reflecting on dear Mother Earth? The encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'* On Care for our Common Home, written by Pope Francis, offers much to study and discuss, but more than anything, it is a call to action.

Three other CHMs and I just returned from a three-day theological institute with Fr. Diarmuid O'Murchu. I am still processing some wonderful insights from that experience. He challenged us to recognize the oneness of all creation and of our participation in an evolving universe that has self organizing capacities.

It seems that in our culture many believe humans are the center of creation, separate from all the rest. This prevents us from recognizing our role as part of creation and keeps us from seeing how we damage ourselves and Earth by actions not in harmony with nature.

Our CHM mission statement includes the sentence, “We commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to work for justice within the human family and to care for Earth itself.” The two resources mentioned provide a broad foundation for deepening that commitment and taking a more realistic look at what each of us can do to make a better and more just world for all who live on this planet now as well as for the generations to come.

Brian Thomas Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker wrote in their book, *Journey of the Universe*: “Wonder is not just another emotion; it is rather an opening into the heart of the universe. Wonder is the pathway into what it means to be human...Our human destiny is to become the heart of the universe that embraces the whole of the Earth community.”

This issue of *theFlame* gives further food for thought as we continue caring for Earth. We thank all of you who join us in this urgent and compelling mission.

*Sister Johanna Rickl
CHM President*

-Care for our Common Home continued

Additionally, you will see sisters dedicating time to social justice issues, entering protest sit-ins, supporting cross country marchers or volunteering with Xstream Cleanup, a nationally recognized project to clean up the Mississippi River. I was invited to participate in a faith based training by the Climate Project in Nashville, TN, with the commitment of sharing insights with many groups in the Quad City area.

Another exceptional CHM commitment to nature, and to the Spirit, was the establishment of Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat which continues to give many people the experience of the quiet and beauty of the prairie. Yes, as a community, we are responding to the signs of the times.

We have already heard Pope Francis speak forcibly on taking care of Earth while at the same time facing our responsibilities for the poor. Francis is following closely what St. Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict have noted—the environment, God’s creation, is being harmed by human beings to the detriment of Earth. Through his encyclical the Holy Father speaks to us individually and to governments of the world regarding these responsibilities.



Sr. Pat Miller has regularly visited local legislators’ offices making sure her voice is heard on social justice issues.

The United States uses more than its share of Earth’s resources. In fact, if everyone in the world lived like we do in the U.S., we would need three Earths to supply the resources needed. Obviously this is not equitable. We need to turn to our governments to intervene and require companies and factories to reduce their carbon emissions and, at the same time, provide money for developing countries to raise their standard of living.

Many in the secular world, in particular the scientists, are concerned about the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the danger it represents to the earth—melting of glaciers, more severe droughts, more frequent and severe weather events (hurricanes, thunderstorms, tornadoes), forest fires, rising sea levels, human diseases. As these concerns become realities it becomes more difficult for people, including legislators, to pass off scientific studies as inaccurate or incomplete.

Fortunately, positive things are happening: greater innovations to save fossil fuel, the use of renewable energy, and working with companies to reduce or stop deforestation. How can we as Sisters of the Humility of Mary help with these large projects? Our individual role is to talk to our legislators, lobby them, and vote for Earth friendly candidates who will adopt good policies. And at home use less electricity, eat locally produced foods, check into solar or wind energy, look into efficient modes of travel, reduce, reuse and recycle.

Pope Francis didn’t say it would be easy. But with God’s grace we can do it. So let us pray for the courage, discipline and love to take care of Earth, God’s creation, as God wills us to do.



Sr. Joan LeBeau checks in volunteers during the Quad Cities XStream Clean-up.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) website—www.usccb.org—provides a link to the entire encyclical:

“On Care for Our Common Home (*Laudato Si'*) is the new appeal from Pope Francis addressed to ‘every person living on this planet’ for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Pope Francis calls the Church and the world to acknowledge the urgency of our environmental challenges and to join him in embarking on a new path. This encyclical is written with both hope and resolve, looking to our common future with candor and humility.”

Excerpt from Pope Francis’ encyclical: “Praise be to you, my Lord.’ In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. ‘Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.’

“This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she ‘groans in travail’ (Rom 8:22). 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.”

Shared CHM Connections

by Karen Brooke, CHM Development Director

As siblings in a family of five children, Mary Martin Lane and Gary Lane spent much of their childhood in Fairfield, IA. When asked about their earliest recollections of Sisters of the Humility of Mary, they shared very similar memories. Both Gary and Mary Martin have had lifetime relationships with CHMs, beginning with their mother's family's experiences. "Our mother told us of her and Aunt Kay's days at St. Joseph Academy and their sister's as a student at St. Joseph's School of Nursing in Ottumwa, IA. These accounts were shared with a great sense of respect for the lives the sisters led and the good that flowed from their work and example. The stories were very specific and peppered with the names of many sisters with whom they had contact, especially Mother Geraldine."

Christian Education for the Lane children began at St. Mary's Parish in Fairfield. Humilities taught catechism classes every Sunday and special Bible school in the summers. Mary Martin recalls, "Sr. Marilyn Reyes was our First Communion teacher, an icon of all the sisters who followed in our parish; we understood that she loved Jesus and she loved us too. The teachings and practices of being Catholic made us very distinct from Protestants surrounding us. We had

a guardian angel, patron saints, Mass, sacraments, rosary, devotionals, all things that introduced us to the spiritual world in our earliest years, a very real sense of the sacred. The personalities of the sisters attracted us, friendly, unpretentious and different, in a curious way." Gary recalls those early years, "In all honesty I regarded time spent with sisters as a time of sanctuary, a time I always anticipated. I still carry with me a sense of awe and wonder imparted by them with respect to Holy Eucharist."

In 1957 Mary Martin enrolled in Ottumwa Heights College (OHC), just in time to participate in the great fire of October 7, 1957. "Five of us, in our second year, entered the Novitiate, which was housed in the airbase, and we experienced the great tornado of 1959! I went on to study at Marycrest, receiving an excellent liberal arts Catholic education, giving me a love for learning, which stimulated my curiosity, imagination and discipline for doing the 'hard work' a goal requires."

Gary recalls visiting Mary Martin during her novitiate days and being present when she took her final vows. "My sister has had a lifetime of involvement with CHMs that far eclipses mine, but through her I have always felt 'in the loop' with what was going on, and led to my own commitment to CHM mission

as an adult." As a Sister of Humility (1958-1972), Mary Martin's teaching career began in parish schools in Iowa and Montana. "We were trained and mentored for classroom teaching with rigor, relevancy and creativity; teaching was an extension of 'spiritual exercises' outside of chapel, but connected. As a CHM Associate, later in my career, I always attributed successful completion of four graduate degrees to the foundation laid by teachers at OHC and Marycrest and those parish school classrooms.

"Sisters as a community shared values, but also allowed room for diversity, so in the wake of Vatican II, individuals were able to readjust personal needs or goals to community adaptations in light of 'the signs of the times.' In 1978 I began Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), which took me to Yugoslavia, Saudi Arabia, China, Croatia, Ukraine and Eastern Europe, as well the U.S., retiring in 2010."

Mary Martin adds, "The sisters' annual assemblies

consistently provided challenging topics for personal, professional and spiritual growth. Many of my closest friends are former (and current) members I met in the 1960s. Living 'on mission' together had a lasting impact. We learned how to agree or disagree and remain friends, and gained a sense of identity and belonging through healthy, empowering relationships.

"In my mind I never 'left' the CHM community, but rather transitioned from canonical membership to an 'associative' degree. I wanted, and continue to want to share in the *esprit de corps* that expresses the gifts my sisters offer humanity, as a global population, reflecting God's love for rich diversity throughout creation. When all is said and done, the bond for me boils down to one complex word—love...capped with esteem and gratitude."

As an adult and throughout his working years as an attorney, Gary Lane's life intersected with CHM sisters in a variety of ways. "Humilities taught our sons at Sacred Heart School.



CHM Associate Mary Martin Lane

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Everything We Do is Inspired by God

by Kathleen Storms, SSND, Director, Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat

“Everything we do is inspired by God.” I’ve been reflecting on this phrase taken from the Congregation of the Humility of Mary statement as it touches the ministry at Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat (OLPR).

God is the one who inspires us, guides us and directs us. God is the primary and ever present spiritual director. Everything at The Prairie—the landscape, reflective spots, the Labyrinth, Stations of the Cross, the Cosmic Walk, sitting areas, gardens and swing—provide portals for us to experience God in nature and in ourselves. The silence and solitude, the hum of the prairie grasses and the chorus of birds all add to this invitation to “Be still and know that I am God.” (Ps 46:10)

Part of my role as director of The Prairie is to provide a means to make sense of the “still small voice” of God speaking in life. As a spiritual director I listen to the stories of those who seek spiritual insight. Most of the time I ask, “Where do you find God?” As I listen to individuals reflect on this question, I am touched by the new images of God that emerge, past hurts that are healed, the pain of



Sr. Rae Elwood, OLPR program assistant, Sr. Kathleen Storms, OLPR director and Joyce Ollie, a member of the OLPR board of directors. Meetings are more inspired and efficient when they take place at Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat! Schedule your meetings at OLPR by calling Sr. Rae at 563-336-8414.

grief that is lessened, new freedoms that are gained, courage that is unleashed and cloudy discernment that becomes clear. This is how God uses me to be a listening presence through spiritual companionship.

As I prepare programs and retreats at The Prairie, I listen to God’s voice speaking through groups who reflect on what they feel is lacking in their lives. Often I hear direction, clarity, hope and

*We are not human beings
on a spiritual journey. We
are spiritual beings on a
human journey.*

—Teilhard de Chardin

transformation. Individuals experience hopefulness, peace, insight and clarity in their lives.

“Come to the Quiet” Days have been offered at The Prairie for many years as a way to give people a chance to come monthly into the beauty and solitude. Most of the time the theme is not as significant as is the time individuals take to step away from the busyness and concerns of their lives to just listen to God’s and their own inner voice. The sharing at the end of the day confirms the action of God in their lives. Even the clouds of darkness that accompany most busy lives seem to be lifted by the solitude and sharing. Grace flows from the realization that God is in everything!

Sister Kathleen can be contacted at 563-374-1092 or kathleenstorms@yahoo.com to discuss the benefits of spiritual direction on your life’s journey.

-Shared Connections Continued

Sr. Regina Mary Cratty, Sr. Donna Donovan and Sr. Maggie Bennett, the band teacher. I also had occasion to serve with sisters on diocesan committees and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. In recent years I’ve been involved with Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat ministry, first as a board member of New Horizons of Faith and now on the OLPR Advisory council. I view The Prairie as a very special sanctuary, much like what I found in the catechism rooms 60 years ago.”

Gary adds, “I hold Sisters of Humility in the highest esteem and have great respect for the work they do today in their three local ministries—The Prairie, Humility of Mary Housing and Humility of Mary Shelter. They are giving great witness to us all in what it means to bring the Gospel to life in our time and place. I count it a privilege and an honor to support them in any way possible. I am grateful for my Catholic faith and for the foundation they provided to me and my family and for the continued encouragement I receive from their exceptional example.”



Gary Lane and Sr. Jude Fitzpatrick

A Time of Planning and Celebration

A weekend of meetings and special events occurred June 26-28 during the annual CHM General Assembly which took place at the St. Ambrose University Rogalski Center. Sisters and associates attended the annual meeting, with many traveling from across the United States and Mexico to be present.

The CHM General Assembly is a time for community business, sharing among members, and celebration. This year's theme was "Growing in the Spirit of Consecrated Life" and featured keynote speakers Sisters Lynn Jarrell, OSU, and Simone Campbell, SSS. Special events during the weekend included: welcoming rite for new associates, memorial service for sisters and associates who died since the assembly last year, and a Jubilee Mass celebrating sister anniversaries.



Keynote speaker Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS, CHM Leadership Team Sr. Mary Bea Snyder, Sr. Jeanie Hagedorn, Sr. Johanna Rickl, Sr. Greta Fitzgerald, Sr. Mary Ann Vogel, and keynote speaker Sr. Lynn Jarrell, OSU.



Sr. Catherine Linnenkamp studies a Care of Earth exhibit, one of many ministry displays at the assembly.



Sr. Cathy Talarico, Sr. Carla Takes and Associate Janet Rossmiller-Dolan enjoy a break together.



New CHM Associates were welcomed during a special ceremony. Sr. Regina Mary Cratty, Associate M. Kay Snowden, Sr. Joan Sheil, Associate Tyla Cole and Associate Director Pat Knopick.



Sisters and associates gathered in small groups for future planning discussions.



Sr. Elaine Hagedorn places a rose in honor of one of the eight sisters and associates who passed away this year. Their lives were celebrated through personal tributes, prayer, and song.

Jubilee 2015



Sisters celebrating their Jubilees include Johnelle Howanach (60), Mary Rehmann (60), Joan Sheil (60), Dorothy Chevalier (60), Lucille Feehan (60), Ursula Keough (75), Pat Miller (60), Rosalia Riedel (70) and Mary Hilary Veith (60).



Reverend Charles Adam, celebrant for the Mass, visiting with Sr. Mary Bea Snyder.



The Jubilee Mass was celebrated in the lovely Christ the King Chapel on the campus of St. Ambrose University.



Father Robert McAleer and Sr. Kathleen Hanley



Sr. Dolores Schuh and Associate Nancy Roberson



Srs. Elaine Hagedorn and Claudellen Pentecost

Resting in Heavenly Peace



Sr. Patrice Steffes
August 19, 1942 -
March 11, 2015



Sr. Marilyn Brinker
May 19, 1943 -
April 04, 2015



Sr. Marcia Marie Costello
October 19, 1931 -
June 03, 2015



Sr. Mary Anne Leto
February 16, 1928 -
July 01, 2015



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