



Franciscan Sisters

Congregational JPIC Newsletter

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France: French Work To Prevent Nuclear Contamination of Earth

By S Françoise Weber



Nuclear Power Station Cattenom

The Sisters in France continue to be involved in JPIC efforts to care for Earth, our common home. On March 12, S Françoise participated in a demonstration to commemorate the nuclear catastrophe 5 years ago in Fukushima and in 1986 at Chernobyl. S Françoise continues her long time commitment to the anti-nuclear movement in France as a member of “SDNM”, “Exit the Nuclear Moselle”. The nuclear power station Cattenom is the third largest nuclear producer of energy in France. It is located in Lorraine in the Cattenom Commune of France on the Moselle River. 88 mishaps have been reported between March 2000 and March 2008, including a fire on June 7, 2013 in the power transformer of unit 1. The power transformer of unit 3 caught fire

on June 11, 2013. Twitter petitions have protested the maintenance of power plants in France despite their age. The Central Cattenom power station is over 25 years old. It was built between 1979 and 1991. The Sisters also oppose the French government’s plan to build a nuclear waste facility in the surrounding countryside at a cost of 35 billion francs, raising serious environmental concerns. Peace can never be built by weapons of war. Nuclear weapons threaten all of us with war and with environmental devastation. Dialogue, respect and love are the true and effective building blocks of peace in our world.

The Sisters in France have been inspired by Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si*. S Françoise put together a slideshow about the encyclical. The Sisters viewed the slide show and participated in a discussion. Now, every last Tuesday of the month, S Françoise prepares a special vespers prayer based on the theme of *Laudato Si*. She has also used posters to invite others to join them in these prayers for our common home.

Germany: Refugees Welcomed With Peace and Love

By S Stefanie Müllenborn

S Stefanie Müllenborn has been a dedicated advocate for decent accommodations for poor people in Germany, particularly for the large influx of refugees in the past year. She was supported by the Caritas Association and the Refugee Council in Herten. She noted that many arriving refugees were traumatized. This inspired a new idea for contact and encounter in her mind: "Dancing with women from around the world". 50 women followed the first invitation to dance together. The abundance of many dances from different cultures links the women with one another. In this atmosphere, they process their escape traumas, their family dramas, the longing for their children left in their countries and the lack of their

husbands who are locked up in prison. Within the cultural folk festival on 1 May 2015, the opening event of the Ruhr Festival in Recklinghausen, the first "human rights Choir" (MenschenREchtechor) performance was held. It is a mutual project of Sing-human-Rights and the Ruhr Festival. Over 100 singers sang songs about human rights, together with Sr. Stefanie and some refugees from Herten. The new choir "Venu Kanti" was founded in autumn in collaboration with the artist - Charles Moulton, singer and actor. Moulton took over the artistic direction of the choir. This is a wonderful project of integration of refugees in cultural life. One of the many messages of Pope Francis is: "Christians need a culture of encounter" in order to really help people. In commemoration of 30 years of Prayer for Peace in Assisi and in commemoration of the occasion of violent events around the world, a prayer service will be held on October 27, 2016: Prayer of Religion, at the Carmelite monastery in Cologne with the presence of INFAG Group (Inter Franciscan Network Association).

Romania: Kindergarten Children At St Ursula in Caransebes Begin Holiday By S Lydia Fecheta



In Chapter 49 of Laudato Si, Pope Francis writes: "...we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." In Romania, the kindergarten of St Ursula in Caransebes serves 30 children from very poor families. Sponsors, donors and the Sisters support these children with school supplies, sneakers and sport suits for the beginning of the school year. Without this loving care and support, many children would not be accepted into school. June 23, 2016 was a happy time for the children. They celebrated the end of the 2015-2016 school year and will return again in September. Most of the children move away during the summer vacation time. 7 children will begin primary school in September while the rest will continue in the kindergarten. Even as young children, these students are taught respect for one another and respect for earth, our common home.



Children treasure their school supplies at the beginning of the school year

East Timor: Teaching Children To Become Mature Girls and Boys

By S Marie Yose Pinto Gonzaga

I am working in East Timor, teaching Religious Education and Counseling Guidance special for young people at high school level. These lessons are very important to the situations which occur today here in East Timor. Most of the young people here lacked education themselves as children growing up, including sex education because it is still considered taboo. Therefore, as a result, there are high cases of early marriages, early pregnancies, infidelity and divorce. The relationships they build between boys and girls do not foster respect and love of oneself or one's partner, but instead lead to abusive relationships. Although young people may be physically mature, their attitudes towards one another may be very difficult. Therefore educational lessons are very important, being taught for the good of growing children, promoting good religious attitudes of respect and love, and becoming responsible adults in the future.

In *Laudato Si* paragraph 162, Pope Francis reminds us that the care of Earth is linked to how we treat one another. "Men and women of our postmodern world run the risk of rampant individualism, and many problems of society are connected with today's self-centered culture of instant gratification. We see this in the crisis of family and social ties and the difficulties of recognizing the other." By teaching young people their own worth and human dignity, they also learn to value the dignity of the other person. In East Timor, the Sisters' efforts to teach children how to build right relationships with one another will lead them to live in right relationships with all of creation.

USA: Raising Consciousness About *Laudato Si*

By S Beatrice Hernandez

With publication of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* in June and the goals set at the COP21 meeting on climate change in Paris in September 2015, it seemed like the perfect time to raise consciousness about the care for Earth, our common home. The JPIC office, in conjunction with our Province's spirituality ministry known as Tau Center, offered a month long study of *Laudato Si*. For 2 hours each week a presenter shared some of the key points from 2 chapters of the encyclical. The 30 participants (sisters and others) who had also read and reflected on the chapters before the meeting, then shared their own insights with one another in small groups and in the larger circle. The sessions inspired each of us to look at how we can contribute to solving the global climate change crisis.

Earth Day 2016 was a momentous day for the Wheaton Franciscans and for the world. April 22nd occurred as the Wheaton Franciscans were gathered for our Provincial Chapter meeting. In honor of Earth Day we joined the worldwide community in the theme "Trees for the World" by planting a Hackberry tree. This tree was chosen not only for its beauty, but also because it is native to our area of the USA and attracts monarch butterflies and birds. Our native Illinois prairie planted in the front of the property also contains many milkweed plants which support monarch butterflies, an endangered species which used to be plentiful in Illinois and are now rarely seen. About 49 Sisters, Covenant Companions and employees joined in blessing and planting the Hackberry.

In this way we contributed our small part toward the UN goal of planting 7.8 billion trees to celebrate Earth Day.



Sisters, Covenant Companions and friends gather on Earth Day 2016.



S Marie Diebold assists with tree planting.

Malawi: Teaching Children Respect For The Poor and For Earth

By S Raynela Saragih



Sister Raynela Saragih is principal of a school of 1035 students in Malawi

The parish compound where our Sisters in Malawi minister consists of a parish house, the church, a school and a hostel. They respond to “the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth” in many ways each day. Many people come begging for food and blankets and the Sisters respond with loving kindness in whatever way is possible. Caring for the sick and for those living with HIV/AIDS remains a priority for the Sisters. In the school, children are taught respect for the poor and respect for earth. Each child receives a special blessing before they take their 8th grade examinations, praying that they will do their best and be successful. During the school year, in December, many trees were planted around the school and hostel. They will provide much needed shade for the compound, and the mango trees that

were also planted will soon bear fruit. On international Earth Day, a special assembly was held for students, staff and Sisters to reflect on care and respect for earth, our common home. This assembly helped to raise consciousness about global climate change and connected Malawi with the entire world community on this special day.

Netherlands: Dutch Sisters Embrace the Message of Laudato Si



The Sisters in the Netherlands have wholeheartedly received the message of *Laudato Si* and are striving to put its message into practice in their daily lives. At the convent in Alverna, Sisters and staff are evaluating the seven “V” for reducing their carbon footprint:

1. Verwarming (heating)
2. Vervoer per auto (transport by car)
3. Vlees- en zuivelproducten (meat- and dairy-prod.)
4. Vliegen (fly)
5. Verlichting (lighting)
6. Verschillende apparatuur (equipment)
7. Veel papier (kranten, tijdschriften) (paper)



The Sisters and staff are also embarked on a “Green Top” initiative to be held on October 25th, 2016. Three meetings are scheduled and Sisters, employees, volunteers and service providers were all invited to attend. In each meeting, an element required for life (water, fire, air and earth) will be the focus. At the first meeting held on June 23rd, participants discussed water. Future meetings will be held July 28th, September 1st and September 29th.

Recently, the Dutch Sisters signed a letter of support for the message of *Laudato Si*. Those who were able signed online, while others signed on paper. The statement expressed that they stand behind the message of Pope Francis and his call for more care for the earth and care for the poor.

July 2016 Congregational JPIC Feature Article

Brazil: Sisters Caring For Our Common Home

(written by S Beatrice Hernandez from an interview with Sisters Martha Friedman and Raimunda Barbosa during her visit to Brazil in April 2016)



S Raimunda Barbosa (blue shirt, center) and some of her students planting a tree on Earth Day, 2016

S Raimunda is the Congregational JPIC Team member from Brazil. Her main ministry is teaching young people in a school in Santarem Brazil, in the state of Para. She has organized a program for 14-16 year old students to promote the study of *Laudato Si: Earth As Our Common Home*. This study involves students in the school, pastoral groups in parishes, etc. In response to this study, the students have planted trees at the school under the teaching of an agricultural specialist. They have also planted other plants at school and in the city park where plants had been destroyed by a recent fire. They have also planted fruit trees in the park for all to enjoy.



S Martha tending her "tree nursery"



One of S Martha's papaya trees bearing fruit

For many years, the Sisters in Brazil have beautified the courtyard at the Motherhouse with wonderful plants, trees and flowers which grow so well in the tropical weather of the Amazon area. Over the previous 6 months, S Martha has transplanted over 25 trees from her "tree nursery" to the yard near the Motherhouse and at the novitiate house. They supply all sorts of fruit, including mango, papaya, coconut, avocado, lemons, limes and bananas.

Santarem, Para is located at the junction of the Tapajos and Amazon Rivers. This area of Brazil is presently experiencing many challenges. The national government has planned to build a series of seven hydroelectric dams along the Tapajos River, a major tributary of the Amazon, thus endangering huge areas of Amazon forest as well as threatening many indigenous people who live along the river. The river is not only a major thoroughfare for transportation, but is a source of livelihood for entire communities. Many people will be displaced to nearby cities if the dam projects proceed, yet the government has not allocated any funding to help cities cope with this rapid influx of people. Although the project is being advertised as creating jobs, there are not enough jobs for all those who are coming to the area in search of work. This has led to increased poverty, prostitution and violence in the cities.

The bishops of the Prelacies and Dioceses of the western part of Para recently participated in a seminar about the proposed hydroelectric dams planned for the Tapajos River. It took place in Itaituba May 23-24, 2016 and was promoted by the Public Ministry of the State of Para. Neither local public officials, nor representatives of the indigenous communities of the area were consulted prior to the planning of these dams. Following the meeting, Bishop Dom Wilmar Santin of Itaituba read a statement, signed by all the bishops, defending the communities along the river banks and the traditional populations of Amazonas. In the statement, they spelled out their concerns for the Amazon ecosystems, its effects on global climate and the impact on people in the entire area.

Caring for our common home is an everyday reality for the Sisters and for all the people of the Amazon area. Earth has much to share with us and to teach us. We can also make a difference for Earth by adopting sustainable ways of living. In paragraph 207 of *Laudato Si* we read: “The Earth Charter asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge: ‘As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. 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.’ (The Earth Charter-June 2000)”