

REFLECT



December 2021

Restoring Nature

We hear of climate change, deforestation, and global warming, throw away culture, depletion of fresh water resources and loss of vital biodiversity, and pollution. What does this mean for each of us personally, as communities and as a congregation?

When I think of protecting the earth from global warming and its effects, I automatically turn to St. Francis of Assisi for inspiration since he is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology. His love of nature coupled with his love of the poor and commitment to interior peace pushes me to be an agent of change in today's world. I recognize that at the core of my being is a deep union with and love for nature, and that this colors my whole life. I've come to realize how we are all connected - nature with humans living in God's gift of creation in our common home.

If St. Francis were here today, he would warn us against relying on and continually extracting all the fossil fuel sources from Mother Earth. He would support ecological spirituality which calls us to acknowledge God as creator of the

universe and we as caretakers and stewards of creation.

Our modern Francis, Pope Francis, stresses that "the current environmental situation calls us to act now with urgency to become ever more responsible stewards of creation and to restore the Nature that we have been damaging and exploiting for too long." Drawing inspiration from Psalm 19:14 he notes that "we are all part of this gift of creation; we are a part of Nature, not separated from it." Restoring nature we have damaged means in the first place, restoring ourselves and making decisions to reverse the harm done. We can ask ourselves in what ways am I nourishing and sustaining the earth that in turn nourishes and sustains me?

From the very beginning of creation, the Creator asks us to work on the ground and to keep it productive. Farming is a constant backdrop in the Bible. The language of Jesus is full of illustrations from agriculture - tending flocks, planting, harvesting, building granaries and paying workers. Jesus assumes his listeners understand and respect healthy agriculture. This allows Him to tell parables about farms and farmers. In the parable of the good seed, Jesus talks about how seed reacts to

different types of soil to teach what happens when people react in different ways to the word of God. (Mk 4) What kind of soil am I?

The COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference has been exciting and is an opportunity for us, as religious, to unite and hear the voices of the vulnerable. We are not alone, and we can stand together to work towards solutions for a sustainable future.

This is not the time to be indifferent. We all recognize that climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our day. Global warming affects our health, economy, food production, travel, etc. The changes and actions we make in our life style will only contribute a small percentage towards solving the problem, but they are necessary.

How do we receive the messages coming to us about the need to be good stewards of creation? I would really like to hear from you on how you, your community, village, school, or parish, etc. is working together to encourage ecological conversion.

You will find many ways you can be involved in protecting our planet from further harm. Visit the home page of our www.osutildonk.com website. Find Laudato Si' Movement <https://laudatosimovement.org/>

Sr. Jane Quinlan, OSU
with shared ideas from
Sr. Lucienne Kakanatt, OSU

Peep into the Deep

Advent is a time of preparation. It is a time to look inward to look forward. It is a time to get ready to welcome our Saviour into our hearts, who comes, comes ever into our lives through different persons, events, situations and circumstances. The entire season prepares us to allow Christ to come into our hearts, sometimes in ways far different from other times, when we celebrate His coming in this unprecedented time. What is this Holy season calling me to do as a Christian and particularly as a consecrated person in this challenging situation?

Certainly, as a consecrated person our primary duty is to **pray**. It is the time to pray for all the victims of this virus and all those who are suffering the side effects of this pandemic. Imagine the suffering of the people who have lost their dear ones, suffering due to unemployment and financial crisis, and lack of what is needed for a day's meal or for medicine.

It is a time to **listen**, listen to the silent whispering of God. Possibly our God is speaking to us through the happenings of these days. He speaks to us in a different way. Of course, He speaks so profoundly through events and experiences. In the book of Exodus, God spoke to Pharaoh of Egypt through the plagues. Prophet Amos mentions God speaking to the people of Israel through nature, pestilence and plagues. So, God is speaking to each one of us and He wants us to listen to Him attentively.

Often the busy world of self-centeredness, ego, insensitivity and modern gadgets - such as mobile, computer and internet- becomes so noisy that we fail to listen to the gentle voice of God, the silence of the heart.

What is God calling me to do today? What is the message that God wants to communicate to us individually, to our community, to our Congregation, to our Church and to the world at large to bring His kingdom in this situation? What gift can I give to myself, to my sisters in the community, to the students & staff, to the Congregation and to the world; a gift of goodness, love, care, compassion, forgiveness, sincerity, generosity, a little sensitivity, listening heart and peace. What would be that great gift that I am going to bring in this Christmas?

Let's peep into the depth of our heart and let go of the things that become stumbling blocks, to adore the king of our heart, Emmanuel who is always with us. Let us be open and surrender to Him alone to be led deeper, higher, beyond and to Him to be his love, joy and peace to the world.

Sr. Ritu Ranjita Kindo, OSU

Merici Convent - A Replica of Bethlehem

Srs. Deepkala Tirkey, Rashmi Kerketta, two Guyana Missionaries and I were held up in New Delhi for one week en route to Guyana for we did not have a special Covid pass to enter Trinidad (Port of Spain) airport.

We had to stay in our Merici Convent there until our documents were clear. While there I happened to meet Saroj, Sonu and MD. Shahjahan. They shared with me their painful stories which touched me very deeply. My thought went straight to the town of Bethlehem - to the countryside - house of the shepherd who gave shelter to Mary and Joseph.

1. Saroj Devi, a 52 year old widow, irons the clothes of the rich at the rear part of the building of Merici Convent. She is given a small place by the sisters. She hardly earns Rs.250/- to 350/- per day.



2. Sonu, a wanderer, suddenly appears one fine morning to the sisters begging to keep his 2 small daughters left by his wife. Seeing the pathetic condition of these girl children sisters readily accepted to look after the girls Sonu, sensing the kindness and generosity of the sisters asked permission if he could keep his small belonging for the night in the convent. Sisters allowed that also. Every evening he would come and keep his bags full of articles, give his day's earning to one of the sisters to keep and go to his hut.



3. MD. Shahjahan, a widower from Bihar, a tailor by profession was seen sitting under the shade of a huge building of a millionaire, not very far from Merici

Home. But one fine day this poor man was asked to vacate the place because the owner of the building wanted to make it a garage.

Shahjahan was sad and helpless. But a few kind hearted senior citizens came to his aid. In fact they brought him to Merici Convent for they knew that sisters are very charitable and kind.



They called for Sr. Sophia Dungung, the community Leader and requested her to give Shahjahan a small space at the gate to sit and stitch. Sisters were very kind and considerate to Shahjahan. He was allowed to sit in a small space at the gate of the convent and do his work. He too kept his machine and other belongings in a little corner of the parlor. Thus he found a place not only at the gate but in the heart of the sisters. He seemed to be quite comfortable and happy with the kind hospitality of the sisters.

A warm welcome in Merici

Joseph and Mary, after the census was over were looking for shelter in the inns of the city but all the inns were full. Joseph actually was looking for a place which could be a little spacious, quiet with some privacy. As it was not possible in inns he took Mary to countryside to a shepherd house who generously gave them a front place of the house where he used to keep his sheep and cattle.

And there in the middle of the night Mary gave birth to her first born, wrapped him in clothe and laid him in a manger....for there was no room for them to stay in the inn. Lk.2:7 The owner of the hut and his family were the first to see the Baby Jesus. It is because they welcomed the holy family in their home. The shepherds in the field were awake and attentive to hear any noise. They were poor people, pure and humble at heart. Hence they could hear the call of the angel and believed it. They together went to the hut and found Baby Jesus as the angel had told them. They worshiped him. They sang *Gloria* with the band of angels. They experienced the joy and peace of seeing the savior.

Like our sisters in Merici Convent and shepherds at Bethlehem, let us keep the door of our houses and hearts open for Baby Jesus. Let us be kind and generous to recognize Joseph and Mary with Baby Jesus in any shape, give them space in our homes and we shall indeed have the joy of seeing him born in our hearts and in our homes. Our Ursuline way of living contemplative spirituality will surely help us to hear his silent steps in our day to day life, for in the words of the great Indian poet, Ravindranath Tagor: *He comes, He ever comes.*

Sr. Matilda Dungdung, OSU

Be Fully Alive

St. Irenaeus says, "The glory of God is a man fully alive"

Who among us does not want to be fully alive? But we need to understand what it means to be fully alive. I too like this quote of St. Irenaeus. "The glory of God is a man (human person) fully alive. All that God has created is very good, and the best of them, the crown of creation, is humankind - created in His own image and likeness.

The rose plant fully alive will bring out roses in abundance and hues. A fruit tree will mature and produce fruit in plenty to feed the birds, the animals and man. And what should man do? Be fully alive - bring out the best that is in him/her, and let it benefit the others. This precisely is the meaning of being "fully alive".

Sr. Lucienne Kakanatt, OSU

Send your Spirit

Send your Spirit to open my
eyes and my ears,
my mind and my heart, my soul and my
imagination
and all my days and nights
to where you lead me, Lord,
where you guide me,
where you call me to new life,
to richer, more abundant life,
to life filled and blessed
with your mercy, your word, your grace
and your love...

by A Concord Pastor
Austin Fleming



*Merry Christmas to each and every
one and a Blessed New Year 2022*