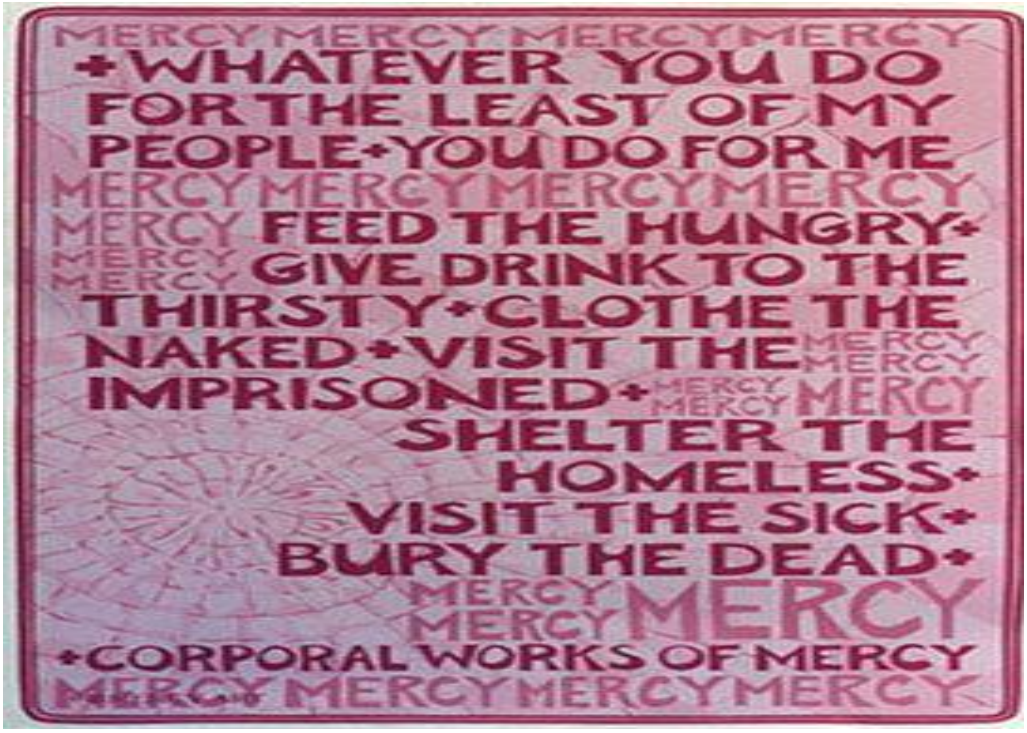


The View From The Bluff

September 2018

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

I FOUND IT IN THE ARCHIVES

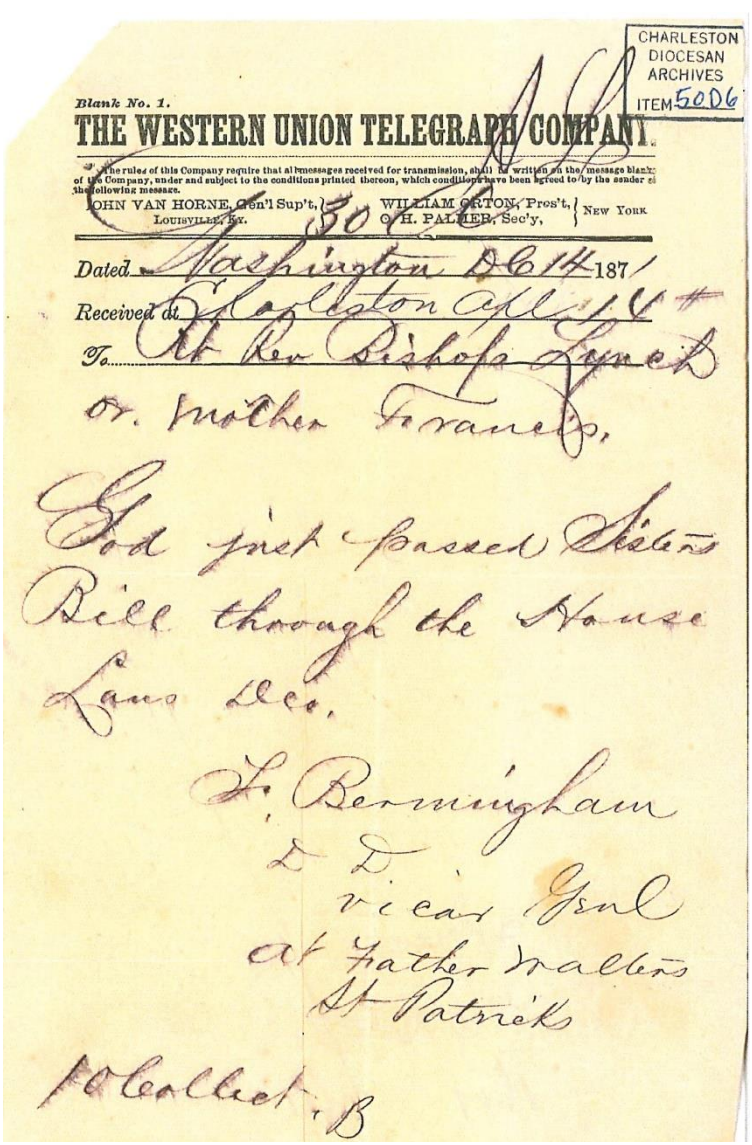
Father Timothy Bermingham

Ecclesiastical Superior

1868 - 1872

Father Timothy Bermingham was born in County Tipperary, Ireland, in 1797. It is not known when he left his native land. However, he began his studies for the priesthood in Montreal, Canada, and completed them in Bishop England's Seminary in Charleston where he was ordained in 1832. Father J.J. O'Connell, author of Catholicity in the Carolinas and Georgia, described him as "Of medium stature, attenuated frame, sharp face, thin hair, and an uncommonly long nose. He looked to be the impersonation of mortification and ill health." However, "his irreproachable life, joined to austerity of manners and habitual prayer, rendered him an efficient missionary priest." Following his ordination Father Bermingham was stationed for twelve years in Columbia, SC, and then for six years in Columbus, GA. When the Diocese of Savannah was created in 1850, Father Bermingham chose to remain in the Diocese of Charleston and was assigned to Edgefield and its missions. Saint Mary's Church of the Immaculate Conception, Edgefield, built under Father Bermingham's direction, was dedicated by Bishop Patrick Lynch in 1859. Father O'Connell described it as "a massive, handsome building of granite and rock, destined to last for ages."

In 1861 Bishop Lynch sent Father Bermingham on a diplomatic mission to the Papal States. Among the items Father Bermingham carried with him was a



petition written by Bishop Lynch asking Pope Pius IX to confer upon the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy "a special blessing and testimony of approbation". A year later Father Bermingham wrote the Bishop: "I got the Pope's own signature for the establishment of the Sisters of Mercy in Charleston." Bishop Lynch informed the OLM Community that the approval of his petition on their behalf was tantamount to Papal approbation of the Congregation. They, in turn, accepted the Bishop's explanation. Every edition of the Rules and Constitutions of the Community published before 1949 included a copy of Bishop Lynch's Petition and the approval granted by Pope Pius IX.

Upon returning to Charleston at the end of the Civil War Father Bermingham was appointed Vicar General of the Diocese, Pastor of the Cathedral, and, in September 1868, Ecclesiastical Superior of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Although he was simultaneously involved in building Stella Maris Church on Sullivan's Island, Father Bermingham managed to attend Council Meetings and support Community endeavors. With his approval and encouragement the Community bought the Alston Mansion (now called the Russell House) on Meeting Street for $19,00.00. The purchase enabled the Community to move the Academy from Queen Street to Meeting Street and house the orphan girls on the Motherhouse property on Queen Street. Father Bermingham also supported OLM efforts to obtain a Congressional appropriation to help rebuild the Girls' Orphanage which had been damaged during the War. He went to Washington, DC, in April 1871 to expedite passage of the "Sisters' Bill". On April 14th he telegrammed Bishop Lynch: "God has just passed the Sisters' Bill through the House. Laus Deo!"

Father Bermingham became ill during the early months of 1872 and was sent to New York City for medical treatment. However, the unspecified illness had gone too far. On June 4, 1872 he died in his sleep. His body was returned to Charleston and was the first to be buried in the small cemetery plot behind the Cathedral. In a letter to Bishop Lynch dated July 9, 1872, Mother Agatha McNamara said: "You cannot imagine how much we regretted the death of our Reverend Superior so far away from his home and the scene of his labors for so many years. We were sorry and are still sorry that he left home without telling us he was going or giving us his blessing, but one of the Sisters with whom he died wrote that he spoke often of the Community."

May 24, 2018 marked the third anniversary of the release of Laudato Si', Pope Francis' Encyclical On Care of Our Common Home. To read Laudato Si' just google it and numerous online sites will have copies that can be read online. The following is a review of the first two chapters. Other chapters will be covered in the October View From the Bluff.

The pope is calling the world to a conversion that will have a huge impact on how we live, how our economy works, and how governments operate. "Revolutionary" is almost too weak a word. It will require an extraordinary change in human vision and behavior to accomplish this peaceful revolution. It will require sacrifice from everyone, especially those who are enjoying the fruits of the status quo. What the pope asks will not be easy, but he encourages us to **trust in a loving God and a powerful Spirit that can renew the face of the earth. Laudato Si' emphasizes love as the motivating force and requires each of us to get involved for the long haul**. This is a marathon, not a sprint. As Christians, we must have hope and faith. Francis' encyclical strengthens that hope.

The encyclical draws on an immense range of sources. Pope Francis was trained as a chemist before he entered the seminary. He is quite clear that 'Facts are more important than ideas'. These facts include the physical limits of the Earth, our atmosphere and to life for many. The pope begins the encyclical by saying Sister Earth "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." He cites earlier popes and other religious leaders who have spoken about the environment and is clear that the land and resources belong to God.

Henry Longbottom SJ also provides a quick overview of Laudato Si', "a text of such landmark significance that it may well become one of the most important sources of Catholic Social Teaching since its inception with Pope Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum in 1891." Pope Francis presents "**urgent challenge to protect our common home … to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change**" (13). It's all about relationships.

In the introductory section, Francis, following his thirteenth-century namesake, **calls the earth our "common home", which is like our sister and our mother. But we are damaging this familial relationship as we harm the environment. In so doing, we are damaging our relationship with other humans**, particularly those least equipped to defend themselves: **the poor and future generations. We are forgetting our interconnectedness with the earth and with those around and ahead of us who depend on our good stewardship of the gift of creation**.

Given the universal nature of our common home, Francis makes it clear that **the encyclical is addressed to not only members of the Church but is a vehicle to "enter into dialogue" with all people who are "united by the same concern**" (3, 7). Such a wide target audience explains the immense range of

sources the encyclical draws on. The document looks to St. Francis of Assisi and St. Bonaventure, as well as St. Thomas Aquinas, but also to Eastern Christian traditions. It even quotes a Sufi Mystic. Twentieth-century thinkers Teilhard de Chardin and Romano Guardini deserve special mention. Secular documents such as the Rio Declaration from 1992 and the 2000 Earth Charter are referred to as well. The reader is also struck by the many references to previous papal writings, particularly those of St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The relationship between Francis and his predecessors on ecology is strong.

After a comprehensive introduction, the encyclical divides into six chapters, each examining different aspects of the rupture between humans and creation and the prospects for healing this relationship.

The first chapter, "What Is Happening to Our Common Home", looks at the various symptoms of environmental degradation. The impacts of climate change are considered alongside issues of the depletion of **freshwater and loss of biodiversity**. There is no substantial discussion of the science of global warming; instead, it simply points to **the overwhelming consensus concerning the negative impact of carbon-intensive economies on the natural world and human life**: "**Caring for ecosystems demands farsightedness, since no one looking for quick and easy profit is truly interested in their preservation**" (36). **The encyclical firmly posits that a truly ecological approach is also inherently social** – an approach that simultaneously hears the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. The social and environmental impacts of mining is cited as a prime example of this.

The second chapter, "The Gospel of Creation", considers the world the way that God intended it. The chapter surveys the rich scriptural traditions to show **that there is no biblical justification for "a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures**."(68) And **reverence for nature is only authentic if we have compassion for fellow humans. All have a role and deserve life.**

The third chapter, "The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis", examines the twin notions of what it calls the **"technocratic paradigm" and a "modern anthropocentrism" borne out of a view that mistakenly sees nature as a mere given, devoid of any spiritual or transcending inherent value. These notions have led us to ignore limits, the inherent value of others, or longer term considerations**, thinking that our approach can continue despite the earth's finite resources. A **purely materialistic view of reality has not only resulted in disregard for the environment, but also lessened the value of life**, **especially those forms viewed as having little or no use in the current economic order** – human embryos, the poor, or people with disabilities.

At the heart of consumerist and profit-driven economic ideologies is a wrong-footed idea of dominion. The result is exploitation and a throwaway attitude towards nature and human life itself. The encyclical calls for a bold cultural revolution in our attitude to development and progress. It puts it rather bluntly: "Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age, but we do need to slow down and look at reality in a different way, to appropriate the positive and sustainable progress which has been made, but also to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur."(114).

In the fourth chapter, "Integral Ecology", the encyclical charts a path to **recapture awareness of the interconnectedness of creation**. To do so, it is essential to **appreciate the impact of environmental degradation on "cultural ecology", such as those social networks and ways of life which are bound up with the environment in which communities are placed**. The experience of indigenous peoples is specifically referred to in this regard.

The fifth chapter, "**Lines of Approach and Action**", sets out various international collective actions needed. **It highlights the imperative to switch from fossil fuels to renewables, with the use of government subsidies where appropriate**. It identifies the need for international agreements and legislation not only in relation to climate change but also biodiversity and the oceans. Carbon credits are

criticized as “an expedient which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors.” (171).

The sixth chapter, “**Ecological Education and Spirituality**”, shifts attention to the individual believer, families and communities, and invites them to make a difference in concrete ways as we strive to transform our systems and take practical steps leading to **a deeper, spiritual “ecological conversion” through which the follower of Christ recognizes the true worth of all created entities**. The statement “**God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore**”(221) stands in the hallowed **natural law tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas that every creature has in its nature an end, a telos, which humans should respect and honor. The intrinsic value of non-humans**is noted when the encyclical states that the “ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us” but rather in the Risen Christ who embraces all things (83). — Henry Longbottom, SJ hlongbottomsj@thejesuitpost.org

Chapter 1 What is happening to our common home?

Pope Francis is a firm believer in the need to **gather the facts in order to understand a problem**. Chapter 1 presents the scientific consensus on climate change along with a description of other threats to the environment, including threats to water supplies and biodiversity. He also looks at **how environmental degradation has affected human life and society**. He concludes by writing about the **global inequality** of the environmental crisis.

“The climate is a common good” (23) and “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right.” He says biodiversity is important (32-42) and we have no right to deprive other species of their existence. He talks about the effects on people’s lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development, and the throwaway culture (43-47) and says “we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we **attend to causes related to human and social degradation**” (48). He stresses that “**a true ‘ecological debt’ exists, particularly between the global north and south” and that the world’s response to our intersecting environmental and economic crises has been weak** (53)? **Our technocratic decision making and economic domination system oriented to profit more than people has been problematic**.

Chapter 1 of the encyclical first reports on air pollution: “Exposure to atmospheric pollutants produces a broad spectrum of health hazards, especially for the poor, and causes millions of premature deaths.” Pollution is “caused by transport, industrial fumes, substances which contribute to the acidification of soil and water, fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and agrotoxins in general.” Then the chapter moves on to the pollution caused by waste. “Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable, highly toxic and radioactive, from homes and businesses, from construction and demolition sites, from clinical, electronic and industrial sources.” About climate, the Pope cites the overwhelming scientific agreement that “global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity.” He references how global warming leads to melting of glaciers and polar ice, rising sea levels, and the release of methane gas from the decomposition of frozen organic material. He also notes that “carbon dioxide pollution increases the acidification of the oceans and compromises the marine food chain.” He points to the overwhelming consensus concerning the negative impact of carbon-intensive economies on the natural world and human life: “Caring for ecosystems demands farsightedness, since no one looking for quick and easy profit is truly interested in their preservation” (36). “If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us.”

Chapter 1 devotes an entire section to the loss of biodiversity, its causes and consequences. “Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our

children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity." These are resources that will not be available to future generations. The encyclical reports on polluted water supplies, dying coral reefs, and deforestation. It summarizes the current thinking of scientists about environmental issues. Later in the encyclical, Francis writes, "Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes." **Facts matter when it comes to the environment, which is why Francis begins his encyclical with a presentation of the scientific consensus on the state of the environment and where we are going**. **These facts present the world with a moral dilemma** that will be explicated later in the encyclical. **Facts, in Francis' universe, should not be twisted to fit our ideas. Rather, facts can force us to change our ideas**; for example, what it means to be a Christian in the 21st century must change when confronted with environmental crisis we face.

Chapter 2 The Gospel of creation

The pope argues that **faith convictions can motivate Christians to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters**. He begins with the biblical account of creation and care. He then meditates on **the mystery of the universe, which he sees as a continuing revelation of the divine**.

"**Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth**." In "till and keep" the garden of the world (cf. *Gen* 2:15), "keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies **a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature**. In addition to communities taking from the bounty of the earth what is needed for subsistence, we also have the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. **"The earth is the Lord's" (*Ps* 24:1); to him belongs "the earth with all that is within it" (*Dt* 10:14). Thus God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine."**(67, *Lev* 25:23) "This responsibility for God's earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must **respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world**." Further, rest on the seventh day is meant not only for human beings (67) Together with our obligation to use the earth's goods responsibly**, we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes; they cannot just be used as we wish. Man must respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things**." (69) **Everything is interconnected, and genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others** (70). The Pope reviews biblical law on the sabbath, giving land and people adequate rest, and returning land and goods to those indebted. The pope says, this "was an acknowledgment that the gift of the earth with its fruits belongs to everyone. **Those who tilled and kept the land were obliged to share its fruits, especially with the poor, with widows, orphans and foreigners in their midst**."(71) All "not only exist by God's mighty power; we also live with him and beside him. This is why we adore him." (72)

He reminds us to find renewed strength during times of trial by contemplating" **God who created the universe, who "gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless." (*Is* 40:28b-29). Francis urges us to read the prophets (73) and recall that God can overcome every form of evil. Injustice is not invincible** (74). When we forget this we can end up forgetting our place, "worshipping earthly powers…even to the point of claiming an unlimited right to trample his creation underfoot;" "otherwise human beings will always try to impose their own laws and interests on reality." (75). **Creation can only be understood as a gift** from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, **and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion**. (76) The creating word expresses a free

choice. Creation is of the order of love. God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things. Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. (77)

He speaks of freedom and responsibility of human beings who, as part of the world, have the duty to cultivate their abilities in order to protect it and develop its potential. If we acknowledge the value and the fragility of nature and, at the same time, our God-given abilities, we can finally **leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress**. A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, **challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power**. (78)

Faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding. And we can apply our intelligence towards things evolving positively. **The work of the Church seeks not only to remind everyone of the duty to care for nature, but at the same time "must above all protect mankind from self-destruction.**"(79) God, who wishes to work with us and who counts on our cooperation, can also bring good out of the evil we have done, and "**loosen the knots of human affairs, including the most complex and inscrutable**".(80) God is intimately present to each being, without impinging on the autonomy of his creature(s). His divine presence, which ensures the subsistence and growth of each being, "continues the work of creation" (79, Aquinas). The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, **something new can always emerge** (80). Each of us has his or her own personal identity…a direct action of God and a particular call to life and to relationship. The biblical accounts of creation invite us to see each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object, each capable of entering into dialogue with God and others. It would also be mistaken to view other living beings as mere objects subjected to arbitrary human domination. **When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. This vision of "might is right" has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all**. Completely at odds with this model are Jesus' model of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace.

As he said of the powers of his own age: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (*Mt* 20:25-26). (82). In 83 he "add(s) yet another argument for **rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures**. The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us (83). Each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God. And the history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places. The Earth is a continuing revelation of the divine"and "To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God's love and hope" (85). The universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God (86). St. Thomas Aquinas wisely noted that multiplicity and variety "come from the intention of the first agent" who willed that "what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another", as God's goodness "could not be represented fittingly by any one creature". Hence we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships; the Catechism teaches "God willed the interdependence of creatures. No creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other" (86). When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them (87). Nature as a whole not only manifests God; God is present and found therein (88). "The earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone." (71).

Questions:

1. How does Francis interpret Genesis 1:28, which grants humankind dominion over the earth (Paragraph 67)? He says "Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted

the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that the word dominion or that we are created in God's image justifies absolute domination over other creatures. Christians in their turn "realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith" (64, JPII).

2. According to Francis, the Bible teaches that the harmony between the creator, humanity, and creation was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations (66). In what ways do we deify the market? Our leaders? Do we also take less responsibility then for bringing about system change, where we can have an impact?
3. How does Francis use the Bible to support his view that the gift of the earth with its fruits belongs to everyone? (71)
4. In reflecting on the mystery of the universe, what does Francis mean by saying that "creation is of the order of love"? (77)
5. What is our role "in this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems" where "we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation" (79)?
6. Francis says, "Creating a world in need of development, God in some way sought to limit himself in such a way that many of the things we think of as evils, dangers or sources of suffering, are in reality part of the pains of childbirth which he uses to draw us into the act of cooperation with the Creator" (Paragraph 80). How do you understand this?
7. If the ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us, how do we and other creatures fit into God's plan (83)?
8. Alongside revelation contained in Scripture, "there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night" (85). How have you experienced God in creation?
9. "The Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property" (Paragraph 93). When can the right to private property be subordinated to the common good?
10. What was the attitude of Jesus toward creation (Paragraphs 96-100)?

Commentary: Revelation and creation, respecting and sharing God's gift

From the beginning of human history, the beauty and awesomeness of creation has inspired people to think of God. Whether it was the power of a storm or the beauty of a sunset, humans have experienced creation as revelatory of greatness of a creator God. Even without Hebrew or Christian revelation, many peoples saw the divine working through nature. For early humans the world was alive with spirits and the divine. The Bible is filled with reflections on the relationship between God and nature, and the role of humans in this world. Pope Francis in the second chapter of *Laudato Si'* reflects on God, creation, and the role of humanity in the divine plan in order to "show how faith convictions can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters."

First off, he wants to make clear that he rejects the "dominion" theory that gives man total domination over creation. This theological view, based on Genesis 1:28, was interpreted during the 19th century to promote the industrial revolution and its desire to use the earth as malleable clay that man could pound and shape into whatever he wants. Francis sees this interpretation as distorted. It "has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him [man] as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church." **Today, "we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures**." Instead, Pope Francis does an exegesis of Genesis 2:15 telling Adam to till and tend the garden of the world. "'Tilling,'" writes Francis, "refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while 'keeping' means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving." As a result, "**Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations**."

He notes that the Sabbath was a day of **rest not only for humans but also for "your ox and your donkey**" (Exodus 23:12). "Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures." In fact, the psalms tell us that creatures by their very existence bless and give glory to God. God loves the work of his hands and saw that it was good even before man and woman were created. Francis' reflection on Genesis leads him to see that "**human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself." These relationships are ruptured by sin, "by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations**."

Francis affirms that the world did not result from chaos or chance but "as the result of a decision … a free choice" based on love. "Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it a place in the world," and "God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things." As a result, "**every act of cruelty toward any creature is contrary to human dignity." The biblical answer to the injustice of domineering earthly powers or the destruction of the earth is to "speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world**." Francis notes each human person possesses a uniqueness. "Each of us has his or her own personal identity and is capable of entering into dialogue with others and with God himself. Our capacity to reason, to develop arguments, to be inventive, to interpret reality and to create art, along with other not yet discovered capacities, are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology."

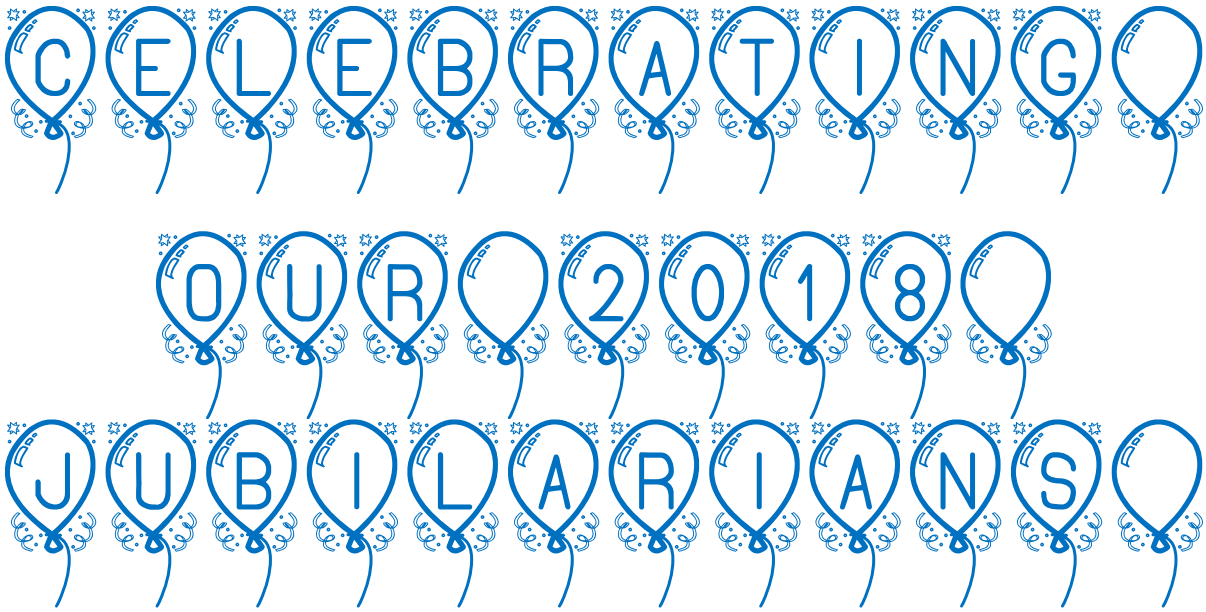
God created "a world in need of development," and "counts on our cooperation." As a result, "many of the things we think of as evils, dangers or sources of suffering, are in reality part of the pains of childbirth which he uses to draw us into the act of cooperation with the Creator." Despite the specialness of humanity, "The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God" and the fullness of life for all. Everything is connected, he argues. He cites the Dominican bishops who said, "**Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism**." He goes on to write, "Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth."

Central to Francis' biblical reflection is seeing the earth as a gift "with its fruits belonging to everyone." Those who farmed the land "were obliged to share its fruits, especially with the poor, with widows, orphans and foreigners in their midst" (Leviticus 19:9-10). "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." Perhaps Francis' most challenging theological reflection for Catholics in the global north is his seeing **the earth as "essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone." We are called to be faithful to our God who "created the world for everyone**." **This requires a revolution in our perspective on the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged. It requires that private property be subordinate to "the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use." He calls this "the golden rule of social conduct and the first principle of the whole ethical and social order**."

He asserts that "**The Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property." He concludes that "The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others**."

Francis cites the New Zealand bishops who asked "**what the commandment 'Thou shall not kill' means when 20 percent of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive**."

Francis reminds us that "In the Christian understanding of the world, the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ, present from the beginning: 'All things have been created though him and for him' (Col 1:16)." "The very flowers of the field and the birds…are now imbued with his radiant presence." The theological vision of Pope Francis in chapter 2 of *Laudato Si'* is a practical one; his principal aim is to show that **humans must care for creation** as well as **share its fruits with one another**.

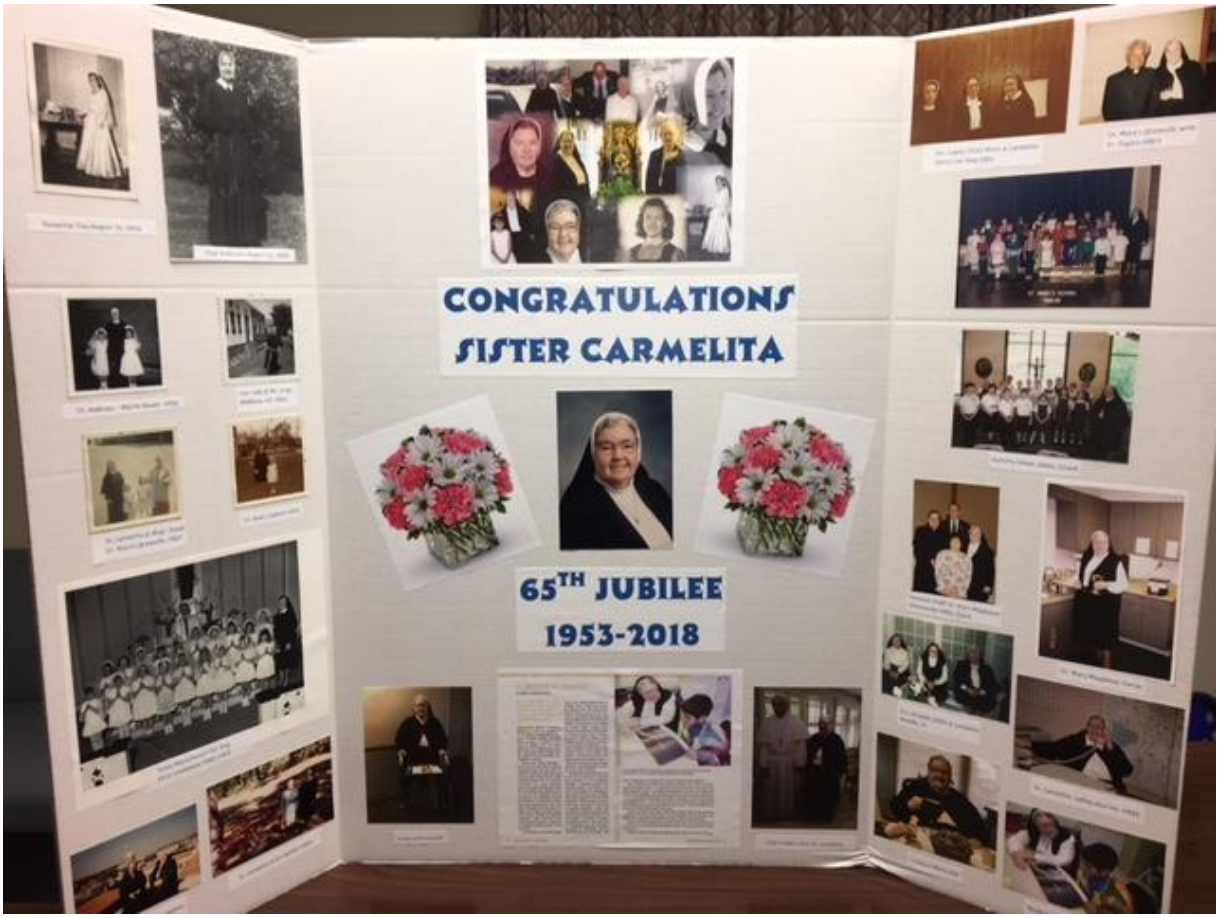


Sister Carmelita Boyd

65 Years

Sister Mary Thomas Neal

60 Years


CONGRATULATIONS
SISTER CARMELITA
65TH JUBILEE
1953-2018


CONGRATULATIONS
SISTER MARY THOMAS
60TH JUBILEE
1958-2018

At the recent LCWR Assembly the following Resolution was passed:

2018 Recommitment to 2016 Assembly Resolution Systemic Causes of Injustice

In 2016 the Leadership Conference of Women Religious committed to the work of recognizing racism as a systemic, structural cause underlying and contributing to the multiple situations of injustice identified in the LCWR Call. The Global Concerns Committee has heard a desire from the membership to go deeper into this critical work. We recommend that we adopt the following statement recommitting ourselves to the 2016 Assembly Resolution.

2018 Statement of Recommitment In the presence of constant and painful reminders of the deep roots of racism in our country, we the Leadership Conference of Women Religious reaffirm the 2016 Assembly Resolution and pledge to go deeper into the critical work of creating communion, examining the root causes of injustice and our own complicity, and purging ourselves, our communities, and our country of the sin of racism and its destructive effects.

Rationale LCWR has a long history of contemplative listening to the signs of the times, compassionate response to the thirst of the world for integrity and communion, and action for justice. This 2018 statement recommits the membership to going deeper into the critical work of the 2016 Assembly Resolution:

Grounded in our belief that action on behalf of justice is a constitutive element of the Gospel, we, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, affirm the interrelatedness of the justice concerns addressed by our recent assembly resolutions. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, we commit ourselves to examine the root causes of injustice, particularly racism, and our own complicity as congregations, and to work to effect systemic change as we struggle to establish economic justice, abolish modern-day slavery, ensure immigrant rights, promote nonviolence, and protect Earth and its biosphere. We pledge prayer, education, and advocacy and commit to using our collective voice, resources, and power in collaboration with others to establish justice which reflects God's abundant love and desire that all may have life.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

1. LCWR and its members are encouraged to address the root causes of injustice as well as their own complicity by examining the consequences of white privilege and unconscious bias, sharing this statement and the 2016 Assembly Resolution with their ministries, and reviewing policies and practices, including human resources and employee compensation, for bias and structural injustice.

2. Congregations are encouraged to use the contemplative process and social analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the interrelated systemic causes of injustice and to urge their social justice promotors to coordinate communication, share resources, and act in collaboration with other justice groups.

3. Regions are encouraged to continue the work of responding strategically to an identified issue of local, regional, national, or global concern and to examine its effects and explore its underlying causes, particularly racism. For the years 2015-2019 the Global Concerns Committee will continue to provide resources to facilitate the implementation of this resolution.