



# JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



## CELEBRATING SISTER MOTHER EARTH

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*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth, who sustains us and governs us  
and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

~ From the Cantic of Creation by Francis of Assisi

*“LAUDATO SI, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord.”*  
In the words of this beautiful cantic, 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”. ~ From the opening of *Laudato Si’*, 2015

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis’ much anticipated encyclical, *Laudato Si’*. These important milestones have ignited a renewed energy and excitement for environmental justice issues. They have also brought back to light the tremendous damage we are doing to the earth, our common home.

Earth Day is an annual event celebrated around the world on April 22 to demonstrate support for the protection of our environment; of our Sister, Mother Earth. Earth Day is a global reminder that we have to continue to care for our common home. Unfortunately, we as a people have been negligent in that care and have done great harm to the earth. Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si’*: “*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.’ We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.*”



More than 800 years ago, Saint Francis wrote that our Sister Mother Earth sustains and governs us; she gives us life. Instead of returning the favor, we have laughed in her face by the damage and the harm we have done to her. The social teaching of our Church speaks to us of caring for all of God’s creation – this includes God’s people and God’s earth. In *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) writes: “*We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.*”

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*: “*The environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.... Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other*” (48, 51).

Finally, Article 18 of our Holy Rule states: “*Moreover [we] should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High,” and [we] should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship*”. This is not just a lovely suggestion or some pie-in-the-sky platitude, this is what we promise, what we profess. As Secular Franciscans, let us continue to call to mind the words of our Holy Rule and our seraphic Father Francis who called our earth Mother and Sister. Let us always show Sister Mother Earth the reverence and respect that Saint Francis showed. May the Lord continue to grant you peace.