



JUST Love

APRIL 2020



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF PEACE, JUSTICE AND
ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH

Do you remember where you were for the first Earth Day in 1970? Did you participate in any way? Did you even know it was happening? Perhaps more important than this exercise in nostalgia is to reflect on what the United States was like before the first Earth Day. There was no Environmental Protection Agency. Polluted air and water were the norm. Companies dumped toxic chemicals into our waterways with impunity. The first Earth Day was the inspiration of 2 term Wisconsin governor and 18-year US Senator Gaylord Nelson. Nelson was inspired by the success of teach-ins on college campuses about the Vietnam war and wanted to start a national teach-in on the environment. One of the reasons that April 22 was chosen for the first Earth Day was that it fell between spring break and final exams on most college campuses. It is estimated that 20 million people participated in the first Earth Day – and it was organized in the days before the internet, email, cell phones or social media of any kind! In the 50 years since the first Earth Day the US Congress has passed the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and a host of other environmental legislation. In religious Congregations, care for creation hardly registered in our consciousness in 1970. Today, religious Congregations see care for creation as an essential element of their mission. Check out this collection of statements from the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth <https://www.scnj.org/images/justicepeace/careofcreationstatement.pdf> 50 years after the first Earth Day, every religious Congregation would echo the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*, “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

Recently the Sisters of Charity Ecospirituality Reflection group gathered for an exercise *Charting Our Journey of Ecological Conversion*, to ponder our own experience of the past 50 years. We invite you to reflect on the same questions we did:

1. List a few ways in which the way you look at nature has changed since the first Earth Day fifty years ago.



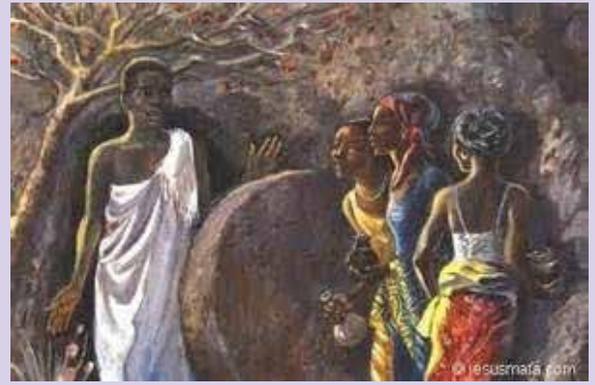
2. List a few changes in behavior you have made in the past five years to live in a more ecologically sustainable way.
3. What are the next steps in your journey of ecological conversion that you would like to make in the next five years?
4. What are the next steps in the journey of ecological conversion that you would like the Sisters of Charity to make in the next five years?

You might conclude your reflection with this prayer as we did:

Saint Vincent de Paul,
You saw the face of Jesus in those broken
and made poor.
With your courage and zeal, may we heal
our broken Earth
Mother Seton, you delighted in nature,
radiant with God’s presence.
Give us discernment to see God’s presence in Earth.
Mother Xavier, with imagination and creativity,
you met the needs of your age.
May we respond to the needs of our time and
the call of Earth and Earth’s children.
God of Boundless Charity, your invite us
to live simply, to live sustainably,
and to live in solidarity with the poor.
Help us to respond to that invitation with
conviction and generosity. Amen.

Easter: A Social Justice Holiday — Think About It, **Joann Fisher**

When we remember the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, it is not just so we can rehash a past injustice, contemplate our part in it, and wallow in guilt. On the contrary, it offers the most sacred opportunity to commit to becoming the kind of people God wants us to be. This is our chance to change the narrative of the sinner from a lost soul to one worthy of redemption. And, it asks us to uphold the principles of an ancient, radically spawned movement—Christianity. While on a tremendously smaller scale than that of Jesus Christ, the unjust deaths of people of color have arguably sparked both the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter Movement.



This Easter, as we contemplate the sacrifice and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, let us also remember his boldness to speak the truth and the unstoppable movement that changed the world because of it.

We invite you to continue to use our *Living a Laudato Si'* Lent calendar in April

English https://www.scnj.org/images/justicepeace/Living_a_Laudato_Si_Lent_2020_English.pdf

Spanish https://www.scnj.org/images/justicepeace/LIVING_A_LAUDATO_SI_LENT_Spanish_2020.pdf

As April *JustLove* goes to press, we are in the midst of the escalating global health crisis. We share this prayer by Kerry Weber from America magazine <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/02/coronavirus-prayer>



Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love. Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.

Jesus Christ, heal us.