Voices of Sisters
Environment
EarthBeat



(Unsplash/Soonam Wooeser)



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Tornados, catastrophic flooding, hurricanes, wildfires, life-threatening heat. Nature continues to respond to human lifestyles that cause the climate to change. It is now a crisis. We were warned for decades, but governments chose political decisions over the dire need to reform energy sources. The repercussions are disastrously obvious. Now what do we do?

The global situation is more than heartbreaking; it is frightening and frustrating because the majority of us do not know how to stop it.

Pope Francis will be remembered for many courageous actions during his papacy, and high on the list will be his encyclical "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home." *Laudato Si*' is a thought-provoking and straightforward declaration of the root causes of climate change affecting not just the human experience but of all aspects of creation.

Climate impacts food production worldwide. That, in turn, drives the migration of people facing a desperate lack of food. Migration affects how countries respond to their neighbors, often leading to xenophobia, with aggression and violence close behind. The repercussions extend to housing, education, medical needs, and more. This is termed *intersectionality*, because all aspects of life are affected by climate.

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The beauty of *Laudato Si*', for me, is how accessible the encyclical is. In clear, understandable language, Francis explains the interrelationships that sustain the divine balance of creation. He lays the foundation of the human impact on creation in Scripture:

> The creation accounts in the book of Genesis ... suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself.

We lose the thread of the bond if we ignore or neglect any of the three. If one relationship suffers, the others are affected. We can see the destruction as basic needs are lost due to flooding, wildfires, tornados and hurricanes. How do we, as Catholics, Christians, and all people of faith, respond? What does our faith call us to do? How do we answer both "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor"?



From left: Susan Charrette, Judy Humowiecki, Providence Sr. Sue Paweski, Lauria Kelley and Rebecca Izquierdo display the banner from One Home One Future, a multifaith campaign that energizes communities to work for creation care. (Courtesy of Laura Kelley)

The blessing of combining parishes — ours is St. Catherine of Siena–St. Lucy-St. Giles — is the wealth of experience and energy that people share in new ways. Our combined parish has reenergized the climate crisis group Vine and Branches. As members of the Laudato Si' Action Platform and One Home One Future, a national organization of faith communities, we have an abundance of possible initiatives to involve the community and make an impact.

In our first year we collaborated with our neighboring parish of Ascension-St. Edmund, collecting batteries for recycling; sponsored the Creation Liturgy with parish school children; distributed bulletin blurbs with ecological tips; and collected plastic bags to be recycled into benches.

Our community garden includes school parents and children as well as committee members. The St. Giles Community Garden networks with surrounding congregations to provide food for neighborhood food pantries. A Sustainability Fair is also in the works, focusing on ways everyone can make lifestyle changes that support ecological goals.

The common mantra on our committee has been: "We have to do something!" I see this as an urgent alert from the Holy Spirit to act on our beliefs. People created the forces that now undermine the balance in nature that sustains creation; thus, people can create the forces that can mitigate losses and co-create with God to restore our common home, Earth. We are compelled by our provident God to do no less.