



# THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

JUNE 2021

VOLUME 11 ISSUE 3

## Our Faith Compels Us To Care For Our Earth

by Jen Garlitz

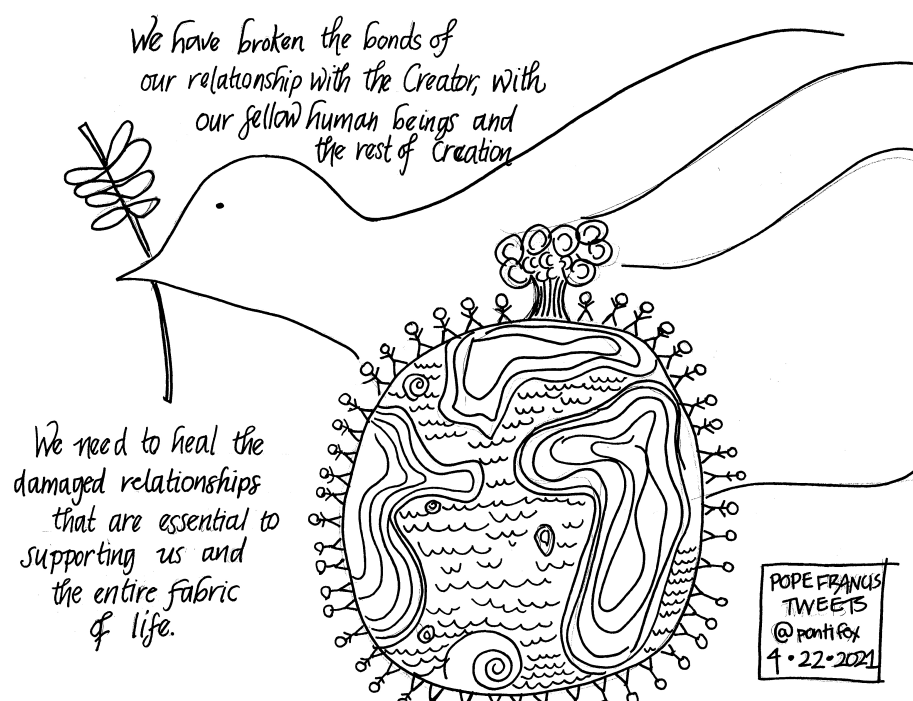
The year 2020 was a year when it dawned on many of us that we are living with climate change. Climate change is no longer subtle; it is striking us personally with Hurricane Laura, the August 10th midwest derecho, and California's first-ever million-acre "giga fire" in the west. The fires were so massive that they could be seen from space. Texas is being hit with bigger, stonger, and slower hurricanes. A derecho in the midwest in June struck my neighborhood near Chicago with ferocity; tree limbs were down throughout the area and thousands of people were without electricity for days. Farmers in Iowa fared even worse: 40% of Iowa's corn and soybeans were flattened by the derecho.

Governor Gavin Newsom of California was asked about the

cost of cleaning up after the wildfires of recent years. He stated that just the debris removal after the fires was a multi-billion dollar expense. Quoting Governor Newsom, "Folks think, 'well we can't afford to address climate change.' My gosh. The naiveté of that. Because the most expensive option is doing nothing."

These catastrophes had been predicted by the vast majority of scientists for years, who said that storms and wildfires would become more frequent and severe if we do nothing to slow down the release of greenhouse gases. Also, scientists predicted the rising temperatures. In 1990, the U.S. military called climate change, "a threat multiplier." There are environmental catastrophes

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## Simplicity, Sacrifice and Spiritual Mindfulness

by Bryon Pulliam

Many young people are responding to the darkness of social and ecological disaster by crying out for justice and seeking out new ways to live. They seek to better sustain all life and guide humanity by pursuing more simplistic, intentional lives. There is no better place to look for a way of life oriented toward how to set things right than our brethren in the abbeys.

While not all of us have been called to don the monastic habit, we have all been called to seek God and to order our lives in pursuit of the unique holiness that He has planned for each of us.

We need only to look to these communities who have stood through the ages striving to fulfill God's designs, making them, "A City upon a Hill," if you will, a beacon shining forth through the darkness of greed, excess and pride, offering a respite from the corrupted impulsivity that has led humanity to the precipice of destruction. Their example can serve to inspire all of us to a daily conversion of life through the cultivation of virtues, spiritual mindfulness, healthy relationships and genuine communities of humble service that align to the will of God and honor His Creation.

Developing virtues and conversion of life is not a one time event; it is the work of a lifetime that requires patience and fortitude moment by moment. It is vital that we enter into this undertaking by ordering everything towards God and staying aware of our ultimate goal. I recently finished a course in Benedictine spirituality where we began each class by repeating the goal for life: to enjoy God! When interacting with God's creation we find pleasure with our senses in things like the taste of foods or the sights and sounds of nature. It is important to remember that these feelings are

just a tiny inkling of what it will be like to be in the presence of God. So often we lose sight of this simple truth: that God wants us to be happy and attain His Kingdom. To do this we must learn to interact with creation in the proper ways with prayer being the cornerstone of that pursuit. Monastic prayer is an important model for all people to follow and helps facilitate authentic guidance from the Holy Spirit. The world has become incredibly loud and like monastic communities we must seek out quiet time with God and His living Word. Structured prayer life and seeking the voice

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## Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends of Nativity House,

Happy Summer! Welcome to our annual issue spotlighting Care for Creation.

Spring and Summer are a bustling time here at Nativity House. The CSA (community supported agriculture) is up and running with weekly garden work days. We have a great mix of new and old members: 10 families total. The garden is teeming with activity and growth. Each Saturday from 9-11am the garden is all abuzz with children exploring the farm, families planting and/or harvesting something delectable, a few friends keeping one of our three dogs company, and a pair of garden members raving as they chomp on young sorrel leaves. Seriously, the joy is palpable.

In March our seventh guest mom made a big move into the city to be closer to her job and family. She expressed that her short stay at Nativity House gave her the confidence she needed to make this decision toward independence. She is doing well adjusting to her new apartment and work. Her baby is due in July. Just in time for the Easter Season our eighth guest mom moved in. She is due with a baby boy on June 8. With your help we showered her in early May with lots of love and gifts to help welcome baby Vayden when he arrives. We are also currently accepting applications for a second guest mom.

This Spring we have been hard at work on a new project: Resurrection Trails. Nativity House sits on five acres; three and a half of which are largely impassable woods. The vision of Nativity House has always been to offer a safe place where healing and reflection can take place. We believe that connection with the Earth is a large part of that process. We rallied our greater community and you came through. By the time you read this three trails through our woods will have been completed. What an amazing blessing! God is Good!

Our intern community is largely responsible for the amazing progress on the Resurrection Trails project and the many opportunities for hospitality this coming summer. Becca, Karen, and Megan are amazing women of faith that are eager to serve joyfully and they do! We are looking for another intern to join this amazing team. If you know of any young adults looking for a gap year or a year of service, send them our way!

We are looking forward to a great summer of hospitality. We are hosting our first ever Camping at the Farm weekends. Friends and families are invited to join us for working in the garden, farm projects work, campfire fun and farm crafts. The details for our annual Farm to Table Celebration are also in the works! Hopefully you will be able to join us for some fun on the farm this summer!

As always we are humbled by your prayers and support. Please know that we hold you and yours in our daily prayers.

Peace of Christ,

Venus & Justin Wozniak

## About The Visitation

This newspaper, The Visitation, is a publication on topics of social justice, spirituality, and theology. It is published four times a year by Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

To contact us, email us at:

[newspaper@nativity-house.org](mailto:newspaper@nativity-house.org)

Past issues are online at:

<http://www.nativity-house.org>

## About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a house of hospitality for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. Nativity House operates an on-site community supported farm (CSA) that provides nourishment for the Nativity House and the greater community. Overall, we envision a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work, and stewardship of the earth.

Nativity House is administered by a board of directors and an advisory committee of individuals with a broad range of experience. Nativity House has formed positive relationships with relevant local organizations that are extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house. Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

To connect with us, please email Venus Wozniak at:

[venusad@nativity-house.org](mailto:venusad@nativity-house.org)

Postal mail should be addressed to:

Nativity House  
17141 W. 143rd St.  
Lockport, IL 60441

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

### Wish List

- 50 solar garden lights
- 10 2x6x8 cedar/pine boards (for bridge making)
- Outdoor Benches
- Echinacea Plants
- Birdfeeders
- St Joseph the Worker Statue (outdoor)

## The Youth and The Environment

by Karen Rojas

Youth and the environment go hand-in-hand. The typical phrase, "the youth are our future," is constantly thrown around by the older generation, which leads to a mindset of not listening to the young express their worries. Currently, many youth are advocating the need to change our habits of pollution of the planet and push for laws to avert the climate crisis. The fight to save the planet does not start in five years, next year, or tomorrow, but TODAY! Fresh water levels are dropping, the atmospheric temperature is rising little by little, and animals are dying from eating or getting caught in our garbage. Our actions affect our home and young people are trying to save the planet before it is too late.

With social media, we are connected in a matter of seconds. Thanks to Twitter and Instagram, the world has learned about an environmental activist from Sweden: Greta Thunberg. She

placed a spotlight on the climate crisis by confronting those in power to seriously act now to save our planet. At age fifteen, in 2018, Greta Thunberg made the decision to sit outside the Swedish Parliament to protest climate change. Her actions went beyond just sitting with a sign outside parliament, "I handed out fliers with a long list of facts about the climate crisis and explanations on why I was striking. The first thing I did was to post on Twitter and Instagram what I was doing and it soon went viral," Thunberg said on a Facebook post.

The actions of this young woman started marches around the world. Millions of young people in her native country teamed up with Greta to bring awareness and call for change before a horrible irreversible climate crisis occurs. An environmental march occurred in Chicago in September 2019.

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## Letters from Our Readers

Dear Community

The March 2021 Visitation was disappointing and made me sad.

Opinions expressed riffing off the 6 Jan 21 D.C. demonstrations and civil disobedience expressed a one-sided, off-balance, and unfair representation of our Republic's struggles, goals, and achievements. [Text omitted for space].

I support your work, not your politics.

God Bless, [Name removed]

### *from* Creation

an article by Dorothy Day in *The Catholic Worker*  
June 1956

In the midst of this beauty yesterday, on Pentecost, the hydrogen bomb was dropped from the air over a Pacific island. The flash was equal to 500 suns, and according to one reporter it was like a nightmare in broad daylight, the most horrible part of which was "a giant super earthly cloud that kept climbing and spreading outward and outward until it appeared that it would envelope the entire earth. For more than an hour the cloud kept growing in all directions, a mushroom cloud of many colors, rising until it towered over all its surroundings. The sun rose to the right. It seems puny by comparison with what had been seen some forty-two minutes earlier."

The contest between man and God! It was as though man were trying to shut off the earth from Heaven, from God himself.





## Our Faith Compels Us To Care For Our Earth

happening all over the world, the immense wildfires in Australia being just one example. Moreover, our changing climate is causing increasing numbers of people around the world to become refugees. In our own country, many people were displaced after Hurricane Katrina, and have had their homes destroyed by other hurricanes. Now we also have refugees from the wildfires in California.

I look at this natural world and see God's amazing gifts to us in flowers, trees, creatures, rivers, oceans, and an weather. Pope Francis states in Laudato Si, "The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us." When we are given a lovely gift by a friend, we naturally express our appreciation. A way that we show appreciation for God's gifts to us in this natural world is by taking care of those gifts He has given us, and not abusing them. When we disrespect the gifts, we disrespect the Giver of the gifts.

Many times in the Old and New Testaments we are told to care for

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the poor, immigrants, the homeless, and the powerless. Katharine Hayhoe is a woman of faith and the Director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University. Regarding climate change, Katharine says, "The poor, the disenfranchised, those already living on the edge, and those who contributed least to this problem are also those at greatest risk to be harmed by it. That's not a scientific issue; that's a moral issue. When I look around, the biggest way in which we are failing to care for those in need is through ignoring climate change and acting like it doesn't exist. As a Christian, I believe that is something the church needs to know." When we care for our Earth we are caring for each other, and working for the common good of all humankind.

Pope Francis, in Chapter One of his encyclical Laudato Si states, "Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us, as living creatures are dependent on one another." An example of the interconnectedness

of all creatures is the connection between honeybees, wild bees, and human beings. All of humankind is dependent on bees and other pollinators to pollinate our food crops, including peppers, tomatoes, berries, apples, almonds, peaches, and many other fruits. Without bees about half of the produce section of our grocery stores would disappear. The glyphosate in Roundup and other lawn and agricultural chemicals are wreaking havoc on bees, causing the death of many honeybees and wild bees. This is a serious threat to our food supply and one reason that it is important to buy organically grown produce. Also, we need to let our lawmakers know that they need to ban or severely restrict the use of dangerous agricultural chemicals, including Roundup and Dicamba.

When we take care of our bees, we are taking care of ourselves.

In closing I share part of a prayer from Michelle Balek, OSF. "All creation - each star and every flower, -each drop of water and every person, -each and every atom, down to its very electrons, explodes with the revelation of your Sacred Mystery. Our minds alone cannot fathom such splendor. Our hearts can only respond in awe, praise and gratitude."



*Jenifer Garlitz works as a reading specialist in Plainfield. She is active in a local environmental group C.A.R.E., Citizens Against Ruining the Environment. Jenifer is a blogger on environmental topics.*

### Easy Essays:

## Regard For The Soil by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)



Andrew Nelson Lytle says:

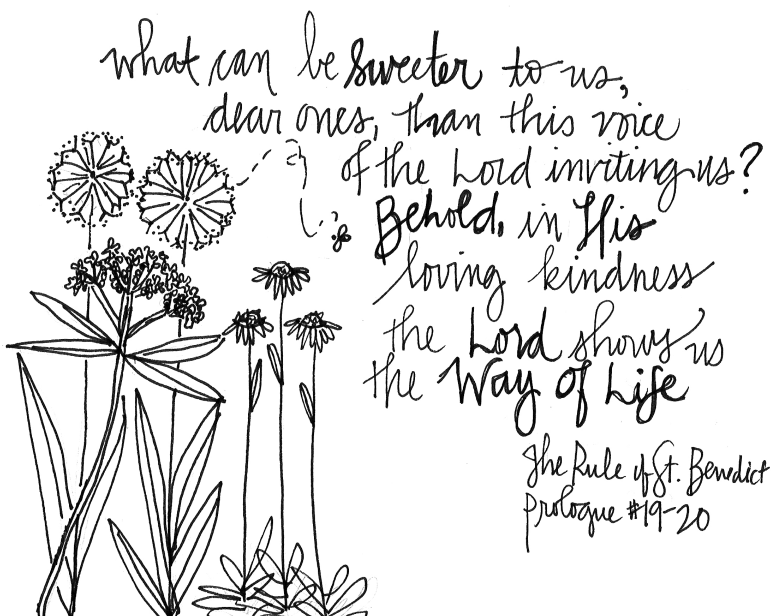
The escape from industrialism  
is not in socialism  
or in sovietism.

The answer lies  
in a return to a society  
where agriculture is practised  
by most of the people.

It is in fact impossible  
for any culture  
to be sound and healthy  
without a proper regard  
for the soil,

no matter  
how many urban dwellers  
think that their food  
comes from groceries  
and delicatessens  
or their milk from tin cans.

This ignorance  
does not release them  
from a final dependence  
upon the farm.



## Laudato Si - Praise be to You Lord, through Mother Earth

by Jackie Myers

This morning I arise and turn towards the window, and I see the beautiful morning mist settle amongst the mountains as the trees say "Good morning." I pull on my work pants before climbing down the stairs to greet the misty morning. As I open the door, I look to my right and greet the misty morning, I look to my left and greet the morning sun. I settle into morning prayer as we gather together as a community to thank the Lord for our beautiful Earth. We head off into morning chores with the thoughts from prayer fresh in our minds. I greet the blackberry, raspberry, and blueberry bushes as they all wave hello. Their branches and leaves are dusted with the morning dew.

The bees have begun their day as they buzz about the orchard looking for something to pollinate. I look around and see a group chopping wood to use later during the winter to fuel our woodburning stove. I look farther and see a group harvesting vegetables, weeding, and tending the garden. I look past the garden and I see another group tending to the chickens and gathering eggs. I turn on the hose with its source coming from the grey water drainage system from the kitchen.

I carefully water each bush and pick the fresh berries before the breakfast bell rings. The bell rings, and everyone finishes up their chores before heading to the kitchen. We gather around the kitchen table to thank God for giving us the beautiful gift of food and for the hard work put into gathering and preparing our breakfast. We sit down together to join in a meal full of the beautiful fruit of our labor and the land: fresh eggs, homemade yogurt,

freshly picked berries, homemade breads, and granola. Before heading off to work, I use the sawdust toilet to later be composted into beautiful, nutrient dense fertilizer. Upon my return home from the worksite, I grab a 5-gallon bucket and fill it with water warmed by solar power and head out to the bucket shower stalls next to the orchard. I gaze up at the sun as I scrub my garden-stained hands and wash as the dirt and water flows down the wooden floor and out towards the orchard. This is a day in the life at the beautiful Bethlehem Farm in Alderson, West Virginia.

Everything we do here at Bethlehem Farm is in stewardship with the Earth. It is in response to a call by our Lord to take care of and befriend the Earth. It is in response to the call made by Pope Francis in Laudato Si, a call to action to combat the humanmade destruction of climate change. Everything we do at Bethlehem Farm is in accordance with this call of stewardship of the Earth: from the sawdust toilets to the grey water system to the solar panels to the locally grown and sourced food, even to the diligence and care taken with sorting the recycling before dropping it off at the local recycling plant.

Every day each individual at Bethlehem Farm makes a conscious decision in everything that they do to be as friendly as possible to the Earth. Each Thursday night is spent in an electricity fast. Water is placed in pitchers prior to the fast as a symbol to remind us that our water pumps are powered by electricity. Lights are replaced with solar-powered LED lanterns.

We all agree to unplug from our phones and take a break from constant communication. This act reminds all of us of the societal sin that takes place with mountaintop removal coal mining and the dangers of non-renewable energy. It is important to constantly be reminded of these tragedies to keep us in check with why we do what we do and why it is so important to make the sacrifices that are continuously made at Bethlehem Farm.

Why would anyone want to live a life so full of sacrifices and hardship? To be truthful, the more I have eliminated from my life, the more fulfilled I have felt. The more I live in accordance with Earth and the land, the more connected I feel to Christ, to God, to others, and to my soul. This simplistic lifestyle is not only the

most life sustaining lifestyle I have found, but also the most fulfilling. It is so beautiful to live in accordance with the Earth and God's call to stewardship of creation.

Lord, help us to live in accordance with your Word. Help us to protect and to honor your beautiful blessing and creation of Earth. Lord, help us not forget where we come from.

Adamah, the Earth, the dirt, the soil. We are born from the soil, and to the soil we shall return.



*Jackie Myers is a senior at Purdue University. She has spent the past five summers as a Summer Servant at her favorite place in the world, Bethlehem Farm.*



### Nativity House Seeking Staff

Are you passionately Pro-life? • Seeking a year of service? • Eco-justice minded?

Nativity House is an intentional Catholic community and house of hospitality for expectant mothers rooted in Catholic Social Teachings in Lockport, IL.

We are seeking interns! Full time and part time positions are available.

#### Job Description

- Living at Nativity House and participating in International Community
- Monthly Stipend, Room and Board, Health Care Benefits (for full-time staff)

#### Tasks include

- **Hospitality:** Caring for the specific needs of 1 - 2 guest moms
- **Community Living Tasks:** managing keeping house tidy, cooking rotation for community meals, community laundry
- **Community Farm:** participation in community work days, caring for animals - chickens, goats, cats, dogs
- **Newspaper Editor:** formatting, writing, delivering our quarterly publication *The Visitation*
- **Community Events & Fundraising:** help plan 2 fundraisers per year; help plan community events Holy Mass & Roundtable Discussions
- **Spirituality:** participate in morning & evening prayer; commitment to personal spiritual growth

*In the last two years, being an intern at Nativity House has brought me so much joy, love, and growth. As an intern I have had the gift of walking with mothers during their pregnancies, building community with those I live with and with the people who come garden with us. No other job could have given me the time to focus on what I love while serving others. Living in this community is such a wonderful way to grow in your talents, to deepen your faith, and to serve the Lord by serving mothers in need.*



## Simplicity, Sacrifice, and Spiritual Mindfulness

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of God by utilizing practices such as The Liturgy of the Hours and Lectio Divina supports the development of a spiritual mindfulness that enables us to sustain a daily rhythm of life that is ordered toward the will of God so that every action is in praise of His Creation.

Many times when one approaches monastic life they begin to see the face of God in moments they had experienced thousands of times previously without much thought. As such, daily routines are a perfect place for anyone to begin practices in spiritual mindfulness.

There is an old tradition that can assist us on the path to cultivating an overall awareness, especially in relation to consumption and the interconnected nature of creation. This exercise uses food as the object, but you can substitute anything in its place. Consider a salad for example. Before you begin eating, spend time in prayerful contemplation acknowledging how each item came to be on your plate. The farmers and workers who planted the crops and helped nurture their growth, those involved in the harvesting and packaging of each of the vegetables, the people who

created the containers they arrived in, the drivers transporting the items etc. This exercise should humble us and illustrate how small we truly are and how dependent we are on so many people for just one meal. Practices like this can help to facilitate mindfulness and allow us to come to the realization that everything we take in and put out has far reaching consequences for all creation, not only in the span of our lifetime, but for eons to come. With proper perspective towards the way we work, consume and build relationships and communities, we can develop an attentiveness that enables us to stay present with God and allows His Spirit to work through us for the benefit of all whom we interact with, directly and indirectly.

Monastic communities are intentional communities and as such, the physical and mental health of all members directly relates to the conservation of community resources and spaces. The stability and balance, which benefits the social and emotional well-being of all, is the personal responsibility of each member and requires consciousness of how actions will affect the rest of the community. This illustrates the importance of how we approach the development of our relationships, not only with other people, but with all created things. The daily rhythms and routines that we engage in have consequences and with this in mind it is imperative that we actively seek out genuine forms of community with those who have similar intentions. We must rid ourselves of the selfish notion that we are somehow independent of

other people, animals and nature. We have to invest in people and be willing to devote ourselves to personal sacrifice through the denial of comforts and conveniences that have negative ecological impacts and know that when we do this, we acknowledge our immense weaknesses and in others, we recognize the mercy of God and the power of His Creation. Only when detached from the allurements of this world are we able to grow closer to His Kingdom in true freedom like these brothers. While we enjoy God in the small feelings of pleasure that we obtain in the bite of a nectarine or a hike in the woods, we also enjoy and encounter God in the sacrifices we make in unison with the communities we have formed, collectively praising God's designs.

We have the power to change the wayward perception of the self that is endlessly consuming and aimlessly chasing every whim. We are obliged to seek God out in the purity, simplicity and patience of every moment and accept the freedom He offers through humble obedience; the embodiment of which we can see through the lives of our monastic brothers who have given up everything, even their names, to sing psalms and pray unceasingly for you, for the world, for the dignity of all life and the justice that is rightfully owed to His Creation that we can emulate through simple mindful lives of prayer, work and love.



*Bryon Pulliam is a special needs educator and CSA shareholder who is actively discerning a call to religious life*

**NATIVITY HOUSE PRESENTS**

# CAMPING AT THE FARM 2021

*Get ready to explore the farm!*

SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>Morning</b> - Garden work time	<b>Morning</b> - Breakfast - Pack up
<b>Lunch and Midday Break</b>	
<b>Afternoon</b> - Farm projects	
<b>Late Afternoon</b> - Set up camp	
<b>Evening</b> - Dinner - Campfire	

**FOOD IS INCLUDED!**

- Dates: May 29-30  
June 5-6  
June 26-27
- Free will offering

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT VENUS**  
Email: [venusad@nativity-house.org](mailto:venusad@nativity-house.org)

## The Youth and The Environment

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Thousands of young people flooded the streets of downtown Chicago demanding change. I attended the march with my camera excited to document the fight for our planet. At the march, I spotted marchers from CTU (Catholic Theological Union) with their banner showcasing their presence and drive for a solution. A young Franciscan was holding a sign which read, "The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all," as stated by Pope Francis from his encyclical, *Laudato Si*.

Caring for the environment is not a modern goal. Saint Francis of Assisi is the "patron saint of animals and environment" and could be viewed as the original Earth Day advocate. Francis' devotion to God was expressed through his love for all of God's creation, [1]. Saint Francis demonstrated his care for the environment by preaching to the animals. He set the example for the people around him to treat every creature and living thing with respect and care. "In 1979, Pope John Paul II paid tribute to Francis' love for creation by declaring him the patron saint of ecologists [1]." . Not only is he the patron saint of the environment, as well as the founder of the Franciscans. He is a Saint I deeply admire and so does Nativity House.

Nativity House has created a home around the mission of caring for creation. They care for the lives of unborn human beings and their beautiful mothers. They work hard to grow vegetables and fruits in the community supported agriculture (CSA) garden. Moving into Nativity House, I was amazed by their eco-friendly actions to

help keep our earth clean. Paper towels are not used for any purpose around the house. Cleaning rags, kitchen towels, and cloth napkins are used instead of single use paper towels and napkins. This is a style of living I hope to maintain and share with others beyond my Nativity House years.

Every small change causes an impact. Choosing to switch from a plastic toothbrush to a bamboo toothbrush, or turning off the light every time you leave a room, or shopping consciously from brands which respect their workers and the environment can all make a positive difference.

Youth are becoming more and more aware of the impact companies have on the environment and are not willing to stay silent. Organizing marches, events, and fundraisers through social media platforms creates not only connections, but dialogue to learn from each other's habits to better care for our common home. Listen to the youth. They are trying to grab your attention to save the planet.

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." - 1 Timothy 4:12

[1] "St. Francis of Assisi. A profile..." <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/st-francis-assisi>



*Karen Rojas is a Nativity House Intern.*



*Franciscan Friars participating in Chicago's Climate Strike rally at Federal Plaza in the Loop on September 2019*

## St. Kateri Tekakwitha

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His creation there is all-encompassing love.

As an indigenous woman, Kateri understood the land she walked on as relational and sacred and for that she has been named the patron saint of ecology. I have been aware that the land we live on belonged and belongs to indigenous people, but my deeper exploration of the history behind this and current eco-justice issues has pained my heart. To begin to respond to God's call to action, I

offer it up to Him in prayer. In the words of Kateri we must ask "Who can tell me what is most pleasing to God, that I may do it?"

St. Kateri of Tekakwitha, pray for us!



*Katie Gozum is a volunteer with the Global Catholic Climate Movement. She belongs to Holy Spirit Catholic Community in Naperville with her husband, Dean. They celebrate their first year of marriage in June!*

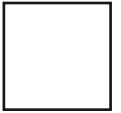




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Nativity House  
17141 W. 143rd St.  
Lockport, IL 60441



## St. Kateri Tekakwitha

Feast Day: July 14, April 17 (Canada) by Katie Gozum

Patron: Native Americans, The environment, and Ecology

When I was younger, my uncle thought my confirmation saint was St. Kateri Tekakwitha because my name is Kathryn and I have always loved the earth. Being a priest, he would bring my sisters and cousins prayer cards and saint medals. He gave me a little orange prayer card sleeve with a metal plate imprinted with the image of Kateri, blanket around her and rosary in her hand. Another time I received a necklace of Kateri, Lily of the Mohawks, showing her praying before a cross in the woods. But now it is years later that I am learning more about her, the first Native American saint.

Kateri was born in 1656 in a Mohawk village in New York to an Algonquin Catholic mother and Mohawk chief father. The smallpox epidemic left Kateri an orphan at age four, weakened, scarred, and partially blind. In her images, she is often shown carrying a blanket that she used to cover her eyes from the bothersome brightness of the sun. French Jesuit missionaries

established a chapel in her village and Kateri was baptized at 20 years of age. She fled to the Catholic mission of St. Xavier near Montreal where she lived with other Indigenous Catholics. She spent most of her time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and she loved the Rosary. She died at age 24 because of the long-lasting effects of smallpox and her rigorous asceticism. When she died, her face was miraculously cleared of all scars and she radiated in beauty.

When I read that Kateri would spend entire days in the church in Eucharistic adoration, I thought of her devotion to God and her deep relationship with Him. That relationship became unshakable. Even in the winter, when Kateri and villagers were away for hunting season, she prayed in the woods, creating her own chapel with a wood cross. She would kneel, praying in the snow.

My prayer life deepened when I started going to Eucharistic



Adoration regularly. I would stop by the chapel on my way home from working as a waitress at night. Sometimes I would stay for five minutes and a few times the clock hit midnight before I left. Gazing at Jesus in the monstrance I witnessed His beauty. In that space, everything came up in prayer: my desires, intentions, praise, thanksgiving, examination of my sins, conversation, and openness to receiving. Stillness came and I sat in peace, blessed with God's everlasting mercy, love, and gifts that words cannot describe. Now, if I were to stay in adoration for an entire day like Kateri, I can only imagine what would happen. Through every season of life, I kept returning to the chapel.

The pandemic came, and it felt like the winter. With adoration chapels less open, I needed prayer in my life in different ways. Kateri, being away from her chapel, dedicated herself to prayer in the snowy woods. Following her example, at home, I lit candles for virtual adoration and prayed before my bedroom crucifix. Seeking prayer in nature, I set out to find a prayer garden. I remembered the peace of the prayer garden I would visit some mornings to spend time with God, Mary, and Joseph before a busy day started. Sitting there with the sun playing on each little leaf and the squirrels eating their nuts, I witnessed God's beauty. In relating to creation, while being

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