



# SEASONS

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SNDdeN US EAST-WEST QUARTERLY

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*Laudato Si'*

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# Beauty, the Invisible Embrace

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The late John O'Donohue, poet and philosopher, reflected in great depth on the human meaning and need for beauty in his book titled *"Beauty, the Invisible Embrace"*. As we contemplate the call in *Laudato Si'* to be awed, humbled and inspired by the beauty of our common home, the words of the Irish poet are particularly compelling:

The Greeks ... raised the eye beyond the horizon and recognized the heavenly patterns of the cosmos. There they glimpsed a vision of order which was to become the heart of their understanding of beauty. All the frailty and uncertainty was seen to be ultimately sheltered by the eternal beauty which presides over all the journeys between awakening and surrender, the visible and the invisible, the light and the darkness.

The human soul is hungry for beauty... When we experience the Beautiful, there is a sense of home-coming. Some of our most wonderful memories are beautiful places where we felt immediately at home. We feel most alive in the presence of the Beautiful for it meets the needs of our soul. For a while the strains of struggle and endurance are relieved and our frailty is illuminated by a different light in which we come to glimpse behind the shudder of appearances and sure form of things. In the experience of beauty we awaken and surrender in the same act. Beauty brings a sense of completion and sureness. Without any of the usual calculation, we can slip into the Beautiful with the same ease as we slip into the seamless embrace of water; something ancient within us already trusts that this embrace will hold us.

We asked for reflections on *Laudato Si'* as we take up our Chapter call, *"Compelled by the ecological crisis, we examine every facet of our relationship with the community of creation. All members and units of the Congregation commit to take action on this defining issue of our time."* This issue of *Seasons* is a compilation of your reflections and photography, a short video clip and our beginning attempts to read, understand and act on the challenges in *Laudato Si'*.

Terry Davis, SNDdeN

*"We are made  
immortal,"  
Emerson wrote,  
"by the  
contemplation  
of beauty."*

*John O'Donohue*





*“Soil, water,  
mountains,  
everything is...a  
caress  
of God.”*

## Our Common Home

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Earth, our Mother, our Sister, is our common home! How lovely of Pope Francis to call his Encyclical: “Care of our Common Home”! “Care” suggests loving appreciation; “Home”, a reality so full of meaning for most of us - home to all living beings and all people!

Think of one of your favorite songs that expresses your appreciation of Nature. I invite you, here and now, to play or hum that melody, or read one of your favorite psalms about Creation. Let this music of praise and thanksgiving uplift your hearts! One of my favorites is the choral masterpiece “How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place”, based on Psalm 84.

I call your attention to Paragraph 84: “Soil, water, mountains, everything is...a caress of God.”

*What aspects of Nature particularly appeal to you?*


One of my favorite parts are trees, especially Redwood trees. Ponder these creatures as “a caress of God”! And, perhaps, we can challenge ourselves to realize: a part of Nature that we hardly ever notice, or dislike, e.g. mosquitoes, is also a “caress of God”!

In Paragraph 85, the Pope quotes two groups of Bishops: *“From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, Nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the Divine.”* (Canadian Bishops)

*“To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God’s love and hope.”* (Bishops of Japan)

These beautiful statements remind me of a stirring excerpt from the Preamble to the Earth Charter: *“Earth our home, is alive with a unique community of life...Earth has provided the conditions essential to life’s evolution.”*





As we continue to ponder the wisdom and challenges of this Encyclical...as Pope Francis has referred to the eloquent Earth Charter (*paragraph #207*), I end this brief reflection with the same concluding excerpt:

*“Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life!”*

Finally, I offer this prayer: Loving Source of Life, we, being of Earth and blessed with the Spirit living and acting within us, join together to renew our awe and appreciation of our precious Planet. May our awe and appreciation result in actions that witness to our concerns for Earth. We ask that your presence within us will empower us to co-create a thriving Planet now and into the future. Amen.\*”

Noreen Morgan, SNDdeN

\* Earth Day Prayer, Ecospirituality Resources

*“Let ours be a time  
remembered for the awakening  
of a new reverence for life,  
the firm resolve  
to achieve sustainability,  
the quickening of the struggle  
for justice and peace,  
and the joyful  
celebration of life!”*





## Woven together

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The last part of Section 92 is very meaningful to me. It's poetically phrased. Two themes so important to us in Notre Dame are evident in it. The first is our pilgrimage on earth (*our Journey in Fidelity*). The second is community and right relationships with each other and all of creation.

*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.*

Barbara English, SNDdeN

## Needless buying and spending.

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With the publication of *Laudato Si'*, the bright blue recycling bins near the side door of the house where I live in Lawrence, Massachusetts as well as our large forest green trash container have taken on heightened significance. I'm good at rationalizing that not everything in these bins is 'my stuff.' After all there are seven of us in community!

But who am I kidding! The links between ecological education and spirituality in *Laudato Si'*, chapter 6 and that of poverty and mission in article 68 of our Constitutions call me to a bottom up personal conversion of lifestyle which is going to hurt at times as I own up to my own pattern of "*needless buying and spending.*"

Maureen O'Brien, SNDdeN

# A Universal Communion

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The idea of “A Universal Communion” resonated with me at the time I read it and kept resurfacing as I reflected upon *Laudato Si’*.

This portion of the encyclical speaks of a *deep communion with the rest of nature that cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.*

The writing speaks of the connectedness of all creation and urges us to recognize that *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.* It further affirms the interconnectedness of peace, justice and the preservation of creation.

Timeless images, phrases and themes such as the Mystical Body, the Communion of Saints and the social teaching of Pope Leo XIII came to mind in reading this section of *Laudato Si’*. It seems that framing the idea of universal communion and the interconnectedness of all of creation builds upon core messages that have been a part of Church teaching for centuries. It reflects the Gospel message in a way that speaks so well to the challenges of our current time.

Pope Francis urges us to be authentically open to universal communion, which excludes nothing and no one. May we be willing and able to actualize this in our lives in a spirit of compassion, tenderness and a concern that includes all our sisters and brothers and all of creation.

Meg Glendon

*“...a deep  
communion with  
the rest of nature  
that cannot be real  
if our hearts lack  
tenderness,  
compassion  
and concern for  
our fellow  
human beings.”*

## There Goes Love!

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*Creatures exist only in dependence on each other,  
to complete each other, in the service of  
each other.*

Why compelling?

there goes God ! there goes Love !  
Come forth At-one-ment !

Marie Burke, SNDdeN





## Choose one, give it your all!

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*It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected.” (138)*

I have never forgotten something Daniel Berrigan, SJ said many years ago at a lecture I attended. A question from the audience: “There are so many important issues to address, I get overwhelmed that I can’t work on all of them. How do I choose?” His response was, “choose one, give it your all, and watch for the connections!” I think of that wisdom so often when reading *Laudato Si’*. The focus is on the environment/ Care of our Common Home. But Pope Francis clearly shows the many other issues that are very closely connected and impacted. So, following Berrigan’s advice, I will try to focus on one and hope to grow in awareness of others!

As I study the encyclical I am so aware of the realities of our society in the US and how our attitudes, culture and power affect others, especially the developing countries who bear the biggest brunt of our use/misuse of resources. This is such a huge issue, entrance at any point will bring me, I know, to a greater awareness of so many others!

Nancy O’Shea, SNDdeN



## Less is More

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*We need to take up an ancient lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that “less is more.” (Laudato Si’ #222)*

This reminds me of article 68 in our Constitutions: “Our poverty is related to mission and calls us to choose to live with less until all have enough.” I wonder how I/we have lived this since this phrase was first used in 1984. Now that we know so much more about what our culture of consumerism has done to our common home, I wonder how I/we need to live this challenging call.

Mary Rose Crowley, SNDdeN



## Fall in love with creation

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*Laudato Si'* addresses the interconnectedness of all creation. When this notion is really absorbed, it changes everything. As someone who has been involved in the arts and ecology for many years, I found the contents of the encyclical both affirming and hopeful.

Artists reveal a part of themselves in their work—whether it be a painting, a piece of sculpture, a poem or a musical composition. If we see all of creation as the artwork of the Creator then each act of creation becomes a revelation of the Creator. We begin to see, as *Laudato Si'* suggests, the sacredness of every part of our world and the importance of treating the entire earth community with reverence and gratitude.

If, by our actions, this amazing creation becomes diminished then not only is the quality of life diminished for all but so is our experience of the Creator.

I have the privilege to be a part of the Cuvilly Arts & Earth Center in Ipswich, MA ([www.cuvilly.org](http://www.cuvilly.org)). For more than 30 years. Cuvilly has worked to create a space that respects all of creation in an ecological balance. We strive to have all our activities become a model of ecological sustainability. Our students are immersed in this space and thus, begin to experience themselves as an integral part of the natural world. Our hope is that they fall in love with creation and carry that love with them throughout their lives. They will then take care of and preserve what they love.

This love of creation and sense of interconnectedness is something that can be found in each of our hearts—whether we are young children or people who have seen many years. My hope and my prayer is that *Laudato Si'* will help restore that awareness and encourage us to be agents of change so that our actions reflect our love and reverence for the Creator revealed in such an awesome 'work of art.'

*Patricia Rolinger, SNDdeN*





## New unit, New bonds, New experiences

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*Laudato Si'* was published on June 17, 2015, the day after our arrival at the Emerald Lake State Park in the lush Green Mountains of Dorset, VT. Virginia Dorgan, RSHM, Barbara Gutiérrez and Mary Friel had gone on an earthly retreat, to experience the presence of the Good God in nature. We set up our tents among birds singing, various insects flitting about and evergreen trees stretching upward.

Every morning, seated in the middle of mighty trees, natural cathedrals, we read and reflected on the day's Gospel, thanking God for the grace of being there. We enjoyed personal time to read, hike the trails clothed with many plants of many kinds and go swimming in the glacial lake formed more than 12,000 years ago.

Evenings were enjoyed by the campfire and closed with each one sharing the experiences of her day. We experienced "*of his constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder.*" (*Laudato Si'*, #97) This earthly retreat has prepared us to respond to *Laudato Si'* engaging ourselves and asking others to join us to work together in saving our common home. The question emerges, how are we going to respond to *Laudato Si'*?

Watch a short, reflective video with images from the retreat by looking here:

***[https://youtu.be/K03Ofzyr\\_Ek](https://youtu.be/K03Ofzyr_Ek)***

*Mary Friel, SNDdeN and Barbara Gutiérrez, SNDdeN*





A close-up photograph of a squirrel with grey and brown fur climbing a tree trunk. The squirrel is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing left, with its tail bushy and curved upwards on the right. The tree bark is rough and textured. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting foliage.

## God's Grandeur

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The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1877*