



Earth Day 2022: *Response To the Cry of the Earth*

“We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.”

Laudato Si’: On care for our common home, 2

“Earth and the life it sustains are precious gifts of God, now radically threatened by climate change and ecological exploitation. Safeguarding these sacred gifts for future generations is a moral responsibility integral to the mission of the Family of Holy Cross.”

Family of Holy Cross Statement on Climate Change (2009)

Laudato Si’: On care for our common home calls all persons of good will to recognize that integral human development—that is, the common good—is the duty and responsibility of all persons and sectors of society. Only through its accomplishment can present and future generations be secure in the knowledge that all may have the opportunity to flourish.

Pope Francis and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced the launch of the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform, a communal tool for the implementation of the global Church’s response to *Laudato Si’*, in May 2021. The platform sets forth seven goals to which we are all called: Response to the cry of the Earth, response to the cry of the poor, ecological economics, adoption of sustainable lifestyles, ecological education, ecological spirituality, and community resilience and empowerment.

In this first in a series of reflections exploring each of the seven *Laudato si’* goals in greater depth, we examine the “Response to the cry of the Earth” which demands that we protect our common home for the well-being of all by equitably addressing the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and ecological

Fort Portal, Uganda—Women as vital actors in sustainable development

According to Sister Semerita Mbambu, CSC, justice and peace coordinator for Uganda, the role of women in sustainable development in Africa should not be underestimated. “Women are directly involved in a number of local livelihood activities that, in turn, affect the involvement of women in the care of the environment.” Recognizing that the cry of Mother Earth is echoed in the plight of women and girls, Sister Semerita and the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Uganda envisioned a training program to promote sustainable development even as it empowers women.

For decades, African forests have been decimated by tree cutting for charcoal and firewood—historically basic fuels for homes. Over the last 15 years, Africans have increasingly sought energy alternatives that meet people’s immediate needs and protect Mother Earth. In the race for sustainable development in Africa, solar energy has become the predominant renewable energy source—now used in nearly every village as an affordable source of fuel, especially for eco-stoves.

As solar energy supports ever-increasing populations more sustainably, demand for solar installations is rising. In Africa, and Uganda in particular, solar installation and maintenance is considered a male profession, marginalizing women in the process. By developing a women’s training program in this field, the Sisters of the Holy Cross hope to expand women’s opportunities in Uganda. Such opportunities would support employment with solar companies or starting a business, engaging in community education and outreach, and contributing to interventions for the improvement and expansion of renewable energy in Africa.

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sustainability. This calls us to adopt renewable energies and energy sufficiency measures with the goal of attaining carbon neutrality, protect biodiversity, promote sustainable food systems, and guarantee access to clean water for all.

Our responses to the cry of the Earth necessarily intersect with other *Laudato Si'* goals as well. For truly, “everything is interconnected” (LS 70). Training programs are vital tools for sustainability, empowerment and parity. Below, learn how women—often the most vulnerable, marginalized and disproportionately affected by environmental issues—are being prepared to lead their communities in active hope and expand renewable energy in Africa.

Suggested Reflection Questions

- *As you look at the places in which you live and minister or work, what needs to be done to respond to “the cry of the Earth”?*
- *What is one thing you could do to respond to these needs?*
- *With whom could you partner to achieve your goal?*

Action

- Pray for an end to violence against Earth and all creation.
- Form a **Laudato Si'** study group.
- Make a personal commitment for responding to the cry of the Earth.
- Connect with the Sisters of the Holy Cross **Our Time is Now** movement.

Prayer

Creator God, you brought us forth from Earth,
And in your love for us, you entrusted to us the care and protection of all creation.
Grant us the wisdom to be awed and humbled by your gifts, O God,
That we might never forget: Violence against creation is violence against us all.

Even as we celebrate the beauty and bounty that surrounds us,
May we also acknowledge the suffering we have inflicted on creation,
through our actions and through our failures to act.
The cry of the Earth is a wound we feel at the soul level.
As we experience this pain, O God, convert our hearts,
That we might transform our vision of what is possible through active hope.

Amen.

Many women are interested in the program, which makes funding challenging. But Sister Semerita has already seen the fruits of this labor of love, noting: “Women and their partners are becoming aware of *Laudato Si'* and ready to participate in solar installation and maintenance as an opportunity to gain a dignified livelihood while serving the community and protecting creation.”

The Sisters of the Holy Cross joyfully participate in Jesus’ mission by proclaiming God’s transforming love for all creation. For more information, visit <https://www.cscsisters.org/>

