



CARE FOR CREATION AT BETHANY

A Ministry of the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Highland Mills, NY



Back row, left to right: Louise Pisano, Dave Niemotko, Tracey Niemotko, Kayel Conklin, Sr. Teresita Morse, Tom Brinkmann, Julie Brinkmann, Katie Williams
 Front row, left to right: Sr. Joan Curtin, CND and RJM Sisters. Diane Dube, Doris Bissonette, Rosemary Mangan, Norene Costa

Upcoming Events

Seminar for Sustainable Business
 with Tracey Niemotko and Moira
 Tolan

Date TBD

Check out our Facebook page for
 future events and updates

Facebook Name: Cfc Bethany

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Blessing of the Care for Creation at Bethany Ministry

There are beginnings and beginnings. The September 25th Blessing of Care for Creation at Bethany marked a new phase in the story of this ministry's many "beginnings":

- 2015: Pope Francis published *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*.
- Fall 2019: RJM General Chapter, chose "care for our Common Home" as a Congregational priority.
- Spring 2020: Province affirms "care for our common home" as a priority and selects their NY property as its focus.
- Summer, 2020: Province Leadership established *Care for Creation at Bethany*.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And God saw that it was good. [Genesis 1:1-24]

Blessing Continued...

- Fall 2020: Center was physically rebuilt, learning stations & laptops donated, library & exhibits established.
- Winter 2021: 12-member committee was formed; regular meetings began.
- Spring 2021: Committee began envisioning ministry's goals/offerings; bio-diversity map for property was created.
- Summer 2021: Information Technology was set up – computer/printer, laptops, TV, wifi, email, Facebook.
- Fall, 2021: building of Constituency began; local parishes were introduced to the ministry.
- Winter 2022: vision, goals, objectives were established; business plan was created.
- Spring 2022: first *Care for Creation at Bethany* newsletter was published.
- Summer 2022: restoration of gardens and woodlands began; first group was welcomed to Center.



The Blessing of *Care for Creation at Bethany* took place Sept. 25, 2022, an expression of gratitude for God's help in all that had developed and a petition for His continued direction as the ministry moves into its next phase. Because the ministry's beginnings coincided with the pandemic, this was the first time the committee was able to gather in person. The experience was long-awaited and joyful. After sharing a meal, Fr. Michael Achanyi, local parish priest, blessed the ministry's Center, mission, goals and objectives, and each committee member.

As you read the following excerpt from the Blessing, please join us in prayer:

+ Divine Creator, we ask you to bless with success the mission of *Care for Creation at Bethany*:

“To foster the integrity of Creation and the care for our common home by using what we have in the property and facilities at Bethany to respond to Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si'* and the priorities of the Religious of Jesus and Mary.”

+ Holy Spirit, the Living Water welling up within us, protect these wet lands, springs, streams, lake, and all the creatures who form part of this web of life. Help the ecosystems of meadow, woodland and garden flourish so that each tree, plant, insect, animal, may be heard and respected as it speaks its truth in praise of You.

+ Jesus, our Lord, empower each committee member and the RJM Leadership Team as we work together to bring the hope for this Ministry to fulfillment.

The meeting culminated with a sharing by members of the motivations which led them to this ministry. They renewed together their trust in the Lord's promise that the Divine Kingdom is unfolding here and now on planet earth and their desire to help all God's creation share in this renewal.

Committee Member Highlight

I was born and raised in St. John's Parish in the Bronx--the Borough of Parks. I was educated by the RJMs in the parish school, by the Ursulines in Mt. St. Ursula



Sr. Patricia Dillon, RJM

Academy, and by the Jesuits at Fordham University's School of Education. My graduate studies were at NY University and Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.

Even before I started school, my mother would walk with me and my brother, Philip, to Van Cortlandt Park where we fed the ducks and swans. In winter, we played in Ewen Park with its glacial boulders, majestic trees, and steep slopes for sleigh riding. Summers were spent in Mt. Lodge Park, where I had a favorite reading tree. This was not far from the RJM property in Highland Mills where we would visit the sisters we knew from St. John's.

I entered the RJMs after high school and taught elementary and junior high social studies. I then moved into community organizing with the newly born North-West Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC).* Since 1997, I have been missioned to Gros Morne, Haiti, where I have had the great privilege of working with people, schools, and organizations dedicated to restoring Haiti's deforested mountainsides.

The opportunity to be part of *Care of Creation at Bethany* connects me with people trying to live out Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and those engaged in finding solutions to challenges we face here in Haiti and beyond.

*Some of Sr. Pat's work is highlighted in this article: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/who-will-save-bronx>

Dignity Works Here, Inc.

Dignity Works Here, Inc. is a highly effective and life-enhancing program directed to young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, aged 18 and older. Its mission is to partner with community organizations and businesses to provide vocational, social and educational opportunities to individuals of all abilities. Care for Creation at Bethany is privileged to have been selected as one of the places where this program is being offered, a choice made in part because of the recognition that presence in nature helps people to experience God's creative nurturing in their own lives.



Created by parents to meet the unique needs of their children, this organization embraces "the ideal that all individuals are entitled to a life filled with opportunities to learn, grow and become contributing members of the community." Dignity Works Here does this through vocational/volunteer experiences, personal development classes and access to social networks. The program is directed by its Board of Directors, represented by Steve Testa, Board President, and Holly Gubernick Borzacchiello, Board Member.

For a month last summer and throughout the fall semester, the Care for Creation Center has proved to be a comfortable and versatile space for Dignity Works Here to offer their educational programming; focusing on the development of skills for independent living, leisure, health/wellness, vocational choices and social relationships. The classes include building kitchen confidence, fitness, pre-vocational training skills, creating art for children's books, and self care.



Dignity Works Here Continued...

This semester, Lisa Currao and Annie Kikel taught Spanish, Stacey Orzell and Eric Orzell taught Basic Photography and Animal Art in collaboration with Daniel O'Brien, and Kevin Bredberg taught Fitness Ninja. Weather permitting, a great part of each class session takes place outside. The teachers are exceptionally gifted for their vocation, untiring in their enthusiasm to help the young people and highly skilled in doing so. The classes were at capacity size of 10 to 15 participants. The gratitude and happiness of the students and their parents has been made obvious to the Care for Creation at Bethany staff which has certainly responded in kind!

For more information see: <https://www.dignityworkshere.org/>

Visit from the Lay Associates of the Religious of Jesus and Mary

On October 23rd, Care for Creation at Bethany hosted the Lay Associates of Religious of Jesus and Mary from the Bronx. This group of religious sisters and lay associates has been in existence for over 25 years, supporting the important and diverse work of the RJMs. The group gathered on-site for a prayer service, lunch, and tour of the Center and property, all centered on the theme "All are Welcome. "

As a direct result of this gathering, the Bronx Lay Associate group has decided to establish a study group on Laudato Si', using a study guide by Bill Huebsch.

The Care for Creation committee members were delighted by the visit and want to continue to provide both religious and lay groups a beautiful and inspirational environment for prayer and meetings.



Learn More - COP 27

- On 20 November, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27)* met in Egypt.
- The goal of these annual meetings between nations is to work to: "reduce emissions; build resilience and decrease vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change; [and to] uphold and promote regional and international cooperation."
- This year, an agreement has been reached to establish a fund to compensate vulnerable nations for 'loss and damage' from climate-induced disasters.
- For more information: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop27>



St. Joseph's Day of Service

For the second year in a row, parishioners of St. Joseph's parish in New Paltz chose to make the Care for Creation at Bethany property a focus of their Parish Prayer and Service Day. On Saturday, September 24, three members of the parish spent five hours helping to rid the property of wisteria, an invasive species, which is overtaking and killing native species.

They began at their church having breakfast and praying with other parish members working at two other sites, the New Paltz Rural Cemetery Veterans' section and a local Community Supported Agriculture operation that provides food for the parish food pantry. The group at Bethany removed invasive wisteria vines on the property so that native species might once again flourish and support the fauna and flora that depend on the Bethany ecosystem. They returned to the parish to join the others for reflection, celebration of the Eucharist with the parish, and a meal together.

Care for Creation at Bethany is grateful to St. Joseph's community for their gift of service to us. If you would like to offer such service to Bethany, please email:

carersofcreation.bethany@gmail.com.

Advent Calendars

The holiday season is upon us and most immediately, the season of Advent. This is a time of preparation for the celebration of Jesus' Birth (Nativity) on Christmas and therefore a time of hope. It also marks the beginning of the liturgical year for the Western Catholic church. It is unclear when Advent was first celebrated, but it seems to have been formalized in France in the 4th and 5th century (nearly 2000 years ago!).



Advent traditions vary around the world, with different colors symbolizing joy, hope, and solemnity. Special music is played and sung, and wreaths are often used to mark the four Sundays of Advent.

There many ways of preparing for Christmas. Lots of people use a calendar to count down. This year, try making your own calendar using recycled materials. Or celebrate each day with an act of service. Loyola Press has created a blank Advent calendar template and digital calendars to help you and your family prepare for Jesus' birth! <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/advent/calendars/>

Advent History: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advent#:~:text=According%20to%20Saint%20Gregory%20of,Martin%22.>

Committee Member Highlight

My background is in natural resource management and policy which is the protection of wildlife, plants, soil and water. I use my background to help create new parks in NYC and remove



Kayel Conklin

contaminated soils, sequester storm water, bring in native plants and create areas for people to recreate in fun and safe ways. Not everyone has the ability or the want to live in a remote areas but it's important to always have a connection with nature. Parks provide this connection to a large portion of the population.

Working in an urban environment really drives home the need to control invasive species and use plastics in a responsible way. I believe that Pope Francis is correct in saying that each of us is responsible for one another and the future of the planet. RJM has made a commitment to those ideas and I am eager to help foster in anyway that I can.

In my off time I really enjoy biking especially with my two sons on the rail trail. I pull them in a trailer behind my bike and let them see nature and show them different plants and animals along the way. My hope is that I can stay healthy biking and they can have a positive experience in the outdoors.



Quick Facts and Eco Tips - More Plastic

- Facts:
 - Plastic can take more than 400 years to decompose
 - Scientists think over 8 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year
 - Microbeads. are tiny bits of plastic found in many products including some clothes, cosmetics, and toothpaste
 - Animals and birds can get trapped, tangled, and strangled by plastic waste. They may also mistake small bits of plastic for food and eat them up - leaving no room in their swollen stomachs for real food.
- Tips:
 - Choose loose fruit and vegetables, rather than ones wrapped in plastic
 - Opt-out of products containing microbeads - [check brands for microbeads here](#)
 - Host a *The Story of Plastic* documentary watch party and learn more about plastic pollution
 - <https://www.storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-plastic-documentary-film/>

Sources:

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/kids-club/cool-kids/general-kids-club/plastic-pollution>
<https://www.beatthemicrobead.org/>

A Thanksgiving Prayer by Rev. L.E. Moser, SJ in "Home Celebrations"

To us, your children, O God,
 You have opened your hands and
 have shared with us

The wonders of your world: sun
 and sky,

Leaf and flower,
 Surf and shore.

In your grace, O God,
 You have given us one another.

Into our keeping you have placed
 our selves

That, united in your love,

We may mold your earth
 Into a home for each and
 every[one]:

Where [all] may live in
 peace

And share in the love that
 alone warms life

And gives it meaning.

For this, all of this

Things both small and great,
 And for the greatness caught
 within the smallest of your
 creatures,

We thank you.

O God, despite our best,
 Our world is still weighted with
 sorrow:

your sons and daughters still go
 hungry;

your children take up the
 weapons of
 Cain against each other
 we gouge the face of your
 world with greed
 and leave a wasteland where
 nothing,

not even your children, may
 grow.

Keep us thankful, Dear God,
 So that we may touch all things,
 And every person

Only with delicacy -- of
 reverence and love.

Keep us aware of the work,
 Your work,

That you have given into our
 hands.

For only in your spirit

Will your kingdom come, and
 that day shine

When all people will see clearly
 That there is indeed reason
 For thanksgiving.

This, All of this,

We ask in your Spirit,

Through our Lord and brother,
 Christ Jesus.

Amen. (Adapted)



Laudato Si' Quick Study - Chapter 1

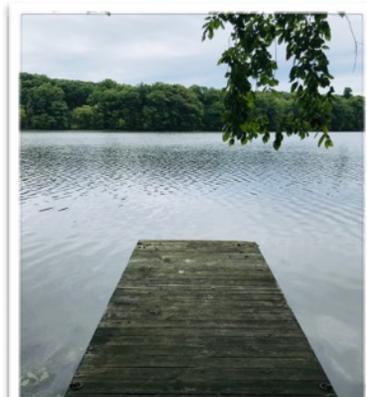
Written by Tom Brinkmann

In the first chapter of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis gives us an analysis of our present situation. He implores us “to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering.” (19) It is not something happening out there apart from me which I can ignore. The climate crisis is more than a physical effect outside of us. It is an integral threat, involving an assault on human dignity and rights as well. Our membership in the human family impels us to take action as does our identity as Christians who worship a God who created and gave us this world as a common home. We are called to steward and care for creation as it cares for and provides for us. God shows a preferential option for the poor and those who are oppressed. It is the poor who suffer the harshest impacts of climate change.

In the seven years since the writing of *Laudato Si'*, the water crisis has become more intense as we see drought overtaking ever-greater areas. “Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right.” (30) To deny the imperative to act is an affront to human rights and dignity. The loss of biodiversity is another focus. The thousands of species being lost due to our refusal to change our relationship with creation, is an affront God to whom glory and praise are due. “...thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence.” (33) Pope Francis wants us to understand that ‘environmental degradation’ is integrally connected with all forms of ‘human and social degradation.’ (48) “...the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor’ (49) are one in the same. He warns us of two attitudes that are used to justify complacency in the face of this crisis:

- 1) As Christians and responsible members of the human family tasked with stewardship of creation we must avoid falling into ‘distractions which constantly dull our consciousness of just how limited and finite our world really is.’ (56)
- 2) Neither can we hide behind the temptation to “think that what is happening is not entirely clear.” (59)

Read and pray over this document of challenge and hope, *Laudato Si'*. [Download](#) a copy from the Vatican website. To continue your study of *Laudato Si'*, consider watching the *The Letter*. Watch the full film for free at <https://theletterfilm.org/watch/>.



JPIC Networks: What and Who Are They?

The *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (JPIC), seems to have sprung up internationally as the perfect ID for organizational initiatives in response to Pope Francis' two encyclicals: *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*.

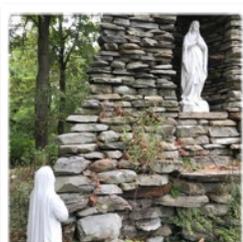
The countries where the RJM's minister under the leadership of their Rome-based, superior general, Sr. Monica Joseph, RJM, all have JPIC initiatives. The US/Haiti Province JPIC committee is directed by Sr. Rosemary Mangan, RJM, a member of the Washington DC- based Provincial Leadership Team .



US/Haiti is one of the first RJM provinces worldwide to create an arm of the JPIC committee focused particularly on Care for Creation. *Care for Creation at Bethany* was initiated by former Provincial Superior, Sr. Margaret Perron. This Fall, Sr. Mary Bourdon, formerly the member of the Leadership Team responsible for shepherding the fledgling initiative, became the new Province Leader. *Care for Creation at Bethany* is based in New York but carries out a mission for the whole province. It is steered on the local level by a twelve-member committee led by Sr. Teresita Morse, RJM.

But the RJM's are only a small part of the dynamic JPIC commitment evident in the wider reality of U.S. Congregations of women and men religious. These Congregations from their foundations have been dedicated to serving those in need, but with the increasing threats brought about by Climate Change, there has been a dramatic inclusion in their apostolic focus to the needs of the earth's ecosystems and all its "citizens". The movement among Religious Congregations to dedicate personnel, resources and property to Care for Creation reaches coast to coast. In the Hudson Valley alone, some of the other Congregations included in this movement, include: Sparkill Dominicans, Blauvelt Dominicans, Newburgh Presentations, New York Charities, Maryknoll in Ossining, Sisters of Christian Doctrine at Marydell in Nyack, Dominican Sisters of Hope at Mariandale, Graymoor Franciscans in Garrison, Marist Brothers in Esopus, Passionists whose monastery in Riverdale was an ecological center directed by Fr. Thomas Berry.

Many of these Congregations belong to *Religious Organizations Along the River* (ROAR), a strong ecological and environmental advocacy group founded by Religious Sisters for the health of the Hudson River and its environs. Currently the Archdiocese of New York is beginning a JPIC outreach for parishes and Care for Creation at Bethany is hoping to help local parishes take part in this outreach.



Our Mission

To foster the Integrity of Creation and the care for our common home by using what we have in the property and facilities at Bethany in response to the call of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* and the priorities of the Religious of Jesus and Mary.

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