



CARE FOR CREATION AT BETHANY

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



Upcoming Events:

Tree Tours with Kayel - Late Spring/Summer Dates TBD

(email carersofcreation.bethany@gmail.com if interested in attending)

In This Issue:

- Claudine’s Birthday pg. 3
- Tree ID at Bethany pg. 5
- You Can Make a Difference . . pg. 6
- Stamp of Holy Trinity on Creationpg. 8
- View from a Highlander pg. 9
- Laudato Si’ Quick Studypg. 10

Spring is a time of delightful surprises – the first and most wondrous of which is the Easter mystery of the Resurrection.

At Bethany, there is a framed cartoon from comic creator Cuyler Black’s *Inherit the Mirth*. It shows only the foot of Jesus as he walks away from the empty tomb. It is Easter morning, and the two “clueless guards” are just waking up. One says to the other: “Waddy mean? That wasn’t you who just said ‘Good morning?’”

The cartoon makes you laugh but then it makes you catch your breath!! It captures the ultimate divine surprise: that even death itself cannot kill life! Spring is a seasonal assurance of this. It is the time of year when we are always catching glimpses of “Jesus’ footsteps” leading us to new life.



Here in the Hudson Valley some of these spring “footsteps” can be seen in:

- the winter-grey mountains with their new reddish glow signaling the rising sap and growing leaves
- the pussy-willow catkins, soft to our touch and our hearts, which quietly budded while we weren’t looking
- the resident black bear who came to the dumpster in the wee hours of morning, looking big and round and content with her soon-to-be born baby
- the first mourning dove cooing an unexpected “I’m back”
- the brave daffodil spears shooting up in the barren garden and filling us with renewed hope that the garden will indeed return to its riotous life



These and all of nature’s signs of spring are like the Risen Lord’s footprints in our death-bound, winter world. They are His message spoken through the created world and saying to us “Good morning” – good, good morning because the Easter mystery and inevitable return of spring is our joyous reality!

For more of Cuyler Black’s work and to see an image of the described comic, visit: <https://www.cuylerblack.com/inherit-the-mirth-1>





Happy Birthday Claudine!

On March 30, 1774, 250 years ago in Lyon France, a baby, Claudine Thevenet, was born to a deeply Catholic family. A woman of “high courage”, she would become a fierce advocate of orphans, founding boarding and workschools for Lyon’s daughters of silk weavers, made destitute by the French Revolution. At the same time, on the other side of the great ocean, in the British colony of New York, Langford Thorne (1735-1807) owned and was living on the land which is now Bethany. Langford belonged to one of the earliest Quaker families in America. The Quakers believe that all life is precious because it comes from the Hand of the Divine. Claudine and Langford would never know of each other’s existence in this life but, in God’s exquisite plan for Bethany, they were partners. By following God’s leading in their lives, they together enabled the existence and mission of Bethany today.



Saint Claudine

Image from rjmgeneral.org

Both Claudine and Langford lived through the violence of major revolutions. When Claudine was 15, the French Revolution broke out and her family heroically defended their home-city against the revolutionaries. As a result, her beloved brothers were condemned to death and Claudine accompanied them to the guillotine. She stood with them through their horrific murders. Astoundingly this experience grounded her in the conviction that “The greatest misfortune is to live and die without knowing God.” This conviction is shared with all those served by the religious congregation that St. Claudine founded in 1818: the Religious of Jesus and Mary. In America, Langford was witnessing the nearby realities of the American Revolution. In the midst of the raging war, he protected and preserved the integrity of the large tract of land he owned, embodying the Quaker commitment to stewardship. Eventually, he would provide land to the Quaker Church in Cornwall, NY and pass on the Bethany portion to another Quaker family, the Riders.



continued from page 2

In 1911, when Mother St. Clare, General Superior of the RJMs, visited the Bethany property in Highland Mills in search of a country house for the sisters, she immediately experienced “the peace of God brooding over all”. Surely, this was due to the Quaker spirit which had possessed the land for more than 150 years. In this oasis of peace and natural beauty, the Religious of Jesus and Mary planted the charism of Claudine which has taken root, grown and influenced the land for another 115 years. Today, Care for Creation at Bethany provides a new expression of the heritage of Claudine and Langford. Its mission is to help people experience God’s loving and peaceful presence and to hear God’s voice in the natural beauty and healthy biosystems of this beloved land which Claudine and Langford together preserved.

Happy 250th Birthday, Claudine!!





Learn More

Kayel will be hosting “Tree Tours” this summer as well as other educational events for all ages using Bethany’s forests and lake as outdoor classrooms. For more information about these events, reach out to Louise Pisano at: carersofcreation.bethany@gmail.com.

Interested in learning more about the trees around you?

Kayel loves Virginia Tech Dendrology - a massive online database and field guide. Use their Dichotomous Key to identify all kinds of trees as the site walks you through a series of tree characteristic choices to narrow down what you are looking at.

<https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/ident.htm>

Guess that Bark!

Answers on page 6



Tree ID at Bethany

The land at Bethany is home to a rich diversity of trees, each with their own unique qualities, needs, and gifts. Trees are vital parts of our local ecosystems, providing clean air, habitat to wildlife, and invaluable shade. They remove from their air and store vast amounts of harmful carbon dioxide. Being able call a tree by its name makes it “a friend.” It increases our familiarity with and appreciation for our tree friends and can lead to increased efforts towards preservation.*



Kayel marking trees at Bethany

Photo Credit: Sr. Teresita

At the beginning of March, Kayel Conklin, committee member for Care for Creation at Bethany, and highly gifted dendrologist (people who study trees), determined a central walking tour through the property and marked 15 varieties of trees along the way. Each of these trees now has a numbered medallion that correlates to a map, enabling visitors to identify the trees and learn many fascinating aspects of these giants in the Creator’s earth-garden. Later this spring and summer, Kayel will again be offering his popular teaching tours about the trees of Bethany and the Hudson Valley. One person who attended a previous Tree Tour said: “I will never see a tree in the same way again. Now I understand that a tree is not ‘a thing’ but a benefactor and a friend.”

* <https://ecosystems.psu.edu/research/centers/private-forests/news/know-your-trees-and-where-they-grow>



A Prayer for the Crosses We Bear

We complain about the cross we bear but don't realize it is preparing us for the dip in the road that God can see and we can't.

**Whatever your cross, whatever your pain,
there will always be sunshine, after the rain....**

**Perhaps you may stumble, perhaps even fall;
But God's always ready, to answer your call....**

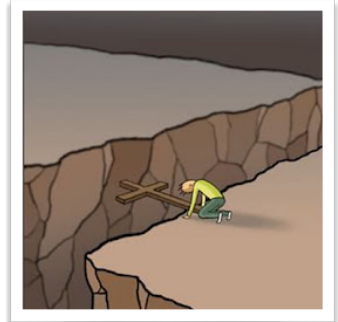
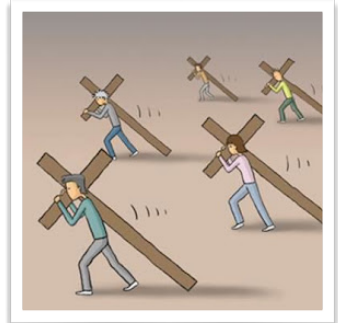
**He knows every heartache, sees every tear,
a word from His lips, can calm every fear...**

**Your sorrows may linger, throughout the night,
But suddenly vanish, dawn's early light...**

**The Savior is waiting, somewhere above,
to give you His grace, and send you His love...**

God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage.

Text source and view the images: <http://www.swtblessings.com/2009/03/cross-we-bear.html>



You Can Make A Difference!

Contributed by: Kevin and Matthew Morse

Matthew's family church is situated in a lush wooded area between a busy highway and the marsh and banks of a beautiful woodland creek. Each Sunday, an hour before the church service, Matthew brings his two young sons to Sunday school. One day, while waiting for his children, Matthew walked down to visit the creek and found that its rich marsh area was inundated with trash. He saw that the trash was coming from two sources:

- the heavily travelled roadway from which people threw trash out car windows which cascaded downhill and into the sensitive marsh;
- the storm drain system whose rain-water washed into the low-lying area and creek bringing with it the trash people tossed onto curbs and road sides.

Clearly, this litter was contributing to soil and water pollution and negatively affecting plant and animal life. The accumulated debris was harming habitats, reducing light essential for photosynthesizing by vegetation, depleting oxygen levels, and undermining the ability of the marsh and creek to support the rich life systems that depend on them.

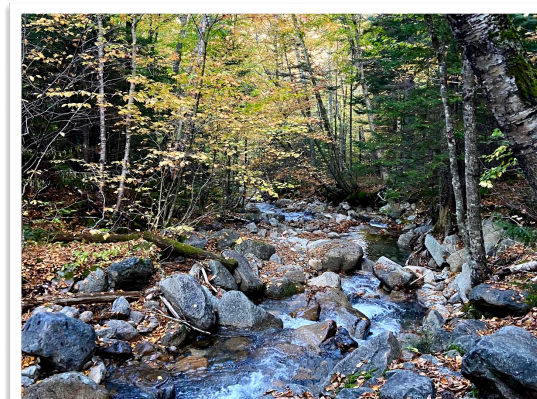


As his father had done for him, Matthew is teaching his children the importance of making a difference in the community and working for the health of the environment. So he was moved to action. With the pastor's grateful blessing, he recruited volunteers to help clean up the creek area. Now, there is a regular Sunday morning project of remedying the damage done by people's careless attitude toward the environment and the improvement is dramatic.

Matthew also asked the county management to come out and inspect the damage being done. County officials had not realized the amount of trash being washed down into the marsh and creek behind the church. They are now an important part of the effort to prevent future abuse in this sensitive area.

Recently the county held a 3-hour clean-up of adjacent marsh areas in which about 100 volunteers participated. Matthew arranged for his church congregation to coordinate with this county project. The amount of trash that had washed into the county's marsh areas stunned all involved but they were gratified by the results of their joint participation in the clean up. Although the County is planning another big cleanup for the fall, Matthew and his Pastor agree that they will also continue working an hour a week after church services. Big county-wide projects can generate a high level of excitement, but an even greater positive impact can be made by those who engage in consistent local action.

The response of Matthew and his Dad, Kevin, to those discouraged by the enormity of the ecological problem is "Yes you CAN make a difference!!" If you give just an hour a week, but couple it with a full-time concern for the environment, your impact can be vast.





Kids Corner - You Can Make a Difference Too!!

Like Kevin and Matthew, here are a few easy things you can do to make a difference in your environment:

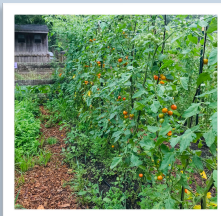


1. **Go outside!** Spend time in nature - research shows that young people who spend time enjoying and playing in nature are more likely to preserve and protect the environment as adults. °
2. **Read a book and educate yourself,** your parents/guardians, and community about climate change and other important climate-related topics. Our favorites include: *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom; *Climate Rebels* by Ben Lerwill; *P* is for Permaculture: The ABCs of Earthcare by Sharon Baldwin.
3. **Plant a garden** and reduce your food miles by growing your own vegetables! This reduces tons of



harmful carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere during the shipping process.

4. **Clean up your ecosystem.** Spend an hour, just like Kevin and Matthew, picking up trash in a place you love. Bring your friends and don't forget your personal protective equipment (gloves, trash bags) and to recycle what you can!



Stamp of Holy Trinity on Creation

Recently, Sr. Doris Bissonnette, RJM spoke with the Care for Creation Committee about her 8-day retreat experience on the mystery of the Holy Trinity and its manifestation in the created world. The retreat was given by Sr. Patricia Connick, OP of Peace, and it was based on Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si. What follows is a reflection by Sr. Teresita on Sr. Doris' sharing.

"Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made." (Rom. 1:20)

Modern science teaches us how plants and animals communicate. Mystics and spiritual masters teach us about the relationships and communication among the Persons of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and Their communication with the earth they created and continue to "enliven." Reflection and prayer with *Laudato Si*, especially its final chapter "About the Trinity" helps us to realize that the stamp of the Holy Trinity is on all of creation.

One example can be seen in the murmuration of starlings. "Murmurations are huge groups of starlings that twist, turn, swoop and swirl across the sky in beautiful shape-shifting clouds. Just before dusk, small groups of starlings from the same area come together above a communal roosting site. The group grows ever larger, moving in unison in an aerial dance that casts gorgeous shapes against the waning daylight." ^

There is no one starling-leader. Yet, in their flight, the birds do not bump into each other but efficiently interweave. How? Each maintains communication with five or six neighboring birds. Multiply this communication and the whole flock knows where to go, how to turn, what to do. Is this not an expression of the Communal life of the Holy Trinity imprinted on the Work of Their Hands? An example for us of how humans are called by their Creator to live in community?

Starting points for prayerful reflection:

- How do you perceive in the murmuration of the starlings, the stamp of the Holy Trinity's communication with One Another? with all earth creatures?with human beings?
- How can we learn from this to improve our communication with one another?





Views from a Highlander

by John Kramer

The Common and Miraculous Existence of Vernal Pools

Vernal Pools are very small bodies of water hidden throughout forested areas. They are created in small depressions by upland streams and snow melt. Vernal pools are the most essential part of the forest ecosystem because they provide the habitat for the larvae of many aquatic and amphibious species. Some of the species born in vernal pools are wood frogs, spotted salamanders, blue spotted salamanders, and fairy shrimp.

The vernal pool is a seasonal occurrence, sometimes called “a pop-up pool.” Precisely because it is a very short-lived water-source, it is the perfect nursery for the countless larvae born within it, protecting them and enabling them to grow to maturity. The forest environment is filled with predatory fish and water fowl looking for the food source these larvae would provide. When pools are a permanent fixture in the environment, birds, ducks, snakes, and many other animals know their location and come regularly to feed on the small species living within them. However, the vernal pool exists only briefly. Just before the predators become aware of the pool, the water disappears! What an extraordinary window of opportunity! And it happens in countless hidden areas throughout the forest every spring! As soon as the tiny larvae in the vernal pool grow to maturity and are ready to emerge from the waters, the pool evaporates and the newly-matured creatures spread out into the surrounding forest.

Later, as winter approaches, the creatures born in the pool tend to return to the place of their birth to hibernate. They hide under the dried leaves and twigs and, trusting in nature’s life-giving cycle, they await the “pop-up pool” of spring. Thus, they can give birth to their own young in the very spot where they came into being. Interesting note: the wood frog hibernates in the winter by actually freezing itself. It appears dead but when the spring temperature rises to 40 degrees, the wood frogs unfreeze themselves, emerge from their burrows, and lay their eggs in the newly restored vernal pool.

Vernal pools are predominant in the forests of the Northeast. In most states, vernal pools and the uplands that feed them need protection from development. This is certainly true in the area where Bethany is located. Care for Creation at Bethany is working to protect the vernal pools on the land entrusted to its stewardship.





Laudato Si' Quick Study

“It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected.” (LS #138) This is a certain truth that will help us to understand the crisis facing our beloved planet and point a way forward to address it. *Laudato Si's* fourth chapter deals with integral ecology, summed up in the last three words of the quote above. We will not make progress on the climate crisis front without addressing the issues in an integrated manner. The climate crisis has environmental, economic, and social dimensions in the same way that the social issues we face have economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

“We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.” (#139) This is not to say that the problem is so big one can do nothing. Rather, it is a call to work in the area to which the Spirit leads, respecting the interconnectedness of the issues.

Pope Francis shows that the same integral interrelatedness is found in the seven basic themes of Catholic social teaching which point the way forward. “...the principle of the common good immediately becomes...a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.” (#158)

Perhaps we frequently act without being aware of it, but everything in our daily life points to the network of relationships in which we live and on which we depend. This chapter highlights many such interrelationships”: global economics and culture (#143 – 46); the quality of our communities and happiness (# 149 – 53); our attitude of gratitude towards God’s gift of our bodies and selves and our attitude toward the rest of creation (#154 – 55); and the relationship between current and future generations (#159 – 60).

Nothing, no one exists in isolation, independent of nature and others. We live and thrive in a network of interdependent relations. The unity within the Trinity, which Christ prayed for us on the night before He died, “Father, that they may be one as you and I are one,” (Jn 17:21) is the reality in which we live. It is the path to address the threats to our common home, both environmental and social.

Link to Seven Basic Themes: <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching>



Take Action!

Volunteer at Bethany

As we prepare for our own spring cleaning around the Bethany property, we are looking for small groups of volunteers to help. Projects may include pulling invasive wisteria from our forests and clean up of our Butterfly Garden and Stations of the Cross Walk.

If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to Louise Pisano at:

carersofcreation.bethany@gmail.com



Heal the Hudson

On May 4th, join Riverkeeper for their 13th annual Sweep of the Hudson River Valley. With more than 100 locations along the river from NYC to the Adirondacks, Riverkeeper is looking for community members to help them cleanup, remove invasive plants, and continue the effort to protect and preserve the Hudson River. Check out their website for more details about the event.

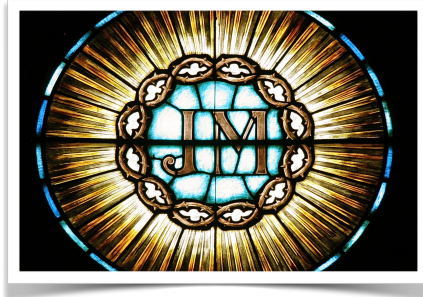
<https://www.riverkeeper.org/news-events/events/rvk-events/13th-annual-riverkeeper-sweep/>





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.



Contact Us

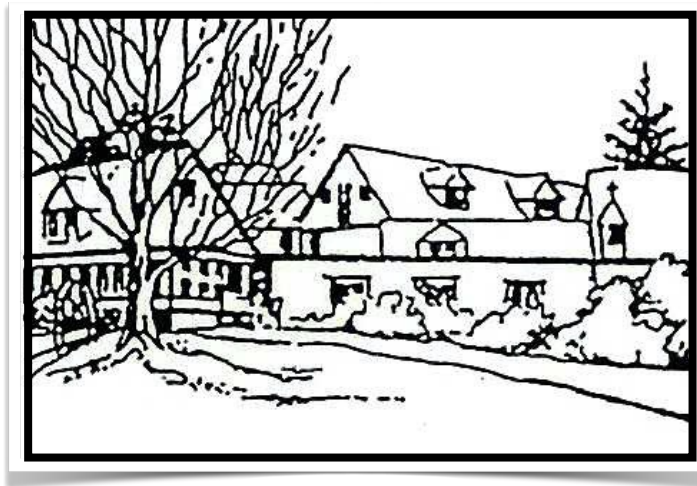
Email: carersofcreation.bethany@gmail.com

Facebook Page: Cfc Bethany

Website: Coming Soon

Address:

Care for Creation Center
15 Bethany Drive Highland Mills, NY 10930



Credits

Written Contributions From: Sr. Teresita Morse, RJM, Kevin and Matthew Morse, Tom Brinkmann, Sr. Doris Bissonnette, RJM, and Katie Williams

Newsletter Editorial Committee: Sr. Teresita Morse, RJM, Louise Pisano, Tom Brinkmann, and Katie Williams

Photo Credits: Katie Williams, Flaticon, Britannica, Shutterstock, Harvest Church of God, Adobe Stock, Dreamstime

Edited by: Katie Williams