



Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment

March 2016

Issue 17

Where do we find ourselves?

Our world continues to change each day. There are so many events which demand our attention. In this hectic, frenzied atmosphere, how can we maintain our Benedictine values?

The Earth Our Common Home

- ✦ Pope Francis continues to reach out, speaking truth to power along the journey. His encyclical, **Laudato Si**, challenges us to take care of the planet we live on and reflect on the ways we can change and be good stewards of all which is entrusted to our care.
- ✦ In December 2015, the COP21 conference in Paris reached agreements with 195 countries pledging to reduce carbon emissions by a significant amount.
- ✦ In January 2016, NASA and NOAA agencies revealed that the Earth's surface temperatures were the warmest since modern record keeping began in 1880.
- ✦ Religious shareholders continue to press companies on a variety of issues, especially climate change. Benedictine monasteries continue to use their stock portfolio to raise these timely questions.
- ✦ On February 20-21, according to the United Nations, Category 5 Severe Tropical Cyclone Winston hit Fiji—it is estimated to be one of the most severe ever to hit the South Pacific.

Money Speaks

- ✦ Corporations continue to “move” their headquarters out of the U.S. as inversions for tax purposes.
- ✦ Many are left to wonder how can Health and Human Services (HHS) in Texas move forward to license detention centers for immigrant mothers and children as residential child care centers?
- ✦ In this election year, the U.S. Presidential primary candidates offer new areas to ponder each day.
- ✦ There are calls for more transparency about who is funding what endeavors, what candidates and what legislation at the local and national levels.

Small Signs of Hope

- ✦ Campbell's Soup will begin labeling food products which may contain genetically-modified organisms (GMOs). Original Cheerios do not contain GMOs. This cereal is often the first cereal babies eat.
- ✦ Colgate's commercial, #Every Drop Counts, for the 2016 Super Bowl highlighted that if we leave water running while we brush our teeth, it is more water than some have for their entire weekly use.
- ✦ In 2015, Germany passed a law requiring corporate boards to give women 30% of supervisory seats on boards of directors.
- ✦ By February 2016, the Bangladesh ACCORD for Fire and Building Safety had inspected 1589 factories out of 1661 factories covered by the agreement and mandated safety remediation where necessary.
- ✦ Walmart raised wages to the promised \$9 an hour for employees, amid warnings from Wall Street analysts that profits would suffer.
- ✦ Maquiladora workers in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, were fired in December for protesting working conditions and trying to form an independent union at a printer cartridge factory owned by Lexmark International (a U.S. company). This would be the first independent Juarez union in 50 years.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/01/upheaval-in-the-factories-of-juarez/424893/>

In the midst this hectic pace of life on Earth, monasteries daily continue to live faith-filled lives, according to the Rule of Benedict.

We are grateful for this opportunity to work with all of you.

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BCRI Meeting Minutes

October 29, 2015

The annual meeting of the Benedictine CRI was held from 7:30-8:45 a.m. on Thursday, October 29, 2015, at the RCRI national conference in Orlando. Nineteen Benedictines attended:

- * Sylvia Ahr, OSB, and Susan Mika, OSB of St. Scholastica Monastery, Boerne, TX
- * Lou Whipple, OSB, of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, KS
- * Mary Ann O’Ryan, OSB, Roberta Pierick, Judith Murphy, OSB of St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, IL
- * Mary Finnigan of St. Benedict Monastery, Bristow, VA
- * MT Summers, OSB of Benet Hill Monastery, Colorado Springs, CO
- * Tonette Sperando, OSB, Sherrie Brainard, OSB, and Lynn McKenzie, OSB, (also Federation of Saint Scholastica president) of Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, AL
- * Marlene Milasus, OSB of St. Walburga Monastery, Elizabeth, NJ
- * Jennifer Whitehouse and Carla Graves of Saint Joseph Abbey, Saint Benedict, LA
- * Janet Marie Barnard, OSB and Mary Forman, OSB of Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, ID
- * Jennifer Carber of St. Mary Monastery, Rock Island, IL
- * Maureen Conney, OSB of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove, IN
- * Julia Walsh, consultant, St. Louis, MO



Sister Mary Ann O’Ryan of Chicago served as acting secretary, opened the meeting, welcomed the group and invited all to introduce themselves. Sister Lou Whipple of Atchison led the opening prayer and distributed forms for all to sign in and update their contact information. The minutes of the November 5-6, 2014, meeting were approved.



Welcome to New Members

Sister Susan Mika announced that the Benedictine CRI now has 19 member communities with the recent addition of Sacred Heart Monastery in Lisle, Illinois, and Mother of God Monastery in Watertown, South Dakota. Welcome to the Lisle and Watertown communities.

Benedictine CRI History

We reviewed a packet of information for those attending the meeting, beginning with a history of Benedictine CRI membership. The group has grown from 5 members in 2004 to 19 communities in 2015. One area of the work is to empower religious communities to use the stock they own in a company to be able to introduce resolutions that will influence the company to improve its policies and procedures. During the 2015 proxy season, 26 resolutions were filed with 21 companies.

Update on Corporate Responsibility Actions

Sr. Susan gave an overview of the victories during the past proxy year; a summary of the various 2015 ICCR workgroup topics for research, discussion and advocacy; and a calendar of the November-December resolution filing dates. Much work has been done with McDonald’s, Chipotle, Panera and other restaurants regarding their supply chains and the prohibiting of antibiotics. Both Walmart and TJ Maxx have raised their employee minimum wage. We reviewed a handout from CERES on food waste. Reducing food waste is not only a significant economic opportunity, but is also part of a solution to climate change and is a means of being more socially responsible.

BCRI Meeting Minutes

October 29, 2015

Climate Change

ICCR will be making a big push on issues related to climate change in 2016 in support of the recent United Nations Framework conference in Paris on climate change (COP21, with COP standing for Conference of Parties and 21 meaning it is the 21st such conference). ICCR is calling on companies to:

- ✿ Issue statements that are specific, clear, and constructive in support of a global agreement to limit warming to below 2° C in advance of COP21;
- ✿ Adopt science-based, time-bound quantitative greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals;
- ✿ Engage with policy makers to mitigate climate change risks and support a transition to a low-carbon economy;
- ✿ Commit to zero deforestation and adopt corporate water stewardship policies that respect the human right to water.

Pope Francis' recent encyclical, **Laudato Si'**, gives impetus to this effort as groups are reading and discussing the encyclical and asking what they can do in response to it.

Immigration

Sr. Susan shared information on the new rules governing immigrant children and mothers and continued concerns related to the Karnes and Dilley Family Detention Centers in South Texas. These centers are run by private companies, such as The GEO Group and Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). GEO bought the company that makes the ankle bracelets used to track the detainees once they are released from the centers. Donations are needed to support the efforts of those working to get the detainees released and to provide assistance to them. Information was given on where to send donations and how to contact our government leaders to urge an end to family detention. (See pages 6 and 7 of this newsletter for the most recent updates.)

Member Updates

Participants shared information on actions they are taking in their communities and areas. Major action areas included: working to bring greater awareness of the plight of detention center immigrants, solar energy to reduce our carbon footprint, education and sharing on **Laudato Si'**, concerns about fracking in their areas, divestment of fossil fuels from investment portfolios, recycling efforts, human trafficking issues, awareness of products used and food waste. Sister Lynn McKenzie shared information about the concern in Torreon and throughout Mexico regarding Lala milk products. The community in Bristow, Virginia, is building a new monastery; the Boerne, Texas, community is installing solar panels at the new monastery; and Holy Wisdom Monastery has been LEEDS-certified.

It was noted that we can't do it all – and much of what we do can be overwhelming, but we each can take small steps to make a difference in our world.



Minutes compiled by Mary Ann O'Ryan, OSB and Rose Marie Stallbaumer, OSB

Coalition Member Filings for the 2016 Shareholder Resolution Season

ALPHABET-GOOGLE, INC

Human Rights Risk Assessment
Monasterio Pan de Vida, Torreon

AMERICAN EXPRESS

Lobbying Expenditures — Climate Policy
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

AT&T

Lobbying Expenditures — Climate Policy
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica
Monasterio Pan de Vida, Torreon

CHEVRON

Greenhouse Gas Reductions — Science Based Targets
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica
Shale Operations — Fracking
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore
Benedictine Sisters, Boerne, TX
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

COCA-COLA

Report on Renewable Energy Goals
Primary Filer: Benedictine Sisters, Boerne, TX
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

COMCAST

Lobbying Expenditures Disclosure
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica

CONOCOPHILLIPS

Review Public Policy Advocacy on Climate Change
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore

DUKE ENERGY

Lobbying Expenditures — Climate Policy
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

EXXONMOBIL

Acknowledge Moral Imperative to Limit Global Warming
Benedictine Sisters, Boerne, TX
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

GENERAL ELECTRIC

Hudson River Cleanup
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

The GEO GROUP

Human Rights Policy Implementation and Performance
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica

HOME DEPOT

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO-1) Report
Primary Filer: Benedictine Sisters, Boerne, TX
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

McDonald's

*Phase Out Routine Use of Antibiotics Used
by Humans in McDonald's Supply Chain*
Primary Filer: Benedictine Sisters, Boerne, TX

MERCK

*Safe Disposal of Prescription Drugs to Prevent Water
Pollution*
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore

OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM

Review Public Policy Advocacy on Climate Change
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica

PEPSICO

Pesticide Pollution to Curtail Pollinator Decline
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

PHILLIPS 66

Greenhouse Gas Reductions — Science Based Targets
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

SOUTHERN COMPANY

Business Plan for 2° C Warming Scenario
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

SPECTRA ENERGY

Lobbying Expenditures Disclosure
Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

TIME WARNER

Fostering Healthy Nutrition for Children (licensing of brand characters in movies and merchandising)
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica

WALMART

Lobbying Expenditures — Climate Policy
Benedictine Sisters, Boerne, TX

WALT DISNEY COMPANY

Lobbying Expenditures Disclosure
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica

WHOLE FOODS MARKET

Impact of Palm Oil on Deforestation and Human Rights
Benedictine Sisters — Mount St. Scholastica
Monasterio Pan de Vida, Torreon

RESPONDING TO THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

“We pledge ... to reduce our carbon pollution 50% by 2030 and to become carbon neutral by 2050.” With these words from the 2015 Paris convention -- the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) — our long-term commitment to living sustainably on planet Earth took on a new dimension as we embraced a specific, measurable goal for reducing our carbon footprint.

When three separate yet related things happen within a short timeframe, it's a call to pay attention. In October, 2014 a small group of Oblates and community members formed a committee named CARE (Committee for **A**lternative **R**esource **E**nergy). The committee's purpose is to research renewable energy sources and the practicality of their use for our community buildings. Second, in June 2015, Pope Francis awakened the entire world to the dangers faced by Mother Earth, particularly with regard to climate change and its impact on the poor and on future generations. His profound encyclical, **Laudato Si'**, is a clarion call to action. And third, in December 2015, 195 nations gathered in Paris to negotiate a planet-wide agreement to change the trajectory of global warming.

The “signs of the times” were speaking clearly. We knew *what* we needed to do – we weren't quite so clear on *how*. Over the years, of course, we had undertaken numerous energy-related initiatives. Most recently, extensive renovations here at Mount Saint Benedict, have improved energy efficiency with increased insulation, efficient hot water and heating systems, window replacement and improved lighting.

As CARE, our renewable energy committee, began enthusiastically researching local solar possibilities, it became very clear that our first steps needed to be gathering energy data from all of our buildings, getting some professional help with initial energy assessments, and recording current and historical data so that we could measure our progress. We have found that the assessment tools of ENERGY STAR, a joint program of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy, suit our needs well in determining progress toward meeting our Paris Pledge.

Current projects include re-lamping our chapel with LEDs and pursuing other LED installations. Although LED lamps are much more expensive than traditional lamps, the pay-back is very short (4-5 years) and they'll last 10 years or more. We are also reviewing our current electricity provider and hope to move to a “greener” source soon.

In addition to looking at energy efficiency, providers and renewable sources, several of our sisters are very active in a local group dedicated to preventing “fracking” — unconventional horizontal drilling for gas — from impacting our area of Pennsylvania as it has other parts of the state.

Global warming is very real. Let's all respond to Pope Francis' call to take immediate action to “escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us.” (**Laudato Si'**, #163)

Sr. Annette Marshall, OSB
Benedictine Sisters of Erie, PA

IMMIGRANT FAMILY DETENTION UPDATE– March 2016

South Texas Family Detention Centers - Karnes and Dilley

FAMILY DETENTION STATISTICAL REALITIES:

- ❖ 21,500 families apprehended by Border Patrol agents between October and December, 2015 (187% increase) and 17,300 unaccompanied minors (117% increase) (*San Antonio Express-News*, January 13, 2016).
- ❖ Only 900 of 6,200 detained adults with children had cases resolved in immigration courts between July 2014 and November 2015.
- ❖ U.S. Congress allocates \$750 million to aid Central America's Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) and authorizes 55 new immigration judges and additional layer of congressional oversight of conditions at the South Texas detention centers in Dilley, Karnes County and elsewhere (*San Antonio Express-News*, January 9, 2016).
- ❖ FY 2016 Congressional budget allocates \$712.9 million to Custody Operations for salaries/benefits and an additional \$1.7 billion for general expenses to fund adult detention beds, with \$342.73 per family/per night appropriated funding.

U.S GOVERNMENT RATIONALE FOR DETENTION OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN:

- ❖ Deterrent for future immigrant crossings
- ❖ Ensure appearances at immigration court proceedings
- ❖ Protect legal resident community from security threats

IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTER

- ❖ July 24, 2015 ... Judge Dolly Gee of the Central District of California ruled current U.S. family detention policies violate the 1997 Flores Settlement, which set standards regarding detention, release and treatment of all immigrant children in detention.

ment, which set standards regarding detention, release and treatment of all immigrant children in detention.

- ❖ August 6, 2015 ... The Justice Department asked Judge Gee to reconsider, asserting that federal authorities are not violating the ban on holding immigrant children in secure facilities. (*New York Times*, August 7, 2015)

- ❖ August 21, 2015 ... Judge Gee ordered the swift release of immigrant children held in detention centers, giving the Administration until October 23 to comply. (*New York Times*, August 22, 2015)

- ❖ October 2015 ... Detention Centers at Dilley (operated by Corrections Corporation of America) and Karnes (operated by The GEO Group) applied to be licensed as residential child care centers, possibly receiving six-month provisional licenses from the State. Child advocates and immigration lawyers rigorously opposed such a move. (*San Antonio Express-News*, October 17, 2015)

- ❖ December 9, 2015 ... A public hearing was held in Austin, Texas, to take testimony on whether to license family detention facilities as residential child care centers. All who testified **opposed** the agency's licensing of these facilities as child care centers.

- ❖ January 26, 2016 ... MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund) filed a legal challenge to the constitutionality of Texas law, House Bill 11, on behalf of landlords and non-profits, who could be charged with a felony "for harboring immigrants in the country illegally."

- ❖ February 12, 2016 ... The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) announced a new category --"family residential centers"-- has been created to allow Karnes and Dilley detention centers to apply for licensing after March 1, 2016.



Photos from San Antonio Express-News & Sr. Susan Mika — Prayer Gathering in the rain in ditch outside the Dilley Detention Facility 04-22-15, Bus station ministry & Austin hearing Dec. 9, 2015.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED IN SERVICE AND ADVOCACY



Interfaith
**WELCOME
COALITION**

WOMEN AND CHILDREN SEEKING REFUGEE STATUS

Welcome Ministry

Volunteers at the Mennonite House welcome women and children 24 hours a day on their journey to unite with their sponsor family in the U.S. Transportation ministers greet the women and their children at the bus terminal/airport and assist them with obtaining and understanding their tickets. Backpacks are distributed here to go with the families to their destinations. We need volunteers to visit the families in the Karnes and Dilley Detention Centers. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Marlyss McKinney at 830-660-8158 or at sanantoniowelcome@gmail.com.

Backpacks: Donations

There is a daily need for specific items to fill the backpacks for these journeys. A typical backpack can be prepared with a donation of \$25, providing such items as drinks, snacks, blankets, toys, toiletries. Sponsor a refugee backpack at <http://bitly.com/refugeepack>.

Other Donations

Donations are needed to support the Mennonite House --- utilities, food, household supplies, travel money for the women who must make the two- to four-day journey with no money to feed their families. Make checks payable to: University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell Avenue, San Antonio, TX 78212, ATTN: IWC (Interfaith Welcome Coalition).

Family Defense Fund

Some detainees are being issued ankle monitors for their release while others still must post bonds. The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) is providing pro bono legal assistance to those who must bond out. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/familydefensefund>. Make checks to RAICES, 5121 Crestway Drive, #105, San Antonio, TX 78239. Sign the Petition: "DFPS (Texas Department of Family Services) Don't License Baby Jails!" <http://bit.ly/stopbabyjails>.

Advocacy

Call the White House at 202-456-1111 and the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121. Make the message: "End Family Detention!" heard. Ask your state representative to co-sponsor HR 2808, which would prevent ICE from signing contracts with for-profit entities that include detention quotas. Choose to BE A VOICE to our legislators on behalf of these women and children. Ask your Representative to get involved -- visit the Karnes or Dilley facilities, tweet, write an op-ed, do a floor speech in their respective chambers to show support for #EndFamilyDetention.

Additional Ways to Help Refugee Families

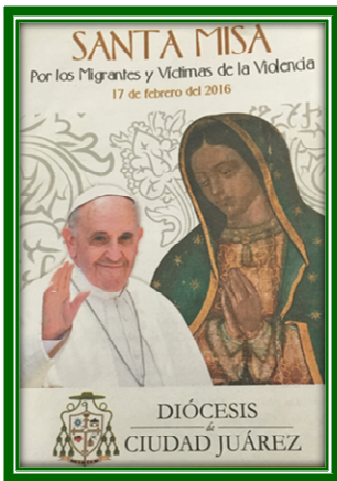
Once families are released from detention, volunteers are needed to assist them around the country as they transition, including rides to immigration check-ins, court appearances, and finding legal assistance. Find out more at <http://bit.ly/raicesvolunteer>.



Advocacy Update

Months of advocacy work have paid off. The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services issued notice on January 25, 2016 that the licensing of the Berks County Family Detention Center (BCRC) would not be renewed and officially revoked, ending family detention in the state. (Press Release-Grassroots Leadership, February 4, 2016)

The Pope in Mexico 2016



Pope Francis' visit was a gift for the Mexican people. He visited key cities, emblematic of the impoverishment, violence, corruption and immigration issues that wrack the country. His personal warmth, pastoral approach, obvious love of those marginalized by our consumer society and his simple use of the Spanish language touched the hearts of many.

One morning during his visit I was at our CENTER sharing Lauds and *lectio* with a group of lay people from our low-income neighborhood. As we talked about how Francis' visit was affecting our lives, one faithful participant who is almost totally blind, said, "I've tried to remember one phrase from each of his homilies and talks, to keep in my heart during this Lent." Some of those phrases include his words to the bishops, "The people don't need princes, they need pastors!" In Chiapas he connected the impoverishment of the people to the impoverishment of the land. The Pope also instructed married people to, "Solve your differences before you go to bed at night. If you don't they will have turned into a cold war by morning."

One disappointment about the papal visit is that there was no mention at all of the widespread problem of disappearances in Mexico, the most notorious being the disappearance of 43 students from a rural teacher's college in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, in September of 2014. On February 12, the day Pope Francis began his visit to Mexico, Amnesty International submitted a report to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances that reveals a context of generalized disappearances throughout Mexico, many of which could qualify as enforced disappearances. An "enforced disappearance" involves kidnappings carried out or permitted by government officials. Parents and families of these "disappeared" all hoped to have some gesture of encouragement from Pope Francis, or have him urge the government to do something.

On his return to Rome on the Second Sunday of Lent, Pope Francis told thousands of pilgrims in St. Peter's Square that his visit to Mexico had been a transfiguration experience and that the body of Christ in Mexico has been many times wounded, oppressed, disregarded, violated in its dignity....and yet he found there the light of faith that transfigures us and enlightens our way. Pope Francis reminded us over and over again of our human dignity and insisted that we not become resigned to abuse, oppression and marginalization from any group or institution. I hope all of us can keep key phrases in our hearts and turn them into actions that build a better world.

Sr. Patricia Henry OSB, Prioress, Monasterio Pan de Vida, Torreon, Coahuila, MX

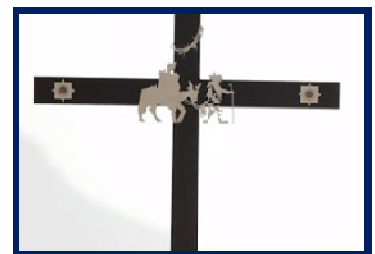
Reflection on the POPE'S Visit

We felt encouraged by Papa Francisco's visit to the border. The messages of hope hit their mark. He urged changes: the violence must stop, the low-wage exploitation of workers must stop, the immigrants must be given dignity and respect.

Saying a prayer at the cross erected on the Mexican side but facing El Paso was a wonderful tribute to the immigrants that have left their families to find a better life in the U.S. At the base of the cross were a number of shoes abandoned by immigrants in the desert. On the crosses were an image of the Holy Family fleeing. Perhaps, this could become a place of pilgrimage and remembrance of the hardships immigrants encounter fleeing violence, in the oppressive desert heat, and at the hands of human traffickers.

The Holy Father said, "I want to invite you to dream, to dream of a Mexico where a father can have time to play with his son, where a mother can have time to play with her children." A female maquila worker told the Pope her hours were long and wages too little for quality time with her family. The message to the inmates he visited was one of hope and redemption. In fact, all of us were deeply touched by the Pope's message and his down-to-earth attitude, identifying with immigrants since his own parents were also immigrants.

Victor Munoz, Resident of El Paso



What Pope Francis' visit means for Texas

Reprinted with permission from **THE TEXAS TRIBUNE**, February 22, 2016 — www.texastribune.org

As Pope Francis visits Mexico this week, his message should resonate across the border and throughout the great state of Texas. We have so much to learn from the Pope's guidance, particularly around education, health care and immigration.

Pope Francis has decreed 2016 the Jubilee Year of Mercy. With all the unpleasant politics and xenophobia rampant in Texas today, our state leaders could stand to be more merciful. Indeed, underfunding public education, refusing federal health care programs and discriminating against immigrants violate religious teachings and contradict Texas' values. Continuing the Pope's focus on those who struggle and yearn for opportunity, his visit on Wednesday to Ciudad Juárez will include stops at a prison and at a gathering of business leaders and workers.

For nearly 100 years, the Benedictine Sisters have relied on our faith to advocate for the well-being of all Texans. We have responded to the needs of those we serve through our ministries in the areas of spirituality, hospitality, education, peace, justice, health care and pastoral care. And more than 30 years ago, we recognized that government plays a role in fighting poverty and improving lives, which is why we founded what has become the venerable Center for Public Policy Priorities.

Today, we need leaders who believe in justice, compassion, charity and human dignity. Pope Francis' message that immigrants deserve dignity is a timely one. I am disheartened by state leaders who have tried to shun refugees fleeing violence and persecution. It is painful to think how immigrants to Texas have been treated. While visiting one of the immigrant detention centers for women and children in South Texas — helping with a communion service and meeting with detained women — I have heard their heartbreaking stories and witnessed their powerful faith.

I am hopeful, however, about local efforts to welcome those in need. In San Antonio, the Interfaith Welcoming Committee formed in response to the needs of the women and children, including their release from the detention centers in South Texas. Most big city mayors in Texas have publicly called for welcoming immigrants and refugees. This week, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner will host a regional meeting of the White House Task Force on New Americans, where leaders will discuss ways Texas can be more welcoming. Our culture and economy benefit greatly from immigrants, and we must welcome them — not marginalize them — in our actions and our public policies. Small businesses owned by immigrants, for example, contributed \$4.4 billion in earnings to the Texas economy in 2011.

A major way our leaders can heed the Pope's message to heal and help others is by expanding access to health care. We have the country's highest rate of uninsured people, inexcusable in a state this great. Accepting federal dollars to expand Medicaid would cover working poor adults and protect hundreds of thousands from medical bankruptcy, helping countless families work their way out of poverty.

With Pope Francis at our border, it's time to renew our call on state leaders to close the health care coverage gap. Eventually, Pope Francis will return to the Vatican and the media frenzy will subside, but his message of mercy and compassion should inspire us to keep fighting for all Texans. Our state can be a beacon for justice and opportunity. Let's make Texas the best state for hard-working people and their families, regardless of background.

By *Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB*,
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas
This story has been edited for length.



Why 'Laudato Si' Should be on the Reading List of Every CEO

Rev. Seamus P. Finn, OMI

Reprinted from the [Huffington Post](#). Used with permission; edited for space.

Upon reading the much anticipated Papal Encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, I found myself immediately looking for ways to get it into the hands of the CEOs I know. While it is a genuinely great read, it is even better as a resource for institutionalizing ethical business principles, and a brilliant illustration of what servant leadership looks like.

There will be many interpretations of this Encyclical. ... I remain hopeful that more forward-thinking CEOs will hear the deeper ideas he is proposing. Pope Francis is clearly extending an invitation to corporate leaders who authentically wish to be a part of the solution to help heal the world.

As I see it, the Pope's messages for business leaders are as follows:

- 1. Embrace integral ecology:** To be good stewards of God's creation corporations must acknowledge the earth's finite resources and respect our shared commons. *[They]* must account for all externalities, measure their footprints on the planet, and restore harmony to the environment for future generations.
- 2. Be a leader in addressing inequality where your company operates:** Current systems discourage equitable access to land, food, water and capital. Corporate practices that begin with the premise of, not just fairness, but active consideration of those less fortunate, will begin to address global inequality and build healthier, more socially sustainable communities. Business models that are exclusively focused on maximizing profit without integrating social and environmental priorities are inherently inconsistent with the Pope's concept of justice.
- 3. Respect human rights:** The UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights make clear the corporate responsibility to respect and protect human rights and remedy abuses in global supply chains. Corporate human rights policies must include provisions protecting human rights, including the right to water and sanitation, adequate and safe food, and health care services. A global supply chain that is tainted by forced labor or trafficking sanctions human slavery -- a sin in any context.
- 4. Be collaborative and transparent in the search for solutions:** The systemic transformation this Encyclical is calling for will require a collaborative and inclusive process *[and]* active consultation with all stakeholders, especially the communities and bioregions ... impacted by corporate operations.

It is my hope that CEOs will read the Holy Father's teaching with an open mind and heart. *Laudato Si'* is an urgent reminder of the importance of instilling ethics and reciprocity in the culture of every corporation. A broad consensus of religious leaders have joined Pope Francis in reminding us that the earth is our common home, and that responsibility to care for it extends to all institutions and sectors of society. As leaders you are uniquely positioned to make ... the right choices and become the servant leaders our world so desperately needs.

Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. #225

The work of the CRI goes to the heart of the peace that Pope Francis speaks of. When corporations violate the earth, they violate vulnerable people -- farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, the rural and urban poor -- and they rob them of the basic conditions needed to live a life of peace and dignity. In an attempt to satisfy stockholders, they use environmentally unsound practices to obtain natural resources, pay unjustly low wages, and produce shoddy goods. They then need to use money to influence lawmakers to quash laws aimed at protecting the environment, requiring a just minimum wage, and funding social services. Advertising seeks to create never-ending artificial "needs" in consumers. This vicious circle destroys the peaceful fabric of a whole society by increasing the imbalance between the wealthy and the poor, as well as promoting the unease of people feeling that they need more and more things and experiences to be happy.

Sr. Patricia Coughlin, OSB, St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago

Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and “take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system.”

John Paul II , Encyclical Letter
Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,
30 December 1987
as quoted in *Laudato Si* , #5

Many times in the encyclical, Pope Francis affirms that humans do have the right and duty to transform the material world to make it more serviceable to the needs of human beings. Each affirmation of this ability of humans to intervene in the natural world is coupled with a caution: humans cannot just do as they please with nature. Nothing is disposable or insignificant. Human intervention must be very cautious, so that links essential to the proper functioning of the whole are not broken or altered with harmful effects.

The example of the great modern increase in gluten intolerance illustrates the problem. The cultivation and consumption of cereal grains has enabled civilizations to rise and flourish for the past 20,000 years. In that time, humans have been “intervening” in grain crops, selecting and promoting and improving, to better meet human needs. Now — suddenly, it seems — large numbers of people cannot tolerate the gluten found in these basic grains. Why?

Some possible explanations include:

- The human-engineered pace of change in grain crops has outstripped the ability of the human digestive system to adapt.
- This genetic modification of cereal crops might be a structural change, for which the body has no adaptive response.
- Methods of milling — the fineness of the grind, the removal of grain parts, and the addition of other substances are to blame.
- The gut biome— the micro-organisms of the intestine—has been compromised by antibiotics, additives, and environmental pollutants.

Our bottom line is that we really don’t know what is causing the rise in gluten intolerance, the exponential increase of allergies, the apparent increase of cancers, and so forth. Yes, we humans are given dominion over creation. But we cannot just do as we please. We must, as Pope Francis insists, “...take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system.” (#5)

Fr. Mark Stengle, OSB

Subiaco Abbey, Subiaco, Arkansas

ST. SCHOLASTICA MONASTERY (Ft. Smith, Arkansas) AND THE JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY

In addition to our scholarship program for girls in Esquipulas, Guatemala, we continue to try to be in solidarity with our Hispanic friends in this area. It is a privilege for members of the community to accompany immigrant families in need of medical, legal, and educational services. We write letters in support of family members on the verge of deportation and visit them in their homes. We try to help immigrant college students who don't qualify for governmental scholarships.

Believing that people want the opportunity to do good, we reach out to dentists, doctors, and lawyers to provide pro bono services. They usually respond graciously. At St. Scholastica’s request, an orthodontist recently agreed to provide braces for a young immigrant teenager (ineligible for governmental aid). Although desperately needed, \$6,400 braces would have been impossible for this single mother to afford.

We think it helps tremendously to make these requests in the name of our Benedictine community.

Sr. Rosalie Ruesewald, OSB, and Oblate *Kathy Jarvis*

Social Awareness Committee
St. Scholastica Monastery

Reflections on *Laudato Si*

On the Circular Model of Production, #22

Our monastery operates a sheep farm among other things. We remain close to nature with wool products and we use and sell compost for gardeners. We recently sold timber with strict selection to assure the growth of the smaller trees. Our bees produce honey and the wax is used for some of our candle production. We have gas under our property but we refused to use fracking. Money is a means for many things but not the end.

Br. Pierre, OSB

Mount Saviour Monastery, NY

Over 60 years ago, the Benedictine Sisters of Ridgely, Maryland, founded the *Benedictine School for Exceptional Children*, a residential, special-education facility, on our monastery grounds. Over the years, the program has expanded to include an *Open-Community Program*, where clients live in supervised homes and work in area businesses based on their abilities. There are also several *Senior Homes* where those clients approaching retirement age will be able to live in appropriate settings. While we no longer own or administer the school, several sisters continue to minister in the school programs, enabling both residents and clients to live fruitful lives. Over 30 years ago, the sisters founded *St. Martin's Barn*, an outreach program for the rural poor named for St. Martin de Porres. Initially a food pantry and thrift shop, this program has expanded, connecting clients with appropriate social service agencies. With others in the wider community, we built *St. Martin's House*, a transitional home for women and their children. While sisters no longer minister daily at *St. Martin's Ministries*, we continue to support this outreach to the rural poor through donations, assistance with and support of various projects and fundraisers.

Through the *Benedictine School* and *St. Martin's Ministries*, the Benedictine Sisters have embraced their shared responsibility for others. In turn, we have been richly blessed through the gratitude of those to whom we minister.

Reflections on Paragraph #229 — "We have a shared responsibility."

Sr. Eleanor Murray, OSB, St. Gertrude Monastery, Ridgely, MD

Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds.

Pope Francis
***Laudato Si*, #219**

José, undocumented and charged with a felony, can't afford to pay an attorney, so an over-worked, non-Spanish-speaking public defender is assigned to the case. José will probably not receive justice. Teresa, a counselor on a Native American reservation, grieves over rampant drug abuse and sex trafficking in her tribe.

Our Sisters historically have ministered with immigrants and Native Americans in parochial schools and pastoral ministry settings. Recently, however, by more intentional networking with the broader community through the

establishment of the ***Watertown Initiative to Prevent Sex Trafficking***, we collaborate with law enforcement, the public school system, social service agencies, tribal personnel, and other religious denominations to more effectively and compassionately respond to urgent and dehumanizing immigration and sex trafficking issues.

Sr. Marlene Minnaert, OSB
Prioress
Mother of God Monastery
Watertown, South Dakota

Each individual can do her bit. Still the sum total of all those 'bits' will not equal what can be done by a dedicated, active group which works with other groups, forming a network which spins out to touch and transform corporations. This effects real and lasting conversion that begins to solve complex problems. The cry of revolutionaries over the centuries includes the command 'Organize!'

Large corporations can still be affected by the persistent, nonviolent demands of their shareholders. When even a minority of their shareholders demand that they do the right thing, that

voice will eventually be heard. It may be that a corporation is finally educated into a more just reality.

They may change for the sake of their public image or just to get the nuisance off their back (LK18:3-6).

Organizing does this. We file many resolutions to keep pressure on corporations to do more.

Sr. Barbara McCracken, OSB
Mount Saint Scholastica, Atchison, Kansas

Reflections on *Laudato Si*

Any technical solution which science claims to offer will be powerless to solve the serious problems of our world if humanity loses its compass, if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well. Believers themselves must constantly feel challenged to live in a way consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions. They need to be encouraged to be ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace. —

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #200

We can't -- we won't care for the earth, if we don't learn to care for each other, all people. Today there is too much violence and greed. People have forgotten God and the sacredness of life. Religion and family are not central—so people don't live in harmony, sacrifice for the common good, or treat others well and fairly.

That is one reason that Benedictine communities are so important. Today we are living proof that people can live together in peace. Community is the sign we give to show others that living simply and sharing is both possible and desirable. Our hospitality and other ministries give encouragement to believe in and LIVE the Gospel so all others might know justice and peace.

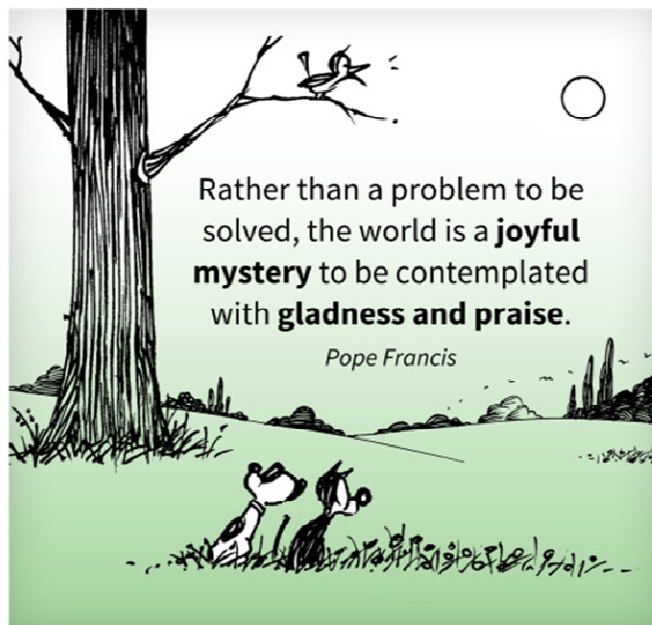
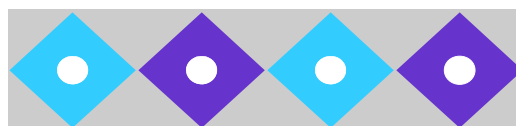
Sr. Mary David Hydro, OSB

Holy Name Monastery
St. Leo, Florida

"If humanity loses its compass..." A startling warning to be sure. Fortunately, history records where we have lost our sense of purpose and meaning over time. I say fortunately because reflecting on what was helps us frame a new and different response for tomorrow. Benedictines are lucky to have such "compass" points as the Rule of Benedict and 1500 years of shared experience, living with purposeful direction in "a school of the Lord's service." This is not to say we have always gotten it right or have done the right thing. But isn't one of our strongest convictions to attempt each day to live anew this verse: "Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else?" (4:20-21) We can and do ask, "Are we living in harmony and with sacrifice?" This "different way of acting" is what the world longs for; people desire to see something tangible and real rather than hear of a new theory. Benedictinism offers this: the reality of successful purposeful living over time, a long time. A stronger statement of faith, a more challenging example of faith in action is hard to find. Benedicite!

Sr. N. Barbara Younger, OSB

Mother of God Monastery, Watertown, SD
Reflecting on #200 *Laudato Si*



Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a **joyful mystery** to be contemplated with **gladness and praise.**

Pope Francis

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For Reflection: Continued Questions and Wonderings



- ✕ What are the effects of the continued rise in the surface temperature of the Earth ...
- ✕ How will we be more effective in the drive to cut carbon emissions ...
- ✕ What are the tipping points for making decisions about the effect we will have on the next seven generations ...
- ✕ What the long-term effects of drought will be — on our areas and the rest of the world ...
- ✕ Whether fracking causes earthquakes (Oklahoma experienced 907 magnitude 3+ earthquakes in 2015) ...
- ✕ Whether divestment from fossil fuel companies does make a difference ...
- ✕ Whether our country can come together to make decisions of importance ...
- ✕ Whether our country and other countries have the will and backbone to take the necessary steps to take bold steps to counter the problems of our times ...
- ✕ What else can we, as a Benedictine monastery, be doing ...

Hopeful Signs

The Pope Reaffirms the Importance of Our Work

Pope Francis continues to reinforce our Benedictine values, especially stewardship of the earth and care and concern for the poor and marginalized. Several quotes from ***Laudato Si'*** support the community's corporate responsibility ministry:

- ❖ [St. Francis] “shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.” [10]
- ❖ “The creation accounts in the book of Genesis ... suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relations: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself.” [#66]
- ❖ “I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest.”[#13]

What does Benedict say?

“Yet the Abbot should always keep in mind the sentence from the Acts of the Apostles that ‘distribution was made to each according as anyone had need’ (Acts 4:35).

In this manner, therefore, let the Abbot consider weaknesses of the needy and not the ill-will of the envious. But in all his decisions let him think about the retribution of God... Let those who receive new clothes, always give back the old ones at once, to be put away in the wardrobe for the poor. For it is sufficient if a monk has two tunics and two cowls, to allow for night wear and for the washing of these garments; more than that is superfluity and should be taken away. Let them return their stockings also and anything else that is old when they receive new ones.”

- Rule of Benedict—Chapter 55: On the Clothes and Shoes of the Monk

UPDATE FROM ST. LEO'S

Our venture with aquaponics is growing — we now have fish *and* vegetables. Many who help with this are becoming community, as we work with creation, rather than trying to control it. This month and next, the community will be hosting Habitat for Humanity workers who are constructing houses in our area, providing lunches for them with homemade breads and baked cookies. Sharing food as we share ourselves helps to spread Benedictine values and shows our own gratitude, respect and care for all human persons.

The community continues to pray and lobby on key issues: the death penalty, justice for immigrants, an end to human trafficking.

Sr. Mary David Hydro, OSB, Holy Name Monastery, St. Leo, Florida

“Understanding the difference between facility assessments, master planning, and full design. And how they all depend on each other”

By: Mark Higgins & Shane Larsen

At this RCRI workshop in October, the designs of the new Bristow and Boerne monasteries were featured. Sr. Cecelia Dwyer and Sr. Sylvia Ahr each spoke on video about the efforts of each monastery to plan for their future. Mark and Shane presented photos and drawings to illustrate the process of assessment, master planning and going to full design of the project.

Welcome to Mother of God Monastery, Watertown, South Dakota

The Benedictine Sisters of Mother of God Monastery are eager to be a member of the Coalition. We have long been concerned that justice be done so we must be an active part of it however we can. We are not able to attend shareholder meetings but we do make our voices heard. We follow the Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines of the U.S. Catholic Bishops. We require specific screenings in the areas of human rights, defense, and environmental/harmful products.

We prefer to invest in companies that have strong records on community involvement, good employee relationships, excellent environmental impact on policies and practices, respect for life, and improvement in the quality of life in such areas as health, housing, food, education, utilities, leisure, transportation and advertising. We look forward to working with BCRI for a brighter future for all.

-Sr. Marlene Minnaert, OSB, prioress



UPCOMING MEETING DATES:

**Interfaith Center on Corporate
Responsibility in New York City**
June 27-30, 2016
September 26-30, 2016

**The Resource Center for Religious
Institutes Conference (RCRI)**
Anaheim, California
October 11-14, 2016



Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment

P.O. Box 200423 San Antonio, TX 78220

The Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment

P. O. Box 200423 San Antonio, TX 78220 Phone: 210-348-6704

Members of the Benedictine CRI work to influence corporate practices on issues relating to basic human rights. Nineteen monasteries now comprise the Coalition. For further information about the coalition's work, please complete the following and mail it to the coalition at the address above. The Coalition staff includes: Sr. Susan Mika OSB, Vanessa Lopez and Linda Murphy.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL _____

MONASTERY (or other affiliation) _____



OUR MEMBERS



- **Mount St. Scholastica**
(Atchison, Kansas)
- **St. Scholastica Monastery**
(Boerne, Texas)
- **Benedictine Sisters of Virginia**
(Bristow, Virginia)
- **St. Scholastica Monastery**
(Chicago, Illinois)
- **Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration**
(Clyde, Missouri)
- **Benet Hill Monastery**
(Colorado Springs, Colorado)
- **Benedictine Sisters of Erie**
(Erie, Pennsylvania)
- **St. Scholastica Monastery**
(Fort Smith, Arkansas)

- **Sacred Heart Monastery**
(Lisle, Illinois)
- **Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore**
(Lutherville, Maryland)
- **Benedictine Women — Holy Wisdom Monastery**
(Madison, Wisconsin)
- **Monasterio de San Benito**
(Mexico, D.F.)
- **Immaculata Monastery**
(Norfolk, Nebraska)
- **Mount Saviour Monastery**
(Pine City, New York)
- **St. Gertrude Monastery**
(Ridgely, Maryland)

- **Benedictine Sisters of Florida**
(St. Leo, Florida)
- **Subiaco Abbey**
(Subiaco, Arkansas)
- **Monasterio Pan De Vida**
(Torreon, Coahuila, Mexico)
- **Mother of God Monastery**
(Watertown, SD)

Our Mission

Recognizing the directive from the Rule of St. Benedict that distribution should be made to each according to need, the Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment works to build a world in which corporate policies and practices reflect just and equitable distribution of resources for the common good..