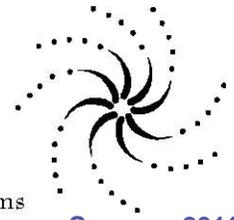


# Staying Connected



a publication designed for alumni of Catholic full-time volunteer programs

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## Staying Connected to Environmental Justice, Pt. 1

Welcome to the first of a two part series on staying connected to environmental justice. In considering the environment, we see not only the beauty of God's creation but also the fragility of our planet. We are reminded every year during the Easter Vigil that God found what He had created to be "good," but that does not free us from the responsibility of taking care of this good earth.

Early saints knew this. St. Francis of Assisi is popularly known as the patron saint of ecology. You might be familiar with the St. Francis Pledge, which was recently initiated by a group called the Catholic Climate Covenant to encourage Catholics and others to think about five interconnected responses to climate change.

To date more than 4,800 people from countries

around the world have taken this pledge. The pledge is included here for your reflection.

might wonder how care for creation can be seen as a justice issue in the Biblical sense. The prevailing

environment places a heavy burden on poor people, who are often forced to live in conditions that threaten their health and that of their children.

When people see that abuse of the environment has a human face, they are more likely to think twice about the decisions they make. In the current issue, we consider the urban farm movement as one example of efforts to heal blighted inner-city neighborhoods and provide nutritious food to residents there.

We also revisit the Gulf of Mexico one year after the BP Oil Disaster and consider some possible responses that are in keeping with the spirit of the St. Francis Pledge. Concerns about the environment are addressed on both macro and micro levels.

(See Pledge Pg. 4)

*I/We Pledge to:*

**PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.

**LEARN** about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.

**ASSESS** how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations-contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.

**ACT** to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.

**ADVOCATE** for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.



As you can see, the pledge is grounded in the principles of Biblical justice, which is primarily concerned with putting people in right relationship with one another.

At first glance, we

attitude for many years in the United States was that the decisions we make about the environment have no impact on human beings.

Yet, we have learned the degradation of the

### Gulf Coast Still Recovering

Since 2005, the Gulf Coast region has been trying to stay afloat. First Hurricane Katrina devastated the Coast through wind and tidal waves that wiped out neighborhoods in cities across Mississippi and Alabama, and broke levees in New Orleans flooding a majority of the city.

Just over a year ago, another flood came upon the Gulf Coast. This time, instead of water, it was oil. On April 20, 2010, a BP oil rig exploded and caught fire, killing 11 workers and injuring 17 others. The rig

sank into the ocean, and started a leak of over 200 million gallons of oil that



would eventually coat the Coast. The spill not only immediately impacted the wildlife and plants in the area, but also threatened the livelihood of those who depend on the Gulf

(See Gulf pg. 2)



Toxic coal sludge (right), is one of the by-products of so-called "clean" coal. This particular sludge lake is held back by an earthen dam, and sits above Marsh Fork Elementary School in Raleigh County, W.Va. In 1972, a similar earthen dam failed in Logan County, W.Va. at Buffalo Creek Hollow. 125 people were killed, 1,100 injured and over 4,000 left homeless in the flood.



# Urban Farms Yield Healthy Options

When Prince Charles came to Washington, D.C. for a conference on the future of sustainable food in early May, he didn't only visit the usual dignitaries and diplomats. Instead, four days after his son William's royal wedding to Kate Middleton, the prince was found digging in the dirt at Common Good City Farm in the Northwest section of the city, long known for its disparity between rich and poor.

Charles' visit helped bring international attention to the urban farm movement, which in the last decade has added a small measure of food security in areas of the country most reliant on obtaining food from outside sources.

Part teaching tool for urbanites across economic strata, part response to food deserts (densely populated areas lacking grocery stores, farmer's markets and other healthy options), urban farming is helping people re-learn the value of food from the soil to the plate.

In Detroit, a city as famous today for high rates of unemployment, housing foreclosures and crime as is once was for American manufacturing prowess, Earthworks Urban Farm has been twinning the values of organic growing practices and environmental stewardship for more than a decade.

The farm was founded in 1997 when Brother Rick



Samyn, a Capuchin Franciscan, felt called to use agriculture to address systemic change needs surrounding poverty, environmental destruction and health in low income neighborhoods in the city. Today, the farm continues its mission of serving people in the community by providing food for the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and facilitating a process for youth to sell the remainder of the produce at vegetable stands.

"My whole outlook on life shifted because of the work," said Marcia Lee, program director at Capuchin Franciscan Volunteer Corps Midwest, who completed her volunteer experience with the same program in 2007. "At Earthworks I began to understand that everything is sacred. The farm puts Catholic Social Teaching into practice because every action that is taken in running it makes a difference (in caring for God's creation)."

Lee and Rachel Severin, the current Cap Corps volunteer at Earthworks, said the key to planting and maintaining a successful urban garden is preparation. Daily care



can take 15 minutes to two hours, depending on the size of the plot and what is being grown.

"Just eating well makes a huge difference in how we treat each other and appreciate ourselves," Lee said. "Each of us individually living well locally as a community is essential to overcoming the injustices of the world and to live out the Kingdom of God in a tangible way."

## (Gulf from pg. 1)

Coast for work. As Christians, we are called to help our fellow brothers and sisters most in need.

We are called to be respectful of the Earth that God has given us. When it comes to disasters



perpetuated by human over-consumption, we are called to a greater awareness of our role on this Earth. What can we, as former missionaries, do to lessen our environment footprint, to stand in solidarity with our neighbors most affected, and to care for the Earth?

We have seen the images of the post-Katrina and

post-BP spill Gulf Coast. We have heard stories of the loss of lives and ways of life. We have prayed and sent donations. We may have even gone and volunteered for a week, month or year. But what are some other ways that we can help our neighbors?

Whether we are 10, 100 or 1,000 miles away, what can we do to keep our brothers and sisters afloat? As detailed on the next page, we can pray, learn, donate, act, serve and volunteer.

Be sure to visit [www.pallotticenter.org](http://www.pallotticenter.org) for discernment resources for short and long term volunteer opportunities.

## Vatican Issues Warning

More than two million deaths worldwide occur on a yearly basis due to human-caused changes in air composition, according to a recent Working Group report commissioned by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The world's "bottom 3 billion"-those too poor to withstand the dangers of industrialization-face particular threats to water and food security.

This dangerous geological epoch that we are living in, characterized by human exploitation of fossil fuels and natural resources, has been given the name "Anthropocene" by Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen.

The 1,000 billion tons of

carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere each year have led to rapidly shrinking glaciers. Their disintegration threatens local communities near the Hindu Kush Himalayan mountain region of Tibet, as well as others who depend on mountain water.

Humans have made changes to the climate resulting in losses of forests, coral reefs, and wetlands, which cause food and water shortages for vulnerable persons.

The Working Group is committed to making sure that all people "receive their daily bread" as well as fresh air and clean water. (See Warning pg. 4)

# The BP Disaster: A Christian Response

## Pray:

For victims of Hurricane Katrina from the United States Council of Catholic Bishops  
(<http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/katrinaprayers.shtml>)

For our environment Canticle of the Sun (<http://www.webster.edu/~barrettb/canticle.htm>)

## Learn:

Watch an interactive animated portrayal of the flooding in New Orleans after Katrina.  
<http://www.nola.com/katrina/graphics/flashflood.swf>

See the progress that has been made in the efforts to clean up after the BP Oil Spill.  
<http://www.restorethegulf.gov/release/2011/05/11/oil-spill-cost-and-reimbursement-fact-sheet>

## Donate:

The Greater New Orleans Foundation Gulf Coast Oil Spill Fund  
(<http://www.gnof.org/programs/gnof-oil-spill-fund/>)

International Bird Rescue  
(<https://npo.networkforgood.org/Donate/Donate.aspx?npoSubscriptionId=1003562>)

## Act:

Take a stand against BP and other oil companies by taking easy, practical steps to reduce your dependence on oil

Bike, walk, or take public transportation more often.

Use less plastic (which oil is used to make); buy a reusable water bottle and use cloth grocery bags.

Switch your household cleaning products to those with the DfE (Design for the Environment) labels.  
(<http://www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/projects/formulat/saferproductlabeling.htm>)

## Serve:

Spend a week or two helping to rebuild the homes of elderly and disabled residents of New Orleans who are still not able to get back into their houses after Hurricane Katrina. Operation Helping Hands a ministry of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, provides service projects for groups of 6-25. <http://www.ccano.org/programs/operation-helping-hands/>

Reach out to those still recovering from Hurricane Katrina in areas of Mississippi.  
[http://projecthopeandcompassion.org/help\\_page.htm](http://projecthopeandcompassion.org/help_page.htm)

## For more opportunities for service, visit the following websites:

Mississippi <http://www.mcvs.org/>; Louisiana <http://www.volunteerlouisiana.gov/>; Florida <http://www.volunteerfloridadisaster.org/>; Alabama <http://www.servealabama.gov/2010/default.aspx>.

## Volunteer (again):

Have you been getting the itch to do mission work for another year or two? Interested in going to New Orleans, LA? The Cabrini Mission Corps, Christian Brothers Lay Volunteer Program, Domini can Volunteers, Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Lasallian Volunteers, and Notre Dame Mission Volunteers all have placement sites in the New Orleans area. Interested in somewhere else in the Gulf Coast region? The Christian Brothers Lay Volunteer Program have placements in Bonita Spring, FL; the Jesuit Volunteers have placements in Mobile, AL; and the Missionary Cenacle Volunteers have a short-term opportunity in Camden, MS. For more information on these programs visit [www.pallotti-center.org/index.php?m=cd](http://www.pallotti-center.org/index.php?m=cd)

**(Pledge from pg. 1)** Inside this issue, you will read about the recent findings of a Vatican Commission made up of some of the world's best experts on climate change.

Meanwhile, the St. Francis Pledge reminds us that we should think of issues such as global warming as evidence of sin in the world, which requires a very personal call to repentance.

The pledge invites us to consider the small, every day personal choices that we make as individuals that impact the environment and, by extension, the poor.

Think about your current attitudes concerning care for creation in relation to your thoughts while you were a long-term volunteer. Are you more or less in tune with the call for environmental justice than you were during your mission year? If you need a boost, visit <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/> and keep reading.



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Help us recycle. Please do your part by passing on your copy to another former volunteer or by recycling the paper. Thanks!

**(Warning from pg. 2)**

Protecting the environment is an issue of peace and justice, as its devastation is deadly to the human race. To address this issue the Working Group has made the following recommendations:

**I.** Immediately reduce carbon dioxide emissions to meet international global warming targets. Nations should transition to renewable energy sources, stop deforestation and develop technology to take excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

**II.** Slow down climate change this century by decreasing the amount of air pollutants (including dark soot, methane, and hydrofluorocarbons) by half. This will prevent millions of deaths caused by respiratory disease and millions of tons

of crop damages each year.

**III.** Make a plan to deal with chronic and abrupt climatic changes that society can not mitigate.

The Working Group advocates for climate policy that stabilizes greenhouse gas emissions to stop dangerous human interference with the climate and ensure that food production is not threatened.

The group says policies relating to air pollution and climate change should be made in conjunction.

In addition to efforts to mitigate environmental destruction, the Working Group calls for a plan to assess and adapt to damage that has already been done.

"We appeal to all nations to develop and implement, without delay, effective and fair policies to reduce the causes and impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems, including mountain glaciers and their watersheds, aware that we all live in the same home. By acting now, in the spirit of common but differ-

entiated responsibility, we accept our duty to one another and to the stewardship of a planet blessed with the gift of life," the Working Group states in its report.

The 15-page report report, entitled "Fate of Mountain Glaciers in the Anthropocene" was put together by a group of glaciologists, climate scientists, physicists, meteorologists, hydrologists, mountaineers and lawyers whose meeting was organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in the Vatican from April 2-4, 2011. It serves as both a warning and a call to action and can be found online at [http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Pontifical-Academy-of-Sciences\\_Glacier\\_Report\\_050511\\_final.pdf](http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Pontifical-Academy-of-Sciences_Glacier_Report_050511_final.pdf).



Harmful mining practices mark the anthropocene.

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**Mission:** Our goal is to promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church, and to support lay volunteers before, during and after their term of service.

**Inspiration:** The Center takes inspiration from St. Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850), who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an image of God and as called to be missionary. Please visit our website, [www.pallotticenter.org](http://www.pallotticenter.org), for more information.