



# REDWOODS MONASTERY NEWSLETTER Autumn 2015

*Dear Friends of Redwoods Monastery:*

*This newsletter is an effort on our part to stay connected with you and to share with you the spirit of Redwoods, even when you are not physically present here. I hope you enjoy these thoughts and pictures and I invite you to let us know what you think of the newsletter. With prayerful wishes for peace, Sister Kathy DeVico.*



Dear Friends,

As autumn moves along and Advent beckons, we witness creation receiving graciously the changes that come with this season. We are surrounded by the green of our mixed redwood forests; the few maple trees and other deciduous offered some amazing autumn color all around us. The light is soft and illumines, like the brush strokes of an artist, the inherent beauty of God's created world. Indeed we are blessed to be stewards of this property we are living on!

We have much to be grateful for. Because of your generosity and on-going support we have put new doors (24 in all!) in the guesthouse; we have upgraded the electrical panels in the two guesthouse units, along with installing a generator. The final good news is that we have raised half the money we need to build a 'welcome center.'

We are dedicating this newsletter to Pope Francis' encyclical titled *Laudato Si, On Care For Our Common Home*. I hope you will find encouragement in the reflections offered from members of the community along with those of two friends of the monastery who, through their ecological work, have dedicated their lives to protecting and sustaining life in our natural resources. The encyclical asked us all to reflect on how we live with each other, with all of the creatures of God's creation and with our home, the Earth. Pope Francis calls us to an orientation toward the poor and towards social justice. As the Pope instructs, care for our earth is caring for our world's humanity, at a time when we so

need to recognize that the needs of the poor and dispossessed reflect the needs of our earth. In that regard, I was very touched by a note from Tensie Hernandez of the Catholic Worker organization that expresses the oneness we feel as a community with those who work in caring for others and for our common home. We include her note in the newsletter.

We also wanted to share some photos of Redwoods in Autumn and, as this is the centennial of the birth of Thomas Merton, a photograph he took in 1968 when he visited Redwoods. The black and white picture is of the eucalyptus tree at nearby Needle Rock and the tree is still known today as the "Merton Tree."

You were all present with us as we celebrated our Eucharist of Thanksgiving, thanking God for you and for all that you have made possible for us and this monastery.

Wishing each of you a blessed Advent,

*Sr. Kathy*

Sr. Kathy DeVico & the Redwoods Monastery community



Photograph by Thomas Merton. Used with permission of the Merton Legacy Trust and the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University

## A Reflection:

### *On Care for Our Common Home*

*Sharon Duggan*

Imagine receiving a gift – a greeting, word, inspiration, openness, willingness, love – which expands your heart and resonates into the future, moving you deeply. I believe we all have received such gifts in our lives.

Pope Francis gives us just such a gift in his encyclical letter *On Care for Our Common Home*. Simply stated, “nothing in this world is indifferent to us.” I have read, and reread his words, and find such solace and hope in his letter. As one who, according to Francis, works to propose “urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources,” (111) which are insufficient to deal with our ecological crisis, I am heartened by his invitation to dialogue and engage.

As scientist and a Jesuit, Pope Francis brings his expertise and intellect to a commanding subject. Francis outlines the realities of our time, clearly focused on the devastating reality of climate change and global crises, framed as “one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (139). He locates environmental degradation in a reckless pursuit of profits, excessive faith in technology and political shortsightedness. He speaks to the “enormous inequalities in our midst” (90).

More than just providing a rigorous exposé, Francis offers us such instruction – teaching of the relatedness of all. “Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes” (92). He urges us to struggle with deeper issues, and invites us to engage a “great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge,” which “will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal” (202).

Francis inspires us to embrace a “moral imperative” to understand the consequences of our actions (208). He invites us to heed the “summons” of the ecological crisis and engage both a profound interior conversion and a community conversion anchored in gratitude and a loving awareness of our interrelationship with all creatures (217-220). This is “an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full” (226).



Pope Francis’ letter is required reading for all of us. It urges an abiding faith to encounter reality and engage deeply with our world. Most important, it asks all of us – no matter who we are – to accept this invitation to conversion, to step outside of our comfort zone, and to move forward in new ways with deeper “tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings” (91).

Jesus teaches that we must let our light shine “to give light to all in the house.” (*Matt. 5:15*) For the light to do its job properly, it must shine unimpeded. Francis has given us such a gift of light in his words and invitation. What shall we do to let it shine? For each of us, this is our moment.

*Sharon Duggan is a member of our Advisory Committee, and a public interest attorney who has worked for more than 30 years to protect and defend natural resources.*

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## **Pope Francis: *On Care For Our Common Home* – Autumn: 2015**

*Sr. Kathy DeVico*

Why would a Pope write an entire encyclical on care for our common home: that is care for our ‘mother earth,’ care for creation? He is clear this care for our common home can not be separated from our care for the poor and for changing those structures in societies that keep the poor oppressed, victims of pollution, bad water and other environmental degradation. Pope Francis has a keen sense that our world is at a threshold, a threshold where the choices we make now are critical for the future of our planet. He quotes the Patriarch Bartholomew at the beginning of his document in words that shake our consciousness to see more broadly and deeply to what we are doing to this our ‘common home’: “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God” (8).

In one of the psalms that we chant at the Divine Office, there is this refrain: ‘Not to us God not to us but to your name give the glory.’ And then this verse from the same Psalm 113-B: ‘The heavens belong to the Lord but to us God has given the earth.’ To us God has given the earth: Care for our common home is to give glory to God...care for our

common home is a concrete act of offering gratitude to God for the gifts of creation...care for our common home is an expression of our love for God and one another...we care for God’s gifts with each simple act of caring for our earth...Care for our common home is care for the divine life pulsating in the life of His creation.

Toward the end of the encyclical Pope Francis writes: "Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made of small gestures, which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In the end a world exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms" (88). Let us together find those 'small gestures' that we each can do to manifest more our love for this our common home. Let us find ways to not let Pope Francis' words to us go unheeded.

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*Tensie Hernandez and her husband Dennis maintain the Catholic Worker house in Guadalupe, California, amidst farmworkers and their families. She and her family visit Redwoods each year to take time for retreat and to benefit from the experience offered at Redwoods. As someone who spends all of her time working for the poor and social justice, she offered these words about Redwoods:*

We try and attend to the many needs of this community in Guadalupe by offering a supplemental food and clothing program, free medical clinic, advocacy and life accompaniment. Our house is called Beatitude House



where all are welcome and where we all strive to find the blessedness in our mutual and utter need of God's mercy and love.

Redwoods is the "deserted place" that Jesus went to nourish himself after healing and feeding the people that flocked to him constantly. He, and we, need a place in which to renew the call of service to the "least of these." What makes Redwoods so unique is their union with us in our work through prayer, concern and knowledge of the issues in the world. They do not shut the world out in order to pray; they exclude themselves from active participation in service and instead participate in a hidden manner that is just as valuable in creating the kingdom of God here on earth. We are one body and we need to support each others' gifts. I am honored for their love and support over these many years and I want to encourage any one who can support them to do so.

## Reflections on *Laudato Si*

Pope Francis asks us with urgency to return to values of simple living, namely: care of our planet and the natural beauty that surrounds us, and care for each other as reflected in societal values of Peace and Justice.

These are key elements in our monastic way of life too. Tending a monastic garden and nurturing its plant life is a prayer that nourishes my mindfulness and humble service to others in community. This brings joy and leads to a just peace that unites all creation.

*Sr. Ann-Marie Buss*

The power of prayer is intention. Even the simple act of recycling, done out of care, caresses the earth and restores balance.

*Sr. Suzanne Mattiuzzo*



"Merton Tree" photographed in 1994 by Redwoods Monastery guest Yvonne Rose

*"The most important thing is that we are here, at this place, in a house of prayer....Enjoy this. Drink it all in. Everything, the redwood forests, the sea, the sky, the waves, the birds, the sea-lions. It is in all this that you will find your answers. Here is where everything connects."*

Words of Thomas Merton as quoted by Br. David Steindl-Rast in *Recollections of Thomas Merton's Last Days in the West*

Listening to the encyclical letter, what struck me is the Pope's focus on harmony of Creation. No dialectic, no antagonism but this insight :

"The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God."

In this "precious book written by God" we are invited/ called to rediscover this harmony "singing the hymn of each existence." This is hope, love and joy in our interconnectedness/relationship.

*Sr. Claire Bouttin*

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## Reading *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*

### *Rondal Snodgrass*

When on retreat this summer, I was given a copy of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* by Abbess Sr. Kathy Devico. She, with her own persuasive passion and commitment, asked that I read it and then contemplate how to react and what to do in response. I have been an activist for social and environmental justice for decades and during this time have worked closely with the Monastery to keep the beauty and wisdom of their surrounding forests preserved in perpetuity.

With the Encyclical in my hands, I returned to my room and began to read. I was utterly amazed and enormously impressed, filled with new understanding and life changing inspiration.

It is a gospel of faith, with intellectual and scientific authenticity, blended with instruction and direction. Throughout the six chapters there is a pervasive and deep spiritual connection to the connectivity of all creatures, all life forms, and all people here on earth. Pope Francis reveals the truth of the causes of the damage and mistreatment of our Mother Earth. This is not an encyclical for Catholics alone but is for every person on this planet.

Pope Francis warns us of the danger ahead and of the danger of "weak responses."

It is a call for action, action with faith and solidarity. I am moving forward to enlarge the community of concern. In my home city, I am establishing study groups for participants to share their reactions to the messages within the Encyclical.

This amazing treatise belongs in every household. It is clear to me that God is

working and divining though this poetic, brilliant, and challenging document.

I hope you will take it upon yourself to not only hear of this encyclical, but to read it.

With this clear call to all of us, please consider what steps you will take to respond.

*A friend of the Monastery, Rondal Snodgrass helped create Sanctuary Forest, and served as its Executive Director from 1987-2000. He has been fully engaged in North Coast conservation work for decades, and with his leadership has helped protect and conserve more than 75,000 acres of forestlands, farmlands, streams and rivers.*

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*Thomas Merton remains a source of spiritual inspiration and a guide for many people...Merton was above all a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and for the Church. He was also a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions."*

Pope Francis in an address to the US Congress  
September 24, 2015

*If you would like to give a present of Redwoods honey and cards this Christmas season, you can order through our store web site:*

**<http://www.redwoodsabbey.org/Store/>**



*In these challenging economic times if you can remember us in your year-end giving we would be deeply appreciative.*



**Redwoods Abbey**

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