

**Connecting our values with the Laudato Si’ Goals.**

At the very heart of our identity as Religious Sisters of Charity is our commitment to the service of the poor ‘set in the context of the mission of Jesus who sent his apostles to proclaim the reign of God and to heal.’ For over 200 years now, we have been committed to serve the poor in different ways as we continue to discern our mission and evaluate our apostolic effectiveness. Our aim is to give to the poor what the rich can buy with money. The face of poverty is changing all the time to include the vulnerable children and adults, the trafficked, refugees etc. and in the more recent years the suffering planet. For many years, we have been committed to care for the earth as mandated in our 2007 and 2013 General Chapters. Mary Aikenhead herself said “we ought to pray that Our Lord may preserve the truly abundant fruits of the earth” 18th August 1853. Like many other Religious Congregations, we have responded to Pope Francis’ invitation to join the rest of the Catholic World to live and promote the Laudato Si goals in our individual lives, communities and our ministries according to the measure of grace God has given to each. Our values as a Congregation connect very much to the seven Laudato Si goals

**Response to the Cry of the** **Earth** – Our sense of relatedness and our efforts to heal broken relationships has come to include the whole of creation as reflected in our documents – ‘By constantly nurturing right relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with creation, our communities struggle to be a sacramental sign and gift to a world of fragile and broken relationships.’ C.D page 28

“There is an urgent call for us at this time, as individual sisters and as a congregation, to care for the earth. The precious gift of creation which we hold in trust for future generations is both beautiful and fragile. The present consumerist lifestyle has accelerated the earth’s natural cycle of warming and cooling. While all of humanity will be affected, those who will suffer most will be the poor especially children and the elderly”. General Chapter 2007.

**Response to the Cry of the Poor**

Our sisters continue to discern the different faces of poverty and strive to make a response. Following in the footsteps of Mary Aikenhead, ‘To each and all, they … bring the love and tenderness of Christ, respecting human dignity in impoverished circumstances.’ C.D pg 21

‘As servants of Christ’s mission, we are greatly enriched by opening our hearts and our very lives to the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of men, women and children of our age, especially those who are disadvantaged or in any way afflicted.’ C.D. pg 21-22

Relying on Divine Providence and following the teaching of our foundress Mary Aikenhead, ‘we are strengthened to enter into the world of the struggles or our times; to stand in solidarity with people who are disadvantaged; to be advocates of all who are poor, to speak with and for them, to empower them and to be empowered by them.’ C.D pg 22

“in the spirit of our 4th vow, we desire to reach out with the compassion of Christ to all, especially the most vulnerable and those in greatest need. Open to the reality that this will challenge us to respect and reverence, the whole of creation, the cultures and traditions of every race and nation, moving us beyond our fears and prejudices, as we try to respond to the needs of our times”, General Chapter 2001.

**Ecological Economics**

In some parts of our congregation, we are trying to exercise our stewardship by choosing ethical investments – use of solar energy rather than generators or electricity, use of hybrid cars rather than manual cars, choosing to buy earth friendly cleaning products, soap, shampoos etc. Our documents call us to understand our poverty as ‘a public commitment to responsible stewardship of the goods of the earth and to the struggle for a more just and economic order’. CD pg. 15

“we speak out at both local and multi-national levels, against government policies and business practices which are destructive of our planet”. General Chapter 2007.

**Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles**

‘Our manner of life both in personal and in community is to be simple and hospitable … It is recommended that each community draw up a plan that reflects the desire to live simply,

It is disturbing. As the gap between the rich and the poor ever widens and as unjust structures force the greater part of the human family to exist in dehumanising conditions, the cry of the poor has become more piercing. This challenges us to make essential changes in our manner and style of living. C.D. pg 15. As we journey to sustainable ecology, we will desire to walk, car pool, cycle or use public transport rather than driving.

“we are challenged to live a lifestyle e that is simple, thereby witnessing to our commitment to care for the earth”. General Chapter 2007.

**Ecological Education**

Over the last twenty-five years through chapter documents, courses, seminars, webinars, sabbatical programmes, membership of ecology groups, reading groups, reading, our sisters are involved in on-going ecological education.

“We continue to educate ourselves in order to deepen our understanding of the shift that is required in our relationships with the earth and all of life”. General Chapter 2007

In one part of the Congregation, awareness raising and education is being done on the Laudato Si Goals through sending out a weekly reflection to communities and working with CAFOD on their Live Simply campaign. Parishes are being encouraged to include in their Confirmation programme etc work on ecology using the material available from CAFOD.

**Ecological Spirituality**

The Ignatian spirituality of finding God in all things is central to our life and ties in very well with the ecological spirituality. ‘In the Ignatian constitutions, Mary Aikenhead saw how her call and desire for Religious life could be fulfilled by integrating contemplation and action in the service of the poor. … To be a contemplative even in the midst of activity, to seek and find God in all things with a love that leads to a full and total surrender … was also central in the heart of Mary Aikenhead.’ C.D pg 2

The cry of the earth is the cry of the poor. We realise that the health and safety of our common home is at risk. Therefore, the love of Christ urges us as RSC’s to hear and respond to this cry, acknowledging that human activity contributes to the endangerment of our common home. With hope and determination, we commit ourselves, to take up the challenge of conversion and transformation, of our way of living, for the wellbeing of all creation and future generations”. Congregational Statement issued 2017.

**Community Engagement and Participatory Action**

‘In our various ministries, we are committed to devote ourselves to building a more just society and to collaborating with others … to create communities of solidarity in seeking justice. As Sisters of Charity we are called to work in collaboration with each other, with the local clergy, with members of other religious congregations and lay organisations in the church, with civil authorities, as well as with people of all faiths and no

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