



**Laudato Si' Action Platform:
A Reflection on Past Actions of the Sisters of Providence
of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods Community
and our Commitment to the Future**

In May, 2020, at the request of Pope Francis, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced the Laudato Si' Action Platform (LSAP) as a service to the universal Catholic Church and to "all men and women of good will." (LS3) It is a seven-year process to assist groups in their efforts to make significant progress in mitigating climate change. Immediately upon hearing of this effort, the Climate Change Task Force (CCTF) began to study the Action Platform and committed itself to working to helping the Providence Community to engage in the seven-year process.

In preparation for committing ourselves to the process, the CCTF examined the seven goals of the LSAP and identified some of the actions (certainly NOT an exhaustive list!) in which the Providence Community already has engaged relative to each of the goals. What follows is a summary of our recent work as a Providence Community.

Laudato Si Goals and Providence Community Current and Past Actions:

RESPONDING TO THE CRY OF EARTH (a call to protect our common home for the well-being of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability):

Current and Past Actions: Our White Violet Center for Eco-Justice has been a 25-year commitment to maintaining our wetlands and forests and using organic farming. WVC has committed to land restoration through the growth of alpacas; our chickens provide cage-free eggs. Through the USDA, we have made a ten-year commitment to put large tracts of land into pollinator habitats. Our land ethic details our commitment to responding to the Cry of Earth. The Providence Climate Agreement/Manifesto was adopted by the Providence Community three years ago – it was a personal invitation and commitment of individuals within the community to reduce her/his carbon footprints.

RESPONDING TO THE CRY OF THE POOR (a call to promote eco-justice as a basic human right, aware that we are called to defend and protect human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth):

Current and Past Actions: Our connections and work with NETWORK since its inception and more recent engagement with NETWORK allow us to do advocacy at a national level. Many members of the Providence Community engage in direct services with the poor in our sponsored institutions and ministries, including Miracle Place, Miracle Home, Mother Maria Gratia Hostel for Girls, Providence Food Pantry, Connecting Link, Providence Cristo Rey High School. Many more work in impoverished neighborhoods of urban cities such as Chicago. For over 40 years, we provided staff for 8th Day Center for Justice, and numerous other persons are doing/have done extensive work in justice ministry. Our work with police in neighborhoods,

our long-time commitment to abolishing the death penalty, our establishment of St. Mary's Senior Living and Miller Parrott Lofts, our Justice Promoter work, and our temporary housing of an asylum-seeking family and assistance with Afghan refugees are all responses to the cry of the poor.

BUILDING ECOLOGICAL ECONOMIES (acknowledgement that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere—our common home):

Current and Past Actions: Our commitment to do impact investing, not only in our alternative investments but also with some of our other investments is a real commitment to “put our money where our mouths are.” We have also made a commitment to purchase hybrid cars. We make the sale of fair trade items in Linden Leaf Gifts and farm store a priority.

ADOPTING SIMPLE LIFESTYLES (a goal grounded in the idea of sufficiency and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy):

Current and Past Actions: Many of us have committed to eating lower on food chain, and some have committed to vegetarian and vegan diets. Our Motherhouse community currently has two meatless days per week, and individual sisters have committed to even more meatless days. The widespread adoption of the Providence Climate Agreement has kept us as individuals attentive to the ways that our living more simply can contribute to the good of the world through such actions as the use of less plastic; shorter showers; reusing or recycling as much as possible; using less electricity, etc.

CREATING ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION (re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action):

Current and Past Actions: Our White Violet Center programs provide formal and informal education. We have offered programs on climate awareness and impacts of eating lower on the food chain. Members of the Providence Community have given homilies in churches and done presentations at parish gatherings. Our Earth Day each year is a massive educational endeavor.

ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY (recovering a religious vision of God's creation and encouraging greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude):

Current and Past Actions: We continually offer eco-spirituality programs through Providence Center; create Earth/Creation-Centered prayers. Through the years we have engaged in rethinking Providence Spirituality and multiple speakers have connected Providence spirituality to ecology.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY ACTION AND ADVOCACY (encouraging the development of policies and practices that protect our common home and all peoples who share it):

Current and Past Actions: Housing for refugee family; work with refugees and immigrants; walking with incarcerated; actions against death penalty; actions against negative immigration practices and laws; actions to change wealth gap and raise awareness of unjust/unfair tax laws;

anti-human trafficking work in collaboration with others in Chicago area and elsewhere; Connecting Link; work with Citizens Climate Lobby to promote a carbon fee and dividend law; tracking the work of Biden/Kerry – all are ways that we in the Providence Community are engaged in community action and advocacy.

And we know that there is still much to be done. As we have done for years, we will use our Land Ethic and our Providence Identity Lens as guiding forces as we plan for the future.



Sisters of Providence Land Ethic:

As members of one sacred Earth community, we Sisters of Providence commit ourselves individually and communally to care for our resources and to make decisions regarding their current and future use as we seek to balance our individual and SP communal economic needs with the sustainability needs of Earth community. The following commitments will guide our decisions regarding the care and use of our resources.

“This land was no longer for me the land of exile; it was the portion of my inheritance, and in it I hope to dwell all the days of my life.”

— From the journals of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin

Care and Use of Resources

- *We will conserve natural resources and preserve species unique to an area.*
- *We will make every effort to use non-toxic materials that will not poison Earth community in the present or in the future.*
- *We will promote conservation and reduction of consumption by recycling and purchasing recycled materials.*
- *We will practice conservation and restoration of land through food production, management of forests and wild spaces, and healing and re-habitation of diminished areas.*
- *We will be advocates for ethical principles in resource use at local, state, national and global levels.*
- *We will explore options and possibilities as we seek both environmental and financial sustainability.*
- *We will research options such as: land trusts, easements, deed restrictions and the transfer or selling of development rights, for the protection of our resources and will investigate their ramifications.*
- *We will provide educational opportunities and share our own lived experiences, both individually and communally, in our efforts to live in right relationship within Earth community.*

The questions from the Sisters of Providence Identity Lens will guide our decision making.

Sisters of Providence Identity Lens:

The standard to which we will hold ourselves accountable is whether or not this choice or action concretely furthers the mission of Providence at this time.

- *What positive effects will this choice or action have on my/our being in right relationship?*
- *How will this decision or action bring hope and healing to Earth community?*
- *How does this decision or action promote justice, non-violence, peace-making?*
- *How will this decision or action affect Earth community?*
- *How does this decision or action offer a creative alternative?*
- *How does this decision or action affect the common good?*
- *What potential adverse effects might this choice or action have in any of these areas?*



Mindful of all that we have done in the past, and with these tools to guide us in our decision making, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN and our wider Providence Community, publicly commit to join the worldwide Catholic community in responding to Pope Francis' appeal to participate in a seven-year journey toward sustainability and integral ecology by developing a plan for the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

This commitment marks our willingness:

- To take up the “urgent appeal” of Laudato Si’ to listen and respond to the lurings of Providence to attend to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor by making it a community priority;
- To further our ongoing ecological conversion by fostering greater understanding of our socio-ecological vocation within the spirit of our Providence charism;
- To integrate each of the seven Laudato Si' goals into our lives and apostolates by developing a systematic process to transition to an integral ecology;
- To take bold concrete actions, both corporately and individually, in the spirit of Laudato Si', to address the multiple crises afflicting our common home – the planet and its people;
- To practice nonviolence, as we reconcile and heal the pain in creation and sow hope for peace.

This commitment is made in love, mercy, and justice, knowing that we are participating in God's Providential work of transformation, and trusting in “that Providence that so far has never failed us.”