



Our Times

Newsletter of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius

Pope Francis' Laudato Si' Action Plan

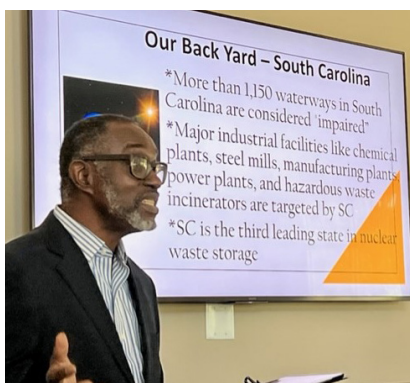
Together in Faith and Friendship-- For the Life of the World

by Sister Pamela Smith, SS.C.M.

Care for the Earth, Care for the Poor: these are the first two themes, of a set of seven, in what is called the "Laudato Si' Action Platform." The Platform is something which Pope Francis has advanced as a responsible way to look at our human obligation to take care of the gifts of creation and the needs of suffering human beings everywhere. The Platform is not a short-term project in which to engage but a call to change our own lives and the lives of others—not only for the present but for years to come.

Our community, the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius—along with many dioceses, parishes, universities, organizations, individuals, and faith traditions—has been at work on the first of these commitments, the care for Mother Earth. We mention below some more recent activities, while also acknowledging that a love for the land and a reverence for creation has been part of our heritage and practice since our founding in 1909.

In May 2022, our Bluffton, South Carolina, parish (Saint Gregory the Great) and the Diocese of Charleston hosted pastors and representatives of the Jewish, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, Latter Day Saints (Mormon), Quaker, and Unity communities in a dialogue on our views of creation and human responsibility. Attendees, one after another, remarked on our commonalities and shared biblical tradition. We also learned about water quality in Demark, SC (comparable to Flint, Michigan) and reflected on the bigger global picture of the desperate need for clean water. Then, this past July, at our annual convocation in Danville, our Sisters and Associates had an opportunity to hear what Orthodox Christians are doing to care for our common home. In August, we joined local Presbyterians and Methodists in a tour of the global Water Mission headquarters in Charleston, and in September our SSCM community helped sponsor and also participated in the Walk for Water, a fund-raising effort to support water purification systems which will be sent around the world. Tens of thousands of dollars were raised. These pro-Earth efforts went on, as we marked the Season of Creation, September 1-October 4 (Feast of St. Francis of Assisi) in solidarity with believers across the continents.



Top: At the microphone, Sr. Pamela Smith leads a group of Interfaith Partners in Hilton Head and Bluffton in prayer. **Above and Left:** Rev. Dr. Jon Black's explanation of the water crisis in South Carolina is the impetus for the Walk for Water to raise funds and peoples' awareness.

Amidst these projects, we have been active in the second of the Platform commitments—something grounded in our founding care for orphans and immigrants. In some new ways, we have joined efforts to assist those who are in

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crisis—hungry, homeless or living in substandard housing, ill but without recourse to good medical care, discriminated against, or fleeing situations of domestic abuse. Our Sisters in Texas join with Sisters in their region and friends on the campus of the Oblate School of Theology to assist refugees and migrants. Sisters and Associates in Pennsylvania are part of the cycle of churches serving the Jubilee Kitchen in Danville. Our St. Francis Center at St. Helena Island, SC—a ministry sponsored by our SSCM community—continues to provide food, clothing, utility and prescription and dental assistance, emergency housing, and other forms of help too numerous to mention. They count on contributions and volunteers from area churches and charitable organizations. As we celebrate our 10th year of service on the island, our Sisters are replacing or massively renovating barely habitable homes, repairing roofs, and also garnering financial support and materials to make major repairs to a historically Black church in their area.

With all of these things, we know that the

congregation at large contributes to Catholic Relief Services and pro-life activities, responds to emergency appeals, stands with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in its insistence on care for creation and for the disenfranchised, tends our expansive property, and supports the health of the natural environment by planting trees, keeping orchards and gardens, recycling, and finding ways to reuse and repurpose material goods. We remember that care for the earth and care for the poor is not a once-and-done project but a way of life.

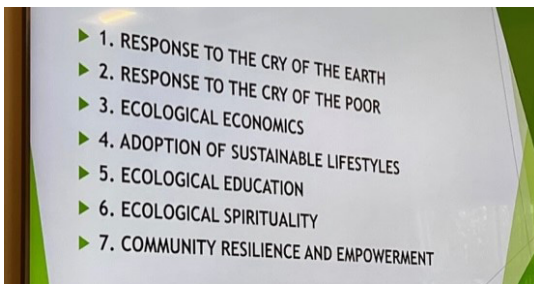
A number of our ecumenical and interfaith partners have also reminded us that our worship itself cultivates a mindfulness of God and how God is revealed in creation. We live in what Catholic and Orthodox leaders have called “a sacramental universe,” one in which we are blessed by the goods of creation and called to worship the Creator. As we recite the Liturgy of the Hours, we note that sun, moon, stars, wind, dew, rain, seas, rivers, birds, and beasts wild and tame “bless the Lord,” as the prophet Daniel tells us.

We recall, amid the recital of the splendor of creation in Psalm 104, that the Spirit continues to renew the face of the earth. And we hear in Psalm 148 that not only do humans praise the Lord, but so too do lightning and wind, fruit trees and cedars, animals and birds. As St. Thomas Aquinas taught nearly 800 years ago “Every creature bears a vestige of the Trinity.” We pray in a world of elements and what astrophysicists term “starstuff,” the art-work of the Almighty.

So, by our prayer and good works and by

simply paying attention to the beauty and complexity of the world around us, we worship the God who is Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and we help to insure the health of our planet and of future generations. As Catholic Sisters and Associates, we are doing so in good company—with other Christians, with Jewish and Muslim and Hindu and Sikh and Baha’i people in interfaith organizations.

Through his encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, and with the Action Platform, Pope Francis has reminded us to tread gently and reverently on earth. As we do so, we grow in harmony and appreciation for our human brothers and sisters and for the planet which sustains and blesses us.



Above left: On Zoom, Sr. Pamela Smith works with other interfaith leaders to plan

a public prayer service for peace in the Ukraine.

Above right: On St. Helena Island, one of the happy recipients of home repairs and remodeling rejoices with a St. Francis Center generous volunteer.

Above: For her presentations on *Laudato Si’*, Sr. Pamela Smith uses a PowerPoint to drive home the 7 Goals of the Platform.

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from the General Superior
by Sister Barbara Sable, SS.C.M.



Open My Eyes, Lord

This Autumn, I invite you all to be surprised by grace each day. God's grace comes to us through many quiet, gentle gifts in a noisy world: shadows cast upon a field at sunrise or sunset; the sound of geese heading to warmer climates, or simply a forgotten song heard on the radio; smells from the neighborhood that bring back family cookouts; distant laughter in the Autumn air, which is a reminder of joy that was never lost. Take note of the small, gentle moments today where grace surprises you. Remind yourself of these moments before you go to sleep and pray a simple prayer of gratitude for the "little things" with which you have been graced and that God has opened your eyes to see. "Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered here." 2 Chronicles 7:15

Sister Barbara Sable

LCWR for Strength in Numbers



The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is an organization that brings together the Leadership Teams of religious communities of women to collaborate with each other and navigate current issues. From June 7-9 in Baltimore, members of the SS.C.M. Leadership Team had an opportunity to meet with Leaders from other Religious Communities in "Leadership Hubs." **(Left and Bottom left)** The groups prayed about and shared ideas concerning the challenges and opportunities facing leaders and their institutes at this time in the ongoing evolution of religious life. Participants considered how discussions of this nature could help them in their ministry of leadership, particularly in shaping and implementing priorities related to mission, members, and resources.

In Atlanta from August 9-12, at the LCWR Annual Assembly focused on *Mystical Wisdom: Following the Spirit's Beckoning* **(Below)**, the Team met up with Sister Deborah Marie **(Far left)** who was present to represent the National Religious Vocation Conference. SS.C.M. strength in numbers!



So Many Events Since Spring

Time passes, and events pile up on one another. Perhaps these photos can convey more than words to tell the story of so many months.

Right, Below and Far right: Holy Week began with the blessing of palms on Palm Sunday. Sister Brigid did the honors. On Holy Saturday, Father Jerry blessed the new fire and lit the Paschal candle. The next morning, Father blessed the food for Easter breakfast with Sister Jana holding the holy water.

Below right: Still utilizing virtual visiting, the Sisters' Easter Extravaganza by Zoom was an opportunity to pray and exchange happy Easter greetings.



Above: On Saturday, April 16th, the East End Fire Co. held its annual Egg Hunt on the Maria Hall grounds. Fun!
Above center: Divine Mercy Sunday was celebrated at Maria Hall with a special Holy Hour.
Above far right, Far right and Right: Evening Prayer on May 5th was the context for crowning the two Mary statues at Maria Hall. Starting on the outside of the building and then moving into the chapel, Sister Carol Ann scaled the ladder to make it happen.



Always An Active Summer



The summer Convocation Days are a time to reconnect with everyone, **(Right and Far right)** learn about important issues and enjoy just being together. The Summer of 2022 was exceptionally welcome as vaccinations made us more confident in the safety of groups.

A highlight of the Convocation Days was the Renewal of Vows by Sister Mary Kate Mensch **(Below left and right)**. In the Maria Hall chapel, Sister Barbara Sable accepted the vows of Sister Mary Kate for another year of temporary profession. May God continue to bless her and us in her commitment.

Below, far left: One beautiful summer Sunday afternoon, the Sisters enjoyed roasting marshmallows for s'mores. It was great fun for many young-at-heart Sisters.



Above, left: Sister Michaeline's 102nd birthday was a great celebration of a grand life. **Above:** Preparing 72 bagged dinners for the Danville Jubilee Kitchen on April 2nd is welcome work for many hands.

Both the Montour-DeLong Fair and the Bloomsburg Fair held the entries of many SS.C.M.'s. It was no surprise that many entries merited ribbons. To cite only a handful: **(Far left)** Sr. Irene Marie's four-photo story of Cordiae the cat sidling up to the statue of St. Therese; Sr. Donna Marie's pot people entry **(Left center)** won a blue ribbon and Best of Show; Sr. Michael Ann's afghan **(Far left)** made the judges happy, as did Sr. Barbara Sable's handkerchief collection **(Left)** mounted by Sr. Jeanne.



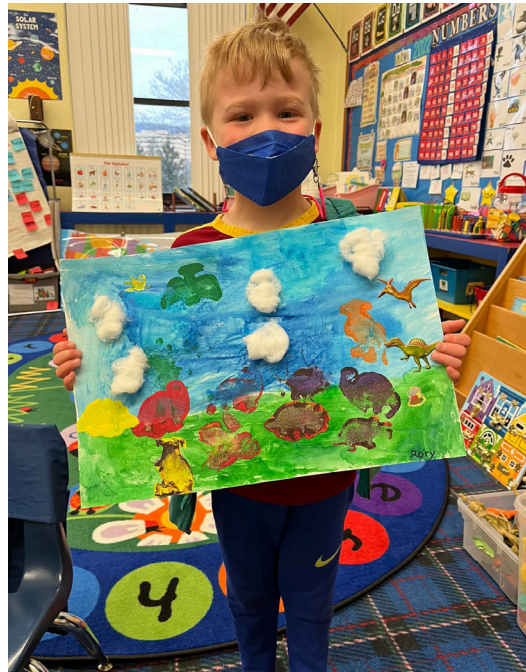
St. Cyril Preschool and Kindergarten

Since the last edition of **Our Times**, the 2021-2022 school year has ended and the 2022-2023 year has begun. Does anyone know where time rushes to at such a speed?

Easter of 2022 brought the much-anticipated and quickly finished scramble for Easter eggs (*Right*) and a visit from the fluffy Easter Bunny ((aka Sr. Loretta Marie). (*Below, far right*)

In early April, the Preschool students completed a multi-media art project on dinosaurs (*Below, center*). At the end of April, the students celebrated Clown Day which made "clowning around" the order of the day!

Closer to the end of the school year, the students enjoyed a Field Day (*Far below left*) and the annual wedding of Q and U in the courtyard. (*Far below, center*)



Above far right: Many new faces: Ms. Jordan Weaver is the new teacher for the 3-year olds. *Right:* There's nothing like a hot dog after a long hike! *Far right:* And while the boys and their Fathers were hiking, the girls and their Mothers were enjoying the annual Tea in the Villa Sun Parlor on Sunday, September 25th.



St. Francis Center, St. Helena Island, SC

If the photos displayed here could speak, they would carry on about non-stop service to many in need provided by the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius and abundant volunteers and Associates at the St. Francis Center, our sponsored ministry in South Carolina. The needs intensify in the summer with the influx of migrant workers, and the efforts to make occasions special continue in full force.

Left: Of course, the Easter Bunny has to make an appearance to help with the distribution of food and personal necessities.

Below left: No sign of snow, only joyfilled faces on Sisters Agnes Marie, Pamela Smith, Canice and Marcine for Christmas in July.

Below: The increased demand on the food pantry in the summer elicited a loud cry for help to restock the shelves.



Above: Volunteers prepare give-aways for Father's Day and Sisters Canice and Marcine get ready to welcome the recipients.

Above: All is ready for Mother's Day, including the pink bags to hold what the ladies will select from the tables.

Bishop Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS, was installed on May 13th as the new Bishop of Charleston, SC.

Successful in a New Land

Over many months, Sisters Bernadette Marie has researched the lives of many of the 50 Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius who immigrated to the United States from Slovakia. As our country's citizens grapple with the pros and cons of immigration, Sister Bernadette Marie has shared these success stories with the readers of the Jednota newspaper. In the interest of sharing, we offer some highlights of Sister Bernadette Marie's research into the lives of several Sisters who found a new home on our shores and contributed to the lives of many to whom they ministered in the land that had welcomed them. Much of the information was gleaned from vocation stories the Sisters shared in the Jubilee booklets that were printed when they celebrated 25, 50 and 60 years of profession.

As November approaches, we anticipate celebrating Saints, canonized and venerated more personally. The Sisters whose stories are recounted here are among those we hold in great esteem personally and remember fondly.

Both Sister Basil and Sister Claudia had relatives in New York City whom they joined as parishioners of St. John Nepomucene Church. The two young women became Third Order Franciscans, but took a different turn following the visit of Sisters Amabilis and Gabriel, two Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius who came to New York to see the newly-built parish church. On July 6, 1925, the two young women set out for Danville to enter the congregation. The trip began with their borrowing money since the banks were closed, followed by the purchase of material for clothing which they sewed through the night. They missed a train in Scranton, but a helpful conductor stopped a freight train to get them a ride in the caboose. Determined to make it to Danville by their entrance day, they became separated from their trunks. We have no record of how the situation ended, except that the community had two Sisters from Slovakia named Basil and Claudia.

When Sister Josaphat became a novice, Mother Emmanuel granted her a special favor, reserving the name "Josaphat" especially for her. Since Father Jankola wanted the



Sister M. Basil Benko



Sister M. Claudia Šipka



Sister M. Josaphat Gernat received in the new Motherhouse in Danville. Her patron, St. John Nepomucene, has been known as "a silent saint." Sister imitated him and was known to be "quiet, retiring, prayerful and conscientious."

Known for her generosity and self-sacrifice, Sister Redempta also possessed an openness to growth and change. One of her most outstanding gifts was being able to reach out to others in new circumstances, for example, becoming involved in prison ministry in the Diocese of Charleston. The Cursillo movement and Kairos benefited from her wisdom and willingness to share her insights. Of course, Sister cherished the devotions her mother taught her, including the Rosary. She once declared, "Our Lady never fails me."

Often Sisters recall with joy the times they came into contact with the popes on their visits to the United States. Sister Germaine, for example, vividly recalled being within ten feet of Pope Paul VI when he visited New York City in 1964.

Sister Germaine also recalled seeing Guglielmo Marconi, leaving the Sacred Heart parish rectory after Father Joseph Murgaš had given him his wireless broadcasting technology.

Sister Vivian was born in Petejovce, Slovakia, and immigrated to the U. S. with her family in the early 1900's. Besides receiving degrees from Marywood and Fordham, Sister Vivian also received two NDEA grants and did Advanced Study in Educational Media at Columbia College in South Carolina.

Sisters to pray for the return of Slav dissidents to unity with Rome, St. Josaphat is one of the community patrons. Included in Evening Prayer on his feast are the words, "After the example of St. Josaphat and through our unity of heart and mind, heal the divisions among Christians."

Sister Nepomucene was one of the first novices



Sister M. Nepomucene Ondrišek



Sister M. Redempta Tomančík



Sister M. Germaine Kalnash-Oros



Sister M. Vivian Hritzak

Sister Vivian served for 25 years in Charleston, SC, at both St. Patrick and Blessed Sacrament Schools. When she could have retired from teaching, Sister Vivian spent 13 years at Andean High School as a teacher, tutor and assistant librarian.

These Sisters were all immigrants to the United States, all fully invested in their new country, the Church and their vocations as women religious.

Sister Lydia: 50+ Years Teaching and Still Counting.

The School Community of St. Columba Parish in Bloomsburg gave Sister Lydia a rousing recognition on the completion of her 50th year as a teacher in St. Columba School on May 26, 2022. Sister's second grade students, past and present, in school and in religious education have benefitted from her fidelity and expertise. Pictured below are the testimonials presented at the anniversary Mass, and Sister Lydia's First Communion Class for 2022. Congratulations, Sister Lydia--and may God bless all the students you have yet to bring successfully through the second grade and prepare for First Holy Communion.



Have charism, will travel! After 14 years as Director of Religious Education at St. Augustine Parish in Larchmont, NY, Sr. Suzanne Duzen (Left) has taken a position at St. Columba School in Bloomsburg, PA, teaching religion in 6, 7 and 8th grades as well as kindergarten. Scripture says

there is no chaining the Word of God!

The next **Our Times** will feature many pictures of the lavish "Thank You" reception which St. Augustine parish orchestrated for Sr. Suzanne on Sunday, October 16th. Fourteen years was a long time to influence and inspire many children.



As mission is all about need, Sr. Carol Therese (Left) packed her bag in Maria Hall and traveled to Bluffton, SC, where she was asked to help with driving and ministry there. When called, we answer!

Answering another need, Sr. Jana (Right) gets used to her new assignment at the Meadows, where she serves as a Pastoral Visitor to the residents in their homes.



Following the September 18th centennial celebration of the Benedictines of St. Andrew Abbey in Cleveland, OH, Sisters Barbara Sable and Michael Ann presented them with a gift from the SS.C.M.'s for their chapel: an icon of the Mother of Sorrows, patroness of Slovakia.

Pictured at the right are the SS.C.M.'s who attended the June 19th closing of St. André Bessette Parish in Wilkes-Barre, PA. After the closing Mass, there was a procession to SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Plains, PA, and a warm reception.



A Curtain Call for Twenty Years of Summer Stage

For twenty years, Sr. Donna Marie has spent the month of June training young children in the art of theater. The first two weeks were dedicated to 4-6 year olds, and provided them with two consecutive Friday evening performances at which they demonstrated their acting, singing and dancing--and stage presence! *(Right)*

The second two weeks, for 7-12 year olds, resulted in a full-blown musical--always a feat of magic and exceptional talent on Sr. Donna Marie's part. Due to the pandemic, the final production, *Kokonut Island*, was delayed several weeks, and on August 4th, the show went on with some revisions but much joy and relief. *(Right)*

On July 3rd, the parents, actors and actresses of Summer Stage held an outdoor party *(Below)* to thank Sr. Donna Marie for her two decades of script-writing, direction, costumes, stage design, choreography, vocal coaching and encouragement! She did it all with remarkable love and energy!



The annual Maria Joseph Golf Outing was held on Friday, September 16th. Eighty-one golfers took to the course to help raise money for a new wheelchair van for Maria Joseph. With the help of generous sponsors, we are well on our way to reaching the goal and scheduling amazing trips for the residents.

For her first public event as Mission Advancement Director, Dawn Orzechowski *(Above left)*, pulled all the pieces together with a talent that matched the day's glorious weather.



Hired by Sr. Salome fifty years ago, Mr. Bob Drumheller has served the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius faithfully, as master repairman, lawn manicurist, carpenter, car doctor and Santa Claus for the Preschool and Kindergarten. On August 18th, *(Above)* Bob's 50 years were celebrated when he was joined by Mrs. Drumheller, members of his family, the other maintenance staff and many Sisters. Everyone enjoyed the cake and his tributes. Asked "What next?," Bob said, "Now I can get back to work."

When We Wish



Maria Hall, built in 1969, was not designed for its current residents. While it was always intended to be a retirement home, the Sisters who retired then did not have walkers--canes, maybe, and canes don't take up too much space! Rooms are small, but today's Sisters can adjust to that. The problem that takes a toll is the bathrooms. On the fourth floor, which had been the skilled care floor originally, the bathrooms are no bigger than a closet, with a tub, sink and toilet very close together. Our dream is to remodel the six bathrooms that we need to use--enlarge them and replace the tub with a walk-in shower. We have applied for several grants, but the price tag will be greater than the funds we can solicit. Can you help? We are grateful for any help you can offer. God bless you!

You Are Invited to Leave a Legacy

With a gift through your will, you can support the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius and ensure that our mission of witnessing to, proclaiming and building the Kingdom of God will continue into the future.

An example of bequest wording:

I give, devise and bequeath to the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a not-for-profit organization located in Danville PA, the sum of \$___ (or ___% of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate) for the unrestricted use and general purposes of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

It is a good idea to let your heirs know about the charities to which you are donating.

If you would like more information about giving to the Community in your will, please contact:

Sister Barbara Sable, SS.C.M.
General Superior
570-275-3581 ext 300
barbarasable@hotmail.com



Grateful in Comfort

We wished--you heard and responded! We are immensely grateful for your answers to our plea for new lounge chairs for the Sisters **not** in personal care. Those of us who are still independent thank you for making it a joy to sit comfortably in our rooms after a day of ministry, or early in the morning for meditation. You are at the top of our list of people to commend to God for special blessings! May our prayers for you repay you as you deserve.



Always a joy coming together, the Leadership Teams of the SS.C.M.'s, IHM's and SSC's met on May 24th. Twice a year the "cousins" meet to stay connected and explore ways to collaborate in mission and ministry.



Supplied with updated iPads, the Sisters received several sessions from Motherhouse IT guru, Chris Curl, on how to avoid the many scams and difficulties possible in social media platforms today.



*In the morning of Earth Day, April 22nd, the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Good Shepherd Sisters and the Carmelites of Danville blessed the earth and planted a red maple tree on the Villa grounds in the spirit of **Laudato Si'**. In the afternoon, the blessing and tree planting moved to Maria Joseph CCC, our sponsored ministry, where residents, administrators and maintenance staff joined the Sisters in the planting of a tree. The timing was providential in that the Manor had lost several trees in a recent storm.*



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Thank you for reading our newsletter.

Fall 2022



Mission: *In the name of Jesus we teach and heal.*
 Spirituality: *Christ centered and Mary-modeled.*
 Motto: *Thy Kingdom Come!*



Summer Festival and Flea Market+

If you were able to be here on July 9th you know that the Summer Festival was a success! Everyone seemed to enjoy the reduced footprint of the booths, the exceptional food trucks, the delightful entertainment, the auditorium full of flea market items, the bingo prizes and silent auction. Of course the bakery was a big hit, as were the religious articles and Sisters' art.

Since even the auditorium was not large enough to hold all the Flea Market items, we held a Flea Market+ sale on Saturday, October 8th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Additional offerings for sale were furniture, crafts and books. A crisp autumn day made the four hours pass quickly along with many of the items for sale.

Thanks to all those who volunteered to help and came to share these days with us!

