

November 1, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Saint Francis and in Christ,

Greetings to you on this first day of November. November starts with All Saint's Day, a day we dedicate to the saints of the Church. We then look forward to Thanksgiving, the first day of Advent, and preparations for the beautiful celebration of Christmas. This year we also look forward to November 14, the day the Vatican intends to announce the first of seven parts of the Laudato Si' action platform, intended to assist the global Catholic world and, in fact, the whole world, in living out the plan to honor the earth and integral ecology, living in true kinship with all of the planet. Many fraternities have studied Laudato Si' and we will continue to learn from it over the next years.

I pray for Sister, Mother Earth every day as I am sure you do. In early October I was on the beach near my home, scanning the ocean for signs of disruption. There had recently been a significant oil spill in the City of Huntington Beach, and I was grieving. Their web page reported:

"The oil spill has significantly affected the city, with substantial ecological impacts occurring at the beach and at the Huntington Beach Wetlands. In response, Huntington Beach Fire and Marine Safety personnel had been deployed to implement oil containment efforts."

In our not distant past our country has suffered several rather significant spills, including the Exxon Valdez and the Deepwater Horizon, among others. They were all difficult, but I experienced this one more deeply. I think this happened for several reasons. First, the spill was geographically closer to me than other spills and I was seeing signs posted as I entered the beach warning visitors not to go near tar balls but to notify the authorities if one is seen. Secondly, I have been studying ecology more deeply as part of our Care for Creation team for the Diocese of San Diego and want so much for all of us to love our earth and all that is in it. But thirdly, I will confess, I think I was more profoundly touched because, on the recommendation of my eleven-year-old climate sensitive grandson, I had watched "My Octopus Teacher." In the documentary, which I recommend, Craig Foster, a naturalist, befriends an octopus in the waters near his home in South Africa. The befriending takes place through a year long daily visit, which is filmed. The viewer cannot help but be captivated by the existence of the diversity of plants and animals that live just under the water's surface, a whole ocean habitat that pulsates with life and with God's love. In the film, the human and the octopus connect physically and emotionally, a testimony to the kinship St. Francis so eloquently intuited and expressed.

So, my dear Franciscan sisters and brothers, let us love the earth and all that is in it. Love animates protection. Let our love lead us to protect our earth. Let us study the Laudato Si' Platform and embrace it in our hearts, our homes, our parishes, and our communities. Let us continue to encourage and support each other as we live out our Franciscan calling.

Peace and All Good,

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