



Dehonians USA

PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART

January 3, 2023

Dear Brothers,

On October 4, 2023 (the Feast of St. Francis, the Patron Saint of Ecology), Pope Francis issued an apostolic exhortation on climate change called *Laudate Deum*. This builds on his previous environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, which also addressed the need to protect our common home. The apostolic exhortation is relatively brief, but it highlights the impact of climate change on the most vulnerable

people. Rising global temperatures and sea levels, more frequent and intense droughts, floods, heat waves, and heavy snowfall are all contributing to this issue.

Religious leaders from different spiritual traditions have expressed their concerns about the suffering planet, echoing Pope Francis' call to protect our common home. These leaders have issued declarations, such as "The Time to Act is Now: A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change," "The Islamic Climate Change Declaration," and "The Hindu Declaration on Climate Change." The underlying message among these declarations is that our daily actions have an impact on the environment and all living things. Addressing the ecological crisis is not just the responsibility of leadership in business and government but of each

individual. Therefore, our responsibility is to act now to reduce this impact.

How can we tackle climate change? In his soon-to-be-published book, *Religious Self-Cultivation and Environmental Flourishing: A Humanist Relational Approach*, Anthony Le Duc, SVD, argues that protecting our environment and caring for our



Women Singing Earth
By Sr. Mary Southard, CSJ

planet requires a collective and comprehensive response from people of all faiths and cultures. Le Duc believes that caring for creation starts with self-cultivation, which is recognizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life. Humans are responsible for caring for the natural world, as taught in the sacred texts of Theravada Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, and Christianity (Catholic tradition).

In Christianity, humans are believed to be created in God's image and likeness – *imago Dei*. The planet is part of God's divine plan and a sacred gift that we must respect and protect, not to be dominated or exploited for our own interests and desires. As followers of Christ, we are called to become spiritually cultivated and ecologically conscious people who recognize the intrinsic worth of every created being and the sacredness of creation. Through union with Christ and by emulating Christ's humble service, we can live out the vocation of being good stewards of creation, embodying the divine image within us and exhibiting God's attributes in our relationships with the natural world.



Cosmic Birth
By Sr. Mary Southard, CSJ

Laudate Deum - "Praise God." With the proposed North American joint conference on climate change and nuclear weapons this year and Pope Francis's call to care for the earth, it's time for us to deepen our relationship with the planet and all its inhabitants and work towards a sustainable future for humanity and nature. As the New Year brings with it the tradition of making resolutions, I hope that we become more aware of the sacredness of the natural world and the environmental crisis we are facing. We are called to take concrete steps, no matter how small, to protect and preserve Mother Earth.

Happy New Year!

Fraternally,