



# Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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## **An Easter Family: Trinity and Maternity**

### **Christ is risen...and risen on high! Alleluia!**

The readings for the Fifth Sunday of Easter on May 9 and the celebration of Christ's Ascension on May 16 describe the familial love-communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Revelation, John sees a vision of the new holy city Jerusalem, where the "temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb," (21:22) the "glory of God" is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb (21:23). In the Gospel reading for May 9, Jesus promises his disciples an experience of God dwelling with and even in us before the fullness of the new Jerusalem: "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (Jn 14:23). The Father further sends us the Spirit in the Son's name to teach us and remind us of Christ's word (14:26). The Spirit renews the peace which Christ leaves as his parting gift (14:27) and clothes disciples with "power from on high" (Jn 24:49) to be Christ's witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

We experience reflections of the love that the Father, Son, and Spirit share and extend to us in the maternal love we celebrate on Mother's Day. Mothers provide us with shelter as we dwell in them for nine months and with them for much longer. They clothe us first with our skin and then in warmth and comfort as we grow. As Christ nourishes us in the Eucharist, mothers nourish us through their bodies and then with the work of their hands.

Whereas Francis called all creatures "Brother" or "Sister," he added the title "Mother" to his term of reverence for the Earth. Francis recognized the ways in which the earth also shelters, clothes, and feeds us.

As the Easter Season continues, we celebrate the reconciliation in Christ that makes us one family and seek the Spirit's guidance for living out this familial love of neighbor and kinship with creation. In gratitude for God's provision through Sister Mother Earth and for all the mothers who have sheltered, clothed, and fed us, we share the following stories and opportunities to respond to these blessings.

### **SHELTERING, CLOTHING, FEEDING: a response to love**

For 25 years, the Felician community outreach center focused on the "holistic treatment of poverty" in Buffalo, NY has been living up to its name: Response to Love Center ([www.responsetolovecenter.org](http://www.responsetolovecenter.org)). Executive Director Sr. Johnice, her companions Srs. Catherine and Rose, and more than 100 volunteers have expressed love of neighbor through hot meals, a food pantry, infant formula, a thrift shop and personal care program, a chapel, GED and computer classes, an AMVETS Career Center, and a Sisters Care Center with volunteer nurses.

For Earth Day 2010, the Response to Love Center collaborated with West NY AmeriCorps, Home Depot and local home owners and tenants for a neighborhood revitalization project that will continue in the coming weeks and months. The “Good & Green Homes” initiative assisted 35 households. Energy efficiency measures included replacing windows, installing storm doors, and adding insulation; Comfort Control, a local heating and cooling company, removed a failed furnace from the inaccessible crawl space of one home and installed a high-efficiency furnace in the walk-in attic. Teams also embraced the task of greening the neighborhood by planting trees, flowers, and hydro-seeded grasses; removing debris; and establishing a peace garden as safe space in the vacant lot across from the Center. Installation of new sidewalks continues, and the city intends to re-pave the street. In response to requests from other neighborhoods in the area, the Center is developing the protocol to expand the program.

Although the peace garden is a quiet spot, the Center is also in a mutually supportive relationship with Broadway Market ([broadwaymarket.org](http://broadwaymarket.org)), which is starting a roof-top gardening project. Families and other community members can access container plots and educational workshops about all the steps in gardening, from compost to canning, with an emphasis on natural methods.

### **SHELTERING with Creation** through “green” building

As wise and faithful stewards of their financial resources, the Felician Sisters’ leadership team set aside funds over time for the eventual renovation of the 75-year-old buildings at their Convent and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School in Coraopolis, PA ([olsh.org](http://olsh.org)). When they interviewed construction companies, the Sisters looked for ways to implement their Franciscan principles of care for creation. Locally-based Sota Construction understood their commitments and embraced all 155,000 square feet of what would be the company’s largest project to that point, affecting 360 students and 75 convent residents.

The architecture team at Perkins Eastman Architects hosted conversations with parents, students, faculty, Sisters, nurses, and other community members to gain an understanding of their concerns. New features of the renovation includes solar panels (which heat 10 percent of their water), motion detectors and lighting fixtures that reduce waste and increase efficiency, heat pumps, and paint with low volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Renewed features include flooring and furniture made out of recycled fibers, an acre of oak wood flooring, a mosquito-infested cistern refurbished for the air conditioning system, and formerly unused courtyards now vibrant with native plants and rain barrels.

In addition to reduced costs in gas and water bills, the Felician community has experienced the benefits of their stewardship in happier and healthier students and residents. Respiratory problems have improved due to better air quality, and the insulation developed from recycled blue jeans blocks all noise from airplanes that used to disrupt classes. Students participate in vermicomposting and experience the beauty of a cross-country trail through a restored meadow that has become a habitat for wildlife.

The project has won 12 awards, including the U.S. Green Building Coalition’s ([www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)) Gold-level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification, and is part of a tour of green buildings. The Felicians have no regrets about their undertaking. With their

intentional savings and grants from the PA Department of Environmental Protection, the project was not as expensive as they had expected. School Principal Sr. Francine Horos, CSSF encourages other communities to explore similar options: “there is no reason you should not consider being green.”

### **CLOTHING Creation** in prayer and beauty

The Felician Sisters in Lodi, NJ commemorated the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day with a second annual program of prayer and song at their Peace Site. Students, faculty, and staff from Immaculate Conception High School and Felician College led prayer and introduced state Assemblywomen Joan Voss and Connie Walker; Jennifer Mancuso, the Chief of Staff for state Senator Robert Gordon; and Bruce T. Masopust, the Mayor of Lodi. The children from the Felician College Day Care entertained everyone present with song. During the ceremony, Fr. John O’Neill, a professor at Felician College, blessed flowers that students from the Felician School for Exceptional Children had planted at the peace site prior to Earth Day. High school and college students also had the opportunity to speak with the legislators about their initiatives to care for creation.

### **FEEDING Creation** with justice for all farmers

The Codex Alimentarius Commission is a body of the World Trade Organization which oversees food policy. The Codex is meeting in Quebec, Canada from **May 3-7** to discuss the subject of Food Labeling. Various groups have raised concern that the U.S. delegation will oppose a proposal to allow labeling of genetically modified foods. The Consumers Union led 80 organizations in a letter to the USDA and FDA expressing this concern. Please pray that the Spirit may guide these meetings and that the outcomes may reflect justice and truth.

Given the Franciscan commitment to those who are poor and vulnerable, FAN opposes “life patents” that undermine the common good by monopolizing access to agricultural knowledge. These patents have allowed pharmaceutical and agribusiness companies to gain exclusive rights to genetic material that should be universally accessible, thus burdening the world’s poorest farmers, both in the United States and especially in developing countries, with oppressive dependence on large corporations. Br. Keith Warner, OFM has written about the conflict between the Church’s social teaching and biotechnology’s patent regime. You can read his paper in the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* (available as a PDF on the FAN website) or an article he wrote for the National Catholic Rural Life Organization ([http://www.ncrlc.com/promise\\_threat.html](http://www.ncrlc.com/promise_threat.html)).