



Suore Francescane della Penitenza e Carità Cristiana

Casa Generalizia - Via Cassia 870 - 00189 Roma

Tel. (39) 06 332 48773

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We, as the Congregation of the **Sisters of Saint Francis of Penance and Christian Charity**, **stand for global care for the environment.**

Therefore, recognizing that each province, community, and mission of the congregation is actively caring for Earth, our common home, we, as a congregation, act together in response to four goals related to Laudato Si':

- respond to the cry of the earth,
- educate ourselves and others in environmental responsibility,
- encourage ecological spirituality,
- and promote community engagement and participatory action.

At our last General Chapter, held in October 2024, we committed ourselves to planting trees in the various places around the world where we are present.

As we are celebrating the 800th anniversary of the Canticum of the Creatures composed by St. Francis of Assisi, we want to sing a hymn of praise and reconciliation to the Lord in communion with all creation. St. Francis invites us to live more deeply in this time of history as pilgrims of peace and hope and to reaffirm that we are guardians of creation, as brothers and sisters of every living creature. This excerpt from the encyclical letter Laudato Si' reminds us well of this reality.

Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism". Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. (Laudato Si' #92)

Praise to the Creator and the celebration of the Jubilee of the Canticum of the Creatures call us to action. Planting trees is our way of planting hope and expressing our commitment and love for our common home as a congregation. This action was fulfilled in a celebrative way.

IN THE NETHERLANDS

In **Heythuysen, Netherlands**, is the place where our worldwide congregation (today about 1000 sisters) started in 1835, through the vocation and courage of Catharina Damen, who became Mother Magdalen. The community here is aging. The average age of our sisters is 91 years.

On May 19th, 2025, we had a prayer service with deep meditation about the Canticum of the Creatures. After this we went with almost all the sisters to our cemetery to plant a tree there. Most of the sisters went with wheelchairs, walkers or mobility scooters. There we made five – inner – steps, visualized on five posters, each held by a sister. The first step was to remember the Canticum of the Creatures once again, which is 800 years old already. We sang part of it again. At the second step we commemorated our dear Pope Francis and his

encyclical “Laudato Si’”, written 10 years ago. As our third step, we went back to our General Chapter a year ago where we decided to plant at least one tree. Then in step four we put that into practice. We planted our tree, giving every sister a bit of earth to put around the magnolia tree. Some of the sisters spontaneously spoke to the tree or blessed it. After having heard a poem about trees forming a forest together, we made the fifth step: We decided to give a donation for precious trees to be planted. They shall be placed in the “Museumpark Orientalis” near Nijmegen in the Netherlands. This is a park that unites education for ecology and the different religions, teaching about the Holy Land where Jesus lived, and which is dear to Christians as well as Jews and Muslims. In this way we donate to enhance ecology, education, religion and dialogue.

We are grateful that we can serve our Mother Earth and her children in this way, even with our limited resources.



IN GERMANY

On the occasion of the 190th anniversary of the Congregation, **the Christ the King Province in Lüdinghausen** planted 190 trees in an area where many trees had died due to drought damage. Trees were selected that are better able to withstand climate change. During the jubilee celebrations, another tree was planted directly in front of the convent: in thanksgiving for all that God has allowed to grow and as a reminder to respect the dignity of creation.



As a small sign of our concern for the threatened creation, we, the **Mary Immaculate Community in Remagen / Germany**, asked our gardener in the spring to plant another tree in our park, which has many old trees. It is a cherry tree of the JADE variety. Soon after it was planted, it began to blossom, and in the summer, it even bore a few dark red fruits.

The young tree is just a small sign of our concern for Mother Earth – a concern that we sisters repeatedly entrust to God in prayer. For example, during the Month of Creation in September, we prayed a special vespers service with all the sisters of the community and celebrated a Mass for Creation.



IN POLAND

In the **Province of Mary Help of Christians – Orlik, Poland** - our care for the Earth – our common home – manifests itself in many ways. We see that our sensitivity to the natural environment is growing.

The inspiration flowing from the *Canticle of the Creatures* transforms us, our thinking, and our actions, bearing fruit in many different forms. We take care of nature in our immediate surroundings, being aware that the Earth is the home and living space for all creatures. When we cut down a dry or sick tree, we plant a new one in its place.

In Orlik, after the 2017 windstorm, almost all the trees in our convent park and forest were destroyed, but we planted new ones in their place (on an area of 5 hectares, we planted over 70,000 saplings: pine, spruce, birch, and other species). Today, we rejoice in their slow growth and beauty. We also continue to plant new trees. Recently, we have planted two willows and two ornamental spruces near the statue of Saint Francis.



IN INDONESIA

Today, the Earth is getting hotter and the air is not fresh anymore because of what humans have done. Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, calls us to care for the earth, our shared home. One way we can do that is by planting trees. In **Most Holy Trinity Province, our Saint Francis community in Payakumbuh, West Sumatra, Indonesia**, has a small piece of land. On it, we plant different kinds of trees, vegetables, and flowers.



IN TANZANIA

Our responsibility in making the world a peaceful and safe place for humans and other creatures is indubitable. In response to our General chapter recommendation, **Saint Clare Mission in Tanzania** has started planting trees, each community on its premises. This action will reach its peak in November when, if it rains enough, more fruit trees will be planted in the area appointed by the sisters. Furthermore, the Mission continues to replace trees in places where the harvesting of the old ones is done.



IN THE UNITED STATES

We, **Sisters of Sacred Heart Province in Denver, Colorado, USA**, planted trees on an acre of our land, which we call Little Portion. Nurtured with the healing power of our Creator, Little Portion is designed and maintained within a permaculture philosophy that embraces living in harmony with the earth. Permaculture is a highly efficient and self-sustaining ecosystem. As such, this land hosts a variety of plants, trees, ground cover, minimal water usage, humans, and animals of land and sky – all kin to us!



During Peace Week at **Stella Niagara, NY, USA**, the campus and school community, and our Sisters and Associates gathered. We prayed together in praise and thanks to God for the gifts of all creation. In light of our commitment as a Congregation at the 2024 General Chapter, we, **Holy Name Province**, joined all of our Sisters and Associates around the world in blessing Mother Earth and planting a tree. Praised be You, my Lord, with all of Your creatures.



On May 29, 2025 Sisters, Associates and invited collaborators from the **CommonSpirit healthcare system gathered in the garden area of Marian Residence in Santa Maria, Saint Francis Province, California, USA** to plant a tree and bless four small houses where our elder Sisters will live. The small tree that was planted is in the center of a new collaborative project that will provide housing, healing and contemplative prayer for civic communities that are marginalized and underserved: Senior Citizens and Families at risk of homelessness, a Hospice Center that will provide services for the dying and Medical Offices that care for the sick and dying in their homes. The small tree represents the Hope that comes from a project that reflects our Franciscan value of interdependence as we care for one another, giving witness to our relationship as brothers and sisters with all of Creation. Our elder Sisters provide the ministry of Contemplative Presence and Prayer for all who are welcomed to live on this campus.



IN BRAZIL

Planting life and care. It is a grace and a blessing to be able to remember and celebrate the call that our beloved Pope Francis made to us for urgent charity towards our Common Home, through the document *Laudato Si*, which is now 10 years old. Everything is interconnected... and our brother and father St. Francis of Assisi, 800 years ago, helps us to praise and revere all creatures through the *Canticle of the Creatures*. Therefore, with him and with all our

brothers and sisters, we sing “Almighty and good Lord...” **We from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Province, São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil**, as pilgrims of hope, in the “certainty that hope does not disappoint,” united with the Church, want to continue the mission of care.

“He who sows expects to reap!” As a gesture of faith and trust, in the 190th year of the Congregation, we planted three trees: two peach trees and one lychee tree, celebrating the continuity of our history.



Based on the commitment made as a congregation at the General Chapter of 2024, we care for the environment and encourage ecological spirituality. Action of the Communities of the Convent of St. Francis of Assisi, **Immaculate Heart of Mary Province – Santa Maria – RS, Brazil**: we planted an olive tree seedling in the midst of nature, which is developing rapidly, full of beauty, and attracting the attention of people who enjoy this wonderful space. St. Francis of Assisi, in his Canticle of the Creatures, conveys to us what is said in the Encyclical

Letter Laudato Si: "When we speak of the 'environment,' we also refer to a particular relationship: the relationship between nature and the society that inhabits it. This prevents us from considering nature as something separate from us or as a mere backdrop to our lives. We are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it." (Laudato Si' n. 139).



SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI...

"He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace." Laudato Si' 10

