



Franciscan Action Network

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

P.O. Box 29053 • Washington, DC 20017 • 202-527-7575 • 1-888-364-3388 (toll free) • 202-527-7576 (fax)

Bulletin texts on a Franciscan approach to the oil spill

As we look at the images of the devastation from the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, could Christ be calling each one of us by name and he called Francis, and urging us to rebuild God's house that is being destroyed? Are we listening to that voice speaking to us through the Scripture, through the signs of the times, or the images of former beauty and harmony now smeared by death and destruction?

If we are to move beyond a popular, quaint sentimentality of Francis in the birdbath, we must ask deep questions: what factors contribute to this and other environmental problems; what beliefs and values support the status quo and which challenge it; who makes decisions, who pays the price and who reaps a lion's share of benefits; what do Scripture, the Church's social teachings and the Franciscan tradition have to say? What is the level of our environmental literacy? To keep yourself well-informed and motivated, consider going to www.earthbeatradio.org/home for a weekly one-hour broadcast, not only to hear the threats to God's creation but also about the signs of hope. (For additional resources, go to Franciscan Action Network's Care for Creation webpage: <http://www.franciscanaction.org/careforcreation> or Holy Name Province's JPIC webpage: <http://www.hnp.org/jpic/>.)

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Responding with integrity to the oil spill in the gulf requires that we squarely face and begin to transform our habits of high consumption that we have grown accustomed to and take for granted. Historically, the Franciscan tradition challenges us to resist abstractions or concepts devoid of particularity and concreteness. This insight applies to our relationship with God and the rest of God's creation. Can we as Franciscans authentically speak about the sacramentality of God's creation, sing hymns such as "O Creatures of Our God and King," bless animals on Oct. 4, or relish in the fact that St. Francis is a patron saint of the ecology while being oblivious to how our patterns of consumption might be antithetical to what we profess and publicly celebrate? Do we consider how our food choices affect people and ecosystems, including way beyond our borders? Can our lives – as professed Franciscans or as lay men and women – become a living parable of God's Kingdom where we would ensure a place for the poor and for our non-human kin at God's abundant banquet of life?

Each of the care for creation themes featured in Franciscan Action Network's Lenten reflection series (www.franciscanaction.org/lent2010) relates to petroleum and includes suggestions for ways to reduce our consumption.

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As Franciscans and Franciscan-hearted people we are gifted with imagination and the rich Franciscan tradition that speaks to us about a sacramental world in which God's presence would be more transparent. We are also sent to be troubadours of hope singing a song of a new, more humane and sustainable world. Following Mary, and beholding God's promise of life for all creation, we are to say YES to God and YES to this vocation.

One of the major aspects of this vocation is the urgent need to advocate in a public square for those who cannot speak for themselves. We must strive to ensure a greater respect for all of life: human and non-human; in our local neighborhoods, and in the Gulf of Mexico. Building up on our effort to defend the life of the unborn, we are also to continue to advocate for the poor and future generations and stand up for the entire web of life that is becoming unraveled.

The Franciscan Action Network (www.franciscanaction.org) provides us with a unique opportunity to address the roots of injustice. Do you take full advantage of FAN? Have you considered inviting your family, friends, and fellow parishioners to join?

It is time to heal a painful and disastrous gap that all too often exists between spiritual life and political involvement. Are we ready to get Francis out of the birdbath and into the real world that needs him – the world blemished by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, deforestation, global climate change? Will we trust the Holy Spirit and, through Franciscan Action Network, co-partner with God who desires to heal, “make all things new” and bring forth even greater beauty?