



NewsNotes

June 2023

Last week was Laudato Si' Week, a global week highlighting the eighth anniversary of the encyclical letter Laudato Si'. It is also the second anniversary of the launch of the Laudato Si' Action Platform. There were workshops and prayer services scattered throughout the week in live meetings or on-line. Wednesday also saw the culmination of the course taken by Laudato Si' Animators as they were expected to turn in their Capstone projects signaling the end of their course assignment. Over 1,600 signed up for the animator's course from around the globe. That is an amazing number of people who are committing time to promoting the learning and living of the principles laid out in the encyclical written by Pope Francis in 2015.

How fitting that one of our first impact investments, one of our responses to ecological economics, was finally approved during last week's activities. The Vita Fund will supply clean water and efficient cookstoves to women in Ethiopia. That will provide jobs for the women to make the stoves, reduce or eliminate the hours it took for mothers or daughters to search out usable water and then boil it to be suitable for cooking. There is more on this story to be found below.

With all the good that was happening last week, we cannot think we are out of the woods. There is still so much to do the change the course we are on regarding climate disruptions.

As we heard at our justice promoter's conference most of us in the "first world" have not really begun to change our climate unfriendly lifestyles. While beef consumption is down slightly, overall meat consumption continues to rise. We have not as communities been willing to fund mass transit, reducing the need for personal vehicles. We still depend on a capitalist economics that leaves out

those without capital. I still see shopping carts full of bottled water, sometimes 4-5 cases at a time leaving the Shop Rite every Saturday evening when we shop.

Until we can convince others of the seriousness of the crisis, by modeling the necessary changes ourselves, we may not have a life-giving planet to pass on to the next generations.

Frank

Frank McCann
Peace through Justice Facilitator
Congregation's NGO Representative to the UN



An update on the water situation on the UK

by David Richardson

On the 18th of May [UK Water](#), which is a body representing water industries gave an apology for not acting quickly enough on sewage spills. The industry plans to introduce a three-point programme to reduce spills into rivers and seas. The plan consists of the following;

- An additional £10 billion to be invested in a new national overflow plan, there are 15,000 overflows in England.
- A new environmental hub which will provide real-time information on overflows, accessible to the public.
- Water companies will support up to a hundred communities to create new protected waters for swimming and recreation.

Water UK has acknowledged that customers will be responsible for the entire cost of the project, which is unjust. Customers have been paying for water services and investment in the infrastructure, but water companies have failed to fully invest despite paying substantial dividends.

The Observer newspaper reports that English water companies are expected to pay out around £14.7bn in dividends by the end of the decade, with shareholders receiving £1.4bn in 2022. While based on 2022 prices, the £10 billion investment will cost each customer an additional £624 by 2030.

UK Water plans to reduce sewage overflows by up to 140,000 annually, in comparison to the 2020 levels. However, one might question if this initiative is sufficient enough. [The Rivers Trust](#) reported that in 2020, there were an alarming 403,171 instances of untreated sewage being discharged. This implies that a significant amount of untreated sewage will still be finding its way into our rivers and oceans even with the improvements. If this does not move you then I encourage you to look at The Rivers Trust [interactive map](#) and zoom in on the area you live, it becomes alarming and personal. This is our common home what right do water companies and their shareholders have to take our money and pollute our water?

The encyclical "Caritas in Veritate" by Pope Benedict XVI, which is a source of inspiration for "Laudato Si'," emphasizes that the natural world is a unified and interconnected whole. It encompasses not only the physical environment but also human life. Our responsibilities towards the environment are intertwined with our obligations towards fellow human beings. Without clean water, neither the natural world nor human life can flourish.

What can we do

- Pray. To bring about change will be difficult and time-consuming but we have a God who moves mountains.
- Write to your MP, water company, shareholders or Ofwat who is the UK regulator.
- Sign the following petition to renationalise the Water Industry

https://www.change.org/p/return-the-water-industry-to-public-ownership?source_location=search

Upon request, I am happy to provide a letter on your behalf that you can send to your MP, water company or shareholders.

WATERSPIRIT's Joys of the Sea, June 10



Saturday, June 10, 2023
2-5 PM
4 E River Road in Rumson

Join your fellow water protectors at this community-building fundraiser: Waterspirit's **Joys of the Sea Gala** as we celebrate 25 years. This event will be an outdoor afternoon of delicious food and wine, beautiful harp music, and special remarks by honorees Drs. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Yale professors who cofounded the field of religion and ecology who are the 2023 winners of the Suzanne Golas Spirit of Water Award.

Don't miss our silent auction full of amazing prizes!

Greenwashing

By David Richardson

According to [The Guardian](#), the UK's advertising regulator plans to prohibit ads that claim products are carbon neutral through offsets unless companies can substantiate their effectiveness. The European Parliament has also recently passed a ruling to prohibit [carbon neutrality claims](#) that rely on offsetting. These moves come amid rising apprehension that businesses are [greenwashing](#) which is no more than a symbolic reference to appear more environmentally sustainable and climate-friendly than it really is.

Carbon offsetting is also another tool companies use to greenwash their products. [The Dutch airline has scrapped an ad campaign telling customers to 'Fly Responsibly' after law firm Client Earth accused it of greenwashing.](#) The airline is accused in a lawsuit of misleading customers through its 'carbon offsetting' program, which implies that customers can reduce the environmental impact of their flights by funding reforestation projects. It is very important not to take carbon offsets as 'rights to pollute'. However, the effectiveness of carbon offsetting is a matter of debate.

For example, a recent investigation by [The Guardian](#) and the German weekly Die Zeit revealed that more than 90% of forest carbon offsets endorsed by Verra the top certifier in the world, and utilized by major corporations are mostly ineffective and may exacerbate global warming.

It all can feel perplexing and complicated but it does not have to be. I encourage us to revisit The 2008 Seeds of Peace Chapter Act because there, led by the Holy Spirit, we will find the way forward.

How to spot Greenwashing

- Is there evidence for the environmental claims being made on the packaging.
 - The use of vague terms such as eco-friendly, sustainable and biodegradable environmentally friendly.
 - The excessive use of the colour green on packaging which is often associated with being environmentally friendly.
 - The environmental promises made are not consistent with the company's actual actions like fast fashion, fast food giants, and airlines.
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Fast Fashion

Did you know that the Fashion and textile industry is the third most-polluting sector globally after food production and construction? The average person in the UK buys 60% more clothing today than in 2000 and more clothes than any other European country.

Many of the clothes bought are thrown away after being worn just a handful of times; the industry produces an estimated 92 million tonnes of textiles waste annually, much of which is burnt or finds its way to landfill, while less than 1% of used clothing is recycled into new garments.

In November 2021, [Agence France-Presse \(AFP\) reported](#) on the mountains of discarded clothing ending up in Chile's Atacama Desert. 59,000 tons of second-hand clothing is said to arrive in Chile for resale each year from Europe, the U.S. and Asia. However, an estimated 39,000 tons is unable to be sold and ends up dumped in the desert, most of which are non-biodegradable. The fast fashion model often relies on worker exploitation. When an item is cheap, the person who produced it was likely paid very little." The UK C4 [documentary](#) exposes poor conditions and exhausted, exploited workers.

Considering the carbon impact of fast fashion, it deserves more focus. The EU is stepping up its fight against throwaway culture by aiming to end fast fashion by 2030. At COP26, the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action was announced, with more ambitious targets for carbon reduction to align with the Paris Agreement's 1.5-degree aim, disappointingly the UK's government is reluctant to regulate the UK fashion industry.

Pope Francis said in a speech addressed to members of the Council for Inclusive Capitalism on 11/11/2019 that "In the end, it is not simply a matter of 'having more,' but 'being more,'" which demands "a fundamental renewal of hearts and minds so that the human person may always be placed at the centre of social, cultural and economic life."

In conclusion, the Pope's statement emphasises the importance of recognising the moral dimension of economic life in Catholic social doctrine, which focuses on the common good and respects human dignity. By doing so, we can act charitably towards others and promote their integral development while also considering the impacts of our economic activity on people and the environment.

What can you do about fast fashion?

- Join the [right-to-clothing campaign](#) by using their tool to email fast fashion brands.
 - Buy consciously and look for ethical brands.
 - Buy second-hand or repair what you already have.
 - Join a fast fashion campaign, such as Fashion Revolution or the Clean Clothes campaign.
 - Buy less clothing.
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Nuns Against Gun Violence group formed and will honor June 2, Gun Violence Awareness Day



Nuns Against Gun Violence

Friday, June 2nd
National Gun
Violence
Awareness Day

We encourage you to join this nationwide action:

- Place a light or a candle in your window as sign of your commitment to bringing this issue into the light
- Wear Orange to honor survivors of gun violence
- Take a picture of your candle, or yourself in orange to flood social media with light amidst the darkness of violence and a call for action to end gun violence!

Gathered at the Justice promoters conference in St. Louis at the end of April, it became clear that the idea of forming a group originally called Nuns Against Guns had strong support and further meetings were planned to promote actions in support of an anti-gun-violence program. Angela McParland, a justice promoter of the Sisters of Mercy, in New England brought up the subject and chaired the unplanned promoters meeting on the idea. She hoped that we could bring the integrity and moral voice of Catholic Sisters to the discussions on gun violence. She and others were already joining the weekly calls that linked all the major anti-gun-violence groups like Everytown and Sandy Hook Promise as well as the youth from Parkland, FL. It was especially hoped that we would encourage (and catch?) some of the enthusiasm of the young people for this struggle to ban assault weapons and to put in place basic safety measures for all gun ownership.

The candlelight vigil was the first proposed idea. Thus Friday, June 2nd is Gun Violence Awareness Day and everyone is encouraged to wear orange all day on Friday and throughout the weekend. Friday evening, we are planning a nation-wide candlelight vigil from our homes by placing a candle in the window to bring light to the darkness of our current situation. Below are links to a Prayer, a prayer service and a toolkit for involving others. It is hoped that

photos of each of us with candles and signs could be taken and posted across the nation on social media to show congressional members the growing strength of those in opposition to the status quo of gun violence.

[Prayer](#)
[Prayer Service](#)
[Toolkit](#)

DC Sit-In for Assault Weapons Ban June 6-12

Sam Schwartz, a cousin of parkland victim Alex Schachter was fourteen when his cousin was killed. And has, for the last five years fought for an assault weapons' ban

Noting other tactics that have been attempted, he is asking for a six day sit in on the Capitol steps June 6-12. "We deserve to see our elected leaders fighting for our right not to be shot every single week until the bill passes both chambers. After all, it took the Brady Bill 7 votes before it was finally passed into law."

"This is why I am leading a sit-in & I am asking other gun violence survivors and advocates to join me. I am so sick and tired of the inaction and political games. I should be able to finish school, get a job, get married, & grow old without getting shot."

What you can do to help:

Attend:

If you are interested in attending, please fill out this Google form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfRj5klFwCAnD4Aw8YpXFIFo5-Eq2QouitQ3dVWQTNOmlt2ww/viewform?usp=sf_link

Donate:

In terms of donations for food and other essential items, I have set up this Go-fund-me for the event: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/dc-capitol-sitin>

Promote:

Please help spread the news of the sit-in starting on May 16th. This gives people enough time to make arrangements to join us, but soon enough that we won't lose a sense of urgency.

Thank you so much and please email me with any questions you may have. This is a massive undertaking that requires the help of every organization. We are so close to seeing real change in this country and I believe if we all come together during this sit-in we can get an assault weapons ban passed and help prevent future mass shootings.

World Refugee Day Message from Pope Francis

Pope Francis penned the Message for the 109th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2023.

This year he uses several scripture passages beginning with the flight of the Holy Family (Mt. 2) to draw distinctions between those who did not have a choice in leaving their homes and those who freely chose to leave.

"The flight of the Holy Family into Egypt was not the result of a free decision, nor were many of the migrations that marked the history of the people of Israel. The decision to migrate should always be free, yet in many cases, even in our day, it is not. Conflicts, natural disasters, or more simply the impossibility of living a dignified and prosperous life in one's native land is forcing millions of persons to leave." [p.3]

After citing the passage from Acts 2:44-45 Francis writes, *"To make migration a choice that is truly free, efforts must be made to ensure to everyone an equal share in the common good, respect for his or her fundamental rights, and access to an integral human development. Only in this way will we be able to offer to each person the possibility of a dignified and fulfilling life, whether individually or within families. Clearly, the principal responsibility falls to the countries of origin and their leaders, who are called to practice a good politics – one that is transparent, honest, farsighted and at the service of all, especially those most vulnerable. At the same time, they must be empowered to do this, without finding themselves robbed of their natural and human resources and without outside interference aimed at serving the interests of a few." [p. 5]*

Francis uses the text of Matthew 25:35-36 to remind us that migrants are not just brothers and sisters to us, but are Christ himself in need. *"In whatever place we decide to build our future, in the country of our birth or elsewhere, the important thing is that there always be a community ready to welcome, protect, promote and integrate everyone, without distinctions and without excluding anyone." [p. 7]*

[Read the entire document here.](#)

The following prayer was appended to the Pope's message:

PRAYER

God, Father Almighty,
grant us the grace to work tirelessly
for justice, solidarity and peace,
so that all your children may enjoy
the freedom to choose whether to migrate or to stay.

Grant us the courage to denounce
all the horrors of our world,
and to combat every injustice
that mars the beauty of your children
and the harmony of our common home.

Sustain us by the power of your Spirit,
so that we can reflect your tender love
to every migrant whom you place in our path,
and to spread in hearts and in every situation
the culture of encounter and of care.



Vita Fund Ready to start their work in Ethiopia



The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace have made an impact investment with the Vita fund to provide clean water and efficient cookstoves for women in Ethiopia. That work is about to begin as we learned this week from Vita staff in Dublin, Ireland.

We are very delighted to announce the closing of Vita Green Impact Fund has happened earlier today! [5/2-/23] With the DAC account receiving EUR 10 M proceeds transferred from escrow account, and transactions documents fully executed, CAFICO (the fund service company) has confirmed the setup of Sec 110 in compliance and the closing of the transaction.

We do want to extend our deepest gratitude to you - this would not have been possible without your trust and commitment in supporting all the great works Vita has been doing on the ground. Hope this will only serve as a starting point for your future support for innovative vehicles committed into delivering impactful results to the needed communities.

Vita has project teams in place to deploy funds to rural communities in Ethiopia and Eritrea that are fully prepared for the roll-out of the cookstoves and water repair programmes. Women groups have been contracted to produce 10,000 stoves initially and tenders have been issued for supply of spare parts to repair 1,500 water points. Partners have been invited for project launch workshops in early June. Vita Dublin is setting up Gold Standard registration for the projects.

The press release of the closing announcement has been sent to channels that TOTAL has connections to and been put on our website as [link](#) and [link](#) - please feel free to share on your own outlets.

Again - huge congrats to Vita and FCI for embarking on this exciting journey, and we are very proud to be part of this process. Keep up with the good work!

Please note:

This comes to fruition at a critical time when there is a severe climate emergency in the Horn of Africa. Countries including Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya are experiencing the worst drought in 40 years.

This week the [United Nations called](#) on its member nations to respond. "People in the Horn of Africa are paying an unconscionable price for a climate crisis they did nothing to cause," UN Secretary-General António Guterres [said](#) on Wednesday.

Climate change, conflict, and migration are three of the most urgent and critical challenges facing the world today. What is happening in this region underscores the risk of failing to respond holistically. These [interlocking crises](#)—severe and lengthy drought, mass displacement, skyrocketing food costs, and ongoing regional conflict—threaten the lives of some 32 million people.

As one of the largest historic emitters of greenhouse gases, the United States has a moral responsibility [to assist countries](#) bearing the worst impacts of the climate crisis.





Upcoming Waterspirit Events



Tell the NJ Board of Ed to keep climate change curriculum in schools

Urgent Call to Action: Join Waterspirit and [Send a letter](#) NOW to the New Jersey State Board of Education to ensure inclusion of English Language Arts (ELA) and Math in the K-12 climate change curriculum charge by June 7th.

May our spiritual message of moral courage toward environmental justice be loud and clear! Please check for updates on Waterspirit's [Calls to Action](#) page and let us know if you have an action you want us to amplify.

Our Planet, Our Future: NJ Call to Action on Climate

Wed, May 31, 2023 4:30 PM - Mon, Jun 5, 2023 5:30 PM

It has taken a considerable collaborative effort to continue to prevent 7 dirty fossil fuel projects slated throughout the state. As we approach critical deadlines, we will gather together for bold, beautiful actions. Come for as little or as much as you can; we appreciate your ongoing advocacy.



Join us! [REGISTER HERE](#)

Lament with Earth

- Thursday, June 22, 2023
- 7:30 PM 8:30 PM
- online ([map](#))

Waterspirit is co-sponsoring this event. We invite you to join us for an evening to explore our ecological grief in community at our June Lament with Earth

offering.

As days lengthen and temperatures warm, many of us are drawn outside to first-hand experiences of awe and wonder, and delight — the characteristics of creation spirituality's *via positiva*. Our creatureliness awakens and is enlivened by the blooming, burgeoning, bountiful world. Yet the more we are aware and alive, the more keenly we feel the threats to our fellow beings — the extinction of species, their loss of habitat, and the despoiling of dwelling places by powerful forces which threaten the extraordinarily diverse and resplendent world which we share with all that lives and breathes along with us. We welcome you to join us as we celebrate and mourn, awaken and grieve, love and despair. Coming to be together, to share these feelings, thoughts, and sadnesses is the key to moving towards life.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Atlantic Sturgeon's Last Baby Shower

- Thu, Jun 29, 2023 10:00 AM Fri, Jun 30, 2023 2:00 PM
- Independence Hall ([map](#))

Waterspirit is joining Delaware Riverkeeper Network in holding this event because it could very well be the LAST season we will see our genetically unique population of Atlantic Sturgeon spawn. By volunteering at this event you are playing a crucial role and lending yourself to helping us advocate for the sturgeon. From 10AM-2PM on 6/29 and 6/30 please join us and lend a helping hand!



Please sign up HERE: bit.ly/VolunteerSturgeonBabyShower

For any further updates: www.dinointhedelaware.org



Join Waterspirit for a Summer Solstice Ritual



Through music, movement & ritual, we honor the earth, sun & water working in harmony to bring us the gifts of summer. On this, the summer solstice, we celebrate the light, energy and warmth of the sun. The sun is on the ocean; the fire is on the water. The warmth and flow make life. The sun touches our skin and changes us, making the vitamins we need for health. We are structured water reaching for the sun. The sun helps the plants produce the food and oxygen we need to live. We pray with gratitude for water that is life and for the light, energy, warmth and food we receive so abundantly from the generous, self-giving sun.

Bring your family and friends and join in the celebration! Featuring live music by Joseph Frame.

Meditation for Earth



Please join Waterspirit for a 30 minute "Meditation for Earth" in-person in the Sanctuary at the Rumson Presbyterian Church 4 East River Road, or livestreamed on Waterspirit's YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFzJckCCtU22hEjrmoLitwQ>

[Find the Meditation on the Waterspirit YouTube Channel.](#)



A Mighty River
Amos 5: 24

Let Justice and Peace Flow

Season of Creation 2023

The Season of Creation 1 September 1 until 4 October

Stay tuned to the Season of Creation 2023. Theme of this year "*Let Justice and Peace Flow*". The symbol is a Mighty River. "The urgency grows and we must make visible peace with Earth and on Earth, at the same time that justice calls us to repentance and a change of attitude and actions. As we join the river of justice and peace with others then hope is created instead of despair" (Season of Creation, 2023).

Anyone interested in planning an event for that time should contact Frank McCann



Advocacy Plan for the Afghan Adjustment Act

Since the fall of Kabul in August 2021, millions of Afghans were displaced from

their homes, including many who risked their lives in support of the U.S. mission. During the evacuation, the U.S. welcomed more than 76,000 Afghans on a temporary basis via humanitarian parole, which provides only two years of protection and no clear path to permanent status. Many more remain at risk in Afghanistan or nearby countries where they lack adequate protection. Join us the week of June 12-16 for [Congressional Advocacy Days](#) to support Afghans at risk. With clear paths to permanent protection still out of reach for many Afghans, and with the anticipated reintroduction of the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#) approaching, now is a crucial moment to advocate for our Afghan allies.

Here is what you can do:

[Register here](#) for Afghan Adjustment Act advocacy days by Wednesday, May 31st, which will take place between June 12th and 16th. Meetings with Congress will take place both online over Zoom and in person in DC, depending on your availability. Both seasoned advocates and those who are brand new to Congressional advocacy are encouraged to join us. Participants will receive:

- Training on Virtual Legislative Meetings the week of June 5th (exact day TBD).
- Schedule of your meetings with your legislators or their staff, between June 12 and 16: if you are unavailable for any of these days, please ensure to note this in the RSVP form.
- Resources to help guide your meetings - you are also encouraged to share your personal stories and experiences.
- Each meeting will include an experienced legislative advocate to provide support.
- Advocacy and Social Media Toolkit: including a call-in action, sample social media posts and graphics, and additional advocacy resources that you can share.

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