News
EarthBeat



Welcome dinner for new Jesuit Volunteers in Cleveland. Brenna Davis, top right, serves as a support person for the group. (Provided photo)



by Bill Mitchell

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If you're like me, you may have started this day by considering a suggestion from today's Lenten Daily Food Reflection: "Eat at least one food item mindfully."

In my case that meant consuming my English muffin and peanut butter at a much slower pace than usual. It made time for me to consider, as the reflection suggests, the people whose labor produced the food I enjoy every morning. And to be grateful — to them and for the circumstances that enable me to eat whatever I want, whenever I want.

I'm also grateful to Brenna Davis, the Ignatian Solidarity Network staffer who's writing the Lenten reflections for us.

Brenna grew up in Clarksville, Tennessee, where she says her Catholic upbringing "became a central piece of my identity … simply because I was living in the Bible Belt and there weren't many Catholics around."

When Pope John Paul II High School opened its doors over in Hendersonville, Brenna recalls: "I begged my parents to let me attend."

They agreed. As a result, Brenna says she has "a lot of CO2 karma to make up for because I drove around 100 miles round trip each day."

It was in high school, Brenna says, that she "learned about and fell in love with the social justice tradition of the Catholic Church."

Later, at Smith College, she recalls missing "classes connecting to issues of justice," prompting her to transfer to Boston College. There, she majored in theology with a focus on justice and human rights and Spanish.

After college, Brenna signed up with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in Cleveland. As a high school teacher, she was introduced to the Ignatian Solidarity Network. When a job opened up to run environmental programs and the Education for Justice platform, she went for it and got it.

I asked her what it's been like creating the 40 reflections she's written for our series.



Brenna Davis (provided photo)

"It has helped me slow down and be mindful as I go through my day," she told me by email. "It has helped me to cultivate a sense of awe and gratitude toward food that I sometimes miss as I rush through my day."

She says she has especially appreciated conversations with people about their experiences with food, noting that writing what she's learned has become "a Lenten practice that leaves me feeling 'full' in the best way."

Brenna points out that "climate change is quite depressing," but says the reflections have "become a source of hope."

She says the work has reminded her that "what Jesus and the gospel asks of us is quite simple: take only what you need, share the extra that you have with others, celebrate by sharing meals together.

"If we do all this, no one will be left out," she adds. "All people will be fed."

If you'd like to thank Brenna for the reflections, you can reach her here. Thanks, too, to staff writer Jesse Remedios, who edits and produces Brenna's reflections every day.

Here's some of what else is new on EarthBeat this week:

- National Correspondent Heidi Schlumpf profiles a young climate activist who has been inspired by church teachings and is key to Earth Day planning in Chicago.
- Announcing plans for a "Laudato Si' Week" in May, Pope Francis renewed his urgent call "to respond to the ecological crisis." Staff writer Brian Roewe has the report.
- In response to one of your Burning Questions, Roewe answers a query related to the pope's announcement: When exactly is the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*?
- Correspondent Sarah Mac Donald reports from Dublin that a new study finds women and girls hit hardest by climate change.
- In his Pencil Preaching column, Pat Marrin notes that "tears of regret will come too late" if we fail to heed the prophets among us sounding an alarm about climate change and other crises.
- Columnist Fr. Dan Horan argues that, in addition to the "integral ecology" called for by Pope Francis, we need an "integral economy."
- In her Small Earth Story, contributor Caitlin Faulds asks a critical question after helping create "a corridor of sacrifice" as the member of a trail crew in a Massachusetts forest.

Here’s some additional climate-related coverage:

- The New York Times addresses a key question — how much of the bad stuff happening to our planet can be blamed on climate change? — in this piece exploring the science of attribution.
- A new study finds that coverage of climate change by network news and Sunday morning shows increased by 68% from 2018 to 2019. The bad news? Such coverage still accounted for less than 1% of overall news coverage.
- In his new newsletter for the New Yorker, Bill McKibben reports some lessons that coronavirus holds for the climate crisis. Among them: Companies can still be productive even if their employees are working from home as opposed to spewing all those toxic emissions on the freeway.
- Speaking of travel for work, the coronavirus is turning up the volume on questions that had been asked with less fanfare in the context of the climate crisis. Such as: Should I take that trip? WBUR radio has some answers. (The coronavirus has prompted the NCR Board of Directors to shift its April meeting from a hotel in Los Angeles to a virtual gathering of its members on their computer screens at home.)

Upcoming Event:

If you're in or around Boston on Sunday (March 8), I hope you'll consider participating in a multifaith retreat focused on climate justice at the Paulist Center (which also happens to be my parish). Rev. Fred Small will lead the group through meditation, reflection, conversation and song. You can RSVP here.

You’ll find more events like this — virtual as well as in person — on EarthBeat’s Event Calendar. And don’t forget to post upcoming events that you’re involved in!

Closing Beat:

If you clicked on any of the links in EarthBeat's Event Calendar above, you're in a select group. So select, in fact, that we're thinking of discontinuing the feature. For whatever reason, it just hasn't caught on with readers in ways we thought it would.

If you have ideas that would make it more useful — or feel that it's a useful tool as is — please let me know here. We'll keep you posted.

We hope you'll forward this week's newsletter to anyone you believe might want to subscribe. They can do so here. And if you'd like to support EarthBeat, please join NCR Forward for as little as five bucks a month.

Thanks for reading!

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