News
EarthBeat



Sidewalk sign inviting homeless diners to a free take-out dinner at the Paulist Center in Boston (Susan Rutkowski)



by Bill Mitchell

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As another week in this new normal draws to a close, I find myself encouraged by examples of solidarity all around.

Well before the rest of us were at our keyboards Friday morning, NCR Vatican Correspondent Josh McElwee fired off a message in the "daily work" channel of our Slack network: "Vatican has issued a decree essentially giving a plenary indulgence to the entire world."

Standing with people threatened by coronavirus around the world, Pope Francis let them know that, come what may, God's grace and forgiveness is there for the asking.

Here at home, I'm heartened by the actions of fellow parishioners at Boston's Paulist Center who devised a safe way to sustain the center's tradition of distributing a take-out meal to homeless people every Wednesday night for the past 52 years. This week, a meal of pasta salad, sandwiches, chips, drinks and dessert was served to 180 people, many of whom sleep outside on the Boston Common across the street.

It's exactly the sort of solidarity Francis called for in his 2015 encyclical, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home."

"We require a new and universal solidarity," Francis wrote, noting that "obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions."

Much of the world has gotten past that sort of skepticism when it comes to the pandemic. But what will it take to accomplish that on the climate front – and to instill the urgency required to address both crises?

Like last week, this week's collection of climate stories includes several addressing the linkage between climate and pandemic issues:

- Inside Climate News reports that coronavirus "has advocacy groups treading carefully and moving campaigns online."
- In this afternoon's edition of his Climate Crisis newsletter, Bill McKibben argues that airlines and other industries should be forced to pledge climate-saving steps as a condition of the coronavirus bailouts they're seeking from Congress.
- Yale Climate Connections has collected a range of coverage addressing both global crises.
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that this winter has been the second warmest on record for the planet.
- The Beacon, the newsletter of the environmental news site, Grist, reports that electricity usage depressed by empty offices and factories will likely hasten the end of coal.
- The International Energy Agency urged governments to include investment in renewal energy projects in the stimulus initiatives launched to address the corornavirus crisis.

Here's some of what's new on EarthBeat:

- Covering Climate Now, the consortium that NCR joined last fall to collaborate on climate coverage, reports that loss of forests drives viruses as well as climate change.
- Staff writer Brian Roewe reports that the pandemic shut down the Loyola climate conference but a preliminary workshop revealed ways Jesuits are making use of community-based research.
- In her Lenten Daily Food Reflection, Brenna Davis suggests baking some cookies – and includes a quote from Hildigard of Bingen that resonates in the time of pandemic.
- In her Small Earth Story, Antonia DeBianchi recalls a story of sea-level rise from her childhood that drives home an issue very much in our future.

Climate Events:

With most all in-person gatherings canceled, EarthBeat is especially interested in highlighting events that can be attended online. Please post yours here.

Closing Beat:

Next week, we expect to be reporting a story about how the coronavirus is shifting the strategies and plans of Catholic climate activists. If you're involved in such a group, please alert me or my colleague, Brian Roewe.

On the pandemic beat, we're collecting your stories of Corona Kindness, small or big examples of people extending a helping hand, if not a plenary indulgence, in these challenging times. Please chime in here.

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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