News
EarthBeat



Graphic by Jesse Remedios



by Bill Mitchell

View Author Profile

bmitchell@ncronline.org
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We're coming up on several important milestones:

- The 50th anniversary of Earth Day is Wednesday, April 22.
- The 5th anniversary of the completion and distribution of Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change, "*Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home,*" unfolds in May and June.
- And here at NCR, we'll mark the first six months of publishing EarthBeat on April 30.

In this week's Burning Question, staff writer Jesse Remedios has rounded up an engaging collection of 14 Earth Day events you can join from your screen in this week's Burning Question. Among the Earth Day related coverage coming up next week:

- On Monday, a report by Global Sisters Report freelancer Melanie Lidman about beekeeping work performed by the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose in Fremont, Ca.
- On Tuesday, a look back by staff writer Brian Roewe on the many ways that Catholics and people of faith joined in the celebrations, teach-ins and demonstrations of the first Earth Day in 1970.
- Throughout the week, several commentaries on the day and its significance from EarthBeat contributors in various locales.



NRDC President and CEO Gina McCarthy in a Zoom conference April 16, 2020 (NCR screengrab)

Yesterday I sat in on a Zoom discussion with three environmental experts, pegged to the coronavirus pandemic as well as Earth Day: Dr. Maria Neira, director of environment, climate change and health at the World Health Organization; Dr. Aaron Bernstein, a pediatrician and director of the Center for Climate, health and the Global Environment at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Gina McCarthy, president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the former head of the Environmental Protection Agency under President Obama.

You can tune into a video recording of the discussion here.

In response to my question about the impact of *Laudato Si*' – and what she's hoping people of faith will do going forward – McCarthy said:

> The Pope's encyclical… made a big step forward to reach people that medical communities can't reach and government can't reach. (Francis) turned (responding to the climate crisis) into something where it actually

is a moral obligation.

It is absolutely a commitment that is fundamental to religions everywhere, that life is important, that we have to invest in people and that we do have an obligation to address... the inequities of climate change -- just like every other pollutant that isn't an equal opportunity killer.

In this COVID 19 exposure... we're seeing African Americans die at much higher rates than others in part because of their exposure to air pollution... It's adding another layer of burden on their bodies, and they just can't fight equally. These are moral obligations.

It's important (as) we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the anniversary of the Pope's encyclical that we remind ourselves that it is in many ways not about us. It's in many ways our obligation to the future. It is in many ways our obligation to protect the natural resources that we have been given and that we are supposed to steward. (It's about) our ability to show our children that we understand that it's about the future, not about our past, that should be pointing the way to every decision we make.

Here's what's new on EarthBeat this week:

- Rhina Guidos of Catholic News Service reports on the impact of the pandemic on farmworkers who, unlike many of the rest of us, can't rely on Zoom for their paycheck.
- Stephanie Kelly of Reuters reports on a new clash between Big Oil and Big Corn over requirements that corn-fed ethanol be blended into gasoline.
- Rita Chandran of Reuters explores the ways that the coronavirus lockdown is encouraging urban farming.
- In this week's Small Earth Story, Margaret Small takes up Thomas Berry's call for us to find a new story – this time in a pandemic.
- On EarthBeat's Interfaith Climate Tracker, the Evangelical Environmental Network notes that the EPA has found that one in six children born in the U.S. had dangerous amounts of mercury in their bodies. And now the EPA has weakened regulations on the release of such toxic metals.

Here's what's new in some other climate-related news this week:

- Yale Climate Connections reports on Catholic institutions that have divested from fossil fuels.
- Pegged to both the pandemic and climate change, Grist hosted a conversation about staying focused on science when it comes to global health catastrophes.
- Some good news? Laura Hurst and James Herron of Bloomberg Green report that Shell announced Thursday that it plans to "eliminate all net emissions from its own operations and the bulk of greenhouse gases from fuel it sells to customers by 2050."
- Charles Collins reports in Crux about British bishops hoping that recovery from the pandemic will include a "new normal" that addresses the climate crisis.
- U.S. Catholic interviews Sasha Adkins of Loyala University Chicago's Institute of Environmental Sustainability about the linkage of science and ethics and her book, *From Disposable Culture to Disposable People*.

Upcoming event:

Sunday, April 19, 11 a.m. EST: Rev. Jim Antal (a member of EarthBeat's advisory panel) will preach at The Riverside Church about the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the pandemic. Details linked from here about how to watch and listen. (You can watch a recording of the service here.) One advantage of so many events moving online is their accessibility to a wider audience. If you'd like to expand the audience of your next virtual climate event, please post it here.

Closing beat:

How will you observe Earth Day's 50th anniversary this week? Please let me know here and I'll share it next week with readers of EarthBeat Weekly. We hope you'll forward this week's newsletter to anyone you believe might want to subscribe. They can do so here.

Thanks for reading!

Bill Mitchell

NCR Climate Editor

bmitchell@ncronline.org

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