

Artwork by Ricardo Levins Morales

by Bill Mitchell

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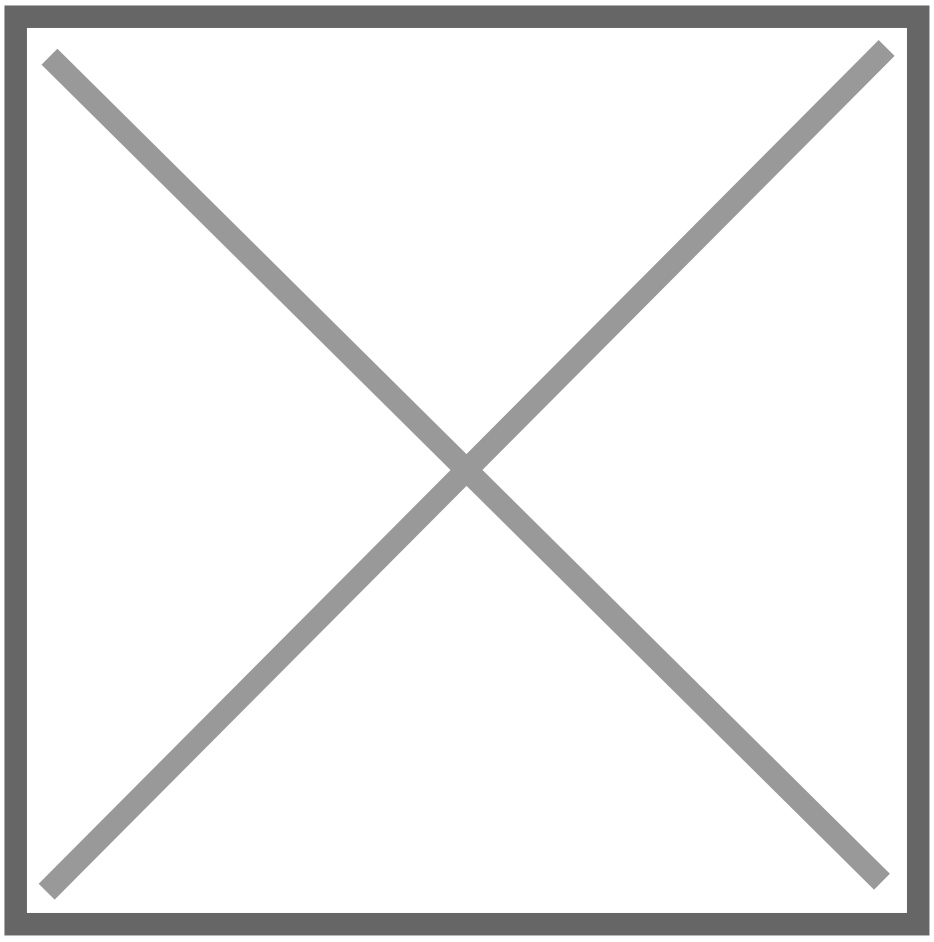
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The first time that Samantha Panchèvre read Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*', she was a junior at Georgetown University. The encyclical was assigned reading for a course exploring theology and the environment, and she remembers being stunned by what she discovered in the document.

As a Presbyterian whose views of Catholicism had been shaped by its recent scandals, she said she was not prepared for the "progressive, even radical" views expressed by the pope on behalf of our common home.

"I fell in love with Pope Francis," she recalls.

On campus, she was surprised to discover a relatively low level of awareness of what *Laudato Si*' really calls for in terms of significant action on behalf of the Earth.



Samantha Panchèvre

Two years later, NCR's engagement editor, Brittany Wilmes, asked Sam to read *Laudato Si*' again – this time along with the more than 10,000 readers who subscribe to EarthBeat's spirituality features.

The two had met via EarthBeat's Instagram account, where Brittany engages with readers around the stories and images we publish about what people of faith are saying and doing about the climate crisis.

Since May 11, Sam has been retracing her steps through *Laudato Si*' three days a week, dividing her articles into three sections: read, reflect and act. Each day's installment also includes an attachment of the relevant section of the encyclical.

"Brittany told me to write as if I were explaining *Laudato Si*' to my friends," Sam says, adding: "I try to do that in a way that makes it more accessible to people who might not be either spiritual or super aware of environmental issues."

That can present a challenge, as with her discussion of environmental justice, summed up in Pope Francis' assertion that "we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (49).

To illustrate that idea, Sam discovered an illustration that Brittany was able to secure permission for us to use at the top of that edition of "Digging." It's the same illustration you see at the top of today's newsletter.

If you'd like to join us in thanking Sam for her good work, you can send her a note here. Thanks, too, to staff writer Jesse Remedios, who edits and produces each of Sam's installments. And if you've not yet signed up to read Laudato Si' with Sam, you can do so here.

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

- Staff writer Brian Roewe assesses what's happened in the five years since Pope Francis issued "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home."
- Sr. Elise D. García, OP, president-elect of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, makes the case for pursuing a profound transformation after the pandemic, as opposed to any kind of "return to normal."

- In the latest installment of Burning Questions, Brian provides a detailed response: What is ecological sin?
- Franciscan Fr. Daniel P. Horan explores the ways that the pandemic foreshadows the horrors awaiting mankind if we continue our current course of failing to address the climate crisis.

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

- In The New York Times, international climate correspondent Somini Sengupta explains how the pandemic leaves the world's most vulnerable people ever more exposed to the impact of climate change.
- Will Wade of Bloomberg Green reports that the United States consumed more energy last year from renewable sources than from coal – "the first time that's happened since the late 1800s when wood stopped powering steamships and trains."
- Speaking of climate optimism, the T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard publishes a newsletter called The Climate Optimist. This week's issue explores encouraging signs that at least some of the elements of the Green New Deal may be achievable.

Closing beat:

Here are some oldies but goodies from the EarthBeat archive:

- Mercy sisters cook up recipes for less-meat Lent – and not just on Fridays, by Brian Roewe. (Published Feb. 28, 2020)
- Beloved Amazonia – a love letter for the conversion of hearts, by Mauricio López Oropeza (Published Feb. 14, 2020)
- Listen up town meeting – time's up for gas, by Daria Mark (Published Nov. 1, 2019).

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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