News
EarthBeat



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Editor's Note: *EarthBeat Weekly is your weekly newsletter about faith and climate change. Below is the Jan. 21 edition. To receive EarthBeat Weekly in your inbox, sign up here.*

Online sustainability "support" groups might be some of the most judgmental spaces. (I think they're even worse than groups that offer parenting advice!)

One person orders bamboo toothbrushes, and 10 others chide them for not considering the impact of the fuel required for shipping. Someone promotes a vegan diet by sharing a picture of their latest grocery haul and is immediately scolded for the pre-cut fruit in plastic packaging. An individual recommends backyard composting and is one-upped by a person who claims to have eliminated food waste altogether.

It is my experience that in these groups you simply cannot win.

Your efforts are never enough to please the crowd. The result is that rather than connect and encourage people with a common goal to care for the earth and those who live on this planet, members of the group end up feeling divided and discouraged.

Doesn't that defeat the point?

If our goal is merely to live in the most sustainable way possible, then I guess not. But I think our call to care for creation has just as much to do with connection and community as it does with decreasing our carbon footprint.

A focus on solidarity has always been present in the way religious people talk about ecological justice; Pope Francis brought this into sharp focus with the language and example of his 2015 encyclical "*Laudato Si*': on Care for Our Common Home."

It is indeed a misnomer to refer to *Laudato Si*' as "the environmental encyclical" because it is about so much more than the state of the natural world. It's about how we relate to each other, to non-human creation and to God; what happens when those relationships rupture; and what is possible when we get those relationships right.

In Monday's article "Young Black Catholics confront nature, racism and the church's way forward" Brian Roewe reports how the four Black Catholic millennials featured in the National Black Catholic Congress' virtual conversation, "Imagining Our Ecological Future: Black Life and *Laudato Si*'," bring up many ways that Black culture has long connected with the land. The conversation also highlights strong connections between ecological and racial justice.

On Wednesday, Jonathan Luxmoore's story, "Inspired by Pope Francis, Laudato Si' institute at Oxford on a mission to better the world with research," explains how the director of this new institute seeks to promote multidisciplinary research through building relationships of respect among scholars of faith, ecology, art, social science, economics, business, education and others.

Both of these stories provide real examples of the integral ecology Francis promotes as an essential framework to caring for our common home.

And this is a bit of the perspective I hope to bring to EarthBeat as the new environment editor for National Catholic Reporter. We'll continue to provide you with the same excellent reporting on the climate crisis, faith and action, along with an intentional look at how connection and community are important parts of the ecological justice conversation.

I'm so excited to be here at EarthBeat with you, and I look forward to the ways we'll grow together on this journey toward right relation with all creation. (And I promise I won't judge you for buying food in plastic packaging.)

Let me know what kinds of stories you would most like to see with an email to sclary@ncronline.org or find me on Twitter, @scherp01.

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What's happening in other climate news:

- The Boston Globe has expanded its climate coverage with a new climate team of journalists and a dedicated page for climate news.

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's new chief scientist, Katherine Calvin, wants people to associate NASA with climate science, reports Catherine Clifford for CNBC. She also hopes to make climate science data more accessible to the public, especially underserved communities.

- The Catholic Climate Covenant announced 100 Catholic organizations as the first winners of the Victory Noll Sisters Small Grants Program. The grants, up to $1,000 each, will fund Laudato Si'-inspired projects.

- The first aid flights landed in Tonga on Thursday following the weekend eruption of the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai volcano, reports Scott Neuman of NPR. Relief efforts, including those by Caritas chapters in the Pacific, have been hampered by communications outages, which have also delayed a full assessment of the damage.

- Across America on Monday, communities honored the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. At Inside Climate News, James Bruggers spoke with scientists, theologians and environmental activists about the connections between today's push for climate justice and the civil rights movement that King led.

Upcoming events:

The Catholic Climate Covenant will debut its new "Ecospirituality Nights" virtual series on Jan. 31 with a presentation by Christina Leaño, associate director of Laudato Si' Movement. The live event will run from 7:30-8:30 p,m., Eastern, and will feature English-Spanish interpretation.

During the 2022 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering from Jan. 29–Feb. 1, Anna Robertson, director of youth and young adult mobilization for the Catholic Climate Covenant, will lead a workshop "At the Intersections of Climate Change: Voices of Young Adults." You can register online for the full 4-day event. Cost is $50.

You can find more information about this and other events on the EarthBeat Events page, and you can add your own group's events here.

Final Beat:

You may notice a small change next week that we're making with EarthBeat Weekly.

Beginning Jan. 28, the newsletter will no longer be posted on ncronline.org/earthbeat . To ensure you're still receiving it each week, sign up for the email version at ncronline.org/earthbeat/free-newsletters. Encourage a friend to sign up as well!

Thank you for reading!

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