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## Sisterly solidarity for Planet Earth

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Eco Catholic

In Guatemala, I am a guest of the *Hermanas de la Sagrada Familia* (Sisters of the Holy Family). They are a sister community to my Loretto community. These are great Guatemalan women, tracing their community roots to Belgium, and they now have sisters in Africa. (Yes, Mary Ann McGivern is a Loretto friend and *NCR* blogger, as well!)

On this visit, I was struck by a special sisterly solidarity between us: solidarity in our commitment to save Earth. At our Loretto motherhouse in recent months, we have been protesting the Bluegrass Pipeline, which would carry toxic natural gas wastes from fracking in Pennsylvania and Ohio to the Gulf of Mexico. We have refused to allow The Williams Companies to bring the pipeline across our land, and so have the other religious communities in the area. We have also been organizing folks in Kentucky to oppose it. We do this because we believe we are called to preserve Earth for future generations.

On Thursday, I encountered the same love of Earth among our Guatemalan sisters. They drove six of us Loretos to a camp where ordinary Guatemalan citizens have been protesting the existence and practices of a mine that produces gold and silver for 23 months. *Campesinos* camp on both sides of a rural road, where they have tried -- sometimes successfully, sometimes not -- to stop mining equipment that attempts to pass by to get to the mine. The local people take 24-hour turns at the camp.

This mine is affecting the water supply and crops in the area in serious ways, and the people are trying to save their way of life. At times, they have been harassed by the military and the corporation that owns the mine. But they have stood their ground, an incredible act of courage in a country where there is a long history of violence against such protests.

Our Guatemalan sisters have joined the protests from time to time and are in total solidarity with these people. (For the record, the local bishop and some priests have also been vocal and supportive. They have

a Mass in the camp once a month to give thanks that they survived another 30 days. Some local evangelicals are also supportive.)

The courage of all these people is inspiring. And I am proud to discover yet another dimension of our sisterly relationship with the *Hermanas de la Sagrada Familia*: solidarity in defense of Earth.

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