

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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Happy New Year to all of our Heart to Heart readers. As we continue to explore “an Angela response to the reality of our times,” we turn our focus and attention to the critical issue of climate change. We are grateful to our readers who responded to the invitation to watch the film The Letter and to share their reflections with all of us!



I was thrilled with an opportunity to experience *The Letter* a third time, and I paid more attention to the introduction by Dr. Lorna Gold: “The Pope wrote a letter to **you**, to every single person.” Happily, I was able to focus more on who was invited to the conversation, a representative voice from the peripheries, the indigenous, the youth, and nature/wildlife. The expansive, stunning cinematography captivated me throughout the presentation. I am so proud of Pope Francis and his vision for our world. I want to do all I can to support his prudent farsightedness, which, I think would be the same for St. Angela. I spread the word through emails to our associates and posts on Facebook to alums from our schools in San Antonio and Laredo, Texas.

—Karen Schwane, OSU,
San Antonio, TX

As I watched *The Letter* and listened, I experienced a deeper understanding of climate change and shock at seeing what is happening in various parts of our world. I experienced, as well, compassion for the fires and other natural disasters Mother Earth has been experiencing. I was left with a deeper conviction that WE, together as a world community, must take steps, however small they may be, to counter (personally and communally) the “tower of human arrogance” that Pope Francis talked about and which really does have humanity working like slaves to providing more power and riches to the few. I saw too that science and theology must work together with the total human community in stopping the insanity that is definitely present.

As I reflected on the Angela response I see is needed to this urgent reality, what came to my mind is the

Angela quote that is on the wall above my computer: “Do something. Get moving. Be confident. Risk new things. Stick with it. Get on your knees. Then be ready for BIG surprises!” And these words say to me that it is not only what I do, but what WE do together.

As I reflected on the action steps I might take, I chose to look at the online follow-up to *The Letter* and some of its suggestions. Based on those suggestions, I put *The Letter* on my Facebook page, encouraging all to take the time to look at it. I also pulled off the Reading Plan that was on the site for *Laudato Si*. I will do their suggested nine-week plan, and would be interested in connecting with others who might choose the same plan. Anyone interested? Please email me: sistern@stmarysmoscow.com.

—Margaret Johnson, OSU,
Moscow, ID

As a young child hiking, camping, and backpacking, I learned from my parents that I had a **“responsibility”** to leave the land so that others who come after us could enjoy what God had so richly placed before us, natural, unencumbered, and uncluttered. In Alaska this past fall, I visited glaciers I had seen 40 years ago that are now miles shorter due to the effects of global warming. Currently, we are at the tipping point in so many ways.

The Letter is a powerful message in all ways about **“our responsibility”** to our world both locally and globally. Individually we have a responsibility to conserve water, recycle when possible, and reduce our personal footprint in terms of emissions. We must do more than just talk about it. Our personal actions must speak those words in a real and powerful way. In our families and in our schools, we need to teach children that they too have **“responsibility”**, that their actions and attitudes can

either impact our environment positively or negatively. We can challenge them to identify ways they can step actionable steps. One example is my brother and his wife who started a non-profit organization taking bicycles from landfills, fixing them up, and giving them to children and youth to get them outdoors, riding, and appreciating God’s amazing world - both demonstrating responsibility towards recycling and appreciation for our natural world.

St. Angela is all about action and “meeting the needs of the time.” Now is the time for each of us to take personal actions, educate our young, expect responsibility from us all, and hold our legislators accountable to our environment and the value of people over power and money.

—Jennifer Beller,
Princeton, ID

In watching *The Letter*, I saw the whole concept of an encyclical in a new perspective, as a letter to me, to all individually. This is emphasized by the persons receiving the “Letter” through their excitement at being invited to respond and be engaged in person. How very Angela is this focus on the individual person.

The carefully chosen words and meaningful visuals show that those affected by climate change most drastically are so often the poor and so it seems not to touch me so closely. This calls me to let myself be engaged by being one with those in need whom I am called to serve.

—Madonna O’Hara, OSU,
St. Louis, MO

As I watched and listened, I was moved by the passion displayed in each one’s experience. Their stories were very moving and caused me to be in awe of each one. This was the third time I watched the video, and I was so impressed by each one’s ability to be an agent of change. Watching them bond as friends was heartwarming. When one received the news of the tragedy in his homeland, they all rallied around him. They are aware of each other’s stories, and they trust each other. What surfaced in me is the importance of working together and being there for one another.

I see Angela calling us to work together for the good of others and our planet. She would want us to do everything we could to make the changes necessary to help our environment and our planet. Angela was a woman of peace and cared deeply for the people of her time. We are called to be the same.

I can continue to increase my knowledge and understanding of the plight of our planet and the effect it has on other people. I can utilize resources such as thelaudatosimovement.org and share what I learn with others.

—Pat Schifini, OSU,
New Rochelle, NY

As I watched *The Letter*, I found myself deeply touched by the choice of voices that we need to hear, touched by the wisdom gained through being in touch with the challenges of this age. It truly is a call for us to be global citizens. Pope Francis calls upon all of us to recognize “we belong to a greater community, opening our minds and hearts to universal human fraternity.”

—Mary Ann Dooling, OSU,
St. Louis, MO

As I watched *The Letter*, I was left with mixed emotions – sadness regarding the present environmental destruction, anger at the slowness of our response, hope knowing that there are many organizations and individuals addressing the wide variety of environmental issues.

As I pondered what Angela's response is needed, I reflected on how in the film one said "Be the change you want to see in our world." This reminds me of Angela's words, "Do something. Get moving."

In terms of what actions I might take: Now that I am retired I have more time to give to local/state-wide environmental organizations. I'm happy that I have a handyman who when called to repair something broken usually fixes it with old parts rather than buying new parts. The old pieces are often from things we have out in the garage that Sr. Pat Funderhide, with whom I lived for many years, found as she was a scavenger and never wanted anything to go to the landfill.

—Mary Dostal, OSU,
Billings, MT

As I watched *The Letter* for the 2nd time, I realized many nuances had escaped me in my first viewing. This beautifully crafted film is full of poignant moments and puts a human face on some of the looming catastrophes presented in *Laudato Si'*.

The film is meant to stir the conscience and consciousness of every person on the planet. Pope Francis sees the planetary urgency in our time and has used film as an art form to awaken our understanding and alarm. We see first-hand the threats to our planet's viability as a home for innumerable species including our own and get a glimpse of how all working together can turn the tide of destruction.

The Letter is a film for all people regardless of religious affiliation or nationality. In spite of St. Angela's independence from the papacy of her time, I think she would approve of this film and encourage its viewing.

—Terry Eppridge, OSU,
Harrison, NY

St. Angela said that we need the poor more than they need us, and I saw that so clearly while watching this film. Hearing Arouna from Senegal tell his story about being a climate refugee as a young child is a warning for all of us, because what is happening to the poor (who live on the periphery and are currently the most impacted by climate change) will eventually impact all of us if we do not take action now. The film says experts predict that there could be as many as 1.2 billion people displaced by climate change by 2050.

Right now, we may live in a time where we can choose to deny climate change and do nothing, but it does not serve us well. We often choose to become "used to" the destruction and death that occurs daily. But in the film Pope Francis warns that "becoming used to" is a terrible illness for all of us.

When I watched the film, I couldn't help but think about Sr. Bridget Haase, OSU, and her time spent feeding the

starving children in East Africa. In reflecting on what action steps I might take, I was reminded of Sr. Bridget's account of an encounter she had with a physician there on a day when she was feeling particularly overwhelmed and depressed. In response to Sister's question about how the doctor had done it for so long, the doctor replied, "If you think of ALL the children, you'll never do it. Just focus on the child in front of you and feed that child. One on one is how it's done."

The subject of climate change can be so BIG and overwhelming when we look at the magnitude of the problem, but if we take our steps and actions one by one it can help prevent the despair that can cause inaction. Watching the film and remembering Sr. Bridget's story has helped renew my energy to take some daily steps and focus on "one action at a time" to do my part to help the earth.

—Beth Sheehan-Collins,
Foxboro, MA

Reflection Questions:

- If you have not yet watched *The Letter*, how do these reflections inspire you?
- If you have watched the film, what actions are you moved to take? What further suggestions for action do these reflections offer you?