

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart

Angela Merici

Living Legacy

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The celebration of EARTH DAY 2024 on April 22 provides the backdrop for the April issue of Heart to Heart. We begin with a reflection from Sr. Dianne Baumunk of the USA Roman Union Western Province sharing her province's engagement in an international Roman Union commitment to integral ecology.



For a number of years, the three USA Roman Union Ursuline provinces have been involved in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform. Last year the entire Roman Union made a commitment to the Platform, and the USA provinces are participating. Two excellent facilitators, Jacqui Remond from Australia and Megan Seneque from South Africa, were hired to work with a core team of Ursulines as animators. Along with two members of the general leadership team, one from Indonesia and one from Brazil, and sisters from France, Africa and Indonesia, Sr. Dianne Baumunk from the USA Western Province rounded out this diverse team.

The team began by co-creating an experience of integral ecology for all the provincials at last year's Enlarged General Council in Rome. This year each province on 6 continents was invited to choose at least three participants (leadership sister, younger sister and lay) for an online pilgrimage of transformation to become the animators of integral ecology in their provinces. These monthly two-and-half hour modules have focused on the goals of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform and led more than 90 pilgrims on a journey of envisioning and co-creating an integrated ecological future.

The challenges of busy schedules, span of time zones, difference of culture and language have been juggled to provide an experience of integral ecology imbued with the charism of Angela. The pilgrims have been stretched to new levels of personal growth and have been enriched by a variety of experiences, reflections, discussions, and the diversity of the groups themselves. We are building a world-wide network of animators to help us co-create a future for our common home.

In the Western Province our animator team consists of Sr. Margaret Johnson and two lay associates, Jennifer Beller and Barbara Aston. As a province we have invited a number of lay men and women to join us monthly for our own integral ecology experience and our animator team has taken the lead in those. Yes, we are a small province, but once a month we double in size for a lively experience and sharing that enriches us all.



Associate Barbara Aston describes this journey for her: "It has been such a gift to have been invited to participate in the International Integral Ecology program of the Roman Union as an animator for the Western Province. As animator in training, we are the recipients of the labor, insights, and prayers of those who have designed and are presenting this program. We in turn have the privilege of sharing it within the province. The response from participants has been life-giving as we take the principles and introduce them in our journey together towards a transformation that will enable us to make a difference in our world and for our world. The greatest impact for me personally has been connecting with individuals of a like mind and heart who are seeking understanding and action. I am experiencing at a gut level the power of community! We are not alone in facing the future and living out the Call for the Care of the Earth and the Care of the Poor! Praise God!"

—Dianne Baumunk, OSU
Windsor, CA

Ecology Efforts and Projects in our Ursuline Schools

URSULINE ACADEMY — ST. LOUIS, MO

In August, a small group of students formed a new club at UA-STL, the Agricultural/Gardening club. During our meetings I could see the passion and interest of the students in growing their own food (flowers too). Although our new club is small, we have big dreams of what our school garden could look like. I knew I needed to get others involved to help these seeds of ideas grow into a reality. With the help of many interested participants in our community here at Ursuline we have just started the process of becoming a Seed St. Louis School



Garden network member. Once we have successfully gone through each stage of the application process, we will have additional support and benefits to bring to the school garden. In the meantime, we have started to plant in a corner of the garden space, and will slowly expand over time. The space is shared with the wildflower and prairie conservation site and the intent is to allow portions of the wildflowers to remain to benefit pollinators and other native wildlife.

—Lisa Payne,
Ursuline Academy
St. Louis



THE URSULINE SCHOOL — NEW ROCHELLE, NY

On March 7, as part of its commitment to the Ursuline global integral ecology project, The Ursuline School welcomed esteemed international expert in science education, Dennis Liu, Ph.D., as the Keynote Speaker at its annual Global Symposium which focused on **Global Biodiversity**. As Vice President of Education for the E.O.Wilson Biodiversity Foundation, Dr. Liu is committed to carry forward Ed Wilson's mission to protect our planet's precious biodiversity now and for future generations. The world is in the midst of a biodiversity crisis, with concerning trends for the well-being of our planet's wildlife and the well-being of human communities around the world. Dr. Liu stressed the importance of the collaboration between people and science to safeguard biodiversity and protect species, ecosystems

and natural resources on planet Earth. He also underscored the importance of Pope Francis' critical message in the 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, reminding us of our collective responsibility to "care for our common home," and to recognize the interconnectedness of all living beings. After his presentation, Dr. Liu fielded students' questions and

spent time sharing his insights with students in the Science Research program. The Ursuline School learned so much, and its students and faculty are inspired to do their part in local communities and environments close to home.

—Maria Barton
The Ursuline School
New Rochelle, NY



Christopher Pope Photography

URSULINE ACADEMY — WILMINGTON, DE

We just visited Princess Vlei wetlands in Cape Town, South Africa, at the end of our recent Global exchange with Brescia House School in Johannesburg. We met with Denisha Anand, biodiversity project manager at the wetlands who took us around the wetlands as part of a service project.



She spoke with our students about the importance of how culture and nature are intertwined and noted that by separating them, we erase people and identities. Our students joined her efforts to help make Princess Vlei cleaner and more accessible, as everyone deserves access to green spaces. Denisha's work is significant, as she connects with surrounding communities that are economically strained in hopes of reviving and reclaiming this land, a place that remains heavily impacted by the effects of apartheid. Ursuline students enjoyed learning from Denisha and gained so much knowledge and insight from her.

—Erin Prada
Ursuline Academy, Wilmington, DE

MOUNT MERICI ACADEMY — WATERVILLE, ME

The fourth-grade class at Mount Merici Academy in Waterville, Maine, is participating in an ecology outreach community service project. While working



on their animal classifications unit, the students have learned all about pigs; they have learned about their eating habits, how they grow, their adaptations, and their habitats. Mrs. Riddle, classroom teacher, was able to work with Mrs. Lopes, director of childcare, to arrange

transportation to Turner's Farm. The fourth-grade students take turns setting up and cleaning up a large plastic bin to feed the pigs. Mount Merici students place all food remnants from their lunches into the bin after they have finished lunch. This project teaches all the students at Mount Merici about sustainability and the importance of giving back to our community and the environment.

—Sarah Riddle
Mount Merici Academy
Waterville, ME



URSULINE ACADEMY — DALLAS, TX

Four Ursuline Academy of Dallas students in the Service-Learning class, Markley Shaw, Zia Ramnath, Corinne Tinker, and Laura Thompson, researched the UN Sustainability Goal #2, Zero Hunger, to create projects revolving around the redistribution of food waste in and around the Ursuline community. Zia and Laura are focusing on the Ursuline Dallas community by repurposing excess food waste from our meals in the Fox Dining Center and partnering with the local Dallas non-profit, The Stewpot, to repurpose otherwise wasted food for



those in need. They have currently repurposed over 1,000 pounds of food waste since February 2nd! Markley and Corinne are focusing on the local Dallas community by working with North Dallas Shared Ministries to redistribute excess prepared meals from local restaurants, while holding different canned food and pantry drives, accumulating over 750 cans and dried goods for the non-profit, out in the Dallas community.

—Gabi Merani
Ursuline Academy
Dallas, TX

PRAYING TOGETHER

Join us in efforts to create worldwide awareness on the importance of our environment with this prayer taken from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*:

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

*Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.*

*Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.*

*O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.*

*Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.*

*Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.*

*Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.*

We thank you for being with us each day.

*Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.*

