

Canticle of the Creatures

and

Pope Francis' Laudato Si'

The publication of “*Laudato Si’*,” the Pope’s encyclical on the environment, unites two holy men separated by 800 years but who share a name (Francis) and a common vision of a world built on communion, not competition, and a planet protected in beauty and sustained in abundance for generations to come... *Reflection: Pope Francis and St. Francis’ Canticle of the Creatures by David Couturier, OFM Cap.*



...We, in the modern world, live with a prejudice for seeing the world around us solely or largely in material terms. Nature, after the Enlightenment, quickly became just another commodity on the open market to be used and abused, bought and sold, depleted for as much profit as we can extract from it, without regard for its deeper meaning and purposes...

...It is a question that St. Francis addressed 800 years ago. He lived in a time of incredible greed and amazing violence. People in his time were being sacrificed in bloody, never-ending battles for economic supremacy. St. Francis knew this scheme because he and his father were very much part and parcel of this economic venture that sacrificed people for profit. After his conversion, however, St. Francis introduced people to a new relationship to the environment. He began to build a fraternal relationship with all of creation.

Reflection: Pope Francis and St. Francis' Canticle of the Creatures by David Couturier, OFM Cap.



Il Poverello Fraternity

When St. Francis looked up into the heavens, he didn't see matter and stuff. He didn't see profit centers and cash cows. He saw "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon," creation as a gift of God, signs and signals of a God who loved men and women, whom God endowed with gifts that nourished, sustained and bonded them to one another...

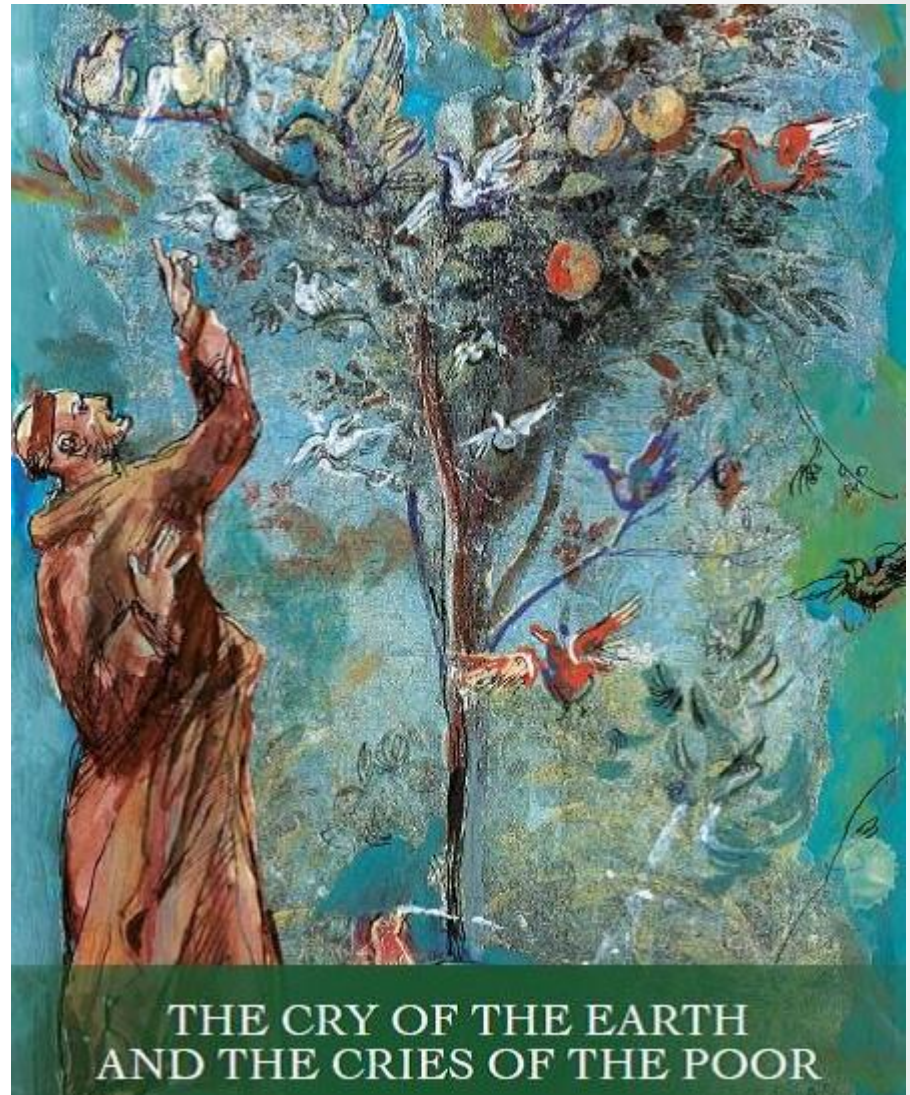
Reflection: Pope Francis and St. Francis' Canticle of the Creatures by David Couturier, OFM Cap.

Murray Bodo writes, “(the Canticum) focuses ... on creatures and praises God through them; it is the song of a soul who has lived the truth that only two things really matter:

the love of God and

the love of God’s creation.”

Rule 6



Ordo Fratrum Minorum

PRAYER FOR STEWARDSHIP

God of all creation,

At the beginning of time
You placed a single mandate on humankind -
To be stewards of creation
To replenish and nurture through all generations
What you have made

We kneel today amid that same creation -
A world that is, in many ways, more splendid than ever
But in too many ways, scarred beyond recognition

Turn us from our unmindfulness
Help our touch be light
Help us renew the world that supports us
So we may once more know creation
As it was in the beginning

Amen

Credit: CRS



Theme one: What is Happening to our Common Home?

Laudato Si' Revolution



Storm Surges in White Rock



Wildfires in Burns Bog

This sister (the Earth) now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor. (LS 2)



Mountains of plastics

a throwaway culture...affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish. (LS 22)

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life. The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system. Another determining factor has been an increase in changed uses of the soil, principally deforestation for agricultural purposes.
(LS 23)



Burning the Amazon for agriculture



Oil_Sands_Alberta

Large enough to be seen from space, tailings ponds in Alberta's oil sands region are some of the biggest human-made structures on Earth. They contain a toxic slurry of heavy metals and hydrocarbons from the bitumen separation process.



Today, however, 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**. (LS 49) *Rule 14*



Processing Plant in the pristine forest of Skouries, processing-plant_orig

It is remarkable how weak international political responses have been. The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are **too many special interests**, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and, manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected...the interests of economic groups which irrationally demolish sources of life should not prevail in dealing with natural resources" (LS 54)



Refugee Camps

Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods.

It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. (LS 25) *Rule 13*



Zenit.org

Theme Two: The Gospel of Creation *Laudato Si' Revolution*



usa-agriculture-widerimage

Bonaventure tells us that, “from a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with even more abundant piety, (Francis) would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of ‘brother’ or ‘sister’”. Such a conviction cannot be written off as naive romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behaviour. **If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs.** (LS 11) *Rule 11*



...to live in harmony is possible

The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God. (LS 84)



...nature as a whole not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence. The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with him. Discovering this presence leads us to cultivate the “ecological virtues”. (LS 88) *Rule 12*

Theme Three: A Call to Ecological Conversion

Laudato Si' Revolution



So what they all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. **Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.** (LS 217) *Rule 13*



This (ecological) conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works. (*LS 220*) *Rule 7*



Village endangered at the edge of giant open pit mine

“contemporary man has not been trained to use power well”, because our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience. (*LS 105*) *Rule 18*

Theme Four: Institutional, Systemic & Lifestyle Changes

Laudato Si' Revolution



Plastics are convenient but how are we harming...?

Patriarch Bartholomew has spoken in particular of **the need for each of us to repent** of the ways we have harmed the planet, for “inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage”...

... we are called to acknowledge “our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of Creation” ...



Photograph: Jan-Otto/Getty Images



We are swimming in plastics

...for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins". For **"to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God"**. (LS 8) Rule 7

At the same time we can note **the rise of a false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness.** As often occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear.

Superficially, apart from a few obvious signs of pollution and deterioration, **things do not look that serious,** and the planet could continue as it is for some time. **Such evasiveness serves as a licence to carrying on with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption.**



monkeys_orig

This is the way human beings contrive to feed their self-destructive vices: trying not to see them, trying not to acknowledge them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen. (LS 59)

Theme Five: The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor

Laudato Si' Revolution

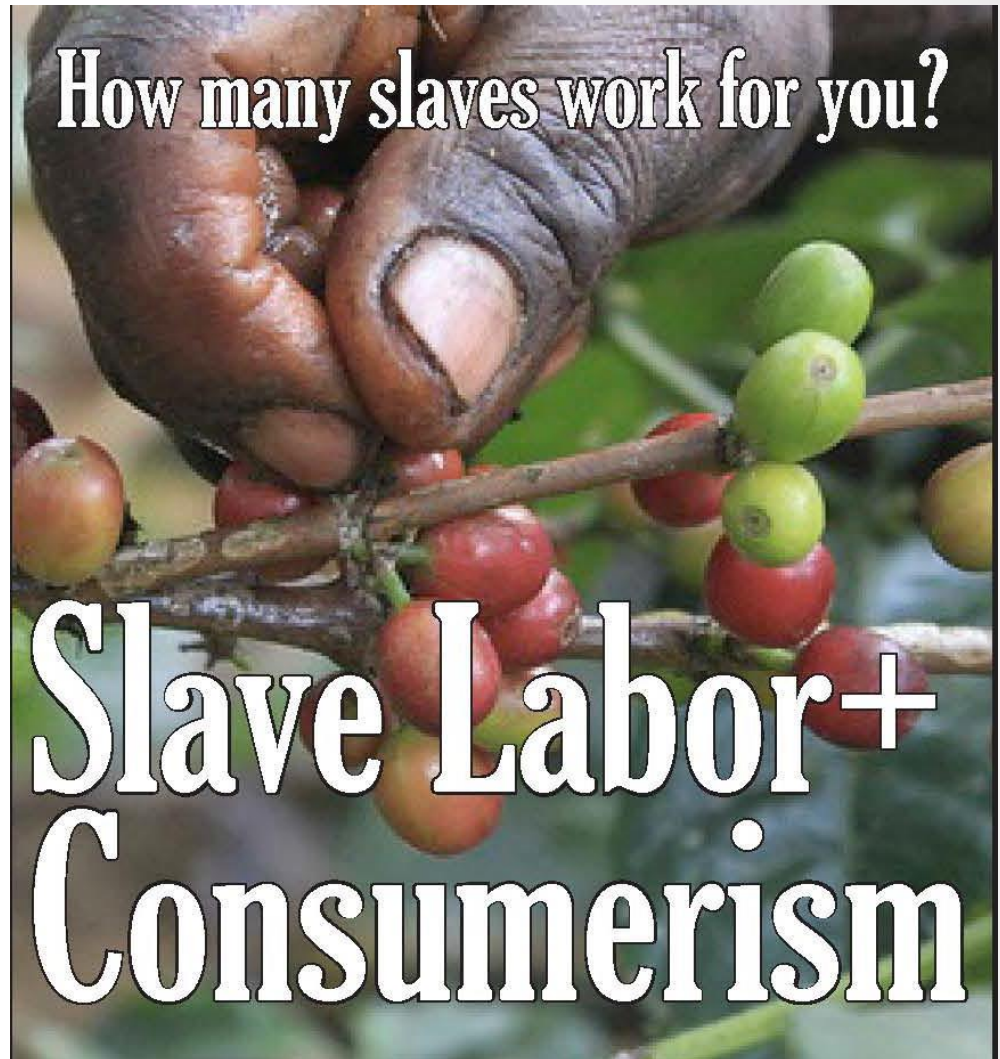


Teach the children ...

Ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources. There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm. (LS 111) *Rule 16*

If **everything** is related, then the health of a society's institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life. "Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment". (LS 142)

Think fair trade





...local individuals and groups can make a real difference...public pressure has to be exerted in order to bring about decisive political action. Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment. (LS 179) Rule #15

Theme Six: The Importance of Interfaith Collaboration Climate Emergency and other Social Justice Issues

Laudato Si' Revolution

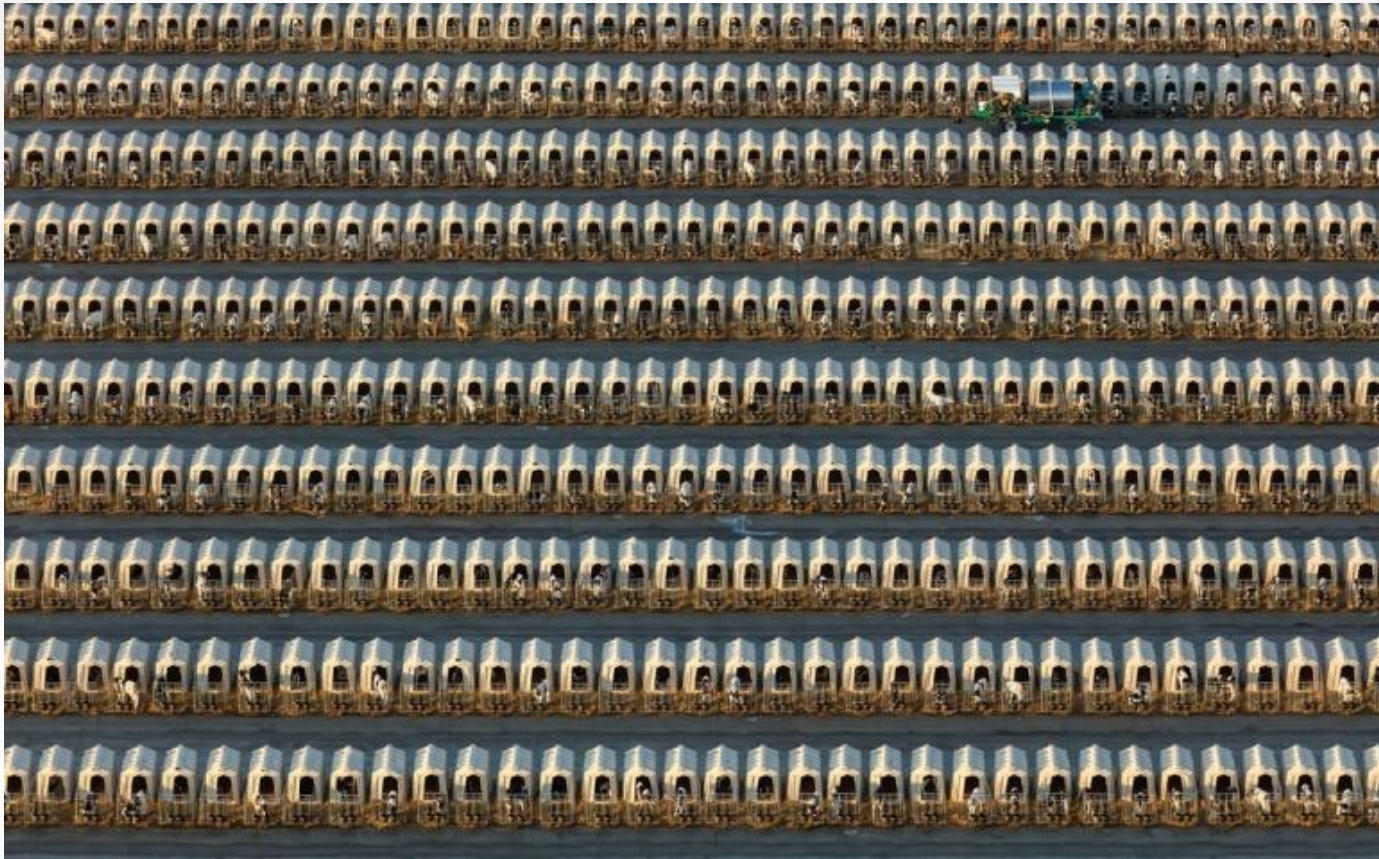


thenarrowgate.web

The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity. Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language...(LS 201) Rule 19



...The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which requires patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that “realities are greater than ideas”. (*LS 201*)

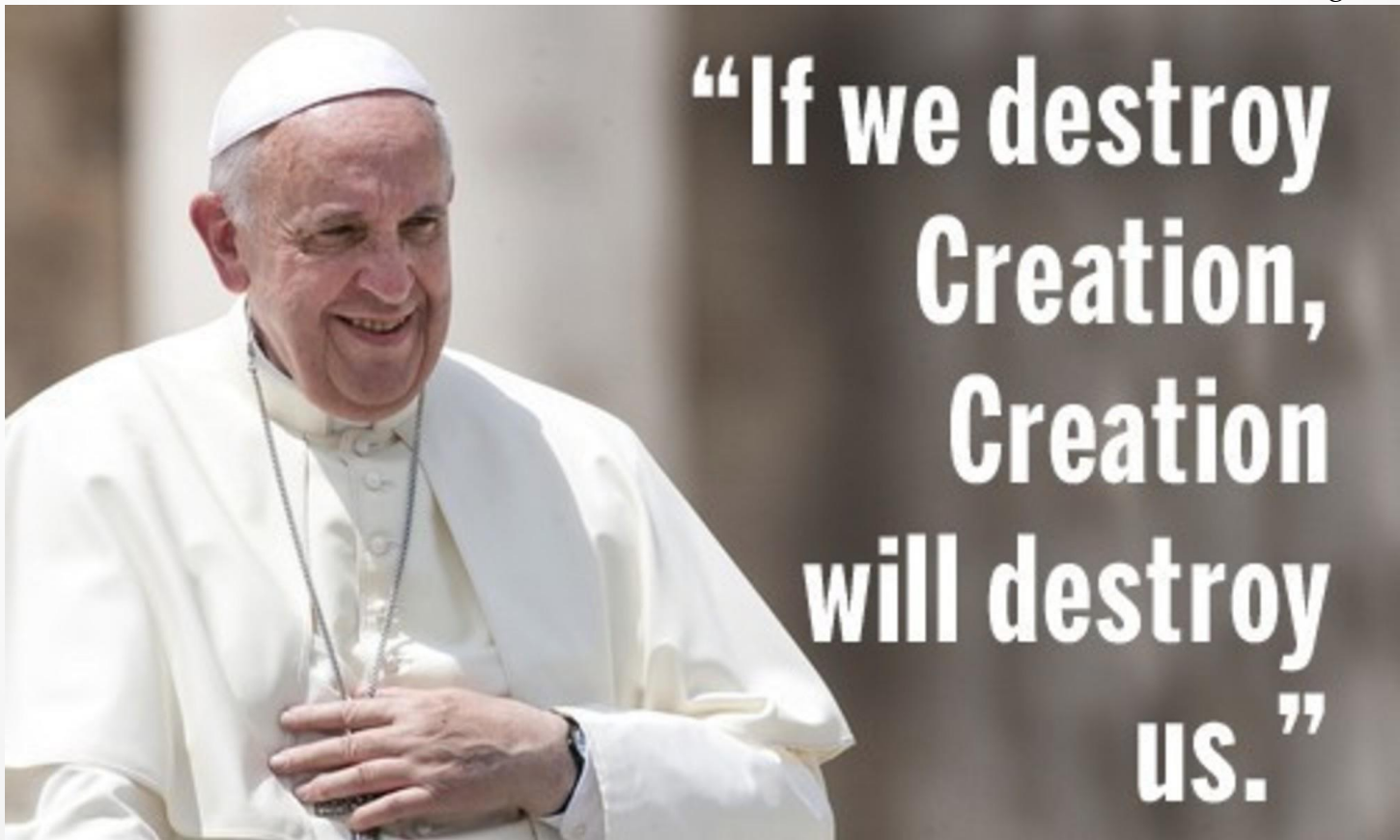


Industrial farming today – *New York Times*

Believers themselves must constantly feel challenged to live in a way consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions. They need to be encouraged to be ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace... (LS 200)

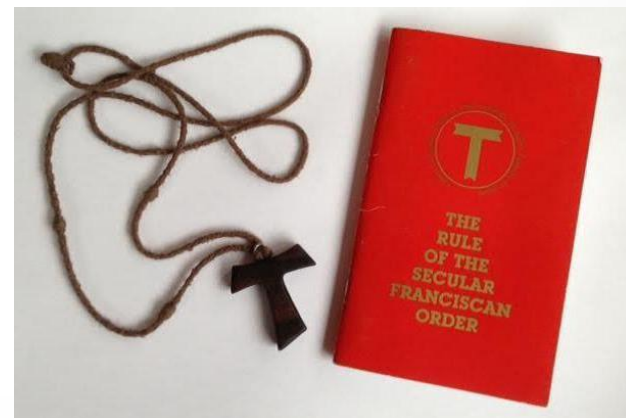
...If a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us to justify mistreating nature, to exercise tyranny over creation, to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence, we believers should acknowledge that by so doing we were not faithful to the treasures of wisdom which we have been called to protect and preserve. (*LS 200*)

Catholic.org





With Francis we can pray,
“Praise and bless my Lord and
give Him thanks and serve Him
with great humility.”



The painting *The Canticle of the Creatures* (by Sr. Mariella Erdman, OSF,) visually incorporates the ideas from St. Francis' written Canticle of the Creatures. The cross is central in the painting. Francis totally immersed himself into the life of Jesus Christ crucified. He was passionately in love with Christ. Francis was a man who lived close to the earth, and in the natural world he found the glory of God revealed. He saw all creation radiating from God. It was because of this that he could call all creatures good. In today's world, our relationship to the elements of nature is often dimmed and not a part of our awareness. ... I have portrayed the four elements: fire, water, air and earth. These elements are a part of Francis' vision of God, creation, and the human soul... (Francis) gives the basis for his hymn. Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Water, Sister Air, Brother Fire and Sister Earth all become his companions in praising God.

Sr. Mariella Erdman, OSF

