Dear Friends,

How wonderful to connect again. With the publication of this plan, the Sisters of the Holy Cross begin the second of a seven-year journey with the Laudato Si' Action Platform (LSAP). As sisters, our journey began more than 20 years ago. But our new commitment to the LSAP now places us on a more common road, where we walk alongside many people of goodwill.

We have spent this past year learning to walk at a new communal pace, stepping onto new pathways, learning and sharing with our traveling companions from around the world. It has been a graced journey and, with this global network, we are helping to heal our planet.

However, the rapidity of climate change and the growing polarizations of our world signal warnings that we must double down on this commitment. We must strengthen our resolve to be bearers of peace and justice, and work to shrink our carbon footprint drastically and quickly.

Through all this, our commitment as women of hope is unwavering. And so we invite and welcome all who wish to join us, as we each take stock of the gifts and opportunities that God places before us to bring to this endeavor. We also desire to collaborate in the initiatives of others who share our common goals and who are dedicated to healing our planet, our common home. The urgency and necessity of such shared action is echoed in the words of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si*:

"We see increasing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet .... Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it." (*Laudato Si’* 19)
This year’s report does share information and the painful awareness that climate change, natural and human-made disasters, mass migrations of people, and the proliferation of violence is “our suffering— the suffering of our sisters and brothers in the Holy Cross family, of our coworkers and friends, and even of those we do not yet call “friend.” Our commitment this year is to evaluate where we must change our behaviors now, to discover where we must dare to act in different and innovative communal ways.

We promise to continue walking this path of integral ecology, aware that we are only two years into a seven-year commitment. We are also aware that the number seven in biblical language carries with it multiple meanings. The seven-day or seven-year structure is “the ending” of one era and the beginning of another—a cycle that continues until the dawning of the “eighth day/year,” or the dawning of the fullness of time. So, to paraphrase the words of Robert Frost, there are miles to go before we sleep.

The pace and measure of our step is intentional and meant to carry us to the unknown of the future. We strive to be a people of resilience, knowing the journey will bring us and those who come after us to unknown vistas. But journey, we must. In the words of our founder, Blessed Basil Anthony Moreau, “We prepare the world for a future better than our own.” With that vision as guide, we seek to embody and witness the words of Laudato Si’, “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential … it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (*LS* 217). We are Laudato Si’ pilgrims!

I invite you to join us in our pilgrimage, in prayer and action for our world. We hope that using this plan as a guide or support may be as helpful in your journey as it is in our own. Also, let us know via social media of ways that we can collaborate in whatever actions you take part, as this will multiply the effectiveness of this shared journey to create anew a global “culture of care.” We are blessed!

_Sister M. Veronique (Wiedower), CSC_  
President
Mission Statement

We, Sisters of the Holy Cross throughout the world, are called to participate in the prophetic mission of Jesus to witness God’s love for all creation. Compassion moves us to reflect on the signs of the times, discern needs, and respond. We stand in solidarity with the poor and the powerless. Our life together enriches and strengthens us to foster community wherever we are.

Core Values

Compassion compels us to stand with and embrace others in their suffering, that together we may experience God’s liberating and healing presence. Faith impels us to trust God ever more radically and to risk responding as disciples of Jesus. Prayer, personal and communal, grounds us in God’s unconditional love, calls us to integrity in discernment, and animates us in our work of building a society of justice and love. Community commits us to seek ways to journey together which energize and sustain us to live our mission in solidarity with one another.
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We strive to be a people of resilience, knowing the journey

Protectors of God’s Handiwork

As we enter into our second year of the *Laudato Si’* commitment, we, along with many others around the world, continue to develop a bold and active response to the ecological crisis.

In *Laudato Si’ (on care for our common home)* (2015), Pope Francis dared the global church “…to become painfully aware, to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (*LS* 19).

The Sisters of the Holy Cross have spent the last year continuing to study and discern the challenges and injustices before us, as well as working tirelessly to implement congregational initiatives into our lives and ministries around the world. We are inspired to act strategically and intentionally from a growing awareness that education can inspire an ecological conversion in our hearts and the hearts of those to whom we minister.

Pope Francis reminds us, “All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education” (*LS* 214) and “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue” (*LS* 217). We are continually motivated by the urgency of these global crises and the call for communities like our own to act and journey toward integral ecology. We are inspired to think globally, act locally and emphasize the interconnectedness of this work.

In November 2021, we committed to the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform and invited others to join us on this journey as we entered a period of education, prayer and discernment that would culminate in a decisive action plan toward integral ecology.

In September 2022, we published our *Laudato Si’* Action Plan for 2022–2023 to guide our lives and ministries.

Since then, we have acted, animated and accomplished so much. From advocating for climate justice to expanding our environmental engagement across the world. In these pages, we chart out our journey toward integral ecology, highlighting last year’s efforts and our hopes and goals for 2023–2024.

Here is our plan for year two. Our time is now.
Opening Prayer

A Prayer for Our Common Home

In this perilous time of climate change, we call upon you, all powerful and loving God.

We believe that you are present in all of Creation.

We ask you to open our minds and hearts as we seek to care for our planet Earth.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we might protect life and the interconnection of all Creation.

Help us to hear the cry of the Earth as so many suffer from climate change.

Empower us in favor of action to protect our planet.

Refresh us and stir us to action that we might have wisdom as we enter this graced mystery of existence.

We believe that caring for our Earth is a preferential option for the young, as they will inherit the Earth.

Enlighten and move us daily as we seek to be the voice of justice, peace, love and beauty.

Prayer provided by Sister Patricia McCabe, CSC
Laudato Si’ Action Platform Overview

Spurring action to address our global ecological and social crisis, the Vatican launched the Laudato Si’ Action Platform in 2021.

“The Laudato Si’ Action Platform is a unique collaboration between the Vatican, an international coalition of Catholic organizations, and ‘all men and women of good will.’ (LS 3) Taking a truly ground-up approach, it is rooted in the strengths and realities of communities around the world, empowering all to take ‘decisive action, here and now’ as we journey towards a better future together. (LS 161) Action is urgently needed. Our Creator called the human family to be the steward of creation, but we have neglected that call. Our hotter, dirtier, deader planet is driving up the risk of suffering. The most vulnerable suffer above all. At this Kairos moment, we are responding to the call for healing in our relationships with God, our neighbors, and the Earth itself. Through the Laudato Si’ Action Platform, we are walking the ‘path to renewal’ together (LS 202).”

—Laudato Si’ Action Platform website

The platform provides an online space for us to connect with families, parishes, dioceses, schools, organizations and other religious congregations to care for our common home together. The digital forum requires participants to complete an assessment, a reflection and a plan every year for seven years to fulfill the commitment. Joining the platform gives us shared resources, guides, ongoing support and other benefits, as well as seven goals to guide and unite our efforts in the work of Laudato Si’. These seven goals give congregations, like our own, common language and focus so that we may all work strategically toward the universal objective of integral ecology—where we acknowledge the interconnection of the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.

In November 2021, the Sisters of the Holy Cross started the seven-year journey toward global sustainability by formally committing to the Laudato Si’ Action Platform. However, the work of Laudato Si’ is nothing new for our Congregation. For decades, the Sisters of the Holy Cross have been living out the tenets of Laudato Si’ through our corporate stands, the Family of Holy Cross Statement on Climate Change, and the many responsive programs envisioned by our sisters and partners in ministry. Therefore, our commitment to the Laudato Si’ Action Platform is a way to reinvigorate our passion and commitment and an obvious step towards caring for our common home in solidarity with the global community.
The Laudato Si’ Action Platform goals guiding the work are:

Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the well-being of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and ecological sustainability.

Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth.

Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere—our common home.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy.

Ecological Education is about re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action.

Ecological Spirituality springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to “discover God in all things,” both in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick and the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities.

Community Resilience and Empowerment envisage a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels.

Learn more at laudatosiactionplatform.org
Animating *Laudato Si’*

The Congregation Justice Committee

The Congregation Justice Committee advises the Congregation on justice priorities, and most sister members work with a local justice committee to animate related work in their respective countries. (Refer to the map for the scope of our global ministry.)

Supporting the Congregation’s Laudato Si’ Action Plan commitment, the committee members developed country specific work plans for 2023-24 and will oversee their implementation. Learn more about the exciting initiatives we’re starting and/or expanding in each country on pages 16–31.

United States
Sister Mary Alice Bowler, CSC

United States
Sister Susan Kintzele, CSC

United States
Sister Laura Guadalupe Tiburcio Santos, CSC

Mexico
Sister Esperanza Jacobo Acevedo, CSC

Peru
Sister Patricia A. Dieringer, CSC
Ghana
Sister Comfort Arthur, CSC

Uganda
Sister Semerita Mbambu, CSC

Bangladesh
Sister Likha Ruram, CSC

India
Sister Shadkmenlang Kharsahnoh, CSC

Brazil
Sister Maria de Lourdes de Deus Pimentel, CSC
Provided
access to education for all

Invited
communities into the Laudato Si' Movement through education and awareness

Empowered
those on the peripheries with skills-based training

Cared
for the sick, elderly & vulnerable
Led environmental stewardship efforts

Collaborated with other congregations, Laudato Si’ leaders and other organizations

Fostered dialogue to amplify marginalized voices

Promoted justice & advocacy

Guided faith formation & pastoral care

Encouraged government & international organizations to use their power for good
Ghana

● Current Initiatives

● Eradicated plastic waste especially in areas where schoolchildren study and play. SOAR (Sisters Organizing and Advancing Recycling) visited schools throughout the year to encourage plastic waste clean-up and the importance of caring for our common home.

● Made conscious efforts to collaborate with the Ghana Forestry Commission to plant more trees in the communities they serve.

● Empowered communities through radio and church messaging on the themes of Laudato Si’.

● Created and facilitated more educational activities on recycling and caring for our common home.
● Proposed Initiatives

Cry of the Poor
Care for the vulnerable in our communities and parishes through empowerment with plastic collection, skills training and free legal counseling.

Cry of the Earth
Collaborate with individuals and other organizations (schools, parishes, etc.) for plastic waste collection and engage in tree-planting exercises to promote how an increase in vegetation can result in cleaner air.

Community Resilience & Empowerment
Raise awareness and empower communities through radio station programs and in-person education workshops in schools, churches and other institutions, utilizing technology to reach as many people as possible.

Ecological Economics
Buy from local farmers and in the local markets, and strive to buy locally manufactured goods when possible.

Ecological Spirituality
Create a space outside for people to pray with nature and encourage incorporating God’s creation into their prayer lives.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles
Improve our community-composting efforts, encourage a more conscious use of our natural resources, and adopt more green energy when possible.

Ecological Education
Host environmental education sessions on recycling and other ways to protect the Earth through awareness building and partnering with others in the care for creation.
Uganda

Current Initiatives

- Addressed short-term needs of vulnerable people including elders, widows and victims of human trafficking.
- Ensured access to education and included ecological education at our institutions.
- Organized community meetings related to justice and, specifically, climate justice.
- Hosted radio programs to advocate and raise awareness to the dangers of human trafficking, environmental degradation, and other justice issues Uganda is facing.
Cry of the Poor
Respond to the physical and spiritual needs of the vulnerable around us, especially human trafficking victims, elders, widows, refugees and others.

Cry of the Earth
Limit the use of plastic bottles and charcoal, encourage the usage of digital copies to limit printing, and promote the planting of trees.

Community Resilience & Empowerment
Empower local farmers to improve the quality of produce and production, empower vulnerable people in skills-based training, and partner with the local government to collaborate on ecological initiatives.

Ecological Economics
Continue to grow the use of solar throughout our communities and ministry sites, and continue to pay our workers fair and just wages.

Ecological Spirituality
Host eco-spirituality prayer services and tree-planting exercises with local schools.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles
Use animal droppings and other green fertilizers in our sustainable gardens.

Ecological Education
Sensitize and share Laudato Si’ goals and educational initiatives with those we minister to, especially in our schools through environmental clubs and other organized efforts.
Bangladesh

● **Current Initiatives**

- Taught students in our institutions about ecological education and the importance of caring for our common home.
- Hosted awareness seminars on Laudato Si’ and human trafficking to educate people in our communities.
- Facilitated ecological-spirituality prayer experiences in our communities and convents.
- Provided food and medical care to the most vulnerable around us when possible.
Cry of the Poor
To stand in solidarity with the poor and powerless, practice weekly fasting and raise funds for those who live in poverty. Observe ecological action days: World Environment Day, Earth Day, World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, and others.

Cry of the Earth
Live an eco-conscious life. Consciously take care of our Mother Earth each day. Plant trees and gardens and use environmentally friendly fertilizer.

Community Resilience & Empowerment
Strengthen connections among the local parishes, other communities (religions) and our sisters.

Ecological Economics
Buy and use eco-friendly items.

Ecological Spirituality
Organize prayer services in nature and observe days that call special attention to creation.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles
Reduce food waste and use food scraps for composting in our gardens.

Ecological Education
Educate and grow awareness in our ministry places, teaching clients, students, parents and others about the effects of climate change.
India

● Current Initiatives

● Incorporated creation care into the education and experience of students in our hostels through gardening and tree planting.

● Hosted cleaning drives on World Environment Day at schools and in the local community.

● Visited and prayed with those who are sick and vulnerable, touching on ecological spirituality and other spiritual needs of people.

● Empowered local communities to use public transportation, limit plastic use, and buy locally sourced foods through example and sharing best practices.
Proposed Initiatives

**Cry of the Poor**
Educate and respond to the needs of those who are most vulnerable through respect, love and care. Use compassionate listening and the language of equality and justice in our daily interactions.

**Cry of the Earth**
Help each other understand the importance and value of the Earth within our communities, schools, hostels, local churches and parishes through intentional education.

**Community Resilience & Empowerment**
Empower our sisters to be more aware and effective as a community and in our ministry places with our actions for the Laudato Si’ Movement, and join other groups to share our knowledge and the actions we take.

**Ecological Economics**
Use public transportation and buy local goods to support workers and care for our common home.

**Ecological Spirituality**
In our prayer and spiritual lives, strategically emphasize the beauty of creation and how we are connected to it. Be aware of ongoing natural disasters and violence so that we may stand in solidarity and prayer with those who are impacted.

**Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles**
Ensure the availability of natural resources by creating an awareness of our choices, particularly single-use plastics, and how they affect Mother Earth and continue to replace vehicles with ones that are more energy efficient.

**Ecological Education**
Educate ourselves and those we live with and minister to about Laudato Si’ by using the language of Laudato Si’ in reflections and when teaching catechism to others, especially the youth.
Mexico

• Current Initiatives

- Accompanied people in the migrant shelters by sharing Scripture and through games, art, drawing, painting and crafts.

- Incorporated recycling, energy efficiency and sustainable gardening into our community life and encouraged our neighbors to do the same.

- Shared resources on ecological education and encouraged care for creation through a gardening project at ministry sites.
Proposed Initiatives

**Cry of the Poor**
Support programs that address immediate, short-term needs of those who are vulnerable.

**Cry of the Earth**
Plant a fruit and vegetable garden and encourage those we serve to do the same.

**Community Resilience & Empowerment**
Host preventive workshops on mental health, physical health, and psychological and bereavement issues.

**Ecological Economics**
Incorporate the use of energy-saving lightbulbs.

**Ecological Spirituality**
Create and share a Season of Creation prayer video globally with sisters, ministry partners, employees and friends.

**Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles**
Recycle and encourage recycling in our community and ministry sites.

**Ecological Education**
Create and share a Laudato Si'-themed podcast to educate the public about caring for our common home.
United States

● **Current Initiatives**

- Supported programs that address immediate, short-term needs of those who are vulnerable.

- Helped facilitate walks for peace, advocating for nonviolence.

- Started a Laudato Si’ committee for our Area of North America to continue to grow awareness and develop animators.

- Draught tolerant landscaping in prayer and reflection garden to help conserve water.
● Proposed Initiatives

**Cry of the Poor**
Support programs that address immediate, short-term needs of those who are vulnerable.

**Cry of the Earth**
Provide reminders and update signs and notices about items and materials that can be recycled.

**Community Resilience & Empowerment**
Facilitate education and a social media campaign related to nonviolence and credible news during election time.

**Ecological Economics**
Encourage buying local to support farmers and artisans.

**Ecological Spirituality**
Create and share a Season of Creation prayer video globally with sisters, ministry partners, employees and friends.

**Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles**
Encourage our communities and ministry partners to compost, reduce the use of single-use plastics, and replace existing vehicles with ones that are energy-efficient.

**Ecological Education**
Share ecological resources to educate our communities and those we serve and minister to.
Brazil

● **Current Initiatives**

- Facilitated sustainability and recycling workshops and education, including reusing and upcycling materials into better quality products, bags and art.

- Supported the Indigenous and other vulnerable people through food donation campaigns and other immediate-need initiatives.

- Harvested rainwater for garden irrigation and cleaning, and used solar panels at our local ministry for power generation.

- Delivered seedling to traditional communities to help with erosion, cleaner air, and enhance local habitats.
Proposed Initiatives

Cry of the Poor
Develop activities with people who are homeless, migrants, women in prostitution, imprisoned women and traditional peoples. Support the activities of the Day of the Poor. Participate in discussions with partners on combating trafficking.

Cry of the Earth
Promote seminars together with VIVAT and other partners on the challenges and consequences of mining companies, and support projects that carry out reforestation.

Community Resilience and Empowerment
Participate in movements and with groups and partners that are developing activities and actions on the ODS (sustainable development goals), hold seminars on the context of forced migration and its challenges, and promote activities that lead to women’s empowerment.

Ecological Economics
Hold a seminar with community partners that reflects on the Economy of [Saints] Francis and Clara.

Ecological Spirituality
Make subsidies to help communities reflect on ecological spirituality, health and God-in-Nature spirituality. Create cards for social networks with themes related to the Laudato Si’ objectives.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles
Hold training meetings and prepare a subsidy with information on sustainability, including its importance and tips for how to live sustainably.

Ecological Education
Promote reflections on the environmental issue with groups of young people and adolescents, motivate discussions about global warming, and help rethink attitudes and habits that harm the environment.
Peru

● Current Initiatives

● Incorporated recycling and composting into our communities and convents, bought more local food and produce, and used public transportation when possible.

● Partnered with other organizations and church leaders to advocate for the people who are vulnerable in our communities and to empower them.

● Through radio announcements and other modes of communication, advocated for and provided a voice for the vulnerable people we serve.
Cry of the Poor
In solidarity with people affected by failed systems, host and support programs that address the immediate, short-term needs of those who are vulnerable in our communities.

Cry of the Earth
Study the possibilities of the use of solar panels, participate in recycling programs, improve composting habits and gardening skills, and participate in an ecology group.

Community Resilience & Empowerment
Coordinate with institutions of support and respond to the crises and needs of the social groups that are most vulnerable.

Ecological Economics
Reduce meat consumption, purchase goods from local markets, and use public transportation.

Ecological Spirituality
Participate in ecumenical Bible groups, prayer groups and the Eco-Spirituality Commission in North Lima. Create workshops on eco-spirituality to share with multiple groups.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles
Reduce the purchasing of new consumer goods and recycle as much as possible.

Ecological Education
Develop opportunities to connect with nature. Undergo ecological conversions through workshops and courses and in the different spaces where we minister, such as women’s prisons, in the community, with the youth, and other groups we serve.
Closing Prayer

Stewards of Creation

Creator of heaven and Earth and all that is in them,
You created us in your own image and made us stewards of all your creation.
You blessed us with the sun, water and bountiful land so that all might be nourished.
Open our minds and touch our hearts so that we may attend to your gift of creation.
Help us to be conscious that our common home belongs not only to us,
but to all your creatures and to all future generations, and that it is our responsibility to preserve and protect it.

Prayer provided by Sister Semerita Mbambu, CSC