

Monastic Scribe XCV: October 3, 2025

HOW CREATIVE ARE YOU?

Saturday, October 4th is the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. It is the final day of the “Season of Creation” which began on September 1st (and which is largely ignored in the US). Saint Francis is honored as someone who really followed Christ and took his teaching seriously. He was humble, loving, poor. Most people know him as a lover of animals! He wrote the marvelous poem, “Canticle of the Creatures” which embodies his love of all creation.

Francis followed others before him who were sensitive to all created matter. Many of the Psalms, such as Psalm 104, are imbued with the praise of creation. In the Book of Daniel, the canticle of the three young men in the fiery furnace blesses creation. The parables of Jesus are full of references to the world of nature. Saint Patrick’s Breastplate honors all God’s creation. And, more recently, people have been finding Saint Hildegard (1098 – 1179) very inspiring.

Hildegard was a Benedictine nun, a writer, composer of music, philosopher, a mystic, visionary, medical writer and scientist. Pope Benedict XVI recognized her genius by declaring her a “Doctor” of the Church. Already in the twelfth century she was aware of the possible environmental crisis to come upon us earthlings. In her poems, her music, she brought out the relationship of humankind to the rest of creation entrusted to our care. Made in the image and likeness of God, humans have the vocation to be creators just like God. Hildegard poetically described humans touching, kissing, and embracing nature. And she saw that this comes with a moral responsibility. We are to work with creation to fulfill our vocation as bearers of God’s image and likeness, to fulfill the plans that God has for the world. All of creation is contained, revealed, or interconnected within the human person. Or, as Hildegard sometimes put it, the human person is all of creation or every creature.

The created world is a sacrament of God’s presence and love. Nor are we separate from it. The enlightenment and industrial revolution taught that the earth is ours to use as we wish. We can destroy the land, the animal kingdom, the air and water if it pleases us for our use. Hildegard knew, as many indigenous people know, that the world and all its elements are our brothers and sisters. In fact, we are not whole without knowing and practicing our oneness with creation. How good it is to sit beside flowing water, or to celebrate a majestic tree, or learn from the animals how to live on our earth. Central heating, indoor plumbing,

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perpetual lighting all have tended to make us forget our oneness with nature. Burying our heads in television, computers, cell phones contribute to our isolation. Progress and technology are good but not if we lose this primal connection to nature.

Ten years ago Pope Francis wrote and published his wonderful encyclical, **Laudato Si**, which he subtitled “On care for our common home”. In this beautiful letter he described what is happening to our common home, and then went on to write of the gospel of creation, passing on to describe the human roots of the ecological crisis in technology, globalization, human centeredness. He proposed an integral ecology, an ecology of daily life, the importance of the common good, and heeding the many matters of justice. Finally, he proposed lines of approach and action, education and spirituality. This letter was received with gratitude and appreciation by environmentalists, as well as many political officials, and churches both Catholic and other traditions. Pope Leo has taken up the cause in recently establishing the **Borgo Laudato Si** in Castelvetro to help study and celebrate and spread the message.

It is sad to witness the neglect of the message and this cause here in our own country. We have a government that denies the environmental crisis, that encourages the use of fossil fuels and ridicules the promotion of sun energy which is now cheaper than fossil fuels. Other countries have emphasized the need for care of the environment. But it is not only the political centers here that have been negligent. It is also the church, the American Catholic Bishops in particular. Have you heard of the season of creation? Has it had a place in your parish or church? It is a joint celebration of Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians and many Protestant churches. It encourages prayer, study and action. It is said that Americans are already tired of this crisis but have done little to deal with it.

Ecology begins with a contemplative gaze on creation, a reverence and a sense of solidarity with it. It means slowing down, looking at one’s mode of life and how we use matter. It is also a matter of seeing the connections with other areas of justice, whether social, economic or human. How does our life style affect others? How can we join with others at church or in our community to practice integral ecology? This has to become a matter of the style of living, embracing our attitudes as well as our behavior. What can you do? Let others know. Let me know at: joycet@glastonburyabbey.org.

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Please note that I do not speak on behalf of Glastonbury Abbey, the Archdiocese of Boston or the Catholic Church, though I hope my faith is in harmony with all these. Any error in judgment should be credited to me and not anyone else.