

Laudato Si Action Plan First Year Evaluation

The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas formally began its 7-year journey with the Laudato Si Action Platform in May 2022, with the submission of a plan for the remainder of the program's first year. Here are some of the ways in which the Institute has grown over the past few months in our response to Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Cry of the Earth

- The Climate and Sustainability Director began making site visits to learn of opportunities for environmental sustainability projects at various properties in the U.S.
- The director developed an emissions tool to collect data on emissions from electricity, gas, vehicles, food and plastics.
- The director began collecting data on electricity, gas and vehicle emissions. This included starting to compile electricity and gas data at our many properties by opening online accounts with energy companies in order to see the most current usage. By mid-November, he had access to data at 15 sites.
- The director selected a project manager for a solar installation pilot project at our property in Belmont, NC. The company has a partnership with another firm that focuses on supply chain issues in order to ensure that equipment and materials are sourced from locations and vendors whose work is compatible with Mercy values on earth, labor and human rights protections.
- The Justice Team used the new emissions tool to determine an optimal meeting site based on potential travel emissions.
- [Mercy Focus on Haiti](#) provided salary support for the Grepen Center's team of agronomists and agronomy technicians, facilitating their efforts to train and support farmers through a seed bank, weevil eradication, soil conservation, reforestation and animal husbandry.
- Mercy Focus on Haiti supported the construction of nearly 100 ferrocement cisterns (500- to 1,000-gallons each) for rainwater harvesting in the Gros Morne, Haiti, region using materials that are locally available.



Cry of the Poor

- Mercy Focus on Haiti partnered with the Religious of Jesus and Mary in maintaining an environment of dignity, respect, and love for the 20 infirm elderly and mentally ill residents of Maison Bon Samaritan (House of the Good Samaritan). A "Forever Friends" program was expanded to twice-monthly partnership and sharing with schoolchildren from Lekòl Jezi-Mari.
- 200 women (cohort #3) completed Mercy Focus on Haiti's Pathway to a Better Life ultra-poverty-eradication program. With an average family size of five, that

means more than 3,000 women and their family members were brought out of abject poverty. Children of the participants were able to enroll in the Lekòl Jezi-Mari (Jesus and Mary School) thanks to tuition support from Mercy Focus on Haiti.

- Mercy Focus on Haiti provided funding support and occupational training to 150 families in the Gros Morne region of Haiti.
- Four Mercys from the Institute of the Americas participated in Mercy Global Action's COP27 task force and helped draft a position statement for the international climate talks in Egypt, calling for attention to loss and damage that too many countries are experiencing. A sister from Argentina participated in a Mercy Global Action at the UN delegation to COP 27 to advocate this position.
- [Mercy Volunteer Corps](#) placed a volunteer with a new site: Sanctuary Farms in Philadelphia, which addresses health inequities resulting from systemic racial oppression and economic injustice by converting abandoned and neglected areas into spaces that foster safety, hospitality, nutrition and growth.
- [Mercy Investment Services](#) has furthered the integration of environmental, social and governance investment strategies into its portfolio by
 - approving the funding of investment managers that understand and mitigate the environmental and social impacts of their global investments, which is expected to increase the proportion of equity managers that utilize these tactics by 8%; and
 - completing a review of investment manager diversity and inclusion efforts, which demonstrated that the majority of managers have diversity policies and clear chain-of-command oversight responsibilities for those policies. A significant number of managers have diversity targets. Other strengths and areas for improvement were identified by this review. This first review will constitute a baseline for continued improvement for identifying and engaging diverse managers.



Participants in the Pathway to a Better Life program get metal roofs on their homes to protect them from the rain.



Participants in an immersion experience to the Rio Grande Valley in Texas visit the border wall.

- The Justice Team had 28 people participate in immersion experiences on the U.S.-Mexico border to explore the root causes of migration, including climate change, extreme weather and displacement by climate change.

Ecological Economics

- In its continued response to the Chapter 2017 Recommitment statement that includes a call to “intensify efforts to align our investments with our values,”
Mercy Investment Services
 - reduced the holdings of extractives stocks by 98% compared to its holdings as of Chapter 2017;
 - originated \$43 million additional commitments to the Environmental Solutions Fund, which invests in renewable energy, energy and water efficiency, materials recycling, green buildings and sustainable agriculture;
 - committed three new investments and additional investments to five projects whose primary thematic area is environmental sustainability, impacts from the extractive sector or migration, or that address a just transition to a low-carbon future in the Mercy Partnership Fund, and

- continued rigorous engagement with more than 150 corporations using shareholder advocacy to promote sustainable production and consumption, including filing 43 resolutions at these corporations seeking environmental and social improvements in the 2022 season and negotiating several mutually agreeable next steps.
- The Justice Team wrote a letter to the Chapter planning committee recommending a more environmentally sustainable meeting in April 2023 with more frequent vegetarian meals and minimal use of disposable plastics.

Sustainable Lifestyles

- The Justice Team surveyed nearly 1,000 participants of the [e Mercy Earth Challenge](#) to determine what sustainable practices they were continuing more than a year after that program concluded. We learned that many continue to conserve water, reduce plastic use, purchase local foods and eat less meat, among other lifestyle choices.
- The Justice Team developed [A Mercy Guide to Living *Laudato Si'*](#), which includes reflections on each of the goals and suggested actions. The guide is posted on our website and was shared in our e-newsletter and in an email to our donors.

Ecological Education

- In September, to celebrate its five-year anniversary, Mercy Education encouraged schools to include service activities as part of their celebration of Mercy Day. Inspired by the Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns, many schools chose to focus on care for Earth, which included picking up trash, participating in compost programs, sowing seeds for sustainability, participating in a Cosmic Walk to meditate on the gift of God's creation and beautifying school property. Mercy Education staff participated in the five-year anniversary service extravaganza by volunteering with the horticultural therapy program at Holy Angels in Belmont, North Carolina. In total [45,300 service hours](#) were logged!



Students and staff clean up the grounds at Alpha Infant School in Jamaica.

- [Mercy Education](#) promoted numerous opportunities for its 55 member schools to engage in ecological education and reflection. These have included the development of a [Laudato Si' resource page](#) that includes promotion of the Laudato Si' Action Platform, *A Mercy Guide to Living Laudato Si'* and link to view [The Letter](#). Other resources include a [classroom guide for Berta Saves the River](#), [Prayer for Our Ocean](#) from Mercy International Association and their [Oceans Campaign](#), and [Lesson Plans on Care for Earth: Extractives](#), a resource developed by Sr. Patricia Donlin, RSM, connecting Care of the Earth to Catholic Social Teaching, the Mercy Critical Concerns and Laudato Si'.
- Our Communications office ran a series of blog reflections on how sisters and ministries are addressing the 7 LSAP goals.
- The Advancement Office shared some of those reflections from our blog series with 15,000 donors.
- Unable to welcome groups to Haiti given the instability there, Mercy Focus on Haiti held informational talks both in-person and via Zoom at 5 Mercy universities and colleges and 3 high schools.

Ecological Spirituality

- The Justice Team adapted resources from the [Awakening to a New Consciousness theological reflection process](#) on extractivism for our weekly e-newsletter during the Season of Creation and for a 90-minute webinar held on Nov. 10th. The latter program was especially designed for Chapter delegates who hadn't been able to participate in the five-month process, to enable them to fully engage in conversations around our Call to Respond to the harms of extractivism.
- Sisters and ministries throughout the Institute celebrated the [Season of Creation](#) with prayer services, educational programming and garden clean-ups and planting.
- Sisters in Latin America created a formation process for sisters, associates and other collaborators in Panama eager to learn and reflect on Pope Francis' writings for service and their social justice commitment. They started with a workshop on Laudato Si'.
- As part of a series of ongoing evening reflections, vocation ministers offered an online program in May on "Earth Matters: Beholding Our Planet with Easter Eyes." Three young adults and three vocation ministers reflected on creation together.



Sr. Paula Diann Martin enacts Moses and the Burning Bush during a Season of Creation prayer service in Belmont, N.C.

Community Resilience and Empowerment



Mercy sisters, associates, co-workers and friends participated in the Poor People's Campaign mass mobilization in Washington, D.C., in June calling for policies to support low-wealth Americans.

- 80 Mercy advocates participated in the Catholic Climate Covenant's Encounter for Our Common Future advocacy campaign for climate action in the U.S. Congress.
- More than 30 Mercy university students, faculty and staff participated in a Washington, D.C, immersion experience in May that focused on climate change, culminating in advocacy with their legislators.
- 50 Mercy advocates participated in the [Poor People's Campaign](#)'s mobilization in Washington, D.C, in June and many more participated in virtual programming and advocacy with their legislators.
- The Justice Team sent out 57 action alerts to our more than 4,000 Mercy advocates, [inviting them to contact their legislators](#) or the Biden administration on social and environmental justice issues. These alerts included opposition to oil and gas drilling and fast-tracking of permitting for energy projects, support for investments in clean energy, and calls to stop deportations to Haiti and to shift federal funding from the military to community needs.