

**Laudato Si': Spirituality and Action, April 20, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**  
**Amiens Hall, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Ohio Province**

**Sister Mary Ann Barnhorn, SNDdeN 0:00**

Good Mornings sisters and friends. We're delighted to have you here and so happy that many of you know one another. Clearly this is an issue we all care about. As Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, we are proud to have inherited from our founder Saint Julie Billiard. A worldwide vision. Julie, a small woman from a small town in France thought big, and encouraged her sisters to do the same, as she urged us to have hearts as wide as the world. Today we are blessed with the leadership of a Pope who also thinks big and our focus today is our hurting planet.

Our Province responded in multiple ways to Francis' call to Care for Our Common Home. We were inspired by his message on Laudato Si', and even more inspired by Laudato Deum. In order to look at what we the Sisters of the Ohio Province can do to address the current climate change. We thought big, we developed a steering committee and looking to look at various phases of ecological concern. We decided on three major efforts, namely, the reduction of the use of fossil fuel, single use plastic, and also our effort, begun some years ago to provide clean water where it is most needed. We have formed two subcommittees to address the reduction of single use plastic. The first continues to enlist the help of every sister and colleague on this campus in reducing our dependency on plastic.

Today's gathering is from the second committee, plastic advocacy for the reduction of single use plastic. We have taken to heart Pope Francis' vision of not just acting responsibly, ourselves, but of gathering groups to work together. And that is why we are here today. We believe that together we could make a difference. This vision led us to develop a three-part program today. Dr. Mescher, will guide us to a deeper understanding of the theology and spirituality of Pope Francis' call. Sister Carol will lead us together to respond to the God who invites our closeness. And Teresa Phillips will help us learn how our action enables us to make a difference together in what often seems an impossible task. So let us begin our morning's work.

It's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Marcus Mescher, who has been professor of Christian ethics at Xavier University since 2014. Dr. Mescher received both his MTs and PhD from Boston College and his bachelor's from Marquette. Would you say that he knows that he is a man for others, the Jesuit Hallmark in all of their education. Dr. Mescher has authored three books, 55 articles in the last count, and multiple presentations. In addition, he keeps

up with his three children and his wife Anne whom you might meet, if ever you visit Children's Hospital. She is a nurse there taking care of the sickest children in our community. It is my pleasure to welcome to this morning, Dr. Marcus Mescher. Doctor,

**Dr. Marcus Mescher 13:57**

Good morning, everyone. I'm delighted to be here with you. Thanks so much Mary Ann for this opportunity to join you to talk a little bit about the spirituality of Laudato Si'. And I really have to say, it's a beautiful document. It's 300 paragraphs long. So I don't think Francis had in mind that anyone would try to sit down and take it on in, you know, a single reading. But if you haven't had time to spend with it recently, I'd invite you to just maybe take it paragraph by paragraph, you know, you, you could take it on one paragraph a day and get through it in less than a year. So that's not too bad.

I just wanted to start by giving us a little bit of context for what Pope Francis is up to with Laudato Si and, you know, because it came out in 2015. I'm not really telling you anything new but I just want to make sure we're on the same page with kind of the background to this encyclical, that's now nine years old. So, as you know, Pope Francis is not just the first pope from the global south, he's the first pope in the history of the Catholic Church, who's a Jesuit. And he certainly is bringing his lifetime of practicing Ignatian spirituality to this encyclical, which, as I understand it, you know, he was elected Pope in March 2013.

And from the beginning, he said, I want to write, we call it an environmental encyclical. And Francis rejects that. It is not an environmental encyclical. Francis is adamant that this is about the intersection of the social and the ecological, right that, that we are tasked with caring for our common home, by responding to both the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. So, we don't want to call it the green encyclical or the environmental encyclical, because I think we missed the interdependence of creation, where we are impacted by nature and nature is impacted by us.

But Francis, you know, had from early on this plan to write an encyclical that was going to address the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. And he made sure that in the drafting process, it was vetted not only by theologians, but by climate scientists, who would ensure that the science was sound that he was consulting. But I think as we visit this document together this morning, hopefully, you know, the what we have at the forefront, is what we've inherited from Ignatius of Loyola, this invitation to seek God in all things, to really adopt a sacramental vision, that doesn't just look for the presence and power of God and one of the seven sacraments. But to that really takes seriously the idea that everything around us and everyone around us is sacramental, a visible sign of invisible grace.

So that's kind of the forefront and I have this quote from, you know, the Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." And so, I think what Francis really wants us to do this morning is to take a moment for all and reverence. And for that to be kind of the first movement, to just take time to appreciate the world exactly as it is, which is, you know, it is miraculous, right? If space goes in every direction without end. Right, just like numbers don't end space does not end. And as far as we can tell, we are the only planet with life, right? Perfectly situated. If we were only farther from the Sun, it would be too cold. If we were closer to the sun, it would be too warm, that we have just the exact conditions necessary for life. And, you know, in the vastness of space, and I'm sure there is life, somewhere out there, if space goes in all directions to infinity, right? But this has been created in such an act of care and tenderness and love. That sometimes I think it's easy for us to miss just the awe and reverence that everything created so perfectly for our flourishing and the flourishing of the entire planet community. That we miss the sacrament of creation. So, in addition to seeking God and all things, you know, it would also be misleading to say that Pope Francis is doing something novel in *Laudato Si'*. He is building on the legacy of his predecessors.

So, in 1990, Pope John Paul II started to talk much more adamantly about how care for creation and our duties to the Creator are an essential part of Christian faith. So not optional, not secondary. Not if you're a tree hugger or progressive, but if you identify as a Christian, then care for creation and our duties to the Creator are essential to Christian discipleship. And then, you know, in 2005, after John Paul II died and the Cardinals elected Benedict the 16th, as his successor, Pope Benedict shifted real rapidly to trying to address climate collapse and much to the chagrin to other European nations. He made sure that the Vatican City was the first state in the world to be carbon neutral. And *Newsweek Magazine* ran a cover story calling him the green Pope. And he gave this beautiful homily in 2005 that gets quoted in *Laudato Si'*. Pope Benedict says the external deserts are growing because our internal deserts are so vast. So, Pope Benedict really took seriously that if we're looking at the climate collapse, which, you know, again, climate scientists tell us that every single day we lose 110 species. You know, we have ice sheets and glaciers melting rapidly, sea levels rising. Climate change is impacting women, the poor and indigenous people first and worst all over the globe.

We're kind of insulated here in Cincinnati. In fact, a lot of people say that for the next, you know, 75 years, Cincinnati is going to be just about the perfect place to live, because we will be most insulated relative to a lot of other places around the globe. The UN predicts that by 2050, there will be more than a billion climate refugees who have been displaced by desertification by rising sea levels, by their water table being polluted or, you know, not

having access to potable water, and potentially as many as 2 billion climate refugees by 2100.

So, this is a crisis. And what I really appreciate about Pope Benedict the 16th is his ability to connect the dots between the ecological collapse and our spiritual crisis, that we are living in a way that is unsustainable beyond what the Earth can provide. And so I think it is worth pointing out that Pope Francis, even though you know, my presentation is on the spirituality of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis really made points to ensure that, you know, *Laudato Si* was fact checked by climate scientists. And he found a lot of willing partners. Sometimes, I think we see faith and science is antagonizing one another, or debating one another. And again, I think, you know, Pope Francis being a Jesuit, he knows that we have to put faith and reason together, and that we should be learning both from Scripture and tradition, as well as what the best science has to teach us. And I have this quote from Gus Speth, who is a climate scientist. He observes, "I used to think that the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. And I thought that with 30 years of good science, we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy. And to deal with those, we need a spiritual and cultural transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that."

So there are a lot of people who feel like the Catholic church got on board too late, that it took too long for us to really stress the necessity of ecological conversion and ecological solidarity. But we could debate that all day in hindsight is 2020. The point is, it's 2024. And there is a lot of suffering caused by our unsustainable rates of production and consumption, which I think we could diagnose, as coming from deeply held spiritual problems, like insecurity, or fear, or greed. You know, Gandhi used to say, "There's enough in this world for everyone's need, but not everyone's greed." And I think, you know, especially those of us living in the global north, we have to take a hard look at our rates of production and consumption. And think about the ways in which we're contributing to the suffering of both the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth.

So Pope Francis sees *Laudato Si* as a chance to protect our common home. And also there are times where he does call out to those of us living in the West, pointing out that, that we are a disproportionate cause to the problem. And on the bottom right hand part of the screen, you'll see you'll see that the top 1% of the wealthy and the privileged in the world, that they are the ones contributing most to the overuse of fossil fuels. I point this out in part because sometimes I think we can especially those of us who are Catholic, we can become a little bit over scrupulous, and think about oh, you know, I need to recycle this aluminum can or you know, I should take a shorter shower or I should make sure all the lights are off. Right those very small individual actions, although important when done in

the aggregate, they really are a drop in the bucket compared to what like for example, the fossil fuel industry. is responsible for or, you know, our military, the United States Armed Forces is the fifth worst polluter on the planet. Right. So I know that Teresa's going to talk a little bit about action steps later on, and I don't want to steal her thunder. But I hope that we overcome the scrupulosity of worrying about, you know, a single decision we might make or, you know, continue this consumer mindset where we think like we can buy our way to ecological justice by paying a little bit more for this product, because it's green.

Ultimately, I think, you know, what, what a spirituality of solidarity has calling us to is to be allies and advocates for the people who are suffering under the weight of the fossil fuel industry, or you know, that the macro level, the policy side of things that we have to hold corporations and countries to account? And not, you know, do the little finger pointing of, oh, you left your lights on? Or why aren't you driving a Prius, because that's not going to do it. For some examples, if everyone on the planet consumed like an American, we would need six planet Earth, worth of resources. Americans throw away 40% of the food that we buy, and US children have 40 times the clothes and toys of children around the world, even though US children represent just 3% of the world's population of children. I read this recently, that average US home has over 300,000 items. And the homes today are three times larger than they were just 100 years ago. So we just keep accumulating more and more stuff. And again, I think that's a symptom of the spiritual problems where we don't believe that we are enough, or we're worried that we're not good enough. And so we convinced ourselves that our rates of production or consumption will help, you know, kind of alleviate the insecurity or fear that we might be feeling and I mean, we talk about retail therapy, about how you know, I'm going to feel better when I make this purchase. And that's part of what's got a chokehold on the planet. Pope Francis acknowledges this as much he says, the current global situation engenders a feeling of instability and uncertainty, which in turn becomes a seedbed for collective selfishness. The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to own and consume. In this horizon, a genuine sense of the common good disappears, obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all, when a few people are capable of maintaining it can only lead to violence and mutual destruction. So he's pretty critical of capitalism here. And that certainly did not go over well in the West.

But I do think, you know, again, trying to take on a spiritual lens this morning, we might look for the ways in which we have internalized capitalism. I see, for example, in my students, who tell me they feel guilty or lazy if they take time to rest. And I have to remind them of the commandment, that we take Sabbath rest, or that's not optional. It's not a luxury, right, we are supposed to honor the Sabbath day, we're not machines. And so if we are exhausting ourselves or depleting ourselves, I think that too, is a symptom of a deep fear or insecurity

or anxiety. That means that we have lost touch with our innate and infinite goodness. And I worry about this, especially with our young people in the sky, high rates of mental illness, especially among young people. So I asked them, we read together Genesis one, which I think is so beautiful, right? Like, there's two Genesis accounts of creation. So the biblical authors were not worried about contradictions that didn't see it as a history book. They're not proposing that the Earth was created in 6x24 hour periods 3000 years ago, but they are stories about how God creates order out of disorder. How God created everything, just so, so that we could flourish. And for too long Christians have read that document and said,

Okay, well, because we're the last show up on the scene, that means God saved God's best work for last. But my friends who are biologists point out, that's not actually true. It just means that we're the most fickle and fragile of all the species and everything had to be just right for us, the Goldilocks of creation. Right and actually, you know, they'll point to evidence that homo sapiens are the only species that you could remove from planet Earth, and it would not have a negative effect on any other species. So, we're not the pinnacle of creation. Right, but but I think it is worth pointing out that after we show up on the scene, made in God's own image and likeness, and trusted as stewards of creation, God, the very last line of Genesis one, God looks at creation and sees everything is very good. Not useful, not profitable, not beautiful. There's no instrumental good here. It is intrinsically good. So I asked my students at Xavier to write in pen, very good on the palm of their hand, so that they'll be reminded of their very goodness throughout the day, or maybe someone else at school? Well, we'll see they've got pen on their hand and ask them, What was that about? And they'll say, Oh, my lame theology professor made me write very good on my hand. Right. But we live in a world that makes it so hard for us to see that we are very good exactly as we are. Right, Greg Boyle that Jesuit priest who works with, you know, former gang members out in LA, he has a habit of saying, "You are exactly who God had in mind when God created you." And I think if we took that to heart, if we really basked in our very goodness, I think that we'd lower the impulse to feel the need for more stuff. Or to go prove our worth, by working really hard, so that we have more money so that we can buy more stuff, or prove our worth through, you know, performance or achievement, or our appearance, or possessions.

And so on the other side of the screen, I have some examples of internalized capitalism, which I think are worth reflecting on. You know, that that sometimes when we feel guilty or lazy for resting, if we measure self worth based on productivity or possessions, if we believe that hard work will lead to happiness, or if we use busyness as a way to avoid psychological and spiritual needs, right, that we, we can sometimes just use busyness or productivity as a way to escape from everything that we're carrying, right or just to numb the pain, because we don't go there because we're so busy.

So I think above all, the spirituality of Laudato Si is in an invitation to slow down. And to get in touch with the goodness that is in us and around us. I also think so in addition to this invitation to slow down and get in touch, to the goodness that is in and around us, there is the question of accountability. So it's not all sunshine, lollipops, and rainbows. You know, this isn't Oprah Winfrey's live your best life. You know, Pope Francis wants you to be happy. This is also how do we answer for being covenant partners with God and with non human creation? And I am ashamed to admit this. I've been Catholic educated since kindergarten, I did not know that nonhuman creation was part of God's covenant with us after the flood. But when you read Genesis nine, which again, you know, is a story I don't understand people who are out in Turkey looking for remnants of an actual Ark.

But this idea that Okay, after this incredible destruction, that God makes this pledge to say never again, right? If, if you can find a way to live in harmony with creation, right, like, covenant is intended towards shalom, which we translate as peace, but is better understood is the wholeness and balance and harmony of life in right relationship with God, ourselves, our neighbors and creation. And in Genesis nine, it says, God said to know my eldest son's name is Noah, it means a faithful, which I love, God said to Noah, and to his sons with him, See, I am now establishing my covenant with you, and your descendants after you. And that's all I remember, you know, from a lifetime of Catholic education, but I missed the next line. And with every living creature that was with you, the birds, the tame animals, and all the wild animals that were with you all that came out of the ark.

Right? So to take seriously that non human creation is a covenant partner that our relationship with God is measured by how we treat non human creation. I think there is a question of accountability of how do we measure up with how well we love God by how well we learn, we live with non human creation. So now getting into Laudato Si I love this line that Pope Francis has. He says, "living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue. It is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience." So why aren't there more of you here, right? Like every Christian should be here, right? Like this is not something optional, or you know, something that we can opt into or opt out of, or make time for, if you know, we can find a surplus of free time. Pope Francis is saying that if we call ourselves Christians, then we have to find a way to integrate into our moral choices, how we can deliver on what we owe both creation and our Creator.

So what is ecological conversion that you know what Pope Francis is calling us to. I've got a cardinal sin here, which is way too many words on a slide. There's over 300 paragraphs, you know, in this thing, I mean, there's just so much content. And here are two paragraphs

on what Pope Francis means by ecological conversion. I'm not expecting you to be able to read this, but I just wanted to give you a sample of you know, the punch he's trying to pack by calling for this metanoia. Right, that word metanoia. We sometimes you know, think of as like, you know, doing a 180 or, you know, going from being a sinner to a saint, we can think in like binary terms, but metanoia means to turn with. And it really doesn't have a beginning or an end. It's an invitation to a lifelong process of turning toward love and turning with God, other people creation, right. It's an invitation to a deeper relationship, a new way of seeing yourself and others and creation. And Pope Francis has some adjectives here for us to try to give us some guideposts for what kind of metanoia what kind of transformation of our way of perceiving or our way of responding, our way of praying might involve. So he talks first about some attitudes of spirit of generous care, full of tenderness, you might remember, and *Evangelii Gaudium*, which he released in 2013. He called on everyone to join him in advancing a revolution of tenderness. Pope Francis loves to quote himself, so he's doing that here and reminding you this tenderness is not just intended for the people that you share life with every single day, but it should be part of the way that we encounter the natural world.

First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness. A recognition that the world is God's loving gift. Here we can see Francis as a son of Ignatius, right for St. Ignatius of Loyola, the root of every sin is ingratitude. And the antidote for ingratitude is to savor the goodness in and around us. And so for Francis, if we can take more time to really tune into the world as gift, then it should inspire in us gratitude. That would lead to generosity, right. And you can think of Ignatius Loyola is prayer for generosity to give without counting the costs right? To fight and not to heed the wounds. There is this loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion. Right. So one of the most repeated lines that you will find in *Laudato Si'* is everything is connected, or everything is related. Right? He wants us to look at the world and see that we are part of God's single family, and that there is no daylight between us. Nothing that separates us no hierarchical order of better or worse, more important or less important, which, you know, I suppose isn't like a radical egalitarianism. He's not saying that a mosquito is just as valuable as a human life, but to say that everything is sacred. And so we shouldn't take a posture of, you know, the throwaway culture that he laments, again, he loves to cite himself.

So that's here to write the throwaway culture where we just, you know, make people or countries or parts of the planet, just discardable insignificant, invisible, helpless or powerless. But, in addition to that call to Communion I really like his call to greater creativity and enthusiasm. So even though we're dealing with climate collapse and losing 110 species a day and you know, the specter of a billion climate refugees in the next two



and a half decades, Pope Francis never wants to tempt us with despair, or fear mongering, right. Instead, he wants to call us to expand what we imagined possible for ourselves and for one another and the way that we live together. And so I think that's a really valuable insight that, that this is a hopeful vision, that when we rely on the fact that God's presence and power is always everywhere around us, then God is giving us exactly what we need to be in right relationship with creation.

But I did want to take a moment to scrutinize this presentation of the world as gift. There are a lot of climate scientists and activists who worry that when we talk about like, the created order as a gift or as gratuitous, then we miss out on on the essential dimension, right? Because I don't know if this ever happened to you, did you ever get like a birthday present that you didn't absolutely love. This happened to me a little bit from time to time growing up, that, you know, I'd have an aunt or an uncle who would give me this huge, thick fat book about something I couldn't care less about. They they thought it was interesting, but it didn't mean I was going to be you know, interested in it. You know, like, not everyone receives a gift in the way that it's intended to be received. Some gifts are rejected or ignored, right? Like some, some gifts, we stick in a closet and forget about, right, or we donate to charity because we know, frankly, you know, right like this, this is not a good fit for me or something I'll never use. And so I do think that, you know, there is room here to scrutinize a little bit about of the way in which Pope Francis is inviting us to kind of sit in this dynamic of gratitude and generosity, because it does seem a little bit gratuitous, like, Okay, this is a nicety, but it's not necessarily essential or that you know, lives are on the line, which they certainly are.

So maybe something, you know, for us to think a little bit more about what's an alternative to language of gift or gratuitousness. So that we don't just think of it as something that's been given to us but something that we are accountable to. But I do want to give you a moment to actually practice this ecological conversion. Joke, my picture of the squirrel. Isn't that adorable.

So as you may know, Walter Burghardt, who is a Jesuit, he presented, "Contemplation is taking a long, loving look at the real." And I wanted to give you a moment to actually do that. And I'm not trying to steal the thunder of Sister Carol, because I know you're gonna do contemplative prayer as soon as I'm done. But I do think that there is something that can change in us or open up and us. If we take a long loving look at the real. I'm, you know, staring down the barrel of the end of the semester. We have one more week of class, I have, you know, papers to grade up to my eyeballs. And I don't know if you remember last Saturday, but it was absolutely glorious. And I got to I was sitting in my office and Hinkle Hall on Xavier campus. And I was trying to get caught up on grading and I had a student

email me she was very panicked because she had missed a deadline. And she was promising me that it was going to get in, you know, as first chance she got. And I wrote her and I said it's beautiful. Get outside. You have no business doing work today. And then a little voice said to me, why aren't you taking your own advice. So I went for a walk in Ault Park. And it was absolutely glorious. And there's that little creek that runs through Ault Park, which I love. There's something about water for me. I think maybe it's being a native of Milwaukee. And growing up next to Lake Michigan. I'm sorry, the Ohio River does not do it for me. But I want you to imagine yourself in a scene that has brought you peace or that makes you feel in touch like deeply connected to the natural world whether that's French Park, you know, right down the street or Ault Park I mean, we are so lucky to have these great parks here in Cincinnati.

But I want you to imagine that, what it's like for you, you know, for me, I'm imagining last summer being in Acadia National Park and being on the beach and just seeing the waves just keep coming for me. And that always it breaks open something that's tense inside of me or rigid or feeling like I need to control or just hold it all together. And the rhythm of the waves softens my body in a way that nothing else does. So I just want to give you a moment to imagine a scene whether it's by water or in a field with wildflowers or in a quiet forest or in your backyard.

and just take a moment to take a long, loving, look at the real. What do you notice that you might otherwise miss? How do you engage your senses as an embodied human being that allows you to feel one with nature, to feel welcome, just as you are that puts you in touch with your goodness, just as you are that welcomes you to rest and savor the gift of creation hoping that you would delight in it just as God delights in you.

When you take a moment to feel connected, what does it bring? What does it bring to mind in terms of how you want to care for the natural world? Or how you want to be an advocate or an ally? For the species that you know can't speak up? Or be heard? Or cry out? Or how do you want to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy the pristine beauty of nature in the same way that we've been able to?

My hope is as you practice contemplation. And as you think about where you feel connected to nature, or what helps to fill you up. When you're in nature, maybe it's the sound of birds in the morning, or the flowers that are blooming or seeing water, you know, whether it's flowing through a creek or cascading down a waterfall. How do we see in each and everything a sacrament? And in what ways is that an invitation to practice our spirituality all of the time.

I have to say as someone who teaches christian ethics and tries to connect spirituality to ethics with my students, I find that most of my students have a really impoverished spirituality that they've been taught to pray, you know, the Our Father or the Hail Mary, you know, a prayer someone else wrote a long time ago, but they don't know how to open themselves up to the Divine or even really how to tune in to their own interiority. And so, my hope is that as we spend time with Laudato Si we also think about how to cultivate the interior life in a way that is life affirming and life giving that replenishes us right because the word spirituality comes from the word *spiritus*, which means breath, right? It's pointing to the Holy Spirit as the author of life and the force that sustains life. And so one of my concerns, especially in Catholic circles, is that we don't really have our own spirituality, right we might be able to talk about Carmelite spirituality or Ignatian spirituality or, or like this, this tradition that maybe I can borrow from, but I just wanted to take a moment to invite you to think about how Laudato Si invites you to practice your own mode of being present to yourself to God to others to creation to be with right in the spirit of accompaniment to feel connected.

When I was in Ault Park, It wasn't just enough to see the sunlight hitting the creek. You know, I wanted to put my hand in the creek and to feel the coolness of the water which was so refreshing. And to just be there and not rushed the moment I was, you know, as a father of three, especially with a six year old, right, like, we are always on the move I, I don't usually have time to just be, and to be with, and not to just think about where, you know, moving on to the next thing.

But, you know, I think ultimately spirituality is an invitation to a relationship, a deeper relationship with ourselves in a way that's authentic, and free, a deeper relationship with the divine as the author and sustainer of life. And then also a deeper relationship with our human and non-human neighbors. And then ultimately, to right, like, the point of metanoia, is to be changed to be transformed, right, like, we're not to be left exactly the same. And so hopefully, we see the spirituality of Laudato Si, as an invitation to be moved into a new way of seeing ourselves and others and God and the world, a new way of thinking and feeling and speaking and acting. And in that way, being transformed, is the impetus for being transformative, and making an impact on the world around us in a way that tries to lead us toward ecological communion. Right, this idea of an inclusive and interdependent solidarity, really seen ourselves in kinship with the rest of creation. And I really liked this paragraph where Pope Francis says. "The entire material universe speaks of God's love and boundless affection for us, soil, water, mountains, everything is as it were, a caress of God." My son, Noah is a freshman at St. X. And he's having a really good experience there. But I've been curious, like, you know, what's it been like for him to go to church or to be in theology class. And he told me the other day that that still for him, the time he has felt

closest to God in his entire life, was when we were hiking in Glacier National Park. And he said that that was God's cathedral. And I think sometimes it's easy for us to think of God, as near to us in moments of majesty, I studied abroad in Spain. And so I had a lot of time to enjoy the churches in Europe. And certainly, you know, the the churches in Europe are meant to inspire wonder and awe and majesty and to point our attention up to the heavens, right, or to remind us that in the thick of everything God is right here, right. But I think there is a danger when we think of God in a church, or in Glacier National Park.

And we don't look for God, even in the Ohio River, which you know, as, as the country's most polluted river, and I don't know if you've seen it lately with, I mean, with how high it is, I my, my daughter has soccer practice at St. Rose. And there's so much trash in the Ohio River right now. It's, it's just awful, because you know, all the rain and the flooding. But even the Ohio River, the nasty Ohio River is Grace calls, it looks like Charlie, or Willy Wonka's chocolate river, right like that everything is intended to be aggressive God and that, if it's hard to see it, then that that's, you know, that's on us, right? Like the Ohio River is the most polluted river in America. We've done that, right? Like, that's not God's intention that it looks that way. But then for us to think about, if we've done this, then how do we undo it?

So I think, you know, what I really wanted to just bring our time together to an end is to think about how we can see the people in this room are those of us who are joining us online. In a how do we see one another as partners for a journey of on the long path of renewal. In Laudato, si Pope Francis acknowledges that this is a long term, project, this is not a short road that we're on. And so we have to find other companions on the journey, who can offer us both support and accountability. But it's not a path, we walk alone. And he calls out to us, it is we humans who need to change, we lack awareness of our common origin of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. And I think that stress on intergenerational solidarity is important. We all know, the greatest commandment is to love God and our neighbor. But I don't know how often we really think about our future neighbors, you know, that the ones that, you know, will be inheriting the earth, in whatever condition we leave it. Wendell Berry has a line that, you know, "We need to treat those people downstream as we would hope the people upstream would be treating us." and, you know, to think about that, that intergenerational dimension, hopefully, you know, reminds us that that even though you know, we're facing some daunting circumstances, and maybe there are Reasons to despair, given the scale of the problem. And I should add, you know, psychologists tell us that climate change is like the perfect problem. Because the scale is so big, our brains really can't comprehend how we should respond. And because that scale is so big, and our brains are a little bit overwhelmed, that's why I really like Pope Francis has appealed to the heart, that we have

to, you know, find ways to stay in the fight. And to live with hope, you know, hope is a virtue, it's a midpoint between presumption and despair, right? Like, there are some Christians who think God won't let us destroy the planet, or God will swoop in and save us, which I think is utter nonsense, right? Because then Free Will has been a mirage the entire time, right? But then there are others who just have despair and think like, well, this is how the end times will arrive, we will have just destroyed the planet. And armageddon will be upon us. And we are Easter people living in the Easter season.

And so we have to remember that, you know, we should live with hope, the conviction that there is good worth fighting for. And the resurrection is not a past historical event. It's a cosmic event. St. Paul says that "The resurrection makes a new creation." And so I hope that you know, today, if you remember anything, it's an invitation for renewal and what can we make new in and around us, so that we don't settle for the world as it is, and anything less than what God makes possible in and through us. So my last slide. When I was in college, I got to spend time with Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

And Archbishop Tutu would always say "The work for justice is like a symphony." And I have the rhythm of a corpse. I have no musical talent whatsoever. So I was, you know, a junior in college as a being a little bit of a smartass. And so I said, Okay, well, what about me, because I, you know, have zero musical talent. And he looked at me, and he was gentle, but very firm. And he said, "Even if the only instrument you can play is the triangle, then play the hell out of the triangle for justice." And so I hope if you know if anything, this invitation to kind of spend some time with the spirituality of Laudato Si invites you not only to tune in for a deeper appreciation for the natural world, or to even raise questions about how accountable we are to the natural world. But it invites you to think about what role you have to play in contributing to the symphony for justice. Thank you.

### **Sister Mary Ann Barnhorn, SNDdeN 58:14**

There's another famous Jesuit word and it's the Magis, the more certainly Dr. Mescher you have given us the more as you have helped us swing from a desire for tenderness with ourselves in the most intimate way and with God, and yet to move to the very big picture of taking on the corporations, the companies that are doing so much damage to our common home. That's a big challenge. It's a big picture call. But I am convinced that together as a community as a faith community, we can do it. And now Sister Carol is going to lead us in a contemplative response to some of what we have heard today, Sister Carol.

### **Sister Carol DeFiore , SNDdeN 59:30**

I don't know what I'm going to do, I think you said it all Marcus, so beautifully. I just want to affirm it all. Taking a long loving look at reality, taking that long, loving look at our life. What is prayer but conscious awareness of God? And we don't need a whole lot of words. We just need to stop. We just need to pause. And we can all do that. To pause more often. I like to sit out on our deck here in Julie Hall, to watch the sunset. To take a long loving look at life, my life, what's going on and what's going on out there. And I noticed just how I am refreshed, how I am renewed. And that's what prayer is all about. That's what God wants to do for us, renew us. Rekindle within us love and desire and hope and peace.

I had a monk friend, Jeff Barron (sp) at Holy Spirit monastery, he wrote that article, titled, we need to sit on the porch more often. He died not too long ago. So, I sit every night and watch the sunset. If I can't go outside, I do it inside. And just let Mother Nature renew me, refresh me. And how all the cares of the world. Just float away. Prayer is conscious awareness of God and mother nature as a good mother just wants to renew us, doesn't she? refresh us revitalize us. So I encourage all of us to do that. Sit out on your porch. Just be there. let Mother Nature renew you and refresh you.

There's a wonderful Zen story that I love. Where the head monk, or Rashi. He's dying. So all the monks are gathered around him in eagerness, wondering Oh, when he dies, who's going to be chosen to be the next Rashi? The master? And the Rashi? Who is dying says where is the gardener? And all the other monks say the gardener? Why the gardener? He's just a simple man. Who tends all the plants. He's not even ordained. Yes, the Rashi replies, but he's the only one who is awake. He will be the next teacher. And I love that because Jesus says to us over and over, stay awake. Be alert. Always telling us to watch Be alert. Why? Because life is here. God is here. The kingdom is right here at hand.

So all of creation, that's where the kingdom is, you know all of our loved ones, our children, our spouse, the situations that we have at work or at home, all our experiences. That's where the holy is the kingdom is at hand. So to stay awake. How often Jesus says that, how can we stay awake, we can pause.

And you and I can do that often. We could pause at work right in our office. Look out the window. We could pause at home. We could breathe. I believe that's what prayer is all about. Connecting with our loving Creator. Just pause. We don't need a lot of words. So sit on your porch. Sit on that deck. I think the poet's habit right to as you mentioned, Marcus, you know, Il Cummings, "I thank you God for most this amazing day." And Wendell Berry who says you know, "I just go out among the trees and all my troubles Leave me." Edna St. Vincent Millay. I love her poem, "Oh God. I think you've made the world to beautiful this year. My soul is all but out of me." Mary Oliver, all of them, recognizing the presence right at hand, the kingdom is here. So again, I encourage us go out on your deck and pray that

way. You don't need a lot of words, let Mother Nature comfort you. Your favorite place. I'm from Chicago, Lake Michigan, vast, like the ocean. let Mother Nature refresh you. I always need a tree, I can survive if I have a tree. I lived in Hamilton one year, my bedroom window looked out to a brick wall. That was hard for me. But let mother nature the good mother restore you and renew you. There's that wonderful book Braiding Sweetgrass, which I love. Yes, you love it too, where the author is sending her daughter off to college far away, and she drives her there. And you know, you who are mothers and fathers, when your first child goes off alone. But in that story, after she leaves her daughter, this author, remember to put her kayak on the top of her car. It was a long drive home many hours. So she's in the car driving, and she's almost home, but not quite. And she stops at a lake. I love this story. And she takes her kayak. And she just gets in her kayak on the lake. And she's just sailing along. But she notices how the water has comforted her. And she started to cry. She said, "I didn't know I came here to be healed." But how mother, Mother God, Mother Nature just washed over her and set her at peace and calm.

So sit on your porch and pray that way. Take it that long, loving look at your life. And feel the presence there with you. Take the advice of the great poets who know the wonders of God in our myths. I can't say that enough. The kingdom is at hand. We don't need a lot of words or books. Prayer is loving awareness of God and wherever however that happens for you. Go with it. Oh, great spirit. Earth Sun sky and sea, you are inside and all around me. Oh, great spirit. Earth Sun sky and sea you are inside and all around me. Oh, great spirit here. Earth Sun sky and see you inside and all around me. So sit on your porch and let Mother God renew and refresh you.

### **Sister Mary Ann Barnhorn , SNDdeN 1:09:39**

Thank you, Sister Carol for these contemplative moments. During our break, we invite you to enjoy the coffee as well as some wonderful cookies that Sister Judy (Tensing, SNDdeN) has baked on her solar oven. And you can see the solar oven back there at the table where She and Mark Shannon are there to tell you a little bit about their program called just Earth - Cincinnati. After many years in Over-the-Rhine at Venice on Vine, Sister Judy and Mark Shannon began a new endeavor, an educational endeavor called just Earth Cincinnati, in which they are connecting neighbors and friends with one another, and with some of the major ecological issues of our times. So the Notre Dame ministry in inner city continues as well as our educational tradition of teaching more and more.

We also have Sister Elizabeth Marie (Bowyer, SNDdeN) in the back as you came in where the nametags were sister Elizabeth Marie is the chair of our plastic Advocacy Committee,

and she has two petitions which we invite you to sign. One is asking the Cincinnati city council to reinstate the law banning the use of single use plastic bags in our city. And the second one is for the Legislative Council at the State of Ohio, asking them to give better support to those cities and towns, which are making sincere efforts to be more ecologically responsible. And lastly, we have our display of Sister Dorothy Stang, our martyr in the Amazon whose 20th anniversary of her death we will be celebrating next year. So once again, please enjoy the break and we'll come back to hear Teresa. Let's say 10 minutes and then we'll flash the lights and come back. Thank you

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### **Sister Mary Ann Barnhorn, SNDdeN**

It's my pleasure and privilege to introduce to you Teresa Phillips. Teresa Phillips received her degree from Ohio University. She went on to be a Peace Corps worker in Gabon, Africa. She served 20 years in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati working at the peace and justice for the entire archdiocese. And in 2019, we were fortunate enough to get her to come here to serve as our director of peace, justice and care of the earth. Teresa inspires us with her words constantly. And even more by the way she lives her life and the choices she makes. She's here today to tell us some of the how that we might do together in order to make a difference as Pope Francis calls us to do.

### **Teresa Phillips**

Good morning, everyone. I will by a show of hands Has anyone here ever given a talk after a fantastic keynote speaker. I want to just toss this out and then have him come back up and talk more about this internalized capitalism because everything he said I was like, check, check, check. But that's alright, we're gonna power through in our conversation here with some action items. As Marian said when we first started this presentation this morning, it is sponsored by the advocacy subcommittee of the plastics task force of the Dorothy Stang initiative.

And I'm the convener of the steering committee of the Dorothy Stang initiative, but because it was the plastics Taskforce, I decided I better talk about plastics, since they throw me out if I don't. So first, I want to say thank you very much, Marcus for this very engaging and amazing presentation. There's so much there for me to think about and for all of us, I'm sure. And thanks to Sister Carol, I heard someone say that her prayer brought them to tears and I was pretty darn close myself. So thank you very much. But we're going to talk a little bit about the to do's the action items that we might be able to take for going forward and making a difference. And I have some of my slides that I'm gonna go actually through quick because I did a little background but we already talked about that in our introduction. So, so but the charism of the Sisters is *Ah! Q'il est bon le bon Dieu* or teaching



the goodness of God. Right that's not the right words. What's the right word? How good is the good God as the English is in English, but we are here to proclaim God's goodness to others, but also to all of creation.

And the one additional thing for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur is that we're here we're for special with special attention to the needs of those who suffer from injustice and poverty. We know that the people as Marcus said, the people who are going to be the most in the first affected are the people who are made poor and in marginalized communities, and in the Global South, the sisters believe that we all have a responsibility to contribute to the conversion needed to save our common home. I also wish I could work do without notes, Marcus, I'm so very impressed by that, but I can't. So just really quick, our goals here that the the Dorothy Stang initiative have are, all of these are kind of checked off by what we're doing here today. You know, kind of encouraging, fostering change and conversion, educating our Notre Dame family, and anyone else who wants to come along with this on the ride. And taking action, and advocating to change the practices that we are that are causing damage to the earth. So here we are.

Today, we are talking about plastics today. That's only one of our focus, but it's a big one. Because not only does plastic touch, not only is plastic about plastic, but it also touches on our fossil fuel reduction as well. So and I'll get into that a little bit. So our research into plastics. When we first got this started, we started first thinking, well, how can we better recycle? And what we learned through our research is that recycling, ain't it. It ain't where it's at. So not that we won't that we stopped completely, but that we really have to focus on reducing our use, starting with single use convenience, plastics, and then educating and advocating for our community response.

But maybe we should talk a little bit about why we were doing this in the first place. Before we talk about the what. Let's talk a little bit about the why. What's our Why are why is a healthy planet and a healthy us. Plastics effect on climate change is big. If production of plastic or a country, it would be the fifth largest user of fossil fuels. And that's just in the production. So plastic is a byproduct of fossil fuel extraction, mostly fracking. And those processes in themselves are incredibly bad for the climate. As we all know, if the global reliance on plastic continues, it is estimated that plastic will account for 20% of oil consumption by 2050. That's pretty big. I mean, I never would have guessed that as the statistic 20% by 2050. On the other end of the life of plastic emissions from plastic incineration, which is becoming more and more the way we're dealing with all the plastic pollution. In 2015, there were 55 point 9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent released in one year, burning just plastic.

Plastic is affecting every corner of the planet. If you search for pictures of ocean plastic in the ocean, it's sickening. If you search for plastic in the Ohio River, it's sickening. And in reality, we can only clean up surface plastics in the ocean. But plastic is found on every level from the surface to the sediment. So it's everywhere. It's in our oceans, it's in the soil, it's in the water. And the other thing that we have to remember is that there are more than 1300 Mostly unregulated chemicals that are added to plastic to give it its various, you know, characteristics, whether it's hard or whether it's heat resistant, or whether it's soft and pliable, whatever all of those other little chemicals. So as that plastic breaks down wherever it is, whether it's in the landfill, or in the ocean or floating around loose as it breaks down. All those little molecules that are kind of just shoved into the plastic break off as well. And then they're free in the environment. And many of those plastics are known as forever chemicals. I don't know if you've heard of that forever chemicals. I actually was watching the news the other night and they said it in a newscast and I thought oh my goodness. It's that term now is becoming more and more known, these chemicals will stay around forever, they will never go away.

And plastic affects the food web, we all know that we've all seen the pictures of the animals that eat plastic and don't make it so. So that is, you know, another assault on our web of life, our connection together. And then the other kind of why is a healthy s, this is the part of our plastics research that we didn't really wasn't surprising. But it was some new information. I'm sure you've heard of microplastics, they're in the air we breathe. They're in the water we drink. They're in the food we eat. microplastics crosses the blood brain barrier. So it's in our brains. It's been found in the human placenta. And in the first bowel movements of newborn babies. So it's in us already, everywhere through us. Some microplastics are so small, they cannot be filtered out even though we you know that municipal water systems try. But it's not any better in your spring water either, because it's frightening that as well. So we have to remember, we have to realize that that all of those chemicals coming with that plastic are also inside of us. And 2400 of those known chemicals that are used in plastic, are classified as chemicals of concern for the human health. Many of them are actual known carcinogens. And they're in us, and they're all throughout us.

There are studies only now or studies being done to really dig into how much this can affect us. There are scientists who are looking to see if there's a connection between microplastics and dementia microplastics and ADHD and autism spectrum disorders microplastics and liver cancer. And what was the other one? I didn't write this one down. But I remembered I wanted to say, and now it's going out of my head. But that's okay, those are enough, I think, to give us enough of a scare. And in reality, since those studies are just being done, we're really just one giant science experiment. We don't really know for sure.

But it's pretty concerning. So let's talk a little bit now that we know why we decided to tackle this little problem. Let's talk about what we can do.

So recycling versus reduction. When we started our conversation again, like I said, we just were all about, hey, let's better recycle. I'm not saying don't recycle. Just be aware that only 9% of the plastics created since 1950 have ever been recycled. So the other 91% is floating around in our atmosphere, atmosphere in our air, and our water in our soil, degrading Not, not degrading into its original forms, just degrading into smaller and smaller pieces of plastic.

It's estimated that since 1950, there have been 80 billion tons of plastic created. And if you think about how light plastic is, that's a lot of plastic. And it's all still around, it's in one form or another. Unless it's been burned, which is not good either.

We still encourage recycling of plastics one (#1) and two (#2) are most effective. Those are the ones that are most effective. It's difficult to recycle the others we are blessed here in the city, we have a great recycling center. And I just don't know how much research they're able to do to say where the plastics are going.

And there is an interesting correlation. The countries where the rivers and waterways are most polluted with plastic are the countries where the the wealthy nations ship their plastic off to be recycled. So we have to ask, alright, is it being recycled? Or is it being tossed in the river? We don't know. There's again, not a lot of information on that. But it's certainly curious.

So a better way, a better answer reduction or elimination. Now, clearly we cannot eliminate all plastic. Plastic keeps things sterile in a hospital or safe in a disaster situation. Or many other ways. We can't get rid of it all. We acknowledge that But we have to ask ourselves, what is ours to do? What can we do here in Cincinnati? What can we do?

And I really want to touch back on what Marcus said about what our personal choices are very important, right, our step one would be addressing the unnecessary plastics we have in our own lives, right making choices. Because the ones we the reason we have it is because it's easy and cheap.

Am I also need to acknowledge it, that is a privilege statement for me to say that I could spend a little bit more on plastic free programs products, not everyone can do that. And that's another thing we have to acknowledge.

But that's our, you know, kind of our first personal thing we can do make that personal change wherever possible, and help address our own personal participation in that throw that understanding of throw away culture.

The only thing that we need to look at really what we can, the bigger picture is system change. And we all know how easy system changes right?

Now, but it's, it's really where we can have the most impact. So while we are learning, and making those changes in our own personal life, whether it be about plastics, or driving less, or, you know, whatever, We have to address the system.

We need to address our throwaway culture. on a large scale, we can do it personally. But we also need to do it on a large scale.

And then we need to advocate and I like to look at advocacy, and having two flavors. Okay. The first flavor is advocating with legislation. So we advocate with our legislators, we advocate on the on the local level, and on the state level, which a lot of people don't think about, and on the federal level.

But change, grassroot change comes from the grassroots. So the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have affiliated with an organization called Beyond plastics. And this is their advice as well. So you start small in your municipality, and try to make change. And part of that making changes changing people's minds and helping people understand the importance of it. But in Ohio, and in 14 other states in this great country, The state has passed what they call a ban on bans. So the state government has said to the cities, you can't ban plastic bags, or you can't ban whatever. So you're not allowed to do that. So we have to take it up a notch, right? We have to go to the state and say, This is so silly. You need to stop the ban on bans, so that we can go ban plastic bags, right.

it's a hard mountain to climb. But this is really the system change. The convincing ourselves, the convincing of our family and friends and neighbors and workplaces and I don't know church, I'll never be good went to church. To to to really understand the reasons why this is possible. And then with one voice, we say, to the city to the state, whatever this needs to happen. It's happening. And other I mean, we have a part of our congregation is based out of Boston or not Boston, north of Boston, Ipswich. And I went one year, the first year I ever went there, and went into CVS. And they handed me my stuff in a paper bag. I thought, Oh, this is cool. And then they went back. Well, they were not we don't have plastic bags here. We're so close to the ocean. Oh, so it's those kinds of thinking, you know, like maybe if we drag everyone down to the Ohio River and say, look, the garbage, right? Maybe, you know, those are the kinds of things we we try to focus on to get people to speak with one voice.

And the other flavor of advocacy I like to talk about is advocating with the stores and the brands that we like best. So if you're a Kroger shopper, or you're a Meijer shopper, or you'd like to go to Walgreens, whatever.

Or you have a particular shampoo that you'd like or a particular whatever, advocating with the corporations and the stores, if they know that's what their customers want. They're just they just want you to pet by their stuff, right? They just want you to come to their store.

So if we can speak with one voice and say, we need to, we would like you to do this, then

That would be kind of that second flavor of advocacy. Our little plastics task force had a letter writing party where we wrote to Kroger, and then we said pick two more stores off the list that you shop at. So Walgreens Walmart Meijer, wherever and right to the corporate office and say, Look, I would really like you to stop using plastic bags. And we know Kroger is located in areas of this country that already have a ban. So they have in place something that they use already in those places. Why not just make it every place? So we have that as well, where we are asking people to join us in in raising your voice in that in that way as well.

And, and we are always excited to have everyone or anyone join us in these lovely endeavors. So we have your email now, maybe. So you might be getting a lovely evil email that says, hey, next week we're going to write letters to or could you contact your state representative?

Because we have to build a movement, if we want to make an impact. And just as Marcus was saying that intergenerational peace for me, it's that intergenerational peace. I don't want my kids growing up my kids kids, if they ever have any, to grow up in an apocalyptic desert, right. So that's my motivation. We all have motivation.

And I now after this fantastic presentation for Marcus have even a more internal motivation, of that, that connection to creation, that sometimes I have to frankly admit, I forget in the what was it called internalized capitalism of my life. I can't sometimes forget that. But that's an amazing connection as well. And that's all I have for you today. If anyone has questions, I'm happy to answer them either now or after. I, you will probably MSA, probably you will be invited in receiving invitations from us if we have captured your email. Hope you'll join us in our efforts. Yes.

Question:

She asked recently, rumpke partnered with hefty and you can now buy these big orange garbage bags, where you can put all your plastic that you can't put in to your curbside recycling. So the things that aren't normally recyclable, you can put those in and then send them off.

My opinion on that is that it is creating more plastic to gather plastic that may or may not even be recycled.

That is my opinion. I know that there are people who feel very differently about that. I think it encouraged us, us. Not that I'm saying we shouldn't be recycling but encourages us in the recycling arm of this and not in the elimination and reduction arm of this. I think it'll do more harm than good. Because people will continue to think in that throwaway culture. mindset. Again, my opinion but yeah, yes.

I go to the Hub. I have been recycling since college, and I can't stop myself. I mean, it's gonna go somewhere anyway, right? So I still take my stuff to the hub in the hopes that those not non ones and twos are getting where it needs to go. I think the hub is a wonderful thing. I would love to sit down with members of the board of the hub and say, Where are your other plastics going? can you convince me that they're being used or recycled correctly? I don't know. But again, it's so deeply ingrained in me. I take it there anyway, in the hopes that it's happening, but I know that hub is very, I mean, they're very aware of this stuff. So yeah, yes.

QUESTION:

Laundry detergent? P&G just came out with tide laundry pads. Okay. So this little pad that you put in like the sheets, except it's full of plastic.

So you know, the little dishwasher tabs that come in plastic that dissolve. It's called polyvinyl alcohol. But it's still plastic and it's and not dissolving back into some elemental you know oxygen nitrogen carbon atoms it's dissolving into microplastics so this is that kind of they call it greenwashing how you you know get this information you think you're doing I have fallen into that myself many times I think I'm doing this great thing and then somebody says you know. I order from the company called Clean people. There's also Earth Breeze and and true Earth those are the three that I believe are pretty good in non platinum non plastic two years just little very tiny for one load and they keep telling you we don't we're also advertising for a lot of this comes in the mail and recycled cardboard.

Yeah, the lovely thing about going you know looking for these more ecologically friendly companies is they're usually more socially conscious as well so they're doing things like that or they're planting trees or they're those that yes

QUESTION: Yeah, so it's this is not a reuse and recycling center. Not to be confused with the Cincinnati reuse center, which is for building materials and those sorts of things for Habitat for Humanity. But the recycling and reuse hub is, they take all kinds of recycling and they have a great website that'll tell you what it is some most of it's free. But they also take things for a fee, which is like, you know, computer electronics and batteries and

smoke detectors and that sort of thing that they have to pay for to get rid of, or to read, recycle, they take denim, they take metal, they take all kinds of different things. And then they have on the fourth floor, their free takeaway center. So you can bring things in that are still good that you want to give somebody that then saves it from the landfill. And they put it up on their fourth floor. And when they have enough volunteers, you can go volunteer there, by the way, if you'd like to, they open that floor and you just go up there and you take whatever you want. They weigh it when it leaves because then they can say to ramky we've saved you such and such so many tons of garbage. And it's really quite neat, because teachers go there and they get all kinds of free pens and markers and file folders. You never ever buy a binder or hanger again, please. Because you can go there and they have racks and racks of binders and hangers and and it's all you just walk out with it. And it's really just kind of a sharing of stuff you don't need with people who need it.

Any other questions?

So if you didn't hear that Therese DelGenio, who was in Kenya for a while, when she came home told us the entire country of Kenya has banned plastic bags.

Because they see it as well. And in many of the Caribbean countries, many of the countries with coastlines are saying look, you are throwing all your trash in the ocean and it's coming up on our coastline. But we're not producing this trash. It's kind of like the statistic of of, you know, how much one the 1% of the top 1% How much fossil fuels we burn, how much trash we create, and how much it affects, you know, that's the kind of the ecological justice the environmental justice piece of this how what we're doing is negatively affecting people in poor and poor and marginalized communities. So that's a whole nother aspect of that spirituality piece where we have to realize we have to sit and think about our throwaway culture and our choices and our society and what it's doing and how it's affecting so many people who have they're not voiceless it's just that we don't listen you know we always talk about being the voice of the voiceless they're not voiceless they're just not being heard.

QUESTION: Sister Nancy

So, she just said that she waits for the day when she walks into the store. And it's so common that people bringing their own bags that you don't have to be careful to watch they're putting your stuff into plastic.

It was like the Holy Spirit is in this room because that is one of the topics I meant to talk about. And just right out of my head it went, this is called the reef refill. So BJ said, when, you know, there's places that you can you take the container, and you refill it, or you get a

new one, and they take the old one, and then they reuse that. This is kind of a movement of called refill, reuse, and refill. And we have a refill store here in Cincinnati, it's downtown. And you take the container or you purchase one of theirs. And it's either a durable plastic, or it's glass, you use the product. And then you take that container back and refill it. Imagine if our grocery stores were like that, you know, you take your cereal container and just fill your cereal container and you take your soap and fill your soap, you know. So on this table over here, I have some just some alternative plastic type things that I have at my house and I just brought it in for a display. Just imagine if our grocery stores were like that, you know, that'd be pretty cool. I mean, a lot of work, but pretty cool.

### **Sister Mary Ann Barnhorn, SNDdeN**

Well, once again, in your name, I want to thank our three speakers, Dr. measure, for the wonderful presentation on spirituality which will stay in our hearts, I'm sure. For many, many days, as we reflect upon the beauty of creation, the beauty of the God in our life, and the beauty of one another as we continue to work together make a big difference. I want to thank Carol, sister, Carol, for leading us in that touching prayer service. We always count on Carol for that, and she never lets us down. And Teresa Phillips, you can see why we are so proud and excited of the work that she does. And all of you. And I know you'll hear from us again. And this is the first time we've done this kind of a mourning in the service of our ecological efforts. And but I have a feeling it won't be the last. The people that brought it to us Marcus Mescher, his baby's second soccer game to be with us today. I know I know. Teresa gave up one of her rear free Saturdays and Sister Carol to give up some of her precious contemplative time which she does so well to be with us. So we again, we thank the three of them. And we thank all of you for coming. And we hope to see you again and you can be sure you'll hear from us. Goodbye.