

**CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION**  
**By: Sister Aida Velasquez, OSB**

"I would like to ask all men and women of goodwill: let us be "protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment," Pope Francis urged everyone in his inaugural Mass last March. (CBCP Monitor, Mar 18-31, 2013)

It is good to note that the Gen Chapter (Oct, 2012) and the Manila Priory Chapter (Jan 9-12, 2012) have responded even before Pope Francis called for protection for life and environment...

The delegates to the 12th General Chapter (Oct, 2012) state: "We commit ourselves ...to live "authentically our Missionary Benedictine charism...through

1. Conversatio Morum
2. New Evangelization
3. Inter-Priory Sharing
4. Care for God's Creation.

In order to carry this out:

a. The Gen Chapter acknowledges the need to give great attention to the ecological crisis which necessitates "personal, communal, local and global actions so as to protect the environment from further destruction and to promote health of the ecosystems. (Here one can see that every sister can contribute something for the care of God's creation. It is everyone's duty- not only that of the environmentalists.)

b. The Pories are urged to come up with a comprehensive Ecological Plan which may include, among others:

1. development of a creation spirituality
2. policies concerning lifestyle and consumption practices, and
3. advocacy for social and ecological justice (Message of the 12th General Chapter 2012 #14 pp13 & 14).

c. In addition, the Generalate will appoint a Congregation Coordinator for Justice, Peace and Care for Creation.

The 18th Manila Priory Chapter (Jan,9-12,2012) continues to focus on Family Evangelization and a Priory-wide Ecological Agenda and asks the Priory Government to "draw up a three -year priory-wide program of consciousness-raising (pp 5 & 6, 18th Manila Priory Chapter) leading to community action and concerted citizens' action geared to:

Healing Mother Earth, conservation of our natural resources,  
promotion of Filipino agri-based industry, and

partnering with the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) for these purposes.

This is a complete set of recommendations starting with  
Education on environmental issues,  
Green Lifestyle Program per community and  
networking with government organizations, non-government organizations,  
LGUs, local and national institutions,  
diocese and/or parishes.

Why all this attention and concern for the environment? for care for God's creation?

In the Philippines, for the past several days no one can avoid experiencing the rise in temperature - an effect of climate change. It has been observed that in Metro Manila and other parts of the country, the temperature in April is in the range of 35 degrees with the highest in Tuguegarao at 37 deg. (Tuguegarao also holds the highest temperature on record in the country at 42.2 deg last 1969) The month of April is still two months away from the usual onset of the rainy season. How many more hot days shall we endure?

While the country swelters in heat now in this side of the Earth, earlier, the other side of the world froze. Northwestern Europe experienced late winter snowstorm, the US and Canada were walloped by a huge blizzard last February.

Australia perhaps suffered the most. "The Climate Commission observed that the "Australian summer over 2012 and 2013 has been defined by extreme weather events across much of the continent, including record-breaking heat, severe bush fires, extreme rain fall and damaging flooding."( Editorial, Phil Daily Inquirer, Apr 14, 2013)

Nobody can deny how human activities have affected the planet!

In the Philippines, environmental degradation is "caused by deforestation, unsustainable farming practices, coastal resource depletion, biodiversity loss, mining operations land conversion, overdrawng of ground water and pollution". (Margarita T dela Cruz, UPV Tacloban College," Climate Change and Environmental Concerns in the Visayas", Oct,2009)

"Judging by the crazy weather, the worst is yet to come with global warming in full gallop. As we swelter, ancient sheets of ice are melting at an unprecedented rate. Humankind is now faced with the daily task of surviving extreme temperatures. It is now reaping the whirlwind." (Phil Daily Inquirer, Apr 5, 2013)

These extremes of weather, an effect of climate change, will affect global food and water supply. There is the danger of famine. And since about twenty years ago, the possibility of war due to shortage of food and water supply has been reported in the media.

What have we all, humans, brought upon ourselves and on the generations to come?

Together with many other individuals and groups, as Missionary Benedictines, can our

practice of ora et labora help the situation?

On bended knees let us each implore: "Lord, help us. Please show us the way  
Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!"

Guide Questions :

1. In Chapter 32 of the Holy Rule, St Benedict tells the Abbot to "choose brothers whose lives and virtue are reliable to care for the clothes, tools and other monastic property. He will give them charge of those things they are to look after and collect when used.... The abbot will keep an inventory, so that when other brothers assume the task, the abbot may have an accounting. No one shall treat monastic property carelessly or in a slipshod manner. If anyone does, he must be scolded, and if no amends are made, he will be subject to the discipline of the Rule. (Anthony Meisel and ML del Mastro, "The Rule of St Benedict," Translation with introduction and notes ,1975)

What can be St Benedict's instruction when he talks of nature, of God's creation?

2. Comment, make suggestions on the proposed three-year priory-wide program of consciousness-raising of the Manila Priory Chapter.