

Dear Oblates,

Thursday, November 19, 2015

Care for the earth has been integral to the Benedictine Charism since our very foundation. We have consciously and deliberately included this responsibility in our Corporate Commitment and have taken significant steps, both as community and as individuals, to deepen and broaden our understanding of sustainable living and to take concrete and intentional actions in the name of sustainability.

Pope Francis' Encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, clearly lays out the crisis that our planet faces and calls all of us, all nations, all religions, all people, to find a common solution to Climate Change. In his words: "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. Regrettably, many efforts have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents." (14)

In the very near future, actually, November 30–December 11, world leaders from 150 countries will gather in Paris for the COP21. This 21st "Conference of Parties" will build on the twenty previous conferences and endeavor to put internationally agreed upon targets in place to curb ongoing Climate Change and, to at least some degree, reverse it. While this conference was in place long before Pope Francis' call for dialogue, his encyclical adds a clear imperative that this conference be successful.

Interfaith Power and Light, a broad-based organization serving religious congregations of all faiths, invited us to be part of an initiative to make the same pledge "at home" as the nations of the world are being asked to pledge at COP21.

Grateful for the community's public statement of our commitment to environmental sustainability in our Corporate Commitment and for the many ways we have been faithful to this commitment, I have signed on to the *Paris Pledge* in the name of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Joining with many other religious communities, parishes/congregations, and individuals we pledge to:

1. Reduce our carbon pollution by 50% (from 2005 levels) by 2030
2. Set a goal of being carbon neutral by 2050

This puts tangible goals on efforts that we are already making. Given all the renovations at the Mount over the past 10 years, we are well on our way to the 2030 goal.

Signing the *Paris Pledge* provides us with an excellent vehicle to make a public statement inviting others to make a commitment to environmental sustainability. Whether or not they will have time to ask their parishes or churches to sign onto the *Paris Pledge* or to sign themselves as individuals prior to the COP21 meeting, making this pledge is good for our planet.

Two things will be happening soon:

1. Outreach:
 - CARE (our committee looking at alternative energy sources) in conjunction with Sisters Dianne Sabol and Ann Hoffman, Oblate Directors, will get the word out to the Oblates;
 - Sister Charlotte, Communications Director, will send out a Press Release to publicly state our sustainability commitment through the *Paris Pledge*.
2. CARE will develop an action plan of implementations for us to consider.

I urge you to tell your families and friends about the *Paris Pledge* and encourage them to sign on (www.parispledge.org).

Anne

Sister Anne Wambach, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie