

Mary Quinn, Sister of Mercy, is Co-director of Mercy Farm Eco-Spiritual Center in Benson. She has a master's degree in adult education from the University of Southern Maine in Portland and a bachelor's degree in sociology from St. Joseph's College in Standish, Maine. She studied Radiologic Technology at Mercy Hospital School of Radiologic Technology in Portland.

Why did you agree to serve on this committee?

Our mission at Mercy Farm is basically to care for and to protect the earth. Joining this committee is a way to further our mission by broadening our perspective on the issues facing our planet and helping to identify and support possible answers to address them. It is also an opportunity for us to share what we do for the earth through environmental education, organic gardening and sustainable living practices. One influences the other for the betterment of all.

What specific concerns do you have about the wellbeing of the earth, "our common home?"

Specific or obvious concerns include: the issues surrounding clean water, the extinction of wildlife and vegetation, global warming, pollution, fracking, building pipe lines and the movement of tar sands across the country. Closer to Vermont are the current issues of water contamination from industrial plants, pipelines going through the state and water runoff into Lake Champlain.

What message do you want to convey about care of the earth?

Underpinning the obvious are misunderstood or unrecognized underlying issues. For example: a lack of understanding or recognition that all of creation is interconnected, that everything is closely interrelated. In "Laudato Si" Pope Francis elaborated on the environmental, economic, social and cultural aspects of ecology in the chapter entitled 'Integral Ecology:' "We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time protecting nature."

How can Vermont Catholics participate in the care of the earth?

The idea that "if everyone lit just one little candle what a bright world this would be" is transferrable to earth's plight today. If everyone consistently did just one thing to make a difference, what a cleaner, safer and healthier world this would be. Recycle, reuse and reduce! This simple catchy phrase packs a lot of meaning and has great potential in a positive impact on the environment.

What do you say to people who do not understand/believe the seriousness of the situation of the earth?

Look around! Icebergs are melting, tides are rising, and drought is putting a stress on sources of water. There is an increase in earthquakes, tornadoes and forest fires and an imbalance in temperatures, rainfall and snow across the United States and around the world. Areas of clear cutting of forests for coal, gold and timber are plentiful, and each brings devastating results with immediate and long-range negative consequences.

What motivates you in your work to protect our earth?

More and more people are beginning to recognize that something must be done to reverse the degradation of Earth and that societal and economic imbalance affects the most vulnerable of people.

Together we can make a real and sustained difference for the betterment of Earth, "our common home."