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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

WHEATON FRANCISCANS CELEBRATE 75 YEARS, TAKES URGENT CLIMATE ACTION

Community commits to seven-year plan to care for our common home

WHEATON, IL, November 16, 2021 – October 2021 launched a year-long jubilee celebration of the 75th anniversary since the Franciscan Sisters (locally known as the Wheaton Franciscans) first came to Wheaton, after arriving in the USA from Germany 150 years ago. The sisters are embracing the future by creating a seven-year action plan that integrates care for the Earth and people who are poor or vulnerable.

Over the years, the sisters have served those in need in the local area, including establishing the Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital for individuals who have experienced an illness or injury; Marian Park, one of the first low-income housing developments for families and seniors in the county; Canticle Place, serving those with disabilities resulting from HIV/AIDS; and the Tau Center, a place for personal growth and spiritual development.

The Wheaton Franciscans have also been actively involved in creating a beautiful campus for the public to enjoy, returning several acres to native Illinois prairie, planting a butterfly garden, and establishing a majestic stand of evergreen trees.

On the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4, 2021, the Wheaton Franciscans have taken action to meet the urgent challenge of Pope Francis to the universal Church to protect our common home and to address the effects of climate change, global warming, and concern for the poor. “An exciting global movement is underway to create and implement action plans to move us to a flourishing future for all humanity,” stated Sister Beatrice Hernandez, who is leading this effort of the Wheaton Franciscan Community.

The seven-year plan is in response to the encyclical (papal letter) Laudato Si’ written by Pope Francis in 2015. It discusses scientific and spiritual perspectives on the current state of Earth, our common home. Sister Melanie Paradis, Regional Directress of the Wheaton Franciscans, announced the community’s commitment: “What we are embarking on is a response to the question, ‘What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?’ (Laudato Si’ #160). The Wheaton Franciscans have lovingly cared for our land in Wheaton and people in need for 75 years, and we are now redoubling our efforts to demonstrate regenerative living, in collaboration with all who seek a healthy and safe community, especially the young.”
She continued, “While this is challenging, we view the next seven years as filled with endless possibilities. We cannot do this alone. Everyone’s talents and knowledge are needed. We are seeking active collaborators who are committed to fostering both resilient living and community-building.”

Visit https://wheatonfranciscan.org/laudato-si/ to learn more.

Public Commitment
October 4, 2021

Wheaton Franciscan Statement of Commitment to the Laudato Si’ Action Platform

Our Wheaton Franciscan charism calls us to be a blessing in the heart of the world. Therefore, we, the St. Clare Regional Community of the international congregation of Franciscan Sisters, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, joyfully and humbly pledge our commitment to develop and implement a seven-year Laudato Si’ Action Plan as we seek a flourishing future.

We believe that all of creation is one. As people of God, we are called to live in harmony and to recognize that all is sacred. Our presence conveys the values of simple living, compassion, and integrity of creation. Our charism, history, and vision compel us to respond to the critical needs of our times.

We commit to open our minds to learn from Creation’s diversity and move beyond sustainable stewardship to transformative kinship.

We commit ourselves, our ministries, and our resources to creative actions that demonstrate resilient living and community-building.

We commit to living a life of connectedness by:
- creating spaces for nurturing community and the practice of contemplation and action;
- fostering a culture of care for our common home;
- listening to and engaging the young;
- embodying radical hospitality;
- promoting nonviolence;
- working to recognize and eliminate systemic injustice in all its various forms.

We commit to collaboration with others who desire to create healthy and safe communities where all of God’s creation can thrive.

We embark on this journey for the sake of Mother Earth and for the sake of future generations.

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The Wheaton Franciscans are the St. Clare Regional Community of the international congregation of Franciscan Sisters, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, located in Wheaton, IL. Visit https://wheatonfranciscan.org/ to learn more.