

## *Care for Creation Affirmed*

The work of a nine-member task force over the course of a year culminated in the Proclamation of a Statement of Principles on Care for Creation and the Environment in the Franciscan Village on April 26, 2012. More than 50 people gathered on the patio of the Lourdes University dining hall to hear the reading of a document that will be the directional statement on how the Sylvania Franciscan Village will care for creation and the environment in which it lives.

A committee has been formed to draft practical guidelines for implementing this document throughout the Franciscan Village.



Dr. Robert Helmer, President of Lourdes University, and Sister Diana Lynn Eckel, Congregational Minister, Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania, hold a framed "Statement of Principles on Care for Creation and the Environment" that will be prominently posted in the Franciscan Village.



Pat O'Connell, Associate Professor, Lourdes University, and Sister Ann Francis Klimkowski, OSF, President Emerita, Lourdes University, explain the year-long process that was used to research and write the statement of principles.

## ***The Sylvania Franciscan Village Statement of Principles on Care for Creation and the Environment***

We, the members of the Sylvania Franciscan Village, believe that the creation of our vast and wonderful universe is God's gift to us, and God's first act of self-revelation. Respect and care for creation is our gift back to God.

In the 13th century, St. Francis praised God through creation. He saw the sun, moon, stars, water, air, all natural resources, all creatures and fellow humans as the reflection of God's goodness. Consistent with St. Francis' vision, we in the 21st century recognize that humans are interconnected with nature, not separate from it. We also acknowledge the capacity of each person and every society either to diminish creation or to conserve and sustain it.

Since their founding in 1916, the Sisters of St. Francis have consciously focused on peace and harmony. The Sisters have a long record of caretaking, concern, and reverence for humans and Mother Earth. Because of this, we live and work in places of beauty that speak to the hearts and minds of all.

The history and legacy of the women founders compel us to continue the commitment and awareness of our relationship with the Earth. The Sylvania Franciscan Village is a community of brothers and sisters interconnected with all of creation. We have a spiritual responsibility to integrate our values of community, stewardship, reverence and service into our planning, decisions, and actions to ensure the preservation of all creation for future generations. Care for creation thus is our spiritual responsibility and requires an ongoing journey of ecological literacy and reverence.

As a community committed to service in education, healthcare, human services and social justice we are compelled to uphold our common values. We will be continuously aware of how our activity impacts the entirety of creation. Just as St. Francis saw his life as a balance between acting in the 13th century world and fully embracing prayer and contemplation, we will acknowledge the challenges of 21st century human activity and productivity with responsibility to preserve God's gift of creation for future generations. We acknowledge and believe:

- We have the responsibility to take leadership in the care of God's creation
- We are called by our faith traditions to live simply and consciously in harmony with creation
- Every small action by an individual makes a difference over time
- Without reverence and respect, human activity can negatively impact the preservation of God's creation for future generations
- It is our duty as educators, caregivers, and people of faith to transmit and act upon these values and beliefs

The Sylvania Franciscan Village will thus reverence the diversity of creation. We will embrace and engage in our spiritual and moral responsibility to balance being in the world and being in kinship with all species.