



May 2013

# Go Green!

*with the Sisters of Divine Providence*

*A Yearly Update*



## Keeping Green in the Spirit

In 1979, John Paul II declared St. Francis of Assisi to be the “patron of ecology.” St. Francis made a point of walking lightly on the earth. His biographer tells us: *When he washed his hands, he chose a place where the water would not be trampled underfoot after the washing. Whenever he had to walk over rocks, he would walk with fear and reverence out of love for Him who is called “The Rock.”* ... (Source: *Live Simply – Earth Friendly*, Franciscan Media)

Sister Marian Senish lives her life reverencing the earth as well. She tells of discovering Hildegard of Bingen a number of years ago. Hildegard was a Benedictine abbess who lived in the eleven hundreds. She was also a musician, a painter, a scientist, and an expert with herbs and nutrition. Sister Marian said, “I found her so amazing that I read as much as I could about her.”

One of the things that Sister Marian found so interesting about Hildegard was her insight about *keeping ourselves green in the Spirit*. “What she said,” Sister Marian shared, “was that we should keep our Spirit fresh and alive, the way spring is alive with new life and growth.” Hildegard’s idea was that we become poverty stricken if we do not have a love affair with creation, not only with the trees and plants and flowers, but also with the stars and the moon and the sun—in other words, *everything!*

Hildegard showed Sister Marian that we need to have a relationship with all of creation. When we relate to creation, we avoid dominating it or bossing it. If we dominate it or boss it around, we will lose wonder and awe and beauty and, perhaps, even lack green in our spirituality. She continued, “God made us out of clay. What a wonderful image for making us one with the earth. God then breathes life into us and into all of Creation. God’s breath and God’s Spirit become our life and spirit. God’s breath and God’s Spirit become God’s Presence—God’s Providence, which can never be dominated or bossed around.”

Sister Marian asks us to reflect: “Sit with the God of Creation by a river, or in the mountains, or under a tree, or some favorite place. Be aware of God’s presence within you and all around you. Let the beauty of this place fill your spirit with greenness. Contemplate this marvel, this precious moment as a person in awe of God’s creation. Let it soak in like the rain producing new life and growth within you.”

*Submitted by Pam Greer  
Communications Specialist*

*“The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.” –The Earth Charter*

## KETTELER GROVE – ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Community's commitment to a consistent ethic of life extends to our care for all God's Creation. With that commitment in mind, some time ago the Leadership Team suggested allowing some of the land at Providence Heights to revert to its natural state. This effort would benefit the land and the plants and animals that thrive there. Planting more trees or simply allowing natural reseeding by trees and bushes would add oxygen to the air and shade to the land. At the same time, this change would eliminate fertilizers, grass sowing and cutting, and would decrease labor costs.

This environmental area will be called The Ketteler Grove. By this naming, we honor the legacy of Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler and the mission of the Community to "commit ourselves to making God's Providence more visible in our world." The area that has been selected is to the right of the cemetery walk, just past the stream. It will be planted with trees and cultivated as a place of reflection and rest, contributing to the beauty of our grounds and the sustainability of the earth.

A 10-year plan developed by Lisa Mosser and the Office of Property Management includes planting a mix of tree species, including crimson king maples, red maples, and sugar maples. Maples have a rapid growth pattern and are resistant to the intrusion of deer. A walkway lined and covered with mulch will encircle the grove and will have several benches along the path. Boxwood trees will be planted at the grove's entry and arborvitae will mark the walkway's end.

Along the grove walkway plaques will be installed that will be inscribed with the names of the Ketteler Social Justice Award recipients. There will also be a display of historical information about Bishop Ketteler.

As part of this year's month-long celebration of the earth, a prayer service was held on Earth Day, April 22, at which time plans for Ketteler Grove were shared with everyone in attendance. As the grove progresses and matures, more details will be made known.

(Source: *Leadership News*)





## CAMPUS CLEANUP

On Monday, April 15, the Alpha School students participated in a campus cleanup that included weeding and planting in the cemetery and all around the province grounds, as well as cleaning the playground and benches. In addition to the cleanup, each Monday in April, the Sisters, staff, and students marked the month in different ways: *Go Green* bracelets were distributed to everyone; the tree was hung on the lower level, again sprouting leaves with green tips and more; SAGE baked a yummy green dessert; the staff enjoyed a dress down day, where they got to wear jeans and their *Get Your Green On with the Sisters of Divine Providence* t-shirts; the dining room was decorated; contemplative silence was held each Wednesday in April to reverence the earth; our annual Earth Day prayer service was held in St. Anne's Park; and Nancy Gleyze (foundation) and Denise Barker (Alpha School) were the lucky winners of the basket raffle.

Thanks to everyone who continues to do their part for the environment.





# Earth Day Prayer Service



To view all the campus cleanup and Earth Day prayer service photos, visit our website at [divineprovidenceweb.org](http://divineprovidenceweb.org).

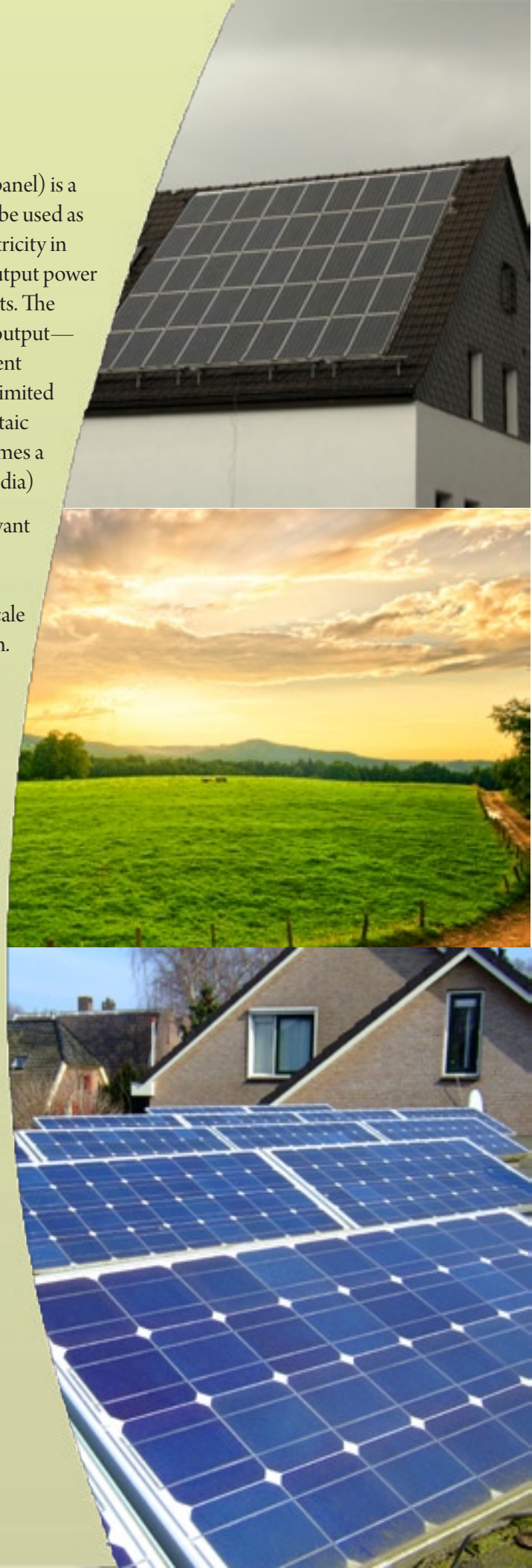
# SOLAR POWER

A solar panel (also solar module, photovoltaic module, or photovoltaic panel) is a packaged, connected assembly of photovoltaic cells. The solar panel can be used as a component of a larger photovoltaic system to generate and supply electricity in commercial and residential applications. Each panel is rated by its DC output power under standard test conditions, and typically ranges from 100 to 320 watts. The efficiency of a panel determines the area of a panel given the same rated output—an 8 percent efficient 230 watt panel will have twice the area of a 16 percent efficient 230 watt panel. Because a single solar panel can produce only a limited amount of power, most installations contain multiple panels. A photovoltaic system typically includes an array of solar panels, an inverter, and sometimes a battery and or solar tracker and interconnection wiring. (Source: Wikipedia)

La Posada Providencia has a very ambitious energy-efficiency goal. We want to go solar! Our dream is to install and use solar panels to provide the electrical energy needed to support three of our client buildings: the women's and men's dorm buildings and the commons building. Large-scale use of solar energy is a very natural next step for our *Greening Up* program. We have engaged various contractors to provide us bids and, in the process, have learned that such an installation will provide significant electrical usage savings and, consequently, monetary savings for La Posada. To convert our buildings to solar power will not come cheap, though; therefore, we are pursuing funding opportunities, primarily in the form of grants. Donations from individual donors to support the endeavor are also encouraged.

If you are interested in donating to help fund our solar panels, please contact Missy Benavidez, development coordinator, at 956-399-3826 or [mбенавидез@lppshelter.org](mailto:mбенавидез@lppshelter.org).

*Submitted by Michele Berhorst  
Communications Specialist*





## “Greening Up” the Produce Garden

Recently, La Posada Providencia, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Divine Providence, welcomed three wonderful volunteers to work in La Posada’s produce garden with clients. Arcelia Aguilar, MSN, RN, Barbara Robinson from Methodist Healthcare Ministers, and Jennifer Herrera from Texas A&M ArgriLife Extension Service arrived in the morning with gardening tools and supplies, a variety of plants, and loads of enthusiasm. These ladies worked together with four of our clients to clear the planting site before planting sweet corn, tomatoes, beans, okra, cucumbers, watermelon, squash, and melon. Our clients, then, had the opportunity to learn about the proper way to care for these plants. After watering the new additions to the garden, Arcelia and Barbara spoke to the clients about different planting techniques, the growing process, other plants, and possibilities for La Posada to expand its garden. In several weeks, this addition to the garden will provide our clients with the ingredients to make delicious and healthy meals.

In late summer, Arcelia and Barbara will return to La Posada to work in the garden and to prepare for fall planting. We plant, fertilize, and cultivate the produce garden every spring and fall and, in doing so, we teach clients about environmental and agricultural sustainability. The garden is fertilized using compost we create; the plants are irrigated with grey water and rainwater from our cisterns; and the garden is weeded weekly during the growing seasons.

As the fruits and vegetables ripen, they are harvested and served with meals at La Posada, which are planned, prepared, and eaten together. We sell surplus produce at the local farmers’ market, and

the proceeds are used for shelter programs. At the end of one season, we remove all the fallow plants and add them to the compost that will fertilize the garden next season.

The shelter program at La Posada promotes the philosophy that it is our responsibility to be good stewards of God’s creation. Through La Posada’s sustainability education and practices, clients gain knowledge and skills to begin new lives in our country—and live more sustainably on our planet. Donors who wish to make an ongoing commitment to our “greening up” efforts can join our Circle of Hope monthly giving program at the \$25 level—*The Gift of Stewardship*. Having regular and reliable income through the monthly giving program helps ensure we can keep teaching clients about the environment for many years to come. You can learn more about the Circle of Hope by visiting [lppshelter.org/join-the-circle-of-hope](http://lppshelter.org/join-the-circle-of-hope).

We are thankful for volunteers like Arcelia, Barbara, and Jennifer, who share in our “greening up” endeavors to teach clients, and ourselves, how to be good stewards of our environment.

*Submitted by Michele Berhorst and  
Alma Gonzalez, Social Work Intern/  
Volunteer Coordinator*



Volunteers Barbara Robinson (left) and Arcelia Aguilar (right) in the produce garden





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