**Celebrating Our Journey Towards Integral Ecology**

**Sisters of Notre Dame, Patna Province, India**

The Sisters of Notre Dame, Patna Province is inspired and led by the spirit of the encyclical, Laudato SI’ of Pope Francis and has embarked a journey towards an integral ecology envisioned by the Laudato SI’ Action Platform in the year 2022 by a well-designed seven- year plan. All the seven Laudato SI’ Goals are included in the plan. The celebration of the Season of Creation every year is a joyous moment for the Sisters and their associates to express their appreciation, respect and care for God’s creation. During this season they recount the blessings of their journey in gratitude and thank God for the thousands of saplings that they have planted, the clean environment that they have created for reducing air and water pollutions, the sustainable life style that many of their communities and institutions adopted, the many roofs that they have solarised, the organic kitchen garden that they have promoted, the sustainable agriculture practices that they have introduced to the farmers, the intense awareness that they have created among the students to keep the environment green and clean, say ‘NO’ to single use plastic and wasting food, and educating the minds and hearts of thousands of people to care for creation. During the season creation, the province also makes a review of the action plan and to outline the activities for the coming year. Many of the activities are ongoing to actualise the seven goals of Laudato SI’. Some of the organised programmes of the province aimed at achieving the goals of Laudato SI’ are the following: -

**Go Green and Clean Campaign**

In response to the Cry of the Earth and to promote Ecological Education, the province has initiated the Go Green and Clean Campaign. This programme also supports the Green and Clean India programme of the federal Government. The outcomes of the campaign are more tree plantation and clean environment to compact pollution. The participants of the campaign are nurtured to care for the earth and respect and sustain the resources and beauty of God’s creation. The campus of the schools and other institutions of the province are maintained single use plastic free with a lot of green spaces. The students and Sisters are introduced to reduce waste, move away from a throw away culture and to be sensitive to the less privileged fellow human beings and to lead an eco-friendly life from their young age on. It also creates a paradigm shift of values and attitudes in the participants in the care for creation in order to create a more sustainable future for all.

**The Waste to Wealth Programme** is carried out by the SND Communities across the province. Every community makes the kitchen waste into organic manure for the kitchen garden and flower garden. Used containers, bottles and bags are recycled as flower/plant pots. Sisters also help collecting mango and jackfruit seeds and send them to the nurseries for growing saplings. In schools, shoes and dresses which are outgrown of the children yet very good ones to be used are distributed to the smaller children of the margins. Students also make art and craft items out of cloth pieces, water bottles, pens and paper pieces etc for decorations. Other waste like e-waste, hazardous waste and other non – biodegradables waste is sold to recycling agencies and use the money received for charity work.

**Solarisation** of roofs is one of the endeavours, the province has taken, to reduce the use of fossil fuel and move to using renewable energy. It is part of a seven-year plan of the province towards integral ecology guided by the Laudato SI goals of LSAP. The communities of the province which have solarised their roofs said it is beneficial because there is no huge amount of energy bill coming for payment every month. There is also an ethical satisfaction of using the green energy as a response to the cry of the earth. There are difficulties and challenges too because it is an expensive effort in the beginning and to keep the panels clean from dust also is difficult in urban places. Though there is a subsidized scheme for installing solar panels from the government, it is difficult to get them on time and in good qualities.

**Kitchen gardens** are promoted in the villages by the social action ministry of the province. It is part of the Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles of Laudato SI’ goal. So far, we have promoted 300 kitchen gardens managed by the women of the villages. They are taught how to make organic manure from their kitchen and garden waste for using it for their kitchen gardens. They cultivate seasonal vegetables for their home use. The family which has a kitchen garden is very happy to enjoy tasty vegetables with confidence that there are no chemical elements in their food produced by them. The Sisters also have in all their convents (35) kitchen gardens and composite pits. Making natura manure from the kitchen and garden waste also help the Sisters to maintain the environment clean and make the best use of the little land they have.

**Sustainable Agriculture Practices** are given importance in the villages with the farmers especially with the marginal farmers of the indigenous communities. It is a project working with 500 families of the indigenous communities to promote biodiversity by making their dry land into cultivable land and planting fruit saplings and boarder plants. So far around 400 acres of land is being made cultivable. The farmers are given training on how to make organic manure, organic pesticide and to care for the soil.

**Retreats and Seminars on Ecological Conversion** are organised in the province for Sisters, teachers, students and parents to motivate and enthuse them to develop an ecological spirituality perspective in the care for our common home.

Through the above-mentioned programmes, the province is slowly moving towards integral ecology envisioned by the Laudato SI’ Action Platform. The province is grateful for the guidance and support it receives from LSAP in its integral ecological journey.