

## Women Witnesses We Celebrate

The life and witness of **Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN**, is remembered in a special way in July, the month of her birth. Regarded as a martyr who gave her life for the sustainability of earth, and justice for Brazilian farmers whose livelihoods were threatened by unscrupulous ranchers and corporations, Dorothy is an icon of a person who lived the spirit of Laudato Si's "Integral Ecology"—care for earth; care for persons made poor. Take a moment and read about her life [here](#). Use this [prayer service](#) as a way of celebrating Dorothy's life. Ask her to guide our work in becoming a Laudato Si congregation.



**Malala Yousufzai** born in July, 1997 in Pakistan, She was barely 11 years old when she began her work for girls' rights to an education in her native country. Her voice and influence was so threatening to the Taliban that they attempted to kill her. Nine months after being seriously wounded, she gave a [speech at the United Nations General Assembly](#) in which she galvanized the resolve of the world toward the cause of girls right to education. In her speech she said, "they thought that the bullet would silence us, but they failed. Weakness, fear and hopelessness died that day. Strength, power, and courage was born." Read about/support the movement she started [here](#)



**Saint Kateri Tekakwitha's** feast day is July 14. Kateri, who lived in the territories of the future United States and Canada, is the first Native American to be recognized a saint by the Catholic Church. When Kateri was a young girl, a smallpox epidemic took the lives of her entire family. It left her with pocked skin and diminished eyesight. We can sense how much of her vision she lost from the name "Tekakwitha," literally, "one who walks groping for her way." Nevertheless, through her conversion and commitment to her Catholic faith, she became an inspiration to many, though her witness did evoke the disapproval of many people of her tribe. She is honored as a patroness of ecology. It is written that she had ties to the earth in a way that non-Natives can admire yet not completely grasp. She was part of a culture in which everything that was hunted or harvested for food, clothing, or shelter was received with a prayer of thanks for the offering that the animal or plant was making. Exploitation of the earth's resources was foreign to Native Americans like Kateri. As we ponder her significance for our lives today let us consider, what can we learn about care of earth from the native American culture? As her name means, "one who walks groping her way," consider if you as a spiritual seeker can see yourself in that name? For more [click here](#).



**Mary of Magdala, whose feast day is July 22<sup>nd</sup>** has been described as "perhaps the most maligned and misunderstood figure in early Christianity." She has been portrayed in many ways including public sinner, prostitute and first preacher of the Good News. In many ways, Mary personifies the many ways women have suffered from sexism in both the Church and the wider society. Distinguished professor of theology at Fordham University, Elizabeth Johnson, csj has amplified this as she writes, "The



problem began in 591 when Pope Gregory characterized Mary of Magdala as a repentant prostitute, a label that “stuck” eclipsing her important leadership and apostolic roles, even today.” “Making her a prostitute has allowed her leadership role among the disciples to be generally forgotten,” said Dr. Johnson. “For those who prefer a Church with an exclusively male hierarchy, it is easier to deal with her as a repentant sinner than as an apostolic woman who had a voice and used it.” To watch Elizabeth Johnson’s lecture on Mary Magdala [click here](#).