



## Restore Our Earth—Earth Day 2021

S. Pat Millen, OSF

Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of earth day. Due to the COVID pandemic, it was a virtual event. The pandemic continues to impact our celebrating this event. This year, the theme for this world wide event "Restore Our Earth". It is anticipated that more than 190 countries around the globe will celebrate. Before we offer suggestions on how "you" can celebrate, let's reflect on the rich history of Earth Day.

The first earth day celebration was held at the United Nations on March 30, 1997. Margaret Mead was the keynote speaker. She said: "Earth Day is to be the first completely international and universal holiday that the world has ever known. Every other holiday was tied to one place, or some political or special event. This Day is tied to Earth itself, and to the place of Earth in the whole solar system".

Eighteen years later, on May 24, 2015, Pope Francis signed his landmark encyclical, "Laudato Si': On the Care for Our Common Home". Pope Francis quotes St. Francis in the opening line in Laudato Si', *mi' Signore* – "Praise be to you, my Lord". In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.

*We, Franciscans recognize that the "Canticle of the Sun denotes Francis's theocentric understanding that God is intimately present in all of creation and in all creatures however unruly or seemingly insignificant (Schumuki, p. 258). In conclusion, therefore, at the heart of the Canticle of the Sun is Francis's personal spiritual relationship with God and creation." (Francis of Assisi: Early Documents eds. by Regis Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellman, William Short. Vol. 1, (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1999), pp. 113-114.)*

Let us celebrate, let us take action, and let us make a difference. See what is available in your area or start making your plans for **Earth Day 2021**. Many Earth Day resources which can be found at [www.EarthDay.org](http://www.EarthDay.org) as well as at Interfaith Power & Light at [www.faithclimateactionweek.org](http://www.faithclimateactionweek.org).

View the movie Kiss the Ground. This is a full-length documentary narrated by Woody Harrelson that sheds light on a "new, old approach" to farming called "regenerative agriculture" that has the potential to balance our climate, replenish our vast water supplies, and feed the world. Available on NetFlix.

Trailer: <https://kisstheground.com>

Another idea to consider is planting trees for special occasions such as a birthday, anniversary, or as a memorial for someone deceased.

- ❖ **The Canopy Project**, \$1 plants 1 tree ([www.earthday.org/campaign/the-canopy-project](http://www.earthday.org/campaign/the-canopy-project))
- ❖ **The gift of climate action:** Trees are planted in Appalachia, Mozambique, Madagascar Nicaragua. **Eden Reforestation Projects** includes Kenya and Central America: Employ villagers, plant local trees. Has available gifts of trees for staff gifts and to offset carbon footprints. ([www.ecologi.com](http://www.ecologi.com))