



School Sisters of Notre Dame

# The Four Commitments, Integral Ecology, and SSNDs

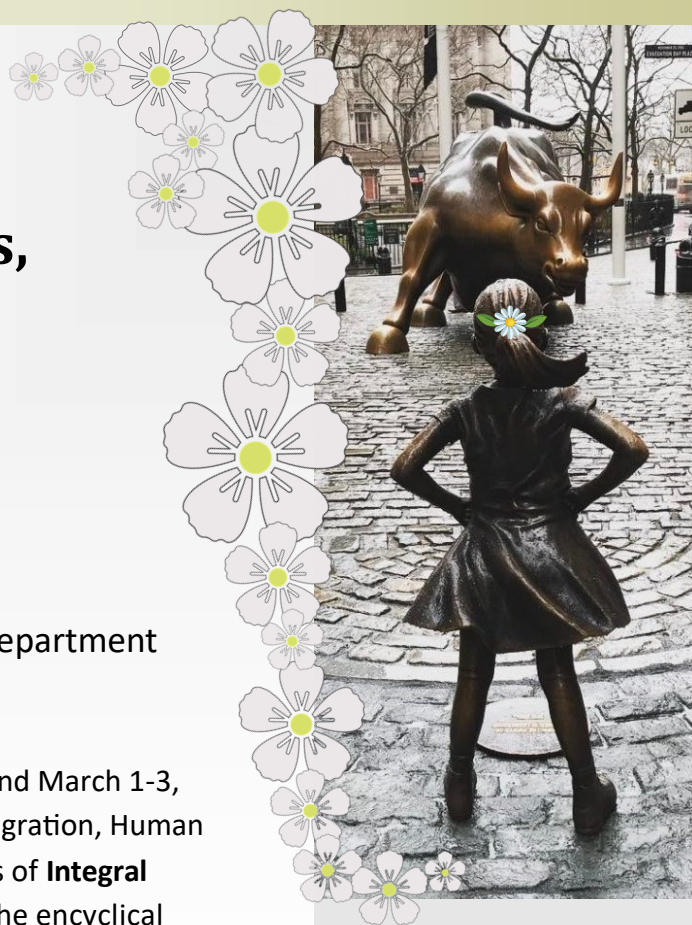
First in a Series of Five Reflections

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in Collaboration with the AMSSND JPIC Department

During the Province Four Commitments Weekend March 1-3, 2019, we focused our attention on Water, Immigration, Human Trafficking and Haiti by looking through the lens of **Integral Ecology**. Pope Francis introduced this lens in the encyclical *Laudato Si* by helping us to understand the interrelationship that exists between our social reality and our environmental reality. Within the framework of **Integral Ecology**, the existence and protection of the natural world is intimately linked with other aspects of human existence like economic, social, political, and cultural life. All of these together have concrete implications for the common good. Francis writes.

When we speak of the 'environment,' what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behavior patterns, and the ways it grasps reality. (139)



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Corporate Social Responsibility, to which the SSNDs are committed, is one of the ways we attend to the common good of all. This is done primarily by our vigilance and engagement with the economic factors, and specifically the corporations, where we and many religious congregations, and other faith-based organizations, invest our retirement funds. As a group we work together through the *Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility* to provide opportunities for socially responsible investing. SSNDs have been actively involved in bringing about change in the questionable practices of many companies. These efforts often make important contributions in the areas of the four commitments that we hold as a province. For example, pertaining to our commitment to **Justice for Immigrants**, pressure from socially responsible investors persuaded J.P. Morgan Chase to withdraw from funding privately owned prisons used for immigrant families. Similarly, pertaining to our commitment to **WATER's** accessibility and sustainability, Hormel (meat and poultry producers) agreed to assess its water risks and improve its water management. Recently, through corporate social responsibility work, Monster Beverage (energy drinks) was asked by socially responsible investors to report on **Human Trafficking** in the sugarcane supply chain.

All shareholders have the right to cast ballots for Corporate Boards of Directors and other company shareholder issues. Three approaches are used with corporations by investors with hopes of bringing about changes within the corporations where their retirement funds are invested: 1) The investors examine the policies on environmental procedures, social guidelines, and governance issues. 2) Through dialogues with appropriate corporate executives, investors such as SSND, discuss policies, suggest clarifications and additions, and recommend what needs to be posted on websites. 3) If changes are not happening, the investors then file a resolution for all stock holders to vote for or against.

As SSND shareholders we are inspired to continue the work of corporate social responsibility because it is an impactful way to engage in the work of transforming the social and environmental injustices at the heart of our four commitments. It is also another way that we are living into our Directional Statement which challenges us to “educate, advocate, and act in collaboration with others for the dignity of life and the **care of all creation.**”

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