



## Sustainability Office Newsletter

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# Pope Francis' Laudate Deum

On November 1, students from the School of Theology and monks from Saint John's Abbey gathered to discuss Pope Francis' new exhortation titled Laudate Deum. We found his arguments compelling. We also shared his concerns that the climate crisis has deepened, while global action seems stagnant. Since the publication of Francis' Laudato Si, for example, global CO2 levels rose from 400 ppm (2015) to 423 ppm (2023).

Another Laudate Deum activity we engaged in involved creation care work in the Saint John's Abbey Arboretum. Students and monks helped build a new nursery where oak saplings will be grown; some cut fencing to protect young oaks during their early vulnerable years. Oak trees have been standing on the earth for about 56-million years. They provide Saint John's Abbey with lumber to build pipe organs and furniture, for instance, but also provide food and homes for numerous insects, mammals, birds, and fungi. Moreover, their high biomass means they work hard cleaning the air that we breathe. When Benedictine sisters and brothers choose the vow of stability they commit themselves to remain with their community for life. The climate crisis perhaps needs people in the 21st century to take a vow of stability for the earth: this means committing ourselves to being on the earth in a manner that seeks communion with all creatures.

BY BROTHER DENYS JANIGA, OSB

## The Honeybee Latte

The Sustainability Promo week with the Perk was a total success! We partnered with the Perk and utilized our freshly harvested honey from the CSBees on campus to create the Lavender Honeybee Latte. It was a hit around campus as many people came by to get their sweet treats throughout the week. If a reusable mug was brought to buy the promo drink, students could also receive 20% off said drink! To promote this promo, we had a "mug" shot photo booth right across from the Perk, which allowed people to take pictures with their drinks in their reusable mugs. We were also able to partner with the CSB Bookstore which allowed us to receive 20% coupons on all reusable cups/mugs, so they could be more accessible to anyone on campus. Overall, the Sustainability promotional week was a BLAST! Not only did we get to showcase our bees, but we also showed just how easy it is to bring your own cup and practice sustainability everyday.

BY ABBY ROBINSON, '27



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COMMUNITY KITCHEN  
VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP



## Full Circle Greenhouse's New Home

After a bit of a hiatus on the relocation of the CSB Full Circle Greenhouse, it has finally found its place to put down roots. It is now located on the South end of the CSB campus towards the maintenance and transportation buildings. Not far from its previous location, now no longer interfering with the underground utility services. The reuse of this building is an important sustainable practice that can help reduce our waste contribution. They are currently getting prepared for planting in the next month.



## United Nations COP28 Experience

As part of the College of Saint Benedict's and Saint John's Delegation, COP has been a life-changing experience. My research focused on Sovereign Wealth Funds — such as the Pension Fund in Norway or Public Investment Fund in Saudi Arabia — can influence climate justice and renewable solutions. As a part of this journey, I listened to the Prime Minister of both Norway and The Bahamas give outstanding speeches in climate justice. In addition, I have met representatives from the Qatari, Saudi Arabian, Bahraini, Ukrainian, Cuban, and American environmental delegations. The COP28 is filled with unity and optimism, and the future genuinely looks bright. From my experience, I see that CSB + SJU has done amazing work around conservation and education with the Arboretum, but more progress is needed! Focusing on local action, ranging from continuing composting or reducing carbon footprints, are key elements to combatting the climate crisis. Also, being in tune with our intersectional relationship between religion and climate justice is an area for future programming. In all, COP28 showed me that climate change is not just a global issue, but a localized one as well.

BY NICHOLAS MERTENS, '26



## The Monastic Woods and the Sustainable Sisters

The Saint Benedict's Monastery woods consists of 90 – 100 acres of mixed woods. The woods evolved on glacial debris and maybe the top layer of what was once a lake or bog. It has been the policy of the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict to let nature develop the woods, and little has been done to 'manage' it as a resource. When working in our woods, I am motivated by the philosophy of Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, who said, "try to leave this world a little better than you find it." Our woods are a little gem in the midst of a small town.

Here, birds, bees, and butterflies find a natural home. The woods are home to most of the common birds and animals in the area, including deer, wild turkeys, red fox, and squirrels. The woods consist of maple, basswood, oak, and ironwood trees. The understory contains the usual array of spring flowers: showy orchids, bloodroot, jack-in-pulpit, and hepatica.

Benedictine practices are well-suited to sustainable stewardship of this natural environment. Some of these are the awareness of God, reverence for all creation, stewardship of resources, patience, and stability of place and work. Being in the woods is a place where I find peace as I work with my hands. It is a place to come to listen and connect with nature and with God.

The woods are a work in progress. Buckthorn is invasive and abundant in our woods, and it takes over the understory and prevents the growth of other plants. This fall, with the help of the Sustainability Office, we had volunteers who worked in a specific area. They pulled or cut and treated the buckthorn. What we accomplished in two 2 hour sessions would have taken me weeks to do on my own. This was an experience of "many hands make light work," and I am most grateful for this!

BY SISTER MARGARET WURM, OSB

