

When it rains, it pours!

By Melanie Guste, RSCJ



“Rain on St. Peter Street” ©Diane Millsap

It rains! It rains! From within the watery bowl of New Orleans on the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, my attention wanders through the nearest window to gaze with pure amazement at the preponderance of water.

It pours! It pours! Dumping massive pools along every street; the city comes to a strange quiet as the familiar sounds of streetcars stop, and hunkering down begins.

Puddling and pooling, everywhere.

As a child, I loved to wade and wallow in such pools of unexpected water. Glee came easily in the “Big Easy” with a carefree innocence to

welcome the predictable afternoon rain shower. Orange soda time. Afternoon naps. We remember – even then, it rained “cats and dogs” (or, as locals say, “cats and frogs”) in New Orleans.

Seems different now; there is simply so much more of the rain.

Scientists claim the cause is global warming and the warming of the oceans. They analyze the details of data,

and they debate probabilities. This is what we know as “paralysis of analysis.”

Here, we know these things by being in the bowl: first-hand, viscerally, and with muddy feet, wet hair and damp skin. We know by instinct, not percentages. We know that what was once wet is wetter, not drier. We know that the rain is fiercer and more intense when it does rain. We know that our rain is less predictable. We know that rainwater doesn’t drain, even though it once did in our massive system of drains and canals. We know that all of this rain affects so many more people.

No one needs to argue percentages to know these things.

On the anniversary of one storm, another one was making U.S. history: Hurricane Harvey. While it bore down on Houston with unrelenting rain, one’s heart did break; and it is not imaginary. It hurts for the children and their parents wading through the streets, looking back at their flooded homes with anguish in their faces. They wade forward with courage, destination uncertain. Future undetermined.

Another storm on its heels: Hurricane Irma, the largest storm in history, turns to Florida. Another one behind that one.

Can anyone doubt that creation isn’t groaning, begging for our attention?

After Katrina, a small group of Religious of the Sacred Heart gathered

“We need to treat the earth sort of like a backdrop for our lives. A ‘cosmic Christology’ reminds us that every aspect of the cosmos is in Christ, everything is Word incarnate. Everything bears the infinite love of God, each in its own way, which means that there’s nothing earthly that doesn’t have some divine dignity to it.”

—Ilia Delio, OSF

a Franciscan Sister of Washington, D.C., and theologian



The Academy of the Sacred Heart (The Rosary) in New Orleans held a hurricane relief drive for people affected by Hurricane Harvey in August 2017.

in our religious community in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Weathered by that storm, we prayed. Asking God for understanding and direction, we committed that day to prayer and action. We formed a group, “*Healthy Waters and Coastal Restoration*,” with our shared desire to act locally, starting with our communities and ourselves. We wrote an article about our personal decisions to “change our course,” and we shared these publicly with others in our community newsletter, *Update*. We invited others to join us.

A disaster pivoted us, radically turned us and converted us.

It was care that joined us, and it is care that moves us forward. Care for God’s creation. Care for our children’s future. Care for our common home. Now, our group continues its humble efforts with more than 100 members across the United States and in five countries of the world.

Wherever we are, we educate and advocate. We act where we can and how we can. We support one another. In these ways, we contribute to the building of community.

Humble work. Small works. And often hidden. ✦



If you would like to join our group, you can find us:

- **Facebook public group:** *Healthy Waters and Coastal Restoration Group: Society of the Sacred Heart*
- **Scoop it:** *Healthy Waters*
- **Pinterest:** *Melanie Guste, RSCJ*, and her boards, *Healthy Waters and Global Water Crisis*
- **Email:** mguste@rscj.org and ask to add your name to our distribution email list.