

Thoughts from the Garden – Let's show them that we care

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The emphasis on climate change in the media, the upcoming People's Climate March, and the work we have been doing to raise awareness of the causes and effects of climate change has led me to reflect on an experience I had several months ago. I was a bit anxious to be speaking with groups of high school girls, but someone once said to me, "If you have an opportunity to speak about something of which you are passionate - don't turn it down." How, then, could I decline to speak about our relationship with the Earth with the young women at Academia María Reina? After hearing a bit about our garden ministry and the lives we nurture there, most of our time together was spent looking at our interconnections and beginning to recognize Earth as our family. We watched two, short, wordless videos that showed the current reality of our planet. One portrayed the beauty of the Earth and the other showed some of the destruction that is taking place.

The students were wonderful in their welcoming and attentive attitudes. As I expected, they came up with positive ways that they can live gently on the Earth, and they shared insightful questions and ideas. Several girls were excited about the possibility of starting to plant herbs and vegetables at their homes and others came up with ways to reuse and recycle. What surprised me was one reoccurring response from a handful of the students who shared, one of utter hopelessness.

A sophomore stunned me when, sitting back in her chair with her eyes cast down, she offered the following reflection about our damaged Earth. "The problem is so big, and no one seems to care. If no one cares, what can we do about it?" This painfully honest sentiment was echoed by a senior who commented, "People know, but they don't care," and a junior who observed that "people care more about convenience than what is right." One student noticed that the environment in which she lives is more like the "pollution one than the pretty one." These students know what is happening to our Earth. They know that it is people who are causing this massive devastation and they don't see anyone who cares.

When we hear of climate change realities, we are peering into the future of these girls. What they are seeing in our response is that we don't care. It was a heart-wrenching experience to observe this hopelessness in teenagers who should be filled with dreams of open possibilities during this stage of their lives. When I experience my own hopelessness at the enormity of these challenges, I remember the students whose lives, for a brief time, intermingled with mine. My sense of hope is renewed because it has to be. We need to care for the Earth for the sake of Earth herself; every life on this planet is precious. We need to care loudly – proclaiming from the treetops that we do care and that we will not trade convenience for the future of a 16 year old girl. How can we restore right relationship with Earth and Earth's creatures so that our young ones, their

children and their children's children will have a future on a healthy planet? How can we show them that we care?

- Heather Ganz,
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