Did you know that what you choose to eat is the most important decision you make every day affecting the planet? Perhaps like many Christians I rarely, in the course of my daily routine, ever reflected on this question. And, until March 7th of last year, I was a product of the predominant narrative that the consumption of fossil fuels was the root and largest cause of our global climate crisis. Well, that night the narrative for me unexpectedly changed since I had been looking up the schedule of a local environmental film festival and stumbled upon the title, *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* (available on Netflix or YouTube). Having grown up on a family farm in Minnesota, I never had the problem of associating where food comes from to the image of Walmart, since I had the privilege of raising our own meat among several other commodities. Moreover, I already knew that our wasteful and unsustainable food transport network equated to the average plate of food in the U.S. commuting 1,500 miles before it reached our stomachs. So besides knowing that ‘eating local’ was better for the planet, what else did I really need to know about climate change and food? The following comes to mind after watching the film...1,100 gals. of H2O, 45 lbs. of grain, 30 sq. ft. of forest, 20 lbs. of CO2 and one animal’s life. These are the amounts that are saved from our individual environmental footprint each and every day simply by eating an all plant-based diet. Another way to comprehend the impact is to understand that animal agriculture is responsible for as much as 51% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions, compared to 13% from the total transportation sector.

It was facts like these in the film that led me to change my diet from that point on to ‘mostly vegan’ (which for me equates to only allowing for dairy or egg on celebrations or when I’m someone’s house guest). The reader may find it hard to believe these numbers, or perhaps may be wondering, “Why don’t I already know about this?” The film, of which Leonardo Di Caprio is the executive producer (and who recently met with the pope to discuss climate change), addresses both of these points by citing credible reports as well as interviewing several of the major environmental organizations about the lack of education to the general public.

Pope Francis’ encyclical letter *Laudato Si’* identifies dialogue and education as two factors that will “help us to escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us.” Furthermore, he cites how “recent world summits on the environment have failed to live up to expectations because, due to lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment.” Even though the pope’s words were written before December’s COP 21 agreement in Paris, it’s safe to say that nothing much has changed when it comes to legally binding agreements of a temperature
increase of no more than 1.5 degree celsius which will save the island nations from extinction. The two degree non-binding target is considered ‘utterly inadequate’ according to a lead author of the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report.

As cited in Cowspiracy, if we continue business as usual with the overall animal agricultural industry we will see fishless oceans as soon as 2048! As people of God we can no longer wait for the leadership of governments or corporations to heed the constant cry of Mother Earth over the past several decades. As individuals and communities of faith we must ground the pope’s message now by auditing our own daily footprints and thus be open to considering the changing of our daily habits no matter how embedded they are into our cultural fabric and narrative. In my case, as foreign as a plant-based diet sounds to a former livestock farmer from Minnesota, the values that inform this choice I’ve made are rooted right here at home. In the end, even if humanity fails to alter the current path of destruction with whatever choices we decide to make for the sake of our planet, by being educated in the here and now we’ll still be one step closer to seeking justice, peace and integrity of creation within ourselves — one day and one choice at a time.

(Michael Dorn ministers at The Benedict Center in Milwaukee)

The movement continues
We are now entering the 46th year of a movement that continues to inspire, challenge ideas, ignite passion, and motivate people to action. In 1970, the year of the first Earth Day, the movement gave voice to an emerging consciousness, channeling human energy toward environmental issues. Forty-six years later, we continue to lead with groundbreaking ideas and by the power of our example.

And so it begins. Today. Right here and right now. Earth Day is more than just a single day — April 22, 2016. It’s bigger than attending a rally and taking a stand. This Earth Day and beyond, let’s make big stuff happen. Let’s plant 7.8 billion trees for the Earth. Let’s divest from fossil fuels and make cities 100% renewable. Let’s take the momentum from the Paris Climate Summit and build on it.

Let’s start now. And let’s not stop.

Care for creation at the Vatican

During this Easter season, the Vatican will take part in several initiatives highlighting the importance of ecology and the care for creation. Vatican City State announced that the thousands of floral arrangements for the Easter morning Mass and the pope’s solemn blessing "urbi et orbi" will be re-purposed after the celebrations.

Thousands of bushes, flowering trees, tulips and other flowering bulbs, which are a gift of growers in the Netherlands, will be replanted in the Vatican gardens. The plants also will be distributed to various pontifical colleges and institutions "so that they may bloom in the coming years."

Page 2 of 4
Good Shepherd Sunday, April 17th marks the 53rd anniversary of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

The purpose of this world day of prayer is to publically fulfill the Lord’s instruction to “Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). As a climax to a prayer that is continually offered throughout the church, it affirms the primacy of faith and grace in all that concerns vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life. While appreciating all vocations, the church concentrates its attention this day on vocations to the ordained ministries (priesthood and diaconate), to religious life in all its forms (male and female, contemplative and apostolic), to societies of apostolic life, to secular institutes in their diversity of services and membership, and to the missionary life.

In his World Day of Prayer for Vocations message, Pope Francis said: “On this day dedicated to prayer for vocations, I urge all the faithful to assume their responsibility for the care and discernment of vocations. When the apostles sought someone to take the place of Judas Iscariot, Saint Peter brought together one hundred and twenty of the brethren (cf. Acts 1:15); and in order to chose seven deacons, a group of disciples was gathered (cf. 6:2). Saint Paul gave Titus specific criteria for the selection of presbyters (cf. Titus 1:5-9). Still today, the Christian community is always present in the discernment of vocations, in their formation and in their perseverance (cf. Apost. Ex. Evangelii Gaudium, 107).

“All the faithful are called to appreciate the ecclesial dynamism of vocations, so that communities of faith can become, after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, like a mother’s womb which welcomes the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1: 35-38). The motherhood of the church finds expression in constant prayer for vocations and in the work of educating and accompanying all those who perceive God’s call. This motherhood is also expressed through a careful selection of candidates for the ordained ministry and for the consecrated life. Finally, the church is the mother of vocations in her continual support of those who have dedicated their lives to the service of others.

“We ask the Lord to grant to all those who are on a vocational journey a deep sense of belonging to the church; and that the Holy Spirit may strengthen among all of the faithful, a deeper sense of communion, discernment and spiritual fatherhood and motherhood.”

Passover: 22-30 April

Passover is an important, biblically derived Jewish festival. The Jewish people celebrate Passover as a commemoration of their liberation by God from slavery in Egypt and their freedom as a nation under the leadership of Moses. It commemorates the story of the Exodus as described in the Hebrew Bible especially in the Book of Exodus, in which the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. According to standard biblical chronology, this event would have taken place at about 1300 BCE.

Please remember our Jewish brothers and sisters in your prayers as they observe the sacred week of Passover.
Adele Thibaudeau, OSF died recently. She was a strong supporter of Capuchin ministries in Milwaukee.

Bruce Quinn (St. Mary Province) died recently. He was born in 1931, invested in 1949, professed in 1950, and ordained in 1957. 

*Friars are asked to offer traditional suffrages for Bruce Quinn.*

**Fast Facts for Earth Day**

More than 22% of the world’s plants are at risk of extinction, while 24% of the world’s mammals and 12% of the world’s bird species are threatened.

Over the last decade, approximately 13 million hectares of forest have been lost each year. About 1.6 billion people depend in some way on forests for their livelihoods.

Seventy percent of coral reefs are either threatened or destroyed. Coral reefs provide food, storm protection, jobs, recreation, and other income sources for more than 500 million people worldwide.

Climate change is expected to increase both the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Over 90% of deaths from natural disasters occur in developing countries.

More than one in every six people lacks access to enough safe freshwater to meet basic needs for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. Worldwide, 2.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation.

*Sources: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); UN Environment Programme (UNEP); UN-Water.*

Happy Anniversary, Earth Day.