

Field for Treasure

Volume 20, Issue 1
SPRING 2025

THE BETHLEHEM FARM NEWSLETTER

Become A Caretaker!

Can you see yourself living on the Farm year-round? We are seeking Caretakers!

A minimum one-year commitment is required.

More information is at www.bethlehemfarm.net/caretaker

or contact Casey at hiring@bethlehemfarm.net

You Can Just Start A Bible Study

By Jack, Caretaker

I don't read the Bible enough. You probably don't read the Bible enough. And no, the drips and drops of scripture you get at Mass every Sunday don't count as 'reading the Bible enough'. One of the potential consequences of a robust Catholic faith which acknowledges the majesty and importance of Tradition is that we neglect that other oh-so-important pillar of the faith, Scripture. What is needed is a personal, intentional, and (at minimum) weekly time spent with the very word of God, that it may seep into your life and imprint His plan for salvation history upon you. It was this line of thinking which awoke

within me a desire to be in a Bible study, that I may be called upon, week after week, to read scripture and reflect on all its delightful twists and turns and pockets of wisdom. One cannot, after all, fully appreciate a hedge maze from above; to really know a hedge maze, it must be explored personally, from the ground. And so I began a Bible study.

The wellspring of delight I have found in a consistent relationship with scripture is hard to adequately describe. It's similar to finally, as an adult, sitting down and talking to a venerable relative who, as a kid, you had a childish relationship with and were always a little wary of. Now, as you come to know them as an adult, you realize how unfounded and foolish was your childish standoffishness, and what a deep well they turn out to be. You realize how much you've missed out on, how much misery you could have avoided, how much there really is to know, and importantly, how little it is that you do know. There is little joy like realizing that it is not too late to begin to sink your roots deeply into that which satisfies, into the ancient abyss of man's experience of God, spiraling back into long before there was even a concept of the smart phone, the printing press, even written language. The immense privilege of bearing witness to the great darkness, the great expanse, the spirit of God blowing over the primordial waters; experiencing the thrill of Joshua's war shout as the mighty walls of Jericho crash to the ground; gazing in awed wonder at the bold and uncompromising faith of Hannaniah, Azariah, and Mishael, speaking words more searing than any of Babylon's furnaces: **"If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be**

it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up." This is the privilege with which we are blessed: of receiving the greatest intellectual and written tradition in human history, and the fact that Catholics are known for neglecting this great tradition is one of the great and pernicious evils infecting the Catholic Church today.

It's also a bold reminder to me that, especially in the context of the Church, you need no special training to just *do things*. I didn't attend a course or read any books on how to start a Bible study. I didn't even read the Bible. I merely felt called to meet a need and talked to my pastor about it. Considering how much the church needs good natured, legitimate lay faithful participation in the church, I want to encourage anyone reading to follow up on that desire that's been on your heart. There, after all, lies God, and there's no sense in waiting for someone else to start that thing you wish was already well developed and supported. You need Scripture, and the church needs you.

Cordless Makita or Dewalt Jigsaws

T25 Drill Bits

Makita Impact Drivers

Sawzall and Jigsaw Blades

Postage Stamps

Nail Aprons

Check out our online tool registry and Amazon wishlist

bethlehemfarm.net/wish-list

WISH LIST



20th Anniversary Reunion

Mark your calendars for **THIS** Labor Day weekend Aug. 29 - 31, 2025. Join us on the Farm to celebrate 20 years of holy ground by sharing community meals, hopping in on Farm chores, engaging in reflection, playing games, and breathing in the mountain air.

Register now at:

www.bethlehemfarm.net/reunion

In Search of PROJECT MANAGER CARETAKER

Seeking a BF Project Manager Caretaker! If you feel a call to live out the Cornerstones, while helping coordinate our low-income home repair and community service program and being responsible for worksite selection, implementation, management, and documentation in collaboration with the Construction Manager, please consider applying!

Learn more at www.bethlehemfarm.net/caretaker



Learning To Be Mindful

By Gloria, Volunteer

My time at Bethlehem Farm was marked by so many new and exciting experiences. Long after returning home to Chicago, these experiences continue to have a strong impact on my daily life. I can talk about a million and one things from the week I spent at Bethlehem Farm, but community and nature were the most outstanding elements of my time at the farm. There are no words to describe the beauty of the region. From the vastness of the mountains, to the sun-lit fields and forests, to the house cats and other animals on the Farm, every moment I spent outside, whether by myself or surrounded by friends, was full of wonder and admiration. I reflected on what it meant to sit in silence, while surrounded by the amazing landscapes. I thought about all of the different aspects of nature that were present, no matter how little, and the role they play in my life and vice versa. Through these little moments of meditation, as well as through conversations with others at the Farm, I realized that we don't live in our own individual bubbles

where our actions only affect us. Of course, this was something I was aware of before arriving at the Farm, but the impact of my actions and intentions on everything, and everyone around me, was infinitely more present in my mind while at the Farm.

Since returning to Chicago, I have tried to keep this mindfulness and these little moments of meditation at the front of my mind. Wherever I go, I try to admire the little ways in which nature shows up. I have noticed that nature is present in the more obvious things like beautiful forests and other green spaces in the city, in the gorgeous arrays of colorful flowers that happily host bees and butterflies, and in the sunsets and sunrises that never fail to take my breath away. However, I have also found that nature is present in the not-so-obvious things, like the designs of buildings in downtown Chicago that are emphasized in the sunlight, the many new and amazing people I interact with on a daily basis, and in the bonds that members of communities establish and strengthen – it is, after all, human nature to seek out and establish connections. It is during these moments of observation and meditation that I am reminded once again of the importance of being proactive, of being intentional in my interactions with both people and nature, and of the ways in which these systems of interactions and reciprocity work.

Thanks to these reflections, I try to be more observant of how I make my way through life, observing, appreciating, and doing my best to give back to nature and to God who have so selflessly provided for us to carry out our lives. This is a lesson that I will never forget from my time at Bethlehem Farm, for which I will forever be grateful.



I literally gasped and ran to get my camera when I walked out on to the porch and saw this – and I have yet to have a similar experience since then.

How We Celebrated St. Joseph's Day

By Casey, Caretaker

During morning prayer, we reflected on the maxims that guide the Congregation of St. Joseph (CSJ)'s spirituality, and then we participated in a training with Crossroads Organizing, which included reading the pastoral letter "Open Wide Our Hearts" and reflecting on how we can respond to racism through the lens of Catholic social teaching and the Bethlehem Farm mission. A value that Bethlehem Farm, the CSJ, and antiracism as a way of being have in common is moving from a mindset of scarcity to abundance.

How will you lean into abundance during this year of holy ground?

Jarrett's Curry

This recipe originally came to fruition when I was in a dinner pinch and decided to improvise a curry. I love Indian curry, and I think my attempt gets fairly close. When you try this out, and you find your own additions, I would love to hear your creative twists and feedback!

1 lb. of meat of your choice - venison, pork, beef, etc. (I used venison) cut into ½ to ¾-inch pieces

1 cup of potatoes, cleaned, peeled, and cut into ½-inch pieces

1 cup of carrots, ¼-inch pieces

½ cup garbanzo beans, cooked

1 can (6 oz.) of tomato paste

4 cups (32 oz.) of no salt added diced tomatoes in juice, drain juice into a separate bowl and keep

1 Tbsp of cornstarch

1 ½ Tbsp of turmeric

½ Tbsp of cumin

½ tsp pepper

½ tsp + ½ tsp of sea salt

2 tsp garam masala

2 Tbsp + ½ Tbsp vegetable oil

1. In a bowl, combine turmeric, cumin, pepper, ½ tsp salt, and cornstarch and mix until combined. Add in meat and continue mixing until meat is completely coated.

2. Add 2 Tbsp of vegetable oil (or alternative oil, such as sunflower or peanut oil) into a wok – I use a cast iron one, you use what ya got! – and set it on high heat. Add the coated meat into the wok and stir continuously until done, about 6-8 minutes, or until meat is barely pink. Once fully cooked, remove meat from wok.

3. Put the wok back on high heat and add another ½ Tbsp of oil. Add the carrots and potatoes, along with 2 Tbsp of juice from the diced tomatoes. Reduce to medium low heat and cover. After 3-4 minutes, or once the potatoes start to soften, add the garam masala and ½ tsp of salt to the wok and stir the veggies to cover. Continue to cover and keep at low heat until the veggies are to your preferred doneness, about 7-8 minutes.

4. Combine the tomato paste with 1/3 cup water or juice and stir. The consistency should be akin to a thick sauce. Add the tomato paste mix, diced tomatoes, meat, and the garbanzo beans. Once it is all warmed through, serve with rice and enjoy!

Welcome Home to Our Newest Caretaker, Helena!

By Helena, Caretaker

Howdy howdy!

I hail from the land of rolling hills, horses and fried chicken – Kentucky. I'm incredibly excited to join Bethlehem Farm's mission and to live out the cornerstones! A little about me: I am a fan of collecting neat rocks/seashells, cheesy sci-fi movies, flying kites, and the most recent addition – birdwatching (if you see a cool bird, let me know).

My journey to the Farm started as a week-long volunteer in 2021, and again in 2023. I fell in love with the Farm, the land, and the community, but it wasn't until the latter visit that I felt the desire to continue my stay. A few months later, I graduated from Northern Kentucky University with a degree in studio arts and made my way back to the Farm for a month-long stay as a Summer Servant. And what a month that was! I don't think I've dug up, or even seen that many potatoes in my life!

I would have extended my stay, but after some discernment, I heard God say, 'Yes... but not yet.'

So, back to northern Kentucky I went and began working as an event coordinator for a Catholic arts nonprofit called The Angelico Project. It was a blessing to work with fellow Catholic artists, but in my heart there was a desire to come back to the Farm. A year later, after a two-week stay as a Summer Servant, further discernment, and consolation on my decision — I applied to be a Caretaker. And here I am!



MISSION STATEMENT:

Bethlehem Farm is a Catholic community in Appalachia that transforms lives through service with the local community and the teaching of sustainable practices.

We invite volunteers to join us in living the Gospel cornerstones of community, prayer, service, and simplicity.

OUR COMMUNITY:

Tiffany Anderson
Colleen Fitts
Eric Fitts
Helena Kaelin
Anna Koshiol
Jack Lampton
Marcus Lyons
Jarrett Murano
Casey Murano
Steve Rassa

BOARD MEMBERS:

Kate Brown
Mary Kate Cervin
Arielle Chard
Brenna Davis
Brent Fernandez
Andrew Ketchum
Lauren LaCoy
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Steve Morrill
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Director's Corner Care for Creation: Laudato Si' In Action

By Eric, Director

Creation is a thread that has woven throughout my life.

I can recall digging for hours in our sandbox as a boy—carving waterways, and then running the hose and delighting in the new stream created. I think of sunny days on the beach when we have crafted sand sculptures to see what would emerge.

Later, I joined Scouts and delighted in being in the woods with others, lashing structures from wood and rope, and learning wilderness survival. My awe for the created world deepened as I swam with dolphins, rose at sunrise, drank from pristine lakes, enjoyed wild berries, or gazed at the Milky Way.

Over the past 25 years living in West Virginia at either Nazareth Farm or Bethlehem Farm, I have been forming community, creating gardens, growing a family, and learning green design. I have marveled at the seed sprouting and the abundance that follows when a community's energy is unified toward a common mission.

As my love and appreciation for God's created world grew, my understanding of its brokenness followed. While I was at Nazareth Farm, I read the Catholic Committee of Appalachia's 1995 Pastoral, *At Home in the Web of Life*, now in its 30th year, which gave me language to express my innate sense of how our faith impels us to a creative and supportive relationship with the other creatures in God's creation. My eyes were opened to the way that environmental destruction often disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable—the very ones to whom Jesus calls us to give special care.

Heralding a main message of *Laudato Si'*, *At Home in the Web of Life* states:

We too do not see the crisis of nature as separate from the crisis of the poor, but see both as a single crisis of community. For the land and the poor people are victims together of the same materialistic consumer society, which promotes the culture of death. It does this by undermining all community, by frequently treating people and the rest of nature as if they were useless waste from the throw-away consumer society.

And so, in creating Bethlehem Farm in 2005, we could not envision being a Christian and Catholic community without being a sustainable community. And "sustainable" is a bare minimum, since wherever

God is, life is abundant, fecund, and procreative, not merely sustainable.

Bethlehem Farm infuses the teaching of sustainable concepts throughout our work while empowering our volunteers and local community to practice sustainability. We compost food scraps and yard clippings, have a composting toilet system, garden organically, conserve electricity and water, heat our water with sunlight, generate our electricity with solar power, drive an EV, and collect rainwater for irrigation, toilets, and laundry. By exploring alternative visions of a sustainable future, we seek to apply the Gospel to our present situation.

The promulgation of *Laudato Si'* 10 years ago was a breath of fresh air, as we felt that the Holy Spirit, through Pope Francis, was confirming and deepening our conviction that the sustainable path was essential to the Christian life.

Laudato Si' gives us some helpful lenses with which to view our common home:

- We are humble stewards who are charged to "serve" and "preserve" this home—we must ask God for permission to move the furniture, much less to set the house on fire.
- Reverence for all life must govern our lifestyle and decisions
- When Christians fully embrace this ecological commitment, the world benefits immensely.
- The ecological crisis requires dialogue and a communal response, transcending boundaries

This perspective challenges the present greed for unlimited growth and consumption. It reminds us that individual and collective actions have consequences, for us and for future generations. It calls for a shift from a mindset of exploitation to a mindset of stewardship, from a culture of waste to a culture of care. It compels us to recognize that true dominion lies not in power over creation, but in responsible and loving service to it.

By living out our faith in a way that honors God's creation, we can contribute to the healing of our planet, where all can flourish, and there is deep joy to be found in such a faith.

Reflection question:

How can my daily choices more closely reflect my role as a steward who "serves" and "preserves" our common home? Can I invite a companion to join me in one simple change this week?