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CATH Capstone Project

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As I was reflecting on the past four years and the reflection questions for the CS Minor, I finally realized the connection between my spirituality, my love of reading, and some social injustices. My faith life is very important to me, and I have always connected with God through nature. This past year has especially focused on understanding my relationship with God in the context of the natural world. When my spiritual director suggested I look into Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, I remembered I had previously done research on him! Not only was he the Jesuit intellectual I chose to focus on during a presentation for CATH 296: *All Things Ignatian*, but he was also the focus of a seminar by a visiting academic that I attended earlier in the year. Something in my brain clicked, and I understood this connection between my intellectual side and my spiritual side. I read about more of his teachings, and I continued to spend ample amounts of time outside. When Loyola announced that classes would be moving online for the remainder of the semester, I had extra time to read and learn about the things I had been putting off. I began to watch more documentaries about the earth and all the processes needed to create a livable planet. Finding ways to act more sustainably has always been important to me, but it wasn't until this past year that it became a more prominent focus in my life. Environmental sustainability is directly connected to my faith life because of the ways I have experienced God through the earth. Similarly, it is also directly connected to my intellectual side as I read about the ways all living things need each other (and ecological systems) to survive. It's amazing! So, I decided to pursue this topic for the Minor project as it seemed to best represent a part of what I have learned about the intersection of the Catholic Intellectual and Artistic tradition. God's Spirit moves throughout the earth and within each of us, and because of that, we are all connected.

I decided to create a photo deck with pictures I had taken of only nature and/or humans interacting within nature. It took quite some time to choose which pictures would make the final cut. After looking through the final pictures, I began thinking about how I wanted to integrate them. Initially, I planned on writing a version of an academic piece. I was going to include a concept or theory from intellectuals such as Teilhard or excerpts from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* and reflect on them. But, the idea of doing that didn't excite me. I let the idea sit for a few days, and like flipping a light switch, I knew what I wanted to do. One of my favorite courses I had ever taken at Loyola was a creative writing class, and it taught me a lot about the intersection between faith, intellect, and reason. I decided that for each picture, I wanted to write some sort of creative writing piece or reflection. When I am in nature, there is an inner dialogue that takes place within myself and with God. I wanted to bring some of this into a written dialogue while also drawing on key concepts and themes from Pope Francis' encyclical and Teilhard de Chardin. For each photo, I closed my eyes and remembered what it was like to be in that place at that moment in time. And I began writing. Because I drew from my own experiences, I purposefully wanted to leave some of the written pieces vague or short. In this way, others can

also interpret the photos in their own ways, whether that be through an inner dialogue or their own memory of some other time and place. Otherwise, if I were writing a longer piece, I would have included explicit rationales behind the presented ideas by incorporating more academic references. My favorite part of this project was interacting with the idea that everything is connected in some capacity, by both visible and invisible forces. This also extends to the reality I encounter in everyday life and the Reality that can't be seen but that I *know* is there. We are interdependent creatures, and this earth in all its complexity, is our home. As St. Francis Assisi, Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, and Pope Francis all point out: We would do well to take care of it.