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Santuario Sisterfarm combines sustainability with justice on the Texas-Mexico borderlands

Rich Heffern | Dec. 2, 2010 Eco Catholic

Eco Catholic will feature ongoing profiles and news about religious communities of women and men around the country that practice and demonstrate Earth-friendly ways and means. Many of these communties are at the forefront in the effort to create new ways of living and doing business utilizing sustainable practices and honoring ecological principles.

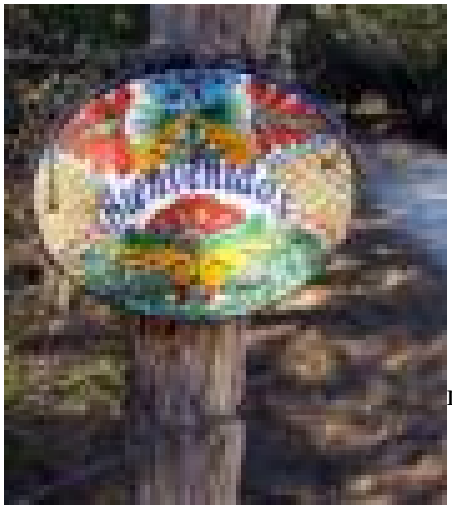
Santuario Sisterfarm is a nonprofit organization founded in 2002 by Dominican Sisters of Adrian and Latinas of the Texas-Mexico Borderlands. Located in the Texas hill country and rooted in the rich multicultural legacy of the Borderlands, Santuario Sisterfarm is dedicated to cultivating biodiversity and cultural diversity ? and living in right relationship with the whole Earth community.

We draw inspiration from Indian physicist and ecologist Vandana Shiva, who writes: ?An intolerance of diversity is the biggest threat to peace in our times; conversely, the cultivation of diversity is the most significant contribution to peace ? peace with nature and between diverse peoples.?

?Cultivation of diversity? is at the heart of Santuario Sisterfarm?s three major projects:

-- **Living Lightly on Earth**: Santuario Sisterfarm has created a small-scale, replicable model of sustainable living on the seven acres in which the organization is located, using Permaculture practices that stress Earth care, people care, and fair share. Always a work in process, the site models a variety of replicable practices including regular and worm composting to increase soil fertility and recycle wastes; organic growing of native, heirloom, and non-genetically modified plants; use of nontoxic and biodegradable household and office products; water conservation through rain catchment, graywater, and other water-saving systems; and energy conservation using geothermal and solar energy, biofoam insulation, and energy-saving devices.

-- **Sor Juana Press**: Santuario Sisterfarm has established a small imprint as an educational arm, in order to publish the works of women?particularly women of color and women religious?on topics related to Earth and spirituality. The press invokes the name and honors the memory of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695), a


musician, and scientist who was silenced for advocating women?s education. Sor Juana Press has published five books in the ?Dominican Women on Earth? series, as well as Drawn by Love: A History of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, and the forthcoming, Maria: Daughter of Immigrants, among other titles.

-- **Latinas in the Borderlands**: Santuario Sisterfarm honors the voice and wisdom of Latina women. Latinas understand in their bodies the inextricable interconnection between ecological and social justice issues. Clean water, poor neighborhoods, energy rate hikes, secrecy in government decision-making and collusion with big business, immigration policy, cuts in education, environmental racism, tax benefits for the rich at the expense of the poor, family violence, health, low-wage jobs. All these and similar issues are interlinked ? and all are part of la lucha that Latina women continue to wage daily, despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles. This ongoing lucha represents an extraordinary dedication to community ? to the whole Earth community ? that is critically needed in our world today. This way of being and seeing things is a gift that Latinas of the Borderlands offer our planet at this pivotal time.

The organization is co-directed by Adrian Dominican Sisters Carol Coston, and Elise D. Garc'a. The founding president of the board of directors is Mar'a Antonietta Berriozábal and Janie Barrera is the founding vice president and treasurer. www.sisterfarm.org [1]
-- Srs. Elise D. Garcia and Carol Coston, OP

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