

PETA's letter to Benedictine Sisters Mary David Walgenbach, Joanne Kollasch, and Lynne Smith follows.

April 28, 2010

Sisters Mary David Walgenbach, Joanne Kollasch, and
Lynne Smith
The Holy Wisdom Monastery

Via e-mail: mwalgenbach@benedictinewomen.org

Dear Sisters of the Holy Wisdom Monastery,

On behalf of PETA and our more than 2 million members and supporters, congratulations on receiving the U.S. Green Building Council's highest-ever rating for a new building. I'm writing to urge you to take another major step toward reducing your monastery's eco-footprint, a step that would also save money, improve the sisters' health, and help animals: Only serve vegan meals in your monastery.

Eating meat and dairy products is devastating for the environment. The United Nations has concluded that raising animals for food is "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global." A major report by the University of Chicago found that adopting a vegan diet has a greater impact in the fight against climate change than switching to a hybrid car. And a German study conducted in 2008 concluded that a meat-eater's diet is responsible for more than seven times as much greenhouse-gas emissions as a vegan's diet is.

In addition to their staggering environmental impact, the meat and dairy industries also cause enormous animal suffering. Chickens and turkeys routinely have their throats cut while they are still conscious, piglets have their tails and testicles cut off without being given any painkillers, fish are suffocated or cut open while still alive on the decks of fishing boats, and terrified calves are torn away from their bellowing mothers just hours after birth. When Pope Benedict XVI (then Cardinal Ratzinger) was asked about the rights of animals in a 2002 interview, he denounced the institutionalized cruelty of factory farming. The Pope had this to say on the topic:

Animals, too, are God's creatures . . . Certainly, a sort of industrial use of creatures, so that geese are fed in such a way as to produce as large a liver as possible, or hens live so packed together that they become just caricatures of birds, this degrading of living creatures to a commodity seems to me in fact to contradict the relationship of mutuality that comes across in the Bible.

Going vegan is the best way to protect God's creation and God's creatures. We would be happy to provide you with free recipes and resources to make this switch.

Yours in Christ's light,

Bruce G. Friedrich
Vice President, Policy