



His Holiness, Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

October 14, 2015

Most Holy Father,

My name is Matthew "Twig" Largess, International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) arborist and "Voice of the Forest." I write to thank Your Holiness for your leadership and passion. You inspire people of all faiths here in the USA at a time when we most need effective and thoughtful action. I call upon you because I need your help.

My life's work is the preservation of the world's forests and trees. I am currently working to save the famous Prouty Garden at Boston Children's Hospital (Children's). In 1956 author and poet Olivia Prouty, mourning the loss of her two daughters, created the Prouty Garden at Children's. She was promised that "the garden would endure as long as there were patients to enjoy it." This world class historic garden, designed by the renowned Olmstead Brothers who helped design and build many of America's National Parks, serves as a unique natural sanctuary for Children's young patients, their families, and the hard-working staff of the hospital. Now, the hospital plans to demolish the garden, erecting a new wing in its place. We, the teams at Largess Forestry, SaveProuty.org, and our supporters respect the hospital's growth and commitment to providing excellent healthcare. Nonetheless, the Prouty Garden is irreplaceable. We need your help to protect it.

As this dispute grows in international attention, the garden embodies our global environmental crisis. At the heart of the Prouty Garden is a giant Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). This rare tree stands as a symbol of hope and resilience to the families at Children's. Believed to have gone extinct over 1.5 million years ago, the species was rediscovered in the remote mountains of China in 1944. Dawn Redwoods, also called Shrine Trees, are fragile survivors of climate change. In the Prouty Garden, the tree represents Mother Earth. For those children receiving months to lifetimes of care at Children's, the Prouty Garden is their primary source of ecological connection and peace. This garden is a holy place where many children enjoy fresh air and take their first miraculous steps toward recovery and happy lives. Some children have taken their last breaths in the shade of this tree. The sacred roots and soil hold the ashes and memories of many children and families.

Pope Francis, the survival of the Prouty Garden captures the core values of your mission to protect children and our environment. By preserving Prouty Garden, we can make a precedent-setting turning point in the environmental crisis. The Prouty Garden is the legacy our children deserve. As Your Holiness stated in the "Laudato si" encyclical and in your recent address to the US Congress: we must "implement a 'culture of care,'" particularly in regard "to those family members who are the most vulnerable, the young." At Children's, the Prouty Garden symbolizes our intrinsic need for healthy natural spaces. This garden is a monument to the love we give and receive from Mother Earth. If the hospital changes course and preserves the garden, it will represent our commitment and prioritization of nature and its indispensable healing powers. Because of the combined history and prominence of the Prouty Garden and Boston Children's Hospital, this high-profile decision will set the course for future stewardship of our planet.

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Pope Francis, will you support us in our effort to save the Prouty Garden? Your public statement in favor of preservation will safeguard this vital place with the permanence the garden was first promised. Through this cause, the Age of Mercy will extend its love and care to the natural world.

Thank you for your great works. Please accept this gift of my book *Treehugger* and further information about Prouty Garden. We eagerly await your reply at largessforestry@gmail.com or Matthew Largess, 221 Shady Lea Road, North Kingstown, Rhode Island 02852, USA. We hear your call to protect “our common home” and urgently request your support.

Forest blessings,

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