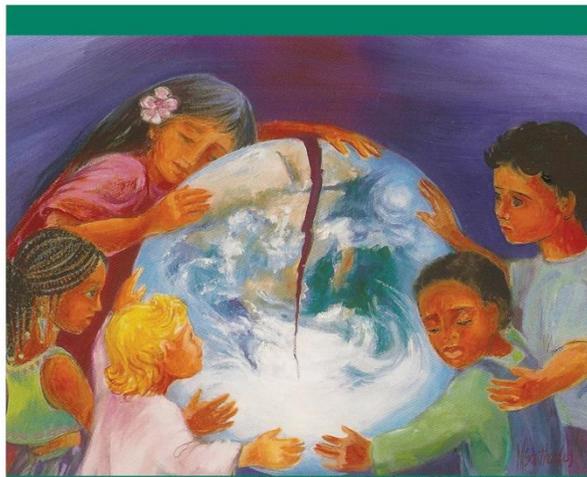




ARCHDIOCESE
of NEWARK



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**PROTECT LIFE.
PRESERVE THAT WHICH
SUSTAINS LIFE.**

**CARE FOR
OUR COMMON HOME.**

POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato Si'*

**“Laudato Si” – On the Care of Our Common Home
Actions for the Archdiocese of Newark, NJ, USA
October 17, 2022**

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Introduction

On Thursday June 18, 2015, Pope Francis released his environmental encyclical, *Laudate Si*, or “*Praised Be*” from the words of St. Francis of Assisi’s *Canticle of Brother Sun*.” In his encyclical, the Holy Father stated that: “*If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith.*”

Shortly after the publication of *Laudato Si*, and while still Archbishop of Indianapolis, Cardinal Tobin wrote that “Fortunately, we Christians believe that God so loved this ruptured world that he sent his only Son to save us from ourselves and from our inhumanity to all creatures. By the power of God’s grace, we are called to restore all creation to its original dignity. Together with all our sisters and brothers (visible and invisible), we are invited to proclaim: “*Laudato Si!*” Praise be to you, Lord!”

Acknowledgements

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We also thank Cardinal J. Wilton Gregory and the writing teams of the Atlanta Archdiocesan and Washington, D.C. *Laudato Si* Action Plans which documents served as a basis for this one. Thanks also to those members of the Environmental Justice Task Force who contributed to this document: Joseph Lavin and Gerald Dalzell (co-chairs), Ann Marie Brennan, Patrick Brennan, Dr. Erin Lothes Bibiano, Jessica Caron, Bruce Segal.

What this document is:

This Action Plan contains a **menu of options** that parishes and parishioners can take to start the difficult spiritual work of reversing the threat of global climate change and environmental degradation, and existing more sustainably in harmony with God's creation. Because there is so much variety and diversity between parishes in terms of human and financial resources, the menu of options presented here are ranked **easy**, **moderate**, and **advanced**. Everyone is encouraged to go as far as they can in implementing *Laudato Si'*. More importantly, all Catholics are urged by Pope Francis to seek the change of heart that is required to make these actions part of their daily lives.

This Action Plan also provides links to other resources that pastoral staff and parishioners can access to learn more and carry out the actions they select. The links consist of web pages where Catholics can drill deeper into each topic, such as finding out how to get an energy audit for your parish or home; calculating your family's carbon footprint; learning about native plants for your parish or home garden, or how to generate support for national policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As *Laudato Si'* observes, the most critical environmental challenge that we face is the threat of global climate change. However, as Pope Francis observes "*avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices,*" are also needed to address our "*responsibility within creation, and [our] duty towards nature and the Creator.*"

Some may fear that the Pope's encyclical is an attack on our economic values and way of life. To the contrary, His Holiness asserts that: "*business is a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world. It can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the areas in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.*" What Pope Francis asks of us is a "*profound interior conversion*" that will come from "*major paths of dialogue*" and lead us toward a future in which "*all people can prosper personally and economically in harmony with the gifts God has given us in nature.*"

Christians are called to "*an ecological conversion whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ becomes evident in their relationship with the world around them.*" Thus, "*living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.*" (*Laudato Si'*, 217).

To see more detail in the action plans outlined below, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has released more extensive suggestions, on the web at <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>. To use this site, as a family, as a parish, or as a school; you will be asked to provide some data about your current energy use. The web site will give you suggestions, but the suggestions will be general.

In this document, you will find occasional references in purple to a more extensive document, [Sustainable Actions for the Archdiocese of Newark](#), annotated SAAN, plus the page number(s).

Goal 1: Response to the Cry of the Earth

Our Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. Actions could include the adoption of renewable energies and energy sufficiency measures, achieving carbon neutrality, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.

As *Laudato Si'* makes clear, it is our sacred duty to preserve the beauty and bounty of our local ecology for generations into the future.

Energy

- Conduct an energy audit (*easy-moderate*) SAAN pgs. 9-11)
- Install solar panels (*advanced*) (SAAN pg.12)
- Install EnergyStar certified efficient appliances (*moderate-advanced*) (SAAN pg.12)
- Use energy-efficient lighting (*easy*) (SAAN pgs. 11-12)
- Use a smart thermostat; set less warm in winter, less cool in summer (*easy*)

Food

- Reduce food waste (*easy*) (SAAN pg. 23)
- Compost (*moderate*) (SAAN pg. 23)
- Shift to more plant-based diets (*easy-moderate*) (SAAN pg. 24)

Water

- Create a water-wise landscape (*advanced*) (SAAN pg. 25)
- Minimize chemical use on lands (*moderate*) (SAAN pg. 27)
- Manage water drainage (*moderate*)
- Fix leaks and use low-flow toilets and faucets (*moderate*) (SAAN pg. 21)

Land

- Plant trees (directly if possible or through donations to organization dedicated to do so) (*moderate*) (SAAN pg. 25)
- Plant for pollinators (*moderate-advanced*) (SAAN pg. 27)
- Reduce lawn size (*advanced*) (SAAN pg. 26)
- Create a wildlife habitat (*moderate-advanced*) (SAAN pg. 27)

Goal 2: Response to the Cry of the Poor/Vulnerable

The **Response to the Cry of the Poor** is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth. Provide where necessary survival needs for the poor and vulnerable.

Water and Sanitation

- Ensure members of the community have access to clean water and sanitation (*advanced*)

Shelter and Clothing

- Ensure members of the community have regular free access to green space (*advanced*)
- Ensure that children are protected from air pollution in places where they play and study (*advanced*)
- Promote adequate public housing (*advanced*)
- Support Catholic Charities with used clothing (*easy-moderate*) (SAAN pg. 16)

Food

- Assist a local food bank (*easy-advanced*) (SAAN pg. 24)
- Support Food stamps and WIC programs (*easy*)

Health Care and other social services

- In solidarity with those affected by failed systems, support programs that address immediate, short-term needs (*moderate*)
- Develop educational events to encourage the defense of human life from conception to natural death (*easy-moderate*)

Elderly, Disable, Handicapped

- Provide aid to our brothers and sister who need assistance (*easy-advanced*)

Goal 3: Support Ecological Economics

Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere – our common home.

Integral Ecology is a concept which refers to an integrated and holistic approach to political, social, economic, and environmental problems. Everything is interconnected. This is a major theme of Laudato Si’.

Circular Economy is a change to the economic model in which resources are mined, made into products, and then become waste. A circular economy reduces material use, redesigns materials, products, and services to be less resource intensive, and recaptures “waste” as a resource to manufacture new materials and products.

- Promote the sharing of goods and services (autos, equipment, etc.) (*easy-advanced*)
- Purchase recycled and sustainable materials (*moderate*) (SAAN pg. 17)
- Use reusable or recyclable materials whenever possible (*easy-moderate*) (SAAN pg. 17)
- Practice the three Rs – Reduce, reuse, recycle. (*easy-moderate*) SAAN pg. 16)

Reduce Use of Fossil Fuels

- Divest from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to people and the planet, or sign the pledge for no future investment (*advanced*)
- Support sustainable energy (wind, solar, tidal, etc.) (*moderate-advanced*)
- Eliminate single-use products where possible (*easy*)

Support Work

- Purchase goods from local craftsperson (*easy-advanced*)
- Support good jobs with livable wages and social benefits (*moderate-advanced*)
- Purchase from local shops and services (*easy-moderate*)
- Patronize farmers markets (*easy-moderate*)

Goal 4: Change to a more Sustainable Lifestyle

Collectively, we Americans indulge in a lifestyle that is consumptive to the point of indulgent. If all 7.7 billion of us on the earth lived like Americans, we would require the resources of five planets the size of the earth!

In *Laudato Si'*, we are called to adopt a prayerful and intentional approach to our purchases, and to be mindful of the toll our choices have on God's creation and the world we live in. *Laudato Si'* calls us to live more simply.

There are many ways to live more simply that foster care for creation. For example, living simply can include buying less goods, purchasing re-usable products to reduce single use plastics, using plant-based home cleaners, consuming more in-season fruits and vegetables, and eating less meat-based meals.

Lifestyle

- Use re-usable water bottles rather than single-use bottles (*easy*) (SAAN pg. 20)
- Reduce purchases of new consumer goods. Repair rather than replace (*moderate*) (SAAN pg. 17)
- Reduce energy use. (*easy-moderate*) (SAAN pg. 8)

Transportation

- Carpool or use public transportation whenever possible (*easy-moderate*) (SAAN pgs. 18-19)
- Consider driving an electric, gas-hybrid, or alternate-fuel car (*advanced*) (SAAN pg. 19)
- Reduce flying by combining trips (*advanced*)
- Be mindful of your carbon footprint (*easy-moderate*) (SAAN pg. 11)

Food

- Adopt one meatless day/week (*easy*) (SAAN pg. 23)
- Eat less meat especially beef (*easy*) (SAAN pg. 23)
- Enjoy a more plant-based diet (*easy-moderate*) (SAAN pg. 24)
Note that daily water consumption from a meat-based diet is about 5000 liters per day, whereas a plant-based diet is only 2700 liters (information from Virtual Water by Prof. Tony Allan)
- Food waste needs to be reduced (currently at 35% in the U.S. and worldwide)

Goal 5: Provide Ecological Education

Ecological education can be integrated into our catechetical programs and liturgical celebrations because our Catholic faith offers a rich array of teachings on the theology of creation, life, and human dignity and our role in fostering the common good. We learn from the Book of Genesis that all of creation is good: “God looked at everything he had made and found it very good” (Gen 1:31). We also hear sung in the Psalms that “The Earth is the Lord’s” (Psalm 24). As stewards of God’s creation, we are called to care for creation in loving and sustainable ways. Earth is our shared home, and its goods belong to all people and for all to use.

The witness of the saints shows us holiness is tied to caring for God’s creation. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Hildegard of Bingen are known for their devotion to creation and seeing God’s sanctity in all of creation. Francis and Hildegard encouraged a contemplative and sacramental view of creation and lived lives imbued with the virtues of temperance and prudence. These virtues are needed today as we work for environmental efforts that preserve God’s creation.

- Regularly highlight Laudato Si' themes in your internal communications channels (*easy*) (SAAN pg. 6)
- Encourage community members to complete a Laudato Si' Plan or use another planning tool (*easy-moderate*)
- Ensure frequently under-represented groups have access to education (*moderate*)
- Ensure a wide variety of people shape the vision and implementation of education programs (*moderate*)
- Ensure that education includes promotion of human rights and dignity (*easy*)
- Develop and implement a Laudato Si' education plan (*moderate*)
- Create ways for educators to connect with nature and to undergo ecological conversions (*easy-moderate*)
- Create opportunities for youth-led Laudato Si' initiatives (*moderate*) (SAAN pg. 31)

Goal 6: Practice Ecological Spirituality (SAAN pg. 6)

Pope Francis reminds us that spirituality rooted in creation is Christ centered, and this Christological approach compels us to be in relationship with others. This Christ-centered approach challenges us to change our personal behaviors and to seek to change society for the better. Guided by Catholic social teaching, Catholics have historically engaged in collective and individual advocacy work across a range of issues for the common good. *Laudato Si'* has been “added to the body of the Church’s social teaching,” (LS 15).

Catholics are called to be advocates for our common home, Earth. We are called to advocate for the people who are most directly affected by climate issues, namely the poor. Pope Francis wrote, “the gravest of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest,” (LS 48). Thus, we are called to be prophetic and persistent advocates at the local, state, and national levels of government.

Two organizations which address environmental concerns through our Catholic faith are the Laudato Si' Movement (www.laudatosi.org) and the D.C, based Catholic Climate Covenant (<https://catholicclimatecovenant.org>). Both are excellent sources of materials to help you stay focused. You are not alone!

- Publicly pray during the Season of Creation (*easy*)
- Develop a Season of Creation spiritual practice and observe it each year (*easy-moderate*)
- Speak about Laudato Si' within the community (*easy*)
- Make Laudato Si' study and prayer guides available (*easy-moderate*)
- Bless a natural space as a reflection or meditation area and regularly pray outdoors (*moderate*)
- Regularly host outdoor prayer services (*easy-moderate*)
- Create a prayer journal, bulletin board, or other way of recording and sharing prayers made in nature (*easy-moderate*)
- Visit another faith community to discuss your social and ecological initiatives (*easy-moderate*)

Goal 7: Participate in Community Involvement and Participatory Action (SAAN pg. 33)

In 1789, Thomas Jefferson stated that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, the people, when well informed, may be relied on to set them right. As a result of citizen action, the U.S. Congress has enacted some of the most comprehensive environmental legislation in the world to clean up our air, water, and land. New environmental challenges face us. Climate change and overconsumption of natural resources are taxing the earth's capacity to provide prosperity and security for future generations. Pope Francis states, "*political institutions and various other social groups are entrusted with helping to raise people's awareness. So too is the church.*" The Creation Care Teams should stay informed on these critical environmental issues and develop a menu of options for getting parishioners engaged in moving society to address them. According to a 2019 Reuters poll, nearly 70% of Americans want the government to take action to combat climate change, and a majority want to transition to 100% clean energy within a decade. While this Action Plan has many individual actions people can take to reduce their environmental footprint, it also critically important for people to let our elected officials know we care about "*our common home.*"

- Develop a community coalition to prepare for and respond to emergent social crises (*moderate*)
- Identify a social/environmental policy focus (*moderate*)
- Organize private meetings with officials to discuss advocacy issues (*moderate-advanced*)
- Maintain a regular review of local, regional, or national policies and share updates with the community; use this to inform engagement with decision-makers (*moderate*)
- Become informed about environmental issues (*easy-moderate*)
- Make public statements about advocacy issues (*easy-moderate*)
- Organize ecological events (*easy-moderate*)
- Regularly explore the local ecosystem as a group (*moderate*)
- Promote integral ecology in public communications channels (*moderate*)
- Develop a coalition with other groups and approach decision-makers in a united way (*moderate*)