

A Jesuit Response to *Laudato Si'*

A Survey of Parishes in the Maryland & USA Northeast Jesuit Provinces

on

Parish-Sponsored Pastoral Initiatives, Education Programs, Arts Initiatives, Activities and Collaborations Inspired by *Laudato Si'*

September 2016



Colorful strips of paper containing students' handwritten commitments to protect the environment form an "Earth Ball" at St. Ignatius Church, Boston.

Prepared by:

Kate Tromble, Holy Trinity Parish

Fran Dubrowski, Director, and Farley Lord Smith, Outreach Advisor, Honoring the Future®

Suzanne Noonan, Volunteer, Honoring the Future® & Holy Trinity parish

With guidance and support from:

Fr. Edward Quinnan, SJ, Assistant for Pastoral Ministries, and Nicholas Napolitano, Assistant for Social Ministries, Maryland and USA Northeast Jesuit Provinces

Introduction

In response to Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si': On the Care of Our Common Home*, many parishes have actively discerned ways to respond to climate change and engaged in a variety of climate justice activities in their communities.

The Maryland and USA Northeast Provinces invited Jesuit parishes to share their activities, actions, and resources in order to inform and inspire others. In partnership with Honoring the Future®, a nonprofit project which harnesses the power of art to educate, empower, and engage the public on climate change, the Provinces then compiled the parishes' responses in this report.

This report organizes parish responses into five main categories: Pastoral Initiatives, Education Programs, Arts Initiatives, Activities and Collaborations. This report also provides recommended resources from national Catholic and nonprofit organizations. We hope to inspire all parishes to respond to *Laudato Si'* in their own unique way, offering these tangible examples and extensive resources as a starting point.

Pastoral Initiatives

- Homilies or homily series
- Prayers of the Faithful, weekly Intercessions
- Reciting the Prayer for Our Earth or Christian Prayer in Union With Creation, both from *Laudato Si'*
- Suggestions for weekly or daily prayer:
 - For the urgent solution of the climate change crisis.
 - For the grace to grow in virtue, which helps us be better stewards of creation.
 - For easing the suffering of the poor and those affected by disease and severe weather.
 - For the Church, that it may use its prophetic voice to help solve the environmental problems we face. (From GCCM) – St. Francis Xavier
- Liturgical calendar-linked initiatives, especially during Advent and Lent:
 - o Good Friday reflection
 - o No Meat Fridays during Lent (because meat production is a major contributor to methane and CO2 emissions globally) – St. Francis Xavier
 - o Be the Change: Climate Commitments for Lent – advice and tips on how to reduce our carbon footprint – St. Francis Xavier
 - o Purchasing sustainably grown palms for Palm Sunday and Easter Season – St. Ignatius, Boston
 - o Advent Series: Following the Pope's Promptings to Care for Our Common Home

- Parish Bulletin spiritual articles, essays and announcements on *Laudato Si'* - multiple parishes including, e.g., St. Francis Xavier, Holy Trinity, St. Therese, Our Lady of Hope
- Incorporating ecology and global warming themes in the Spiritual Exercises for parishioners – St. Peter's
- Incorporating *Laudato Si'* in the Faith Formation program – St. Ignatius, Boston
- Mimesis, a 6-week set of homilies and bulletin articles exploring “acquisitiveness” by individuals, groups, and the world – Sts. Mary and Joseph
- A banner in church (below) calling attention to the theme of a homily series – Sts. Mary and Joseph



- Webpage links to the encyclical, installments of the encyclical, and spiritual reflections on *Laudato Si'*
- Social media – retweeting relevant posts from @Pontifex, Pope Francis' Twitter feed

Education Programs

Multi-part educational lecture series. Examples of sessions:

- Introduction to *Laudato Si'* and creation care
- Reflections on *Laudato Si'* by:
 - o Jesuit scholars (e.g., James Martin, SJ, Tom Reese, SJ)
 - o Environmental and climate justice leaders – St. Francis Xavier
- A four part workshop on Eco-Spirituality, exploring the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Synthesis Report and the Psalms, Genesis, Romans 8:20-22, Irenaeus of Lyon, Origen, Augustine, Benedict, Hildegard of Bingen, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas and Pope Francis. Dr. Catherine Wright also presented “For Earth’s Sake: Re-Awakening to Creation Theology” as part of the G.I.F.T. (Growing in Faith and Theology) program sponsored by 5 local parishes – St. Peter’s
- Climate SmART: Honoring Our Children’s Future Through Faith, Art & Action. A panel program featuring artists whose work addresses climate change and a “Meet the Artists” reception, sponsored by Honoring the Future®, as an introduction to discerning how Pope Francis’ encyclical on climate change might change our lives – Holy Trinity
- Defending Mother Earth and All Her Children -- Fr. Tom Reese, SJ explored Pope Francis’ stance on environmental degradation and global warming issues that will confront humanity for the rest of this century – Holy Trinity
- Environmental Justice Program-- explored how the encyclical calls Catholics to a deeper respect for God’s creation and what the practical impacts might be on how we, as individuals and a Catholic community, live out our faith. Highlighted how parish activities can deal with environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor. (Cecilia Calvo, Environmental Justice Program, USCCB) – Holy Trinity
- What can we, as individuals and families, do to address climate change and care for God’s Earth? (Dan Misleh, Founder and Executive Director, Catholic Climate Covenant) – Holy Trinity
- “The Cry of the Earth,” a partnership between neighboring parishes for a series of talks by nationally known speakers, followed by audience Q & A, to explore issues of climate change

and the role a Catholic voice can play in the scientific climate change debate – St. Ignatius, Baltimore

- “Is God’s Charity Broad Enough for Bears?” With Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, exploring how loving the Earth can become an intrinsic part of faith rather than another add-on to things we do – St. Francis Xavier
- Workshops on the call for change in everyday life – St. Francis Xavier. Based on the Scriptures, the Pope’s teaching, and social and economic data, sessions explored several themes and priorities that Pope Francis is addressing:
 - Encountering Pope Francis
 - What Is Happening to Our Common Home?
 - Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis
 - Integral Ecology
 - Lines of Approach and Action
 - Ecological Education and Spirituality

Discussion programs:

- Bible Study exploring the theme of “The Bible and The Earth” – St. Francis Xavier
- Book Clubs (e.g., Young Adult Community, General Parish) and discussion groups

Workshops:

- Home energy efficiency – St. Ignatius, Baltimore; Holy Trinity
- Introduction to gardening for novice gardeners – Holy Trinity

Parish Bulletin educational articles. Example themes:

- Foundations for the Pope’s environmental encyclical in Catholic teaching – Holy Trinity
- Promoting energy conservation programs of area power companies – St. Alphonsus Rodriguez
- On the ethics of technology – St. Therese
- Reminders of actions we can take to reduce emissions, water use, and waste - St. Alphonsus Rodriguez
- Climate Corner: a weekly series of challenges from *Laudato Si’*

Webpage: posting online resources

Arts Initiatives

- An “Earth Ball” display: On colorful pieces of paper, Faith Formation students wrote ways they were committed to protecting the environment. The strips were gathered to create a beautiful “earth ball.” - St. Ignatius, Boston
- Composed a song (“*Laudato Si’*, Praise Be”) for Boston College’s four-day “Our Common Home” conference on the encyclical. The song, by then-pastor Fr. Bob VerEecke, SJ and Assistant to the Pastor Paul Melley, was featured before Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson’s lecture to mark the beginning of the conference – St. Ignatius, Boston
- (Scheduled) *Sun Come Up*: Film and discussion focused on the impact of climate change on communities – Holy Trinity
- (Planned) Climate Art and Action: Art exhibition in Parish Center sponsored by Honoring the Future® will feature photographs of art from 10 artists whose work collectively develops a narrative theme from melting glaciers to rising seas and highlights practical solutions to climate change – Holy Trinity
- (Planned) Parish schoolchildren will create tiles for the national digital Climate Art Mosaic sponsored by Honoring the Future®: www.honoringthefuture.org/mosaic. The tiles express what students want to tell the world about climate change – Holy Trinity
- See also: Climate SmART: Honoring Our Children’s Future Through Faith, Art & Action panel program (Education programs, above) and banner to illustrate the homily (Pastoral Initiatives, above).

Activities

Reconnecting with nature:

- Garden Challenge; invitation to parishioners to begin a garden – Holy Trinity
- Garden for the homeless: homeless men who participate in parish outreach programs manage a garden, with support from parishioners, that feeds 60-70 people in need of food – Old St. Joseph’s Church



A third grader won Holy Trinity parish's gardening challenge, designed to encourage urban residents to reconnect with nature.

In-Parish activities:

- Parish “Pope Watch” of Pope Francis’ Address to Congress – Holy Trinity
- Lenten Simple Supper program focused on the theme of food waste – Holy Trinity
- Pope Francis Christmas Book Sale: Discounted copies of “*Laudato Si’* - On Care for Our Common Home” encouraged as Christmas gifts for family and friends – St. Francis Xavier
- “Take Back the Tap”: Installation and blessing of parish’s new environmentally friendly water fountains, which filter water and accommodate reusable water bottles, accompanied by sale of reusable bottles – St. Francis Xavier
- Energy efficient renovations, including motion sensors on interior lights and light sensors on exterior lamps – St. Ignatius, Boston; St. Aedans
- Recycling programs for paper, clothing, books (to create a lending library for a low-income neighborhood), and furniture (to furnish apartments for the formerly homeless) – St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, St. Peter’s
- Shifting to using recyclable products and compostable plates and cups at events as much as possible – St. Ignatius, Boston; St. Alphonsus Rodriguez
- Ordering sustainable coffee from Equal Exchange, a fair trade/sustainable company, instead of catering supplied coffee – St. Ignatius, Boston
- Plan to establish a Green Team to explore other actions parish can take to reduce waste, save energy, advocate for environmental legislation, and otherwise support care of Creation – St. Ignatius, Baltimore

Activities outside the parish:

- Sponsored parish group attendance at Rock Creek Park’s “Exploring the Night Sky” program – Holy Trinity
- Sponsored parish group attendance at Botanical Gardens Holiday Concert – Holy Trinity
- Cleaning up a local creek as part of Teen Summer Service Week – St. Peter’s

Advocacy:

- Parishioners signed postcards to be presented to state legislators in support of legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – St. Ignatius, Baltimore
- Visit to Senator’s office to advocate for social and environmental issues – St. Francis Xavier

- Global Catholic Climate Movement Petition Drive: Collected signatures before and after Mass encouraging people to sign a petition, endorsed by Pope Francis and signed by a number of cardinals and bishops, urging world leaders to tackle climate change at the COP21 international climate conference in Paris. – St. Francis Xavier, Holy Trinity
- Gathered signatures on Honoring the Future® letter welcoming Pope Francis to the U.S., thanking him for his leadership on climate change, and pledging signers to listen to his climate message with “open minds, generous hearts, and a willingness to act.” - Holy Trinity

Collaborations

- With neighboring or cluster parishes
- With archdiocesan team to develop a denominational response to creation care
- With interfaith organizations, like Interfaith Power & Light
- With Catholic (or non-Catholic) academic institutions
- With non-profit climate education organizations like Honoring the Future®, www.honoringthefuture.org

Recommended Resources:

Laudato Si': http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:
<http://usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/index.cfm>

From USA Northeast Province: www.jesuitseast.org/care-for-creation

From Xavier University:
<http://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/news-events/Ecology-and-Sustainability.cfm>

From the Franciscan Action Network:
<https://franciscanaction.org/article/laudato-si-praised-be-resources>

From the Sisters of Mercy: <http://www.sistersofmercy.org/resources/social-justice-advocacy/our-initiatives/papal-encyclical/>

From Honoring the Future®: <http://www.honoringthefuture.org>

From Catholic Relief Services: <http://education.crs.org/issues/climate-change>

From the Catholic Climate Covenant: <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/>

Parishes Participating in this Survey:

Holy Trinity, Washington, DC: <http://trinity.org/>

Old St. Joseph's Church, Philadelphia, PA: www.OLDStJoseph.org

Our Lady of Hope, Portland, ME: <http://www.stpiusx-parish.org/>

St. Aedans, Jersey City, NJ: <http://staedans.org/>

St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, Woodstock, MD: <http://www.stalchurch.org/>

St. Francis Xavier, New York City: <http://sfxavier.org/>

St. Ignatius, Baltimore: <http://st-ignatius.net/>

St. Ignatius, Boston: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/prs/stign/

Sts. Mary and Joseph, Salem, NH: <http://saintsmariandjoseph.org/>

St. Peter's, Charlotte, NC: <http://www.stpeterscatholic.org/>

St. Therese, Mooresville, NC: <http://sainttherese.net/>