

LAUDATO SI'

Embarking On A Seven-Year Journey
Promoting An Integral Ecology in
The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington



The Roman Catholic
Archdiocese of
Washington

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COVER: St. Francis International School students form a circle around the garden they planted in Oct. 2018 as a part of the environmental science curriculum.



On May 25, 2021 at St. Matthew's Cathedral, Washington Cardinal Gregory blessed boxes containing seeds that will be distributed to all parishes to plant on church property, as part of an upcoming archdiocesan action plan to respond to Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* encyclical on caring for the environment.



Opening Letter from **WILTON CARDINAL GREGORY** *Archbishop of Washington*

I want to thank the members of the Archdiocesan Care for Creation Committee for their attentiveness and diligent work in preparing this Action Plan for *Laudato Si* during this special 5th anniversary year of this great encyclical. I am so very pleased that the Archdiocese of Washington is launching this Action Plan at the conclusion of this anniversary year in honor of our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

This Action Plan is for all of us! We are all called to protect our common home according to our ability and means. This Action Plan contains small and big ways for us to exercise stewardship over God's creation. I invite each of you to study this Action Plan and be challenged to protect and restore our fragile Earth and our natural resources.

Pope Francis calls us to a "...new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation, which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. We require a new and universal solidarity. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents" (LS 14). Join Pope Francis and me in a new dialogue on Care for Creation for future generations in our archdiocese so that they too can enjoy the natural beauty and splendor of the Chesapeake Bay, Cherry Blossoms and Potomac River.

I know this Action Plan will ensure that the Archdiocese of Washington will be a national leader in implementing *Laudato Si*. I hope that each of you will find ways to implement *Laudato Si* in your home, parish, school, and local community. Join me in renewing our commitment to our planet, our community and to each other by taking concrete steps found in this Action Plan to preserve and protect our common home!

St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Wilton Card. Gregory".





Did you know that the title of this encyclical comes from the first line of St. Francis' Canticle of the Creatures? Pray St. Francis' Canticle here: <http://www.shrinesf.org/franciscan-prayer.html>



A statue of St. Francis at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Largo.

Introduction

In 2015, Pope Francis released the seminal encyclical on the environment called *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*¹. *Laudato Si'* is an open invitation to all people everywhere to care for the Earth as our common home created by God. In this encyclical, the Holy Father writes about the vital connection and dependency we have with each other and the Earth. Pope Francis teaches that because we are God's creation, we are connected locally, nationally, and internationally with each other and with the environment.

Laudato Si' is the Church's first encyclical on care for creation and the environment, and in *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis examines several themes connected to the environment. One of the first themes Pope Francis calls for in *Laudato Si'* is an "integral ecology." An integral ecology calls for "...an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" (LS 139). An integral ecology means that in combating poverty, we are also protecting the environment and vice versa. A local example of integral ecology at work are the efforts of protecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed to ensure that blue crabs continue to thrive by lowering pollution while also ensuring that fisherman and crabbers whose livelihoods depend on blue crabs are able to continue their work while making a living wage.

Another major theme of *Laudato Si'* is Pope Francis' call to protect the environment for future generations. He poignantly asks, "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (LS 160). Catholic youth are not only leading the way for sustainability, but they are at the forefront of leadership, conversations and civic actions aimed at creating a society more attuned to environmental and racial justice. Pope Francis sums up their passion across the full range of social and environmental issues in *Laudato Si'*; "Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded" (LS 13). Young people today are calling on adults to act and advocate on behalf of the environment, and to help them protect the Earth for future generations.

Additionally in *Laudato Si'* is Pope Francis's call for conversion. Our Catholic faith calls each of us to conversion to turn away from sin and towards Jesus Christ! The Holy Father calls us to an ecological conversion to realize the profound impact of global environmental degradation and to transform our lifestyles and choices so that in our daily choices we place the poor and suffering first while protecting the environment.

In the 5 years since *Laudato Si'* publication many dioceses, parishes, schools, religious communities and families have embraced the call of integral ecology so that the Earth is protected for future generations. However, much work is still needed! For the 5th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, the Holy See's Dicastery (Office) for Promoting Integral Human Development created a special anniversary year from May 24, 2020 to May 24, 2021 to promote a wider understanding and implementation of *Laudato Si'*.

In honor of this special anniversary year, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington is releasing this *Laudato Si'* Action Plan! The Archdiocese of Washington embraces the call of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* to work toward an integral ecology that is reflected in our personal lives and in the life of our parishes and Catholic schools.

¹ Francis, encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (May 24, 2015) http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html#_ftn1





At right, the Washington, D.C. skyline. Below, a farm in Southern Maryland.



Laudato Si': A Call to Embrace Faith and Science

Faith and science are complementary, not in opposition to one another. We know from our Catholic faith that God created the world and that His creation is beautiful and something we are called to protect. We also know that science tells us that the Earth is facing ecological challenges never seen before.

The Earth's climate is changing faster than at any point in the history of modern civilization. This change is primarily the result of human activity. Since the late 19th century, humans have released an increasing amount of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels (such as coal, oil, and natural gas) and, to a lesser extent, deforestation and land-use change. These activities have caused the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide to increase by about 40 percent since the 19th century.² Carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases absorb and reflect back to the Earth heat that would otherwise be lost to outer space. As a result, the last decade (2010-2019) was the hottest decade globally since reliable temperature records began recording 140 years ago.³ The last seven years (2014-2020) are the seven hottest years on record.⁴

² Jay, Alexa, et al. "Overview." *Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, II*, U.S. Global Change Research Program, 2018, p. 39.

³ Cole, Steve and Peter Jacobs, "NASA, NOAA Analyses Reveal 2019 Second Warmest Year on Record," National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2020, Accessible at <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-noaa-analyses-reveal-2019-second-warmest-year-on-record>.

⁴ Greene, Tylar and Peter Jacobs, "2020 Tied for Warmest Year on Record, NASA Analysis Shows," National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2021, Accessible at: <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/2020-tied-for-warmest-year-on-record-nasa-analysis-shows>.





We are already seeing the effects of climate change across the United States and in our region. For example, the Chesapeake Bay watershed is experiencing stronger and more frequent storms, an increase in heavy precipitation events, higher bay water temperatures, and a rise in sea level. These effects are leading to increased flooding following intense rainfalls in urban streams and along the undeveloped coastline.⁵ Increased storms, loss of salt marshes from sea-level rise, and degradation (from higher summer water temperatures) of eelgrass habitat and other submerged vegetation that sustains juvenile blue crabs may also directly impact the crabbing harvest, which has provided for families and people on the shores of Maryland for generations.⁶

Increases in high-temperature extremes are directly threatening human health in the summer. Earlier spring arrival, warmer temperatures, and other climate changes increase health risks such as exposure to airborne pollen allergens. The frequency and severity of allergic illnesses—including asthma and hay fever—are expected to increase.⁷

Human-caused climate change is damaging our communities—locally, nationally, and globally. Pope Francis states, “Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political, and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” (LS 25).

Laudato Si' calls us as people of faith to embrace environmental science and the science of climate change to protect and preserve the environment for future generations because the Earth is God's wondrous creation and gift to humanity.



The Brick Chapel at St. Mary's City, one of the founding places of the Catholic Church in the United States.

⁵ Dupigny-Giroux, Lesley-Ann, et al. “Northeast.” *Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment*, II, U.S. Global Change Research Program, 2018, pp. 677, 705.

⁶ Hines, Anson et al. *Predicting Effects of Climate Change on Blue Crabs in Chesapeake Bay*. In: Kruse, GH, et al. (eds.) *Biology and Management of Exploited Crab Populations Under Climate Change*, 2011, p. 122. Alaska Sea Grant College Program, Fairbanks. Accessible at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258236264_Predicting_Effects_of_Climate_Change_on_Blue_Crabs_in_Chesapeake_Bay.

⁷ Jay, Alexa, et al. “Overview.” *Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment*, II, U.S. Global Change Research Program, 2018, p. 56.





The planting of cherry trees in Washington, D.C. originated in 1912 as a gift of friendship to the People of the United States from the People of Japan.



Fifth Year Anniversary of *Laudato Si'*

For the 5th anniversary of *Laudato Si'* the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development created a special document to help individuals and communities better implement the teachings of *Laudato Si'*.⁸ Released on May 24, 2020, the Dicastery's, *Laudato Si' Special Anniversary Year* document calls for individuals and communities to embark on a seven-year journey of implementing the teachings of *Laudato Si'*.

To help individuals and communities become more sustainable, the Dicastery names seven markers that help to measure the implementation of *Laudato Si'*.⁹ These markers will be used in this Action Plan as a way to promote integral ecology in the Archdiocese of Washington's efforts to implement *Laudato Si'*. Before we apply these markers to the Archdiocese's efforts, it is helpful to examine how the Dicastery describes them:

1. **Response to the *Cry of the Earth*:** greater use of clean renewable energy and reduction of fossil fuels in order to achieve carbon neutrality efforts to protect and promote biodiversity guaranteeing access to clean water for all, etc.
2. **Response to the *Cry of the Poor*:** defense of human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, migrant children at risk through slavery, etc.

⁸ Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, *Laudato Si' Special Anniversary Year* <https://www.humandevlopment.va/content/dam/sviluppoumano/documenti/LAUDATO%20SI'%20Special%20Anniversary%20Year%20Plans.pdf>

⁹ *Ibid*, 4.





3. **Ecological Economics:** sustainable production, Fair-trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any economic activity harmful to the planet and the people, investment in renewable energy, etc.
4. **Adoption of Simple Lifestyle:** sobriety [intense focus] in the use of resources and energy, avoid single-use plastic, adopt a more plant-based diet and reduce meat consumption, greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation, etc.
5. **Ecological Education:** re-think and re-design educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirit of *integral ecology* to create ecological awareness and action, promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education, etc.
6. **Ecological Spirituality:** recover a religious vision of God's creation, encourage greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy, and gratitude, promote creation-centered liturgical celebrations, develop catechesis prayer, retreats, formation, etc.
7. **Emphasis on Community Involvement and Participatory Action:** to care for creation at the local, regional, national and international levels (promote advocacy and people's campaigns, encourage rootedness in local territory and neighborhood ecosystems, etc.)¹⁰

The Archdiocese of Washington Responds to *Laudato Si'*: An Action Plan for Embracing the Vision of an Integral Ecology

The Archdiocese of Washington is proud to join the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in a journey of sustainability and integral ecology according to the teachings of *Laudato Si'*!

The Archdiocese of Washington is using an integrated method in this Action Plan to implement the teachings of *Laudato Si'*. Implementing *Laudato Si'* cannot happen in a "green silo." The task of implementing *Laudato Si'* is also not the work of an academic committee. Nor are environmental efforts divorced from the teachings of the Church. Rather *Laudato Si'*'s vision of integral ecology calls for environmental efforts to be rooted in the teachings of our Church. Furthermore, environmental efforts must not only seek to preserve and protect our Earth but also seek to eliminate poverty and lift up individuals and communities who are on the peripheries of our society. Finally, integral ecology calls for individuals to do their part in environmental efforts, and for communities to work together to protect the environment. Let us work together to implement and fully live the vision of *Laudato Si'*.

The remainder of this Action Plan will focus on how the Dicastery's seven markers, identified above, can be implemented in the archdiocese through our archdiocesan offices, parishes, schools and our families. Each section of the Action Plan is divided by a marker and will contain several options that parishes, schools, families and others can begin to implement in order to become better stewards of God's creation, help reverse climate change, and work towards sustainability as proclaimed in *Laudato Si'*.

The Archdiocese of Washington is blessed with a rich diversity of parishes and schools in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Given our wonderful diversity of parishes and people, this action plan lists options according to an easy, moderate and advanced scale so that according to your parish, school or family's financial and human resources, you can find ways to implement *Laudato Si'*.



Pope Francis watches as children release doves from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Jan. 26, 2014. The two young people at his side launched doves to highlight the church's call for peace in the world. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

¹⁰ Ibid, 4.





"I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.... We require a new and universal solidarity."

(LS 14).



In 2019, workers installed more than 5,000 solar panels on Catholic Charities property in Northeast Washington, D.C. The solar array, the largest such project in the District of Columbia, was fully operational by the end of January 2020.

MARKER 1: Response to the Cry of the Earth

In Washington, D.C., and Maryland, nearly two-thirds of our electricity¹¹ comes from the burning of two fossil fuels—coal and natural gas. By generating cleaner electricity without carbon dioxide emissions and by reducing electrical use, we can reduce harmful emissions. The Archdiocese has already taken significant steps to purchase and produce clean energy.

- In May 2020, the number of parishes and parish schools in the Archdiocese buying their electricity from clean wind-power generators went from two to ninety-one.
- In 2020, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington switched on the largest ground-based solar array in the District of Columbia, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars each year on electric costs. These savings allow Catholic Charities to carry out its mission.

¹¹ PEPCO, "Environmental Fuel Source Information" (DC), June 2020, https://www.pepco.com/MyAccount/MyBillUsage/Documents/Pepeco%20DC%20Enviro%20Fuel%20Mix%20Insert_5.20_ADAComp.pdf; PEPCO, "Maryland Environmental Fuel Source Information," June 2020, https://www.pepco.com/MyAccount/MyBillUsage/Documents/Pepeco%20MD%20Enviro%20Fuel%20Mix%20Insert_5.20_ADAComp.pdf.





Possible actions for individuals, families, parishes and schools:

- Seal or caulk around windows and door frames (easy)
- Turn off light sources when not needed (easy)
- Adjust temperatures to 70 degrees or lower in winter and 80 degrees or higher in summer (easy)
- Open windows and use fans for cooling (easy)
- Lower water consumption
 - Reduce indoor water consumption (easy)
 - Look to EPA's WaterSense program for help (moderate)
 - Repair leaks quickly (moderate)
 - Retrofit kitchens and bathrooms by installing low-flow sinks and toilets (advanced)
 - Reduce outdoor water consumption (moderate to advanced)
- Connect to free resources and expertise like:
 - EPA ENERGY STAR® program (easy)
 - Establish energy baselines (moderate)
- Develop a facilities plan for your parish or school and action steps to reduce emissions (moderate)
- Replace all lightbulbs with LED bulbs (moderate)
- Purchase power strips to turn off electronics when not in use (moderate)
- Purchase a programmable thermostat to reduce heat or cooling when not in use (moderate)
- Protect watersheds and wildlife (moderate)
 - Increase tree canopy (easy)
 - Eliminate chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and deicers (easy)
 - Create/build gardens (easy)
 - Introduce storm water pollution reduction methods (easy to moderate)
 - Reduce turf grass (easy to moderate)
 - Plant pollinator plants and conservation landscaping (easy to moderate)
 - Compost at home (easy to moderate)
 - Begin a parish or school composting program (easy to moderate)
- Install shades or heat-shielding film on windows directly exposed to sun and pull drapes at night to keep in the heat (moderate to advanced)
- Install solar panels on property (moderate to advanced)
- Install timers or motion sensors on outdoor lighting (advanced)
- Utilize EPA's ENERGY STAR ratings when replacing or buying new appliances (advanced)



In October 2017, volunteers plant trees at Mount Olivet Cemetery, the largest Catholic cemetery in the District of Columbia.





“The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.”
(LS 48).



Parishioners from Shrine of the Sacred Heart serve dinner to those in need.

MARKER 2: Response to Cry of Those Who Are Poor/Vulnerable

- Listening to *‘the cry of those who are poor or vulnerable’* means actively engaging all members of the Archdiocese of Washington in implementing *Laudato Si’*. This engagement means actively ensuring all communities; especially our cultural communities are consulted, listened to, and empowered to make decisions on environmental issues that affect them. Persons of all income levels including low-to-moderate income, the elderly, children, immigrants, people with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, racial and ethnic minorities, and indigenous people must be included in discussions and decisions related to their communities. There are people in the Archdiocese of Washington who are suffering from the effects of structural racism and from political, social, and economic negligence,¹² and who are disproportionately affected by climate change.
- The lack of environmental and racial justice is of great concern to our Church. In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis points to the global dimensions of the issue of environmental and racial justice, and how these issues are interconnected. Excessive consumption, extraction of Earth’s natural resources, and the culture of waste in affluent countries, has led to dire consequences for the most vulnerable countries of the world and has had a negative impact upon the health of people living in vulnerable countries. Many vulnerable countries have experienced

¹² Learn more about the Archdiocese of Washington’s response to racism and its connection to environmental degradation and environmental racism by reading about this work on our website at www.adw.org. Learn how you can participate in breaking apart these systems.





Joining a June 8, 2020 prayerful protest near the White House against racial injustice and police brutality are, far left, Washington Auxiliary Bishop Mario Dorsonville, and at right, Washington Auxiliary Bishop Roy Campbell Jr., the president of the National Black Catholic Congress.

environmental consequences due to climate-change such as: rising temperatures, rising sea levels, intense flooding, severe drought, and dangerous fires. These consequences have resulted in water scarcity, devastated many farming communities, and people forced to flee their countries for better lives as climate refugees. Such climate refugees (e.g. from Central America and Africa) can be found in our communities, and some of them encounter discrimination in the archdiocese and this country.

- The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted additional injustices, as people of color¹³ were more likely to work in jobs that put them at risk along the food supply chain, in hard-hit meatpacking and food processing plants, and in grocery stores. People of color also were more likely to lose their jobs and become food insecure due to their disproportionate representation in sectors of the economy that could not be shifted to working from home during the pandemic's shutdowns.
- As we work towards environmental justice, we must also work towards ensuring racial justice. We must be mindful of the Church's teachings that God created the Earth, and all people are made in God's image and likeness and therefore, deserve to be treated with dignity.

Possible actions for individuals, families, parishes and schools:

- Create or expand parish and school libraries to feature a variety of voices and experiences on the impact of watershed pollution on low-income communities (easy)
- Explore local ecological educational opportunities in your community to learn about environmental justice (e.g. Tour [Blue Plains](#) in Washington, D.C., the largest advanced wastewater plant in the world; [Chesapeake Bay Foundation Educational Tours](#).) (easy)
- Volunteer to do a parish clean-up (easy)
 - ▶ Assist vulnerable persons (easy to advanced)
 - ▶ Know your neighbors, develop relationships with one another (easy)
 - ▶ Run errands for those who need assistance in your neighborhood (easy)
 - ▶ Develop awareness of programs that can assist vulnerable persons (easy)
 - ▶ Support local charity programs to help and assist vulnerable persons, such as [Catholic Charities DC](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) (easy to advanced)
 - ▶ Contribute food or financial donations to your parish food pantry (easy to advanced)
 - ▶ Develop or expand parish emergency funds to help individuals with energy, water, and other bills (moderate to advanced)
- Volunteer with a local clean the waterways project: [Sweep Sligo Creek](#), [Chesapeake Bay](#), and [Anacostia River projects](#) (moderate)



A young parishioner from Holy Redeemer Parish in Washington recounts the parish's history during a celebration marking the parish's 100th anniversary in 2019.

¹³. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>





“Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone.”

(LS 93).

“Lack of housing is a grave problem in many parts of the world, both in rural areas and in large cities, having a home has much to do with a sense of personal dignity and the growth of families. This is a major issue for human ecology.”

(LS 152).

MARKER 3: Ecological Economics

The Archdiocese of Washington is home to over 3 million people and encompasses a land area of over 2,000 square miles with 1,200 miles of ecologically critical shoreline. The Archdiocese is home to 655,000 Catholics. Washington, D.C. and Maryland are home to many governmental and non-profit organizations, and industries (health, technology, agriculture, etc.) vital for our economy. The archdiocese has tried to respond to environmental injustices suffered by those who are poor or vulnerable while also integrating Catholic social teaching into our economic decisions.

Housing

The Archdiocese of Washington works with parishes to develop affordable housing on underutilized land. Since 1979, Victory Housing Inc., the Archdiocese’s development arm for affordable housing, has developed over 2,300 units in 32 properties. Several parishes have used excess land to develop affordable housing in partnership with Victory Housing, Inc. Possibilities for land use include affordable independent and assisted living housing, special-needs housing, health-care facilities, community gardens, food distribution centers, organic food co-ops, and solar fields such as the one recently developed by Catholic Charities.



Food

Food not only nourishes our bodies but it nurtures relationships, and celebrates cultural identities. Food is central to our faith. The Eucharist is not just bread and wine. It is the Body and Blood of Christ that nourishes our bodies and souls. Injustices and inequities in our food system—from source to table—remind us that eating is also an act that has moral consequences. Our food system reflects broader inequities in society. Many farmers experience economic insecurity at the hands of large corporations that dominate our food system and by unpredictable events and government policies. This economic insecurity impacts farmers, and (migrant) farm workers.



Green Space

Parishes can support efforts to create and preserve green spaces such as parks, community gardens, and playgrounds. Catholic universities, hospital systems, religious orders, and parish schools can all help in these efforts. Such projects can have an impact on neighborhoods. As an example of how Catholic organizations can create green spaces, Casey Trees and Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Washington, D.C. have collaborated with parishes to reforest a significant section of unused cemetery land. Casey Trees has also partnered with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and St. Anthony’s Catholic School in Washington, D.C. to plant trees on the school’s urban campus.



Right from top: Washington Cardinal Wilton Gregory visits senior citizens in Nov. 2019 at Victory Heights apartments operated by the Victory Housing; Blue crabs caught in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay; St. Francis International School third grade students farm lettuce and other greens in the school garden in Oct. 2018 as a part of the environmental science curriculum.





A student at the Academy of the Holy Cross, helps prepare a field for the upcoming growing season at Red Wiggler Farm in Germantown in 2018. The entire school community participated in the Day of Service as a part of the school's 150th anniversary celebration.



Possible actions for individuals, families, parishes and schools:

- Reduce food waste (easy)
- Reduce meat-based meals (easy)
- Consider alternative uses for your parish property (easy to moderate)
 - Build a parish garden (moderate)
 - Use the parking lot for a local CSA (community sustained agriculture) drop off or farmers market spot (moderate)
- Buy locally produced and prepared food (easy to advanced)
- Buy fair trade and sustainably-produced food (easy to advanced)
- Participate in a CSA program or local farmers market (easy to advanced)
- Model healthy and just purchasing practices in all activities for parishes and parish schools (easy to advanced)
- Improve access to nutritious foods (moderate)
- Build and eat from home gardens (moderate)
- Lobby to utilize public land to build community gardens (moderate to advanced)
- Compost food scraps (advanced)





“Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack.”

(LS 222).

“Purchasing is always a moral—and not simply economic—act.”

(LS 206).



In 2018 a prayer garden was blessed and dedicated at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Washington, D.C. as part of the historic cemetery’s ongoing effort to protect the environment.

MARKER 4: Adoption of a Simple Lifestyle

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 and consuming more in-season fruits and vegetables over meat- based meals. Another way to live simply is to use what Pope Francis calls the “circular economy of materials.” The circular economy of materials includes the trading, exchanging, and donation of office, home, and personal items within our communities.

Possible actions for individuals, families, parishes and schools:

- Cut down or eliminate single-use plastic (such as water bottles) (easy)
- Buy less non-essentials (easy)
- Cut down or eliminate foam-based food containers (easy)
- Encourage recycling (easy to moderate)
- An initiative of the The Laudato Si' Movement, *LiveLaudatoSi'*¹⁴ is a guide produced to encourage Catholics to consider the implications of their actions. Here are 10 ideas identified to live more simply from the The Laudato Si' Movement: (easy to moderate)
 - ▶ Buy consciously: look for goods that have less packaging; support businesses that pay fair wages.
 - ▶ Eat intentionally: go meat-free, buy local and in-season fruits and vegetables, or try growing your own.
 - ▶ Waste less: avoid throwing away food whenever possible, bring your own bags
 - ▶ Share more: such as a yard or house equipment, share your time by finding ways to volunteer or support community groups.
 - ▶ Drive less: share a vehicle for grocery trips. Bike, walk, or use public transportation when possible.
 - ▶ Nurture your relationships.
 - ▶ Take quality time for yourself.
 - ▶ Examine your lifestyle for waste.
 - ▶ Take time to pray and give thanks.
- Implement an ecological purchasing system (moderate)
 - ▶ Purchase only products that are fair-trade or sustainably produced (easy- moderate)
 - ▶ Purchase office supplies made from natural, recycled, or recyclable materials (moderate)

¹⁴ The Laudato Si' Movement, “LiveLaudatoSi' Pledge,” <https://livelaudatosi.org/10-ways-live-simply/>





“Homilists should not have to strain to preach environmental justice. It demands no great leap to move from the Scriptures to today’s environmental concerns. The Lectionary already offers great variety for the homilist to address contemporary environmental issues out of our Catholic tradition.”¹⁵

Celebrity chef José Andres helps students plant vegetable seeds for the food science curriculum at The Woods Academy in Bethesda.



MARKER 5: 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 show 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.

Pope Francis has joined with other Christian leaders in designating September 1 to October 4 of each year as a Season of Creation. Parishes can celebrate the Season of Creation through preaching, offering prayer services, and other activities that focus on Catholic teaching on care for our common home. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ guide on *Caring for God’s Creation* has ideas for making connections between the liturgy and care for creation throughout the liturgical year. Care for creation and concern for marginalized communities should be integrated into our proclamation about the life and dignity of all people and into how to celebrate life during October’s Respect Life Month. Concern for our planet and respect for vulnerable individuals in marginalized communities are important dimensions of what it means to be pro-life.



Students of St. Michael’s School in Ridge, Maryland take part in a sailing exercise with volunteers as they talk about the science, technology, mathematics and engineering behind sailing.

¹⁵ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Caring for God’s Creation: Resources for Liturgy, Preaching, and Taking Action*, 2020. <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/upload/ecology-resource-all.pdf>





Possible actions for individuals, families, parishes and schools:

- Organize local environmental educational trips (i.e. Tour [Blue Plains](#) in Washington, D.C., the largest advanced wastewater plant in the world; [Chesapeake Bay Foundation Educational Tours](#).) (easy)
 - ▶ Find a nature preserve in the area (i.e. [Jug Bay Water Sanctuary](#)) (easy)
 - ▶ Find recycling, energy production, and water treatment facilities - many of these places offer and encourage tours and other programs for groups (easy)
- Create or expand parish and school libraries to feature a variety of books that provide guidance and resources for this work and embrace the vision of *Laudato Si'* (easy)
- Challenge children and youth to come up with local solutions to social and environmental problems and affirm the ideas they put forward (easy)
- Explore the connection between the environment and personal and communal health (moderate)
- Develop *Laudato Si'* inspired activities and theme days with practical follow-up actions (moderate)
- Examine how to support efforts toward systemic justice for those who are marginalized and offer practical steps toward living a lifestyle modified to care for creation (moderate)
- Incorporate justice and care for our common home into faith formation programs at all levels (moderate)
- Involve parish religious education, youth ministry and parish schools in living out *Laudato Si'* (moderate to advanced)



In a photo from fall 2019, students in an AP environmental studies class at Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Bethesda conduct a stream study in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C..





“The awareness that each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us, and the security that Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light. Then too, there is the recognition that God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore. May the power and the light of the grace we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and to the world around us. In this way, we will help nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied.”
(LS 221).



Washington Auxiliary Bishop Roy Campbell Jr. celebrates the Archdiocese of Washington’s first Green Mass on Oct. 3, 2020 at St. Joseph Church in Largo, Maryland, where he serves as pastor.

MARKER 6: Ecological Spirituality

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.

Possible actions for individuals, families, parishes and schools:

- Homilies on pro-life values and integration of Catholic social and moral teaching regarding care for creation (easy)
 - Highlight Catholic teaching at appropriate times throughout the liturgical year in a variety of formats: bulletin announcements, parish social media pages, youth ministry, Religious Education classes, RCIA preparation, Adult Formation opportunities, coffee and donuts after Mass (easy)
- Plan, celebrate and mark the Season of Creation held each September 1 to October 4 (easy)
- Participate in the annual Archdiocesan Green Mass (easy)
- Utilize materials from [USCCB on Caring for Creation](#) (easy)
- Integrate *Laudato Si'* into all facets of promoting an integral ecology at celebrations of Respect Life Month/World Mission Month in October (easy)
- Bring in expert speakers to lead/guide conversations at parish or parish school sponsored events (easy)
 - Listen to a variety of voices including/especially from those in marginalized communities (easy)
 - Utilize parishioners, members of Catholic organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who feature Catholic values, to speak on ecological issues (easy)
- Ensure parish and school events and formation opportunities promote the Church’s teaching on climate change, social, racial, environmental, and immigrant justice (easy)
- Empower parishioners to be active and engaged in the work of *Laudato Si'* (easy)





“Public pressure has to be exerted in order to bring about decisive political action. Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment.”

(LS 221)



Students from Holy Trinity School in Northwest Washington carry signs during a pilgrimage to pray for a Syrian family sponsored by the parish.

MARKER 7: Emphasis on Community Involvement and Participatory Action

We are to engage in public advocacy work for decisive political action for the common good. As Catholics, we have models for dialogue and civil engagement in our political processes.¹⁶ In our public policy engagement, we must continue to be effective advocates and heed the “cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” (LS 49)

The Archdiocese employs professional staff to collaborate with parish leaders to advocate for changes in public policy, organize grassroots initiatives, and represent the Catholic voice for the common good. The Archdiocese’s Office of Social Concerns and Office of Public Policy serve as a touchpoint to mobilize and empower Catholics to become effective citizen advocates at local, state, and federal levels. The Offices work with appropriate partner organizations to provide policy and advocacy training to accomplish a goal to engage and encourage all Catholics to fulfill their moral obligation to participate in political action. These partnering organizations include:

D.C. Catholic Conference

The D.C. Catholic Conference maintains awareness and provides support for legislation in the D.C. City Council that addresses a variety of issues including environmental justice and environmental protection. The D.C. Catholic Conference advocates for the Archdiocese before the District of Columbia City Council and directs grassroots Catholic action on pending legislation. You can learn more about the D.C. Catholic Conference here: www.dccathcon.org.

¹⁶ The Tradition of the Catholic Church encourages dialogue and engagement. This includes the newest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. A list of documents to consider is found on the Office of Social Concerns Care for Creation page.



Students and their families from Archdiocese of Washington Catholic schools gather in Annapolis in March each year to advocate for state programs benefiting nonpublic schools.



Maryland Catholic Conference

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) advocates for three (Arch)dioceses (Washington, Baltimore, and Wilmington) before the Maryland State Assembly; mobilizes grassroots action through the Catholic Advocacy Network; and surveys and reports on the stances of candidates regarding issues of concern to Catholics. The Conference supports legislation in the Maryland General Assembly that addresses a variety of issues including environmental justice and environmental protection issues. You can learn more about the Maryland Catholic Conference here: <https://www.mdccatholic.org/>.

Any Archdiocesan parishes or schools interested in facility upgrades, including (but not limited to) LED fixtures, HVAC upgrades, solar projects, or storm water projects, should contact the Archdiocese of Washington Real Estate and Facilities Management Office at facilitiescontracts@adw.org or the Office of General Counsel at legaladmin@adw.org for guidance and information on requirements for these types of projects.

Possible actions for individuals, families, parishes and schools:

- Use parish and parish school communication channels to spread the message of *Laudato Si'* (easy)
 - Distribute liturgical calendars with suggestions for environmentally beneficial practices and other ways to promote justice (easy)
 - Utilize Flocknote, parish Facebook pages, and other social media to put *Laudato Si'* teaching/learning into action (easy to advanced)
- Form parish social concerns teams that focus on integral ecology (easy to moderate)
- Engage ministries and groups in collaborative efforts on integral ecology (easy to moderate)
- Utilize resources from organizations such as [Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake](#) or the [Interfaith Power & Light](#) (DC, MD) to train parish social concerns team (moderate)
- Connect with other parishes through the Archdiocesan Care for Creation Committee (moderate)
- Connect to interfaith groups such as [Interfaith Power & Light](#) (DC, MD), [Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake](#), and the [Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions](#); and through local community organizing entities such as the [Washington Interfaith Network](#) (WIN) or [Action in Montgomery](#) (AIM) (moderate to advanced)
- Collaborate with [Action in Montgomery](#) Social Concerns Committees and other parish groups to foster an integrated approach (moderate to advanced)

Conclusion

The Archdiocese of Washington is proud to embark on this journey towards a fuller implementation of *Laudato Si'*! As a people of faith, the archdiocese is ready to continue our efforts in preserving and protecting God's creation of our common home in our local communities and throughout the world. We are ready to heed the call of our faith and science to work together to implement *Laudato Si'* in our families, parishes and schools. We are ready to proclaim the Gospel message of hope, create a more sustainable society, and preserve Earth for future generations.

Let us work together to embrace Care for Creation!





Cardinal Wilton Gregory prays over a garden he planted with students at St. Mary's School in Landover Hills in Oct. 2019 in celebration of the school's 65th anniversary.



Closing Prayer

A Prayer for Our Earth from Laudato Si'

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

*Photos courtesy of Jaclyn Lippelmann,
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The Roman Catholic
Archdiocese of
Washington

