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CINCINNATI

Office of Catholic Social Action

Laudato Si: Reflection and Objectives

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Laudato Si Action Platform Reflection & Objectives

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Reflection

The Laudato Si Encyclical is above all, a gentle but firm invitation to hear the Cry of the Earth, and to learn “how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace” [LS 10]

As we reflected on the content of Laudato Si, we discovered the intricate relationships there are between the seven goals: Experiencing the global ecological conversion Pope John Paul II called us to, (Ecological Spirituality) will naturally lead us to the pursue of ways to bring healing to our wounded planet (Response to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor) and facilitate our community’s learning of the interconnections that make us such a key part of both, the problem *and* the solutions (Ecological Education). The more educated we are and the more we grow in our relationship with nature, the eager we will be to get engaged (Community engagement and Participatory Action), make better decisions as to how we live our lives, how we spend our time and money (Adoption of Sustainable lifestyles), and what policies and systems we support (Ecological Economics).

As a community looking to actively embrace the teachings of Laudato Si, we see these interconnections as a hopeful sign that well-directed action has the potential to trigger new action and mobilize us closer and closer to fulfilling the seven goals.

The Laudato Si is groundbreaking in that, for the first time, the church institutionally acknowledged the environment as a key component of the crises that bring pain and hardship to the most vulnerable in our societies. Historically, the Catholic Social Teaching had focused on alleviating the suffering of the poor, but the connection between the ecological and the social crisis had never been made explicit. As we think about our journey these past few years and the path ahead, we set a firm intention to grow in our

understanding of this interconnectedness as a fundamental part of our work. We are determined to bring that awareness to the community.

A distinctive trait of the Catholic identity is tending those in need, and we will continue to do that with a renewed, more integrated approach, fueled by the sacred mandate to watch over our God's Creation.

Our Journey

In February of 2009, the Catholic Social Action Office embarked in a journey to create a committee that would be focused explicitly on the issues of climate change and caring for God's creation. Building on the Catholic Climate Covenant's St. Francis Pledge to Protect Creation and the Poor, a group of passionate Catholics from across the Archdiocese of Cincinnati (AoC) came together to form a team (now known as the Care for Creation Task Force (CCTF)) that would lead the way for Catholics and other people of goodwill across the Archdiocese of Cincinnati (AoC) to engage in this critical work.

It has been almost 15 years since then, and over the course of this time, there have been several notable achievements in different fronts:

Community Engagement:

- Launched in 2018 a Laudato Si Community certification that, to date, has recognized over 25 parishes, schools, religious orders, and Catholic institutions for their work in caring for God's creation.
- The CCTF has engaged with numerous parishes as they seek to live out this work in their areas. From establishing community gardens and updating lighting and windows, to installing solar panels and educating their parishioners about the Catholic faith's commitment to caring for creation,

many parishes have committed themselves both in word and action to this work.

- Focused the Social Action Commission bi-annual retreat in 2022 on ecological spirituality.
- Sponsored numerous screenings of ecologically focused films

Advocacy

- Numerous advocacy efforts have been endeavored, on the local, state, and national levels. For example, we have advocated for continued strengthening of energy efficiency standards and more funding for energy efficiency projects in OH.
- Submitted multiple Letters to the Editor on care for creation topics.
- Joined community efforts to raise awareness about the Care for Creation issue, including a People's Climate March in Cincinnati and a Good Friday Way of the Cross for Justice.
- Advocated successfully as the city of Cincinnati developed the [largest municipally-owned solar array in the county](#) (2020)
- Our Social Action Office director is a standing member of the City of Cincinnati's Environmental Advisory Committee

Communications

- When Laudato Si was released, we supported news coverage of the encyclical and promoted its promulgation across the archdiocese.
- Periodically send out a quarterly St. Francis Pledge newsletters to hundreds of people across the Archdiocese (and beyond) with numerous advocacy, educational, and liturgical resources.
- Held press conferences featuring several notable figures including Archbishop Schnurr

- Produced a [10 min. video](#) featuring Archbishop Schnurr and members of the CCTF as they highlighted the great care for creation work happening around the Archdiocese

Grants

- Supported archdiocesan parishes and schools as they sought and were awarded grant monies to “green” their campuses.

Education

- Participated in numerous related discussions at area universities.
- Partnered with universities, including Mount St. Joe (EarthConnection program) and the University of Dayton (Marianist Environmental Education Center), to promote care for creation on campuses and among young adults
- Produced multiple Earth Day and Feast of St. Francis programs.
- AoC is one of three Catholic institutions supporting a Laudato Si intern, a new program through the USCCB environmental office (2022-2023).

Objectives

The two last chapters of the encyclical are a compelling call to examine ourselves, rethink other forms of living in this world and set our eyes in the sacred intention to “take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast.” (LS 244). As we set our intentions and plan for the next few years, we want these words to serve as motivation for the times to come.

There are no small acts when it comes to creating change and we hope that the roadmap we are imagining, will provide everyone in the community the tools, the spiritual support, and the closeness needed to engage wholeheartedly in whatever aspects of the program our members feel drawn to.

While there are many goals to aim for, we are choosing to pursue the ones that resonate most with our communities’ needs and operational/financial possibilities.

1. Create awareness and inform (Ecological Education)

- a) Promote the existence and content of the Laudato Si: *We want our communities to learn about Laudato Si and integrate caring for creation into their faith and religious practice.*
- b) Create opportunities to educate individuals and communities on the Ecological Crisis and all Catholics’ spiritual task to act as stewards of our common Home.
- c) Gain support from the Archbishop: *We will work to surface this agenda to the*
- d) *office of the archbishop. We understand the importance of his support and his influence on the dynamics of the local church as an agent of change.*

2. Connect [with others and nature] and build a network (Ecological Spirituality)

- a) Promote continuous virtual and in-person gatherings of people from each sector: *schools, (families of) parishes, individuals/families to facilitate conversations and provide*

opportunities to get involved. We will leverage the unique power and position of the Archdiocese to support the objectives and growth of each platform.

- b) Promote contemplation and interaction with nature, *through hosting and/or broadcasting of ecological events.*
- c) Restore lost practices of community engagement and self-sustainability.
- d) Celebrate Laudato Si on a periodic basis and use successes as platforms for next steps, cycling upward and outward.

3. Act (Response to the Cry of the Earth; Adoption of sustainable Lifestyles)

- a) Make available practical resources to equip individuals and communities in their first steps of the journey to reduce environmental footprint.
- b) Promote Socially responsible consumption, purchasing and Investment.
- c) Promote initiatives that alleviate the damage caused to ecosystems at the local, national and/or international level.
- d) Leverage existing communication outlets to build a broadcasting strategy focused in the Ecological Crisis, and the people leading change at the local, national and global level.

4. Advocate and empower (Response to the Cry of the Earth/Poor; Community empowerment)

- a) Provide tangible ways for members to access current environmental legislation.
- b) Facilitate ways for individuals and communities to advocate for policy change/support.
- c) Openly support initiatives that promote green energy, zero waste, and environmental justice.
- d) Collaborate with Catholics across the Archdiocese in presenting a catholic voice in favor of environmental legislation.
- e) Identify community leaders and equip them to promote the initiation of LSAP.

f) Promote Environmental Justice as part of Catholic Social Teaching.

5. Live by Example

- a) Be leaders in the implementation of our LSAP
- b) Practice Socially Responsible Consumption, Purchasing & Investment.
- c) Incorporate environmental practices in social gatherings.
- d) Integrate Laudato Si in the catechism and school curriculum
- e) Celebrate periodic Ecological Mass
- f) Move towards energy efficient buildings by xxx

Our Tenets

1. LS was written to ALL people, and EVERYONE must be included. We must make sure that all members of your community (e.g., parish, school, etc.) are engaged (no implicit barriers due to language, culture, socioeconomics).
2. Tools, objectives, resources etc. are accessible, and leaders are empowered to lead.
3. We vary information for schools, parishes and individuals.
4. We empower each institution/family to develop their own plan based on their unique
5. circumstances/realities.