



CALIFORNIA
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

God Calls Us All to Care for Our Common Home

Pastoral Statement by the
California Conference of Catholic Bishops
On the fourth anniversary of
Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home

PART 2, Living Our Ecological Vocations
(pages 14 - 25)

for the full document, please visit <https://cacatholic.org/common-home>

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PART 2: LIVING OUR ECOLOGICAL VOCATIONS

We face a great cultural, spiritual, and educational challenge (LS 202), which calls for a profound interior conversion (LS 217) and a renewal of our common humanity (LS 9). In this context:

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. (LS 217)

Just as California's many ecosystems find expression in diverse beauty and bounty, there are many paths by which each of us might travel as we contribute to the renewal of our common home. Those who work on behalf of environmental justice, such as air pollution prevention and ensuring access to clean water, are pursuing a clear "ecological vocation." For the rest of us, discerning an ecological vocation can mean not only a career path or a means of earning a living, but also a means of undergoing ecological conversion as individuals, families, and communities—in ways that are authentic, personal, and ultimately practical.

To inspire everyone in California to care for our common home, this pastoral statement offers invitations to action and reflection for specific groups, in the hope that every Californian can find themselves touched by at least one.

We Bishops, in communion with pastoral leaders and Catholic institutions

For our part, we Bishops commit ourselves to fulfilling our calling to lead the Catholic Church and its institutions in life-giving responses to *Laudato Si'*. The encyclical calls for ecological conversion across all aspects of life in church and society.

Our Catholic communities have a special responsibility to bring the message of the encyclical to life in our worship, common prayer, and public witness. The very title of *Laudato Si', Praise Be to You*, is a prayer in the language of worship, and a liturgical vision is woven throughout the encyclical.¹⁴ The Lord can use these to further our ecological conversion—if we enter in to the grace they offer.

For our part, we commit ourselves to fulfilling our calling to lead the Catholic Church and its institutions in life-giving responses to *Laudato Si'*. We pledge to work with **pastoral leaders and Catholic institutions** to:

1. Encourage the faithful to take the St. Francis Pledge—to pray, act, and advocate for solutions to climate disruption—and live out its tenets.
2. Support clergy, liturgists, musicians, and pastoral leaders to integrate the messages of *Laudato Si'* into our life of worship. We commit to offering priest study days and days of recollection to share practical tools, such as homily helps, music, and resources that will regularly help proclaim themes of *Laudato Si'*.
3. Examine with (Arch)dioceses their institutional operations to determine the full extent that each can adopt renewable energy, energy efficiency, and water conservation practices.
4. Explore with (Arch)dioceses opportunities for divestment from fossil fuels, whether through Diocese bank investments, oil leases, etc.
5. Cooperate with Catholic charities and Catholic health care institutions to undertake environmental health and social initiatives, with special attention to the needs of the poor and excluded.

Youth and young adults

You already demonstrate leadership in protecting God's creation and promoting the common good. You rightly demand change (LS 13).

Young people have a new ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit, and some of them are making admirable efforts to protect the environment. (LS 209)

The change you demand for protecting the earth and advancing a more sustainable lifestyle is noble and virtuous. Everyone can benefit if you share your vision for a more just and sustainable society while living your lives faithful to your dreams.

We call upon **youth and young adults** to:

1. Seek out opportunities to pray in natural surroundings, and reflect on how to embrace integral ecology in your daily lives.
2. Initiate conversations with those adults older than you about your concerns for environmental protection and a more inclusive society.
3. Consider how your life path and career can best balance your personal needs with the call to care for our common home.
4. Engage with others in personal hands-on care for God's creation (e.g., community gardens, environmental cleanup, or healing the Earth in some way).
5. Actively participate in the political process to advocate for environmental justice, for we need your voices and contributions.

Parents, teachers, and catechists

Laudato Si' proposes ecological education as fundamental to meeting our environmental and social challenges.

Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis, and elsewhere. (LS 213)

California has a fine tradition of environmental education, recently affirmed by state legislation enhancing environmental literacy.¹⁵ But Pope Francis calls for more than the presentation of scientific information:

Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility, and compassionate care. (LS 210)

We call upon **parents, teachers, and catechists** to:

1. Create an environmental consciousness within all Catholic families that incorporates the principles of *Laudato Si'* into the formation of their children, and let a concern for integral ecology and for the common good guide every family's lifestyle.
2. Ensure that environmental education in California public, private, and Catholic K-College classrooms is not only based on authentic scientific information, but also develops an ethics of ecology (LS 209-215).
3. Enhance environmental literacy by educating all California students in environmental principles and concepts, as well as an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and respecting life by protecting nature.
4. Expand opportunities for outdoor environmental education and access to experiential learning about nature for all California students, especially those in poor communities.
5. Weave themes from *Laudato Si'*, especially our shared home as a common good and integral ecology, throughout parish religious education programs and Catholic school curricula.

Public officials

Leaders in society, because of their influence over institutions, have extra responsibilities for upholding the common good.

Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life. (LS 189)

Laudato Si' calls for the renewal of political life and a healthy politics, informed by the common good and integral ecology.

What is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis....A healthy politics needs to be able to take up this challenge. (LS 197)

We call upon **public officials** to:

1. Address environmental issues with an *integral* approach that cares for all of creation's ecological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions as interrelated.
2. Strengthen water systems for times of drought and deluge to assure a plentiful supply of clean water to drink, grow food, power California's robust economy, and also protect precious ecosystems.
3. Enact policies that further improve air quality and drastically reduce carbon dioxide emissions and other polluting gases. This includes the substituting of fossil fuels with renewable energy sources as well as developing greater energy storage and efficiency. Ensure that any transition from a fossil-based economy to one of renewable energy does not add to the burden of the poor.
4. Support assistance programs that help relieve the financial burden on seniors and low-income families to deal with the significant costs of water and energy.
5. Provide environmentally impacted communities with sufficient resources to help them mitigate health impacts and to implement community-led solutions. Prioritize projects that improve, protect, or reduce risks to disadvantaged communities.

Leaders in business

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. (LS 129)

Businesses certainly have the potential to be a force for great good in any society, and many do live up to their moral and economic promise.¹⁶ And yet, economic institutions' tremendous power too often leads to harm when environmental care is not prioritized.

Laudato Si' calls for a re-examination of our economic models and assumptions about progress—summoning its leaders to chart an alternative course, guided by integral ecology and the common good.

We call upon **leaders in business** to:

1. Read prayerfully and reflect thoughtfully on your vocation in light of *Laudato Si'* and its messages regarding economics, finance, and business.
2. Consider: Does your business support the transition toward sustainability and human development?
3. Consider: Does your enterprise produce goods and services that meet genuine human needs and serve the common good, while taking responsibility for the social and environmental costs of production and distribution?
4. Consider: Do you incorporate care for creation and integral ecology into your business practices and business models? Describe for yourselves and the public how the mission of your business contributes to the common good and to the protection of the earth.
5. Reflect on what practical steps each organization might take to foster active care for creation in your business and among your customers. Can you communicate responsible environmental messages through your marketing?

Those who work the land and care for it

In many ways, you represent the human family as stewards of the lands and waters. Farming, fishing, and forestry are noble vocations, and we all depend upon your work to harvest their produce for us, and to care for them on behalf of all of us.

Let us, when we give thanks to God at our meals (LS 227), express our gratitude to those who work the land. Your vocation has a special dignity and fosters the common good of society.¹⁷

Caring for land and water employs a great diversity of people, beyond the production of food and fiber—including, for example, foresters, landscapers, water and land managers, conservationists, park rangers, and firefighters. Through your work, you have the ability to put *Laudato Si'* into action on a daily basis, to foster beauty and environmental protection.

We call upon **those who work the land and care for it** to:

1. Reflect on *Laudato Si'* and examine how your work can best balance economic production and environmental protection. Draw on your practical wisdom of direct contact with creation to guide the transition to greater sustainability within your economic sector.
2. Collaborate together with others to foster farming and agricultural economies that are socially inclusive, respect those who are vulnerable, and address the needs of the hungry.
3. Present ideas to help all of us foster authentic development that cultivates farmland as a viable rural economy.
4. Protect ecosystems and their services, upon which nature and human society depend. Actively educate our society about our dependence upon healthy ecosystems, including their careful stewardship to conserve biodiversity.
5. Help society at large understand how we can best live in harmonious relationship with nature in light of climate disruption and its effects of more fires, floods, and droughts.

Artist and innovators

California has long been home to creative and innovative people, exemplified today by two prominent industries:

- Hollywood, which is a tremendous cultural force, manifesting astonishing creativity and imagination. Hollywood has, to a considerable degree, shaped our narrative myths, the stories of explanation we all share.
- Silicon Valley, which is the world's most entrepreneurial ecosystem, one that has created dramatic innovations affecting, and in many cases improving, the lives of most people on the planet.

Beyond these two industries, innovators and artists, entrepreneurs and architects, designers and creative people of all types have shaped the culture of California and the world. Now, *Laudato Si'* calls for a renewal of human culture, informed by the principles of ecology.

If an artist cannot be stopped from using his or her creativity, neither should those who possess particular gifts for the advancement of science and technology be prevented from using their God-given talents for the service of others. (LS 131)

We call upon **artists and innovators** to:

1. Find ways to highlight the beauty of creation in your work, and to inspire a culture of care in the human family.
2. Evaluate, if you work in California's technology innovation or entertainment industries, how you are shaping human culture in light of the message of *Laudato Si'*.
3. Determine how technology and human creativity can be marshalled to foster the creation of an ecological culture.
4. Invite those engaged in technology's design and development to consider how you can build ethical considerations into each step of a technology's creation, including ensuring its moral application.
5. Invite all persons working in technology innovation and entrepreneurship to evaluate their vocation and work products to see how both can be put in service of ecological culture and the common good.

These questions are deceptively simple. But we invite everyone to chew on them, reflecting sincerely on their implications for their own life of faith. We pray that contemplation of these questions can stimulate a deeper ecological conversion among us all.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this Pastoral Statement will inspire all its readers to a new lifestyle that respects our common home and cares for all who belong to the earth, especially the poor and vulnerable (LS 202-207).

At the heart of all spirituality is conversion. We all need to change for the better. Conversion is not just turning back to God, but always embraces new thinking and new decisions—a new way of life as we move into the future.

Ecological conversion challenges us to advance in culture, to grow spiritually, and to be better educated about the world entrusted by God to our care. The heavens and the earth belong to God, but we have been called to be good stewards.

It is our hope that this pastoral statement will inspire creative, life-giving responses here in California.

God has united Himself definitively to the earth, and His love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. (LS 245)

PRAYER: CARING FOR CALIFORNIA

O God

You call us to care for our common home

California is where we live, and we ask for your help

to better care for this place

We thank you for the inspiring beauty and abundant bounty of California

When we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and

beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity¹⁸

May this prayer draw us deeper in to our ecological conversion

May our common origin in you and a deep sense of integral ecology move us

To undertake new efforts to fashion a more inclusive society and protection of

our Sister Mother Earth

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,

who loves us so much

Amen

¹ On *Care for Our Common Home: Laudato Si'*, Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference/Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2015). Hereafter, LS. References are to the encyclical's numbered paragraphs.

² Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church, 483.

³ California Natural Resources Agency and others. 2018. *California Biodiversity Initiative A Roadmap for Protecting the State's Natural Heritage*. <http://opr.ca.gov/docs/20180907-CaliforniaBiodiversityActionPlan.pdf>

⁴ St. Junípero Serra, whom Pope Francis has called one of America's "founding fathers" (Homily, May 2, 2015), was among the first Europeans to catalogue the wild beauty of California's landscape. He wrote evocatively about the mountains and the plains, the blazing sun, the brooks and rivers, the cottonwood and willow trees, even the sound of a roaring lion that kept the missionaries awake at night. Among the many passages we find in his diaries and letters, he writes: "It seems that the thorns and rocks of California have disappeared, since these enormous mountains are almost entirely of pure soil. But there are flowers in abundance and beautiful ones. And that nothing should be wanting in that direction, when we came to our stopping place, we met the queen of flowers—the Rose of Castile. While I write this, I have in front of me a cutting from a rose tree with three roses in full bloom, others opening out, and more than six unpetaled—Blessed be He who created them!" (Diary, June 2, 1769). *Blessed be He who created them!* This is the meaning of the created world in the Catholic vision. All that we see has been given as a blessing from God, whom St. Junípero called "The Lord, the Author of Nature" (Diary, May 30, 1769).

⁵ Holliday, J.S., 2015. *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience*. University of Oklahoma Press.

⁶ Poverty in California: Amid Plenty, Want. 2018. *The Economist*. October 27. Pages 25-26.

⁷ Warner, Keith Douglass, OFM. 2016. A Holistic Vision^[SEP] Of Human Flourishing. *Health Progress: The Journal of the Catholic Health Association of the United States*. May-June, 15-18.

⁸ National Assessment Synthesis Team. 2001. *Climate Change Impacts on the United States: The Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change*, Report for the U.S. Global Change Research Program, Cambridge University Press. <https://data.globalchange.gov/assets/e9/97/436129058f2107f4925aeec13ed8/nca-2000-foundation-report.pdf>

⁹ Thomas Fuller. 2018. California's Chief Firefighter Looks Back on 30 Years of Infernos. *New York Times*. December 13. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/us/california-chief-firefighter-retires-ken-pimlott.html>

¹⁰ Public Policy Institute of California. 2018. Climate Change and Water. And, Public Policy Institute of California. 2018. Managing Drought In a Changing Climate: Four Essential Reforms.

¹¹ This quote is taken from Assembly Bill 685. See Jonathan London and others. 2018. The Struggle for Water Justice in California's San Joaquin Valley: A Focus on Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities. UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

¹² US Catholic Bishops. 2001. *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*.

¹³ All of the current impacts—from effects of extreme weather and climate-related events on the interconnected natural, built, and social systems we rely on to threats to our air quality, agricultural productivity, and health—were predicted by the 2001 Second National Climate Assessment. National Assessment Synthesis Team. 2001. *Climate Change Impacts on the United States: The Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change*, Report for the US Global Change Research Program, Cambridge University Press.

<https://data.globalchange.gov/assets/e9/97/436129058f2107f4925aeec13ed8/nca-2000-foundation-report.pdf>

¹⁴ Bob Hurd, “Every Creature is Sister and Brother: Reading and Enacting *Laudato Si’* Liturgically. *Worship*, 92 (Mar 2018), 141-156.

¹⁵ SB 720 (Allen) Environmental Education: Environmental Principles and Concepts.

¹⁶ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. 2014. *The Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*.

¹⁷ International Catholic Rural Association. 2016. *Vocation of the Agricultural Leader: Integrating Faith with Agriculture and the Environment, a Reflection*.

¹⁸ John Paul II. 2000. *Catechesis*. See LS 238.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

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