

Introduction

In May of 2015, Pope Francis presented Catholics with a unified framework in which to view creation in connection with contemporary science in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home. The theme is the commonality of our home, the earth, a shared space in which to live and a common resource for our lives. The Holy Father speaks of the relationships between God and humanity, among the peoples of humanity, and between humanity and the rest of the created universe. He tells us that these relationships have been damaged, and that as a consequence of this damage, a series of events, collectively referred to as global climate change, are devastating our planet and threatening life as we know it. *Laudato Si'* is the Holy Father's plea and guide to restoring these relationships.

It is a spiritual yet visceral journey, taking us from our broken relationships, our damaged home, to wholeness in our relationship to God, with each other, and with our terrestrial home. It is a journey with many as yet unmarked roads. No issue we contemplate will exist in isolation from many other issues, as everything exists in relationship to other things. Our attempts to find the right paths will be fraught with complexity, as everything we would propose to do would have positive and negative aspects, and would involve concessions and even sacrifice. We will need to take interim steps, which will be modified as our knowledge and experience grow. We will pray for grace, invoking the Holy Spirit as companion and guide.

We have committed to this journey.

Origins

While our journey began in spirit with the publication of *Laudato Si'*, the plan documented here had milestones in its development. Enrique Berazaluce, of St. John Vianney Parish in Bettendorf, was among a group of college students from the Americas who met with Pope Francis ([Synod encounters with Pope Francis and Bishop Zinkula \(catholicmessenger.net\)](#)). Inspired by the Holy Father, the students committed to climate action in their homelands. Three of the students, including Enrique, Emily Burke and Henry Glynn, met with Bishop Zinkula. During this meeting, they expressed their dismay that so few U.S. bishops had addressed the issues of *Laudato Si'* ([Creighton study faults bishops for silence on climate](#)). Expressing their concern that their future world was at stake, they asked Bishop Zinkula to respond to the challenge of climate change and to work on developing a plan to attain carbon neutrality. "Carbon neutrality" is achieved when the same amount of carbon dioxide is emitted into the atmosphere as is removed by different means (this is also referred to as "zero balance," "zero carbon footprint," or "net-zero carbon emissions").

The bishop committed to such action.

The Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development at the Vatican created a structure to guide the international effort of Catholics to implement *Laudato Si'*. The diocese adopted that structure as the map for our journey. To be true to the spirit of *Laudato Si'*, we must journey together, but there are contributions parishes, families and individuals can make individually that collectively move us forward.

The following pages contain the beginning of our diocesan road map or plan. We recognize that many parishes and individuals began taking action steps long ago that moved them down the road of reducing their carbon footprints. A "carbon footprint" is the total amount of greenhouse gases that are

generated by the consumption of fossil fuels by an individual, family, parish, diocese, business, or other group. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions will enable humanity to have a more sustainable future.

Individuals, parishes and organizations are encouraged to develop their own road map or plan and to register it with the Vatican Platform. The registration link is: [Enroll - Laudato Si' Action Platform \(laudatosi.actionplatform.org\)](https://laudatosi.actionplatform.org). Enrollment will require three things: doing an annual self-assessment; uploading a reflection on how spiritual values are part of the plan; and providing an annual update that targets the actions and outcomes planned for the year ahead and highlights accomplishments from the year past.

Areas of Concern



The Vatican platform contains seven areas of concern. Since everything exists in relationship to other things, the areas of concern and possible responses overlap.



1) Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of us all as we address climate change, biodiversity loss, and the need for ecological sustainability.

Diocesan Goals

- Identify potential areas for improvement in our ability to live compatibly in the environment God created for us.

Diocesan Actions Completed

- By enrolling in the *Laudato Si'* movement on November 14, 2021, the diocese made a commitment to develop a *Laudato Si'* Action Plan.
- The diocese took its first formal step in developing a plan in July 2022, when Bishop Zinkula met once again via Zoom with the three students, along with Jose Aguto, Executive Director of the Catholic Climate Covenant; Dan DiLeo, a professor from Creighton who was a co-author of the Creighton study mentioned above; two representatives of the Verdis Group, which specializes in assisting organizations with sustainability and climate change resiliency planning; and members of the diocesan staff. The discussion reinforced the desire to develop a diocesan *Laudato Si'* plan of praise, prayer and action.
- The diocese instituted a work-at-home day to reduce chancery energy usage and eliminate a day's worth of harmful emissions from vehicles carrying staff to and from work.
- The chancery garden provides produce for the meals of retired priests who reside at the chancery, reducing the emissions caused by transporting produce from a distant location.
- The diocese replaced a large number of single use/disposable cups, glasses and silverware with reusable counterparts.

Diocesan Actions in Progress

- With the assistance of a grant from the Catholic Climate Covenant, the diocese will undergo a carbon audit by the Verdis Group. Verdis will assess the total carbon footprint of the chancery building and all associated operations and make recommendations to reduce their carbon footprint and move toward carbon neutrality.

Suggestions for Parish and School Action

- Reduce electrical consumption by switching to LED lighting and replacing standard switches with proximity sensor switches.
- Schedule energy efficient appliance replacements when less efficient appliances wear out.
- For decorative purposes, use potted flowers that can be planted around church structures or provided to parishioners rather than purchasing flower bouquets that must be transported from great distances and later will be discarded.
- Hold sessions with organizations such as Iowa Interfaith Power and Light to educate parishioners on household environmental and energy efficient improvements.

Parish and School Accomplishments

- The far-sighted parishioners of St. Ann Parish, Long Grove, selected geothermal heating when they built their new church. Later, they replaced all lighting, including exterior and parking lot, with LED fixtures. Three years ago, they installed a solar array under a power purchase agreement, which reduces their electric costs/demand on the power grid.

- Notre Dame High School, Burlington, installed a solar array in 2017 under a power purchase agreement to reduce electrical costs and to serve as a model for others in the community. This resulted in other local schools investing in solar arrays to reduce electrical costs/demand.
- Saints Mary and Mathias Parish, Muscatine, installed LED lighting and timers to reduce electrical consumption in its 100-year-old church building.
- Immaculate Consumption Parish, Colfax, plants trees as memorials for those who have died and encourages parishioners to do likewise.
- St. Patrick Church, Iowa City, was built from the ground up as a LEED church, which means it implemented the international standard for energy efficient, eco-friendly structures. The church has many energy saving features in its electrical system and structure.

Suggestions for Individual and Family Action

- Plant a garden or assist with a community garden to provide produce for food pantries. Involve local ethnic communities in the garden to produce food native to their culture.
- Switch to LED lighting and energy saving appliances.
- Design patios and outdoor areas to be eco-friendly, providing for the management of storm water and habitat for animals and beneficial insects.
- Take children to state and local parks, forest preserves and lakes. Make observations during these visits about the place of each in our environment.
- Compost yard waste and non-animal kitchen waste to provide for soil enrichment.
- Replace lawns with habitat more closely resembling Iowa native prairie flowers and grasses.

Individual and Family Accomplishments



2) Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call to promote ecological justice and raise awareness that humanity's relationship to the earth is special. We are called to defend all human life, from conception to death, and all forms of life on earth. Island nations threatened by rising sea levels, an increase in the number and intensity of monsoons wiping out vulnerable populations, child labor in mining which contributes to carbon emissions, and malnutrition due to the effects of climate change are all examples of people who are poor being impacted by climate changes.

Diocesan Goals

- Recruit two candidates for environmental leadership roles as *Laudato Si'* animators ([Laudato Si' Animators \(laudatosianimators.org\)](http://Laudato Si' Animators (laudatosianimators.org))).

Diocesan Actions Completed

- The chancery houses a multicultural ministry office, an educational office and other support for family life; a social action office that assists parishes and non-profit organizations in the diocese; and an immigration program to assist families separated by immigration to reunite.
- Through grants, the diocese provides assistance to anti-hunger efforts, various child-related services, and community organizers working to benefit marginalized people within the diocese.

Suggestions for Parish and School Action

- Create outreach to the marginalized in the community.
- Provide welcoming materials and signage in multiple languages.
- Support programs such as Special Olympics and events for other-abled in the parish, school and community.
- Work with refugee settlement agencies to help refugees and immigrants become established in communities.
- Support food pantries and clothing distribution.
- Establish a Creation Care Team to assist parish implementation of the plan.

Parish and School Accomplishments

- Our Lady of Victory Parish, Davenport, has a *Laudato Si'* animator, who recruited a number of parishioners to participate in a capstone project of pairing a grandparent with a grandchild in an ecological "Grand Adventure," and continues to provide the parish with opportunities in support of *Laudato Si'*.
- St. Anthony Parish, Davenport, provides food to the homeless at McAnthony Window, maintains a clothing distribution center, and has a book club that helps educate parishioners and interested people on topics of social concern.
- St. Ann Parish, Long Grove, provides spiritual programming for special needs children and adults, and supports the Special Olympics and the North Scott Food pantry.

Suggestions for Individual and Family Action

- Become informed by attending local presentations on homelessness, hunger, refugee settlement, immigration, housing, assistance to single mothers, and community health.
- Participate in the outreach activities of your parish or social service organizations in the community.
- Advocate on behalf of Catholic Social Teaching issues with our legislators via phone calls, emails and visits to regional offices. Be an advocate in your community through contact with mayors, city councils, and county boards of supervisors.

Individual and Family Accomplishments



Ecological Economics

3) Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society embedded within the biosphere – our common home. The economy should exist for the benefit of all people and not the other way around. It should not be the case that some persons are harmed to benefit others. Actions in this area could include moving from a linear economy of extract, manufacture, use and disposal to a more circular economy in which resources are extracted in the least impactful way and products use the fewest materials. Other actions could include ethical investments, prioritizing labor, and protecting the dignity of workers.

Diocesan Goals

- One program offering per year for the remainder of the plan based on identified emerging issues in which proponents of business and care for creation come together to address concerns about climate change and actions to combat it.

Diocesan Actions Completed

- Conversation among business leaders and scholars at St. Ambrose University in 2019 on the topics of multinational corporate investment and corporate stewardship in light of our Catholic Christian faith (<http://www.catholicmessenger.net/2019/10/caring-for-our-common-home-faith-and-business-leaders-share-insights-on-stewardship-of-earth/>).
- Bishop Zinkula convened a panel of business and religious organizations at St. Patrick Church, Iowa City, in 2021 to discuss the intersection of business and the environment. Panelists were the senior vice president of the world's largest truck stop, a Franciscan sister, and a wholesale distributor of sustainable products and systems. Panelists highlighted both legislative issues that blocked climate friendly and business opportunities for environment focused business, and what a religious order has accomplished. (<https://www.catholicmessenger.net/2021/09/bishop-and-business-leaders-cultivate-sustainability-in-iowa/>).

Suggestions for Individual and Family Action

Individual and Family Accomplishments

4) Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is about us, as individuals and families. While there are actions that we can take associated with all of the areas of concern, without our personal adoption of a sustainable lifestyle – spiritually and practically – it will be much more difficult to commit to the many other challenges we face. The essence of a sustainable lifestyle is to live simply so that others may simply live. What was given us was given us to share.

Diocesan Goals

- Identify strategies for simpler, yet more productive living so that we may be more supportive of our global brothers and sisters.

Diocesan Actions Completed

- The diocese instituted a work-at-home day to reduce chancery energy usage and eliminate a day's worth of harmful emissions from vehicles carrying staff to and from work.
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Suggestions for Parish and School Action

- Reduce electrical consumption by switching to LED lighting and replacing standard switches with proximity sensor switches.
- Schedule energy efficient appliance replacements when less efficient appliances wear out.
- For decorative purposes, use potted flowers that can be planted around church and school structures or provided to parishioners rather than purchasing flower bouquets that must be transported from great distances and later will be discarded.
- Hold sessions with sustainability focused organizations such as Iowa Interfaith Power and Light or National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to educate parishioners on household environmental and energy efficient improvements.

Parish and School Accomplishments

Suggestions for Individual and Family Action

Individual and Family Accomplishments



5) Ecological Education is about re-thinking and re-designing curricula and institutions (foundations, institutes, professional societies) in the spirit of our mutual dependency to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Our educational systems must be keyed on interrelationships and redefining progress in terms of what it does for all peoples. Equitable access to education for all, promoting human rights, fostering *Laudato Si'* themes within curricula and educational communities, and encouraging ecological leadership among students and teachers are examples.

Diocesan Goals

- Enroll one parish in the JustFaith Faith and Poverty: A Global Response program, or a program in the JustFaith Eco-Justice Series.
- Present two programs to parishes, one featuring the CRS climate action (<https://www.crs.org/media-center/current-issues/climate-crisis-facts-and-how-help>) and one featuring the JustFaith series of programs.

Diocesan Actions Completed

- Two Social Action Department staff members participated in the Faith and Poverty: A Global Response program.
- The Social Action Department provided a continuing series of articles and other material via email to parish advocates.

Suggestions for Parish and School Action

Parish and School Accomplishments

Suggestions for Individual and Family Action

Individual and Family Accomplishments



6) Ecological Spirituality springs from a profound conversion based on the relationship of all things and all people so that we “discover God in all things.” We discover God in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick and the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit has a connection to worldly realities. Actions could include promoting creation-based liturgical celebrations, expanding our theology of creation, and developing ecological catechesis, retreats and formation programs.

Diocesan Goals

- Celebrate the Season of Creation each year (praise, prayer and action) from September 1 to October 4, the Feast of St. Francis.
- Create a Care for Creation team with members from each deanery to assist in developing each year’s Season of Creation celebration.
- Offer one special program each week of the season.
- Offer at least one in-person prayer gathering each year, such as a mysteries of creation rosary or an ecological Way of The Cross.
- Hold at least one gathering each year in a rural community of the diocese highlighting the significance of rural communities and the connection of the communities to the created world, including other nations.
- List parish accomplishments in the annual celebration of Care for Creation.

Suggestions for Parish and School Action

Parish and School Accomplishments

Suggestions for Individual and Family Action

Individual and Family Accomplishments



7) Community Resilience and Empowerment envisages a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels, a recognition that society is based on communities of families, and an acknowledgement that everyone has a role in the health of the community. Actions could include promoting advocacy for resilience and empowerment, and encouraging rootedness and a sense of belonging in local communities and neighborhood ecosystems.

Diocesan Goals

- Care for Creation teams will make two visits each year to local offices of elected federal senators and representatives to stress the Catholic Church's urgent concern for action to counteract climate change.
- One program per year will be provided to present the FEMA concept that it takes a community to respond to disasters in a community.

Diocesan Actions Completed

Suggestions for Parish and School Action

Parish and School Accomplishments

Suggestions for Individual and Family Action

Individual and Family Accomplishments

Calendar of Events

We will provide a current calendar of events. We encourage people to use our contacts page to inform us of events in parish and school localities. Even if it is impractical for everyone to attend events across the diocese, just knowing what is happening elsewhere inspires others. Please come back often to see what is going on.

We need your involvement. Please use the form below to indicate your interest in care for creation, and any special skills or experience you have. We also welcome your ideas, comments, suggestions and questions.

[Care for Creation - Diocese of Davenport - Davenport, IA \(davenportdiocese.org\)](http://davenportdiocese.org) See form at bottom of page.