

CARE FOR CREATION



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
—OF YOUNGSTOWN—

AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE DIOCESE OF YOUNGSTOWN

JANUARY 2025, 1ST EDITION

On the Cover:

Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) was named the patron saint of ecologists in 1979 by Saint Pope John Paul II. Saint Francis lived in unity with all of nature. His Canticle of the Sun praises creation and names elements of the world around us as our siblings. Such a relationship promotes a life of kinship with nature in which all our brothers and sisters deserve care and respect. Saint Francis' humility, his life of harmony with all of creation, gives us a timeless inspiration for Gospel living.

Letter from the Most Reverend David J. Bonnar, Bishop of Youngstown



My Dear Friends,

Our baptism calls us to live the Gospel in our own time, to understand it and to make it relevant in our world. The late Pope Francis has said, "The opposite of conversion is 'immobility,' the secret belief that we have nothing else to learn from the Gospel." In his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis laid out our Gospel call to "ecological conversion," a way of living sustainably to care for the Earth and its people. It is not an easy path to follow, requiring commitment and sacrifice, but it is a journey of great beauty and grace. People of faith praise and honor God through our safekeeping of all creation.

In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis exhorted all people of good will to step up immediately and take bold action toward the goals of *Laudato Si'*. In light of this essential challenge, I appointed a committee to help us as a diocese to answer this call. Represented on the committee are people from sectors of our diocese that daily undertake to live the Gospel in the world – from families, parishes, schools, and social service institutions. Together they have researched the ways that our people are already answering the call and the many ways that we can all move forward to promote the care of our common home.

Our portion of the Lord's vineyard spans from Lake to River, across fields, farms, cities, and towns. No matter what circumstance each of us dwells in, we are all connected to each other, depending on each other, and affecting each other every day in our decisions. What follows are materials to help us make decisions for the common good so that we may live as one in faith, hope, and love, and in our response to the continuing call of conversion.

May the caring actions outlined in this plan bring us closer to each other and to the Gospel way of life. Please join me in praying, "That all may be one."

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "+ David J. Bonnar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend David J. Bonnar
Bishop of Youngstown

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Why a Creation Care Action Plan?

The answer to this question is threefold. First and foremost, in the Sacred Scriptures each of us has been given a sacred command by God Himself to care for the world over which we have been given dominion. (“*The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.*” Genesis 2:15) This sacred dominion over the Earth (“*Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.*” Genesis 1:28) is not direct ownership, but a partnership and a stewardship. We cannot dispose of the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and this planet simply as we see fit. (“*The earth is the LORD’s and all it holds, the world and those who dwell in it.*” Psalm 24:1) Rather, we must work hard to make use of them in a way that is pleasing to God, and which respects the innate dignity of Creation itself. Creation reveals to us the nature of God and proclaims His divine glory. (“*Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made.* Romans 1:20) The world in which we live is a gift from God, which must be treated with the utmost respect.

Secondly, Church teaching speaks directly to our sacred duty to care for creation. Pope Saint John Paul II stated in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, “A true concept of development cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization - three considerations which alert our consciences to the moral dimension of development.” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, #34) An authentic, integral development of the human person cannot be separated from the person’s environment. The destruction, exploitation, and pollution of the environment is distinguished not merely as a material issue, but as a moral issue that impacts our relationship with God.

Pope Francis has expanded on the work of his predecessors, giving the Church his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, and the apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum*. The Holy Father has emphasized the radical importance of our common home, especially in how it connects each and every one of us to each other and to God. As Francis writes, “Everything is connected. Concern for the environment...needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.” (*Laudato Si’*, #91) Pope Francis has ignited a special concern for the planet in the Catholic consciousness. His works are a significant inspiration for this document, as they have given us a direct teaching on the goals we pursue for our communities as the Roman Catholic Church.

Thirdly, this action plan has been created so that every part of the Diocese of Youngstown may have the opportunity to engage with our sacred duty to care for creation. We recognize that it is necessary for national governments, multinational corporations, and international interests to make significant changes to have the greatest impact on the environment. However, it is also necessary that Catholics on all levels of community to develop their conscience in these matters, because “what is important is something less quantitative: the need to realize that there are no lasting changes without cultural changes, without a maturing of lifestyles and convictions within societies, and there are no cultural changes without personal changes.” (*Laudate Deum* #70)

And so, we ask every Catholic in the Diocese of Youngstown to enter into this journey with us, to join us in doing our best to learn about, to care for, to cultivate, and to safeguard the gift which we have been given. This action plan on caring for creation has been produced and is being offered for the integral, authentic, moral development of our community, for individuals, families, parishes, and more. We hope that this action plan will be both a beginning and a guide for all who wish to care for God’s creation.

Canticle of the Sun - St. Francis of Assisi

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessings.

To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures;
especially Brother Sun, who is the day, and through whom You give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
and bears a likeness to You, Most High One.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars;
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night;
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord,
through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord,
through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord,
and give Him thanks,
and serve Him with great humility. Amen.

St. Francis of Assisi, "The Canticle of the Sun," ed. Franciscan Friars, T.O.R., Franciscan Ministries and Missions, August 29, 2021,
<https://franciscanfriarscresson.org/the-canticle-of-the-sun/>.

Caring for Creation as Individuals and Families



“I cannot deny that it is necessary to be honest and recognize that the most effective solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level.

Nonetheless, every little bit helps, and avoiding an increase of a tenth of a degree in the global temperature would already suffice to alleviate some suffering for many people....

Efforts by households to reduce pollution and waste, and to consume with prudence, are creating a new culture. The mere fact that personal, family and community habits are changing is contributing to greater concern about the unfulfilled responsibilities of the political sectors and indignation at the lack of interest shown by the powerful. Let us realize, then, that even though this does not immediately produce a notable effect from the quantitative standpoint, we are helping to bring about large processes of transformation rising from deep within society.” (*Laudate Deum*, #69-71)

This section is inspired by the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform: (<https://laudatosi.actionplatform.org/>)

Suggestions for Individuals and Families to IMPROVE ENERGY CONSERVATION:

1. Know Your Impact:

Calculate your carbon footprint with an energy audit. (EPA’s calculator: <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>.) Being aware of your impact is the first step to energy conservation.

2. Be Energy Conscious:

- a. Install efficient lighting and appliances, such as automatic switches and LED lighting.
- b. Improve insulation for your HVAC system. Properly insulated and ventilated buildings use less energy to achieve the same climate indoors.
- c. Install a programmable thermostat – helps maintain temperatures in the home
- d. Reduce the use of A/C and heat, when possible. When off, it’s saving emissions and money.

3. Inspect and Maintain:

- a. Routine maintenance on water, electricity, and waste pipes to check for properly seals helps to uphold the health of our soil and ourselves.
- b. Maintaining our vehicles helps to keep them not only roadworthy but also to keep their emissions down and extend their life, which reduces waste.

4. Travel Wisely

- a. Carpool to lower emissions and save on gas. Use public transportation when possible. If you can go on foot, it’s both healthy and saves the environment.
- b. Consolidate trips to the store by planning ahead and grouping errands.

Suggestions for individuals and families to CONSERVE, PRESERVE, AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES:

1. Appliances

- a. Install low-flow water appliances (taps, dishwashers, toilets, etc.). This reduces cost and waste.
- b. Conduct routine maintenance on water appliances to ensure further reduction of waste.

2. Drinking and Cooking Water

- a. Use tap water when possible and use refillable water bottles whenever possible.

3. Gardening

- a. When watering your home garden, use the most efficient and direct water feeding method, rather than sprinklers which tend to be inefficient and wasteful of water.

4. Filtration Systems

- a. Look into gray water and catchment systems to see whether they may be a good fit for your household. (<https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/aex-gw1>)
- b. Try to use non-disposable filter systems for your water, to reduce waste.
- c. If using a water softener, try to be prudent with how frequently you refill it and try to use it only for hygiene purposes.

Suggestions for individuals and families to REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE:

1. Sign up for a local recycling program (if available).

- a. Get a recycling bin and learn about the recycling program. Recycling may seem to not reduce your carbon footprint by much, but it is still effective at reducing total carbon emissions by diverting waste from landfills.

2. Try to eliminate the use of ‘disposable’ plastic and Styrofoam products, such as cups, plates, and cutlery.

- a. This may be tough, since these materials are more affordable and easier to use. However, recyclable paper products, or products made from recycled materials are a great replacement for them.

3. Use reusable materials whenever possible.

- a. Fabric tablecloths, metal cutlery, and ceramic or glass dishware can be washed. One of the best ways to eliminate personal pollution is to reuse what we have.

4. Buy used, repair, and repurpose when possible.

- a. Learn how to repair before going to buy new.
- b. Learn how to repurpose where possible.
- c. Donate your reusable goods rather than throwing them away,

Suggestions for individuals and families to BUY AND SHARE FOOD THOUGHTFULLY:

1. Product In - Product Out

- a. America throws out about 60 million tons of food (120 billion pounds) every year. Keep track of your household food waste and act to eliminate it. Encourage your family to be mindful of the food that we are blessed with and not to waste whenever possible.
- b. Use food waste by learning about and maintaining a compost site on your property. (<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/forms/composting-food-scraps-your-community-social-marketing-toolkit>)

2. Food Banks, Farmers, and Others

- a. Volunteer for food drives for charitable food pantries in your area to help those with less food security.
- b. Join or volunteer at a community dinner as often as you are able. If one doesn't exist in your area, try start one.
- c. Get to know the people who grow/raise your food, such as dairy and cattle farmers. They can be great educators about sustainability, and it helps to connect us to the origin of our meals.
- d. Produce food at home by planting a garden if possible.

3. The Rice Bowl

- a. The Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl campaign is a great way to raise consciousness about food insecurity in the United States and around the world. Reach out to your diocesan director for Catholic Relief Services for more information about this campaign. (<https://doy.org/peace-and-justice/>)
- b. PovertyUSA.org has resources for sharing the facts and statistics about poverty in our country. (<https://www.povertyusa.org/poverty-usa-catholic-campaign-human-development>)

Suggestions for individuals and families to USE LAND AND BUILDINGS SUSTAINABLY:

1. Remove Invasive Species

- a. Find a list of local invasive plant species and how to identify them. (For example, <https://agri.ohio.gov/divisions/plant-health/invasive-pests/invasive-and-noxious-plants/invasive-plants>) Remove invasive plants from your property and stop the planting of them.

2. Plant Native and Protect Pollinators

- a. Find a list of native plants and trees, with special attention to which ones are best to help combat local environmental problems and which are preferable for pollinators (for example, <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/ENT-47>) . Plant them on your property. Share the list with your friends and family and encourage them to plant them.
- b. Try your best to replace any grass lawn with native gardens. (<https://www.toledolibrary.org/blog/ohio-native-lawn-replacements>)
- c. If possible, build an apiary (beehive) - as a bonus for helping the bees, you get honey. (<https://ohiodnr.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/Ohio+Content+English/oda/divisions/plant-health/apiary-program/management>)

3. Water and Soil Conservation

- a. Ensure that all water drainage is properly maintained and routed to the correct disposal area.
- b. Do your best to ensure that there are native plants to maintain the health of the soil.
- c. Reduce the use of artificial fertilizer where possible and apply it with prudence.

4. Litter Prevention and Control

- a. Take time to promote healthy and sanitary living spaces by preventing and even picking up litter. Leave a place cleaner than when you got there.
- b. Volunteer to clean up your local parks.

Suggestions for individuals and families to USE FINANCES JUSTLY:

1. Investment

- a. If you have any investments, seek to place them in sustainable and socially responsible portfolios; if possible, identify resources that can be redirected towards enterprises such as renewable energy or clean drinking water.
- b. If possible, prioritize collaborating with Catholic and other agencies to invest or donate, either financially or through volunteer time, to efforts to install renewable energy in developing countries.

2. Banking and Insurance

- a. If you can choose your bank or insurance provider, seek information to learn whether their investment or insurance portfolios include fossil fuel companies or other socially irresponsible investments. If so, review alternative banks or insurance providers to choose a better option.
- b. If you are not able to choose your bank or insurer due to regulations or other factors, speak with the bank or insurance provider to learn whether they invest in socially responsible investments; if not, encourage them to do so.

3. Education

- a. Learn about socially responsible investments and using our dollar to make a difference. (for example, [https://www.usccb.org/resources/Socially%20Responsible%20Investment%20Guidelines%202021%20\(003\).pdf](https://www.usccb.org/resources/Socially%20Responsible%20Investment%20Guidelines%202021%20(003).pdf))
- b. Learn about gift economy values, which encourages the free giving of goods and services without expectation of financial compensation.

4. Local Businesses

- a. Make a point of purchasing from local retailers. Consider criteria such as preferring in-person purchases to online purchases, preferring small-scale farmers and retailers, and establishing direct and ongoing relationships with producers whenever possible.
- b. Support the purchase of recycled materials, promote the sharing of goods, and highlight employers/employees in your community whose business(es) meet the criteria for being a socially responsible firm.
- c. Promote the importance of care workers and their fair treatment. Janitors, cooks, health aides, and others whose work makes our lives better deserve to be recognized for their important contributions.

Suggestions for individuals and families to UNDERSTAND, ADVOCATE, and SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT CARING FOR CREATION:

1. Learn About It

- a. Learn more about Catholic Social Teaching and Care for Creation from your parish and diocese. (for example, <https://catechistcafe.weebly.com/justice--peace.html>, and <https://catechistcafe.weebly.com/care-for-creation.html>)
- b. Go online to the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>), the Catholic Climate Covenant (<https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>), and the *Laudato Si'* Movement (<https://laudatosimovement.org/>) to learn more about Care for Creation.

2. Gather a Team Together

- a. Establish a volunteer team to take charge of the work of Creation Care at your parish. The team does not have to be large to make a significant contribution.

3. Promote Care for Creation and Advocate for Environmental Justice

- a. With a team established, you can enroll the parish in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform which provides opportunities for parish engagement.
- b. Volunteer for community events where there is an emphasis on the use of sustainable and socially responsible products.
- c. Personally advocate with state legislators for legislation that promotes the care of creation.
- d. Engage with local environmental agencies and ecological educational centers (shelters, zoos, conservation centers, farms, etc.) to promote a relationship with creation in your household.
- e. Meet with local community leaders to promote the care of creation in your own neighborhood.
- f. Build a community garden as a permanent fixture representing the dedication of you and your community to the care of creation.

PRAYER FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES:

Litany in Honor of St. Isidore

Adapted from "Litany in Honor of St. Isidore the Farmer, Patron of Farmers & Workers | Diocese of San Angelo | San Angelo, Texas," The Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, accessed January 14, 2025, <https://sanangelodiocese.org/litany-st-isidore>.

St. Isidore, pray for us.

St. Isidore, patron of farmers, pray for us.

St. Isidore, model of laborers, pray for us.

St. Isidore, support of family life, pray for us.

St. Isidore, lover of the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us.

St. Isidore, lover of God's earth, pray for us.

St. Isidore, lover of fellowmen, pray for us.

St. Isidore, most patient, pray for us.

St. Isidore, most humble, pray for us.

St. Isidore, most just, pray for us.

Jesus, Our Lord, hear us.

Protect all tillers of the soil; Lord, hear us.

Bring to all a true knowledge of the stewardship of the land; Lord hear us.

Preserve and increase our fields and flocks; Lord hear us.

Grant peace and harmony in our homes: Lord, hear us.

Grant, O Lord, that through the intercession of Saint Isidore the Farmer, we may follow his example of patience and humility and so walk faithfully in his footsteps so that we may be able to present to You an abundant harvest of good fruits, You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Learn more about St. Isidore the Farmer: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-isidore-the-farmer/>

Caring for Creation as a Parish



“Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.” (*Laudato Si*, #67)

We are called as a parish community to “till and keep” the garden of this world. (“The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.” Genesis 2:15) The parish has always been the primary place to experience the life of the Church; it is the fundamental community of faith into which we are born and raised. Because of this, we should join with our parish community to raise our parishes up as an offering of joy to the Lord!

This section is inspired by the *Laudato Si*’ Action Platform: (<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>)

Suggestions for parishes to IMPROVE ENERGY CONSERVATION:

1. Know Our Impact:

- a. Calculate and track the parish carbon footprint through an energy audit. (Here is the EPA’s free calculator: <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>.) Being aware of your impact is the first step to energy conservation. Track the impact of your efforts and report them back to the parish.

2. Be Energy Conscious:

- a. Install efficient lighting and appliances, such as automatic switches for bathrooms and LED lighting. It is an initial expense that will in the long term save money.
- b. Improve insulation to reduce heat and A/C impact. Properly insulated and ventilated buildings use less energy to achieve the same climate indoors.
- c. Install programmable thermostats - they have become much more affordable in recent years and can do much of the work of regulating temperature for the least cost and best performance.

3. Inspect and Maintain:

- a. Routine maintenance of building systems and parish vehicles is a key component to energy efficiency.
- b. A good building services manager can make a huge difference toward energy conservation by routinely and reliably seeing that things are turned off, temperatures are set back or programmed, systems are serviced regularly, and energy-using spaces and devices are consolidated where possible. A cost-conscious building manager is an *invaluable* member of a parish creation care team.
- c. Visit <https://laudatosimovement.org/news/10-ways-to-green-your-parish/> to learn more.

4. Travel Arrangements

- a. Encourage your parish community to hold virtual meetings when possible.
- b. Encourage your parishioners to carpool, when possible, to in-person events.
- c. Consider what vehicles your parish uses for its activities and if you might be able to find a more environmentally friendly option (such as a hybrid or electric vehicle).
- d. Consider how events are planned to help reduce the amount of traveling that parishioners need to do to be present.

Suggestions for parishes to CONSERVE, PRESERVE, AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES:

1. Inside the Parish Buildings

- a. Install low-flow water appliances (taps, dishwashers, toilets, etc.) to reduce both cost and waste.
- b. Try to use tap water, when possible, be it filtered, from the city, or from the well. Bottled water creates a large amount of waste, in plastic and in water resources.
- c. Routine maintenance of water appliances can ensure further reduction of waste.

2. Outside the Parish

- a. Collaborate with schools to organize community training on gray water systems for use in gardens.
- b. Collaborate with Catholic Charities or other agencies to provide funding for boreholes, catchment systems, or similar water projects in the developing world; establish a relationship with the Diocese to directly support this effort.
- c. Connect with members of the agricultural community to learn about water consumption on large scales and work together to find affordable ways to reduce water waste.

Suggestions for parishes to REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE:

1. Sign your parish up for a local recycling program (if available).

- a. Place recycling bins next to each trash receptacle and educate parishioners about the recycling program. Recycling is effective at reducing total carbon emissions by diverting waste from landfills.

2. Try to eliminate the use of ‘disposable’ plastic and Styrofoam products, such as cups, plates, and cutlery.

- a. This may be tough, since these materials are cheap and easier to use. However, recyclable paper products, or products made from recycled materials are a great replacement for them.

3. Encourage the use of reusable materials at parish events, such as fabric tablecloths, metal cutlery, and ceramic or glass dishware, that can be washed.

- a. Although this may not work in every circumstance, it is the most effective way to reduce waste at events where food and drink are served.
- b. A dedicated dishwashing/laundry team makes for a great volunteer opportunity for anyone to chip in.

4. Encourage the parish community to buy used, if possible, to repair what can be repaired, to repurpose what can’t be fixed, and to give to others what we no longer need.

- a. Host a “Baby and Children’s Clothing Exchange” event.
- b. Host a “Rummage Day” for the parish, with opportunities for parishioners to learn repair skills and repurposing ideas.

Suggestions for parishes to BUY AND SHARE FOOD THOUGHTFULLY:

1. Product In - Product Out

- a. America throws out about 60 million tons of food (120 billion pounds) every year. Take the time to calculate the parish food costs and quantity over the course of one year. While doing so, take time to note how much food is wasted at your events. Keeping track of this and acting to improve it can both lower costs and decrease waste.

- b. Encourage parishioners to be mindful of the food that we are blessed with, at home and in the parish.
 - c. Maintain a compost site on the parish grounds where possible.
- 2. Food Banks, Farmers, and Others**
- a. Host food drives for charitable food pantries in your area, like St. Vincent de Paul, to help those with less security.
 - b. Host a community dinner as often as you are able, for all to share, parishioner or not.
 - c. Host an event for parishioners to meet with people who work directly with the agricultural and livestock industries - the people who grow/raise your food are great educators on the subject and it helps to connect us to the origin of our meals.
 - d. Encourage the production of food at home by collaborating with parishioners and schools to conduct community workshops on effective and sustainable gardening methods that are appropriate for the area; if possible, provide seeds or seedlings for community members to use at home.
- 3. The Rice Bowl**
- a. The Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl campaign is a great way to raise consciousness about food insecurity in the United States and around the world. Reach out to your diocesan director for Catholic Relief Services for more information about this campaign. (<https://doy.org/peace-and-justice/>)
 - b. PovertyUSA.org has great resources for sharing the facts and statistics about poverty in the U.S. (<https://www.povertyusa.org/poverty-usa-catholic-campaign-human-development>)

Suggestions for parishes to USE LAND AND BUILDINGS SUSTAINABLY:

- 1. Remove Invasive Species**
- a. Find a list of local invasive plant species and how to identify them. (For example, <https://agri.ohio.gov/divisions/plant-health/invasive-pests/invasive-and-noxious-plants/invasive-plants>) Remove invasive plants from your land, as much as possible. Stop the planting of invasive species in the future.
- 2. Plant Native and Protect Pollinators**
- a. Find a list of native plants and trees, with special attention to which ones are best to help combat any local environmental problems and which are preferable for pollinators, like honeybees (for example, <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/ENT-47>) . Plant them on parish property. Share the list with parishioners and neighboring schools and encourage them to plant them.
 - b. Try your best to replace any grass lawn with native gardens. Grass monoculture lawns have been shown to be detrimental to the environment in many ways. (for example, <https://www.toledolibrary.org/blog/ohio-native-lawn-replacements>)
 - c. If possible, build an apiary (beehives) that parishioners can care for - as a bonus for helping the bees, you get honey. (for example, <https://ohiodnr.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/Ohio+Content+English/oda/divisions/plant-health/apiary-program/management>)
- 3. Water and Soil Conservation**
- a. Survey the land of your parish and find where there are places that are possible hazards.
 - b. Ensure that all water drainage is properly maintained and routed to the correct disposal area.

- c. Ensure that there are sufficient native plants to maintain the health of the soil.
- d. Reduce the use of artificial fertilizer where possible and apply it with prudence.

4. Litter Prevention and Control

- a. Take time to promote healthy and sanitary living spaces to prevent litter on the streets.
- b. Host an event where your parish conducts litter removal at a local park or even the surrounding area of the parish.

Suggestions for parishes to USE FINANCES JUSTLY:

1. Investment

- a. If the parish has any investments, identify resources that can be redirected towards socially responsible enterprises such as renewable energy or free, clean drinking water.
- b. If possible, prioritize collaborating with Catholic and other agencies to invest or donate, either financially or through volunteer time, to efforts to install renewable energy in developing countries.
- c. If possible, establish a relationship with the Diocese to contribute directly to its renewable energy projects.

2. Banking and Insurance

- a. If the parish is able to choose its bank or insurance provider, seek information from the parish's current banking institution or insurance provider to learn whether their investment or insurance portfolios include fossil fuel companies or other socially irresponsible investments.
- b. If so, review alternative banks or insurance providers, choose a more responsible option, and make a public statement of the commitment to bank and act responsibly.
- c. If the investments are all socially responsible, make a public statement to bank and act responsibly.
- d. If the parish is not able to choose its bank or insurer, speak with the bank or insurance provider to learn whether they invest in socially responsible investments; if not, encourage them to do so.

3. Education

- a. Try to find time and personnel to discuss socially responsible investments with your parishioners about how we can use our dollar to make a difference.
- b. A dedicated member of the Green Team with experience in the financial sector can be a great witness to the power of the average person to choose where their investments lie.
- c. Include information about gift economy values, which encourages the free giving of goods and services without expectation of financial compensation in youth faith formation.

4. Local Businesses

- a. Create a parish policy on purchasing from local retailers. Include criteria such as preferring in-person purchases to online purchases, preferring small-scale farmers and retailers, and establishing direct and ongoing relationships with producers whenever possible.
 - i. Share a list of vendors that meet these criteria with your parishioners and Catholic schools.
 - ii. If possible, collaborate with other parishes and schools to pool purchases with preferred vendors, ensuring that socially responsible enterprises receive the most benefit and creating an opportunity for reductions in cost.

- b. Support the purchase of recycled materials, promote the sharing of goods, and highlight employers/employees in your parish community whose business(es) meet the criteria for being a socially responsible firm.
- c. Promote the importance of care workers and promote their fair treatment in employment. Janitors, cooks, health aides, and others who go about making our lives better, often without our noticing, deserve to be recognized for their important contributions.

Suggestions for parishes to UNDERSTAND, ADVOCATE, and SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT CARING FOR CREATION:

1. Learn About It

- a. The first step for understanding and advocacy is education. To have a successful Green Team or other parish environmental sustainability ministry, the volunteers themselves need to be somewhat familiar with Catholic Social Teaching. Check with the Office of Faith Formation and Lay Ecclesial Ministry (<https://doy.org/ministries/faith-formation-and-lay-ecclesial-ministry/>) or the Office of Peace and Justice (<https://doy.org/peace-and-justice/>) for a speaker to present on Care for Creation and sustainability as well as Catholic Social Teaching
- b. To learn more, check online: the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>), Catholic Climate Covenant (<https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>), and the *Laudato Si'* Movement (<https://laudatosimovement.org/>) all provide great resources for learning more about Care for Creation.

2. Gather a Team of Parishioners Together

- a. Establish a volunteer Creation Care team (a Green Team) to take charge of the work of Creation Care. The team does not have to be large to make a significant contribution.

3. Promote Care for Creation and Advocate for Environmental Justice

- a. With a team established, they can enroll the parish in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform which provides opportunities for parish engagement.
- b. Hosting green events, where there is an emphasis on the use of sustainable and socially responsible products for the event.
- c. Gathering parishioners to advocate in Columbus for state legislation that promotes the care of creation.
- d. Hosting local environmental agencies and ecological educational centers (shelters, zoos, conservation centers, farms, etc.) to promote a relationship with creation.
- e. Meeting with local legislators and community leaders to promote the care of creation in our own neighborhoods.
- f. Building a parish community garden, to be a permanent fixture that represents the dedication of the parish to the care of creation.

PRAYER FOR PARISHES:

Wisdom to Care for the Earth

"Prayers for the Environment and Sustainability," Prayers for the Environment and Sustainability, accessed January 14, 2025, <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/sustainability-prayers>.

*Lord, grant us the wisdom to care for the earth and till it.
Help us to act now for the good of future generations and all your creatures.
Help us to become instruments of a new creation,
Founded on the covenant of your love.
Amen.*



Image by M_wie_Moehre on Pixabay

Caring for Creation as a School



"Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life. Here too, we see the importance of those who shape educational processes. They affect the way people grow up, learn to live together and shape their future. This responsibility is not limited to schools or universities but extends to society as a whole" (*Laudato Si'*, # 213).

Suggestions for Schools to IMPROVE ENERGY CONSERVATION:

1. Install energy-efficient lighting such as LED bulbs in classrooms, halls, and common areas.
2. Implement a "lights-out policy" in rooms not being used and encourage using natural light.
3. Use energy-efficient appliances (computers, kitchen equipment, etc.) and ensure proper maintenance.
4. Encourage energy-saving behaviors, such as turning off devices and computers after use.
5. Incorporate renewable energy sources like solar panels or wind turbines if possible.

Suggestions for Schools to CONSERVE, PRESERVE, AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES:

1. Install water-saving fixtures, such as low-flow faucets and toilets.
2. Create a rainwater harvesting system for outdoor irrigation of plants or other uses.
3. Monitor water use and fix leaks immediately to prevent wastage.
4. Integrate water conservation education into the curriculum, encouraging students to think critically about water use.
5. Host "water-wise" campaigns that involve students in conserving water both at school and home.

Suggestions for Schools to REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE:

1. Set up recycling stations in classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias for paper, plastic, and metal.
2. Implement a composting program for food scraps and garden waste.
3. Promote the use of reusable materials, like refillable water bottles, lunch containers, and paper.
4. Organize upcycling projects, where students creatively reuse materials for new purposes.
5. Minimize single-use items in school cafeterias and during events.

Suggestions for Schools to BUY AND SHARE FOOD THOUGHTFULLY:

1. Support local and organic food producers when planning meals in the cafeteria.
2. Reduce food waste by implementing a food-sharing program where leftover food is redistributed.
3. Create school gardens where students grow their own food and learn about sustainable agriculture.
4. Hold workshops on food sustainability, teaching students about mindful consumption and reducing food-related waste.
5. Encourage plant-based meals, which have a lower environmental footprint.

Suggestions for Schools to USE LAND AND BUILDINGS SUSTAINABLY:

1. Green school grounds with native plants that require less water and are adapted to local conditions.
2. Incorporate green roofs or rooftop gardens that help insulate buildings and manage rainwater.
3. Retrofit buildings for energy efficiency, like adding insulation and using sustainable materials for any construction or renovation projects.
4. Organize outdoor learning spaces to reduce indoor energy use and help students connect with nature.
5. Establish partnerships with environmental organizations for land preservation or community green projects.

Suggestions for Schools to USE FINANCES JUSTLY:

1. Allocate a portion of the school budget toward sustainable practices like energy conservation and green projects.
2. Invest in fair-trade and ethically sourced materials for school supplies and uniforms.
3. Host fundraising initiatives with a focus on sustainable products or experiences, like eco-friendly events or green campaigns.
4. Adopt a transparent budgeting process where environmental and social factors are considered alongside economic ones.
5. Support green business initiatives and encourage students to explore sustainable entrepreneurship.

Suggestions for schools to UNDERSTAND AND ADVOCATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

1. Incorporate environmental justice topics into the curriculum, highlighting how climate change and pollution disproportionately affect vulnerable communities.
2. Partner with local communities to support environmental justice initiatives, such as clean-up projects or green space creation in underserved areas.
3. Invite guest speakers from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences with environmental justice issues.
4. Encourage student involvement in campaigns and advocacy efforts related to environmental policies.
5. Create environmental justice clubs where students can discuss and act on these issues locally and globally.

Suggestions for Schools to SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT CARING FOR CREATION:

1. Develop school-wide campaigns that raise awareness about caring for the Earth, through posters, announcements, and assemblies.
2. Create an environmental newsletter where students and staff can share ideas, success stories, and eco-friendly tips.
3. Use social media platforms to promote green initiatives and inspire the wider community.
4. Host an annual “Earth Day” celebration or week, with events, activities, and competitions focused on caring for creation.

5. Encourage inter-school collaboration, working with other schools on joint environmental initiatives and campaigns.

PRAYER FOR SCHOOLS:

*God of Creation,
We thank You for the gift of this Earth,
For the lands, seas, and skies that nurture and sustain us.
Guide our school as we seek to honor and protect this precious gift.
Help us to conserve energy and water,
To reduce waste, and to care for the resources entrusted to us.
Teach us to live with compassion, mindful of those most affected by environmental harm.
Inspire our hearts to take action and advocate for justice,
That all may share in the bounty of Your creation.
May our efforts be a reflection of Your love for all living things,
And may we always strive to preserve this world for future generations.
Amen*



Image by VanVangelis on Pixabay

Caring for Creation as a Faith Formation Process



“How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance or endlessly recurring cycles! The Creator can say to each one of us: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you” (Jeremiah 1:5). We were conceived in the heart of God. (*Laudato Si'*, no. 65)

Suggestions for faith formation programs to IMPROVE ENERGY CONSERVATION:

1. Setting temperature to 78°F in the summer when building is occupied and 85°F unoccupied, 68°F in winter when building is occupied and 60°F unoccupied per the U.S. Department of Energy.
2. Turn off the lights when the room is unoccupied.
3. Unplug electronics that are not in use.

Suggestions for faith formation programs to CONSERVE, PRESERVE, AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES:

1. After sessions, check that faucets are turned off in restroom sinks.
2. Encourage using reusable water bottles.

Suggestions for faith formation programs to REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE:

1. Use biodegradable cups, plates, and carry out containers.
2. Provide recycling containers for plastic, aluminum, paper, and glass.
3. Use reusable utensils.

Suggestions for faith formation programs to BUY AND SHARE FOOD THOUGHTFULLY:

1. Do not over buy or prepare more food than will be consumed at the event.
2. Request and accept donated items to be shared with persons in need.
3. Reduce individually wrapped condiments when possible.

Suggestions for faith formation programs to USE LAND AND BUILDINGS SUSTAINABLY:

1. Leave the space you have used cleaner than you found it.
2. Plan service opportunities which demonstrate landscaping projects using natural products (no chemicals).
3. Periodically demonstrate appreciation to parish/school maintenance staff (i.e. make thank you cards).

Suggestions for faith formation programs to USE FINANCES JUSTLY:

1. Purchase only what is needed.
2. Buy local when possible.
3. Accept donated supplies from parishioners' surplus.
4. Purchase reusable products when possible and as storage allows.

Suggestions for faith formation programs to UNDERSTAND AND ADVOCATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

1. Catechists can include Care for Creation objectives from the Diocesan Curriculum for Catechesis in sessions for all ages, grades preschool through 12. Use high school objectives for adults. (<https://catechistcafe.weebly.com/curriculum-for-catechesis.html>)
2. Include bulletin announcements with an explanation of public policy issues on the environment that impact the common good.

Suggestions for faith formation programs to SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT CARING FOR CREATION:

1. Organize an environmental awareness day at your parish.
2. Have an informational table at any parish event with resources for all age groups.
3. Include intentions in the Universal Prayers on a regular basis.

PRAYER FOR FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS:

*Dear God,
You are the fount of all blessings,
source of all life,
and giver of all grace:*

*We thank You for the gift of life:
for air, food, and water;
for the love of family and friends;
for all the things without which
we couldn't continue to live.*

*We thank You for the mystery of creation:
for the beauty that the eye can see,
for the marvels that the ear can hear,
for all the amazing mysteries that fill
the universe with wonder.*

*Help us to grow in knowledge and
appreciation of Your Creation,
To be good stewards of what You have given us,
And to always remember that every good gift
comes only from You.*

*We thank You for this day and for our life.
We thank You that You are our God, our Creator,
and our Savior.*

*For these, and all blessings,
we give You thanks, eternal, loving God,
through Jesus Christ we pray.*

Amen.

Caring for Creation for Health Care



Catholic healthcare ministries are called to care for creation as an integral part of their mission to uphold human dignity and promote the common good. Grounded in Catholic Social Teaching, they recognize that protecting the environment is essential for the well-being of all people, especially the most vulnerable.

Suggestions for health care facilities to IMPROVE ENERGY CONSERVATION:

1. **Implement LED Lighting** – Replace traditional incandescent or florescent bulbs with energy efficient LED lighting throughout facilities. LED lights consume less energy, last longer and reduce maintenance costs. This simple switch can lead to immediate energy savings.
2. **Optimize HVAC Systems** – Invest in upgrading the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. This can include installing programmable thermostats, implementing energy management systems and ensuring regular maintenance.
3. **Install Renewable Energy Sources** – Install solar panels or another type of renewable energy source on the facility's property to generate a portion of the facility's electricity from renewable sources.

Suggestions for health care facilities to CONSERVE, PRESERVE, AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES:

1. **Conduct Regular Water Audits** – Implement routine water audits to monitor water usage across the facility and identify areas with excessive consumption or potential inefficiencies.
2. **Fix Leaks and Install Low-Flow Fixtures** – Regularly inspect for and repair leaks in faucets, toilets and pipes. Additionally, install low-flow faucets, showerheads and toilets in restrooms.
3. **Upgrade to Water-Efficient Equipment** – Replace older, water intensive equipment (such as sterilizers and washing machines) with modern, water-efficient models. Additionally, consider using water efficient technologies in landscaping and irrigation.

Suggestions for health care facilities to REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE:

1. **Implement Recycling Programs** – Establishing a recycling program is a way to divert waste from landfills and engage staff in sustainability efforts.
2. **Establish a Medical Equipment Reuse Program** – Create a program for safe reuse of medical equipment.
3. **Implement an Industrial Composting Program** – Set up an industrial composting system to manage organic waste from food services and landscaping. This might involve collaborating with a commercial composting facility or developing an on-site composting system.

Suggestions for health care facilities to BUY AND SHARE FOOD THOUGHTFULLY:

1. **Prioritize Seasonal and Local Produce** – Source seasonal and local fruits and vegetables from the facility’s cafeterias and patient meals.
2. **Implement a Sustainable Food Procurement Policy** – Develop a policy that includes sourcing organic, plant based and/or ethically produced foods.
3. **Establish a Partnership with a Local Farm or Community Garden** – Establish a partnership with a local farm or community garden to include fresh produce in the facility’s kitchen and develop programs like onsite produce sales for staff.

Suggestions for health care facilities to USE LAND SUSTAINABLY:

1. **Implement Native and Drought-Resistant Landscaping** – Replace traditional, high maintenance landscaping with native plants and drought resistant species that require less water and fewer chemical inputs like fertilizer and pesticides.
2. **Create Green Spaces for Healing Gardens** – Create healing gardens or green spaces within the facility’s grounds that can be used by patients, visitors and staff that incorporate sustainable design principles.

Suggestions for health care facilities to USE FINANCES JUSTLY:

1. **Prioritize Sustainable Procurement** – Allocate funds to prioritize purchasing eco-friendly, energy efficient and sustainably produced products like cleaning supplies or medical supplies.
2. **Invest in Energy Efficient Infrastructure** – Direct funds towards upgrading infrastructure to be more energy efficient.
3. **Develop and Implement an Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) Investment Strategy** – Commit a portion of the organization’s investment portfolio to ESG funds or projects like divesting from companies that contribute to environmental harm and reinvesting in those that demonstrate strong ESG performance.
4. **Establish a Green Revolving Fund (GRF)** – Create a GRF where savings from energy efficiency or waste reduction projects are reinvested into new sustainability initiatives.

Suggestions for health care facilities to UNDERSTAND AND ADVOCATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

1. **Establish a Sustainability Council or Green Team** – Form a group of staff from various departments to develop and implement sustainability initiatives, track progress, and foster a culture of environmental responsibility.
2. **Commit to Joining a Membership and Networking Organization for Sustainable Healthcare** – Seek out an organization that can provide specialized resources and tools to help improve environmental sustainability in healthcare.

3. **Provide Educational Resources on Environmental Justice** – Curate materials about environmental justice, ecology, and Catholic Social Teaching to provide formational opportunities for staff.

Suggestions for health care facilities to SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT CARING FOR CREATION:

1. **Share Sustainability Stories and Updates** – Regularly share stories and highlights internally and externally to raise awareness, inspire staff and demonstrate the facility’s commitment to caring for creation.
2. **Develop Community Partnerships** – Seek out community organizations to collaborate with on sustainability initiatives pertinent to your locality.
3. **Collaborate with Other Healthcare Facilities** - Develop relationships with local healthcare facilities to collaborate and share ideas on environmental sustainability initiatives.

A Prayer for Healthcare Facilities:

God, we ask for Your guidance as we commit to protecting and nurturing the world You have entrusted to us.

Grant us the wisdom to commit to environmental sustainability so that we may honor Your creation and serve our community with care and compassion.

May our efforts to care for creation reflect our love for You and all that You have made, inspiring others to join us in this sacred work.

Amen.



Caring for Creation for Human Services



“Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society” (*Laudato Si'*, #91)

Suggestions for human services organizations to IMPROVE ENERGY CONSERVATION:

1. Install and use timed thermostats that allow for less energy consumption when the offices are vacant, and more moderate, consistent temperatures when offices are occupied.
2. Encourage staff to shut off lights in rooms that are not being used (restrooms, empty offices, kitchen, etc.), as well as encourage use of natural light when practical.

Suggestions for human services organizations to CONSERVE, PRESERVE, AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES:

1. Address leaky faucets as soon as possible with maintenance staff.
2. Install water filtration systems to tap water faucets.
3. Avoid purchasing bottled water, except for events when no other alternative exists.

Suggestions for human services organizations to REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE:

1. Install paper recycling bins in every office location and plan for the collection of paper for recycling on a regular basis.
2. Commit to reducing the use of paper for copies, emails, and other materials that can be accessed electronically.
3. Implement a method for recycling aluminum cans, plastics, and other recyclable materials used in employee break room.
4. Reduce the use of disposable dishware and cutlery.
5. Offer unwanted office supplies and other items to other employees before discarding them.

Suggestions for human services organizations to BUY AND SHARE FOOD THOUGHTFULLY:

1. Strive to utilize locally owned restaurants whenever possible, especially those that practice sustainability.
2. Consume leftover food in the refrigerator in a timely manner to avoid waste.
3. Respond to requests that require a meal RSVP so that those planning events can have an accurate count for lunch
4. Avoid over-ordering food for meetings to save money and avoid waste.

Suggestions for human services organizations to USE LAND AND BUILDINGS SUSTAINABLY:

1. Consider vacant diocesan properties as potential offices and service sites before looking at other options in the community.
2. Consider partnering with other Catholic organizations to share space when practical.

Suggestions for human services organizations to USE FINANCES JUSTLY:

1. Remain mindful that donations are to be used to provide direct assistance to those in need with a preferential option for the poorest among us.
2. Maintain an Audit, Budget and Finance Committee to provide input and oversight for the allocation and use of funds.
3. Ensure that administrative overhead costs do not exceed 15% of total expenses.
4. Continue to evaluate salary scales on a regular basis and work toward a living wage for all staff positions.
5. Encourage collaboration among human service entities whenever possible to reduce costs.

Suggestions for human services organizations to UNDERSTAND AND ADVOCATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

1. Raise awareness about the disproportionate impact of environmental changes and serious weather events on those who are poor.
2. Raise awareness about the impact of environmental toxins on children and families, especially those who are poor.

Suggestions for human services organizations to SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT CARING FOR CREATION:

1. Use the First Step to Service school-based curriculum to challenge students in our Catholic schools and parishes to accept responsibility for caring for the environment.
2. Take advantage of opportunities in digital and print media to highlight the ways in which diocesan human service organizations are good stewards of environmental resources.

PRAYER FOR HUMAN SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS:

Good and loving God, you call us to care for ourselves, our environment, and one another. Help us to use our gifts and talents to ensure that all people, especially those who are poor and vulnerable, can thrive in this world you have entrusted to our care. We ask you to bless victims and survivors of natural disasters and those who live under oppressive environmental conditions caused by selfishness and greed. May all of your children come to recognize and protect the resources of the Earth, sharing its bounty and preserving its beauty for future generations. Amen.



Caring for Creation as a Diocesan Central Offices



“The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.” (*Laudato Si'*, #13)

This section is inspired by the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform: (<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>)

Suggestions for the Diocese of Youngstown to Improve Energy Conservation:

1. Calculate the carbon footprint of diocesan buildings and services, using calculator such as the EPA Carbon Footprint Calculator <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>
 - a. Assist parishes in calculating their carbon footprints.
2. Assure optimal building energy performance.
 - a. Determine current energy performance and facilitate parish determinations, using a benchmarking tool such as EnergyStar for Congregations. (<https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/resources-audience/congregations>)
 - b. Assist parishes in investigating workable means of resolving waste and creating an energy action plan.
 - c. Continue with schedule of replacement of insulation, roofing materials, windows, caulking in aging diocesan buildings.
3. Resolve Energy Waste
 - a. Investigate HVAC systems, kitchen equipment, water heaters, and other energy users; continue schedule of replacement.
 - b. Create a culture of sustainable thermostat setting for moderate temperatures - as warm in summer and cool in winter as tolerable.

Suggestions for the Diocese of Youngstown to CONSERVE, PRESERVE, AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES:

1. Model and promote the safe disposal of hazardous materials including automotive fluids, paint, lawn chemicals, and ice melt.
2. Model and promote lower water consumption measures.

Suggestions for the Diocese of Youngstown to REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE:

1. Develop a short list of critical questions concerning all costs to be considered when funds are to be spent so that purchasing decisions are based on care for the earth and the poor, rather than solely on the bottom line.
2. Develop a list of available office supplies that are sustainably sourced and recyclable materials.
3. Expand the diocesan office recycling programs for toner/ink, paper/cardboard, and other recyclable materials. Help parishes set up recycling programs.

Suggestions for the Diocese of Youngstown to BUY AND SHARE FOOD THOUGHTFULLY:

1. Plan for the redistribution of leftover food from programs to avoid food going to landfill.
2. Develop zero waste guidelines for groups and caterers for food events; share with parishes.
 - a. Find workable replacements for individual plastic water bottles.
 - b. Use recyclable/compostable materials or reuseable utensils, plates, and cups for events.
3. Compile and share meatless recipes with all the faithful year-round.

Suggestions for the Diocese of Youngstown to USE LAND AND BUILDINGS SUSTAINABLY:

1. Facilitate dialogue among parishes and schools about establishing and maintaining gardens.
 - a. Establish a diocesan garden with a schedule for maintenance.
 - b. Formulate a starter kit for parish/school gardens.
 - c. Develop signage for parish/school gardens.
2. Develop a list of natural areas to explore throughout the six counties along with suggestions for ways of praying outdoors.
3. Develop a list of available sustainable building materials.

Suggestions for the Diocese of Youngstown to USE FINANCES JUSTLY:

1. Continue to adhere to and promote the USCCB Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines and review investments regularly in light of these guidelines.
2. Help parishes to understand and adhere to socially responsible investment practices.

Suggestions for the Diocese of Youngstown to UNDERSTAND AND ADVOCATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

1. Submit intentions for the Universal Prayer in the monthly *Communique*.
2. Advocate for Environmental Awareness through the Creation Care Committee and the Office of Peace and Justice.

Suggestions for the Diocese of Youngstown to SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT CARING FOR CREATION:

1. Advocate for and sustain adherence to the Care for Creation in the Formed for Life in Christ section in the Diocesan Curriculum for Catechesis: <https://catechistcafe.weebly.com/curriculum-for-catechesis.html>
2. Continually update and promote the Care for Creation page on The Catechist Cafe website of the Office of Faith Formation and Lay Ecclesial Ministry <https://catechistcafe.weebly.com/care-for-creation.html> which is especially featured for teachers, catechists, parish ministers, and Catholic School Teachers.
3. Use diocesan social media platforms to form and inform discipleship in creation care.

PRAYER FOR DIOCESAN CENTRAL SERVICES:

A Prayer for the Earth (*Laudato Si'*, #246)

*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.*

Amen.



Image by geralt on Pixabay

Annual Report and Review

Each year, the Diocesan Creation Care Team will come together to produce an Annual Report on Creation Care, on the application of the Caring for Creation Action Plan in the Diocese of Youngstown. This report will include the following:

1. The total estimated carbon footprint of diocesan properties and its increase or decrease.
2. Data regarding engagement with the action plan in the areas addressed by the action plan, such as events held, programs started, and number of individuals engaged in total.
3. Data on the effectiveness of the action plan and its implementation.

In addition to this report, the Diocesan Creation Care Team will perform an annual review of the Caring for Creation Action Plan and revise it where necessary to improve its effectiveness. This review will take into consideration the Annual Report, as well as the recommendations and responses of parishioners, diocesan organizations, and other stakeholders.

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