DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS

Laudato Si' Action Plan

A Journey of Ecological Conversion and Caring for Our Common Home

Introduction

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

Let the field exult, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord;

For he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth.

Psalm 96:11-13.

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings is blessed to live in the midst of God's handiwork. From roaring rivers to sprawling plains, our diocese is rich in earth and in spirit. It is through with these blessings that we are called to care for our common home.

Guiding Principles

Pope Francis, in his Laudato Si' encyclical, reminds us that "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." Laudato Si', no. 217. This call is not new to our faith as previous Popes have made this mandate clear. Pope Benedict XVI stated the following,



Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change? Humanity needs a profound cultural renewal; it needs to rediscover those values which can serve as the solid basis for building a brighter future for all. Our present crisis – be they economic, food-related, environmental or social – are ultimately also moral crises, and all of them are interrelated. They require us to rethink the path which we are traveling together.

Pope Benedict XVI *– If you Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation, 2010 World Day of Peach Message Nos. 4, 5.*

Further, Saint John Paul II, cautioned that man's lordship over the Earth is "not the mission of an absolute and unquestionable master, but of a steward of God's kingdom who is called to continue the Creator's work, a work of life and peace." General Audience, n. 3 (Jan. 17, 2001). He then made the call for an "ecological conversion" by stating,



We must therefore encourage and support the "ecological conversion" which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading. Man is no longer the Creator's "steward", but an autonomous despot, who is finally beginning to understand that he must stop at the edge of the abyss.

"Another welcome sign is the growing attention being paid to the quality of life and to ecology, especially in more developed societies, where people's expectations are no longer concentrated so much on problems of survival as on the search for an overall improvement of living conditions" (Evangelium vitae, n. 27).

At stake, then, is not only a "physical" ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a "human" ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment more in conformity with the Creator's plan.

Saint John Paul II – General Audience n. 4 (Jan. 17, 2001).

Through Laudato Si', Pope Francis reminds us of this history and reignites the call for ecological conversion to care for our Earth, our common home –

This conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works: "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Mt 6:3-4).



It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems and in offering ourselves to God "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable" (Rom 12:1). We do not understand our superiority as a reason for personal glory or irresponsible dominion, but rather as a different capacity which, in its turn, entails a serious responsibility stemming from our faith.

Pope Francis – Laudato Si', n. 220.

Laudato Si' Goals

Pope Francis invites every diocese, parish, school and ministry to take on the seven goals of Laudato Si':



Response to Cry of the Earth



Response to Cry of the Poor



Ecological Economics



Adoption of a Sustainable Lifestyle



Ecological Education



Ecological Spirituality



Community Resilience and Empowerment

Current Diocesan Efforts

Over the past year the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings has undertaken the following efforts to live out our Laudato Si' call.

- **Energy Consumption**
  - The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings completed energy audits in partnership with Catholic Energies on ten (10) diocesan and parish buildings with plans to implement the audit recommendations to help reduce its energy consumption.
- **Building Design, Construction, and Renovation**
  - The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings is set install solar panels on five (5) of its diocesan buildings by the end of 2027.
- **Land and Landscaping**
  - The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings plans to partner with local organizations and colleges to revitalize a portion of its Holy Cross Cemetery in Billings, Montana as a sustainable and natural habitat for wildlife along the Yellowstone River.
- **Community Outreach**
  - The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings is working to create partnerships with local entities to promote our Laudato Si' priorities and educate individuals about the undeniable call to care for our common home
  - The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings plans to roll out media resources to inspire and educate all citizens in the Diocese about Laudato Si'.

Future Diocesan Efforts

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings is committed to continuing our Laudato Si' journey into the future. In the coming years the Diocese is committed to expanding our impact in the following areas:

- **Energy Consumption**
  - Continue our efforts to reduce our energy consumption across our diocesan buildings.
- **Waste**
  - Establish policies at the Pastoral Center that cut down on the office's waste production.
- **Purchasing**
  - Establish policies that encourage the Pastoral Center to purchase goods and services from ethical sources.
- **Transportation**
  - Establish travel policies that reduces energy consumption when possible.
- **Building Design, Construction, and Renovation**
  - Establish policies that encourage Parishes to make energy conservation efforts when designing, constructing and renovating properties.
- **Land and Landscaping**
  - Continue to work on revitalizing our land at Holy Cross Cemetery and identify other properties to revitalize.

Parish Plans

The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities of faith, of action, and of hope. They are where the gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. . . Parishes are the home of the Christian community; they are the heart of our Church. – Communities of Salt and Light.

In the coming years, the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings will be inviting Parishes and families to join us in our Laudato Si' journey by establishing their own Laudato Si' plans.

More Information

For more information and ways to get involved visit the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings website:

https://www.diocesegfb.org/laudato-si-landing-page