

From Archdiocese of Washington's Laudato Si' Action Plan Released Aug 2021

Download the pdf of the ADW plan at
<https://adw.org/living-the-faith/social-concerns/laudato-si-action-plan/>

MARKER 5: Ecological Education

Ecological education can be integrated into our catechetical programs and liturgical celebrations because our Catholic faith offers a rich array of teachings on the theology of creation, life and human dignity and our role in fostering the common good. We learn from the Book of Genesis that all of creation is good: "God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good" (Gen 1:31). We also hear sung in the Psalms that "The Earth is the Lord's" (Psalm 24). As stewards of God's creation, we are called to care for creation in loving and sustainable ways. Earth is our shared home, and its goods belong to all people and for all to use.

The witness of the saints show us holiness is tied to caring for God's creation. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Hildegard of Bingen are known for their devotion to creation and seeing God's sanctity in all of creation. Francis and Hildegard encouraged a contemplative and sacramental view of creation and lived lives imbued with the virtues of temperance and prudence. These virtues are needed today as we work for environmental efforts that preserve God's creation.

Pope Francis has joined with other Christian leaders in designating September 1 to October 4 of each year as a Season of Creation. Parishes can celebrate the Season of Creation through preaching, offering prayer services, and other activities that focus on Catholic teaching on care for our common home. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' guide on *Caring for God's Creation* has ideas for making connections between the liturgy and care for creation throughout the liturgical year. Care for creation and concern for marginalized communities should be integrated into our proclamation about the life and dignity of all people and into how to celebrate life during October's Respect Life Month. Concern for our planet and respect for vulnerable individuals in marginalized communities are important dimensions of what it means to be pro-life.

¹⁵ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Caring for God's Creation: Resources for Liturgy, Preaching, and Taking Action*, 2020. <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/upload/ecology-resource-all.pdf>

Possible actions for individuals, families, parishes and schools:

- Organize local environmental educational trips (i.e. Tour [Blue Plains](#) in Washington, D.C., the largest advanced wastewater plant in the world; [Chesapeake Bay Foundation Educational Tours](#).) (easy)
 - Find a nature preserve in the area (i.e. [Jug Bay Water Sanctuary](#)) (easy)
 - Find recycling, energy production, and water treatment facilities - many of these places offer and encourage tours and other programs for groups (easy)
- Create or expand parish and school libraries to feature a variety of books that provide guidance and resources for this work and embrace the vision of Laudato Si' (easy)
- Challenge children and youth to come up with local solutions to social and environmental problems and affirm the ideas they put forward (easy)
- Explore the connection between the environment and personal and communal health (moderate)
- Develop *Laudato Si'* inspired activities and theme days with practical follow-up actions (moderate)
- Examine how to support efforts toward systemic justice for those who are marginalized and offer practical steps toward living a lifestyle modified to care for creation (moderate)
- Incorporate justice and care for our common home into faith formation programs at all levels (moderate)
- Involve parish religious education, youth ministry and parish schools in living out Laudato Si' (moderate to advanced)