



Pope's Action Platform Leader Holds Archdiocese-Wide Workshop at Epiphany



Epiphany's Environmental Concerns Committee presented a workshop on how parishes can live Laudato Si' that not only featured the Vatican's Global Director of the Laudato Si' Action Platform, it drew over 140 attendees from all across the archdiocese. Despite the single-digit temperatures on January 20, organizations representing 15 parishes, Bellarmine University, the Archdiocese Office of Faith Formation, the Sisters of Charity Nazareth and the Archdiocese of Louisville Creation Care Team participated.

John Mundell, the workshop leader who was appointed by Pope Francis to spearhead the goals of the Action Platform, titled his presentation, "Acting Locally to Preserve Our Common Home." During the workshop he explained and demonstrated practical actions individuals and organizations can adopt in caring for the Earth. While discussing the importance of individual actions, Mundell used an image of ripples in water to symbolize the impact of individual actions and then compared that to the mighty waves that can be generated by a connected community. It became clear that increasing an action's impact begins by connecting with others.

Fostering those connections began during a series of table-top discussions that began with the "Earth Cube." This six-sided box turned out to be a tool for supporting a healthy and sustainable planet. It's intended to create discussion on how to bring about a personal and collective attitude transformation. By rolling the box like a big die, one of six concepts comes up:

- Everything is a Gift
- Only What is Needed
- Smile on the World
- The time is NOW
- Discover Amazing Things
- We're All Connected



The side that came up was then considered by each individual at the table who shared thoughts on how this concept could be lived each day.

Mundell related how caring for our common home has deep roots in the Catholic faith. He pointed out that scripture is full of references to the obligation we have in preserving the Earth's riches, that numerous saints including St. John of the Cross, St. John Chrysostom, St. Francis of Assisi, and more recently, St. Teresa of Calcutta spoke on that concept. Thomas

Merton wrote about it and Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict the XVI and Pope Francis have preached on it. Mundell's point was clear that care for God's creation is part of the fabric of Catholic Social Teaching.

Other table-top discussions included how to form Care for Creation committees, how to network with other parishes, schools and organizations to work for progress in sustainable practices. Participants talked about resources and expertise available in their parishes to set goals, plan and implement ecological best practices.

Mundell observed that, "We all must undergo an ecological conversion every day, every moment." The added challenge he said, is "We're tasked with bringing people on the journey."

Mundell and his daughter, Sarah Mundell, who is also a leader in the Action Platform effort, introduced 12 ways a parish can live in more sustainable ways that are less damaging to the Earth. The recommendations included reining in over-consumption and wastefulness, explaining the natural world and how it teaches that everything is connected, encouraging gratitude for life and nature, and promoting environmental justice.



"I find hope in religious sisters who commit a part of their retirement funds and savings to providing grants to people who start creation care projects in their neighborhoods. I find hope in a Pope who dares to call us to change the world, to become protagonists in the fight for survival of thousands of species."

To help start this change process on the local level Mundell provided participants with a guide to developing a parish Action Platform plan, a handout on 12 ways a parish can live Laudato Si' and a series of suggested steps parishes can use to develop an Action Platform reflection.

Mundell used the analogy of a river to explain the power of connected efforts. A river is one of the most powerful forces on earth, able to cut through rock and form deep canyons, but it starts from many small streams, that in turn start from even smaller trickles of water. And just so, individual efforts can flow together forming powerful movements to transform how our Earth will once again flourish.

Mundell reminds us that, "The pope is calling all of us. We as a church need to be the arms, legs, heart and soul at the parish level to give authentic witness to the world."

Participants left the three-hour workshop armed with a new outlook, a load of practical resources and much gratitude toward the Environmental Concerns Committee and Epiphany for providing an inspiring experience.



Did You Know?



- It turns out that space heaters are huge energy users. Running a space heater in the average household for three hours a day can add 10% to your monthly electric bill. 
- Gas stoves emit pollutants like nitrogen dioxide and benzene into the air we breathe. And nearly 13% of childhood asthma cases in the U.S. have been linked to those appliances. 
- In 10 states — California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington — plastic grocery bags are now partly or fully illegal. Colorado currently charges 10 cents for these bags. Next year Colorado will outright ban them. 
- Washington state is rolling out an unprecedented new law — one that quite literally forces residents to save money. The state now requires all new homes to be built with a heat pump instead of a traditional furnace or AC unit. 
- A new CNN poll shows three quarters of Americans want government policies that would slash emissions in half this decade. 
- A recent Washington Post-University of Maryland poll found that 75% of Americans would be comfortable living near a solar farm (and almost 70% say the same about wind turbines). The political breakdown of that data reveals that 66% of Republicans say they are OK being near a solar farm and 87% of Democrats say the same. The poll also found similar numbers (around 70%) in each of the rural, suburban, and urban categories.



Here Are the Seven Goals of the Laudato Si' Action Platform



Response to the Cry of the Earth

This is a call to protect our common home for the well-being of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. Actions could include the adoption of renewable energies and energy sufficiency measures, achieving carbon neutrality, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.

Response to the Cry of the Poor

This is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth. Actions could include projects to promote solidarity, with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, and children at risk, analysis and improvement of social systems.

Ecological Economics

This acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere—our common home. Actions could include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, protecting the dignity of workers, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and the people.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

This involves promoting sustainability in using resources and energy. It includes reducing waste, recycling, adopting sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, active mobility (walking, cycling), and avoiding single use items (e.g., plastic water bottles, etc.).

Ecological Education

This is about redesigning curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology to foster ecological awareness and transformative action, such as ensuring equitable access to education and promoting human rights, fostering Laudato Si' themes within the community, encouraging ecological leadership (students, teachers), and ecological restoration activities.

Ecological Spirituality

This springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to “discover God in all things” both in the beauty of creation and in the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities. It includes promoting creation-based liturgical celebrations, developing ecological catechesis, retreats and formation programs.

Community Resilience and Empowerment

This speaks to community engagement and participatory action at various levels. It includes promoting advocacy and developing people's campaigns, encouraging rootedness and a sense of belonging in local communities and neighborhood ecosystems.

An Idling Car Is Global Warming's Playground

If your car could talk it would probably say, “Don't make me idle.” But first, let's set a sense of scale. We tend to think a million is much closer to a billion than it is. One million seconds is about 11 days. One billion seconds is about 31 years. That's a huge difference. It puts into perspective researchers' estimate that idling from personal automotive vehicles wastes about three billion gallons of fuel every year. Let that sink in – three billion gallons. So what? It means that around 30 million tons of CO₂ every year are being pumped into earth's atmosphere just by letting our personal vehicles idle. That's why some states and cities have outlawed idling.

Sitting in the car line waiting for your child to come out from school, stuck on the Watterson, waiting for an accident to clear, all the while letting your engine run while not moving an inch, we've all been there. Mostly we idle without thinking. Many times we do it for sheer convenience. We want to be warm, we want to be cool or we just want to be ready to go as soon as possible. Let's take a look at what all this idling is doing to our planet, and to your car.

Idling lowers your car's fuel economy

A car engine can use as much as half a gallon of fuel per hour idling. That's wasting an eighth of a gallon of gas for the 15 minutes spent waiting to pick up your kid from school. It's a misconception that idling is overall better than restarting your car – this isn't true in many aspects, especially in fuel use. Idling longer than 10 seconds uses more gas than restarting your engine. Want to save gas money? Shut off your engine.

Idling can damage your car's engine

Contrary to popular belief, idling doesn't protect your engine or help it run better. It does the opposite by causing unnecessary wear.



An idling engine can cause twice the wear on internal parts – cylinders, spark plugs, heat gasket, and more – than an engine operating at a regular speed while driving. When you don't idle, you extend the life of your engine.

Idling costs you in fuel and maintenance

For gas costing \$3.55 per gallon, idling for 15 minutes wastes an eighth of a gallon and costs \$0.44. A small cost that adds up quickly. You'll also pay more for frequent oil changes and part replacements because an idling engine unnecessarily burns oil and wears components. Save your money by idling only when absolutely necessary.

It's harder to breathe

While idling, a car releases harmful exhaust fumes and soot into the air we breathe. These pollutants can trigger respiratory issues, from coughing and throat irritation to asthma and bronchitis. Kids and those who have a history of respiratory illness are most vulnerable. Help everyone breathe easier by shutting off your engine while you wait in your car.

Idling harms the planet

Besides using more gas, idling longer than 10 seconds produces more carbon pollution than restarting your engine. And other harmful air pollutants get released, including methane – a very potent pollutant. Carbon and methane pollution in the air traps heat from the sun,

Archdiocese of Chicago Goes All In for Renewable Energy

The National Catholic Reporter has reported that this January the Archdiocese of Chicago, with its nearly 400 parishes, schools, cemeteries and offices, switched to 100% renewable energy sources for its electricity needs.

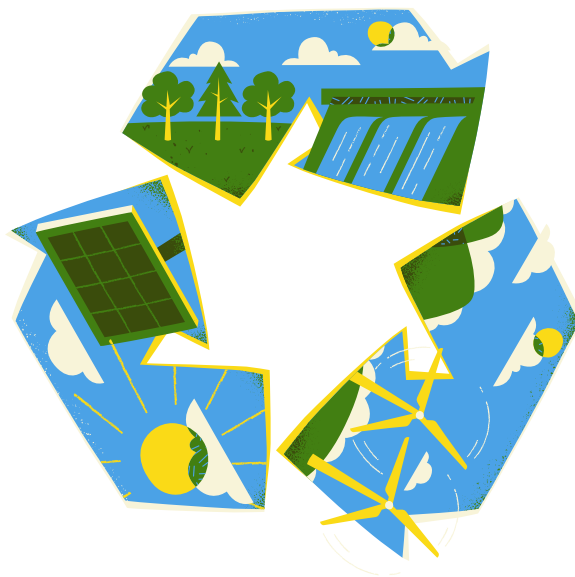
Using a program developed by its energy supplier, Direct Energy, the archdiocese purchased renewable energy certificates, (RECs), to cover the electricity consumption for 2024 for the more than 2,000 buildings in the archdiocese.

Third-party power generators earn RECs for the renewable energy they produce, which they then can sell or trade to utilities, companies and institutions that want electricity from sources other than fossil fuels. Thus, each REC represents electricity generated from a renewable source.

John Mundell, director of the Vatican's Laudato Si' Action Platform, characterized the archdiocese's move as one that reflects the kind of change Pope Francis seeks from the church in response to climate change. "Going 100% renewable is a decisive step on the journey of ecological conversion, and the Chicago action is a sign of encouragement to dioceses worldwide," he said.

The Archdiocese of Chicago is one of the 183 dioceses globally to enroll in the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich said, "We wanted to do something that had an immediate impact for sure across the entire diocese, and this was clearly the most direct way to do that while we continue to advise parishes and schools on other energy savings."



In the past 36 months, the Archdiocese of Chicago has replaced more than 50 boilers in parishes and schools, investing tens of millions of dollars to swap old and inefficient systems with modern versions. It has now started a series of energy audits through their energy providers to identify other projects to improve efficiency and reduce use.

Noting the urgency of this approach, Cardinal Cupich said, "the future of us all depends on the present that we now choose."

Idling Car



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causing average temperatures to increase globally and extreme weather events to intensify. You can help the planet just by turning your engine off.

While the impact of idling may be small on a per-car basis, the impact of the 250 million personal vehicles in the U.S. adds up. Eliminating unnecessary idling of personal vehicles would be the same as taking five million vehicles off the roads. For you, by not idling, you don't visit the gas station as often and you can feel good about all the emissions you haven't caused.

You Don't Say... But Do You Know Who Did?



See if you can match the quotes below with the person who said it.

- 1.If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.
2. The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility.
3. We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong.
- 4.Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another.

A. Wendell Berry



B. Pope Francis



C. St. Francis



D. Greta Thunberg



See answers at bottom of page

The Lighter Side of Climate



- ◆ Congress has a plan for fighting climate change. They say that if we need to, we can lower the temperature dramatically just by switching from Fahrenheit to Celsius.
- ◆ If it solved global warming, would you give up the TV remote and go back to getting up and walking over to the television set every time you wanted to change the channel? If that gets to be the case a lot of viewers will be watching one channel forever!

The Environmental Concerns Committee would love your feedback on this issue of *Common Home*. In addition, let us know if there is particular climate change topic that you've experienced, have seen in the news or read about in *Laudato Si'* that you'd like to see covered. Email us at commonhome914@gmail.com.



Emerald Isle Helps Its Pollinators



Last spring parishes across Ireland were asked by their bishops to set aside 30% of their grounds for pollinators and biodiversity by 2030. The idea is ensure that church land can be enjoyed by the whole community long into the future.



As there are 1,365 parishes with 2,646 churches on their property the amount of preserved land will be significant. Not only will this effort make a huge difference to local biodiversity, it will raise awareness of conservation efforts around the globe. In addition, the set-aside lines up nicely with the United Nations COP 15 agreement to return 30% of land to nature.

A key goal of the bishops' ask was that it serve to increase awareness of church teaching on ecology and highlight the role of people of faith in protecting creation.

As a first step the plan calls for parishes to map their church grounds identifying the 30% that will be allocated for pollinators and biodiversity.

It seems the Irish bishops are leading the way in Laudato Si' actions. They were the first Bishops' Conference in the world to divest their assets from fossil fuels. Since then, bishop conferences in Austria, Belgium, Eastern Africa, the Philippines and Scotland have followed suit.

While not a strict requirement, the bishops are recommending that parishes enlist expertise from within their congregations to do the mapping and accessing areas that are right for nurturing the cultivation of wildflowers that are essential to pollinators.

An existing Laudato Si' Working Group, is developing resources to implement the recommendation. Resources include "The Faith Community Pollinator Plan" and "Gardening for Biodiversity." In communications to this working group parishioners said they are ready to take some practical actions as it is time to stop talking and create real solutions to a growing problem.

JANUARY 26, 2024



Statement from President Joe Biden on Decision to Pause Pending Approvals of Liquefied Natural Gas Exports



BRIEFING ROOM > STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

In every corner of the country and the world, people are suffering the devastating toll of climate change. Historic hurricanes and floods wiping out homes, businesses, and houses of worship. Wildfires destroying whole neighborhoods and forcing families to leave their communities behind. Record temperatures affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans, especially the most vulnerable.

On January 26 at 5 a.m. the White House confirmed a new policy with an [official release](#). All new licenses for LNG export terminals are hereby halted, until the policies used to figure out if they're in the "public interest" can be updated to include modern economics and science. Experts are calling this the biggest check any president has ever applied to the fossil fuel industry, and the strongest move for clean energy in American history.