



U.S. Bishops Urge Ecological Conversion



Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre, Archbishop of Louisville, helped lead the effort on issuing a letter to U.S. Catholics. (Earlier this year the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote to all U.S. Catholics inviting us to commence a personal Ecological Conversion in response to the growing environmental crisis threatening our planet. The Bishops' concerns and recommendations are highlighted in this edited version of their letter.)

Indifference and distance from one another have led to devastating consequences for God's creation, including the poor. The conversion that we need is both metaphorical and physical. As it is, we rarely pause to listen to "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor," nor do we regularly reflect on how our choices impact our brothers and sisters around the world. Our world is hurtling toward unsustainable climate conditions that will affect the flourishing of people all over the planet. This unsustainable situation is, in part, caused by ever-increasing consumption enabled by the ability to accumulate with a simple click of the button, and incessant marketing to convince us that we all need more.

At the same time, our country is stepping back from global and national efforts to change course. Progress to slow climate change remains elusive, even while instances of extreme weather, wildfires, droughts, and floods are now common. Receiving the brunt of the burden are people seeking refuge from disasters, farmers struggling to adapt to erratic weather patterns, children suffering from dehydration and hunger, migrants who flee their homes due to loss of

livelihood, and species declining in forests and coral reefs. Never has it been clearer that everything is interconnected. This call to listen is apt. How well do we listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor? How can we better recognize our responsibility for one another? To what more might we be called in this regard?

The path forward must be discerned together, a reflection of our unity as the Body of Christ. Through conversion of our hearts and lived solidarity with the poor, the vulnerable, and creation, we can find a path for all to live in a manner reflective of God-given human dignity.

We each must recognize the power we have as individuals and in community.

Pope Leo XIV noted in his message to the participants at the "Raising Hope" conference, "Everyone in society, through non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups, must put pressure on governments



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to develop and implement more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Citizens need to take an active role in political decision-making at national, regional and local levels.” Even where the challenges loom large, we must continue to advocate for changes to care for the earth and the poor, and to ensure opportunities for workers while we transition to more sustainable approaches. Each of us has a role to play in urging leaders at all levels to convert their hearts along side us.



In addition, we must each make daily choices that reflect our conversion to better care for God’s creation and the people, communities, and livelihoods that are interconnected.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and many organizations offer regular opportunities for individuals to express and practice conversion, in their own daily lives and through ongoing advocacy. We invite you to prayerfully discern how you, your parish, and your community might participate in any of the actions below.

- **Families and individuals can purchase products from companies that prioritize care for creation and consider renewable energy sources for their homes.**
- **Business leaders can work to increase sustainability and ensure justice towards their workers and communities in the areas surrounding their operations.**
- **Schools can integrate care for creation into curricula.**
- **Parishes can create opportunities for prayer in nature, offer pilgrimages, and celebrate Pope Francis's new "Mass for the Care of Creation" formulary, which promotes stewardship of the environment, featuring specific prayers and readings focusing on ecological responsibility and gratitude.**
- **Dioceses can conduct an energy audit of the buildings they own, which can lead to energy and often cost savings.**
- **Policymakers can listen to the voices of those most impacted by environmental challenges and seek to create just policies mindful of their well-being, with an eye also to other vulnerable populations, such as workers.**
- **Everyone has a role to play in urging leaders at all levels to convert their hearts—and establish policies to better care for God’s creation.**



What Bugs Me... And Will Bug You Too

(Creation Care Team member Jeanna Danhauer helps untangle nature's web and explains why it may be hanging by a thread.)

From time to time, I have been alarmed by news stories reporting a dramatic decrease in the bird population somewhere or a threat to our food crops due to the collapse of the honey bees. I felt helpless on hearing such alarming stories. However, last summer I read *Nature's Best Hope*, by Douglas W. Tallamy. In it he demonstrates how homeowners can realistically restore wildlife populations simply by using indigenous plants in their gardens. It's a movement that could turn our current turfgrass lawns into the "Homegrown National Park."

The terms native and indigenous are often used interchangeably. An indigenous or native plant is one that has evolved over thousands (that's right, 1000s) of years in the same habitat in which it currently grows. The term Indigenous more precisely applies to a geographical region, whereas native can be applied to the whole continent, as in the native plants of the United States. For example, while American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) is indigenous to the eastern Appalachian region of Kentucky, it is also native to the United States. Incidentally, only plants found in this country before European settlement are considered to be native to the United States.



An underlying reason for having indigenous plants in a garden is that most of our Lepidoptera, that is butterflies and moths, are host specific for reproductive purposes. Research shows that more than 90% of herbivorous (plant eating) insect larvae have



evolved to tolerate only a few specific plants as food. During the process of evolution plants developed chemicals in their leaves to protect themselves from being "eaten alive." Herbivores for their part developed the ability to tolerate one or more of these toxic chemicals.

For this reason, if you want a certain butterfly to continue to exist, you must provide its indigenous host plant so the eggs/caterpillars can survive. The chemical makeup of leaves of nonindigenous plants are too alien for our caterpillars to swallow and digest; they will starve or die from poisons in nonindigenous plants.

An interesting side note: while adult butterflies require a specific host plant for reproduction, they as adults will sip nectar from any plant that flowers and has nectar—indigenous, nonindigenous, annual, perennial, tree, shrub, or anything that flowers and has nectar!

Regarding bees, one study found that indigenous bees are four times more likely to take nectar and pollen from indigenous plants than from nonindigenous plants. And some bees can only use the pollen of a single plant species.

Bees collect nectar and pollen—nectar for energy and pollen supplies proteins and other nutrients.

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While collecting nectar and pollen, bees are meeting the reproductive needs of plants by spreading pollen from one flower to another. Bees pollinate as much as 75% of U.S. grown food crops, mostly by nonindigenous honeybees. With the dramatic honeybee decline, it is more important than ever to maintain wild indigenous bumble bees, and other “beneficial insect” pollinators like smaller bees, flowerflies, and wasps.

Plants are the basis of every terrestrial and most aquatic food webs. Plants enable animals to eat sunlight by capturing energy from the sun and storing it through photosynthesis in the carbon bonds of simple sugars and carbohydrates. Insects are the animals that are the best at transferring that energy from plants to other animals. And most insects are very particular about which plants they eat.

Studies have shown that more than 96% of birds require insects and their larvae as food for their chicks. More than 90% of those same insect larvae require the leaves or other parts of indigenous plants as food. Nature has created self-serving links in the food web: butterflies and moths lay eggs on indigenous plants; eggs hatch and caterpillars eat the leaves; birds find the caterpillars and insect larvae and feed them to their chicks while saving the trees and plants from insect defoliation.



The book *Designing Gardens with Flora of the American East* is an excellent resource for gardeners wanting to learn about the best indigenous choices for their own area. It's written by gardening expert Carolyn Summers and her landscape designer daughter, Kate Brittenham. They list detailed appendixes of keystone species— native plants that serve as hosts for the greatest number of Lepidoptera caterpillars, and thus provide the foundation of the entire food web. Throughout their book they list alternatives to such invasive plants as *Buddleia davidii* (butterfly bush) and *Euonymus alatus* (burning bush). There is even an appendix of indigenous annuals and biennials that could be an inexpensive start for a new gardener.

The plants gardeners choose can help preserve the wildlife we have and with enough growers could possibly restore some of the wildlife losses. I have seen a few residences in my area that I suspect are homes to indigenous gardeners. And that gives me hope.

Did You Know?

Insects have a big role to play in the ecosystem. Almost three-fourths of the world's flowering plants depend on insects for pollination. Insects also are crucial for seed dispersement. Some plants even stud their seeds with tiny treats to entice ants to carry them off.

Energy Storage Helping Solar Power Shine

One would presume that the emirate holding approximately 96% of the United Arab Emirates proven oil reserves would have little interest or need in solar farms. But while Abu Dhabi has extensive oil fields and is a powerhouse of the oil industry, its vast desert area is being carpeted with solar panels.

Currently Abu Dhabi has an around-the-clock effort to construct a solar array with a massive amount of battery capacity. The battery portion of this project is intended to store enough power, generated by the solar panels during the day, to produce a minimum of one gigawatt of electricity each night— enough to power well over half a million homes.

Initially the project's critics asked, what's the point of pouring billions of dollars into solar farms when they are unable to deliver power when the sun is not shining? Abu Dhabi's project aims to answer this question by proving it is feasible to store enough electricity to guarantee a constant supply.

One of elements that convinced engineers that this will work is the reduction in battery storage costs. Also critical are improvements in battery life as well as the efficiency of the technology. The project is intended to cope even in the rare periods of bad weather, as even this desert country occasionally experiences less than favorable conditions. Project engineers admit that the system has been "over-designed a little bit". The one gigawatt (GW) of round-the-clock power is achieved through 5.2 GW of solar generating capacity, and 19 GWh (gigawatt hours) of battery storage.

The project is scheduled to go online next year, and will provide a blueprint for similar systems around the world. Chile is also looking to scale battery storage. This South American country has 9 GW of storage capacity in operation, construction or testing, with a further 27 GW in the development pipeline.



Energy storage is key to tackling the problem of Chile's electricity grid being unable to absorb solar and wind power at times of peak generation. As with other countries, it's a growing problem. In 2024, Chile had to stop 19% of its solar and wind electricity generation due to there being no place to store its excess energy.

The problem is how to ensure a system can provide baseload power supply, day and night, throughout all seasons of the year. Chile also must deal with transmission issues. As it's a very long country, it relies strongly on transmission that can move energy from the north, where there is a lot of solar, and also from the very south where there is a lot of wind. That makes having battery storage projects in different parts of the country a requirement for an effective system.

It's estimated that many of the world's sunniest cities could economically get more than 90% of the way to constant solar electricity with the help of battery storage. Las Vegas, for example, could get 97% of the way to one GW of constant solar supply with six GW of solar generation capacity and 17 Gwh of storage.

For now the trend of utilizing batteries for energy storage rolls on. Around the world 180 GW hours of battery storage capacity were added in 2024, almost double the figure from 2023.

There's good news for our Earth

Saving Land is Priceless

Give a big hand to Delsia Bare and her 82-year-old mother, Ida Huddleston. They own a 1,200-acre farm outside Maysville, Kentucky. A Fortune 100 company wanted to buy half their farm for \$26 million to build a data center there. While the offer was ten times what's considered a fair price for land in Mason County, Bare and her mother said no deal. "There is no price on earth enough for what they are getting ready to do. There's no replacing what they're getting ready to destroy."



Her roots in the land go back generations. "My grandfather and great-grandfather and a whole bunch of family have all lived here for years, paid taxes on it, fed a nation off of it. (They) even raised wheat through the Depression and kept bread lines up in the United States of America when people didn't have anything else." For what has been accomplished on this farm, Bare said, "\$26 million doesn't mean anything."

Some have questioned losing out on what the data center could mean to the community. The facts show that communities' benefits are small and the ongoing costs can be heavy. Typically, roughly 30 permanent jobs result and few from the area are hired. A study on data center openings across Texas found zero net employment effects on local economies. Mother Huddleston puts it like this: "I say they're a liar, and the truth isn't in them. It's a scam."

To get the whole story, one has to look at what the ongoing operations would bring. Data centers can consume up to five million gallons of water every day. Typically, 80% of that water evaporates and doesn't get back to the water table. Also typical is a rise in electricity rates. Data centers also need backup generators. These units are the size of a boxcar and run on diesel fuel. Air quality suffers due to the particulate matter and nitrogen oxide they release into the community.

Delsia and her mother know a lot of money is not what matters. Knowing your place on earth and caring for it does.



Growing Solar

Now that the frozen fields outside Bucharest, Romania, are thawing, workers are starting to assemble Europe's largest solar farm. It will spout one million photovoltaic panels backed up by batteries so homes have power after sunset. This 760 million-watt project won't be the biggest for long. In northwest Romania, an even bigger solar farm has been approved that will boast a capacity of one billion watts.

Under communism Romania was known as a polluted state, in more ways than one. Now sunshine on acres of silicon and glass will generate a new economy for this country transforming its economy and improving the health of its people.

And it's not just solar farms helping make that transition. It includes an onshore windfarm near the Black Sea, the world's largest landlocked inland sea, a nuclear power plant by the Danube river whose lifetime is being extended by 30 years, and a fast-spreading patchwork of solar panels topping homes and shops across the country.

Fast and Cheap

Clean energy is now the cheapest form of new electricity to build and often the fastest to get up and running. Plus, clean energy doesn't have to go through the strait of Hormuz or any other strait, and unlike gas prices that go up and down depending on demand, wars and world events, the price of wind and sunshine stays the same.

China Succeeds on Lower Emissions/U.S. Fails With 'Tortured Misreadings'

Encouraging news for people in China and the rest of the world as well, their emissions have flattened out— and may even have begun to decline!

In 2025, most sectors in China saw a decline in emissions, with transportation down 3%, power generation falling 1.5% and building materials dropping 7% compared with 2024. How did that happen? Mostly from more clean energy. Compared to 2024, in 2025 China produced 43% more solar, 14% more wind, and 8% more nuclear energy, while dropping coal power generation by 2%. In both 2024 and 2025 China added more new solar capacity than the U. S. in all of its history.

Meanwhile in the U.S., we can all breathe a little easier. A federal appeals court struck down the Trump administration's Affordable Clean Energy rule, finding that the administration had used a "tortured series of misreadings" of the Clean Air Act to claim the EPA lacked the authority to set national standards for transitioning the power sector away from fossil fuels.

Green Investment Pays Off

And sometimes money does matter. As of January 26 of this year the Clean200 (an annual global ranking of the top 200 publicly traded companies that earn the highest amount of revenue from clean energy and sustainable solutions) generated a total return of 282.9% since its July 1, 2016 inception, compared with 111.0% for the MSCI ACWI/Energy Index of fossil fuel companies.

So, if you had invested \$10,000 in the Clean200 on July 1, 2016 you would have had, as of January 26, 2026, \$38,290 versus the \$21,100 you would have had from a fossil fuel investment in MSCI ACWI/Energy .



Sweet Energy from a Donut

A Finnish company, Donut Lab, has developed a battery that reportedly has an energy density of 400Wh per kilogram—roughly twice that of typical lithium iron phosphate batteries currently in production. According to Donut Lab its battery can fully charge in five minutes and has a practically unlimited lifespan (100,000 charging cycles). It is unaffected by heat and cold and contains no rare earth, precious metals or flammable liquid electrolytes. On top of all that, Donut Lab says it will be cheaper to produce than conventional lithium-ion batteries.

The Lighter Side of Climate



Spring is finally here,
Lettuce celebrate!



Why are trees so care-free in spring?
Because they just turned over a new leaf.



Why did the gardener plant a light bulb?
She wanted to grow a power plant.



Why couldn't the gardener finish planting?
Because he was always wasting thyme.



Why was the gardener so embarrassed?
He got so excited he wet his plants!



What sign did the gardener bring to the demonstration?
"Give Peas a Chance!"

Sign Up to Help
Transplant Seedlings
at Love Grows Here Farm
Beginning April 29

LOVE GROWS HERE FARM

Epiphany's Annual Grant recipient "Love Grows Here Farm" is seeking volunteers to transplant seedlings to greenhouses beginning April 29.

Two- and three-hour volunteer slots are available from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, April 29-May 1; May 5-8; May 12-15; and May 19-22.

Sign up by contacting Inga Arvin at 502-272-0786 or go to info@lovecityinc.org.

Additional volunteer slots will be announced as they become available.

A "Family Day," for families with toddlers and older, will be held Saturday, May 9. Contact Ethan Essex at lovecityinc.org to sign up for Family Day.



The Creation Care Team would love your feedback on this issue of *Common Home*. In addition, let us know if there is particular care for creation 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.

