



DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

LAUDATO SI' ACTION PLATFORM: YEAR ONE REFLECTION

*Ever since the creation of the world His eternal power
and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been
understood and seen through the things He has made.*

Romans 1: 20



Diocese of San Diego Laudato Si' Action Platform YEAR ONE Reflection

Since uploading our Laudato Si' action plan (LSAP) in July 2023, we have endeavored to tackle the following actions, divided into the seven goals of Laudato Si'. Here we reflect on the outcomes of our actions—where we have succeeded as well as where we still have work to be done.

LAUDATO SI' GOAL ONE: Responding to the Cry of the Earth

1. **ACTION:** Eliminate, to the greatest extent possible, plastic water bottle use at the diocesan Pastoral Center and encourage significant reduction of single-use plastics throughout our parishes and schools (CCAP Chapter 4, 'Ban bottled water,' p. 34; GENESIS 2:15; LS #206)

OUTCOME: Three major areas of individual plastic water bottle use were reformed, greatly reducing plastic water bottle (and other single-use plastic) use. HOWEVER, continued reform is necessary.

- 1) **At chancery events, all use of plastic bottles was abandoned** by the Pastoral Center Meeting & Events Coordinator, shifting to recyclable canned drinks and/or reusable beverage dispensers with compostable cups. This action eliminated an estimated 1,500+ plastic bottles from our primary staff gatherings. In addition:
 - a. **A sustainable hospitality kit** was created, consisting of small and large dishes as well as utensils for smaller events.
 - b. **Two new dishwashers** were installed in the kitchen to facilitate use of the sustainable items.
 - c. **All ware is compostable** in the staff break room, and proper signage directing the disposal of items is posted above landfill, recycle and compost containers.
- 2) **A water dispenser with paper cups** was added in the main conference space of the Pastoral Center, allowing for large group events to forgo single-use plastic water bottle provision.
- 3) **Our "Million Meals Event,"** coordinated by our diaconate to package 1.5 million meals in one weekend with approximately 4,000 volunteers, also shifted from individual plastic water bottle provision to use of 5-gallon recyclable water jugs with battery-powered taps and paper (compostable) cups. Volunteers were also encouraged to bring reusable bottles. As a result:





- a. **Total costs were \$1,055 less**—a reduction just over 50%—simply by shifting away from individual bottles.
- b. **Only 20% of the previously purchased volume of water was consumed** with this new means of distribution, revealing typical waste with individual bottle usage.
- c. **Projected costs for next year should come to ~18% of individual water bottle costs**, with taps already acquired and an 80% reduction in need for water identified.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- 1) While several offices in the chancery’s Pastoral Center have adopted elimination of single-use plastics, many have not completely shifted when holding office-level events.
 - 2) At the parish level, single-use plastics are still in use and no diocesan-wide concerted effort has taken root.
2. **ACTION: Continue Tree Planting Program** (Creation Care Action Plan of SD Chapter 4, 'Increase Tree Canopy,' p. 37; GENESIS 1:11-12; *Laudato Si'* #33)

OUTCOME: Our efforts this year were divided into two realms, planting and growing. While tree distribution and planting numbers were lower than we would have liked to see at the parish level, our development of a diocesan tree growing operation constitutes a major accomplishment in achieving long-term capacity for the program. Specifically:

1) PLANTING:

- a. ~30 trees were distributed to our SDCatholic community at our inaugural Feast of St. Francis Trees, Peace and Goodness Festival.
- b. Another 3 trees were planted at the Kairos House, a diocesan-connected transitional home for formerly incarcerated men.
- c. 5 trees were planted as part of our “Planting Hope” program seeking to offer peace and reconciliation with victims of clergy sexual abuse.
- d. In October 2024, St. Mary’s Star of the Sea in Oceanside, CA is scheduled to plant 12 trees in honor of the 12 Apostles during the most appropriate time for planting.

- 2) **GROWING:** Our diocesan Creation Care Ministry team, under the direction of restoration botanist Brother James Lockman, OFM, planted 680 Coastal Live Oak acorns, with another 80 acorns planted by a group of 6th graders. Over 500 have sprouted successfully and will be available for distribution in future years.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: We need to encourage more planting in 2024-2025.



LAUDATO SI' GOAL TWO: Responding to the Cry of the Poor

3. **ACTION: Produce a Diocesan Map of Environmental Vulnerability** - in-house project for Creation Care Ministry (PSALM 146: 6-10; LS # 48)

OUTCOME: This action is pending and will continue as a project for 2024-2025.

4. **ACTION:** Provide sustainable bags to Miseriacordia food distribution efforts and conduct drives for reusable bags throughout the year. (JOHN 21: 15-17; LS #49)

OUTCOME: 500 reusable bags were purchased and donated. Miseriacordia distribution was delayed until April 2024, but their first round resulted in 60 out of 96 bags being returned with more bags projected to be returned for future use.



AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT: We are devising incentives for students to return bags in the 2024-2025 school year.

LAUDATO SI' GOAL THREE: Developing Ecological Economics

- ACTION: Work to divest from Fossil Fuels and share a model for others to follow -** (CCAP Chapter 4, 'Divest/reinvest,' p. 31; ISAIAH 5:8-10; LS #23)

OUTCOME: Accomplished!

In the fall of 2022, the Diocese of San Diego and all of its affiliates implemented an investment screen to divest totally from all direct stock holdings of companies receiving more than five percent of their total revenues from the extraction and/or production of fossil fuels AND also divested from all mutual funds that reflected more than five percent of aggregated fund revenues from fossil fuel endeavors. After a little over a year, the success of this action was confirmed, revealing divestment achieved at three percent of total revenue, exceeding our established goal.

Sharing our action was first announced in our local diocesan paper, *The Southern Cross*¹ and was subsequently covered by Brian Roewe for *National Catholic Reporter's* "Earthbeat" feature.²

- ACTION: Develop and promote an eco-suppliers list to guide parishes toward sustainable purchases** (CCAP, Chapter 7, "Purchasing and Recycling;" MARK 4: 30-32; LS #191)

OUTCOME: Needing to refrain from endorsement of specific suppliers, this list was not published online, but rather shifting "away from single-use plastics and adopting use of sustainable, compostable items for serving at large events" was added to our

¹ www.thesoutherncross.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2024/SOX_01_2024_ENG.pdf (9).

² <https://www.ncronline.org/earthbeat/faith/first-us-church-san-diego-diocese-divests-fossil-fuels>

recommended School/Parish/Community suggested actions with direction to contact Creation Care Ministry for guidance on locating a reputable supplier.

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT: We need to find ways to communicate the need for this ecological economic transformation and pathways to action to our parish business managers and school personnel responsible for purchasing goods.

LAUDATO SI' GOAL FOUR: Adopting Sustainable Lifestyles

- 7. ACTION: "Lights out in the PC" campaign - when away from the office and in common areas after hours; accompanied by "The Heat Is On!" – to set thermostats at sustainable levels and ensure reset to program when rooms are not in use.** (CCAP Chapter 4, 'Reducing Energy Waste,' p. 31; MT 5: 14-17; LS #13)

OUTCOME: Discussion with our Central Services and Building Coordinator as well as the Pastoral Center Meeting & Events Coordinator revealed a "campaign" was not really needed, as they have ensured timers are set to optimize energy use. Notifications and reminders to staff have been sent, however, to encourage honoring these parameters.

- 8. ACTION: Create an "Events Checklist" to ensure sustainable behaviors at our workshops and other PC events** (CCAP Chapter 4, 'Reducing Energy Waste,' p. 31; JOHN 6: 12; LS #27)

OUTCOME/AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT: A new Pastoral Facility Procedures and Meeting Room Guidelines document is under construction and should be approved and disseminated by the end of the year.

LAUDATO SI' GOAL FIVE: Promoting Ecological Education

- 9. ACTION: Continue workshop and speaker series** (CCAP, Ch 2, 'Learning from Catholic Teaching and Science,' p 15; LUKE 8: 4-8; LS #211)

OUTCOME: 22 ecological education events were held from July 2023 to July 2024, including presentations to our deacons & wives, new directors of catechetical ministry, seminarians, new pastors, and stewardship committee leaders. Key highlights of our wider ecological education efforts are as follows:

- 1) The creation of an educational pathway for parishes, schools and households,** using the "SEE-DISCERN-ACT" model was a major transformation to our approach. Our "SDCatholic Creation Care Pathway" consists of a recommended



screening of the film *The Letter* followed by an Introductory Workshop, then attendance at a Laudato Si' Action Platform (LSAP) Hands-On Workshop.

- a) In addition to screening at the diocesan Pastoral Center (PC), numerous parish **Screenings of *The Letter*** with follow-on discussions were held.
 - b) **Introductory Workshops**, offered twice a year at the PC or upon request at individual parishes/schools, present an Intro to Creation Care, the Science of the Environmental Crisis, and Ecological Spirituality.
 - c) **Hands-On Laudato Si' Action Planning Workshops** - similarly offered, provide an overview and practical instruction on using the seven goals of Laudato Si' to enroll and take action via the Laudato Si' Action Platform.
- 2) Other significant ecological education efforts include:
- a) **"A Catechesis of Laudato Si'"** presentation, sharing our approach to creation care instruction as part of a Franciscan School of Theology lecture series, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcKvAgcJrIM>
 - b) **An ecological education exhibition booth** at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, created in collaboration with other Southern California creation care Catholics.
 - c) Presentations were also offered in partnership with the International Catholic Stewardship Conference, the Association of US Catholic Priests, the University of San Diego, the San Diego Interfaith Coalition for Earth Justice, and the Diocese of San Diego Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT: Event attendance currently averages around 25 people at most events but needs to increase to make an impact.

10. ACTION: Introduce the California Catholic Conference Creation Care Curricula to Catholic School educators and catechists (PROVERBS 22:6; LS #209)

OUTCOME: This curriculum was presented to our Office for Schools, however, due to the extensive nature of the curriculum and the very full schedule of existing coursework, it was decided this material would be more appropriately drawn upon as a resource.

The broader spirit of this objective was accomplished, however, in two key areas of youth creation care formation:

- 1) A **Creation Care Teens** high school program using the Catholic Climate Covenant Wholemakers content was created, accepting 9 students for our first cadre from 3 of our local Catholic high schools and 2 parishes. Students met monthly via zoom to learn and share. The team tabled at the diocesan Youth Day in April to provide peer-to-peer creation care ministry.
- 2) **6th Grade Camp** was another area for creation care formation using general concepts presented in the California Catholic Conference. This California state program consists of a week in the great outdoors, but has not previously been held at our regional Catholic family camp, “Whispering Winds Family Camp and Conference Center.” Creation Care Ministry partnered with the camp to provide a half day of Catholic-specific creation care catechesis to four of our diocesan schools. Based on the success of this pilot, a second week of camp has been added to next year’s calendar, four times the number of schools will be participating, and Creation Care Ministry has been asked to increase our content to a full day.



LAUDATO SI' GOAL SIX: Promoting Ecological Spirituality

11. ACTION: Season of Creation Mass; Feast of Saint Francis Trees, Peace and Goodness Fair (PSALM 148: 1-5, LS #11)



OUTCOME:

- **Season of Creation 2023 included a beautiful Mass** celebrated by Cardinal Robert McElroy, uplifting the year's theme "Let Justice and Peace Flow." A musical prelude with a children's procession, carrying in sunflowers and olive branches, set the tone. At offertory, parishes, schools, and households brought up their Laudato Si' action plans in response to the cry of the earth as well as a collection of non-perishable goods to support the host parish's food pantry in response to the cry of the poor. A near-zero-waste reception following Mass to recognize our diocesan Laudato Si' Awardees followed.
- **Our first Feast of Saint Francis Trees, Peace and Goodness Fair** provided opportunity for a blessing of our trees and distribution of them to parishes, schools, and households, as well as presentation of awards to our annual children's "For the Beauty of the Earth" art contest winners, and lots of ecological education by local creation care groups and environmental organizations.

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT: In future years, we need to increase our attendance at our St. Francis Festival and develop more opportunities for ecological spirituality throughout the year.

12. ACTION: Hold 2nd Annual Youth and Young Adult "For the Beauty of the Earth" Art Contest (PSALM 19: 2; LS #215)

OUTCOME: 67 students, grades 4-12, submitted artwork centered on the theme "For the Beauty of the Earth." Awards for first and second place were presented to winners

of the following age categories, 4th-5th grades, 6th-8th grades, 9-10th grades, and 11th-12th grades.



LAUDATO SI' GOAL SEVEN: Community Resilience & Empowerment

13. **ACTION: Imperial Valley/Salton Sea Outreach - animation of the community in an effort to strengthen local voices and foster environmental justice in the region** (CCAP, Ch 3, "III. CARING FOR THE VULNERABLE, FOR THE EXCLUDED, AND FOR OUR COMMON HOME," p 21-25; ISAIAH 1: 17-18; LS #82)



OUTCOME: Ongoing action.

We are currently in a process of building knowledge on local dynamics in the Salton Sea/Imperial Valley, having connected with the Dean of this part of the diocese, having established a relationship with a cadre of scientists from San Diego State University, and having explored partnership with local community organizers. Further relationship building is, however, required.

This project will require dedicated long-term effort to determine how best to support this part of our community. One way the Creation Care Ministry hopes to help is to draw attention to this often forgotten, impoverished area. The Salton Sea is a site of

environmental disaster, and the Imperial Valley is experiencing extreme heat ranging as high as 120 degrees. Simultaneously, this region has high potential for a boost to the local economy and for making a major impact on renewable energy use as a result of the globally significant amount of lithium deposits in the area.

To this end, we are in the process of planning a pilgrimage to the Salton Sea in cooperation with the Diocese of San Bernardino, whose territory includes the northern portion of the sea. This event—an LSAP objective for next year—would mark the 10th anniversary of the *Laudato Si'* encyclical and would bring national level visibility to the Salton Sea—not only highlighting the environmental insecurity there but also giving voice to those impacted by ecological marginalization around the world.

14. ACTION: Participate in community peaceful demonstrations supporting resource equity and environmental justice. (CCAP, Ch 3, "III. Caring for the Vulnerable, for the Excluded, and for our Common Home," p 21-25; MATT 5: 6; LS #10)

OUTCOME: The Creation Care Ministry participated in demonstrations with the Interfaith Coalition for Earth Justice (ICEJ) throughout the year such as the “Ashes to Action” event calling on banks to divest of fossil fuels and praising local banks who have shifted away from such investment. The Creation Care Ministry also participated in three Earth Day events in April 2024 highlighting the disparate use of resources and uneven impacts of climate change upon our poorest and most vulnerable brothers and sisters.

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT: Developing positive strategies for environmental justice via policy transformation is another area for future advocacy.



In conclusion, the Creation Care Ministry is blessed to have had the opportunity to take *Laudato Si'* Action over the course of July 2023 to July 2024. These steps reflect the capacity with which our diocese is endowed. Our continued efforts to foster environmental justice by responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor will be found in our *Laudato Si'* Action YEAR TWO Plan, soon to be uploaded to the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform for the 2024-2025 annual cycle.

Any questions regarding this work can be directed to Christina Bagaglio Slentz, Associated Director in the Office of Life, Peace & Justice, charged with responsibility for our creation care ministry at cslentz@sdatholic.org.

Please find us also at our diocesan website, <https://sdatholic.org/care-for-creation-and-environmental-issues/> and follow us on <https://www.facebook.com/sdcreationcare> and <https://www.instagram.com/lpisandiego/>.

