Reflection on the Archdiocese of St. Louis Laudato Si Commission’s first year

The Archdiocese of St. Louis formed a new commission July of 2024. It is called the Laudato Si Commission.

This is our mission statement.

Inspired by the hope of Christ, the Laudato Si Commission (LSC) seeks to better align the Archdiocese of St. Louis to our Catholic social teaching on Integral Ecology as exemplified in the Pope Francis’ Laudato Si Encyclical through education, formation, collaboration and community outreach.

Our first year’s goals (2024-2025)

1. To organize an inaugural ‘Laudato Si’ Summit to introduce the commission to the people of the Archdiocese. And to provide our Catholic community resources, inspiration and collaborative opportunities to further advance our shared commitment to Integral Ecology.
2. To promote Integral Ecology awareness and appreciation through a parish speaking series hosted by the Commission.
3. Establish a Micro Grant program ($250-$500 per awardee) for parishes to incentivize and assist with specific projects dedicated to increase energy efficiency, reduce landfill waste, encourage gardening and food production, and to assist with low waste fish fries.

We accomplished these goals for our first year.

This is what the Commission did.

The inaugural Summit was held September 2024. The Keynote speaker was Benjamin de Foy, Professor of Atmospheric Science at Saint Louis University. He spoke on the Beatitudes of Creation. Followed by ‘Francis’ talks which were short educational talks by local experts on different environmental subjects followed by table discussions after each talk.

Our Parish speaker series consisted of three integral ecology related talks at different parish locations within the Archdiocese.

-An introduction to Laudato Si was presented by Sr. Cheryl Kemner, fsolph.

-Jean Ponzi from the Earthways Center at the Missouri Botanical Garden spoke on Climate Action: Home Grown National Park.

-Mark Etling, PhD, adjunct instructor at Saint Louis University spoke on the principals of Catholic Social Teaching.

The micro grants were awarded to parishes and schools. The distribution total was $5,000.

And we had Hannah Phillips present a continuing education talk to the members of the Commission on how to talk to people about climate change.

The Commission plans for 2025-2026-

-A second Summit in September 2025 with the Key note speaker being Dan DiLeo. With ‘Francis’ talks and table discussions.

-There will be an educational speaker series again with themes on integral ecology and climate action.

-The Micro Grants will be offered again with the focus on low waste/no waste fish fries at parishes.