2027
Laudato Si' Action Plan

Caring for Our Common Home

PART 1 - Introductory Letter from Bishop Timothy C. Senior

In his Canticle of Creatures, Saint Francis of Assisi calls us not just to praise the Good Lord with and for His creatures but more so *through* them. By acknowledging the wonders of the Sun, the Moon, the good Earth, and all of God's creatures with awe and a sense of gratitude that is both real and profound, we glorify the Creator for His might, His wisdom, His goodness, and His beauty. What is more, created in His image, human beings are the only creatures who glorify God in this way!

The two accounts of creation in the Book of Genesis show that, while Adam and Eve were integrated within the entirety of creation, they certainly held a special place. God orders all His creative action toward man and woman as the pinnacle. Apart from every other creature, God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Then, He blessed them and gave them dominion over all the Earth. Yet, we must not forget that God also created them *dependent* on the very Earth over which He granted them dominion: "God formed the man of dust from the ground" and placed him in a garden where he would both tend and eat its produce.

In his ecological encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reflected on these aspects of dominion and dependence:

> [W]e must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.… "Tilling" refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while "keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.[i]

It has become increasingly clear, however, that our stewardship of the great gift of creation is gravely lacking. Even so, there is hope. Over the years, many people have recognized this problem and have addressed the damage. The Church, too, has been concerned with the environment for many years.

Catholic concern for the environment is rooted in our faith and has gained clearer expression through the development of Catholic Social Teaching. Pope Saint John Paul II and his successors all spoke on the importance of concern for and care of creation, framing it as a spiritual and moral imperative, as well as a matter of justice. Moreover, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has stated:

> Environmental issues are also linked to other basic problems. As eminent scientist Dr. Thomas F. Malone reported, humanity faces problems in five interrelated fields: environment, energy, economics, equity and ethics. To ensure the survival of a healthy planet, then, we must not only establish a sustainable economy but also labor for justice both within and among nations. We must seek a society where economic life and environmental commitment work together to protect and to enhance life on this planet.[ii]

Our motivation, however, is fundamentally different from that of secular organizations. The Church is not simply another organization working for environmental goals; she is the Body of Christ on earth and a witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ – "the Gospel of Life." Therefore, as Catholics, our ecological stewardship is intrinsic to evangelical action. Separating the two would risk the Word's fullness and coherence.

Hence, in this spirit of fullness and coherence, the Diocese enrolled in a special grant-funded cohort created by the USCCB to establish a Laudato Si' Action Plan (LSAP) for our Diocesan Center. We then

formed the LSAP Committee under the Office for Life & Dignity to complete the work of drafting our plan. Today, I am pleased to present this Laudato Si' Action Plan focused on the Diocesan Center for the Diocese of Harrisburg. This plan serves as one practical expression of my pastoral vision, *Stir into Flame*, published in June of this year, and it represents one way in which we seek to live more fully the call to stewardship, discipleship, service, and witness that lies at the heart of the Gospel and undergirds our pastoral priorities.

The actions outlined in this plan are directed at the operations and activities of the Diocesan Center. They represent commitments we are making regarding our own practices, procedures, facilities, and culture. We hope that others throughout the Diocese may find these efforts informative and beneficial as they reflect our desire to take responsibility for the resources entrusted to us and to lead principally through example. Should this plan inspire others throughout the Diocese to begin or expand their efforts in care of our common home, we would enjoy hearing about it. I encourage them to contact the Diocesan Office for Life & Dignity at respectlife@hbgdiocese.org or 717-657-4804 ext. 322.

With gratitude for God's many blessings and confidence in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I commend this Laudato Si' Action Plan to the staff and leadership of the Diocesan Center. May our efforts help us to use wisely the gifts entrusted to our care, deepen our witness to the Gospel, and contribute to the mission of Christ entrusted to His Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior

PART 2 –Care for God's Creation as a component of Catholic Social Teaching.

Care for God's creation is one of seven themes of Catholic social teaching. As such, Catholics have an obligation to be stewards of the natural environment, through which God reveals himself and by which all life on the planet is sustained. For the sake of the common good, which includes all who would come after us, we may not carelessly exploit creation for our own temporary gain or subject it to our own selfish desires. Hence, the Holy Fathers, especially Pope Francis, have called for environmental stewardship and sustainability as one aspect of an "integral ecology," the understanding that the health of our human existence and the environment that gives us life are deeply intertwined.

Because creation supports all life, born and unborn, it follows that if we are to be "pro-life" we must also be *pro-creation*. Thus, our call to care for creation is an essential part of Christian life and the life of the Church and remains integral to defending life from conception to natural death.

In his 2015 Encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*, Pope Francis stated that "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience" (217). In the 11 years since *Laudato Si'*, the need for concrete efforts to address environmental crises has become ever clearer and even more urgent. This is particularly true of human-caused climate change, which scientists warn will only get worse and become irreversible without significant reductions in fossil fuel emissions.

In his 2023 apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis called on the church to respond to this environmental crisis with urgent and decisive action: "Eight years have passed since I published the

Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* … Yet, with the passage of time, I have realized that our responses have not been adequate." Climate change, he says, is no longer a secondary or ideological question, but a drama that harms us all, particularly the poor and vulnerable, who bear its greatest burdens.

As Pope Francis admonished, we cannot claim to care about life while remaining indifferent to the effects of environmental degradation on the poor and vulnerable, and indeed on the future of our planet. Care for creation is therefore a moral imperative, inseparable from our commitment to protect human life and dignity, and one that calls for a bold commitment from the Catholic Church.

At the request of Bishop Senior, this Laudato Si' Action Plan was developed for the Diocesan Center by the Diocese's Laudato Si' Action Plan Committee under the direction of the Office for Life & Dignity. The actions that follow focus on the operations and activities of the Diocesan Center and seek to advance principles of stewardship, sustainability, and integral ecology in a manner consistent with Catholic teaching.

PART 3 – The Goals of *Laudato Si'*

The Diocese of Harrisburg is enrolled in the *Laudato Si' Action Platform* (LSAP), an initiative of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. The LSAP is an action-oriented journey of conversion in the spirit of integral ecology intended to support and empower communities, institutions, and families to achieve total sustainability. Dioceses and parishes alike are welcome to enroll and participate in the platform. Indeed, all of us can make intentional choices to conserve resources and energy that can lead to "internalizing" a culture of creation care.

The Diocese of Harrisburg has developed goals for the *Laudato Si' Action Plan* (LSAP) based on the seven goals of *Laudato Si'*:

Goal 1: Response to the Cry of the Earth

Goal 2: Response to the Cry of the Poor

Goal 3: Ecological Economics

Goal 4: Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

Goal 5: Ecological Education

Goal 6: Ecological Spirituality

Goal 7: Community Resilience and Empowerment

Goal #1 - Response to the Cry of the Earth

The Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the well-being of every person, recognizing creation as a gift entrusted to us by God. Responsible stewardship flows from gratitude to the Creator and reflects our desire to glorify God through the care of what He has made.

"We have been created for God and in God we find our true purpose and meaning." [iii]

On the Diocesan Center campus, we commit to the following in response to the cry of the Earth:

- Water refill stations will be made available throughout the building by June 30, 2027.
- Recyclable and compostable plates for everyday use and containers for leftovers will be bought and stocked instead of Styrofoam and plastic.
- The IT Department will promote energy-saving practices by setting up automated processes that place laptops and other electronic devices in low-power mode when not in use. IT will train employees on how to manually reduce power consumption on their computers and devices.
- The Buildings & Properties Department will work with the Laudato Si Coordinator to review opportunities to reduce energy consumption and our carbon footprint related to the operation of the Diocesan Center Campus including landscaping services, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, building automation systems, electrical distribution systems, building envelope, water distribution systems, catering and food services, janitorial services and other operational and maintenance services provided for the upkeep and operation of the grounds and facilities.

Goal #2 - Response to the Cry of the Poor

The Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call to recognize the dignity of every human person and to serve Christ in those who suffer poverty, displacement, illness, injustice, homelessness, hunger or social exclusion.

"The twofold law of charity, love of God and love of neighbor, forms the core of the Christian life." [iv]

On the Diocesan Center campus, we commit to the following in response to the cry of the poor:

- Staff will be invited to greater awareness of and engagement with the work of Catholic Charities of Harrisburg and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).
- Bishop Senior will encourage staff to participate in an annual day of service (to be announced).
- The Diocesan Office for Life & Dignity with Catholic Charities will host a friendly office-to-office competition to collect the most funds for CRS' Lenten Rice Bowl collection.
- The Laudato Si' Action Plan Committee will research and recommend ways to provide support and awareness to the existing ministries in our diocese that support people experiencing poverty, homelessness, hunger, displacement, illness, or injustices.

Goal #3 - Ecological Economics

Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy holds a key role in our approach to caring for our common home. Financial and operational decisions are often moral decisions. Stewardship calls us to use resources responsibly and prudently for the common good and future generations.

> "Love cannot remain an abstraction. It has the most practical implications for our lives: it leads us to make choices for our future, for the good of ourselves and others." [v]

The Diocesan Finance/HCAS Office will:

- Continue to follow the USCCB guidelines for responsible investing, including consideration of the environmental and social impacts of investment decisions.
- Consistent with Catholic teaching on stewardship of creation and the common good, the Diocese seeks to support investments that promote sustainable economic activity and responsible use of natural resources while avoiding investments that contribute to significant environmental harm.

The Diocesan Buildings & Properties Office will:

- Conduct an energy audit with the support of Catholic Energies to assess current energy consumption, find opportunities for increased efficiency, and develop strategies to reduce operating costs and environmental impact.
- Transition to 100% energy-efficient LED lighting by June 30, 2027.
- Research biodegradable dinnerware with the goal of acquiring viable environmentally friendly options.
    - With the help of the Office for Life & Dignity, the Diocese will actively look for and apply for grants for this purpose due to the higher cost of these items.
    - For example, the cost for a year's supply of cutlery sets would increase from approximately $1,620 to $3,250.

Goal #4 - Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

The Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles calls us to make intentional, well-informed decisions about our use of resources, to reduce our waste and consumption of material goods as a reflection of the Christian call to simplicity, moderation, gratitude, and personal conversion. Through intentional behavioral choices we bear witness to a way of life rooted in the Gospel, rather than the enticements of the world.

> "Being witnesses, martyrs to Christ, means that we make the sacrifices needed to live in this world but not to be of this world…rejecting greedy consumerism to embrace the simplicity of living." [vi]

On the Diocesan Center campus, we commit to the following in response to adoption of sustainable lifestyles:

- Single-use water bottles, paper cups, and insulated cups will be reserved for guests only, and the use of reusable containers for water, coffee, and tea will be strongly encouraged.

- At the Diocesan Center, staff will continue to take part in quarterly electronic recycling collection opportunities hosted and promoted by the IT Department.
- The Laudato Si' Action Plan Committee will create a list of ways to help live a sustainable lifestyle that will be publicized on the Diocesan website.
- The Diocesan Offices for Life & Dignity, Communications, and IT will investigate the creation of an internal website to trade, sell, and buy unwanted items from the offices, parishes and Catholic schools within the Diocese.

Goal #5 - Ecological Education

Ecological Education contributes to lifelong formation, offering formational and foundational educational opportunities with the goal of helping others understand the relationship between faith, stewardship, human dignity, and care for creation. As part of the broader call to ongoing conversion, it seeks to deepen awareness and encourage faithful action.

"The call to lifelong conversion and deeper discipleship belongs to every baptized person." [vii]

On the Diocesan Center campus, we commit to the following in response to ecological education:

- The Life & Dignity Office, with the support of the Diocesan Laudato Si' Action Plan Committee, will offer introductory workshops at the Diocesan Center and at requested locations on Catholic Social Teaching, Laudato Si', and the Laudato Si' Action Platform. The Committee will seek partners with interested parishes, schools, campuses, and organizations.
- The Life & Dignity Office, Laudato Si' Action Plan Committee, and Communications Office will strategically plan informative and promotional communications that effectively educate and orient the faithful in the Church's teaching on care for creation.

Goal #6 - Ecological Spirituality

Ecological spirituality begins with worship and encourages greater contact with the natural world to rediscover God in all things. As we encounter God in the Eucharist, prayer, and the sacramental life of the Church, we learn to receive creation as a gift rather than a possession. Gratitude for the Creator leads naturally to responsible stewardship of creation.

"The Church's greatest work, our work carried forward through the power of the Holy Spirit,
is to worship God who loved us into existence and redeemed us in Christ.
We have been created for God and in God we find our true purpose and meaning." [viii]

On the Diocesan Center campus, we commit to the following in response to ecological spirituality:

- The Laudato Si Action Plan Committee, with the support of others, will offer articles, prayers, reflections, and intentions focused on environmental stewardship.
- During this Jubilee Year of Saint Francis, the Diocese will host a Mass to celebrate his feast day on October 4, 2026, with the Franciscans at Our Lady of Hope, Coal Township. Bishop Senior

will be the celebrant and homilist. This Mass will honor Care for God's Creation. A yearly Care for God's Creation Mass will follow.

- The Diocesan Office for Life & Dignity, Buildings & Properties, and Communications will develop a listing online of parish-based, outdoor prayer and reflection spaces available to openly visit throughout the diocese.

Goal # 7- Community Resilience & Empowerment

Community resilience and empowerment require a culture of collaboration to advance stewardship of creation as part of the Church's broader mission. By coordinating efforts, sharing resources, and cultivating engagement across offices, we strengthen our ability to serve both the Church and society while exercising responsible care for God's gifts.

> "This is the Spirit-driven task we take up together as the Church in Harrisburg with a diversity of God's gifts for the good of the whole Church and for the good of all humanity." [ix]

On the Diocesan Center campus, we commit to the following in response to community resilience & empowerment:

- Bishop Senior will appoint one person within Catholic Life & Evangelization or Buildings & Properties to be the Laudato Si' coordinator.
- Bishop Senior will create a permanent Laudato Si' Action Plan Committee of volunteers/staff members to work on the goals of the plan and to help the Laudato Si' coordinator.
- The Laudato Si' Action Plan Committee will communicate with the PA Catholic Conference to remain knowledgeable about legislation related to the Goals of Laudato Si'.

Laudato Si Assessment and Revision

The Laudato Si' Committee will meet quarterly to assess progress on the plan, and an annual report will be prepared at the end of each year. This plan was developed in 2026 for implementation during the 2027 calendar year. Future action plans will follow this same format and require approval of the bishop. Annual evaluation and reporting will guide ongoing efforts.

CONCLUSION

Care for creation is a responsibility that flows naturally from our faith in God the Creator and from our commitment to live the Gospel with integrity. The resources entrusted to the Diocesan Center, whether buildings, land, equipment, finances, or personnel, are gifts that must be used wisely, responsibly, and for the good of others, now and for future generations.

This Laudato Si' Action Plan represents a commitment by Diocesan leadership to examine our own practices and to seek practical ways of improving our stewardship of those gifts. Some initiatives are simple. Others will require additional planning, collaboration, and investment. Together, however, they express a desire to align our daily operations more closely with the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the call to care for our common home.

With confidence in the guidance of the Holy Spirit and gratitude for God's abundant blessings, we move forward in this work, recognizing that faithful stewardship is measured not only by large accomplishments but also by the consistent practice of responsibility, gratitude, and care in ordinary things.

"When we stir into flame the fire of love for God and for others, everything changes. We see the world anew in the brightness of this divine blaze and we begin to allow ourselves to become everything that God calls us to be."[x]

Endnotes

[i] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (accessed September 24, 2026).
[ii] United States Catholic Conference, *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, NCCB/USCC, https://www.usccb.org/resources/renewing-earth (accessed September 24, 2026).
[iii] Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior, *Stir into Flame*, https://www.hbgdiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Stir-into-Flame-Pastoral-Vision-June-2026.pdf (accessed September 24, 2026).
[iv] Ibid.
[v] Ibid.
[vi] Ibid.
[vii] Ibid.
[viii] Ibid.
[ix] Ibid.
[x] Ibid.