



DIOCESE OF
St Augustine

Care for Our Common Home

*The Integral Ecology Plan for
the Diocese of St. Augustine*

*prepared by
Diocesan Committee on Integral Ecology*

Introduction



In June 18, 2015, Pope Francis released the encyclical *Laudato Si*, in which the Holy Father beautifully describes the integral relationship between human beings and the natural environment inscribed by God. A call to conversion, *Laudato Si* urges human beings to recognize their vocation as “keepers of the garden” and to respond faithfully to this call by caring for God’s creation in this present time of ecological crisis.

In an effort to respond faithfully to the Holy Father’s call, in the fall of 2019, Bishop Felipe Estévez commissioned a Committee on Integral Ecology. The committee is charged with assaying the ecological situation of the Diocese of St. Augustine and crafting a document suggesting ways that individuals, families, and parishes – indeed the entire diocese – might begin “to be faithful stewards of God’s creation.”

The Task

We will work individually and together to slow and reverse the effects of hundreds of years of releasing polluting emissions into the atmosphere, and dumping chemicals, plastics, and discarded goods onto the land and into the waterways to combat climate change and other negative effects of pollution. This requires the conscious effort of individuals, groups, and organizations. The local effects of emissions, pollution, and trash can be seen in Northeast Florida. They affect our neighborhoods and our livelihoods. The impacts are felt most by those who can least afford to escape. Caring for the environment is part of caring for our neighbor: the poor, the lowly, the disenfranchised.

3 Areas of Focus

Formation

The continual growth in faith through experience, reflection, prayer, and study is the first component of this plan. The study of sacred Scripture, church tradition, social and ethical teachings, and the scientific consensus will allow us to recognize our integral connection to God’s creation – to all living things, and so, to one another. Such formation creates opportunities for life-long self-examination of our thoughts about and actions toward God’s creation while learning to love and protect the garden that we are commissioned by God to care for (Genesis 2:15).

Commitment to Reduction of Consumption and Waste

Reducing consumption means we will be more frugal to reduce the demands we place on the environment that sustains us. The consumer mentality results in wanton disregard for the value of goods. Combining a commitment to reduce consumption with mindfulness is a powerful mechanism for cleaning up the environmental troubles we find ourselves in today, and preventing the costly damage and cleanup of environmental disasters of the future (Job 31:38-40).

Advocacy

Advocacy is the extension of mindfulness from person to organization and a commitment to encourage others to make changes to preserve and heal our environment. The Diocese of St. Augustine is adding this component to the plan to affirm our commitment to advocate for solutions, for protection of our natural environment, and the protection of our most vulnerable neighbors. This means community involvement and showing our level of care to a larger audience. Advocacy must always be respectful and cognizant of those who may not be in positions to make mindful decisions about their environment. For example, those seeking out

an existence at or below the poverty level may not be able to make choices due to their circumstances (Deut. 16:20; 27:19).



Scales of the Plan

“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible” (Attributed to St. Francis of Assisi).

-  **Individual** – The smallest scale of action, the individual, requires personal commitment to engage in formation, taking action to reduce consumption and waste, and advocacy. My choices as a person certainly affect those around me, but they are definitely my choices.
-  **Family/Group** – Each individual belongs to a larger group, that while still small in scale, can contribute to the collective effort and multiply the good effects of individual actions. Families or other groups (neighborhoods, clubs, teams, etc.) can be engaged in all three areas of the plan.
-  **Organization** – Each individual is part of a larger, more formal organization. This is nominally the parish in the Diocese of St. Augustine, but can also be a school or workplace. Engaging a larger organization in the actions and goals of the plan can magnify the positive effects.

Goals

- 1 Engage in meaningful discussions about care for creation.
- 2 Improve your knowledge of *Laudato Si*, church teachings, and scripture on care for creation.
- 3 Commit to reducing single-use plastics, carbon emissions, and trash production in our daily lives.
- 4 Commit to lower consumption of fossil fuels and consumer goods.
- 5 Care for vulnerable members of our communities, particularly those most affected by environmental degradation.
- 6 Engage in outreach at home, school, the workplace, community, and place of worship – be a role model for the changes in attitude and action at all scales.

Getting Started

Sign the St. Francis Pledge

I/We pledge to:

- **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God's creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- **LEARN** about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
- **ASSESS** how we – as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations can contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
- **ACT** to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
- **ADVOCATE** for the Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.

(Source: <https://bit.ly/2FmLRf0>)

Committee on Integral Ecology of the Diocese of St. Augustine – October 2020

