**CARING FOR GOD’S CREATION: Living Laudato Si**

**Helping to bring Pope Francis’s encyclical to life in our community**

**From the Diocese of Syracuse “Care for Our Common Home” Task Force**

*(Our attitudes)… attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society. (LS 208)*

Did you know that care for our common home, Planet Earth, can start in our closets? **Fast fashion,** inexpensive clothing produced in response to the latest fashion trends, is typically made with low-cost labor in unsafe conditions. Affecting both climate change and the vulnerable poor, the fast-fashion industry contributes to actions that harm the earth and future generations. Pope Francis has condemned the oppressive and dangerous working conditions of many poor garment workers, and in ***Laudato Si***, he urges us to respond to these cries of the poor and the earth.

Climate change is not just a scientific problem, but a moral one. We all have a responsibility to examine the effects of our lifestyle choices. The mass production of cheap apparel depends on planet-warming fossil fuels. According to the Carbon Literacy Project, the fast-fashion industry is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions, ranking higher than emissions from air travel! What can consumers do?

For one, **we must be mindful that we are connected** to the people who create our clothes. *The Human Thread Campaign*, a program of Seventh Generation Interfaith, educates consumers and promotes solidarity with these workers. Additionally, consumers can embrace **slow fashion** production that focuses on more durable clothing made in ethical and environmentally friendly ways. When consumers learn about the dangers of fast fashion and respond by changing how they shop, global brand companies may be more inclined to address fair-trade business practices such as responsible sourcing, creating safe work environments and paying better wages.

There is **encouraging news** regarding commitments to environmental initiatives in the fashion world: the “radical transparency” of clothing company, **Everlane**; the sustainable, circular economy created by T-shirt company **Teemill**; the recent transfer of ownership by outdoor-clothing company,**Patagonia** to entities that will help fight the climate crisis; and the chemical-management policies for apparel created by retailers **Target**and **Carter’s** to protect workers, customers, and the planet.

Throughout the Diocese of Syracuse there are many **opportunities to shop differently** rather than be lured by beautiful, inexpensive outfits. Demonstrating our commitment to sustainability and a just economy, we can “upcycle and recycle” at thrift and consignment stores and buy from artisans who repurpose clothes. We can lessen the impact of modern fast-fashion culture by considering options for secondhand clothing donations and purchases. Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Utica and All Saints Parish in Syracuse benefit from their partnership with St. Pauly Textile Inc., which purchases the clothing in their donation sheds to sell to organizations like relief agencies, while also providing the parishes with funds to support projects and clothing giveaways. The Agape Shop at St. Lucy’s in Syracuse and The Scotty at Divine Mercy in Central Square sell clothing at minimal cost. St. Mary’s in Baldwinsville encourages parishioners to clean out their closets after Christmas and donate used winter clothing for Catholic Charities. Proceeds from Closets for Charity at Natur-Tyme in Dewitt currently support the CNY Community Foundation, centering on the Black Equity and Excellence Fund. The Community Support Closet at Dr. Weeks School in Syracuse provides clothing to students and families. Interfaith Works of Syracuse supports refugee families and welcomes donations of gently used coats and hats. For more donation sites, the Imperfect Idealist website lists 23 places to donate clothes. <https://imperfectidealist.com/where-to-donate-clothes-besides-goodwill/>.

​Next month we will share ideas about how to turn Thanksgiving into *Thanksliving.*

-Elizabeth Fleury and Marijane Reilly

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