**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**

**From Thanksgiving to “Thanks living”: Gratitude as a Way of Life**

“*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good*.”  Psalms 107:1 and 118:1

“*God looked at everything he had made and found it very good*.” Genesis 1:31

Each November on Thanksgiving we give thanks for God’s goodness, which all creation reveals. But as children of God and heirs of God’s creation, our thankfulness really should not be just a day but a whole way of life that we might call **“Thanks living” – a mindset of gratitude that infuses all we do throughout the year, involving both prayer and practice.** It is not a Pollyannaish optimism**:** our country and our world face enormous challenges we must honestly confront. Instead, it involves showing thankfulness to God by praying and caring for God’s people and creation in our daily lives.

Among other things, we can**:**

-go for walks, in our neighborhoods or elsewhere, and make ourselves aware of God’s abundant gifts – the sunshine and fresh air, the people and their homes, the trees and flowers, the insects and birds, the creatures large and small – while pausing at times to offer a quick prayer of thanks.

- visit cemeteries and memorial parks frequently throughout the year, honoring the “communion of saints” and being present to the interconnectedness of God’s beautiful creation all around us.

-stop to pick up trash, while thanking God for our abundance and asking forgiveness for our throwaway culture that misuses and trashes the gifts we have received.

-reduce overconsumption and waste, not only by reusing and recycling, but also by planning our shopping and meals so we don’t wind up wasting God’s gifts by trashing excess food, clothes, and other goods.

-say prayers of blessing and thanks before and after all meals, As Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si’* (§227), this “reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labors provide us with these goods; and it reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need.”

-reduce our consumption of meats and processed foods, thus honoring God by protecting our health and God’s creation. Donate our time to feed the hungry to show our gratitude by sharing our abundance with God’s people.

-donate our used clothing as a way of thanking God by sharing the gifts we have been given with the needy. When purchasing clothes, we can resist the urge to keep up with fast fashions and instead buy tasteful and durable clothes made by producers who honor God’s creation by treating our environment and their employees well.

-reduce our reliance on fossil fuels by driving less, turning down our heat, and investing in power sources, vehicles, heat pumps, and appliances that rely on renewable energies, thus protecting God’s creation while also giving thanks for God’s gifts of the sunshine, wind, and water.

- take the time to be present and listen to people who are hurting or struggling, and even to those whose outlooks differ from our own, as a way of thanking God for our health, freedom, and diversity.

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- partake in the Eucharist (a word that means “thanksgiving”), which puts us into communion with all God’s creation. As Pope Francis wrote (*Laudato Si’* §236), “Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God.”

-read the pope’s encyclicals and watch *The Letter*, a recent film about Pope Francis and Creation Care (free and available online at https://theletterfilm.org/watch/), to better understand his message and thank God for our Church and Holy Father.

*Next month we will share ideas about how to sustain the spirit of Christmas and the Incarnation throughout the year*

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