**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***

In 2015, Pope Francis addressed the whole church through his second encyclical (pastoral letter), **Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home**. Encyclicals are named after their opening lines which serve to introduce a major theme. **Laudato Si’** means “praise be to you” in Italian and is part of St. Francis of Assisi’s 13th century prayer, the “Canticle of Creation, “ in which he praises God by reflecting on the goodness of nature. In this environmental encyclical on creation care, Pope Francis, inspired by the Franciscan vision of all creation singing praises to God, invites us to protect God’s creation for future generations by nurturing the common home we share, our Mother Earth. Beginning “Laudato Si’” in this way is a reminder of how people of faith should not only respect the Earth but also praise and honor God through their engagement with creation.

“Laudato Si’” is divided into six chapters. The first three explore the gospel of creation (Genesis), what is happening to our common home, and the human roots of the ecological crisis. Chapters four through six build on the concept of **“integral ecology”:** that people and planet are one family and that earth is our common home. As people of faith, we have a responsibility to protect our common home and a commitment to care for creation. “Laudato Si’ “ teaches us that everything is connected, which is why we are called to rebuild our relationships with each other and our common home. (LS 91)

Pope Francis urges us to embark on new ways of living with “creativity and enthusiasm” and to act on the values we hold dear. (LS 221, 220) We are also called to dedicate ourselves personally and communally to the future of creation care for our planet and all peoples. When we prayerfully consider our fundamental relationships with God, our neighbor, and the Earth itself, we come to understand that we are on a long path of renewal to leave the world a better place to live and ensure a positive legacy for future generations. (LS 66,202).

How do we discern what we can do to rebuild our relationships with each other and our common home? The seven “Laudato Si’ “ goals can help us cultivate a spirit of integral ecology by guiding our actions with profound and loving care: **Response to the Cry of the Earth, Response to the Cry of the Poor, Ecological Economics, Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles, Ecological Education, Ecological Spirituality and Community Engagement and Participatory Action.**

The Diocese of Syracuse currently has nine parishes with an established “Caring for Our Common Home” task force or are in the development process. This monthly column from the diocesan task force can serve as a way to build community by sharing stories of hope across our diocese as we work for the healing of our common home. In August we will highlight the efforts of urban farms that work to ensure the availability of fresh produce for all, native plant gardens at local parishes and the important role of pollinator species to our ecosystem. May we be inspired to take decisive action as we journey towards a better future together.

* Elizabeth Fleury July 2022