

Lent: a time to reflect on our environment and our responsibility toward our common home

(thanks to Meg Kane Smith
from Ursuline Wilmington)

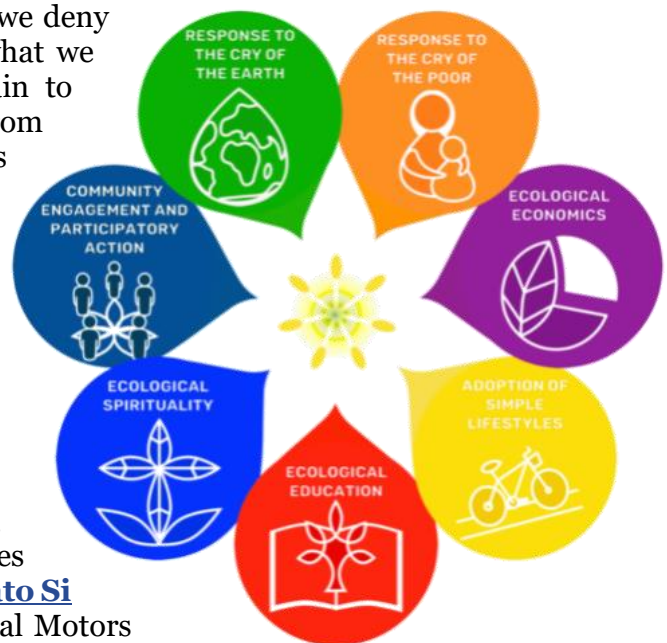
In the 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si* (subtitled Care for Our Common Home), Pope Francis makes clear the interconnectedness we all have with our natural surroundings and our responsibility to pass it on sustainably to future generations for people of all backgrounds. This interconnectedness means we must cease our high levels of consumerism in order to protect the resources and cultures of people, such as our indigenous communities. He says that in various parts of the world indigenous communities are being asked “to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture.”

We must examine where we place our landfills, hazardous waste sites, incinerator plants, factories, highways with all their exhaust fumes and make sure they are not all located near underserved communities where people have much higher rates of respiratory illnesses and water borne illnesses. This definitely affects communities of color as seen in: [Ted Talk: Environmental Justice](#)

We must assess our high usage of fossil fuels, which contribute to flooding, droughts and natural disasters in countries that have a very small carbon footprint. During this Lenten season of fasting, we deny ourselves certain foods making us appreciate what we eat. We must investigate our food supply chain to ensure that food deserts are eradicated from low-income neighborhoods and that healthy fruits and vegetables are available to all and not just processed foods.

In order to tackle these concerns, the Vatican is rolling out a multi-year “*Laudato Si* Action Platform” beginning this May 2021 on the *Laudato Si* anniversary with benchmarks that will include living more simply, becoming carbon neutral, divesting from fossil fuels, promoting ecological liturgical celebrations and school curricula and more. Families, dioceses, hospitals, schools, religious orders, businesses, universities and farms will all be invited to participate. [Laudato Si Action Platform](#) As companies such as General Motors announce they will switch to all electric cars by 2035 and large oil companies seek to diversify away from fossil fuels, we can see hope that many are recognizing the importance of environmental sustainability.

Jesus’ constant emphasis on relationships and not being materialistic (“memories, not mementos”) is a call to us during this season of Lent. We are reminded from the Book of Numbers 35:34 that “you shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.”



**So this second week of Lent, ask yourself:
What can I do in care of our common home?**

copy of the reflection prepared by USA Ursuline JPIC Team