



Laudato Si' Action Plan Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

Like states, cities, universities, and corporations, Catholic parishes and schools see the importance of doing their part to positively contribute to our environment and community. As Catholics, we have a moral responsibility to care for the earth, God's creation and one another. The impact of not doing this is most felt by the poor and vulnerable – in their neighborhoods, in our water and air quality, etc.

We are following the Pope's call to all people of our planet (as requested in his June 2015 Encyclical on the Environment called "Laudato Si – On Care for Our Common Home"). Pope Francis asks that we each do our part to protect our fragile, shared home on planet Earth.

We are stepping up our efforts in Atlanta with The Laudato Si' Action Plan, written by environmental scientists (Mrs. Susan Varlamoff and her colleagues) in 2015 at The University of Georgia. They were asked to create this local Action Plan by Atlanta Archbishop Wilton Gregory. To read the Action Plan, please visit our [website](#).

CURRENT STATUS

Local

- The Action Plan is a part of the science and religion curriculum in all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Atlanta.
- In 2016, the Archdiocese of Atlanta began an annual 'Green Mass' held on or near the Feast of St. Francis (Oct. 4), for those who volunteer or work in "green jobs" or

environmental sustainability and for all who love planet Earth.

- Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Atlanta have been considering new ways to handle food waste and implementing “no idling” car pick up lanes.
- Many of the Archdiocese of Atlanta parishes have created Creation Care Green Teams and are implementing the Action Plan in a greater way. (Increasing gardens, recycling, reusing materials, food sharing, creating food gardens, etc.)
- Parishes have brought in speakers on a myriad of topics that are part of the Laudato Si’ Action Plan. This has led to various action items, such as energy audits, recycling drives for electronics, replacing bottled water with coolers, using reusable plates and cutlery for events and replacing Styrofoam with biodegradable cups.
- The University of Georgia (UGA) Catholic Center implemented a bee keeping project under the supervision of UGA bee keeping expert, Dr. Keith Delaplane.
- In August 2017, the Office of Formation and Discipleship hosted a “Laudato Si’ and Family Planning” Workshop for clergy (priests and deacons) to learn more about giving spiritual guidance to help couples understand human ecology and natural family planning. Human ecology articulated by *Laudato Si’* helps us understand man’s relationship with his whole environment – God, neighbor and creation. Focused on the relationship between spouses, human ecology helps to define God’s design for family planning and shows how contraception works against it.
- Justice and Peace Ministries at the Archdiocese of Atlanta has done presentations on Laudato Si’ at various parishes, including topics such as reducing and refusing single use plastics and celebrating Earth Day.
- Justice and Peace Ministries hosts Lenten Lunches for Chancery employees that include Laudato Si’ information and ideas for action.
- Archbishop Gregory shared The Action Plan with Ebenezer Baptist Church. They are now using parts of The Action Plan on their church campus (home church of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.).
- American Jewish Committee Atlanta – Accepted and shared The Action Plan with all of their metro Atlanta synagogues and schools. Implementation on various levels continues.
- The [Saporta Report guest column](#) written by The Action Plan lead author/environmental scientist/ retired director of The University of Georgia’s Office of Environmental Sciences in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, and lifetime Master Gardener, Mrs. Susan Varlamoff.
- Archbishop Gregory joined a special panel of local pastors and social justice leaders to address the moral imperative we have to care for the earth on September 27, 2017 at Georgia Tech at the [2017 Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Climate Change Conference](#).

International

- The Archdiocese of Atlanta won a Catholic Press Award (First Place) from the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada for the rollout celebration at The University of Georgia (April 2016).
- The Laudato Si’ Action Plan was reported in a column written by Marshall Shepherd, a world class scientist who contributed to the Action Plan, as well as by Yale

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University.

- Portions of our Action Plan have been adopted in the archdioceses of [Boston](#), [New Orleans](#), [San Francisco](#), an [Archdiocese in Australia](#) and the [Diocese of Savannah](#).
- Archbishop Gregory presented The Action Plan at the Mid-Atlantic Congress (Archdiocese of Baltimore) this year (February 2017), and spoke on the importance of the Action Plan in his keynote address about the work of the USCCB's Special Task Force for Peace in Our Communities (he served as the Special Task Force chair).
- Action Plan co-author Susan Varlamoff [marched in the People's Climate March](#) in Washington holding as her sign of the cover of the Action Plan.

FUNDING

- A Pilot Project is underway in metro Atlanta, funded by Ted Turner's daughter, Laura Turner Seydel and her husband, Rutherford Seydel (\$25,000), to conduct energy and water audits at 9 churches and 3 schools (12 locations total). The aim is to find more funding to make the churches/schools and their buildings more energy and water efficient while also reducing the overall cost of running the parish/school.

PARTNERS FOR THE ACTION PLAN IN ATLANTA

- [Georgia Interfaith Power and Light](#) assists by taking The Action Plan to other faiths and conducting the audits for the Pilot Project.
- [Trees Atlanta](#) helps Atlanta metro parishes with certain types of trees for their landscape and provides matching funds. They have a tool to calculate carbon dioxide absorbed by the trees. They also can be contracted to remove or assist with invasive plant removal.
- [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) provides the software to put in energy, water and waste data to track reductions per church, region, etc.
- [Georgia Master Gardeners](#) are working on parish landscapes throughout the state to put in sustainable landscapes as recommended in The Action Plan.
- [Southface Energy Institute](#) is training facility managers in the use of EPA software and data management.
- [U.S. Green Building Council](#) - Georgia Chapter is a partner as their members are providing water audits.