



The Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn Reflection on the *Laudato Si'* goals

The Vatican has a platform for helping organisations plan actions in response to the papal encyclical *Laudato Si* (<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>). The reflection contained here is a necessary first step for organisations who are enrolling in the global action platform.

This first step in planning is to publicly reflect on how local values might connect to the seven *Laudato Si* goals defined in that global platform. After enrolment, organisations undergo a period of further assessment and local discernment to decide on specific action plans in coming years.

Laudato Si – On Care for Our Common Home

Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical letter "*Laudato Si'* - On Care for Our Common Home" provides a comprehensive approach to God's creation and the place of humankind in God's plan. *Laudato Si* explains Christian spirituality and social teaching on care for His creation.

It explains the need to consider others, since everything in creation is connected. The encyclical explains the importance of bringing indigenous voices and perspectives into the centre of our understandings of humanity as a part of creation.

Deliberations for the 2021-22 Plenary Council in Australia strongly reference *Laudato Si* and call for action to implement responses that demonstrate and promote the understandings contained in these teachings. *Laudato Si* provides a rallying point for people and their future, for practical ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue, and for Church renewal.

Creation is groaning. Australia has experienced severe drought, bushfires, biodiversity loss, coral bleaching, severe and more frequent flooding, extreme storms and a global pandemic that it seems arose from 'jumping' zoonoses. Bishops in our Oceania region see the need to respond urgently to these issues and their causes and to deal with impacts on the most vulnerable from things like pollution, sea-level rise and severe storms.

In their most recent social justice statement *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, the Australian Bishops invite the community to join them in taking up Pope Francis' invitation to a seven-year journey for action on *Laudato Si*. The Statement especially encourages Catholic families, parishes, dioceses and organisations to listen to our First Nation people, to reflect on the theological foundations offered in *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, and to plan their next steps to respond.

Our Vision Inspired by Laudato Si'

Spreading the Christian message of God's goodness and love and of God's desire for an abundance of life and salvation for all is the key role of the Church in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (refer Attachment 1).

Following the last Archdiocesan assembly, Archbishop Christopher concluded that 'animated by the "loving kindness of the heart of our God" (Luke 1:78), we are to place ourselves at the merciful service of all humanity, especially the poor.'

In today's world the message in *Laudato Si* is key to this Christian work of bringing people to know God and his saving power. This is not just in understanding the goodness of God's creation, but also in the teachings on the need for us to care for our common home on earth as a way of saving others - bringing and sustaining abundant life to the most vulnerable in accordance with God's plan.

In the words of Pope Francis there is an inseparable 'bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace' (*Laudato Si'* paragraph 10).

Charisms of the movement

In 2020, the fifth jubilee anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese began to more actively consider promoting and implementing 'On Care for our Common Home'. A group of parishioners began working with Archbishop Christopher to animate, form and educate people on the inspiring and renewing role of the teachings in *Laudato Si'* for today's world.

The Archdiocese reflected on a series of years of terrible natural calamities that are signs of global greenhouse warming – unprecedented drought, heat waves, dust storms, ferocious and destructive bushfires, smoke and hailstorms. The Archdiocese of course was already responding in a practical sense to the impacts of these and other events and to the immediate-term needs of those affected.

An Archdiocesan Caring for Creation movement was instituted in May 2021. A prayer gathering initiated the movement. This event featured

- connection to nature in the grounds of St Peter's Yarralumla.
- a leading role by First Nations people and our Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, in view of their spirituality in practical care for country
- openness to participation by other Christian faith communities, given the catholicity and the universal nature of the movement
- encouraging and listening to the voices of the younger generations
- eco-spirituality, deep grounding in the Word and liturgy, prayers of lamentation and thanks
- a strong desire to move towards practical redress and reconciliation, and
- working with the vulnerable - with the event hearing of the significance of the St Vincent de Paul Society initiatives in energy management, recycling and responsible resource usage.

Inspired by *Laudato Si* the Archdiocesan movement seeks to engage others and to work towards effective practical responses to the ecological crises in caring for our common home.



Along with deep connections in the spiritual, sacramental and prayer life of the Church, the above are continuing hallmarks of the nature of the *Laudato Si* movement in Canberra and Goulburn. They are all crucial to renewal in our faith, and to the spirit of evangelisation in the Archdiocese.

The above features are also present in and underpin our *Laudato Si* action planning. They strongly reflect and connect to global *Laudato Si* goals (diagram below with explanations at Attachment 2).



Laudato Si action planning

In its *Laudato Si* action planning, the Archdiocese will walk alongside similar initiatives by Pope Francis, by fellow Bishops around the world and across our region of Oceania, and by other faith communities. The Archdiocese aims to accompany and encourage individuals, parishes and other organisations in their respective journeys along this common path in the coming years.

To show our support, it is crucial that the specific aspects to be handled at Archdiocesan level (for example our resource investments, our vehicle fleet policies and our management of archdiocesan facilities) are managed in solidarity with the aspirations of individual parishes and families, so assisting and enabling their own action plans.



Attachment 1 – Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn – Our Situation

Location

Through vast distances, the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn values a strong connection to the universal Church.



In many ways the Archdiocese (see <https://cgcatholic.org.au/>) is in a privileged position - in a 'first world' country in the Asia-Pacific region where many do not share our advantages, our wealth and our resources -

- Over 88,000 sq km in area, the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn contains some of the most biodiverse regions in Australia. It encompasses high country peaks and headwaters, forests and woodlands, western plains and rivers, coastal forests and coastal waters.
- There are more than 50 parishes across the Archdiocese - in its cities, towns and rural regions, 163,000 people profess their faith as Catholic. As part of a tolerant, multicultural society, the Archdiocese stands alongside many Christian and other faiths.
- There are several significant university campuses, including the Australian Catholic University, approximately 47 parish primary schools, 8 early learning centres, 9 Catholic secondary schools. Catechesis is also undertaken in non-systemic and non-catholic schools. There are 4 hospitals, 10 nursing and convalescence homes, a children's welfare centre and numerous other institutions and organisations.

National focus

The Archdiocese is close to the earth because of its wide rural makeup. But it is inherently sensitive to the politics of the nation being centred as it is, in the national capital. Canberra is a major centre for academia and for sciences. It is a place of national debate and international diplomacy. The Australian Government in Canberra has a national policy-making role in areas like world affairs, immigration, in the use of our offshore waters and places like the Antarctic.

Our vulnerabilities

As Christians, it is important that we do not misunderstand the weaknesses of our wealth, privilege and 'first world' position. With self-knowledge and discernment we can more properly understand our situation under God's plan -

- The contemporary Church throughout Australia and in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn enjoys many blessings. But it also experiences major challenges in its role of bringing Christian teachings to the country. Christian unity is still a way off. Church goers are ageing and practice declining. The move towards collaborative ministry of the laity and pastoral leadership is increasingly urgent.
- Canberra has a particular role to play in forging our national directions. Australia is an especially hot, dry and vulnerable country. It is home to severe resource exploitation and in many ways still undeveloped. It is already responsible for significant land clearing, biodiversity loss and species extinctions. Some of our landscapes, soils and remnant habitats are fragile and severely degraded. We are relatively high greenhouse gas emitters and also a major exporter of fossil fuels like coal and gas.
- Until recent decades Australia was a leading nation in global moves to manage ecological and other connected crises in an integral, scientifically valid and responsible manner. More recently Australia's performance in this area has been criticised internationally.

Alongside our agricultural landholders, Aboriginal communities in our regions retain long-held links to country. First Australians have in many ways a more grounded view. As an ancient culture living in this land of the Southern Spirit, our First Nations people have made strongly worded statements calling on other Australians to walk with them on a journey towards a better future. Never having ceded their sovereignty, they are now calling for truth-telling, for reconciliation and for reforms to empower them to restore their place in the Australian Nation.

Attachment 2 – Connecting Laudato Si goals to our Archdiocesan values, charisms and works

Laudato Si goals	Explanatory	Demonstrating our values
Response to the Cry of the Earth	A call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability	Responsible stewardship of our own resource demands and ecological impacts. Promoting our kinship with creation in solidarity with the perspective of First Australians. Walking with rural communities and landholders in promoting biodiversity, sustainable land use and water access.
Response to the Cry of the Poor	A call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and to defend all forms of life on Earth	Christian health care, social services and missionary works. St Vincent de Paul Society’s energy programs. Advocacy, solidarity and outreach (global and domestic) for vulnerable groups, the disadvantaged and the afflicted, famine, fire and flood victims, refugees, migrants, children at risk, etc.
Ecological Economics	Acknowledges the economy as a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere – our common home.	Sustainable and economical use of resources. Ethical investment of our limited resources, conscious of activity harmful to people and our common home.
Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles	Grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy	Recycle and reduce waste in our operations. As far as practicable, reduce pollution or adverse greenhouse gas emissions from our transportation and infrastructure.
Ecological Education	About re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reforming the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action.	Christian, catholic education and faith formation. Fostering understanding of Laudato Si’ teachings and encouraging community ecological leadership in our schools, parishes etc
Ecological Spirituality	A spiritual life associated with worldly realities. Profound ecological conversion to “discover God in all things” - in the beauty of creation, the sighs of the sick and the afflicted.	Deepening awareness of the place of creation in the eucharist, liturgical celebrations, formation and prayer life.
Community Resilience & Empowerment	Envisages a synodal journey of community engagement and participation at many levels	Listening to the voices of our First Australians. Collaborative ministry, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue in local communities and ecosystems.