



**CARE FOR OUR  
COMMON HOME:  
What Parishes  
Can Do**



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**Catholic parishes, in union with the faithful they shepherd, must serve as examples of stewards of creation.** This necessarily entails fostering a culture of sustainability within the parish, not only through greater environmental awareness, but also by instituting sustainable operations and conservation of resources. Since saving energy and resources also saves money in the long run, such initiatives also serve to highlight responsible use of parishioner contributions, while also serving the common good.





## Parish Operations

Set measurable goals to reduce consumption of energy and resources; track utility costs both before and after to convey savings to parish.

Set thermostats to 78°F in summer, 68°F in winter (and lower overnight).

Significantly reduce school HVAC operations during holidays and over the summer.

Keep worship space and outside doors closed to reduce HVAC use.

Clean HVAC systems and air filters regularly.

Reduce hot water heater thermostats to 120°F.

Turn off lights in unoccupied areas.

Recycle as much as possible, including most paper, cardboard, and plastic.

Post parish bulletins online, and limit printing hardcopies for distribution.

Avoid purchasing seasonal missalettes or printing separate orders of mass for each week; instead, use reusable missals.

When printing is necessary, use both sides of the paper.

Encourage recycling of bulletins and other materials.

Don't cut down healthy trees, and plant new ones.

Mow less of the parish property, and allow reestablishment of native plants.

Convert some areas of parish property to wildflower gardens for bees and butterflies.

Contract with landscapers who don't use gas-powered blowers.

When hosting an event, serve water in pitchers or jugs rather than in bottles, and "rainforest-safe" coffee and donuts (i.e., not fried in palm oil).



## Facility Upgrades

Have an energy survey/audit performed—  
then act on it.

Replace incandescent or CFL bulbs with LEDs.

Install motion-sensor switches for both interior  
and exterior lighting.

Install programmable thermostats.

Improve building insulation and replace old  
windows.

Convert parish grounds to self-maintaining  
ground cover and native species.

Install solar photovoltaic, hot water, and  
geothermal systems whenever feasible.

Join the *Groundswell* community renewable  
power program ([www.groundswell.com](http://www.groundswell.com)).

When building a new facility, design for LEED  
certification.



## Parish Programs

Establish an environmental justice committee and highlight it on your parish website.

Present homilies and seminars on *Laudato Si'*, environmental stewardship, the connection between the environment and life itself, and the common good.

Incorporate environmental topics and care for creation in school curriculum.

Host novenas or other prayers for the environment (e.g., “40 Days for Climate”).

Post weekly suggestions for sustainability on your parish website and in the parish bulletin; refer to papal quotations, scripture, etc.

Establish carpool-to-mass programs for everyone, but especially for the handicapped and elderly.

Establish a parish recycling program for printer cartridges, batteries, etc., that can generate revenue for the school, youth programs, or other ministries.



Host a parish-wide garden for growing produce for either parishioners or the needy.

When hosting fundraisers, sell products that are produced sustainably or that showcase environmental stewardship.

Promote parish involvement in community efforts that support sustainability, conservation, and restoration of natural resources.

Support parishioners who offer suggestions for conservation and sustainability, including an anonymous “suggestion box” in the office and/or on the parish website.

Research information, grants, and other resources related to environmental initiatives, such as: **USCCB, National Religious Partnership for the Environment, Energy Opportunities, and Interfaith Power & Light.**

Participate in the **St. Francis Pledge** (<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org>).

Include in intercessory prayers:

- The grace and courage to take action to help protect the environment and to conserve resources for future generations.
- Those who are suffering from environmental degradation and climate change.
- The intentions of the Holy Father and in particular for the care of our common home.



## **Some Websites for Information on the Environment and Environmental Justice**

[www.migrate.usccb.org/issues-and-action/  
human-life-and-dignity/environment](http://www.migrate.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment)

[www.catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org)

[www.climate.nasa.gov](http://www.climate.nasa.gov)

[www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org)

[www.dels.nas.edu/basc](http://www.dels.nas.edu/basc)

[www.csas.ei.columbia.edu](http://www.csas.ei.columbia.edu)

[www.law.nyu.edu](http://www.law.nyu.edu)

[www.nasa.gov/feature/goddard/carbon-climate](http://www.nasa.gov/feature/goddard/carbon-climate)

[www.ran.org](http://www.ran.org)

[www.nature.org/greenliving/gogreen/  
everydayenvironmentalist](http://www.nature.org/greenliving/gogreen/<br/>everydayenvironmentalist)

[www.rainforest-alliance.org/shopthefrog](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/shopthefrog)

[www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator](http://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator)

[www.ehow.com/facts\\_5939247\\_carbon-footprint-  
information-kids](http://www.ehow.com/facts_5939247_carbon-footprint-<br/>information-kids)

[www.us.fsc.org/en-us](http://www.us.fsc.org/en-us)

[www.consumerenergycenter.org](http://www.consumerenergycenter.org)