

St Therese Catholic Parish West Wollongong

Reflection for Laudato Si' Action Platform



ST. THERESE WEST WOLLONGONG

We are a diverse community united by our love for Jesus and for one another, constantly seeking to grow in this love especially through the Eucharist.

We welcome everyone and help each other to discover their unique gifts, joyfully working together as one to bring the overflowing love of Jesus to all people.

Acknowledgement of Country

The parish of St Therese nestles in the foothills of Mt Keira in West Wollongong Australia, on the lands of the Dharawal people. Our community acknowledges and pays respect to the First Peoples who have lived on this continent for thousands of years recognising a Creator Spirit who was at the beginning of the Dreaming and is at the heart of all life. We appreciate that we have much to learn from an Aboriginal understanding that the land is not a commodity but a sacred space and being connected to country demands a responsibility to care for and live in harmony with creation. Our Aboriginal sisters and brothers invite us to be caretakers of creation and to deepen our understanding that God's creative movement is timeless, boundless and limitless.

Our Parish Community

The Parish was established as a parish in 1940, although the church had already been built in 1939. It was built on land originally purchased by Fr John Dunne at the crossroads of the Princes Highway and Mt Keira Road.

The spirit of the parish was demonstrated from its inception by the foresight of its first pastor, Father John Mulherin and the parishioners' commitment to have their own parish, working hard to raise the funds to make it happen. This spirit has continued as new priests have ministered to the parish and the parish has faced various challenges and changing times over the years.

From its earliest days, a school was established to support the parishioners in the faith and academic development of their children, originally being housed in the church and later in a series of new buildings. Today many students still come from families who were part of the foundation of the community. The Sisters of the Good Samaritan staffed the school from its inception, followed by lay staff who continue to educate young people.

The community of St Therese has sought to fulfil Christ's commandment to 'Love God and love your neighbour' through the formation of a large number of parish groups whose activities have included formation, worship, social justice and community building. Over the years these have changed in response to the needs of the times and at present, there are approximately 50 ministry groups active in the parish.

One of these current groups is the St Therese Justice, Ecology and Peace Group (STJEP) whose members are overseeing the parish's engagement with the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

Environmental Vision



Our Parish community gains inspiration from the words of St Therese, ***"Remember nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love."*** For our Parish, love translates to respect and showing compassion for others, all of creation and to have an outward-looking approach to life.

Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* reminds us that it is through the "little daily actions" that we can make a contribution to caring for our common home, which finds connections in the life of St Therese who made it her mission to live her life "doing the little things really well"

Engagement with eco-spirituality, environmental education and action is a key component of our mission, of being Catholic and is viewed as "core business". As we read in *Laudato Si'*, ***"Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience"***. (LS, n.217)

And we are compelled to ask ourselves the question, ***"What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us?"***

Inspired by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement – *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* and Bishop Brian Mascord's Diocesan Pastoral Message (October 2021) the following two documents guide our Parish journey of ecological conversion.

[Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor](#)
[Bishop Brian's Diocesan Pastoral Message](#)

The 2021 - 2022 Social Justice Statement *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* from the Australian Conference of Catholic Bishops reminds us that the call to care for creation goes to the heart of what it means to be human before God and in the world. The statement asserts that the ***"signs of the times"*** (Gaudium et spes.4) are clear – we know we human beings need a change of heart, mind and behaviour. The Bishops commit to the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform inviting the Australian Church to join in, to participate fully, actively and consciously. Our Parish of St Therese embraces this opportunity.

Bishop Brian Mascord's Diocesan Pastoral Message (October 2021) officially committed the Diocese of Wollongong to engage in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform joining the global Catholic family in a seven-year journey of ecological conversion.

I hope that each of us will find ways to implement Laudato Si' in our home, parish, school and local community. As Pope Francis has said, "We need a new ecological approach that can transform our way of dwelling in the world, our styles of life, our relationship with the resources of the Earth and, in general, our way of looking at humanity and of living life." (May 24th 2021) For the sake of younger generations and their future, and for the sake of all species, human and other, "we must choose to eat, travel, spend, invest and live differently, thinking not only of immediate interest and gains but also of future benefits."

Our Parish of St Therese joins our Diocesan family in responding to this call of caring for our common home.

Laudato Si' Goals

As a parish community, we are not responding in isolation to the challenges of our time, rather we know that we are a part of a civic community which accepts the need for change. Illawarra industries, businesses and educational institutions are redefining priorities, policies and practices to reflect a commitment to the goals of environmental protection and sustainability, particularly through Council's Climate Healthy City Strategy.

From this position of strength, we look forward to considering each of the Laudato Si goals and the action we might take to work towards their achievement.

- RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH**
- RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR**
- ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS**
- ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES**
- ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION**
- ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY**
- COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT**



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