

Laudato Si' Action Platform Plan

2022-2025



Bellarmino Chapel

Dear Friends,

Faced with an array of social injustices, rampant inequality, and ecological degradation, we find ourselves at a threshold moment, a kairos moment. Last year, the Vatican called all Catholic institutions to respond to this moment by submitting Laudato Si' Action Platform plans focused on healing our relationships with God, our neighbors, and the Earth. Supported by the Jesuit's Universal Apostolic Preferences and grounded in our parish's long standing commitment to social mission, we are excited to share this plan with you.

This plan outlines our path to renewal for the next three years. Centrally, it invites our parish community to adopt a new lens appropriate for this moment, a new paradigm for our social mission and justice work: Care for our Common Home. As Laudato Si' emphasizes time and again, this necessarily includes both our human families and all of creation. Let our ears be open and our hearts attuned to the intimately connected "cries of the earth and cries of the poor" (LS 49).

Our plan is a living document, constantly evolving and always integrating into what we do as a parish and members of the wider Church. If you are part of our liturgical ministries, our children or youth faith formation, our issue-based action teams, our service and solidarity teams, or any other ministry, this plan is for you. If you are a parishioner in our pews who has ever cherished a walk in the woods, a dewdrop, a falling leaf, a bee seeking nectar, or a child splashing in a creek, this plan is for you. If you have ever looked into the eyes of your neighbor and seen Christ looking back, this plan is for you.

As you read through it, we invite you to discern: Where is this plan challenging me to grow? What new and creative ways of the Spirit exist for me and my ministry? How might we, as a parish community, better care for our common home and one another?

Over the years ahead, we hope that this plan and the actions that flow from it will awaken a new love for God alive in all of creation so that we might "feel intimately united with all that exists." (LS 11). We hope this plan nurtures the seeds of renewal and change as we together strive to share God's light and love with the world.

With Gratitude,

Healthy Earth Team
Social Mission Core Team
Advisory Committee

Fr. Eric Sundrup, SJ, Pastor
Tim Severyn, Director of Social Mission

Part I: Overview and Structure of the Plan

Overview of Laudato Si' Action Platform and Goals

Inspired by Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, [Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home](#), the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) (LSAP) is a seven-year process launched by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development to help Catholic institutions live into Francis' vision for the church. Per the LSAP website, it is "a unique collaboration between the Vatican, an international coalition of Catholic organizations, and 'all men and women of good will' (LS 3). Taking a truly ground-up approach, it is rooted in the strengths and realities of communities around the world, empowering all to take 'decisive action, here and now' as we journey towards a better future together (LS 161)."

As part of this process, all Catholic institutions across the world are invited to submit an annual Laudato Si' Action Platform plan to move towards seven goals implicit in *Laudato Si'*. These goals include Response to Cry of the Earth, Response to Cry of the Poor, Ecological Economics, Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles, Ecological Education, Ecological Spirituality, and Community Resilience and Empowerment. You can learn more about each goal on the [Laudato Si' Action Platform website](#).

Structure of the Bellarmine Plan

Recognizing the importance of context and culture, the Vatican promotes flexibility regarding the form that each institution's plan takes. For our parish plan, our Healthy Earth Team has identified four areas of focus that each capture between one and three of the broader LSAP goals. These four areas are: **Pray, Learn, Act, and Advocate**.

Figure 1: Pray, Learn, Act, Advocate Model



Our plan begins with an outline of some foundational documents that inform our efforts, along with the core values we are seeking to embody. It then moves into a brief history of parish engagement in each of the four focus areas. The central part of the plan outlines both expansions of existing initiatives and new opportunities for engaging each of the four focus areas.

Given the developing Family of Parishes with St. Xavier Church downtown, we decided to draft a plan for the next three years, 2022-2025, rather than the seven years suggested by the Vatican. We will have an opportunity to develop another three-year plan next spring, and each spring for the next six years.

The plan uses a **logic model** format to organize our engagement in each of the four focus areas. The Healthy Earth Team opted to use this format rather than the traditional structure of goals, objectives, and tactics or strategies. Implicit within a logic model is a **theory of change**, a comprehensive description of why a particular way of working will be effective in creating our desired impact of meeting the parish's LSAP goals. Each of the seven LSAP goals are connected singly or in combination with each activity named in our logic models.

One can read a logic model from left-to-right or right-to-left, understanding it as a series of "if-then" propositions. Beginning from the left, if we invest certain resources, then we can do certain activities. Or, beginning from the right, if the aim is a certain LSAP goal, then we need to see certain behavioral changes; if we want to see these behavioral changes, then we need to see certain cognitive changes, and so forth. In this way, a logic model offers a more complete picture of parish engagement in *Laudato Si'*, serving as a dynamic model capable of growing and changing iteratively over the seven years of submissions we will share with you and the Vatican.

Our Process for Engaging Parish Stakeholders

The Bellarmine Chapel Healthy Earth Team has taken the lead on drafting and organizing this plan. Brainstorming and feedback sessions were held with several of the parish leadership committees - the Youth and Young Adult Core Team, the Evangelization and Discipleship Core Team, the Worship Core Team, the Social Mission Core Team, and the Advisory Committee - as well as the parish staff. This input was critical to crafting a comprehensive plan for the parish.

The plan was approved by the Social Mission Core Team, the Advisory Committee, and the Pastor in April 2022.

Input from all sectors of parish life is important to making this plan not a static document but a living part of our community's life together. Over the coming months, we will be reaching out to different constituent groups across the parish to work through aspects of the plan together. We hope to increase parish engagement in drafting the next plan for April 2023 as well.

Part II: Values Reflection

Foundations

St. Robert Bellarmine Parish, hereafter Bellarmine Chapel, is a diverse parish community of more than 800 households located on the campus of Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. Our mission statement reads:

Bellarmino Chapel is a Catholic faith community that strives to live out the teaching and example of Jesus Christ in the spiritual tradition of St. Ignatius of Loyola. We seek to be a parish where lives are transformed by the new and creative ways of the Holy Spirit. Nourished at the table of the Eucharist, we are sent on mission to make disciples, serve those in need, work for justice, and welcome all with love.

As a parish committed to building the kingdom or kin-dom of God in the world, Bellarmine has a deep-standing commitment to living into Pope Francis' *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. Shortly after the encyclical was released, our Pastor and Director of Social Mission collaborated with Xavier University faculty to host a series of workshops on the core messages of the encyclical. From these 2015 workshops, the Bellarmine Chapel Healthy Earth Team was formed, a group of parishioners and staff committed to helping us embody *Laudato Si'*. The Team's mission statement reads:

The Healthy Earth Team inspires our parish through educational initiatives to connect the tenets of our Catholic faith and the need for action in protecting our common home from ecological exploitation and injustice.

Our Healthy Earth Team and our wider parish community were excited to embrace the [Universal Apostolic Preferences](#) (UAPs) of the Society of Jesus that were released in 2019, particularly UAP 4: Caring for Our Common Home. This UAP confirms, as Pope Francis proclaimed in *Laudato Si'*, that, "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 217). The work of our parish over the last seven years flows from precisely this understanding, grounded in Pope Francis' encyclical and these foundational commitments.

Values Statements

Using the text of *Laudato Si'* to guide us, we have identified the following core values as significant to our work thus far and our work over the next seven years as well.

Figure 2: Core Values

1) A Posture of Wonder and Awe Before God and Creation

2) An Ecological Conversion towards Humility, Curiosity, and Familial Love for Each Aspect of Creation

3) A Way of Living in Harmony with Creation

4) An Intersectional Understanding of Social and Environmental Concerns

5) A Commitment to Compassionate Encounter and Prophetic Witness

6) A Process Grounded in Collaboration and Community Building

1) A Posture of Wonder and Awe Before God and Creation

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. (A Prayer for Our Earth, Conclusion of Laudato Si')

We start with a deep reverence for God present in all creation and in the infinite, beautiful web of relationships that extend across the whole. Stretching to recognize our small place within our interconnected universe, we are filled with wonder and awe, overcome by a holy desire to follow the patterns of sacred nature across our individual and communal lives.

2) An Ecological Conversion towards Humility, Curiosity, and Familial Love for Each Aspect of Creation

'The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast.' For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion....So what they all need is an "ecological conversion", whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. (LS 217)

Within the whole of creation, humans represent only one way of being and knowing. We seek an ecological conversion wherein we approach each aspect of nature, each living being, with humility—looking with a patient curiosity as we strive to understand and learn from the astounding variety of life forms around us. In this striving, we move from curiosity to familial love for the specific others that make up the ecological communities of our lives.

3) A Way of Living in Harmony with Creation

If we approach nature and the environment without...openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. (LS 11)

As part of our communal conversion, we seek new ways of living in harmony with the cycles of nature. We strive to counter the narrative of dominion and its extractivist and exploitative tendencies with a narrative of tender stewardship, grounded in caring for and preserving creation. We commit to simplicity, to walking lightly on this earth and reducing our use of resources across our individual and communal lives.

4) An Intersectional Understanding of Social and Environmental Concerns

Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (LS 49)

We understand that human well being and ecological well being are not contrary concerns, but rather emerge from the same root: a throwaway culture propped up by separation, exclusion, and domination. As a community, we are committed to an intersectional approach in all our work, seeking solutions to ecological crises that are intertwined with the call for justice for those most affected. At the same time, we integrate ecological awareness into all areas of parish service and justice work.

5) A Commitment to Compassionate Encounter and Prophetic Witness

Along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us. (LS 231)

Recognizing that love in action has both interpersonal and social dimensions, we commit to pursuing a deep solidarity with our brothers and sisters on the margins, grounded in a culture of encounter and Christlike compassion. We likewise commit to bearing prophetic witness and to pursuing social justice for all oppressed and vulnerable people, including future generations.

6) A Process Grounded in Collaboration and Community Building

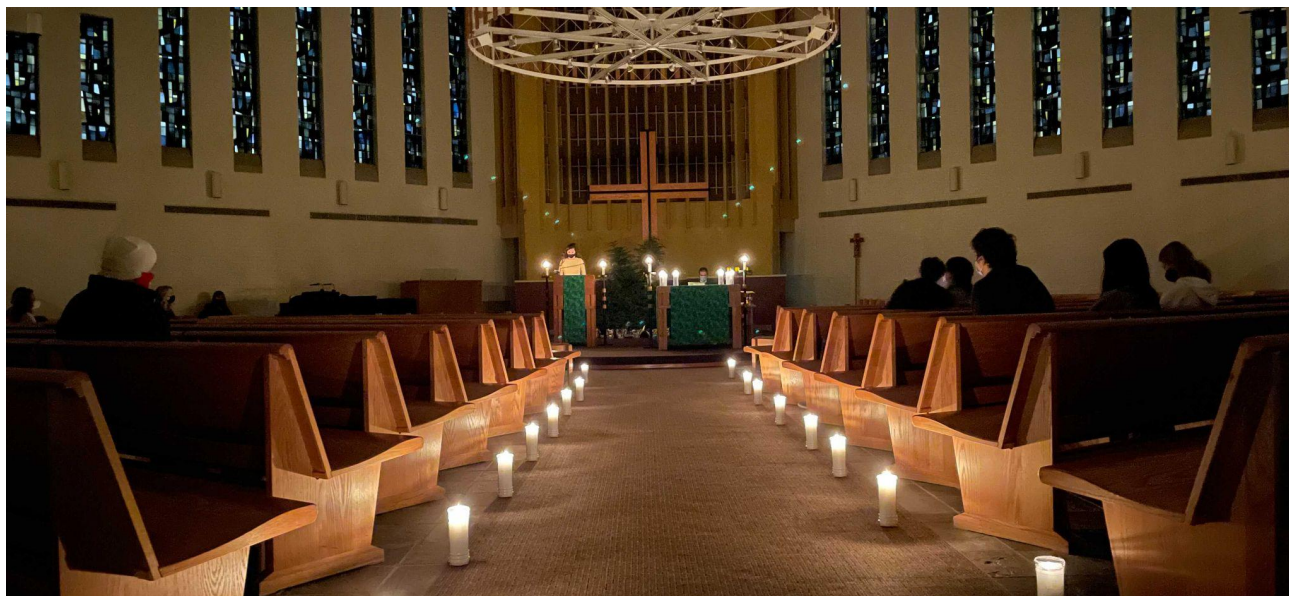
The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of

having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. (LS 13)

We know this work is only effective if we do it together, and so, we seek out collaborative partnerships with the University and community organizations working for change. We seek to build the beloved community, the kingdom of God, using the skills of asset-based community development, community organizing, and leadership development.

History of Engagement

Since 2015, the parish has worked to live out these values across four domains: **Pray, Learn, Act, and Advocate**. What follows are some key projects within each domain. These same domains are used later to frame our plan for the next three years.



Pray

The parish celebrates an Earth Day-themed mass each year on the Sunday closest to April 22, filling the Chapel space with creation-themed songs, petitions, and reflections from parishioners.

Creation-focused petitions and songs are also incorporated throughout the year, particularly through outdoor masses during COVID and creation-themed Taize services.

The Ecological Examen has become a foundational element within parish prayer life since its inception.

Bellarmino's Healthy Earth Team begins and ends each of its monthly meetings with prayer (ending always with Pope Francis' Prayer for the Earth) and includes reflections from participants on the connection between their faith and their call to care for creation.



Learn

The parish has offered theological and sustainability-related workshops as well as extended reading groups on *Laudato Si'*, often in conjunction with University faculty.

On several occasions, the parish has offered multi-week series for small faith groups on JustFaith's Sacred Land and Sacred Air curricula and on the book *Drawdown* by Paul Hawken with the Pachamama Alliance.

The parish maintains a robust [creation-themed resource page](#) on its website for parishioners and the wider community, and offers monthly green actions for parishioners to try at home.

There have been several ongoing opportunities to support sustainable lifestyles, including recycling opportunities through Terracycle and Matthew 25 Ministries, a local non-profit. The parish was also instrumental in launching Drive Electric Week in the Cincinnati region.

Believing we change most through experience, the parish hosts periodical engagements in nature called Earthscursions and monthly Meatless Meetups at area vegetarian restaurants to discuss the climate impacts of our food choices.

Recognizing the importance of engaging youth, Vacation Bible School and the GIFT Program, our ongoing faith formation for children, frequently incorporate ecological themes. Our Bellarmine Youth Group holds an annual mission trip, which likewise includes environmental issues.

In conjunction with the launch of this Laudato Si' Action Platform, we created an educational document for parishioners called [Laudato Si' and You: Ecological Conversion in Seven Challenges](#). This is a list of options for parishioners to either begin or continue on their journey of personal ecological conversion, again using our format of Pray, Learn, Act and Advocate.



Act

The parish engages in two major urban agriculture initiatives, the Fresh is Better: Evanston Garden Project and the NEXUS Community Garden and Urban Farm, designed to build community and increase food security across the region. With the help of volunteers from Evanston, Bellarmine, and Xavier University, Fresh is Better has built more than 80 residential garden beds. The project also created and maintains six beds at the Evanston Recreation Center; helped restore and maintain the Holloway Hope Community Garden; and organizes annual events, including a Plant Sale, a Garden Tour, and a Potluck within the diverse, low and moderate-income community of Evanston.

Through the NEXUS Community Garden and Urban Farm, the parish partners with the University and Brick Gardens, a black-owned business. With the equivalent growing space of 105 raised beds, the parish rents to 30 individual gardeners, collaborates with Brick Gardens on 25 beds, and then uses the remaining space for donation to area food pantries.

In the Chapel itself, we have increased sustainability, including switching to LED lighting and using an electric golf cart for transportation across campus.

There are also Active Discipleship Days held each season providing parishioners an opportunity for service and reflection, much of this is outdoors in creation. More than 100 people participate in this service opportunity, working at sites ranging from community gardens to food pantries.



Advocate

The parish advocates with city, state, and national partners including the Jesuit Office for Justice and Ecology, the Jesuit's Midwest Province, the Ignatian Solidarity Network, the Archdiocesan Care for Creation Task Force, the Xavier Climate Action Workgroup, and the interfaith coalition Faith Communities Go Green. These initiatives have focused on renewable energy and energy efficiency standards as well as greater climate change mitigation efforts.

Recognition

The parish has been recognized for its commitments, though there is a long way yet to go. In 2017, Bellarmine was part of the inaugural cohort of Laudato Si' Parishes for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, a certification process requiring a thorough review of the parish footprint and the footprints of at least 10% of households in the parish.

As part of Faith Communities Go Green, the parish has been invited to share best practices with other faith communities looking to become more sustainable.

In 2020 and 2021, parish staff have offered workshops for the Ignatian Family Teach-In on the collaborative work of Fresh is Better: The Evanston Garden Project.

In 2021, the Victory Noll Sisters and the Catholic Climate Covenant helped fund the urban agricultural work of the parish.

Commitment

We, Bellarmine Chapel, remain steadfastly committed to living into our identity as a *Laudato Si'* parish over the next seven years, a parish committed to the values and activities described above.

Part III: The 2022-2025 Plan

In the plan that follows, we outline important enhancements or expansions for our existing core projects and introduce new projects we plan to undertake together. The logic models are too complex to fit onto a single page within this document, so we offer here a summary of the activities or strategies column with a link to the full logic model for each section: **Pray, Learn, Act, and Advocate.**

PRAY

Primary LSAP Goal(s): Ecological Spirituality

Global Description from the Laudato Si' Action Platform: “Recovers a religious vision of God’s creation and encourages greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude. Actions could include promoting creation-centered liturgical celebrations, developing ecological catechesis, retreats and formation programs, and praying in nature.”

Application at Bellarmine:

Our community has a rich tradition of communal and individual prayer grounded in the tradition of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Enlivened by *Laudato Si'*:

- *Our worship and prayer will praise God in all of creation and reflect our call to protect and restore our common home.*
- *We will build awareness of and stand in a posture of wonder and awe before the interconnectedness of all things, honoring the beauty and value of other-than-human lives, and seeking to heal the rift that has grown between us and the rest of creation.*

Logic Model: [Click here for the full logic model.](#)

| Activities/Strategies |
|---|
| What We Do |
| EXPANDING PROJECTS |
| JustFaith Eco-Series, an 8-week small faith group focused on Sacred Land, Sacred Air, and Sacred Water, that includes prayer, dialogue, and immersion |
| Earth Day Mass and liturgical observance |
| Earth-focused petitions shared at Sunday Masses |
| Witness reflections shared at Sunday Masses through Active Discipleship witness talks and at Active Discipleship Days |
| NEW PROJECTS |
| <i>Laudato Si'</i> and ecological spirituality series for the Jesuit network in Cincinnati |

LEARN**Primary LSAP Goal(s): Ecological Education and Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles**

Global Description from the Laudato Si' Action Platform: “Grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. Actions could include reducing waste and recycling, adopting sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, active mobility (walking, cycling), and avoiding single use items (e.g. plastic, etc.).”

Application at Bellarmine:

Our community has a commitment to forming ourselves as active disciples through educational opportunities that engage the whole person (*cura personalis*). Enlivened by *Laudato Si'*:

- *We will learn—individually, communally, and with a focus on intersectionality—about the growing ecological issues that threaten life on earth.*
- *We will seek to live in harmony with creation and empower each other with experiences, knowledge, and tools that help us take action.*
- *We will embrace the sacrifices and joys of this simplicity and connect these actions to our Christian faith.*

Logic Model: [Click here for the full logic model.](#)

| Activities/Strategies |
|--|
| What We Do |
| EXPANDING PROJECTS |
| Resource sharing through the Healthy Earth Team resource page and Bellarmine Chapel social media accounts |
| Green Actions shared in the Social Mission Newsletter and Bulletin |
| Meatless Meetups, gatherings of parishioners at restaurants for vegetarian meals and community building |
| Earthscursions, immersion trips to parks and natural sites, as well as organizations doing care for creation work |
| Promotion of community-led educational opportunities |
| Child, youth, and young adult education focused on Laudato Si' themes |
| NEW PROJECTS |
| Recycling programs in partnership with the Recycling and ReUse Hub |
| Establishment of entry points for parishioners, outlining lifestyle changes and including carbon footprint calculators |

ACT**Primary LSAP Goal(s): Response to Cry of the Earth, Response to Cry of the Poor, and Ecological Economics**

Global Description from the Laudato Si' Action Platform: "Address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. Promote eco-justice via solidarity with vulnerable neighbors and other groups."

Application at Bellarmine:

Our community has a commitment to living as active disciples engaged in works of charity and relational solidarity. Enlivened by *Laudato Si'*:

- *We will work for a future in which environmental and social responsibility drive individual and institutional actions.*
- *We will celebrate and share the earth's bounty, in collaboration with our partners at Xavier University and in the neighboring community. Through a shared passion for gardening and nature, we will grow loving connections and solidarity with our neighbors, especially those who may experience food insecurity. We will create and maintain beautiful green spaces that heal the earth and restore our souls.*
- *We will take steps to reduce our communal and individual carbon footprints, eliminate waste, and consume goods and services more sustainably.*

Logic Model: [Click here for the full logic model.](#)

| Activities/Strategies |
|---|
| What We Do |
| EXPANDING PROJECTS |
| Active Discipleship Days, community action days focused on prayer, service, and reflection |
| Manage NEXUS Community Garden and Urban Farm, 105 beds on the XU campus, with 30 rented to community gardeners and the remaining used to grow food for donation to address food insecurity in surrounding communities |
| Manage Fresh is Better: Evanston Garden Project, an expanding network of 70+ residential gardeners and several institutional partners (Holloway Hope Community Garden, Evanston Recreation Center, etc.) growing organic food to increase food security and encourage community resiliency; the project focuses on building raised garden beds and supporting the growers that use them through resource-sharing and community-building opportunities |
| NEW PROJECTS |
| Assessing the sustainability and carbon impact of the Bellarmine Chapel space and introducing upgrades as needed, in partnership with Xavier University |
| Engaging collaborations focused on energy equity and environmental justice |
| Exploring renewable energy opportunities for the Chapel space |

ADVOCATE

Primary LSAP Goal(s): Community Resilience and Empowerment

Global Description from the Laudato Si' Action Platform: “Encourage the development of cultures and policies that protect our common home and all who share it. Actions could include promoting advocacy and developing people’s campaigns, engagement with decision-makers, and encouraging rootedness and a sense of belonging in local communities and neighborhood ecosystems.”

Application at Bellarmine:

Our community has a commitment to living as active disciples engaged in works of justice for and with the marginalized and the earth. Enlivened by *Laudato Si'*:

- *We will act with awareness of how our choices impact our neighborhood, community, region, country, and world.*
- *We will advocate for and encourage the development of public policy and legislation that protects and restores degraded ecosystems, while also addressing historic injustices for those who suffer from environmental degradation.*
- *As consumers, investors, and participants, we will seek ways to influence changes in businesses and institutions that will help align practices with values.*

Logic Model: [Click here for the full logic model.](#)

| Activities/Strategies |
|---|
| What We Do |
| EXPANDING PROJECTS |
| Work through the Ignatian Advocacy Team to promote advocacy opportunities after mass and online, with training in advocacy best practices |
| Participation in cross-community networks and coalitions (Faith Community Go Green, Archdiocese Care for Creation Task Force, and Xavier University Climate Action Group) |
| Visits with legislators on the state and national levels (e.g., Ignatian Advocacy Day) |
| NEW PROJECTS |
| Explore parish divestment from fossil fuel investments |

Part IV: Conclusion

Living into Laudato Si' takes each of us doing our part. We look forward to engaging in this critical undertaking with you over the months and years ahead.

Please let us know what you think of the plan and if you would like to be engaged in helping our parish live into this plan together. Our Healthy Earth Team meets at 6 p.m. on the 4th Monday of the month. All are welcome.

You can contact our Director of Social Mission, Tim Severyn, at socialmissiondirector@bellarminechapel.org with any insights or questions.

"Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope." (LS 244)