**Laudato Si’ Reflection**

The Church of the Resurrection is part of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa and until 1961, was known as St. Philomena Church which was established in 1857 by Bishop Mathias Loras. With the construction of a new church in 1986, Resurrection Church was officially dedicated on May 17th by Archbishop Daniel Kucera.

Our church properties include a rectory with meeting rooms and a new elementary school which was dedicated on August 21st, 2022. The school is part of the Holy Family Catholic School System.

A sign in front of a building

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

The Mission Statement of our parish is simple: “To be a Catholic Community that is a Visible Presence of Jesus.” This is evidenced in the many stewardship opportunities offered to our parishioners.

As we reflect on each of the Laudato Si’ Action Platform goals, we pause to reflect on our past and present behaviors and activities to inspire us to further develop the spirit of “integral ecology” of which Pope Francis speaks.

1. **Adoption of a Sustainable Lifestyle**

Environmental Stewardship is one of the central themes in Catholic Social Teaching and our parish has answered this call in many ways. We know that gifts given by our Creator need to be used wisely to minimize harm to the environment and protect valuable resources for future generations. In 2003, our parish established an Environmental Stewardship Committee (Green Team.) We used Resurrection School’s Green Vision School designation as well as the sustainability goals of the city of Dubuque as models. A primary focus was to practice environmental stewardship at our annual Parish Festival. Three thousand attendees were asked to recycle and compost in the dining room and on the grounds. In 2018, of the 3,010 pounds of waste generated, only 8%, or 250 pounds was sent to the landfill. All else was recycled or composted. This prevented 4,331 pounds of greenhouse gas from reaching the atmosphere. Since the pandemic, we have been challenged to meet these numbers. We have much work to do to regain this level of sustainability.

However, our efforts continue with the addition of new recycling containers to be used for all activities within our church social space. We remain committed to eliminating all Styrofoam from parish activities and substituting compostable or reusable products.

Our parish has conducted two energy audits, the last one in 2018 using a Green Assessment for Congregations Tool developed by several community members, a member of our own Green Team, and a representative from the Iowa Chapter of Interfaith Power and Light. Our parish uses an energy miser program in its buildings, including our new school, which consistently monitors energy use and conserves during low volume times.

1. **Community Resilience and Empowerment**

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.” Pope Francis further reminds us that “local individuals and groups can make a real difference” when people of faith speak as one voice. Several of our parishioners participate in community organizations such as the Dubuque Catholic Social Justice Network; the Presentation Sister’s Lantern Center, which offers assistance and education to immigrants; the Dubuque Interfaith Green Coalition, the local chapter of Interfaith Power and Light, whose mission is to inspire and equip people of faith to become leaders in pursuing solutions to climate change; the Dubuque Coalition for Non-violence and the Franciscan Sisters Action Network. There is also collaboration with the Dubuque Area Congregations United, an organization of people of diverse faiths and beliefs, united by belief in God, concerns for justice and a call to serve those in need.

These organizations are always accepting new members and consistently share social justice information through email, social media, newsletters, and local publications.

1. **Ecological Economics**

In his encyclical, Pope Francis talks about rampant consumerism and the “throw away culture” so prevalent in American society. He states, “…unsustainable is the behavior of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity.”

We need to strive for simpler, sustainable lives. We should consider our purchasing habits and choose those services and products that are available from businesses that are both ethical and committed to sustainable practices. We should commit to purchase goods from local, small, and medium sized businesses.

It is important to remember and practice the 5 R’s of sustainability in making purchases: Refuse and Reduce (purchase only what is needed,) Reuse (avoid single use materials,) Recycle and Rot (compost.) These practices should serve as a guide in all parish activities.

1. **Ecological Education**

Our Social Justice Committee is dedicated to the study of social issues as they impact human dignity and the need for systemic change. In the past two years we have conducted book studies on issues related to the prison system and systemic racism. Our current focus is on the Care of Creation and environmental stewardship using Pope Francis’ encyclical, Laudato Si’ and Dr. Katherine Hayhoe’s book, Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World. The Laudato Si’ Self Assessment Tool has indicated that we need to involve more parishioners in the understanding of Catholic Social Teaching regarding Environmental Stewardship.

Pope Francis teaches that ecological education can take place in many settings, but most importantly in the family, “where we first learn how to show love and respect for life.” Our parish should initiate collaboration with our school leaders and involve children in outdoor projects to teach and promote appreciation of the natural world and care for all of God’s creation.

1. **Ecological Spirituality**

Pope Francis writes in his encyclical, “Using our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue. It is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience.” Pope Francis calls for an “ecological conversion” where we need to examine our lives and habits and reflect on how they may be harmful to nature’s gifts, whether intentional or not. In gratitude for the gifts we have received, we need to reconcile these wrongs and make changes in our lives. We are called to reflect on our universal connection to all God’s creatures, recognize the beauty in creation and take responsibility in caring for it.

Pope Francis tells us that contemplation of the natural world can become a source of peace, joy, humility, and simplicity. It can increase our capacity for wonder and release us from the obsessiveness of consumerism. We pray for guidance as we develop ways of celebrating God’s creation within our parish through outdoor activities and an immersion in the natural world.

1. **Response to the Cry of the Earth**

In the spring and fall, our Green Team and Social Justice Committee members participate in a clean-up day to remove litter from the parish grounds, street, and adjacent neighborhood.

Our parish has had a rain garden on the church property for many years. It has been moved recently to accommodate for construction of the new school, but we hope to return it to its original site and perhaps expand upon it.

The Laudato Si’ Self-Assessment indicates that we need to celebrate the Season of Creation more. With the approval of our parish leadership, we hope to create more opportunities to celebrate the liturgy outdoors, reduce further our dependence on fossil fuels, plant trees, and further develop the green space on our campus.

1. **Response to the Cry of the Poor**

There are many opportunities at Resurrection to respond to the cry of the poor and those in need. Our parish regularly sponsors a Mobile Food Pantry, taking collections to purchase and distribute food boxes to those who suffer from food insecurity. Several groups within the parish organize and provide meals to be served at the local Rescue Mission, a facility that provides spiritual hope, food, shelter, clothing, and job development skills to those in need. We also support the St. Vincent de Paul Society and Habitat for Humanity.

Our parish closely communicates with and provides financial support to our partner parish, St. Ignatius Parish in Wanblee, South Dakota, and our sponsor child, Rosie, who lives in Guatemala. Prior to the pandemic, members of our parish also participated in a summer outreach program in Okolona, Mississippi. It is our hope that this program can be reinstated at some future time. Our Youth Ministry program also organizes service trips and projects when opportunities present themselves.

The Church of the Resurrection has an active Health Ministry lead by our parish nurse. This includes an outreach program to the homebound and residents in long-term care centers, caregiver respite, a Be-friender ministry and a funeral ministry.

As we conclude, let us pay particular attention to Pope Francis’ reflection from 1 Corinthians 13:12, where he writes, “In the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God…. In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up to the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God… Let us sing as we go.”

May we, at the Church of the Resurrection, pray for guidance as we forge ahead, meeting our challenges with hope, and our accomplishments with joy.