

## Reflection for Laudato Si Action Platform

Parish of St Joseph and St Anthony, Bracken Ridge, Qld, Australia

September 2022

One of the key elements of Laudato Si is the notion of integral ecology.

Everything is connected.

It is about how humans relate to each other and to the world they live in, with all its beauty in natural structures, plants and animals, processes of regeneration etc., as well as the degradation of the natural world by human exploitation and greed.

In this reflection for the Laudato Si Action Platform ([laudatosiactionplatform.org](http://laudatosiactionplatform.org)), we have been asked to look at how the values of the parish, as demonstrated by the actions of the parish, connect with the goals of Laudato Si.

These goals are:

### **RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH**

*The Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. Actions could include the adoption of renewable energies and energy sufficiency measures, achieving carbon neutrality, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.*

### **RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR**

*The Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth. Actions could include projects to promote solidarity, with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, and children at risk, analysis and improvement of social systems, and social service programmes.*

These first two goals go hand in hand.

The science on climate change is quite clear: our Earth is warming, sea levels are rising, weather patterns are changing. There are more extreme weather events like storms and heatwaves, leading to bushfires, flooding, drought, loss of great numbers of animals and their habitats, the loss of people's livelihoods, to name a few consequences, and we have felt all these consequences here in Australia.

Our parish is involved in action which responds to these cries.

Our parish recognises the cries of our First Nations people, who, perhaps more than most, see the damage done to Country; Country that was cared for by their ancestors for thousands of years. We have formed a group of parishioners to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), to move towards healing and closer ties with our First Nations people.

For some years now, our parish has been supporting villages in South Sudan, with the provision of water wells. South Sudan is ranked among the five worst performing countries in the world on the Climate Change Vulnerability index 2017. Most of the people in South Sudan depend on climate sensitive sectors, such as agriculture, forestry and fishing for their livelihoods. Our parish has responded to the cries of the people to provide water to this dry climate. The provision of a well in a village provides enormous benefit to the people.

Our parish is also providing financial assistance to a parish in Central Queensland, where the community have suffered prolonged drought and hardship due to extreme weather conditions affected by climate change. This has impacted the livelihoods of the people and our assistance has a flow on effect through the whole community.

Our St Vincent de Paul Society hears the cries of the poor and provides support to the vulnerable in our community: single parents, families or individuals experiencing financial hardship due to a variety of reasons. They provide monetary and gift card assistance, to help with back-to school expenses, hardship and recovery from recent flood and weather events, and food and petrol hampers. Emotional support and budgetary advice are also provided when needed. St Vincent de Paul can help direct clients to other support organisations for advice and assistance.

## **ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS**

*Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere—our common home. Actions could include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and the people, supporting circular economies, and prioritizing care labour and protecting the dignity of workers.*

Our church has been designed in such a way, as to take full advantage of the cooling breezes in Summer, and the warm sun in Winter. With awnings and automated blinds across the western windows of the church, the warming effect of a western sun is minimised, keeping the church cooler. We made a choice to install fans inside the church, rather than air conditioning, which would have added to our overall energy consumption for minimal benefit. LED lights were also installed in the church in 2020 to reduce energy costs.

## **ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES**

*The Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is 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.).*

Parish activities have a focus on reducing waste and the promotion of reduce, reuse and recycle. These include Cash for cans programme introduced by Care for Creation group. Our capacity for catering has been seriously affected by the Covid pandemic, which also provides us with an opportunity to review our practices in this area.

## **ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

*Ecological Education is about re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Actions could include ensuring equitable access to education for all and promoting human rights, fostering Laudato Si' themes within the community, encouraging ecological leadership (students, teachers), and ecological restoration activities.*

Since it was formed in 2017, the Parish Care for Creation group has provided education around Laudato Si. A website, created and updated by members of the group, provides information to assist Parishioners in their understanding of Laudato Si and to bring awareness of the things we can all do to connect to each other and Creation. Links on the website will connect you to the world and Pope Francis.

## **ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY**

*Ecological Spirituality springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to “discover God in all things”, both in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick and the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities. Actions could include promoting creation-based liturgical celebrations, developing ecological catechesis, retreats, and formation programmes, etc.*

The Care for Creation group have been responsible for themed Masses during the Season of Creation each year and homilies from our Parish priest inform and inspire us to live out Laudato Si. Videos and presentations during and after Mass on relevant occasions are hands on experiences for Parishioners to fully grasp Laudato Si concepts.

## COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT

*Community resilience and empowerment envisage a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels. Actions could include promoting advocacy and developing people's campaigns, encouraging rootedness and a sense of belonging in local communities and neighbourhood ecosystems.*

We have connected as a sister Parish to a rural parish community

A small group of our Parishioners travel to the community each year (supported by our wider parish) to provide hands on and material assistance at their local Parish /school fete. The relationship that has been built up over the years enables them to feel the prayerful and practical support from a 'city' community from 'over the hills and far away'. Letters back and forth have contained messages of appreciation for, and from their city sisters and brothers.

Our parish has facilitated the settlement of many refugee families as they have arrived from the Middle East. These families have settled in all parts of Brisbane, including our own local area. Their presence has enriched our community as they in turn have developed a new sense of belonging and rootedness in our society.

As we make an account of all that we have achieved in recent years as a Parish, we will now move towards planning for a future that helps us achieve the integral ecology that is so vital in preserving our connection to each other and to the environment that nurtures and provides for us, bringing us closer to the Laudato SI goals.