Laudato Si Reflection 2026

As I reflect on my advocacy for care for creation, I realize that caring for creation remains a challenge in many parishes and local government units (LGUs), despite the growing awareness of climate change and the urgent need to protect our common home. For decades, scientists and environmental advocates have warned us about rising global temperatures, melting ice caps, changing weather patterns, and the serious consequences of environmental destruction. Films such as Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* have raised public awareness, yet environmental protection still faces political, economic, and cultural barriers.

One important realization I gained is that care for creation should not be treated as a political issue or an optional activity, but as a shared moral responsibility. Protecting the environment concerns everyone, regardless of political beliefs, social status, or religious affiliation. It is about protecting human life, preserving the resources we depend on, and ensuring that future generations can live in a healthy and sustainable environment.

Why Is Care for Creation Struggling to Take Root

I believe that one reason environmental stewardship struggles to become part of the regular activities of parishes and LGUs is that it often competes with other priorities. In parishes, leaders and volunteers are already occupied with liturgical celebrations, pastoral programs, charitable activities, and the immediate needs of parishioners. Environmental initiatives may therefore be viewed as additional responsibilities rather than an essential part of the Church's mission.

Similarly, local government officials must respond to urgent concerns such as poverty, healthcare, infrastructure, employment, and disaster response. Political terms and limited budgets may also encourage them to prioritize projects that produce immediate and visible results over environmental programs whose benefits may take years to become apparent.

Another challenge is the lack of adequate training, technical knowledge, and institutional support. While the Church teaches us to respect and care for God's creation, parish leaders may need more guidance on how to translate these teachings into concrete community activities. In the same way, LGUs may have environmental policies but still struggle with implementation, monitoring, and enforcement.

I have also come to realize that many people understand the importance of protecting the environment but find it difficult to change their daily habits. Waste segregation, reducing plastic consumption, conserving water and electricity, and responsible purchasing require consistency and discipline. When these practices are inconvenient or when people do not see immediate results, participation can decline.

These challenges remind me that raising awareness is important, but awareness alone is not enough. What we need is a change in mindset, supported by practical action, leadership, and sustained community participation.

As a Catholic, I find inspiration in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which reminds us that the earth is our common home and that caring for it is closely connected to caring for one another. Environmental destruction does not affect everyone equally. The poor and vulnerable are often the ones who suffer most from flooding, pollution, extreme heat, inadequate sanitation, and other environmental problems, even though they may have contributed the least to these problems.

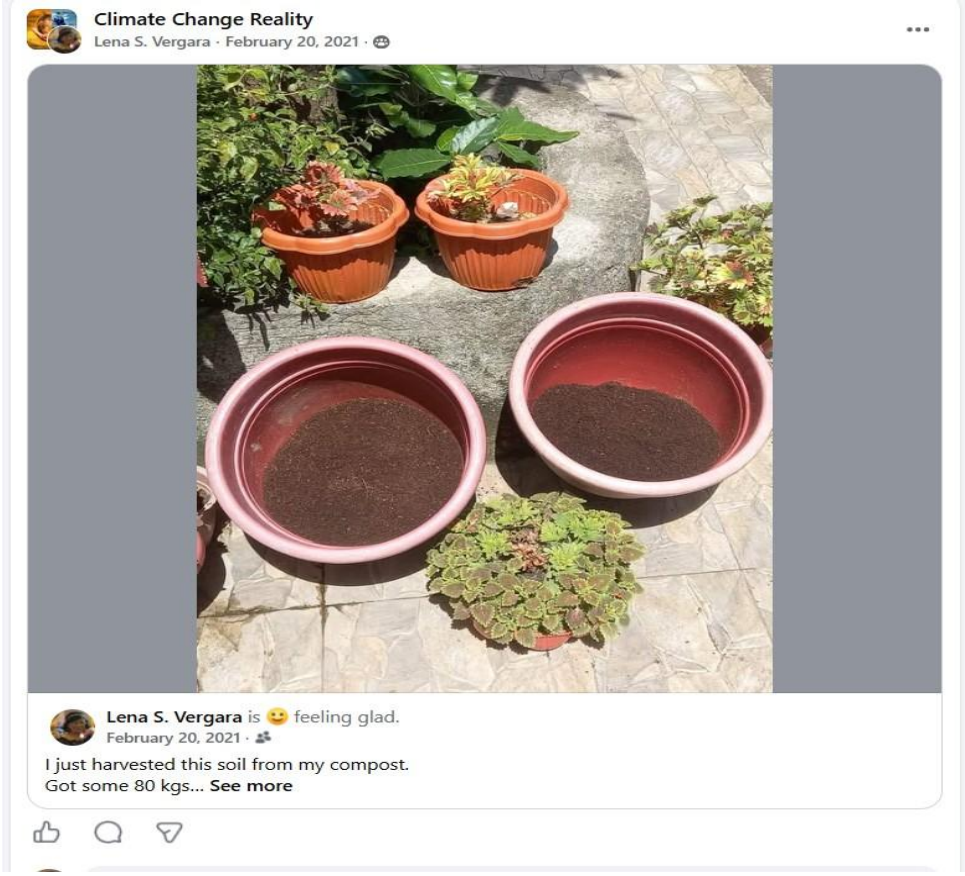
This has strengthened my understanding that care for creation is not separate from our Christian responsibility to love our neighbors. When we protect our rivers, manage our waste properly, preserve our trees, and reduce pollution, we also protect human health and dignity, especially among those who are most vulnerable.

I believe that our parishes can play an important role in making this understanding part of community life. Environmental stewardship can be incorporated into Sunday homilies, catechism, youth formation, prayer gatherings, ministry meetings, and parish celebrations. By connecting ecological responsibility with our faith, we can help parishioners understand that caring for creation is not simply the concern of environmental advocates. It is a responsibility entrusted to all of us.

The Laudato Si Movement has encouraged me to think more seriously about the practical steps that parishes can take, even with limited resources. We do not always need expensive projects to begin making a difference. Small, consistent actions can gradually influence the attitudes and practices of the community.

Parishes should promote and can establish a Care for Creation or *Laudato Si'* ministry team to coordinate environmental initiatives. Such ministry can reduce the use of single-use plastics during parish events, promote waste segregation, compost biodegradable waste, conserve water and electricity, and encourage the planting and proper care of trees and plants. Homilies and formation sessions can also remind parishioners of our responsibility to protect the earth and care for those affected by environmental degradation.

I particularly appreciate the value of practical activities such as composting kitchen waste. Composting demonstrates that what we commonly consider garbage can become a useful resource when managed properly. It also provides an opportunity for parishioners to learn through actual participation rather than through lectures alone. This, I have been doing for the past 20 years. (see pictures below)



Local government units, on the other hand, can strengthen the implementation of waste management policies, provide functional materials recovery facilities, maintain green spaces, support community gardens, and promote environmental education. These initiatives become more effective when local officials involve residents in planning, implementation, and monitoring.

I also see great potential in partnerships between parishes and LGUs. Parishes have established community networks and can encourage people to participate, while LGUs have the authority, technical resources, and logistical capacity to support environmental programs. Together, they can organize community cleanups, conduct environmental seminars, promote proper waste disposal, and develop initiatives that help communities become more resilient to flooding and other climate-related hazards.

Through collaboration, care for creation can become a shared community undertaking rather than the responsibility of only a few committed individuals.

One of my most important realizations from this course is that environmental stewardship must move beyond occasional celebrations and awareness campaigns. While activities during the Season of Creation are valuable, our commitment should continue throughout the year. What

matters is not only the number of activities we conduct, but also whether these activities influence people's attitudes and become part of their everyday lives.

In my own parish community, I see the importance of encouraging parish leaders to integrate care for creation into existing pastoral programs. Rather than treating environmental initiatives as separate projects, we can connect them with our ministries, community outreach, formation activities, and daily parish operations.

I recognize that change will not happen overnight. Some people may be indifferent, others may have competing concerns, and some may be unsure where to begin. Nevertheless, I believe that patient education, good example, and collective action can gradually build a culture of environmental responsibility.

I also realize that I must begin with my own actions. I cannot effectively encourage others to care for creation if I do not practice responsible waste disposal, reduce unnecessary consumption, conserve resources, and support environmentally responsible activities. Personal example may seem small, but it can inspire others when it is consistent and sincere.

Most importantly, I have come to understand that caring for creation is both a spiritual commitment and a practical responsibility. Prayer and reflection should lead us to action, while our actions should express our gratitude for God's gifts and our concern for our fellow human beings.

I believe that the way forward is to make environmental stewardship practical, inclusive, and sustainable. Parishes must recognize it as an integral part of their mission, while LGUs must translate environmental commitments into effective programs and consistent implementation. Through cooperation, education, and personal example, we can encourage communities to take greater responsibility for our common home.

As I move forward, I hope to apply what I have learned by continuing to encourage environmental awareness and practical ecological initiatives in my parish community. I may not be able to solve all environmental problems, but I can contribute by helping others recognize that every responsible action matters.

Caring for creation begins with a change of heart, grows through our daily choices, and becomes more powerful when we act together. Guided by the spirit of *Laudato Si'*, I hope to help make care for creation not merely an occasional parish activity, but a lasting expression of our faith, our love for our neighbors, and our responsibility to future generations.