



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

## Peace and Justice Commission

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Very Rev. Lee R. Roos, VF  
[ADDRESS]

Dear Father \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing as Chair of the diocesan Peace and Justice Commission to ask your parish to join the Holy Father, Bishop Burbidge and our diocesan Church in an effort to protect human life and dignity by preserving God's gift to us – the natural world – that makes that life possible.

In his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis invited us to see our relationship with the natural world through eyes of faith. He committed our Church to preserving the Earth which supports our lives, and to hearing the cry of the poor, who suffer most from the inequities that environmental damage creates.

The Pope has asked all Catholics and people of good will to embark with him on a multi-year journey to learn and practice the teachings of *Laudato Si'*, and to embrace the Church's commitment to uphold and protect human life from conception until natural death by cherishing the Creator's design and by caring for the most vulnerable. In this way, in Jesus' words, "we may have life, and have it more abundantly." Bishop Burbidge has committed our diocese to make this journey with the Holy Father and is inviting all families, schools and parishes to join in this effort.

As a pastor myself, I know how busy you are. I would simply ask you to pass this letter on to a member of your Parish Council or to a capable parishioner who you believe would be willing and able to offer effective lay leadership in response to this call. That person would then connect with the Commission to learn more about the opportunities and available resources I discuss below. Your approval of a designated parishioner's efforts should enable your parish to respond to the Church's call to care for God's creation without imposing additional burdens on you.

The Commission is spearheading this work and has enlisted the Creation Care Network to assist. The Network is an informal group of about 15 parishes who have established ministries or teams dedicated to praying, learning about *Laudato Si'*, and acting within their families and parishes to glorify God by living in greater harmony with His gift of Creation. We would first offer your designee the opportunity to learn what other parishes are already doing under the leadership of the Holy Father and Bishop Burbidge, and how any parish can take steps in this direction. Simply praying and learning about *Laudato Si'* are excellent first steps.



To give your designated contact person an idea of many of the small ways to live the message of *Laudato Si*, enclosed is information about what parishes are already doing. In addition, resources for prayer, learning and action can be accessed through the adjacent QR code or through this link:

<https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/peace-and-justice-commission/creation/pledge/>. The Commission's webpage, <https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/peace/>, contains additional information.

We look forward to hearing from the person with whom you would like us to be in contact. We will try to follow up soon, but ideally, your designee would contact Carla Walsh to ask any questions and obtain initial assistance. She can be reached at [carla.walsh@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:carla.walsh@arlingtondiocese.org) or 703-841-3839. Thank you very much for considering this invitation.

*Blessed are You, Lord God of all Creation!*

In Christ,

Very Rev. Robert C. Cilinski  
Chair, Peace and Justice Commission  
Pastor, Church of the Nativity

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### What does a Care for Creation Ministry Do?

Here are a few examples of what the diocesan Care for Creation ministries do at their parishes. The common theme in each of the activities is bringing the message of *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home* to life in the parish. Each parish ministry is unique and draws on the talents and interests of its members. Many parishes start by studying *Laudato Si'* together. We can provide resources to help. Then, we recommend starting with one small but impactful project

that the new group is excited to implement.

**Education:** *If we are not aware of the impact of our way of life on the delicate balance of life, we won't be inclined to protect God's great gift of creation.* Parishes have made presentations by print, by speaker series and through virtual webinars. Some topics include: Food waste, Zero waste, Fast Fashion, Green Burials, gardening and landscaping in our yards, home energy audits, impact of food choices, sustainability showcases, and wildlife presentations at parish festivals.



*Sharing ideas for reducing waste at showcase after Mass*

**Spirituality:** *Incorporating environmentally themed prayers from Catholic organizations is an effective way to deepen the desire to care for creation.* Some examples include intentions for the Prayer of the Faithful, Advent and Lent Prayer Services, Prayer Walks, Holy Hours, Stations of the Cross and Rosaries.



*Parishioners at an outdoor prayer service and nature walk*



*Teens clear grass away in preparation for adding Kateri Gardens spaces in the church parking lot*

**Landscaping:** *A great way to honor creation is by planting gardens.* Many parishes have Mary Gardens, St. Kateri Habitats, pollinator gardens, community vegetable gardens and nature paths. Some parishes are working with their landscaping service providers to use eco-friendly products that won't harm the local waterways.



**Energy Projects:** *Figuring out how to save energy at the parish facility is a common early step.* Some projects include: conducting energy audits to see where electric use could be reduced, realizing significant energy savings after switching to LED lightbulbs, installing smart thermostats and sensors for light switches in classrooms. Some parishes had solar panels installed.

*Cool Congregation Award for Reducing Electric Use by nearly 30% (and saving over \$15,000/year in energy costs)*



**Resource Reduction:** *Here are some projects that were established to reduce the waste of resources from parish activities.* Recycling, composting, dishwashing instead of using single use products, and providing reusable shopping bags.

*Volunteers at Hypothermia Prevention Shelter, washing dishes*

See a more comprehensive list from diocesan parishes here: <https://tinyurl.com/bdcfda85>



*And of course, ministry members keep an eye on their campuses and keep them free from litter.*