



2023 U.S. LAUDATO SI' CHAMPIONS AWARDS

Health Care Category

WINNER HEALTH CARE: Providence Health Care - Renton, WA

Providence health care has been at the forefront of environmental sustainability for two decades. With a visionary pledge to become carbon negative by 2030, Providence implemented a comprehensive environmental sustainability framework across their network of hospitals, medical office buildings and business units.

Driven by the principles of Laudato Si', Providence not only addresses environmental impacts but also tackles the social consequences of environmental harm, particularly in terms of health equity. As a trailblazer in the field, Providence was among the first health care organizations to sign the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Sector Climate Pledge, vowing to reduce carbon emissions and establish resiliency plans to ensure uninterrupted services during adverse climate events.

Providence's influence extends beyond their own operations. They participate in the National Academy of Medicines Action Collaborative on Decarbonizing the U.S. Health Sector, setting industry standards for decarbonization. Their representatives have also attended crucial CoP meetings, emphasizing the critical link between climate change and health. Through innovative measures such as remote work options, transitioning to hybrid or electric fleet vehicles, and significant reductions in business travel and flights, Providence has reduced their emissions. And 24 healthcare facilities in Washington and Oregon are now powered by 100% renewable electricity.

Providence's efforts and achievements in environmental sustainability make them a deserving recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award. Their dedication to creating a healthier planet and promoting health equity sets an inspiring example for the health care industry.

Honorable Mentions Healthcare:

Ascension - St. Louis, MO

Ascension Health Care recognized the urgent need to address climate impacts, and views sustainability as an opportunity to revolutionize their approach to health care.

Communities served by Ascension have already experienced the dire effects of climate change including extreme heat, intensified rain, and longer and more severe hurricane seasons. In response, Ascension developed a comprehensive Environmental Impact and Sustainability program that builds upon their existing efforts in energy conservation, waste management, recycling, and the use of renewable fuels.

Their sustainability initiatives are centered around three pillars: achieving net-zero emissions, ensuring a Responsible Supply Chain through sustainable procurement practices, and promoting Healthy Communities. Ascension acknowledges that climate change and pollution disproportionately affect those living in poverty, and they have taken steps to show they are dedicated to addressing these disparities.

Ascension's holistic approach to environmental sustainability, coupled with their commitment to serving vulnerable communities, makes them a worthy recipient of Honorable Mention. Their efforts exemplify the transformative power of integrating sustainability into health care, setting a commendable example for the industry.

CommonSpirit - Chicago, IL

CommonSpirit Health's commitment to the environment is deeply ingrained in its core values and strategic plan. In 2022, CommonSpirit Health took a significant step forward by issuing its first Climate Action Plan. This plan transformed their previous pledges into concrete actions, which have been implemented across their 21-state footprint. Consistent with calls by climate scientists, they have committed to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 and a 50 percent reduction in their operational greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. As one of the nation's largest health systems, CommonSpirit's dedication to the environment is evident in three key areas: leadership, mitigation, and resilience.

By challenging markets and changing policies they are having significant long-term impacts. CommonSpirit is improving energy efficiency of existing facilities and eliminating emissions associated with their physical footprint. They are influencing vendors in setting their own net-zero targets and looking at the social and ethical issues impacting their supply chain and including ending forced labor in their supply chain. They are also developing best practices in the prevention and management of diseases amplified by climate change and establishing community partners to build climate-resilient infrastructure and programming.

Through its leadership, CommonSpirit has set an inspiring example for the health care industry. Their efforts demonstrate the power of integrating sustainability into health care practices.

University Category

WINNER UNIVERSITY: Loyola University Chicago

Loyola University Chicago has taken many significant steps to integrate sustainability into its core values and practices.

The university took an active leadership role within the Laudato Si' Action Platform's Universities Working Group, demonstrating its commitment to collaboration and driving meaningful change on a global scale. They helped more than 100 universities in 38 countries commit to Pope Francis' 7-Year Journey. With contributors from around the world, they created the University Pathways website, a clear and inviting introduction to the Laudato Si' Action Project and the 7-Year Journey.

Loyola University Chicago has also taken concrete steps to spread the message of sustainability and reduce its own environmental impact. The university incorporated sustainability classes across its curriculum and launched a new School of Environmental Sustainability. And it maximized energy efficiency in campus buildings and created more "green rooftops" than any other college in the Midwest.

Loyola made a significant announcement by divesting from corporations that derive a majority of their revenue from fossil fuels. And over the past two decades, Loyola has made remarkable progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by over 70 percent. The university has also achieved the milestone of transitioning 100 percent of electricity consumed on all four Chicago-area campuses to clean, renewable solar-energy sources.

With its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2025, Loyola University Chicago continues to lead the way in environmental sustainability. Its commitment to sustainability education, infrastructure improvements, and divestment from fossil fuels make it a worthy recipient of the Laudato Si' Champion award. The university's many actions serve as an inspiration for other institutions of higher learning and contribute to building a more sustainable and just future.

Honorable Mentions University:

Saint Peter's University - Jersey City, NJ

Saint Peter's University has a longstanding commitment to sustainability and its efforts to address the goals outlined in Laudato Si'. As a diverse Jesuit University serving a predominantly Hispanic community for more than 150 years, Saint Peter's University has made many significant strides in promoting environmental stewardship.

The university's "Sustainability Chronology" serves as a testament to their dedication, providing an overview of the steps taken to prioritize sustainability from energy-saving projects and sustainable practices to educational programs and community outreach. The University demonstrates its concern to "care for our common home" by implementing energy-efficient measures to promote waste reductions including food and robust recycling. SAVE (Student Advocates for Valuing the Earth), a student environmental group established in 2003, drives many of these changes.

In line with their commitment, the university is developing a new Climate Action Plan to further integrate sustainability into their operations. Their dedication to environmental stewardship serves as an inspiration and highlights the importance of incorporating sustainability into higher education.

Neumann University - Aston, PA

Neumann University in Pennsylvania has demonstrated collaborative efforts and commitment to sustainability. In July 2023, the Neumann Institute for Franciscan Studies and the Sustainability Advisory Council joined forces to develop the Laudato Si' Year One Action Plan. This plan serves as a comprehensive roadmap for the university's ecological initiatives in the coming years.

The dedication and enthusiasm of Neumann University's faculty, staff, students, and administrators in embracing the action plan have been instrumental in driving the university's ecological accomplishments. Their efforts include sharing excess food with students and families to reduce food waste and responding to the cry of the poor, new strategies for recycling on campus, new modules of study and programs on ecological education; and three new initiatives on ecological spirituality that have all fostered a culture of responsibility and sustainability throughout the institution, and align with the principles outlined in Laudato Si'.

Neumann University's achievements highlight the power of collective action in creating a more sustainable campus and future.

School Category

WINNER SCHOOL: Brophy College Preparatory - Phoenix, AZ

What sets Brophy College Prep in Arizona apart is the extraordinary dedication and leadership exhibited by its students who have spearheaded the integration of Laudato Si' principles into the fabric of the school.

Through a gratitude-based methodology, students at Brophy developed a comprehensive Ecological Justice Plan, meticulously researching and presenting findings on solar, waste, and water usage to the school board. Notably, this process has been intentionally inclusive, fostering an intergenerational approach that ensures the involvement of all stakeholders.

The establishment of the Student Climate Coalition, (a.k.a. Eco Club), went from an extracurricular club to an official class option at the school, and is a testament to the students' commitment. Students worked outside of school time to create a proposal for solar panels that was accepted by the board of trustees and solar panels were operative in the 22-23 school year. Furthermore, the students are actively engaged in waste reduction initiatives, conducting regular waste audits, and are currently researching a proposal for a more efficient water system.

The coalition's four subcommittees – Emissions, Advocacy, Water and Waste – are student-led, showcasing their leadership skills. To foster awareness and education, the students organize sustainability town halls, ensuring their peers are well-informed about the importance of environmental conservation.

In addition to their sustainability endeavors, Brophy College Prep's students have demonstrated a deep commitment to social justice. Their Native American Club has contributed to efforts to protect Oak Flat, land sacred to Native American Tribes in the region.

Brophy College Prep's unwavering dedication to sustainability, as exemplified by their student-led initiatives and comprehensive action plans, makes them a deserving recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award. Their commitment to environmental stewardship and social justice serves as an inspiration to schools nationwide.

Honorable Mentions School:

Carmel Catholic High School/Michelle Titteron - Mundelein, IL

Carmel Catholic High School has made great strides toward sustainability and environmental consciousness. Led by teacher Michelle Titteron and inspired by the principles of Laudato Si', the school has embraced sustainability as a direct response to Pope Francis's call for action.

Titteron assembled a "Green Team," and during the academic year, Carmel Catholic implemented a waste collection process in the cafeteria, driven by a student-led data collection effort and subsequent waste audit. As a result, compostable waste is now directed to a composting facility, significantly reducing their environmental footprint.

The school has embraced the LED revolution, replacing less efficient lighting fixtures in academic halls, classrooms, athletic gyms, and even the football field to decrease their campus's carbon footprint. They also unplug all equipment during weekends. Their "Unplugged Summer School" program saved the school 20,000 kilowatt hours.

Carmel students who attended the 2023 Catholic Climate Covenant Youth Climate Summit have become passionate advocates for the integration of Laudato Si' and Creation Care into more of the school's curriculum. Their advocacy reflects their commitment to spreading awareness and inspiring their peers to embrace environmental stewardship.

Carmel Catholic High School's efforts also include a community garden with organic produce for those in need. Their student-led advocacy makes them a deserving recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention. Their commitment to environmental consciousness and community engagement serves as an inspiration to schools nationwide.

Bishop O'Dowd High School/Michael Downs - Oakland, CA

Bishop O'Dowd High School has shown exceptional leadership in Spiritual Ecology and the implementation of Laudato Si' principles. Spearheading these efforts is teacher Michael Downs, whose dedication has propelled the school to national recognition.

As the driving force behind the six-member Bishop O'Dowd Creation Care Team, Downs oversees the care of a remarkable four-acre outdoor classroom and certified wildlife habitat known as the Living Lab. This outdoor space serves as a testament to the school's commitment to environmental stewardship and provides students with hands-on learning experiences.

Downs's contributions extend beyond the school's premises. He has successfully secured a \$10,000 grant to support the California Catholic Conference of Bishops Environmental Stewardship Standing Committee in developing a curriculum for 4th, 7th, and 11th graders

across the state. This initiative ensures that environmental education is integrated into the core curriculum, fostering a deep understanding of sustainability from an early age.

Downs has also created an upper-level Spiritual Ecology class, which is now in its fifth year. His classes not only educate students about the interconnectedness of spirituality and the environment but also empower them to take action.

In recognition of his expertise and leadership, Downs also plays a pivotal role in leading the Vatican Laudato Si' Action Platform Schools Working Group. His efforts are impacting teacher formation and amplifying Bishop O'Dowd High School's impact.

Bishop O'Dowd High School's exceptional commitment to Spiritual Ecology, as exemplified by the efforts of Michael Downs and the Creation Care Team, makes them a truly deserving recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention. Their dedication to environmental stewardship and the integration of Laudato Si' principles serves as an inspiration to schools nationwide.

Organization Category

WINNER ORGANIZATION: Environmental Justice Program at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Stockton, CA

The Environmental Justice Program at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Stockton has shown true dedication to environmental justice and community engagement. Initiated over a decade ago by former Bishop Stephen Blaire, this program holds the distinction of being the only environmental justice program in the United States housed within a diocesan Catholic Charities agency.

Through programs that involve individuals of all ages, ethnicities, and religions, they foster a sense of inclusivity and collaboration. They use Laudato Si' as a guiding tool in their daily work with parish communities, ensuring that the principles of environmental stewardship are integrated.

The program regularly engages with elected officials to influence policy decisions that affect local communities. Their expertise has made them a valuable partner with organizations across California that address climate change.

They are especially focused on addressing the adverse effects of pollution on the poor and vulnerable and are collaborating with St. Frances of Rome parish in the Diocese of San Bernardino to develop an environmental justice program there. Additionally, they are working to create a curriculum that can be implemented into catechism classes, ensuring that environmental education becomes an integral part of faith-based teachings.

The program's commitment to environmental justice, community engagement, and the integration of Laudato Si' principles makes them a deserving recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award. Their efforts serve as an inspiration to organizations nationwide, highlighting the power of environmental stewardship rooted in faith.

Honorable Mentions Organization:

Climate Justice at Boston College - Chestnut Hill, MA

The Climate Justice student organization at Boston College has shown a strong commitment to environmental activism for more than a decade.

The group has been at the forefront of coordinating the creation of international networks of Catholic students focused on environmental causes including the Jesuit Divestment Network and Catholic Divestment Network, amplifying the impact of their advocacy. The organization has addressed the issue of fossil fuel funds in university research, advocates for divestment of fossil fuels and highlights ecological economics in line with the Pope's teachings. They have held multiple debates and town halls with the student investment club and other departments to talk about BC's investments and how students in business and other areas can ensure their personal finances align with their faith.

In addition to informing students, professors, and administrators, the group has held prayer and ecological spirituality events to lift up the connection between the faith and our environment. Their efforts have touched thousands of students and alumni.

They have also collaborated throughout Boston and Massachusetts to protect 17 acres of forest land, support state and city policies, and work with other secular universities, bringing the Catholic perspective to important rallies and conversations.

The Climate Justice organization's dedication to environmental justice and their ability to navigate challenges make them a deserving recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention. Their achievements serve as an inspiration to students and activists nationwide, highlighting the power of movements in driving collaborative change.

National Catholic Reporter/EarthBeat/Brian Roewe - Kansas City, MO

National Catholic Reporter's EarthBeat, featuring award-winning stories by environmental correspondent Brian Roewe, is a leader in Catholic press reporting on Laudato Si' and creation care activities. EarthBeat plays a vital role in connecting faith, sustainability, climate change, politics, creation care, and science within the U.S. Catholic Church and nation.

Through their comprehensive coverage, EarthBeat sheds light on a wide range of significant Laudato Si'/creation care programs and projects that impact our world and our Church. By amplifying the critical voices of those involved in these initiatives, EarthBeat ensures that their stories and efforts do not become silenced.

National Catholic Reporter's EarthBeat section, under the leadership of editor Stephanie Clary, serves as an invaluable resource for the Catholic community and beyond. Their dedication to reporting on Laudato Si' and creation care not only informs and educates but also inspires individuals and organizations to take action in addressing the urgent environmental challenges we face.

The U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention recognizes EarthBeat's critical contributions in promoting environmental stewardship and raising awareness of the interconnectedness between faith and sustainability.

Religious Order Category

WINNER RELIGIOUS ORDER: Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes - Fond du Lac, WI

Like many communities of women religious, the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes has a longstanding commitment to conservation and care for the creation, which has intensified since the publication of *Laudato Si'*.

A tangible reflection of their dedication is the 880-panel solar installation on the motherhouse grounds. This installation generates 50% of their energy needs and significantly reduces their carbon footprint. Educational tours are available for school groups as well as a self-guided tour for individuals in order to share knowledge and inspiration.

The Sisters of St. Agnes have a deep-rooted commitment to the conservation of the land entrusted to them. They have cared for the soil, tended the woods, and preserved the integrity of the springs that flow through their property in Fond du Lac. On January 10, 2022, the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes signed a Conservation Easement Document protecting 237 acres of Earth in perpetuity including buildings, forests, prairies, wetlands, farm fields, cemetery, labyrinth, nature trails, and three stream channels running down the Niagara Escarpment.

The sisters' recent investment in an off-site, 538-solar-panels "block" through the Alliant Energy community solar project demonstrates their continued commitment to sustainable practices. This investment ensures that the entire St. Agnes Convent and the onsite maintenance building will be powered entirely by the sun, and makes solar possible for others, without having to install solar panels on their property.

The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes' corporate commitment to future generations aligns with Pope Francis' call for the church and the world to address the threats posed by climate change. Their efforts serve as an inspiration to individuals and organizations alike, showcasing the power of sustainable practices.

The U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award is a recognition of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes' contributions to environmental conservation and their commitment to preserving our common home for generations to come.

Honorable Mention Religious Order:

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, Inc.) - Maryknoll, NY

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers have shown a great commitment to the care of God's creation, which has been an integral part of their mission for over a century. They believe we are "called and sent" to be stewards of God's great creation.

In response to Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Society members and employees of Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers have taken proactive steps to action as outlined in the encyclical. They formed two dedicated committees to spearhead their efforts.

Their actions include reducing carbon dioxide emissions through their conversion from utility-supplied conventional electricity to wind-generated power, resulting in a 50% reduction in emissions. Additionally, the installation of solar panel canopies in two main parking lots has allowed for the generation of energy, with 60% of it being directed toward approximately 80 residential meters. This initiative has positively impacted more than 220 individuals residing in low- to moderate-income households. They have also taken practical steps to reduce paper use, manage water use, focus on global human rights projects and ecological economics projects including divestment, and work with sustainable vendors.

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers' proactive approach to environmental sustainability and their tangible efforts to reduce their carbon footprint make them a worthy recipient of the U.S. *Laudato Si'* Champion Honorable Mention. Their commitment to caring for God's creation serves as an inspiration, highlighting the power of religious communities aligning faith with environmental stewardship.

Business Category

WINNER BUSINESS: The Industrial Commons - Morganton, NC

The Industrial Commons focuses on economic change by founding new and scaling current employee-owned social enterprises and industrial cooperatives, and empowering frontline workers such that the southern working class transcends cycles of generational poverty. They seek to build an economy and future for all and create an inclusive economy rooted in community and dignity.

The Industrial Commons was formed in 2015 in response to a need in Western North Carolina for an industry-focused organization to support firms and networks with improving the livelihood of its workers and rooting wealth in local communities. This includes leaders from the factory floor who take positions of leadership and help create manufacturing solutions that build business resiliency, worker agency and address environmental issues.

They have launched 5 cooperative businesses, hired 25 staff, represent more than 100 workers in their co-ops, and there are 25 small mills representing 2,500 workers in their industry cooperative. They have managed more than \$15M in grants over the last 10 years and stewarded \$15M in investments into the region.

Among the enterprises The Industrial Commons supports are: The Carolina Textile District, a member-governed and member-driven network of values-aligned textile manufacturers in North and South Carolina; "Collection", a project of the Carolina Textile District and a community of manufacturers in North Carolina providing an ethical production line, meaningful jobs and a revitalized region that produce women and men's clothing; and Material Return, a service that works with local manufacturers and national brands to transform textile waste into new products. This model benefits the environment, local economies, The Industrial Commons workers, and

values-aligned clients. All their enterprises are supported by a bilingual, women-led bookkeeping co-op, Good Books

The Industrial Commons' new models and commitment to social and economic justice, coupled with their sustainable business practices, makes them a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award. Their transformative initiatives have not only created a more equitable society but have also set a shining example for other worker-owned and worker-led businesses to follow.

Diocese Category

WINNER DIOCESE: Diocese of San Diego, CA

Cardinal Robert McElroy and Father Emmet Farrell have built up care for creation and sustainability practices in this diocese since shortly after the release of Laudato Si', setting an example for the many diocesan parishes and paving the way for all other dioceses. Cardinal McElroy stands out as a powerful national voice, championing climate action at local as well as national and international levels. In the past several years, more than a dozen parishes have begun creation care efforts. With the introduction of a full-time creation care ministry director at the Diocese's Pastoral Center, they have been able to infuse creation care into other areas of ministry, promoting this key component of Catholic Social Teaching as a fundamental feature of our faith.

The Diocesan Creation Care Advisory Committee includes two environmental scientists, two energy engineers, a Naval facilities engineer and a secular Franciscan doctor with experience serving indigenous populations.

In 2021, the diocesan team finalized a Creation Care Action Plan, offering an educational resource tailored to the local area for faith communities throughout the diocese. This plan now serves as the basis from which families, parishes and schools in the region can develop their own yearly Laudato Si' action plans for upload to the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development's Laudato Si' Action Platform.

In August 2022, the diocese officially registered with the Laudato Si' Action Platform. They have created a Laudato Si' Action Planning Program based on the liturgical calendar, inviting families, parishes, and schools to join in a cycle of action over the next seven years. In addition, 62 parishes/schools have installed solar; the diocesan Catholic Tree Planting Program planted 50 trees in 2022, notably 22 of which were planted in Barrio Logan, a community of San Diego where tree canopy is exceptionally low. The diocesan CFO and other senior leaders have worked extensively toward the goal of divestment. They launched a new media campaign to include a full page in every diocesan newspaper edition dedicated to Creation Care as well as social media outreach on Facebook and Instagram; their ministry took great care to support and accompany the leadership and parishioners of Our Lady of Guadalupe as they faced the proposed installation of a cement warehouse within blocks of the community.

The Diocese of San Diego's comprehensive approach to environmental stewardship, their commitment to sustainability, and their dedication to supporting and empowering local communities make them a worthy recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award. Their

achievements serve as an inspiration to other dioceses and communities, highlighting the power of faith-based environmental action.

Honorable Mention Diocese:

Diocese of Davenport, IA

The Diocese of Davenport was among the first to enroll in the Laudato Si' Action Platform with the commitment to develop a Laudato Si' Action Plan for the Diocese.

A group of college students from the Americas participated in a synodal meeting on Zoom with Pope Francis and, inspired by the Holy Father, committed to climate action in their homelands. Three of the students met with Bishop Zinkula in April of this year. During this meeting, the students said that many young people have a deep concern for climate change because it threatens every aspect of their future and asked Bishop Zinkula to respond and develop plans for achieving net-zero carbon emissions. The bishop agreed, and a diocesan plan is in the works to include an energy audit, mid-project goals, and carbon emission reduction.

Many of the parishes in the diocese have already undertaken efforts to increase their actions to care for creation. Part of the diocesan plan charts the path the diocese will follow on its journey to net zero. The plan also suggests actions that parishes, families and individuals in the diocese may take.

The Diocese of Davenport's commitment to environmental care and sustainability, as well as their leadership in supporting young people and all communities make them a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention. Their actions serve as an inspiration to other dioceses and communities, highlighting the power of faith and action.

Parish Category

WINNER PARISH: St. Catherine of Alexandria/St Joan of Arc Cluster Parish - Nashotah, WI

St. Catherine of Alexandria/St. Joan of Arc Cluster Parish have shown a strong commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable practices, led by their Creation Keepers, a dynamic six-member group established in 2016 as a direct response to Pope Francis' Laudato Si' encyclical.

The mission of the committee is to increase environmental awareness, invite parishioners to responsible, individual, and family environmental stewardship, and promote parish-wide environmentally friendly activities.

Creation Keepers has galvanized the parishes and the students of Saint Joan of Arc Elementary School to pursue the goals outlined in Laudato Si'. Their efforts have yielded a range of eco-friendly initiatives, from replacing Styrofoam with biodegradable containers to embracing fair trade coffee; using environmental church bulletins, a website with environmental actions, an environmental Lenten calendar, school programs, activities, lessons and involvement at all grade

levels. They have also introduced recycling containers for unused worship materials, parish bulletins, and school papers, ensuring that waste is minimized, and resources are conserved.

The group has taken significant strides in expanding the Garden of Eatin', an organic garden tended by parishioners and students. This flourishing garden provides fresh produce to local food pantries and serves as a symbol of the parish's commitment to sustainable agriculture. In 2022, the Garden of Eatin' yielded an impressive 500 pounds of nourishing food for those in need.

Through their collaborative efforts, St. Catherine of Alexandria/St. Joan of Arc Cluster Parish has exemplified the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and demonstrated the power of environmental consciousness in parishes. Their dedication to creating a greener, more sustainable future and spreading knowledge is commendable and deserving of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award.

Honorable Mentions Parish:

Our Lady, Star of the Sea Creation Care Team - Marblehead, MA

The Our Lady, Star of the Sea Creation Care Team has shown great effort in promoting ecological conversion and sustainable practices. Since its inception, the team has been a driving force in fostering a deep sense of environmental responsibility within the parish community.

Inspired by a Catholic Climate Covenant's Feast of St. Francis Program in 2021, the Creation Care Team embarked on a transformative journey to become catalysts of change. They organized a collection drive for household items to support refugees from Afghanistan settling in Massachusetts, showcasing their dedication to social justice.

The parish team has taken significant steps towards embracing eco-friendly practices during parish events, too, including transitioning to sustainable products and practices, motion sensors for less power use, preparing for an energy audit and educating parishioners on *Laudato Si*.

In a bid to tackle food waste, the group partnered with a local compost company to collect food scraps and other compostable items on a weekly basis from the parish center and rectory. This initiative diverts waste from landfills and promotes the importance of responsible waste management. The team conducted research and implemented a switch from plastic plates, bowls, and cups to compostable alternatives.

Through their parish-based efforts, the Our Lady, Star of the Sea Creation Care Team has shown commitment to ecological conversion and their tangible actions towards sustainability make them a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention.

St. Camillus Parish - Silver Spring, MD

St. Camillus Parish in Silver Spring, Maryland, has demonstrated commitment to environmental stewardship and extensive efforts in promoting the principles of Laudato Si' among parishioners and staff.

The parish has engaged in a range of activities outlined in the Laudato Si' Action plan, both at the local and regional levels. St. Camillus played a key role in creating Maryland Catholics For Our Common Home and its impressive advocacy efforts. The parish was very involved in the local interfaith advocacy efforts around clean jobs, engaging hundreds of Latino St. Camillus' parishioners in adding their voice for strong provisions in the law. In addition to local and regional projects, they have offered financial support for international ecological projects.

The parish has done extensive ecological formation education, equipping individuals with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions regarding our common home. Their solidarity with the poor is also evident through their efforts to address environmental justice issues.

Through their comprehensive formation, concrete actions, financial support, and commitment to ecological education and solidarity with the poor, St. Camillus Parish has exemplified the principles of Laudato Si' and Catholic Social Teaching. Their dedication to environmental stewardship and their holistic approach to sustainability make them a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention.

Family Category

WINNER FAMILY: Brenna Cussen-Anglada and Eric Anglada - Cuba City, WI

Brenna Cussen-Anglada and Eric Anglada have shown exceptional contributions to the St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm and Agronomic University, as well as a strong commitment to the local community. Eric, serving as the Ecological Coordinator for the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa Mound Center, has been instrumental in spreading awareness about *Laudato Si'* through his engaging lectures and retreats at various colleges and organizations in the area.

Together, Brenna and Eric have advocated for a sustainable lifestyle and the Care of God's Creation at the St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm, which they co-founded. Their dedication extends beyond their farm, as they actively involve high school and college students in discussions on *Laudato Si'* and sustainable living. Their extensive writings on the subject have been published in both local and national magazines, further amplifying their impact.

In addition to their educational endeavors, the couple opens their farm to interns and other Catholic Worker groups, fostering a sense of community and collaboration. Brenna and Eric actively engage with the local community, responding to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor, by cultivating a significant portion of their own food and providing baskets of fresh vegetables to families in need. They also assist a local mission by preparing meals and consistently supporting people who are homeless and those facing adversity.

Brenna and Eric are also dedicated to Land Justice, as they collaborate with numerous communities of Religious Sisters in the Dubuque, Iowa, area and beyond, as well as through their collaboration with the Nuns & Nones Land Justice Project, which creates land transitions rooted in ecological and racial healing with women religious and movement partners. Their commitment to facilitating retreats for religious communities, with *Laudato Si'* at the core of their discussions, multiplies their impact.

The couple lives a life of conscious poverty, abstaining from contributing income taxes to war efforts. Their commitment to their principles and sustainable lifestyle makes them an extraordinary couple deserving of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award.

Honorable Mention Family:

Carol and Henry Gonzalez - Pittsburgh, PA

Carol and Henry Gonzalez helped revitalize an abandoned ballfield in Pittsburgh's Northside. The neglected city-owned property, which had long been left in disrepair, has been transformed into Ballfield Farm, a thriving and productive urban farm and garden under the stewardship of Carol and Henry.

Carol and Henry are stewards of the acreage with a deed agreement with the city, and they are in conversation with Allegheny Land Trust for permanent protection as a green property. Their dedication to restoring this once abandoned area has resulted in a space that now serves as an educational hub, provides nourishment, and nurtures a community of learners.

The success of this project is due to the commitment of an all-volunteer membership consisting of 25-30 households. These individuals contribute a small annual fee and collectively work the farm for at least six hours per month. In return, volunteers can take what their households require, while the surplus is shared with neighbors, a local food pantry and a men's shelter.

Carol and Henry's efforts in transforming the ballfield into a flourishing community resource exemplify their commitment to environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Their dedication to sustainable practices and support for their community make them deserve the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention.

Individual Category

WINNER INDIVIDUAL: Fr. James Flynn - Louisville, KY

Fr. Jim Flynn designed an educational program on *Laudato Si'* that is being presented not only in the Archdiocese of Louisville, but to anyone via Zoom. He put together a team of knowledgeable corroborators to implement the program that uses the virtual platform. Archbishop of Louisville Shelton Fabre has promoted it to all parishes within the archdiocese. Fr. Jim has been hard at work educating folks about *Laudato Si'* since its release. From small book clubs to parish-wide presentations, he has reached countless Catholics. The *Laudato Si'* presentation, which he produced himself, is beautiful, with quotations from the encyclical throughout.

At age 94, Fr. Jim is retired, yet he continues to lead study groups across the diocese. He even sent a quote and an image from *Laudato Si'* to priests and groups in the diocese every day of Lent. He has made numerous trips to Central and South America, working with indigenous people and learning from them, too. In short, Fr. Jim is relentless in his efforts to promote the values of the encyclical.

Fr. Jim's dedication to promoting the principles of *Laudato Si'* is truly remarkable. His efforts to educate and inspire others, even in retirement, make him a deserving recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award.

WINNER INDIVIDUAL: Herman Barahona - Sacramento, CA

Herman Barahona of Sacramento, California, has demonstrated outstanding community activism, particularly focused on marginalized populations. As a member of the Diocese Environmental Justice Committee, Herman goes above and beyond by dedicating extra time to truly listen and understand the strengths and passions of each member. This enables him to effectively utilize everyone's gifts to promote the Laudato Si' Action Platform within the Diocese.

Herman embraces Pope Francis' message in *Laudato Si'* and works towards creating a healthy ecological environment where all individuals can thrive with dignity. He is a champion for environmental justice, advocating for the unhoused, poor, and disadvantaged in Northern California. Collaborating with various community groups, Herman regularly advocates for policies that benefit the most vulnerable.

Through his monthly community talks on Environmental Justice, Herman empowers citizens to recognize and address the injustices occurring around them. He encourages civic engagement to foster positive societal change within their own communities and shares news about proposed legislation that would aid the marginalized.

Herman also participates in environmental science work, focusing on air and soil quality, highlighting the correlation between chronic pollution exposure and structural racism. He helps organize health fairs in marginalized areas of Sacramento, educating the general population about environmental injustice and offering solutions to create a more equitable society.

As an immigrant from Honduras, Herman possesses firsthand knowledge of the challenges and barriers faced by individuals entering and succeeding in the United States. This personal experience grants him additional influence when engaging with communities, as he comprehends the complexities of these issues.

Herman's dedication to social justice is further exemplified by his involvement on the board of the Latino Leadership Council and his service on the social justice ministries with the Diocese.

Herman Barahona's commitment to community activism, environmental justice, and social equity make him a deserving recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award. His tireless efforts to empower marginalized communities and create positive change exemplify the principles outlined in *Laudato Si'*.

WINNER INDIVIDUAL: Mary Myers - Mokena, IL

Mary Myers has shown exceptional dedication to the Peace & Social Justice Ministry at St. Jude parish. Mary's commitment to incorporating the Laudato Si' Action Platform Goals into every aspect of their work makes her an inspiration to many.

Her outstanding efforts in implementing various Creation Care programs include establishing a parish garden, creating informative displays on creation care, initiating a book club, and spearheading a project to reduce plastic usage. Mary has also organized screenings of the film, *The Letter*, to raise awareness about environmental issues.

In addition to her local initiatives, Mary promotes fair trade products and plays a crucial role in bringing clean water systems to mission sites. Her dedication and achievements have not gone unnoticed as her efforts are now being shared with other parishes, enabling them to more readily achieve the goals outlined in the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

Mary's commitment to serving all Creation and her nonstop efforts to integrate the principles of *Laudato Si'* into the fabric of her community make her a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award. Her passion and dedication serve as an inspiration to others, demonstrating the power of individual action in creating a more sustainable and just world.

WINNER INDIVIDUAL: Sr. Kathleen Deignan, CND - New Rochelle, NY

Sister Kathleen Deignan is known for exceptional leadership and contributions to environmental education and advocacy. As a member of the Congregation of Notre Dame and a GreenFaith Green Fellow, Sister Kathleen has been at the forefront of the movement since its inception, earning recognition for her commitment. Sister Kathleen's impact extends beyond her individual efforts. She founded two influential institutes at Iona University of New Rochelle: "The Thomas Berry Forum" and "The Deignan Institute for Earth and Spirit," both dedicated to addressing environmental issues. Her workshops and programs on *Laudato Si'* have reached audiences across the East Coast, Ireland, and Rome.

Sister Kathleen has mentored a generation of young adults who have become advocates for the healing of creation and the restoration of the cosmos. Sister Kathleen's collaborations with esteemed scholars, particularly Christian Brother Kevin Cawley, have further amplified her impact. Brother Kevin, currently representing his congregation at the United Nations on environmental matters, joined Sister Kathleen as she accepted this award.

Sister Kathleen Deignan's visionary leadership, extensive workshops, and mentorship have made her a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award. Her dedication to environmental advocacy and collaboration with scholars have had a profound impact on the movement, inspiring others of faith to join the cause and work toward a more sustainable future.

Honorable Mentions Individual:

Fr. Emmet Farrell - San Diego, CA

Father Emmet Farrell's contribution to Creation Care within the parish life of the Church is among the most significant in the United States. While many individuals have made significant strides in promoting awareness on a national and international scale, Father Emmett's work stands out as a labor of love at the grassroots level.

In just five years, Father Emmet has transformed Care for Creation in the Catholic community of San Diego into a thriving diocesan ministry. Through his tireless advocacy, the ministry has

grown to include a full-time director and has become a driving force in animating parishes throughout Southern California and beyond. The Diocese of San Diego, under Father Emmet's leadership, has emerged as a trailblazer in the Laudato Si' movement.

Father Emmet's impact extends far beyond himself. His dedication to caring for the earth and the poor has created waves of change that ripple throughout the community. His efforts have inspired others to join the cause and have fostered a culture of environmental stewardship within the Church.

In recognition of his significant contributions, Father Emmet is a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention. His grassroots approach and commitment to Creation Care have made a lasting impact on the Catholic community in San Diego and serve as an inspiration to others across the nation.

Yanny Salom - Jacksonville, FL

As a self-proclaimed "Franciscan," Yanny Salom treats the planet as a cherished sister, and her passion for environmental stewardship shines through her work. Yanny has made a profound impact on the students at Holy Family Catholic School, where she has taught and inspired hundreds of students. Through engaging projects and lessons rooted in Laudato Si', she encouraged her students to create the school's first Climate Action Pledge, aligning with the teachings of Pope Francis.

As a University of Notre Dame STEM Trustee Fellow, Yanny's work extends beyond the classroom. She spearheaded numerous conservation and service-oriented school projects, including school recycling initiatives, the creation of on-campus bluebird houses, butterfly and hydroponic gardens, sea turtle conservation efforts, and hatching chicks. Using a 3-D printer, Yanny has taught students to assemble and donate prosthetic hands for children in need. Yanny's dedication to these projects goes above and beyond, as she willingly works during off-hours to ensure their success.

Yanny's impact reaches beyond her immediate community. As a professional engineer turned teacher, she has found a deeper calling in sharing her knowledge and passion. She trains other teachers, using *Laudato Si'* as a guiding principle, and has shared her work on University of Notre Dame forums, further spreading the message of environmental stewardship.

In recognition of her commitment to living and teaching the principles of *Laudato Si'*, Yanny is a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention. Her dedication to her students, her innovative projects, and her efforts to inspire others make her an exemplary role model for environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Sr. Leanne Jablonski, FMI - Dayton, OH

Sister Leanne Jablonski has shown true dedication to integral ecology and environmental education. As the Director of the Marianist Environmental Education Center in Beavercreek for nearly three decades, Sister Leanne has been a champion of sustainability and a trusted ally of the Covenant and partners.

Sister Leanne serves as an adjunct faculty member of the "Hanley Sustainability Institute Scholar for Faith and the Environment," where she not only teaches about integral ecology but also offers presentations for faculty, staff, and students. Her commitment to the cause is further demonstrated through her formation and co-coordination of the University's Laudato Si' Action Platform working group.

In addition to her work at the university, Sister Leanne leads the charge within her religious congregation, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (FMI), as a signer of the Laudato Si' Action Platform. Her leadership and advocacy have been instrumental in promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship within her community.

In recognition of her tireless efforts to integrate integral ecology into education and her role as a leader in promoting the Laudato Si' Action Platform, Sister Leanne Jablonski is a recipient of the U.S. Laudato Si' Champion Honorable Mention. Her commitment to environmental education and her dedication to inspiring others to act make her an exemplary role model for the pursuit of a sustainable future.