

The Marianist Environmental Education Center (MEEC) is an environmental education community in the Catholic tradition. In Mary's hope-filled spirit, we preserve and act in communion with the land and educate other communities in sustainability through ecology-based simple living, social justice and spirituality.

MEEC stewards 100-acre Mount St. John Nature Preserve, including the Bro. Don Geiger SM Prairie. The property was named an Ohio Natural Landmark by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and is a Groundwater Guardian Green Site. The property features two miles of trails that wind through oak-hickory woodlands, natural and created wetlands and Eastern tallgrass prairie ecosystems.

For more information about MEEC and information on other upcoming programs, visit <http://meec.udayton.edu>. For directions to the property, select "visitor information."



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Restoring communities of land and people

Laudato Si

On care for our common home



A reflection guide for Marianist Communities on Pope Francis' encyclical letter on the environment compiled by the Marianist Environmental Education Center.

Laudato si! Praised be for “our common home which is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us” (LS #1). Caring for Creation has long been a part of our Marianist tradition, lived experiences and mission. At this critical time for people and our planet, we are impelled by Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si* towards an integral ecology and the ecological conversion required. We embrace the transformative visions of our Marianist founders and other ancestors in faith to incarnate a lived response in our Marianist lives, both personal and communal.

Pope Francis calls all of us – people of faith and good will - to an ongoing dialogue to find solutions. He says, “We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the underprivileged, and at the same time protecting nature” (LS #139).

This message of *Laudato Si* invites us all in our communities, ministries and spheres of influence to “hear the cry of the earth and the poor” (LS #49). As Pope Francis say, “Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (LS #19) .

The encyclical invites us to an ongoing dialogue that involves prayer, reflection, assessment and action. The document can be purchased in book form from many sources or free online at the Vatican website: www.laudatosi.va. (You may need to select “EN” for English in the top right corner of the page.)

- Go meatless on Fridays. Livestock production accounts for 4% of Americans’ greenhouse gas, according to the EPA. By going meatless one day per week, you’ll both honor Catholic teaching and better care for Creation.
- Recycle more. Recycling reduces your carbon footprint both because landfills emit greenhouse gases through decomposition, and because manufacturing from scratch is carbon-intensive. Find where and how to recycle almost anything in your area at search.earth911.com.
- Use less water. Water processing accounts for approximately 3% of energy use in the United States, according to the EPA. Saving water means saving energy. Post a “please conserve water” sign at sinks and showers, install low-flow spigots, or select the “eco” setting on laundry machines and dishwashers.
- Petition policy makers. Your elected officials have the power to take action on climate change. Write policy makers to tell them that you stand for the stewardship of creation.
- Write to your local newspaper. Writing a letter to the editor has effects beyond your local community. Legislators assign their staffs to read letters to the editor as an important barometer of constituents’ interests.
- Consider forming a Creation Care Team. Email mec@udayton.edu for more information.

10 Ways You Can Make a Difference on Climate Change

Adapted from the Catholic Climate Covenant

While *Laudato Si* is not a climate change document, Pope Francis emphasizes that the climate is a common good, and that “a very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. ... Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it” (23). Here are some ways you can get started responding to this call.

- Be energy efficient. During the summer months, close your curtains to block heat from the sun. During the winter, open your curtains during the day to allow the sun to warm your home. These simple steps can significantly reduce the need for air conditioning and heating, which are likely the most energy-intensive aspects of your home.
- Calculate your carbon footprint. Understanding which activities are carbon-intensive allows you to know where you can take action. The EPA has a free carbon footprint calculator you can use at <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>.
- Adjust the thermostat. Turning down your air conditioning or heating when you leave the house will further shrink your carbon footprint. A change of just 5 degrees is a good start.
- Adjust your driving routine. By combining multiple errands into one trip, you reduce the amount of fossil fuel you use.

The encyclical invites us to consider these commitments:

- Engage in dialogue around the call of *Laudato Si* in our communities, families, ministries, and the public arena and other spheres of influence with people of faith and good will.
- To engage our community members and the Marianist Family at large in prayer, reflection and dialogue on *Laudato Si* through the lens of our Marianist charism and founders’ visions.
- To exercise our responsibility as faithful citizens, as individuals and collectives, in public policy such as by writing letters to the editor, visits and calls to elected representatives at all levels and speaking as a voice for those most impacted by climate change and environmental degradation.
- To nurture an ecological conversion in our individual and collective lives by fostering a prayer life, ongoing ecological education, honest conversations toward a new lifestyle which is responsive to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. To make personal and communal decisions that give witness to our love of God and God’s creation and an integral ecology that considers the social, economic and ecological impacts together.

Suggestions for Opening prayer/reflection:

Pray together some or all of the *Canticle of the Sun* by St. Francis, a portion of which is found in LS # 87.

Questions for reflection and dialogue

Choose from among the following questions for your group dialogue. Choose the number based on your time available and depending on group size, break into small groups.

1. Reflect on the life and vision of our Marianist founders. What resonance/similarities do you see in the needs of their time and how they addressed them and in our world today? What in the style and response of theirs and of Pope Francis invitation and witness can we apply to our Marianist situation today? What wisdom do they offer us?
2. What are the environmental issues where you are? What is happening and what most concerns you? How is environmental quality (air, water, soil pollution) affecting the people you work with and others who live in your region? (e.g. how are farmers and miners and those in the urban core being impacted?) What environmental injustices are there (disproportional impacts or lack of voice in particular peoples or places)?
3. How do you think that “ecological conversion” (shifting to living an integral ecology) best happens? Reflect on past experiences in your own life, and in that of your communities or organizations you’re part of. How has change happened? What wisdom can we draw from this, that will help us in the ecological process?
4. Conversion is a challenging and difficult process that we naturally resist. What resistances to transformation do I experience in myself? In my local or regional community? The larger Marianist Family? How might we strategize to address these?
5. How is the environment part of your spirituality – your personal prayer and action? That of your community? What

helps you to better hear “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”? How do you nurture your care for our common home, and connection with environmental concerns?

6. Reflect on the history of your community or family. How have you lived an ecological spirituality in the past? What practices did you have that assisted this? Think back on how you have “lived simply”. What practices need to be carried forward? What needs to be ‘revised’ or adapted in order to better live a life of integral ecology?
7. How might we as Marianist communities collaborate with others (e.g. larger Marianist Family, local church, other religious families and movements, environmental organizations etc) to better dialogue and work together to care for all?

Suggested Closing Prayer

In response to the reflection and sharing, briefly note here and share one step you will take as an individual, or how you think the community can respond.

Pray together *A Prayer for Our Earth* from the end of the encyclical, LS #246.

With gratitude to our Nuns On the Bus Ohio colleagues for ideas & feedback that inspired this guide.