

# Laudato Si' Project

Newsletter

Restoring Our Natural Connection



**Mission: To restore humanity's connection to the natural world through education, stewardship, and recreation**



Fall 2016

## *New Work of Mercy*

Pope Francis made September 1st a World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. To emphasize the need to be good stewards of this planet, Pope Francis also announced a new work of mercy: **care for our common home**. Pope Francis says, *“human life itself and everything it embraces includes care for our common home.”*

He calls for us to contemplate God in creation as a spiritual work of mercy. As a corporal work of mercy, he asks for daily gestures that build a better, more sustainable world. This is our call as Catholic Christians and a universal call for all humanity.

Pope Francis has not avoided addressing the negative impacts humans have had on our environment. But within all his messages, is the message of hope. The hope the risen Christ gives us each day to work for a better world.

Pope Francis says, *“We must not be indifferent or resigned to the loss of biodiversity ... thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence... We have no such right.”*

-Joe Meyer, Executive Director



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# Being a Catholic Consumer

As the Fall season comes to a close, we move into the Advent and Christmas season. With this season comes the gift giving climax of the year. Saint Nicolas and Christmas often bring to mind having to shop in crowded stores rather than prayerfully celebrating the coming of Christ to this world. Of course, this is not to say that buying and receiving gifts is an intrinsic evil but rather something we must do with some prudence and temperance. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis speaks often about the role of consumerism in our lives. He said this in an interview,

*“It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards ‘having’ rather than ‘being’, and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself. It is therefore necessary to create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments.”*

Here are some tips for being a more sustainable consumer this year.

1. When you receive a gift of clothing or purchase a toy for your children, donate an old item from your closet or toy chest to a Goodwill or St. Vincent de Paul. This prevents us from accumulating or hoarding and helps simplify our life.
2. Attempt to purchase products from companies that use resources sustainably, donate proceeds to charity, or are attune to humanitarian concerns. Certain product symbols can help you rest assured the product meets certain environmental or humanitarian criteria.



3. Buy products meant to last longer. Sometimes the cheaper alternative will just lead to having to purchase multiple of the product over time.
4. Try giving someone a non-material gift like going somewhere together: hiking, fishing, an evening out, or just time relaxing.
5. Give the gift of a charitable donation in that person’s name. We all have people that are hard to shop for so why not donate to a charity that cares about the same things that person does.



# Living *Laudato Si'* Highlights

## Saint Thomas More High School

Saint Thomas More High School resides near the shores of Lake Michigan on Milwaukee's south side. STM's partnership with *Laudato Si'* Project began this past summer, with meetings with administrators who saw a need to engage students in stewardship projects and develop a school culture that is more in tune with environmental concerns.

Our partnership has continued into this school year and has yielded the beginning of a "Green Club", an afterschool group of students and faculty that dedicate themselves to education and stewardship work both at the school and in the neighboring community. *Laudato Si'* Project has received permission for students to use and work on the Archdiocese land commonly known as "seminary woods." This 60+ acre parcel is a beautiful remnant of lake Michigan mesic woodland and we will bring student groups there to explore and help with stewardship projects.



## Wyoming Catholic College



Wyoming Catholic College, WCC, is a four year co-educational Catholic college whose primary objective is to educate the whole person in all three dimensions: mind, body, spirit. WCC immerses students in nature through a 3-week freshman summer program, a 1-week winter wilderness expedition, and various field science labs.

Our partnership is allowing students to better connect their love and experiences in the outdoors to their relationship with Christ and his Church. It is through their new connection with nature that we hope to instill a stewardship ethic that they will carry with them throughout their lives. Students have also been posting wonderful reflections on our blog which you can see at [naturecatholicblog.com](http://naturecatholicblog.com)











# School Connections

## *Laudato Si'* Project's School Partnerships Have Helped Engage Hundreds of Students

Bringing the message of *Laudato Si'* to school students is a key part of *Laudato Si'* Project's mission. How the partnership with a particular plays out is really dependent on each individual school. For many schools it starts by sitting down with the teacher(s) and administration and brainstorming how to integrate what students are learning in theology with the concepts taught in life or environmental science. One of our main objectives is to get students curious and excited about nature. From this, students begin to develop a relationship and love for creation and we believe that only with this

love and curiosity, will they want to care for it. Much of what we do educationally is to equip the school with the ideas and tools to start programming to accomplish the goals. In regards to stewardship, we help initiate projects both on the school grounds and at nearby natural areas. We have engaged many student groups at our Schoenstatt Retreat Center project area as highlighted in [October's article in the Catholic Herald](#). School students also write reflections about their experiences of finding God in nature on our blog [naturecatholicblog.com](http://naturecatholicblog.com).

*"A great...educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal."* *Laudato Si'*

## By The Numbers: Fall Care for Our Common Home

### Education

*Laudato Si'* Project has conducted **28 hours** of presentations, interpretive hikes, and educational tours.

### Stewardship

*Laudato Si'* Project has contributed **171 volunteer hours** in stewardship projects to better the ecological value of our world's outdoor places.

### Recreation

*Laudato Si'* Project has sponsored **5 hours** of recreational outings to visit, explore, and learn about our natural world.

*Laudato Si'* Project is a 501(c)3 tax deductible organization that depends on membership and donations to continue its vital mission. Thank You!