

Commitment to Environmental Ministry

1. Introduction

“Listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” is the beating heart of *Laudato Si'*, and it resonates deeply with our mission in our diocese, Kuzhithurai.

The ecological crisis is one of the greatest moral, spiritual and social challenges of our time. Climate change and extreme weather, biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources threaten not only the environment but also the dignity and survival of humanity, especially the poor and marginalized. Christianity, with its rich theological, ethical and spiritual heritage, offers valuable insights and responsibilities for addressing ecological concerns. Rooted in the biblical vision of creation as God's gift, Christians are called to be stewards of creation, cultivating a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature.

2. Rationale

The Christian faith emphasizes creation as an expression of God's love and wisdom. However, the misuse of creation by humans has led to ecological imbalance. Today, ecological concerns are not just scientific or political but deeply ethical and spiritual. A Christian approach can inspire ecological responsibility through principles of stewardship, justice, solidarity and care for the nature and the poor. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* has reinvigorated this perspective, urging a global ecological conversion. Thus, engaging with ecology from a Christian standpoint is both urgent and necessary.

3. Christian Responses and Practices

- **Ecological Spirituality:** Promoting eco-friendly liturgies, prayers for creation, and green parishes and institutions.
- **Sustainable Lifestyle:** Encouraging renewable energy, waste reduction, tree planting, and organic farming.
- **Education and Advocacy:** Faith-based institutions and educational institutions spreading ecological awareness and influencing policy.
- **Solidarity with the Poor:** Linking ecological concern with social justice, as both are inseparable.

- Collaborating with environmental groups: Activities and programs can be jointly organised with ecumenical, interreligious and secular groups and movements to amplify both ecological and human dignity

4. Laudato Si' Garden at Chunkankadai

The Laudato Si' Garden is a beautiful expression of Pope Francis' call to care for our common home, inspired by his encyclical Laudato Si'. These gardens are designed to promote ecological awareness, sustainability, and spiritual reflection. They often feature native plants, organic farming practices, and spaces for education and community gathering.

Core Principles of a Laudato Si' Garden

- Integral Ecology - Everything is interconnected—humans, nature, and the divine. The garden serves as a symbol of harmony between all elements of creation.
- Biodiversity & Native Planting - Emphasis is placed on planting native species to support local ecosystems and pollinators, enhancing biodiversity and ecological resilience.
- Sacred Space for Reflection - These gardens are designed as places of peace, prayer, and contemplation, reconnecting people with the serenity of God's creation.
- Community Engagement - Laudato Si' Gardens foster inclusivity by involving children, elders, and diverse groups in planting, maintaining, and celebrating the space.
- Environmental Justice - They promote awareness of ecological and social justice, encouraging sustainable practices and stewardship of the Earth.
- Celebration of Life Events - Planting trees or flowers to commemorate birthdays, anniversaries, or the passing of loved ones is encouraged, deepening the garden's personal and communal significance.
- Education & Formation - These gardens often serve as outdoor classrooms, teaching ecological responsibility, organic gardening, and the spiritual dimensions of creation care.

5. Celebrating the Season of Creation

The Season of Creation is a global ecumenical celebration held from September 1 to October 4 every year, inviting Christians and communities to renew their relationship with God and all of creation. Here are some ideas we can adapt for

our outreach and educational work, especially in our Kuzhithurai Diocese.
Spiritual and Liturgical Programs:

- Prayer services for Creation Day (Sept 1) and St. Francis Feast (Oct 4)
- Sunday liturgies with creation-themed homilies, music, and sacred space arrangements
- Rosary for Creation or interfaith prayer gatherings

Educational and Awareness Events

- Career guidance sessions with a creation-care theme (e.g., green careers, renewable energy sustainable development)
- Workshops, seminars, study sessions and discussions on Laudato Si', ecological spirituality, sustainable development, ecological conversion
- Student art, essay, quiz, book reading competitions on the proposed theme for the creation day

Community Engagement

- Creating Laudato Si' Garden and planting drive (perfect for your garden project!) in our parishes and institutions
- . Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation—a walk or reflection event linking ecology and spirituality, visiting eco hot spots and studying about eco systems and connecting with nature
- Clean-up campaigns or eco-awareness rallies with children, youth and local leaders.

Creative Outreach

- Visual storytelling: Create posters or digital art featuring green saints and activists, marginalized groups, and creation themes
- Social media campaigns: Share daily reflections, quotes from Laudato Si', or local eco-heroes
- Inclusive programs for physically challenged and poor individuals, emphasizing dignity and participation

06. Ecological Education and Training centre

Inspired by Pope Francis' Laudato Si' establish Pope Francis Ecological Education and Training Centre in our diocese. The centre will serve as a hub for spiritual formation, ecological conversion, ecological and sustainable development education, and community empowerment, fostering a culture of

care for our common home. Team of committed resource persons will be trained to organise training programs.

Objectives

- Promote ecological spirituality rooted in Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching and Ecological Concerns Outlined in Laudato Si etc.
- Study sessions on Rio Declaration 1992, Earth Charter, Agenda 21, UN Sustainable Development Goals and various other UN Conventions.
- Provide training programs on sustainable living, climate conversion, climate justice, climate resilience, green practices, green jobs and green vocations
- Orienting to develop a Laudato Si' Garden as a living classroom and prayer space in our parishes and educational institutions
- Engage students, youth, and marginalized communities in ecological awareness and action. Initiating environmental study and reading clubs.
- Foster interfaith and community collaboration for environmental stewardship.
- Collaborative activities and programs with environmental education and spirituality centres, eco organizations and movements and eco clubs.

Training and study session will be organised at parish, vicariate and diocesan level for various groups, commissions and at educational institutions for students and faculty members.

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