

Press Conference on *Laudato Si'* and Our Local Call to Be Stewards of Creation
Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr
August 5, 2015

Opening Remarks

My thanks to all of you for gathering this morning. My appreciation to Fr. Al Hirt and the St. Monica-St. George community for hosting us at this beautiful facility. As you can tell, there are many wonderful organizations present here, Catholic and non-Catholic. They include hospitals, religious congregations, universities, small businesses, non-profits, and members of our archdiocesan Climate Change Task Force. Each one of them is either working towards greater environmental sustainability or helping others to do so. Please refer to your press packet for a complete list of the supporters of our message today, and many of them will be available for questions after our formal remarks are concluded.

In June, Pope Francis issued an encyclical document, titled *Laudato Si'*, or “Praise Be,” an exclamation from St. Francis of Assisi’s *Canticle of the Creatures*. Building upon a rich tradition of Catholic teaching on the environment, the Holy Father’s message is an urgent call to “every person living on this planet” to better care for our common home. He urges us all to ask ourselves how all our human behaviors, including those in the political, economic, scientific and religious spheres, are either improving or eroding our relationships with God, with each other, and with all of creation. Pope Francis asks, “What kind of world do we want to leave those who come after us, to children who are now growing up” (*LS*, 160). God leads us to the answer in the Book of Genesis when He commands us to be stewards of the natural world by both “tilling” it and “keeping” it (Gen. 2:15). We till it so that all people in this world can live and reach their full potential. And we keep it, as the Earth has a beauty and a purpose in its own right. Creation is a gift that allows us to see the fullness of God. It too is journeying back with us to the Creator and must return as pristinely as possible.

Based on sound scientific observations, *Laudato Si'* calls for “an ecological conversion” to repair the harm we’ve done to creation and to mitigate the impact of environmental degradation on the poor and most vulnerable (*LS*, 217). It directs us to take seriously the scientific warnings about air, water and land pollution as well as human contributions to climate change, so we can more responsibly protect the life and dignity of all people and future generations. One of the ways that we can proceed together is through greater energy efficiency and renewable energy in our homes and institutions.

I am pleased to be joined by so many representatives from various organizations who exemplify the vision of *Laudato Si'*. Just speaking for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, we still have a long ways to go. Yet, we are making committed strides to reduce our energy usage in our archdiocesan facilities, and many of our parishes have made noteworthy investments to use less energy and protect creation.

I would ask our Archdiocesan Director of Property Management and Real Estate, Jeff Bohrer to now highlight a few specifics.

(OVER)

Closing Remarks

Thank you. I would like to conclude the formal part of this event by emphasizing that all of us can do something to ensure this planet remains as God intended. We are calling on all residents to use less and save energy more. We are also asking local utilities and businesses to prioritize programs for energy efficiency and use fewer fossil fuels in energy production and economic activities. And we are calling on policymakers at all levels to prioritize care for creation in their considerations. This can include more energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives from the state as well as a program of national carbon standards, which the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supports. There can be robust and healthy debate about how we go about establishing effective policies, but we must still act to guide market forces and individual actions towards the common good. As Pope Francis says,

“On many concrete questions, the Church has no reason to offer a definitive opinion; she knows that honest debate must be encouraged among experts, while respecting divergent views. But we need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair... [W]e can always do something to solve our problems.”
(LS, 61)

Let us, with a sense of joy and hope, share in this ecological conversion together, so that we can restore our relationships with each other and with all of creation in a manner that gives due praise to our common Creator.

And now, at this time, I would invite questions for any of the speakers as well as for any of the representatives from the organizations represented here.