



Praise be to you, my Lord

Newsletter of the Laudato Si' Commission of the Diocese of Lexington

laudatosi@cdlexorg

March 2026

Catholic Social Teaching at the General Assembly

Thirty-plus constituents from the Diocese of Lexington were seen in the halls of the Capitol Annex on February 19 for “Catholics at the Capitol.” The annual event is sponsored by the Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Kentucky. The CCK was created in 1984 by the Catholic bishops of Kentucky with a mission of representing the Church and the state’s four Catholic dioceses in public policy matters on both the state and federal level.

The months that the General Assembly meets is a busy time for Jason Hall and the staff of CCK as they track the movement of bills that support Catholic social teaching.

Because of the limited space and time available (the main building is under construction, so the GA is being held in the smaller Capitol Annex this year), training for “Catholics at the Capitol” was held via zoom call on Tuesday, Feb. 17. With diocesan coordinator of peace and justice Josh Van Cleef, Jason



gave the background of bills that CCK has on its radar including: HB 333 which would allow religious institutions to use property to address Kentucky’s housing shortage;

the Family Preservation and Accountability Act, to allow alternate sentencing for primary caregivers of children who are convicted of non-violent crimes (64% of women and 55% of men in Kentucky prisons are parents); and to ask for changes in HB 2 to reduce excessive paperwork for Kentuckians who receive Medicaid (one in three Kentuckians). Ultimately CCK is asking for the defeat of House Bill 2 which calls for major changes to Medicaid in Kentucky.

Folks from as far away as Martin and Barbourville, as well those from Lexington and Frankfort gathered for prayer with Bishop John Stowe, then listened to Jason and Josh as they told of the status of the bills they would be discussing with their senators and representatives. Some issues, they said, have moved through various committees and would receive a vote, others were still in the process of gaining support and co-sponsors. But Jason pointed out that it is important to receive input from their constituents as they make decisions.

Members of the Laudato Si Commission who attended were particularly interested in HB 196 which will establish a working group to examine the health outcomes of “forever chemicals.”

Catholics at the Capitol is an annual event; watch your church bulletin and this newsletter for information about the gathering in 2027.

“We want to ‘go solar,’ but at what cost?”

Several parishes in the Diocese of Lexington have installed or are investigating installing the equipment needed to convert their energy needs from fossil fuels to renewable energy. In his net-zero plan, Bishop John has committed to having the conversions to renewable energy complete by 2030. And while many parishes are interested in making this commitment, the budget still must be balanced. The answer to “how do we go solar?” is just a call away. Destiny

Cooper in the diocesan finance office, is happy to walk you through the process. Contact her at (859) 253-1993 ext. 1046 , dcooper@cdlex.org. If you would like to receive the handout that will take you, step-by-step, through the process of converting to solar, email laudatosi@cdlex.org.

CORRECTION

The February issue of *Praise Be to You, Lord* listed the dates for the fall AIP incorrectly. The dates are October 18-21. See page 5 for information about registration.

Goal #7: *Community resilience and empowerment*

By Sister Kathleen Weigand, OSB

While the focus of the *Laudato Si'* Commission is encouraging the people of the diocese to study and live Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical, the encyclical is an integral part of Catholic Social Teaching. The commission decided to examine each goal of *Laudato Si'* in light of CST, one goal each month. Here, Sister Kathleen explores "ecological spirituality."

For most of us, the events that took place in Minneapolis starting in early December prompted reactions that combined horror and disbelief, but led to the Minneapolis community coming together in solidarity to call for justice for the people targeted by ICE agents acting on the instruction and with the support of the federal government.

Goal seven of *Laudato Si'*, community resilience and empowerment, echoes Catholic social teaching: call to family community; rights and responsibilities; and solidarity. Caring for creation doesn't just mean caring for flora and fauna. Caring for God's creation includes men, women and children of every race and nationality and is key to that responsibility.

Here in Floyd County, the Democratic Women's Club has been re-established. I was immediately interested in joining, although the sisters of my Benedictine community reminded me that as a community we cannot be politically involved. I understood that as a religious community, in this case Benedictines, are not allowed to promote a particular candidate. So how do I speak up about injustices that I see happening throughout our country? Through a conversation with a trusted friend I came to understand that there is a difference between focusing on issues rather than on a candidate. The root word of politics is quite simple. It is derived from the Greek word *polis*, the activity of the city-state. Simple and easily explained, right? As our conversation continued in my Benedictine community I feel confident that membership—and fellowship—with the Democratic Women of Floyd County would enable me to live Catholic social teaching as well as goal seven of *Laudato Si'*. It is not about taking a leadership position within the group nor is it about supporting a particular candidate.

Like the protestors in Minneapolis, I believe that Catholics have a responsibility to work for justice. Involvement with actions and activities that promote peace and justice is part of that responsibility, a responsibility I take quite seriously. I sincerely thank Jason Hall and the Catholic Conference of Kentucky for organizing Catholics at the Capitol, giving me and others within our diocese the opportunity to meet with the people who represent us so in order to express our concerns.

Seven Goals of *Laudato Si'*

Respond to the cry of the earth

Respond to the cry of the poor

Ecological economics

Adopt sustainable lifestyles

Ecological education

Ecological spirituality

Community resilience

and empowerment

Our involvement in politics is something we are called to by Catholic social teaching, as well as *Laudato Si'*. We are called to participate in promoting the truth, the Gospel of Jesus, to hear the cry of the poor. Participating in such activities as Catholics at the Capitol, a Silent Peace Walk, rallies that advocate peace and justice, helping register people to vote and contacting our representatives enable us to live that teaching. None of these actions promote a particular candidate or a party but clearly are ways to advance the common good and give voice to the voiceless.

Living Goal seven of *Laudato Si'* can be a challenge. It calls us to action, calls us to live our Catholic faith and the Gospel of Jesus. Prayer, discernment and active listening are keys to understanding and educating ourselves on the issues that are taking advantage of our brothers and sisters. As Catholic Christians we are called to bring hope, we are called to faithful action, we are called to listen to the voice of Jesus as He speaks through all of our brothers and sisters.

As Fr. Bob Cushing from Pax Christi said in *A Prayer for a Nonviolent Heart*:

O Holy Mystery, Creator God, breathe into me your Sanctifying Spirit, that I may carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus....

“Help us listen to the voice of creation”

By Teresa Nolet

“Happy Lent!” said the header in the email from Catholic Climate Covenant on Ash Wednesday. Of all the Lenten emails that day, this one sounded the cheeriest, so I opened it. I was immediately welcomed in and pleasantly surprised to see that the USCCB had issued an invitation to ecological conversion for U.S. Catholics. The entire reflection spoke to me, but I was most impressed and encouraged by the quotation from Pope Leo XIV regarding care for creation: “Everyone in society, through non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups, must put pressure on governments to develop and implement more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Citizens need to take an active role in political decision-making at national, regional and local levels.” The bishops acknowledge that we face large challenges, but they encourage us to continue to care for the earth and the poor. Finally, I found the prayer included with the reflection to be a good prayer component for my “Greener Lent” commitment. I am grateful to the bishops for this reflection, encouragement, and prayer.

In this reflection, the bishop chairmen of the Committees on Domestic Justice and Social Development and International Justice and Peace invite us to enter the solitude of the desert to better hear Christ’s voice and to be open to

conversion as we begin to realize, with Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’*: “The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast.” For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion.” (LS no. 217)

The bishops call us to discern together and to recognize the power we have as individuals and in community. They share ideas for action and advocacy for individuals and groups, including families, business leaders, schools, parishes, and beyond.

A Lenten Prayer

O God,

During this season of Lent,
draw us into the desert, a place of fasting and prayer,
removed from the distractions of the world.

Help us listen to the voice of creation.

Turn our hearts to you.

In our innermost space,
let us listen more carefully
to creation, to others and to you.

Help us listen to the voice of creation.

As we are touched in this listening
by your incarnational presence,
remind us of your love and mercy,
your initiative and activity.

Help us listen to the voice of creation.

Show us your attentiveness
to the cry of the earth and cry of the poor
to the little ones wounded by a throw-away culture,
and to those suffering due to natural disasters.

Help us listen to the voice of creation.

Listening to *the voice of creation*,
help us to join in holy witness
to protect those most vulnerable
and to protect our common home.
Amen.

Adapted from [Help me to listen to the voice of creation](#)
Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre, Archbishop of Louisville
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan
Bishop of Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

Save the Date

- **March 10**, Parish Teams Meeting, 7 p.m. Facilitated by Josh Van Cleef, director of peace and justice for the Diocese of Lexington, parish team leaders and others will meet via zoom to share ideas, best practices and information. To receive the link, contact Josh at jvancleef@cdlex.org.
- **April 19-22** Appalachian Immersion Pilgrimage
For general information, see page 4. Registration deadline, March 31.
- **April 22** Earth Day. How will you celebrate the earth this day?
- **July 11** Art Retreat, 9:00, St. Martha, Prestonsburg. To register, contact laudatosi@cdlex.org
- **September 12** Brother Mickey McGrath, Pax Christi Church, Lexington. Watch for information about registration.

Join a CCA Squad

The Catholic Committee of Appalachia has formed a partnership with Network Lobby, the leading voice for Catholic social issues at the federal level. With Network's connections and CCA's network of members, they believe "we can deliver a blow to a government that only cares about its billionaire oligarchs. We are at a time when very few people hold a majority of power in this country. With such a slim majority in the House and Senate, if we manage to influence

even one representative at a high level, think of the change that CCA and Network can make in this country!"

Each squad will be a small group of activists led by a squad leader. Tasks may include in-person demonstrations, letter writing, meeting with the press. The issues addressed will be those faced on a local level. Training by Network will begin on March 5 but it is not mandatory.

For more information about participating in a CCA Squad, contact Dave Harl, 859-358-7370.



Catholic
of
Committee
Appalachia

Season of Creation 2026

On the recommendation of Rosie Fedorchuk, the Laudato Si Commission invited Brother Mickey McGrath to give a talk in the Diocese of Lexington as part of the celebration of the Season of Creation 2026. Brother Mickey accepted our invitation and will speak on Saturday, September 12, at Pax Christi Church, time to be determined.

On his website (www.bromickeymcgrath.com), Brother Mickey says, "In a nutshell, I paint, write, and tell stories—and then travel all over the place telling the stories behind what I paint and write."

Brother Mickey's style is easily recognizable, combining traditional religious iconography with bold colors and a contemporary feel.

Details are still planning for the event, but you'll find more information, including information about registration, in upcoming issues of "Praise Be To You, My Lord."

Reading for Holy Week

By Peggy Gabriel

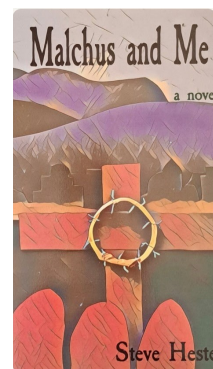
I'm reading *A Leaf in the Stream*, a collection of Lenten reflections by Steve Hester, a former—and very much missed—member of the Laudato Si Commission. When it gets closer to Holy Week, I will take my copy of *Malchus and Me* off the shelf and read it, as I have for the past three Lenten seasons.

The first time I read Steve's first novel, it happened to coincide with Holy Week and I found that the novel really enhanced the week for me. As I listened to the Passion on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, as well as the gospel reading on Holy Thursday, I was impressed by the way Steve wove the gospel through the first-person perspective of Malchus' companion, the "me" in the title. Malchus is called by name only in the Gospel of John; he is the slave who loses his ear to Peter's sword but is then healed by Jesus. Since my first reading in 2023, a re-reading has become part of my activity each year as we grow closer to Easter. I have found new insight with each re-reading.

The "back-of-the-book" text gives a short synopsis the characters we meeting in the Gospel story of Holy Week, then asks, "What about the others on the fringes of society? What about the drunks and deviants who experienced Jesus? This is their story. It's a story of encounter, love and mercy, told as only they can tell it. Theirs is a story of Jesus meeting us where we are, no matter where that is. Theirs is a story of salvation told from the margins."

To buy a copy directly from Steve, go to <https://blockheadpublishing.source.site/>

I highly recommend!



The Seven Goals of Laudato Si'



If your parish needs a Goals of *Laudato Si'* poster (pictured), contact laudatosi@cdlex.org

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day!

By Peggy Gabriel

I was delighted to find St. Patrick on the list when I looked for saints we celebrate in March who have a connection to care of creation.

“St. Patrick (March 17): Known for using nature (the shamrock) to explain the Trinity, symbolizing a connection to creation.” I’ve never thought of that, but as a child, I delighted in learning that the clovers that were abundant in our lawn were the same as the ones that St. Patrick used.

The Laudato Si Commission generally gets together for its annual retreat in March and has a great tradition: sharing a Guinness Chocolate Cake, regardless of how far the retreat is from March 17. (And for those of us who have given up sweets for Lent, there may or may not be a suspension of that abstinence!) Fans of Guinness know that the dark stout dates back to 1759. Although the stout might not be to everyone’s taste, the cake is rich, chocolatey and delicious.



Chocolate Guinness Cake

Yield: One 9-inch cake or 12 servings

For the Cake

- 1 cup Guinness stout
- 10 tablespoons (1 stick plus 2 tablespoons) butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsweetened cocoa
- 2 cups superfine sugar (see Tip 1, below)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sour cream (see Tip 2)
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking soda

For the Topping

- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups confectioners' sugar
- 8 ounces cream cheese at room temperature

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a 9-inch springform pan and line with parchment paper. In a large saucepan combine Guinness and butter. Place over medium-low heat until butter melts, then remove from heat. Add cocoa and superfine sugar and whisk to blend.

In a small bowl, combine sour cream, eggs and vanilla; mix well. Add to Guinness mixture. Add flour and baking soda and whisk again until smooth. Pour into buttered pan, and bake until risen and firm, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Place pan on a wire rack and cool completely in pan.

For the topping: Using a food processor or by hand, mix confectioners' sugar to break up lumps. Add cream cheese and blend until smooth. Add a little milk and mix until smooth and spreadable (it won't take much milk).

Remove cake from pan and place on a platter or cake stand. Ice top of cake only, so that it resembles a frothy pint of Guinness.

Tip 1: To make superfine sugar, place 2 cups plus four teaspoons in a food processor and whirl for 30 seconds.

Tip 2: I substitute plain, fat-free Greek yogurt for the sour cream because I keep it on hand.

***Continue to have a
blessed season
of Lent!***

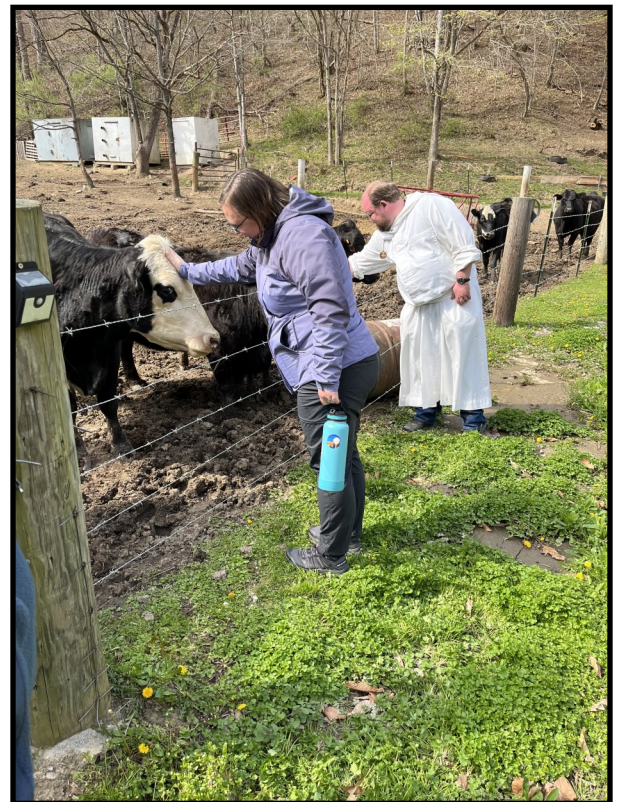
Appalachian Immersion Pilgrimage

Join us for a unique and transformative experience in the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Kentucky. Through listening, building relationships and hearing the stories of people who call these ancient mountains home, pilgrims experience the land, the people and how caring for God's creation is building a step for the future. The Appalachian Mountains are 400 million years old and have a distinct ecosystem. Climate change is having a devastating effect on the land and the people who live here. The people face a lack of resources while trying to maintain a livelihood and their culture amidst adversity. Come, learn and engage with the community and the land. Pilgrimages are planned for April 19-22 and October 19-22, 2026. Registration deadline for each is one month before the start date. If your parish or Parish Team would like to schedule an immersion or a Care of Creation day of recollection, contact laudatosi@cdlex.org.

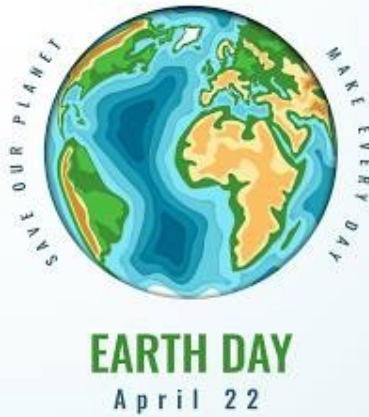


Letcher County coal tippie.

**For more information contact
Sister Kathleen Weigand, OSB
kweigand@cdlex.org
859-339-5928**



Lori Helfrich and Brother Christian Matson greet cows at Geneva Marshall's farm in Floyd County. Four generations of Geneva's family have lived on the farm.



Earth Day 2026 will be observed on April 22. The annual event was first held in 1970 following an oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. The environmental disaster mobilized activists in a number of disciplines to join together to promote such legislation as the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. This year, observance is more important than ever with the introduction by the EPA to chip away at the progress that has been made to assure good, clean water and with the EPA's move to discontinuing calculation of the health benefits by curbing air pollution.

Google "celebrate Earth Day" to find a variety of ways to celebrate our common home.

Seven Goals of *Laudato Si'*

Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the well-being of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. Actions could include the adoption of renewable energies and energy sufficiency measures, achieving carbon neutrality, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.

Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth. Actions could include projects to promote solidarity, with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, and children at risk, analysis and improvement of social systems, and social service programs.

Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere—our common home. Actions could include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and the people, supporting circular economies, and prioritizing care labor and protecting the dignity of workers.

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. Actions could include reducing waste and recycling, adopting sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, active mobility (walking, cycling), and avoiding single use items (e.g. plastic, etc.).

Ecological Education is about re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Actions could include ensuring equitable access to education for all and promoting human rights, fostering *Laudato Si'* themes within the community, encouraging ecological leadership (students, teachers), and ecological restoration activities.

Ecological Spirituality springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to "discover God in all things", both in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick and the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities. Actions could include promoting creation-based liturgical celebrations, developing ecological catechesis, retreats and formation programs, etc.

Community Resilience and Empowerment envisage a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels. Actions could include promoting advocacy and developing people's campaigns, encouraging rootedness and a sense of belonging in local communities and neighborhood ecosystems.

Care of Creation and Educational Resources

Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle, and Rot

Care of Creation and Educational Components

Laudato Si Movement	www.laudatosimovement.org
<i>What is the Laudato Si Action Platform?</i>	
Catholic Climate Covenant	www.catholicclimatecovenant.org
Catholic Agency for Overseas Development	https://cafod.org.uk/
Franciscan Action Network	https://franciscanaction.org
Care of Creation/Environmental Justice	www.USCCB.org
Catholic Care of Creation	www.catholiccarecreation.com--
Catholic Relief Services	www.crs.org/resource-center/ cst-101-video-care-gods-creation
Inside Climate News	insideclimatenews.org/
Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development	
www.vatican.va/content/romancuria/en/dicasteri/dicastero-per-il-servizio-dello-sviluppo-umano-integrale/struttura.html	
God's Planet	https://godsplanet.us
Just Faith Ministries	https://justfaith.org
Greener Lent	https://greenerlent.org

Energy Audits and Advise

Bluegrass Green Source (Lexington)	https://bggreensource.org/
Mountain Association	https://mtassociation.org
Interfaith Power and Light	https://interfaithpowerandlight.org
<i>Most local utility companies have a program to audit ways to reduce energy consumption</i>	

Educational

The Opportunity Atlas	
Arbor Day Foundation	www.arborday.org
Sierra Club	https://sierraclub.org
American Forests	www.americanforests.org
EWG, guides for all environmental issues	www.ewg.org
	www.nature.org
God's Planet	www.bluedotliving.com--
EPA Environmental Justice	
Solar	
Estimate Costs and Benefits of Solar	www.solar-estimate.org –
Solar Advice for Lexington-Fayette	Solarize Lexingtonlexingtonky.gov)
Solar Advise for Boyle, Garrard, Lincoln, Casey, Marion, Washington, and Mercer counties	Solarize Boyle(boylecountyky.gov)

Recycling

How2Recycle

<https://how2recycle.info>

Earth911

Earth911.com

Search for where to recycle what and how

Electronics

Best Buy, Office Depot, Staples. Check to see what items they take at that location.

Composting (rotting)

Farmer's Almanac

<https://www.almanac.com/how-compost-guide-composting-home>

National Geographic

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/how-to-compost>

Sustainability

Sustainable Jungle

<https://www.sustainablejungle.com/>

Green Living

<https://greenliving.guru/sustainable-lifestyle/>

Creation Justice

<https://www.creationjustice.org-->

Green Certification

www.greenchecklex.org

Sustainability program certification for businesses and other entities within Lexington-Fayette County.

One 5 C

www.one5c.com

Partnership with The Nature Conservancy

to plant trees and create an environment of Zero Waste at concerts

www.davematthewsband.com/sustainability--

Environment America

www.environmentamerica.org

Blue Paradox

www.blueparadox.com

Books

Laudato Si': *On Care for our common home*. Pope Francis, 2015 Available on line.

Fratelli Tutti: *On fraternity and Social Friendship*, Pope Francis, 2020. Available on line.

Laudate Deum: *To all people of good will on the climate crisis*, Pope Francis, 2023 Available on line.

These documents are also available as PDFs from laudatosi@cdlex.org

Books below are available through Catholic Committee of Appalachia website

<https://ccappal.org>

This Land is Home to Me *First - Bishop's Pastoral on Appalachia, 1975.*

At Home in the Web of Life *25th Anniversary Edition of Appalachian Bishop's Pastoral on Appalachia, 1995.*

The Telling Takes Us Home: *Taking Our Place in the stories that shape us. A People's Pastoral from the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, 2015.*

Laudato Si Commission Members: Deacon Chris Cecil, Dave Harl, Lori Helfrich, Peggy Gabriel, Bax McClure, Jerry Hardt, Dan Nolet, Teresa Nolet, Sister Kathleen Weigand