



**A Reflection and Statement of Intention About Our Participation  
in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform  
Catholic Diocese of Arlington, Virginia USA  
August 2022**

*“I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly.” John 10:10*

### **Introduction**

Seven years after promulgating his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, in which he invited us to see our relationship with the natural world through eyes of faith, Pope Francis now challenges us to put that faith into action by embracing and exercising responsible stewardship of our place in the Creator's plan and by caring for the most vulnerable. He is challenging us, in short, to ecological conversion, putting human flourishing at the heart of our relationship with the natural world so that, in Jesus' words, “we may have life, and have it more abundantly.”

The Diocese of Arlington enrolled in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (LSAP) in February 2022. Through the LSAP, the Pope is calling for all Catholic institutions to embark on a multi-year journey towards integral ecology – a way of life in which we live and make decisions knowing that “everything is connected.” Bishop Burbidge has committed our diocese to journey with the Holy Father for the next seven years to learn and practice the teachings of *Laudato Si'*, embracing the Church's commitment to uphold and protect human life from conception until natural death, and preserving God's material world, which makes that life possible.

### **Who we are**

The Diocese of Arlington is a thriving community in the Northern Virginia area, led by the Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, its fourth bishop. Since its founding in 1974, the Diocese has grown significantly, becoming one of the fifty largest dioceses in the United States composed of 446,500 registered Catholics in 70 parishes with over 275 priests. Spread out over urban, suburban and rural areas, our diocese is richly multicultural with many spoken languages and customs.

A number of parishes have established Care for Creation ministries in the diocese. Under the sponsorship of its Peace and Justice Commission, the diocese has formed a Care for Creation Network (CCN) to help these ministries learn from and inspire each other. The Commission and members of the CCN have prepared this reflection document.

During the Season of Creation the diocese is launching its participation in the Vatican's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform by hosting a diocesan wide conference entitled “Why Should I Care for Our Common Home? Conversion, Prayer, and Action.”

**Pursuing the Seven *Laudato Si'* Goals (LSGs) within the Structure of our Diocesan Strategic Plan.** The values of our diocese are articulated most directly in our diocesan Strategic Plan, which is expressed in six pillars within which the LSGs can be embraced. Those pillars are:

### **Revitalize Evangelization and Faith Formation**

#### **Cultivate Authentic Discipleship in Christ**

Under these two pillars we will respond to the *Cry of the Earth* by helping to form our diocesan family in the message that, as People of Life and disciples of Christ, we revere the Creator and His gift of the earth and its creatures, which He has given us to sustain our lives. We will help to form our diocese in integrating this understanding into our spiritual lives, cultivating a true Ecological Spirituality that incorporates our reverence for God the Creator fully into our personal and communal prayer and our liturgy. We will also offer formation about the *Cry of the Poor* – because our misuse of the environment places the greatest burden on those in poverty and those living in areas most vulnerable to environmental degradation.

### **Invigorate Catholic Education for All**

#### **Strengthen Parish and Family Life**

Under these pillars we will offer formation and practical assistance for living in the spirit of *Laudato Si'*. We will promote *Ecological Education*, collaborating with our Catholic schools to develop and implement curricula that integrate the teachings of *Laudato Si'*. We will furnish tools to individuals, families and parishes to understand and live *Ecological Economics*, recognizing that our economy is a part of human society and thus a part of our common home. Because of this, we will encourage the *Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles*, since we know that our actions as producers and consumers, our concern to protect the dignity of workers, and our care to minimize activity harmful to the earth and its people -- all have moral and spiritual dimensions.

### **Foster Communion of Many Cultures**

#### **Deepen Commitment to Charitable Works**

As a diocese blessed with many cultural, racial and ethnic communities, we have a great opportunity to hear the voices of our neighbors who hail from around the world. Many of their homelands bear the brunt of environmental deterioration in the form of sea rise, agricultural changes leading to hunger and forced migration, extreme weather disasters and conflict over scarce resources. We will raise up their voices and ask them to teach us about the real effects of climate change and how we should respond as their brothers and sisters. In this way we will foster *Community Resilience and Empowerment* and promote intercultural communion. We will also encourage and facilitate the inclusion of charitable works to mitigate and alleviate the suffering of the poor of our diocese as the climate warms – for example, assistance with increased cooling costs and ensuring that the elderly poor have access to cool environments.

**Summary:** The strategic vision of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington is directed to achieving our growth in holiness. Our participation in the Vatican *Laudato Si'* Platform and the lifting up of the *Laudato Si'* Goals harmonizes with this vision, helping us grow in holiness by living in right relation with God, others and all of creation.