

Our shared mission at St. Ignatius calls us to be “challenged to discern the urgent call of Jesus in our times.” From September 2014 – June 2015, St. Ignatius parish aimed to do just that by engaging in a “Year of Discernment,” hosting events to create a space for prayer, education, and faith formation around justice issues. By highlighting the diverse issues of human trafficking, immigration, economic justice, and ecological justice, we cast a wide net to allow room for exploration. This year took place within a larger framework of discernment – *what is God’s preference for how our parish community works for justice?*

As we prayed and listened to one another, it became clear to the community that we were being called to work for ecological justice together. Many reasons were highlighted: focusing on ecological justice could bring the widest range of our parishioners together (in terms of age, ethnicity, race, gender, socio-economics, etc.) and it’s interconnected with all the justice issues that we considered. Many of our Portland neighbors care deeply about ecological justice, and we felt called to move outside our parish to engage in the local and state conversations with them around climate change and sustainable living. Finally, we wanted to contribute to the global conversation and call to action that Pope Francis has sparked with *Laudato Si: Care for our Common Home*.

As Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si*, “What (we) all need is an ‘ecological conversion’, whereby the effects of (our) encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in (our) relationship with the world around (us). Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. (217)” Rooted in the Gospel, Ignatian Spirituality and Catholic Social Teaching, we seek to have an ecological conversion of heart and to respond to ecojustice issues together. We strive to integrate ecojustice into all parts of our Parish life and ministries as we seek to answer this call.

Guided by our desire to respond to the call to care for creation throughout our parish and our lives, we look for ways to Act, Advocate, Assess, Learn and Pray:

Act – Our work for justice is fundamentally rooted in relationship. By creating opportunities for connection across common divides (i.e. socio-economic, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, language, species, etc.) we grow in our understanding of one another’s joys and struggles, sharing life together. On a personal level, we are invited to act to change our choices and behaviors by reducing our carbon footprint such as being a more energy conscious consumer and less wasteful in our use of limited resources.

Advocate – By drawing from a diversity of tools and practices, we seek to influence decision makers and transform unjust structures for the benefit of the common good. We are called to advocate for Catholic principles of solidarity and stewardship of God’s creation in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.

Assess – We engage in an on-going search of the root causes of injustice and explore new ways of relating to one another and the earth. We also assess how as an individual, my family, parish and school contribute to climate change by energy use, consumption, waste, etc.

Learn – Through faith formation and education, we seek to transform attitudes and habits that foster injustice and indifference. We are each invited to learn about and educate others about the causes and moral dimensions of climate change and ecojustice.

Pray – Through the liturgy and the sacraments, we are called as the Church to pray and reflect on our duty to and for God’s creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.

Please join us in our ecological conversion and help us to hear and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all... We require a new and universal solidarity. As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: "Everyone's talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God's creation". All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents. (14)

We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (49)

It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what (we) all need is an "ecological conversion", whereby the effects of (our) encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in (our) relationship with the world around (us). Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. (217)

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that "contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves". (223)