



Laudato Si' and the Local Church

Martin Hayes, Bishop of Kilmore, has been assigned the role of promoting the implementation of *Laudato Si'*, the Encyclical letter written by Pope Francis and published on 24 May 2015. In this article, he outlines how *Laudato Si'* has already found expression in the Church in Ireland and how the implementation of its principles, especially among local parish faith communities, is ever more relevant in light of increasing climate change.

Climate change is having a global impact and we feel helpless as individuals, as parish communities, indeed, as a country. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis alerts us to the climate crisis and invites us to an 'ecological interior conversion' so that we can fulfil our Christian responsibility to address both 'the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' (LS, 49).

Trócaire through its Lenten resources has engaged with all parishes in Ireland. At its seminar during the World Meeting of Families in August 2018, Trócaire affirmed its commitment to combatting the effects of climate change on the basis that climate change is real and is a concern for all Catholics. Eco Congregation Ireland, a Christian ecumenical group founded in 2005 with a focus on rediscovering the lost connection between our Christian faith and care for the environment, has been inspired by *Laudato Si'* in its Climate Justice Candle and Awards initiatives.

My specific role in promoting *Lau-*

dato Si' is greatly enhanced by the Irish Episcopal Conference through the Council for Justice and Peace and the *Laudato Si'* Working Group of the Council for Catechetics. The commitment of the membership of both groups provides an invaluable source of energy, innovative ideas, and expertise with a focus upon practical actions. While several parishes are actively involved in care of creation initiatives, there is a need for more parishioners to see it as an important element of their Christian vocation. A plan to implement the principles of *Laudato Si'* is required for every diocese and parish.

A very concrete way of becoming immersed in care of creation in your parish is to celebrate the Season of Creation. Liturgical Resources for the Season of Creation, which takes place each year from 1 September– 4 October are available at www.catholicbishops.ie. This celebration of the Season of Creation 2021 is timely as world leaders gather at two crucial sum-

Bangladesh, 2020: Vehicles try to drive through a flooded street in Dhaka.



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mits, the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15, China) on 11–24 October 2021 and the UN Climate Conference (COP26, Glasgow) on 1–12 November 2021, which will focus upon supporting communities affected by climate change and how we can best safeguard our natural world.

Pope Francis is continually urging us to take the issues around climate change seriously and he has initiated the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform under the direction of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. At the launch on 24 May last, he stated – 'I therefore renew my appeal: let us take care of our mother Earth ... We have the opportunity to prepare a better tomorrow for all. From God's hands we have received a garden, we cannot leave a desert to our children.' Therefore, participation in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform seven-year programme is to

be encouraged, see www.laudatosi-actionplatform.org for more details, which includes those of the plans be launched on the 4 October, feast of St Francis of Assisi.

Also, I invite you to visit the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) website www.catholicclimatemovement.global, which affords you the opportunity to sign the Healthy Planet, Healthy People Petition which will be presented on behalf of all Catholics of the world at COP26, Glasgow. GCCM is currently enabling dioceses in Ireland to divest from the fossil fuel industry.

May we continue on our journey of ecological conversion leading to practical actions in our parishes. Every conversation and action matters as we seek to leave our common home sustainable for future generations to sing in the spirit of St Francis of Assisi, 'Praise be to you, my Lord.' 