

# Catholic Ecology

"We are losing our attitude of wonder, of contemplation, of listening to creation and thus we no longer manage to interpret within it what Benedict XVI calls 'the rhythm of the love-story between God and man.'"

+ Pope Francis

## 10 ways Catholics can protect the environment And save money, too!

Aug 10, 2013



I've written often about the Catholic spiritual influence on ecology, but how can Catholics put the spiritual into practice?

This post provides a partial answer. Your ideas will build on what's here and I'll add similar lists as more ideas come my way.

For now, here are "10 Ways Catholics Can Protect the Environment"

10: Get a home energy audit—and do what they suggest

save money. Most local utilities offer free or low-cost energy audits. They may even offer financial assistance to help install efficient boilers, water heaters, and lighting, as well as better insulation. Local and state governments may also offer tax benefits for this work. Such assistance is often provided for homes and larger structures such as schools, churches, and parish centers. Private companies offer the same services, often as part of a home improvement project. Just make sure that they are reputable (insured, bonded, etc) and not selling you anything that you don't need.

You should also explore how you can benefit from renewable energy—either produced at your home (or parish) from solar panels or wind turbines, or from green energy bought by your electrical utility. No matter how you go about using less fossil fuel-based energy or more renewable energy, and no matter how small you start, making your home more efficient is fun and satisfying. You'll not only save on utility bills but you'll also help reduce various forms of pollution and demand fewer resources. The US Department of Energy offers helpful information about all this [on their website](#) and in [this video](#).

## **9: Go natural outside**

Whether you own your own home or can provide input to an apartment complex or condo association, using organic gardening products and methods keep you from adding toxins to the natural environment—and to your family's bodies. Many products that feed gardens and kill weeds and pests come with harmful side effects to people, pets, and innocent

can bring residual toxins into your home on your shoes when you walk outside and then come inside. One large problem is recent [news about how certain pesticides are killing honey bees](#), which farmers rely on to produce the food we all eat. Pesticides from farms and yards can end up in water supplies, and this has tragic effects on the born and unborn. The “[Organic Gardening](#)” [magazine website](#) has lots of information (unfortunately along with pop-up ads for its magazine) but [there are many other sites and resources, too](#). You may want to call your local master gardener association ([here is a list](#) for the United States) or look for talks or classes on organic gardening. Once you switch you’ll be glad you did—and so will the people, pets, and many of the critters around you.

#### 8. Compost, compost, compost

My grandmother raised a family during the Great Depression and she taught me the benefits of composting kitchen and yard wastes. Composting not only helps your local landfill by reducing what you toss out, you’ll be creating a free source of high quality, nutrient loaded soil amendment. And as always, there is [plenty of information online](#) to help.

#### 7. Reduce or get rid of your lawn

The American penchant for big, green lawns come with big impacts on the green in our wallets. Lawns also demand much from our local water utilities. Cutting all that grass usually means gas-powered engines that in total emit lots of air pollution. So consider reducing the size of your lawn by adding large areas of border, mounded, and raised bed gardens. You might even convert your entire lawn into a vegetable garden, turning your yard into a flowery, food-producing conversation piece for the neighborhood. (Sadly, some local ordinances prohibit this. If so, that’s something else you can do: seek to change such rules.) And don’t forget to add a statue of St. Francis—[or the reasons that Catholics have them](#). More on yard gardens [here](#) from someone who does it, and the reasons why. (This video has bonus footage on using rain barrels!) The helpful Front Yard Farmer website is [here](#).

## 6. Eat Local

While most of us can't raise all our food on our front yards, we can support local farmers. It makes sense to do so because the most nutritious fruits and vegetables are the freshest—and that means local. Family farmers (especially the organic ones) bring more to a community besides fresh food—they very often provide educational and recreational activities as well. And they're just pleasant to drive by. Local farms don't need huge quantities of gasoline to ship their produce from their fields to your fridge. And that helps reduce air pollution, most notably carbon emissions. Moreover, local farms are more dependable in case of labor strikes or other stoppages of interstate traffic. So find out where your local farms are. Ask your supermarket to carry local fruits, vegetables, and dairy items. And find out what may be restricting local farms from thriving financially. Local tax structures or sprawling suburbs often put unnecessary pressures on farms. Help identify and change any anti-farming cultures in your community, because everyone benefits from loving and supporting your neighboring farmers.

## 5. Abstain from meat on Friday's—and as often as you can

The Catholic practice to abstain from meat one day a week has a secular counterpart: Meatless Mondays. But I'll stick with Fridays—and with other forms of Friday abstinence to remain mindful of what Christ did for us. The penitential practice of abstaining from meat one day a week also comes with significant environmental benefits. Modern forms of factory meat production are often dirty and they require huge amounts of grain and water, which could otherwise feed and hydrate people, or perhaps not even be needed at

less natural landscapes we convert into pasture.

Taking this up a notch, I respect my vegetarian friends (who do not eat meat) and those that are vegans (who do not eat any animal product, including eggs and dairy products). A local Catholic priest here in the Diocese of Providence quietly goes about his vegan lifestyle. But when asked about it, he provides powerful words and witness as to why he won't eat "anything with a face." While many of us will cut back on our meat intake, we may not completely remove it from our diets. If so, then we should at least buy our meat at local family farms (if available) or markets that buy from environmentally friendly meat suppliers.

#### 4. Drive less and in a more efficient vehicle



For many of us, our commuting needs are not easily attenuated. But when we can drive less—when we walk or bike, or use mass transit, or carpool—we not only save on gas; we also reduce our emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollutants, and that brings environmental and health benefits. And when you do drive, make sure your car is tuned up and that your tires are inflated properly. This helps use less gas. When buying a new car, consider a high-efficiency one or a hybrid.

### 3. Take the St. Francis Pledge

Much of the above (and below) is wrapped up in the St. Francis Pledge. It's a wonderful way to reflect on the impacts of our lifestyles, especially as they relate to the issue of climate change. Dioceses, parishes, and individual can take the pledge and encourage

It asks us to do the following. Pray and reflect on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable. Learn about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change. Assess how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations-contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc. Act to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change. And Advocate for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable. Take the pledge [here](#).

## **2. Get the parish and diocese on board**

Everything in this post can be done on parish levels—and diocesan, too. You'll need a committed group of parishioners to tackle the nuances of implanting much of all this. But the benefits of becoming an environmentally friendly parish and diocese are significant. There are certainly good reasons to use less energy or other resources, or to have a parish garden that can help feed the poor. Becoming a green parish will foster a healthier, more educated family of faith. You can also get some local attention—and that can help in this age of New Evangelization.

## **1. Pray**



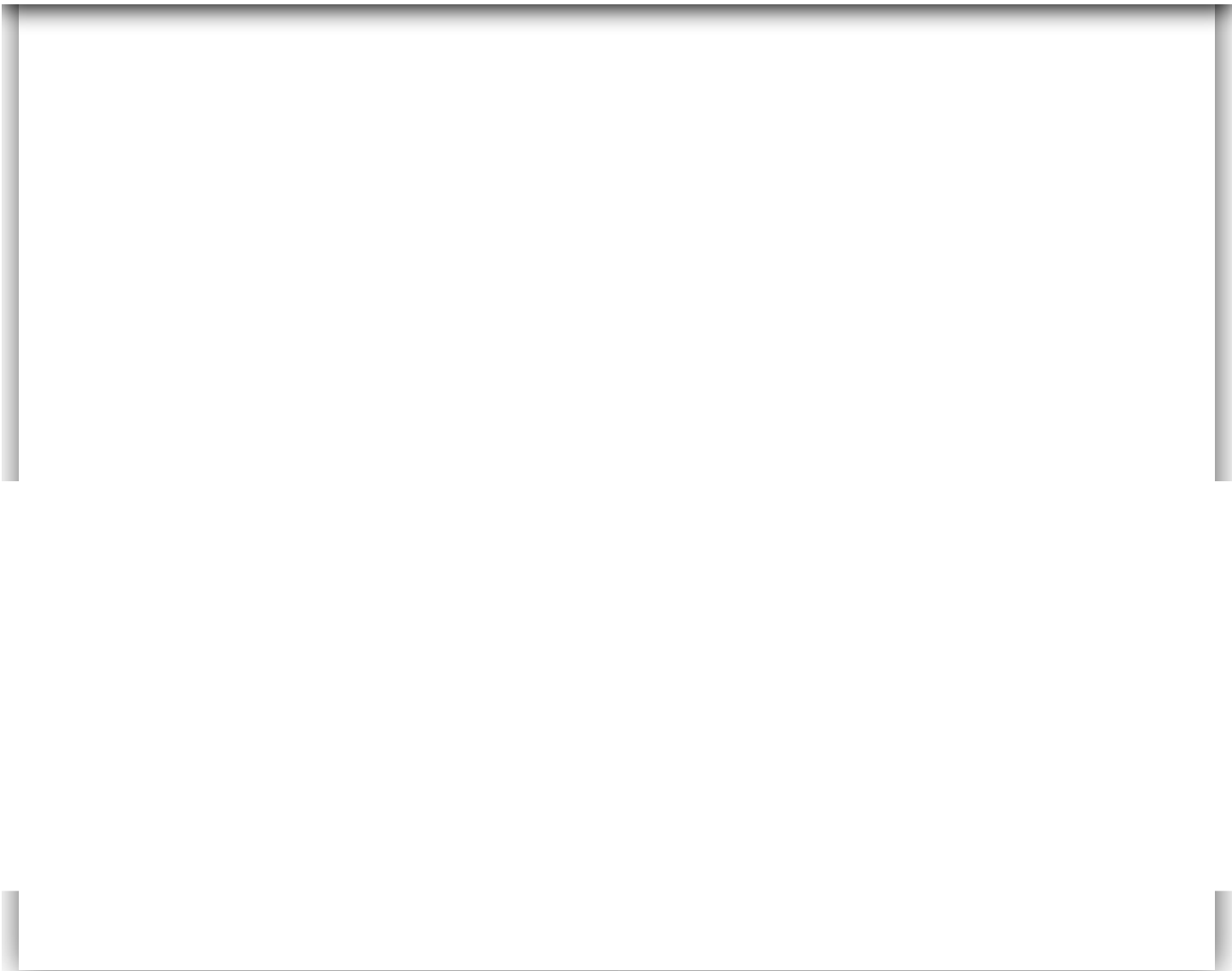
environmental issues of our age are immense. Our individual reductions of raw resources and the wastes that we produce will make a difference on a local level. But to make sizable changes to the demands on our planet—on what we take from it and how we may degrade or wipe out its ecosystems—then we need help. Global ecological crises are global symptoms of human sin. And to tackle sin we will need prayer and sacramental grace. And so Catholic ecologists must pray for the conversions of heart needed by mankind; we must offer Masses for the intention of a more temperate society; we must spend time before the Blessed Sacrament seeking divine assistance to build a world that seeks first the kingdom of God rather than one that demands gluttonous amounts of the things of earth. In other words, if we authentically work for the good of the planet, we'll find ourselves also helping to save souls.

***Okay, those are some of my thoughts. There's lots more to add. But what are yours? What should we add to this list?***

[Catholic Ecology Home](#)





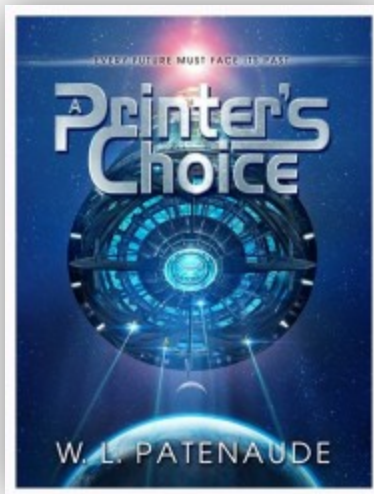


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Zenit

## [Pope Francis signs new encyclical 'Fratelli tutti' in Assisi](#)

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1 of 70 [next >](#)

### About the Blog

Catholic Ecology posts my regular column in [the Rhode Island Catholic](#), as well as scientific and theological commentary about the latest eco-news, both within and outside of the Catholic Church. What is contained herein is but one person's attempt to teach and defend the Church's teachings - ecological and otherwise. As such, I offer all contents of this blog for approval of the bishops of the Church. It is my hope that nothing herein will lead anyone astray from truth.

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Dec 11, 2021



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Creighton University and the Catholic Climate Covenant want to help you keep Laudato Si' momentum growing in the US Catholic Church

Catholics in the United States who care about faithfully protecting creation are invited to attend what may very well be a watershed...

### [Nurturing healthy ecosystems with Mary Gardens](#)

Contributor Kat Hoenke explains how big or small yards, or even an apartment patio, can



our survival. This includes clean air, clean water, and ecosystems that can adapt to a changing...

## Nature and the Mass

We seem to have forgotten that the sacramental nature of our faith innately celebrates and heals all creation



During an eco-talk in another diocese, a participant shared with me how her parish celebrated Masses for creation. Special readings...

## Humanae Vitae: The foundation and companion of Laudato Si'

On this Golden Anniversary of Paul VI's prophetic encyclical, Catholic eco-advocates must reaffirm and teach Humanae Vitae



Forty-seven years before the issuance of Laudato Si' , another encyclical about life rocked the Church. Like Laudato Si' , this...

## Conversations with conservatives

Reaching across the aisle may be easier than we think



The big question lately is, how do we get conservative Catholics to do something about eco-protection and climate change? The question...

## Ecology and the Cross

There is no Easter without Good Friday, no ecological conversion without the Cross.



Consider how the environmental community speaks to the world: you must change your ways; sacrifice for the good of others; deny your...

## 10 (more) ways Catholics can protect creation

One way to celebrate the Feast of All Saints is to learn how you and your parish can honor, praise, and protect God's life-giving creation



I've been thinking of the Feast of All Saints, and about how our journeys on earth should help us on the road to sainthood—of joining...

of our ecological and social ills



One of my fellow RCIA instructors used a video today by Bishop Robert Barron to explore the Seven Deadly Sins and the corresponding...

## The Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Conservation Center

A fledgling eco-group takes wing with the intercession of a great saint



It would be an oversight to let the day go by without mentioning one of the great patron's of environmental protection: St. Kateri...

## Six statements to impress your friends when discussing the eco-encyclical

In minutes you can prepare for the conversations taking place in the days and weeks ahead



Chances are that sometime this week the topic of the Pope Francis's eco-encyclical will come up at work, home, or when out with...

## Lent's lessons for life

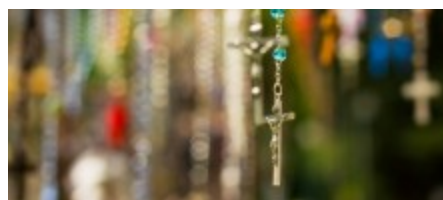
Ecological efforts should have nothing to do with a culture of death



Today's lifestyles can be a bit like Mardi Gras—full of excess consumption and carrying on. But with Mardi Gras all that stops on Ash...

## Say the Rosary, save the world

The time is now for time-tested and true Catholic devotions



"Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world." Blessed Pope Pius IX Last night at First Friday devotions before the...

## Seven spiritual practices for saving the planet



With the help of your responses to my Pentecost post , I'm following up with seven practical ways to bring Catholic spirituality to...

## 10 ways Catholics can protect the environment

And save money, too!



## Pope Francis: "Culture of waste" requires a Catholic response



"I would like us all to make a serious commitment to respect and protect creation, to be attentive to every person, to counter the..."

## St. Francis: beyond the garden statues



At a Franciscan Transitus ceremony at my parish this evening, it struck me that St. Francis—the patron of ecology and animals, as well...

## Reflecting on Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

One of Catholic Ecology's most popular posts is on this humble and beautiful saint of the Americas



July 14 is the Memorial for Blessed [now Saint] Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680), the Native American daughter of a Christian Algonquin...



"Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person,

while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which demeans the person, disrupts the environment, and damages society.”

- Benedict XVI. *Caritas in Veritate*, June 2009.