

A Laudato Si' Inspired Collaborative Sustainability Project

By Sr. Marylou M. Rodriguez, CCVI

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We honor our late Pope Francis who has inspired people globally to have more holistic view of our world and giving back the respect that the creation deserves. He wrote the Laudato Si', a letter to all people in the world. It references the canticle of Saint Francis with a genuine call to treat everything as a family. In this responsible and creative relationship, we are able to praise God with His works in all its beauty and splendor.

This year is the tenth-year anniversary of Laudato Si', a letter written by the late Pope Francis in 2015 inviting all people of the world to see the world as interconnected and to appreciate its beauty and reflect the harm that humanity has inflicted upon the earth with a call to take actions to restore what can still be saved and prevent further damage that have already been inflicted into our Creation. Creation in this letter carries a more depth in meaning more than nature. There is a theological perspective that it is God's creative work that is seen as "very good." Yet, this letter can be read within a familial context and he worded our planet as our "Common Home" that we need to take care of and treat it as a sister. It reminds us that caring for all especially highlighting the vulnerable parts of the society, which have been Pope Francis' mission. It opens doors to the realities of the human, spiritual, and ecological crisis that are so intertwined and inseparable. It aims to address the cry of the underprivileged which includes creation encompassing the sustainability for living and non-living thing through supporting programs for the underserved, lifestyle changes and even transformation, mindful ecological care, spirituality, education and community resiliency and empowerment.

In the same year that Laudato Si' was born, the Paris Climate Agreement became a legally binding document among the 196 parties in the world to keep its temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century with the goal of decreasing the global emissions 48% by 2030. Carbon-Driven industries impacting this global emissions aim to reach net-zero by 2030. San Antonio City Mayor Nirenberg joined hundreds of other city mayors in United States in signing the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017. Despite the United States exit from the Paris Climate Agreement this year, Texas has a Priority Climate Action Plan with the collaborative efforts of city and county governments and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality that also created a plan on the state level.

Since 2022, University of Incarnate Word has been part of Laudato Si' Action Platform (LSAP), which is a space for planning, education, networking, and gathering actions toward a global and environmentally conscious and supportive people and community of faithful. The Incarnate Word Sisters, San Antonio joined the bandwagon in 2023, following the footsteps of its sponsored organization being on LSAP. These two organizations have been active ever since in its effort to care for creation even before joining this global community of environmental advocates.

Three schools from the UIW Brainpower Connection, namely, Saint Anthony Catholic School, Blessed Sacrament Catholic School and Saint Anthony Catholic High School submitted their proposals for Sustainability project early last year sponsored by the Incarnate Word Sisters Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). Five schools have been invited to submit their proposal for a chance to win a grant to fund their projects from \$200-1000. In the fall of 2024, the selection of the Sustainability project was completed by Dr. Muhammad Manzur Alam of English Department, Dr. John Hooker of Environmental Science, Dr. Ricardo Gonzalez of Ettling and Sustainability Center and Sister Katty Huanuco, Incarnate Word Sisters Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation. With the generosity of the Ettling Center for Civic Leadership and Sustainability Director Dr. Gonzalez, we were able to fund all the five projects totaling to the amount of \$4,406.26.

The five projects implemented by the three schools consisted of rainwater harvesting, outdoor learning space for pre-K, trash isolation from Saint Anthony Catholic School, low flow water faucet from Saint Anthony Catholic High-School and Garden Restoration from Blessed Sacrament Catholic School. In addition to these funded sustainability projects by the schools, the Climate Reality Project's San Antonio Texas Chapter President Ms. Darshana Gupte collaborated with the City of San Antonio to seek native trees to be adopted by the five UIW Brainpower Schools.

In behalf of the Incarnate Word Sisters JPIC, UIW Ettling Center for Civic Leadership Sustainability and UIW Brainpower Connection, we thank the students, project facilitators, faculty, administrators and everyone who made these projects possible for our children to learn about climate actions to curb the greenhouse gas emissions, and the value of community in being part of the solution. Through the contribution and empowerment of each member of the communities, everyone becomes part of the solution to global climate crisis, and the hope for the future. As the late Pope Francis said in *Laudato Si'* "Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems."