



THE MARIST BROTHERS USA PROVINCE

LAUDATO SI' ACTION PLAN

- 2025 -



INTRODUCTION:

In his 2015 Encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*, Pope Francis states that "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). These words remind us that our call to care for creation is an essential part of Christian life and the life of the Church. In his 2023 Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis makes plain that this vocation requires the Church, at every level, to take bold, urgent, and faith-filled action.

The spirit of *Laudato Si'* has deep roots in the Marist charism, which emerged among rural Christians from the French countryside in the early 19th century. As Marists, we seek to embody what St. Marcellin Champagnat called a "simple and down-to-earth spirituality" grounded in the Four Pillars of Presence, Simplicity, Family Spirit, and Love of Work (WFR, n.23). We look to our own Brother François – the first Superior General of the Marist Brothers, and an herbalist and infirmarian – as an exemplar for what it means to live out this ecological spirituality.

Brother François spent his early life working on a farm, tending to sheep and lambs, nurturing a deep sensitivity to ecological spirituality. He advised the early Brothers to "watch, listen, and hear" to contemplate the natural world. He likened the heavens to "an immense temple that God has raised up for his glory" (Br. François, Notebook n. 303, p. [560]). He was attentive to the movement of leaves, the songs of birds, the fragrance of flowers, the behavior of animals, and the changing of seasons. He marveled at the profound bond between humans and nature, writing that, "Humans live on air and breathe it constantly" (Br. François, Notebook n. 303, p. [676]).

Brother François experienced God at work in nature. He once observed a farmer who, after planting seeds in the field, could only wait and hope for "the precious produce of the land," and for God to "send the rains of the first and last seasons" (Br. François, Personal Letters, T2. 1664, Notebook of Letters n. 7, p. 1076). He wrote that, "The study of medicine has led me to praise God, who has given healing power to different remedies" (Br. François, Notebook n. 301, p. [77]). Br. François recognized and praised God at work in planting, in the land and its produce, in the rains and the seasons, and in the healing properties of various herbs. Near the end of his life, he wrote: "God in everything; God everywhere; God alone, and my conscience as I face eternity" (Br. François, Notebook n. 302, p. [166]). Like St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, Br. François invites us to see the goodness of God in all creatures.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis connects ecological spirituality with a call to embrace "a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free from the obsession with consumption" (LS, 222). Br. François embodied this ethic in his own time, advising early Marist Brothers to, "Eat less and chew more to aid digestion and maintain health; this is a good recipe for healing or preventing illnesses" (Br. François, Notebook n. 301, p. [149]). He also reflected that, "Being a happy person, engaging in gentle exercises, and having modest meals are three reliable medicines" (Br. François, Notebook n. 301, p. [86]). Br. François believed that a healthy body and a sound spiritual life are achieved through moderation, temperance, and discipline—virtues essential for resisting consumerism and protecting Mother Earth.



CALL FROM OUR MARIST INSTITUTE

In light of the ecological crisis, The General Chapter calls Marists for an urgent change to “live based on an integral ecology (LS, ch. I)”; to move away from a culture shaped by “ego-s’ and adopt that of the ‘eco-s’ (ecology, ecosystems, and economy of solidarity).” We must “awaken in ourselves and those around us an ecological awareness that engages us in caring for ‘our common home’”

(From the Message of the 22nd General Chapter in 2017)

USA PROVINCE



In response to this call, and with firm trust in the work of the Holy Spirit, the Marist Brothers USA marks the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si' with its Province-wide Laudato Si' Action Plan. The plan is comprised of three main components: 1) Province Commitments; 2) Laudato Si' Action Plans from all USA Marist ministries; and 3) Laudato Si' Action Plans from all USA Communities.

The Province is committed to living the 7 goals of Laudato Si in the following ways:

Goal 1: Response to the Cry of the Earth

- The Province will promote sustainable lifestyles and best practices among all its communities and Marist Ministries.
- All Province Team Members and individual Marist Communities will participate in our recently established Carbon Offset Program.
 - In 2024, we announced our Marist Brothers USA Carbon Offset Program to help compensate for the environmental costs of travel in solidarity with the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#). With the help of the [Catholic Climate Covenant](#), this program is an effort to work toward a Net Zero Emissions pathway for the Province. All Province staff are currently logging their car and air travel emissions annually which subsequently is now being offset by the planting of trees across the Province.
- The Province is committed to annually donating to programs which directly respond to the Cry of the Earth, including The MBCE, Blue Missions, and Magnificat Farm.

Goal 2: Response to the Cry of the Poor

- The Province will promote annual Marist Solidarity Projects which will raise needed awareness among all in our Province about how our Marist Institute is responding to many of our poorest and most marginalized Brothers and Sisters. Our Solidarity efforts will also raise needed funds annually to support these worthy projects.
- The Province will continue to support the MBCE and its Mid-Hudson Valley Camps which serve many of the most marginalized populations in our country, including mentally and physically disabled persons, children with cancer, and impoverished children living in our inner cities.
- The Province will promote and support opportunities for all Province Members including Marists of Champagnat and young people to directly serve those most in need by means of volunteer opportunities including immersion experiences and Mission trips.
- The Province will continue to support two Marist Brothers from our Missionary Areas to avail of post graduate degrees at Marist College.

- The Province is committed to continue to directly and indirectly work with and support immigrants, refugees and migrants in all possible ways such as our current work in El Paso and Brownsville.
- The Province is committed to continue to provide needed assistance and relief to communities during emergency disasters such as our efforts to the victims of the earthquake in Syria in 2023, victims of devastating flooding in Eastern Kentucky in 2024, victims of the fires in California this year.

Goal 3: Ecological Economics

- The Province will ensure that its Finance and Investment Teams utilize the Best Practices of Catholic Social Teaching and its Guidelines in all Financial matters.
- Likewise, each of our Marist Ministries will utilize similar Guidelines.
- The Provincial Council is committed to utilizing appropriate Province financial resources to needed Marist Programs that promote the goals of Laudato Si, such as support for an annual Earth Day Weekend, Ecology Grants to Marist Schools, donations to Marist Solidarity Projects, etc.

Goal 4: Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

- As stated in Wherever You Go, our Marist Brothers Rule of Life (18), "Assume a simple and sober style of life and protect life in all of creation. Care for nature, be actively concerned about the environment, defend those who are poor and promote human development."
- As Marists we are called to live a spirituality of Simplicity and, like St. Marcellin Champagnat, to respond to the signs of our times. We commit ourselves to adopting simple and sustainable lifestyles so that we might better care for our Common Home and more profoundly witness such values to all who enter our lives, especially young people.

Goal 5: Ecological Education

- The Province will provide resources to all USA Marist Schools on promoting Ecological Education (see [USA Marist Integral Ecology Resources](#)) as well as how to teach the principles of Laudato Si' across school curricula.
- The Province is committed to sponsoring an annual Earth Day weekend in Esopus to inspire young people from our ten USA Marist Schools to become leaders in our Marist Ecology efforts
- The Province is committed to employing Mr. Sam King as the Province-wide Ecology Coordinator and to utilize his gifts and deep passion and knowledge in the area of Ecology as a resource to all USA Marist Ministries.
- The Province Coordinator of Ecology will work with our other USA Marist Ministries to assist them in developing ways they can promote ecological learning to the young people each of those ministries serve.
- The Province will offer Ecology Resources through its weekly Province Newsletter, Friday Notes.

Goal 6: Ecological Spirituality

- The Province will promote Ecological Spirituality by sharing appropriate reflective readings in its monthly Religious Calendar.
- The Province will provide Ecologically themed Prayer Services on special occasions such as the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Earth Day, Laudato Si' Week, the Season of Creation, etc.
- The Province will offer Ecology Resources including spiritual reflections through its weekly Province Newsletter, Friday Notes.

Goal 7: Community Resilience and Empowerment

- The Province will engage young people and adults, who have a deep passion for ecology, from across the USA Province to be part of the Province Green Team, which will serve as a Ecological Think Tank for the Province and assist the Province to move forward in its commitment to the Principles of Laudato Si'.
- The Province is committed to providing annual Ecology Grants to each of our Marist Schools to empower young people to creatively embrace the principles of Laudato Si' with new ecological initiatives on their local level.
- The Province will engage with Marist Ecological efforts within our Arco Norte Region as well as with the wider Institute.
- The Province will, when possible, engage with other Ecological organizations such as the Catholic Climate Covenant and the Laudato Si' Movement.

Province Plans

The second dimension of the plan calls for Province Leadership to work with all USA Marist ministries and communities to ensure they develop local Laudato Si' Action Plans. These plans articulate how each community, in its own context and with God's people, plans to pursue the Seven Goals of Laudato Si' in simple and profound ways. All plans can be found in the pages that follow.

The Laudato Si' Action Planning Process

Bearing in mind the diversity of ministries and communities across the Province, the Laudato Si' planning process aims to create a simple process in which all ministries and communities could participate.

Laudato Si' Action Platform and the Seven Goals of Laudato Si'

The Marist Brothers USA is enrolled in the Laudato Si' Action Platform and requested that each individual USA Marist Ministry and Marist community enroll as well. The Laudato Si' Action Platform is an initiative of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development with the goal of helping create Laudato Si' Action Plans based on the Seven Goals of Laudato Si'.

Goal 1: Response to the Cry of the Earth

The response to the cry of the earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability.

Goal 2: Response to the Cry of the Poor

The response to the cry of the poor is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on earth.

Goal 3: Ecological Economics

Ecological economics acknowledges that the economy plays an important role in protecting the well-being of our common home. Actions could include purchasing sustainability produced goods, ethical investments, and protecting the dignity of workers.

Goal 4: Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

The adoption of sustainable lifestyles is grounded in the idea that in our personal lives and in communal life, we can make intentional choices regarding our use of resources and energy that can promote the well-being of the planet.

Goal 5: Ecological Education

Ecological education prioritizes formation and educational opportunities that promote ecological awareness and transformative action.

Goal 6: Ecological Spirituality

Ecological spirituality springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to discover God in all things.

Goal 7: Community Resilience and Empowerment

Community resilience and empowerment promotes active and conscious involvement and participatory action to care for creation at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

The Province Plan Format

Informed by a community assessment and listening session, each community plan is comprised of two main elements: the Laudato Si' Statement and Commitments for all USA Marist schools and communities. The Community Laudato Si Statement articulates why caring for creation is important to that individual community. The Community Commitments are new or continued tangible undertakings discerned by the local teams of each Marist Ministry or local Marist community. Local teams were asked to follow the acronym SMART when developing their commitments: they should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant to the Goals of Laudato Si', and Time-bound. Having measurable goals with timeframes will help each community monitor their progress and, each year during the Season of Creation, update and evaluate their plans.

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