

Our Lady of Lourdes is a pilgrim church coming to know the Kingdom of God by being Christ to the world

Our Lady of Lourdes

Catholic Church

Easter, Earth Day & God's Creation

I just returned from viewing the total solar eclipse that much of our country experienced. This amazing celestial phenomena left me in awe of the amazing nature of God's creation. It seemed fitting that the eclipse occurred during the Easter season, a time of renewal and rebirth, and near Earth Day which is on April 22.

One of the hallmarks of Pope Francis's papacy has been his staunch commitment to the environment and our responsibilities towards the Earth. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote the encyclical *Laudato Si' (On Care For Our Common Home)* where he laid out the problem we face, the connection between the environmental crisis and the poor, and our need for ecological conversion. Last fall, Pope Francis issued the apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum (Praise God)*. In this document, Pope Francis bluntly asserts the urgency of the environmental situation, the responsibility of developed countries and their citizens, particularly the United States, and our need to change our consumption habits.

One of the themes of Catholic Social Teaching is "Care for Creation." The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops remind us that "Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation."

So, what are we doing? Many of us take part in recycling. At OLOL we expanded our recycling efforts by recycling old toothbrushes, used toothpaste tubes, floss containers, pens, markers, pencils, and crayons, while empty pill bottles are being collected to be reused at the Bread of Healing Clinic. These are good efforts, but more is required of us all and the bar keeps being raised as we learn more.

Parishioners Cathy Markwiese and Steve Tietz just presented to our GIFT program about how they installed a geothermal heating and cooling system, and solar panels at their home. My wife and I have converted much of our lawn to native plantings to reduce the runoff into the sewer system and increase habitat for pollinators. The Our Common Home Community Garden on the OLOL grounds has reduced the amount of lawn here that needs to be mowed and treated with herbicides while now producing food and building community.

Can we do more?

The Inflation Reduction Act that was signed into law in 2022 included many environmental initiatives including Direct Pay Tax Credits for non-profit organizations seeking to reduce energy consumption. Might OLOL be able to explore solar panels or re-do our needed parking lot with garden swales and a permeable parking lot surface to reduce storm water runoff?

Groups in our parish are offering opportunities too. The OLOL Social Justice Committee, in conjunction with Milwaukee Riverkeeper, is sponsoring a clean-up at Jackson Park on Saturday, April 20, followed by lunch at OLOL, while the OLOL Human Concerns Ministry is helping at the Hunger Task Force Farms on Wednesday, June 26, from 8:30am–11:30 am. Both of these groups need disciples to step up and get involved. Perhaps the Spirit is calling you.

We all have a role to play. What is yours? Do you have any ideas? Let me know. Let's all do what we can to leave our Earth in a place so that our children and grandchildren can thrive.

"Come Lord Jesus, send us your Spirit. Renew the face of the Earth!"

Steve Szymanski
Director of Social Justice and Child Ministry

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Our Lady of Lourdes Stewardship Contribution
*****May 2024*****

Env. No. _____ Date: _____

Name _____

Regular Offering-Operating Fund .. \$ _____

Improvement Fund..... \$ _____

Ascension of the Lord (May 9) \$ _____

Other \$ _____

Check # _____ TOTAL \$ _____

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Contributions to Operating Fund ONLY
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Operating Fund Pledge **Contributions to Pledge**

.....\$ 0.00\$ 0.00

Last Contribution to Pledge on [Date]\$ 0.00

«STATEMENT NAME»
«SPECIAL ADDRESS»
«DELIVERY ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP CODE»

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