

Pope Francis and Environmental Stewardship

Catholic parishes around the nation have taken up environmental stewardship as a ministry. This ministry addresses Pope Francis's profound call, in his Papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si*, for Catholics to take better care of the beautiful but fragile planet God has given us. Worrying about increasing environmental degradation, Pope Francis argues that all of us, Catholics in particular, must become part of the solution by taking faith-inspired action to care for our world and those in it. The Pope's encyclical pays special concern to the harmful environmental effects of unlimited growth as humans seek to control and extract the earth's natural resources. "The idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology," the Pope explains, is based on the false belief "that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry at every limit." Pope Francis teaches us that we not only remove resources from the planet at alarming and unsustainable levels, we also put back waste and other materials toxic to it.

The enormity of the environmental damage described by Pope Francis, as well as the complex nature of the solutions needed to deal with them, can overwhelm ordinary citizens. It may seem impossible to change our ways or to do much good. But change can start here at our parish and in your homes. This is why the St. Michael Parish Environmental Stewardship Ministry has been sponsoring environmental stewardship events. Last year we sponsored an Environmental Stewardship Weekend, during which we handed out reusable shopping bags after the weekend masses. Plastic bags, which most people discard without much thought and eventually make their way into our inland waterways and oceans, cause great harm to our environment especially to our wildlife right here in North Carolina. Our event was one small step in the greater effort to reduce the amount of human-caused pollution in our waterways and oceans.

Environmental Impact of Electronic Waste

We all love to acquire the latest electronic gadgets. Yet our increased reliance on personal technologies and other electronic items has resulted in vast quantities of electronic waste ending up in landfills. Some of the materials that go into making these electronic items, such as lead, mercury, and cadmium, can release dangerous toxins when deposited into a landfill. The EPA estimates that only 12.5% of E- waste is recycled today. Ultimately, some of these toxins make their way into our air and water. Along with the Kramden Institute, which repurposes computers, we hope to make a small dent in this problem by collecting the electronic items parishioners no longer use.

Kramden Institute Information

The Kramden Institute, a local nonprofit organization located in Durham, NC, collects, refurbishes, and awards computers to students and families without a computer in their home. Collected computers and electronic equipment that cannot be refurbished are responsibly recycled by one of Kramden's certified recycling partners. They do so by physically removing every hard drive from equipment that enters their warehouse and securing the drives in their employee-access only Data Sanitization Area. The Data Sanitization Area is continuously monitored by a closed-circuit television system and alarm system. All hard drives are then cleaned of data by a 3-pass software wipe. If a hard drive fails the data removal step, it goes into a locked storage container and is delivered to Kramden's e-waste recycler where it is physically shredded. Certificates of Destruction are given upon request.

The Parish Environmental Stewardship Ministry plans to sponsor other events in the future. If you would like to learn more about our Ministry or join, please contact Deacon Mark Westrick at mwestrick@stm Cary.org