

CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

REFLECTING ON *LAUDATO SI'*



MICHIGAN
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

“Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home” (no. 13). Pope Francis shared this hopeful line in his second encyclical, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*.¹ Last month marked the five-year anniversary of the document’s release, which reinvigorated the Catholic Church’s longstanding efforts to protect and care for creation. The anniversary presents an opportunity for Catholics, as the Church in Michigan encourages all to reflect upon what it means to live out this teaching.

In the beginning pages of *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis states his hope that the document “can help [humanity] to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face.” The encyclical covers significant ground while addressing the Church’s teaching on the caring for creation. It brings together topics that may seem unrelated but are in fact intricately linked to the health of the environment and society, such as the dignity of work, the importance of the family, and need for technology and the economy to be focused on people. Woven throughout is a consistent concern for the poor, who experience the worst impacts of environmental deterioration and exclusion. While *Laudato Si’* shares many important insights, the lesson that shines



most brightly is that each living creature has value and purpose.

From the beginning, God created the world and humanity, and saw “that it was good” (*Genesis, Chapter 1*). The people of the state can simply look around them to understand this concept, as Michigan is home to scores of natural treasures that rival those of any other state. These features contribute to the splendor of the state, such as Mackinac Island, Pictured Rocks, the Porcupine Mountains, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Tahquamenon Falls, numerous federally protected national forests, and thousands of inland lakes—the list goes on and on. The greatest examples are the Great Lakes themselves. In looking out at the many shades of blue and green lining the sandy beaches in the summer or the frozen shores in the winter, residents and visitors alike can feel a sense of beauty and peace. Without even knowing that the Great Lakes are the largest bodies of fresh water on the planet, anyone who sees them can understand intuitively their value and can understand why policymakers at all levels of government are constantly working to protect them.

While Michiganders may recognize the goodness of the state’s natural beauty, discussions about protecting the environment too often fall into partisan bickering rather than