

Furthering the  
Reign of God,  
Where All  
are Welcome



July 29, 2021

Most Reverend Archbishop Alexander K. Sample  
Archdiocese of Portland  
2838 E. Burnside Street  
Portland, Oregon 97214

Re: St. Mary Magdalene Parish (The Madeleine) Laudato Si'  
Contemplation, Prayer and Action

Dear Archbishop Sample:

I am writing to bring you up to date on what we believe the Holy Spirit is leading us to do in caring for our “Common Home” at The Madeleine. As we implement our parish’s three year plan, lay parishioners and staff are engaging the entire parish, other faith traditions, and the community at large in prayer, contemplation and action. We would like to briefly introduce you to some of our initiatives, and respectfully ask for your encouragement and prayerful support.

### *Climate Change*

While we have been deeply involved in recycling, consciously limiting single-use plastics, and promoting environmental education, our primary focus has become climate change. As a pastor (with parishioners already feeling the real effects of climate change), I am convinced that if we do not immediately address climate change, almost no other pressing issue will matter. Both individual and systemic change must be made—and made now. As Pope Francis wrote in his Encyclical five years ago: “Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. ... Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming ...” *Laudato Si* (“LS”), Para. 25. In addition, “As the United States Bishops have stated, greater attention must be given to ‘the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests’” (Quoting Pope John Paul II). See, LS, Para. 52, United States Council of



#### PARISH OFFICE

3123 NE 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97212

PHONE: 503-281-5777  
FAX: 503-281-0673

#### SCHOOL OFFICE

3240 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97212

PHONE: 503-288-9197  
FAX: 503-280-1196

themadeleine.edu

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Bishops, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good* (June 15, 2001).

### *Laudato Si' Circle*

Pre-COVID, beginning with special outdoor worship services in the courtyard, monthly meetings in the newly restored “Old Church” and thereafter via Zoom, we have gathered for almost two years to study, practice spiritual disciplines of prayer, silence and *lectio divina*, to sing together, seek guidance from the Holy Spirit, and to share actionable ideas for saving our precious planet and God’s wondrous creation. From the outset, we have coordinated with the Global Catholic Climate Movement (now known as The Laudato Si’ Movement). As a parish community, with our various gifts, here are a few examples of the actions we have taken:

- Oil and Gas Companies  
We have been serving as a neutral facilitator to negotiate a global settlement of climate litigation (Enclosure 1). Cardinal Peter Turkson has reviewed our proposal to the oil and gas litigants, calling it a “wonderful initiative.”
- Corporate Climate Pledge  
We have developed a template for contacting public companies, encouraging them to make a carbon zero or negative pledge by date certain (Enclosure 2).
- Simple Things We Can All Do  
We have created a listing of suggested things we all can do individually and as a parish community to help curb global climate change (Enclosure 3).
- Tax Legislation  
We have drafted federal legislation to move from tax incentives for oil and gas drilling to renewables, part of which has been introduced as H.R. 2184 (Enclosure 4).
- Speakers  
We have begun to work on a speakers forum with prominent experts for continuing the conversation begun at Mt. Angel Abbey on November 9, 2019.

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Our *Laudato Si'* Circle email list includes some 70 people from all walks of life: An environmental lawyer, an aeronautical engineer (whose recent invention to save jet fuel is pending a patent), a number of religious, and the “sustainability officer” of a local corporation. The facilitator is an antitrust lawyer who helped finalize the Master Settlement Agreement in the tobacco industry and who has focused on the reform of the oil and gas industry for some years.

### *Evangelism*

The science and urgency are clear, but more importantly, living in the Kingdom—filled with the Spirit—leads us to care for all creation and in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups. Christians, those who subscribe to faith traditions other than Christianity, and those who do not follow any formal faith tradition, are in agreement that we must care for our “Common Home.” We find neighbors, those of other faiths, Catholics not attending Mass, and youth, are drawn to this Biblical truth. See, e.g., Genesis 2:7; Wisdom 13:5; Romans 1:20, 8:18-23, Hosea 4:1-3. We can be leaders and evangelizers by talking about the climate crisis with many who have left the Catholic Church or who embrace different faith traditions. As we praise our Lord, we find ourselves driven by the Spirit to change our behavior, to love one another, and to become loving stewards of the gifts we have been given. The world and all living things are threatened by the climate crisis. As one of our recent RCIA members shared: “Reading Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si'* was one of many nudges of the Holy Spirit leading me to becoming Catholic.”

### *Laudato Si' Pledge*

Our parish recently invited parishioners and our elementary school students and faculty to sign the *Laudato Si'* pledge. Encouraged by Pope Francis, the pledge simply states:

- "Answering Pope Francis' urgent call in *Laudato Si'*, I pledge to:
- Pray for and with creation
  - Live more simply
  - Advocate to protect our common home."

Approximately 250 adults and children have signed this pledge.

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### *The Earth is Calling: To Bless and Be Blessed*

Therese Fenzl, The Madeleine's Director of Spiritual Ministries, is leading a twelve-week faith sharing gathering using Edward J. Ciuba's book, "Creation at the Crossroads." This book serves as a small group resource on Pope Francis' Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Ms. Fenzl is working on a similar program for families.

### *Recycling*

For a number of years, our parish has sponsored an Earth Day electronics recycling event, and this annual collection was featured in the May 7, 2021 issue of the Catholic Sentinel. In addition, we have established multiple recycling bins accessible to the parish and the local community for accepting items generally not recyclable through curbside garbage collections. Likewise, individuals and families are signing up to "AdoptOneBlock," contribute to "4Ocean" and actively participate in many other local and nationally-recognized initiatives.

### *Solar and Energy Efficient Facilities*

We have begun working with contractor Neil Kelly to install solar panels for our parish and school campus. This year we are in the process of:

(1) Applying for grants like the recent \$300,000 grant by Pacific Power Foundation to St. Charles Parish, producing significant savings while reducing use of carbon fuels; and

(2) Creating a scalable project template for use by parishes throughout the Archdiocese and by other faith communities wishing to implement renewable energy and cost-saving incentives. To date, we have installed LED bulbs throughout the church and school, resulting in significant savings through reduced power use, moved to using glass and away from single-use plastic (where possible), and made decisions with an eye on the environment when renovating our "Old Church" and school. In addition, we enrolled in Pacific Power's "Blue Sky" program supporting renewable energy projects. All of these conscious and deliberate actions and more are in direct alignment with Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* Action Platform announced in May 2021.

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When our Laudato Si' Circle resumes meeting face to face once again, we would like to schedule a time to gather for prayer, praise and blessings at The Cathedral with Msgr. Gerard O'Connor. We would like to share the good news around actions we are taking to care for our Common Home, and to inspire and encourage others to join us in this important work.

I would be pleased to meet with you or introduce you to our parishioners who are taking concrete action to implement the Laudato Si' teachings, all of which may be of interest for furthering the Archdiocese's Evangelization work.

Prayerfully,

Rev. Michael Biewend, Pastor  
The Madeleine Parish

Enclosures

## **ENCLOSURE 1**

### **OIL & GAS CLIMATE CLAIMS MASTER SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT**

A settlement similar to the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (“Tobacco MSA”) can create a large fund to address climate change significantly with an upgraded structure for effective distribution of settlement funds. An Oil & Gas MSA will: (1) avoid lengthy and costly further litigation for current litigants and non-litigants; (2) quantify and end exposure of Participating Oil & Gas Companies to climate claims by Settling States, Cities and Other Settling Parties and (3) facilitate market driven transition to zero carbon. Terms could include the following:

#### **CREATION OF FUND FOR REDUCTION OF EMISSIONS**

- Simultaneous filing of a Complaint and Settlement Agreement (including Escrow Agreement and model acts and ordinances) in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia with appropriate filings in pending cases in other jurisdictions (parallel structures can be established internationally);
- Escrow Funds distributed to Settling States, Cities and Other Settling Parties must be spent only for reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and production of alternative and renewable energy products;
- Escrow Funds spending must be approved by a Board of Settling Parties Representatives insuring that spending reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions with favorable findings as to: (1) avoiding harm to frontline communities; (2) risk of leakage; (3) additionality and (4) durability;
- The Board of Settling Parties shall employ and rely upon competent experts in sustainability, accounting and law;
- Escrow Payments can be based on market share derived from units sold (e.g., gallons or BTU’s) and set to increase annually to facilitate transition to alternative energy;
- Escrow accounting must be by a disinterested independent auditor, e.g. an accounting firm such as PWC, which has experience administering the Tobacco MSA Escrow;
- The Oil & Gas MSA will become effective upon reaching substantial, agreed upon: (1) Oil & Gas Companies’ market share and (2) Settling States, Cities and Other Settling Parties’ share of national population.

#### **MARKET-BASED OFFSETS FOR NON-CARBON SPENDING**

- As a market-based alternative to making payments, Participating Oil & Gas Companies may offset payment obligations with certified spending on Carbon Zero alternative and renewable energy projects world-wide, including such actions as: (1) Investment in solar power; (2) Investment in wind power; (3) Planting trees and investing in forest lands with No-harvest or Delayed-harvest agreements; (4) Replacing animal feedlots with range; (5) Investment in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> removal systems; (6) Certified and approved forbearance agreements, which guarantee non-development of proven petroleum reserves for a period of years in five year increments (longer forbearance agreements provide larger offset amounts); (7) Investment in CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration systems (8) Payments of carbon tax, should governments enact such a tax and (9) Other approved, scalable actions that reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

- All Offset Spending shall be subject to approval by the Board of Settling Parties Representatives using the same criteria as Escrow Funds spending;
- Annual Offset Credits can amount to no more than a specified portion of required payments for the year in which they are awarded.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE DENIAL ADVERTISING PROHIBITED**

- No Participating Oil & Gas Company may Advertise: (1) any Oil & Gas Product or (2) claims that Greenhouse Gas emissions from use of their Oil & Gas Products may not cause Climate Change.

### **RELEASES BENEFITTING SETTLING PARTIES**

- Participating Oil & Gas Companies will receive a full release of climate change liability claims by Settling Parties. This would not immunize them from all climate related actions, but it would allow Participating Oil & Gas Companies to quantify and end their exposure to claims by States, Cities and all other parties that participate.

### **AN OIL & GAS MSA WILL REDUCE EMISSIONS**

- Entry of the Tobacco MSA was followed by a substantial decline in smoking in America. Cigarette prices generally increased, as: (1) A portion of MSA payments was passed along as price increases in competitive markets; (2) Funding was provided for smoking cessation programs and (3) Restrictions were imposed upon advertising. The Tobacco MSA also facilitated economic transition of an industry with price inelastic products, after years of unsuccessful efforts in Congress, at the FTC and elsewhere.
- Reduced emissions can be expected here. As Oil & Gas MSA payments and costs of Offset Spending are passed along across the range of products produced by Participating Oil & Gas Companies, gradual, market driven, increases in gasoline, natural gas and plastics prices will reduce consumption and provide incentives for conservation and use of alternative fuels. This would immediately begin to reduce atmospheric emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other GHG.
- The effect from automotive fuels alone would be substantial. The EPA reported that, in 2018, 28% of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States came from transportation. <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>. Gasoline sales in the United States during 2020 were about 123.49 billion gallons. *See*, U.S. Energy Information Administration <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=23&t=10>.
- Oil & Gas Companies can enjoy profits from direct investments in renewable energy as well as from market driven prices for petroleum and petroleum based products when carbon is fairly priced.

June 25, 2021

William Jay Hunter, Jr., Esq.  
[wjhunterjr@gmail.com](mailto:wjhunterjr@gmail.com)  
(502) 419-5705

## **ENCLOSURE 2**

### **Laudato Si Circle Initiative to Contact Companies, Governmental Units, Church Groups**

Some Companies are taking action: <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/how-companies-have-been-responding-to-increasing-pressure-to-take-action-climate>

Individually, or with other Circle member(s), choose a company or other entity to prayerfully study and contact and let me know your choice:

Kaiser Permanente  
Amazon  
Exxon Mobil  
Shell  
BP  
Intel  
OHSU  
Moda  
M. D. Anderson  
Nike  
Keene  
Pendleton  
Under Armor  
Adidas  
Prana  
Patagonia  
Vestas  
REI  
City of Portland  
Multnomah County  
State of Oregon

Study websites, 10K's, Press releases,

Ask educated questions after study and prayer, such as:

How are you effectively working for a carbon-free future?

Do you have a corporate group tasked with reducing CO2 emissions? Reporting to the CEO?

Have you taken steps to increase use of public transit? Reduce air travel? Encourage work at home?

What are you doing to eliminate land-fill waste? Use of plastics?

Have you adopted specific targets as corporate policy?

Thank them for work already being done; make educated suggestions for more action specifically tailored to the entity.



### **ENCLOSURE 3**

LAUDATO SI MI SINORE

Hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor

Do everything as an act of worship

“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Things to do small and large with prayer and contemplation:

Reuse baggies

Take the bus/tram/train

Walk

Ride bikes

Use just one paper towel or air dry when washing hands

Trade for low emissions car: <https://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/Find.do?action=sbs&id=41915>

Drive less

Fly less

Turn out lights

Print double sided

Use beeswax paper

Reuse all plastics

Take the Laudato Si Pledge: <https://catholicclimatemovement.global>

Read and pray through Francis, “Laudato Si”

Read and pray the prayers in Grazer, “Catholics Going Green”

Set a Google Alert: “Climate Change”

Subscribe to New York Times “Climate Fwd”

Follow climate litigation

Follow climate legislation

Lobby

March

Contribute money

Volunteer

Study and prayerfully contact a company to urge climate action

Pray that global warming be reversed

ENCLOSURE 4

\_\_\_ th CONGRESS

\_\_\_ SESSION

H.R. \_\_\_\_\_

To provide for expanded allowance of deduction for depletion of natural deposits to allow for conservation of proven reserves and investment in renewable resources under 26 U.S. Code §§ 611-7.

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**A BILL**

To provide for expanded allowance of deduction for depletion of natural deposits to allow for conservation of proven reserves and investment in renewable resources under 26 U.S. Code §§ 611-7.

- 1        *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America*  
2        *in Congress assembled*, that certain provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, 26 U.S. Code  
3        §§ 611-7, are amended by inserting after section 117 the following new section:  
4        “Sec. 118 (a) allowances provided in sections 611-7 shall decrease by 5% each year  
5        following the date of enactment;  
6        (b) allowances provided in sections 611-7 shall be given for new investment in: (1) solar  
7        power; (2) wind power; (3) planting trees and acquiring forest lands with no-harvest  
8        agreements; (4) replacing animal feedlots with range; (5) atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> removal systems;  
9        (6) care and resettlement of climate refugees; (7) forbearance agreements, which guarantee  
10       non-development of proven petroleum or mineral reserves; (8) CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration systems;  
11       (9) geothermal energy and (10) other scalable CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reducing actions such as may  
12       be designated by the Secretary of the Treasury by regulation;  
13       (c) This section shall become effective upon enactment.