

Walking with the Spirit CONFERENCE



The Conference held on February 8th, 2025 was entitled “Walking with the Spirit in the World - Catholic Creation Care at the Heart of Serving Those in Need.” This conference was conceived by Sr Rose Marie Tresp, RSM to celebrate both the 10 year anniversary of Laudato Si and the instillation of Rev. Michael Martin OFM Conv. as the new Bishop of the Charlotte Diocese. This full day conference was sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, Belmont, Catholic Charities, and donors of both funding and expertise. Video recordings were facilitated by Media Specialist Anesu Simango.

- Dr. Catherine Wright’s address can be found at this [LINK](#)
- Bishop Michael Martin OFM Conv. address can be found at this [LINK](#)

Key Metric Analysis



Conference Data

February 8, 2025
Location: Sisters of Mercy, Belmont

What: Reflections on what is happening in our world

So What: Reflections on why Creation Care is important to Catholics in the Diocese of Charlotte

Now What: Reflections on what participants think they can do



Questions for Bishop Martin
Suggestions for the Diocese of Charlotte

Engagement Metrics

150 Number of Attendees
(maximum capacity)

65% Percentage of Conference Participants Who Submitted Insights Input
97 Cards Submitted

66 Number of Feedback Cards



Conference Report Coordinador : Dr. Catherine Wright, Ph.D

Conference Team Members:

Sr. Rose Marie Tresp, RSM, Jerome Wagner OFS, Tricia Vasil, Lynn Dransoff, Joe Purello, Dr. Catherine Wright

What: Reflections on what is happening in our world

There are seven categories identified from the participant responses on the Conference workshop cards. Each category was mentioned a significant numbers of times to be included. The order is not based on frequency.

Category One: God's Relationship with Creation and the Poor

Many participants wrote about God (Love) and God's relationship with creation. Many spoke of seeing God in all things and discovering God's love for all of creation. Others indicated that by destroying nature we are living "a life void of the presence of God."

"Fabric is sacred, mending is sacred. Light pollution alters but the stars are still there, a reminder of God"

"Infinite love in a finite creation"

"To care for creation in the image of God"

"The need to incorporate care for the marginalized [along] with care for non-human aspects of creation. Franciscan spirituality as appreciation of creation, as reflection of God's work"

"Care for the Earth is foundational to care for people"

"We should care because it is part of our faith lived in hope and love"

"The needs of the poor take priority, take priority over the desires of the rich etc..."



Category Two: Interconnectivity and Interdependence

Many spoke of a connectivity between politics, the poor, the environment, and the Gospel. Willful blindness to this causes much anger and frustration.

"We are called to care for all and we need to open our eyes and hearts, and minds to the realization of the interconnectedness"

"So much of the content of the day was that we are all related, connected and life is not about the individual but all people."

"Creation includes we, all the people in the US.... the current level of tracking down those who came to the US for a better life is appalling. We care for people."

"How the lack of caring for creation impacts the most vulnerable people / animals / other life forms across the globe"

"Stirred by the correlation between poverty and ecodamage."

"Thrilled to see the new Bishop is clearly leading in climate and environmental justice. Deeply appreciate the connection between Scripture, social teaching, and action"

Category Three: Integral Education



Many commented on how we must educate based on the fact we are all connected. Understanding the relationship between science and spirituality is important. This education can ignite an integral moral response especially if it is endorsed by people in authority (e.g., Bishop, Pastor...)

"We're not here to take advantage of the world...the way we're raising animals is not the way God intended. "If we do not move, who will?"

"The value of repurposing, profound love of God for creation and poor"

"Income and wealth inequality is higher in the US that it has ever been before..."

"There needs to be a deeper, intentional conversation about the intersection of poverty, sustainability, and justice (particularly for underserved communities like those who are incarcerated"

Category Four: Refugees, Dignity of Workers, Human Trafficking, LGBTQ+ Catholics

Many asked: Who is valuable and worth protecting, and who is not? Who is at the table and who is not welcome? Why? Engaging diversity is hard so how do we do it well? How we answer these questions is part of creation care and integral ecology.

"the lack of dignity in the work environment and climate affects both... we must continue the fight led by others in the past"

"How the Holy Spirit speaks to me in different seasons. Being a Catholic LGBTQ+ person I know the pains of not feeling like I have a place or a home in the church ..."

"Refugees ... need our help"

"How can we help refugees - volunteer to mentor them, especially in the present situation"

"How does a Gay Catholic feel safe and integrated, and accepted to worship, have equality in the church"

"I wish there was a focus on the deep greed of our consumer capitalist systems that shape our decision(s)"

"Human trafficking - vulnerable populations/social justice"

"My fellow gay catholics have never been "OKAY" in the church."



Category Five: Solidarity and Systemic Change

Some spoke about the concepts of building unity and solidarity – and changing systems that oppress. Solidarity comes when strangers become neighbors – who we can name and we care enough to know their stories. Many ideas and thoughts were offered that spoke to the act of building solidarity and making systemic changes.

“Good ideas on how to speak with neighbors – find commonality”

“We need to reach out to people in our community”

“What struck me the most – how hurt and saddened many of us are for different reasons. But mostly the lack of curiosity and desire for dialogue within the parishes, communities, regions”

“Share resources”

“Live a simpler life. Listen to others”

“Something can be done if I change, imbued by the Spirit”

“Extreme responses don't work”

“I love hearing and seeing our Bishop Michael and his profound love of Our Lord. And positive words for our diocese to grow in unity”



Category Six: Hope

There were many aspects of hope offered – new questions, new connections made, alliances forged, and new stories of people acting faithfully to care for creation and the poor are just a few.

“I need to care and act – now”

“Many helpful, knowledgeable folks. Encouraging words that sustain worlds”

“Mara Fenn and Erica Lubamba have given me hope for the future of our young people – inspiring!”

“What are some solutions about the way we get our meat? How can I be pro-life and care for creation?”

“The long tradition in the Church towards caring for the earth as part of our spiritual response to God”

“I would like to learn more about Catholic saints and lay people who have worked ecotheology throughout history”

“Sister Rose Marie had a short but poignant talk! Such truthful points!”

“Being creative and open to the urging of the Holy Spirit to protect our environment and provide for those in need...”

Category Seven: Sustainable Ways of Living and Loving

Many spoke about issues touched on by the speakers:

- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
- Sustainable Textile Industry
- Clean, Accessible Water and Air
- Gift and Circular Economies in Contrast to Exploitation, Consumerism, Greed, Individualism
- Living a Less 'Plastic' and Disposable Lifestyle
- Bioregionalism – Shop Local; Support Small Businesses



“Exploitation of resources, animal, mineral, ecological...”

“What can we do to convince people to use less?”

“Plastic fee. Thrift store. Awareness of energy use in our Catholic facilities. The use of recyclable products in all Catholic churches and schools. Comparing at all Catholic facilities that have food programs. Minimizing the use of plastics”

“St Francis, St Clare’s association with textiles and how our closets reflect our concern for the earth and for agricultural and factory workers”

So What: Why Creation Care is Important to Catholics

Each comment is reflected in the following tapestry. Close attention was paid to honoring the language and imagery respondents used. Direct quotes are in green and the others are representations of comments.

We are our Brothers and Sisters Keeper – we are a beloved family	Need for repentance and conversion – a change of heart	Live and Love like Jesus (Isa 10:1-2). “How can we grow to be more Christ-like?”	Creation is God’s gift and meant for all. The poor are impacted first when we degrade our home
“We’re not Catholic/Christian /children of God if we don’t care”	Need for Systemic Changes – too often the conversation is only on individual choices.	We should care because we are so loved by God – all people loved by God	Earth, and humanity, are reflections of God. We must love all – people and world
Love of God for all people need to be seen in homilies and actions of the church	It is important to connect head, hearts and spirit – doing small things	We need to become more connected and care about each other	“We care, not because the immigrants are Catholic, but because we are Catholic” ... we are all children of immigrants

So What: Why Creation Care is Important to Catholics

Each comment is reflected in the following tapestry. Close attention was paid to honoring the language and imagery respondents used. Direct quotes are in color and the others are representations of comments.

Love as God Loves; Jesus calls us to care	Reflect on why I might have an extreme response	Every life should be acknowledged and honored – this is a truth of the Gospel	We are fellow travelers on the planet; all actions are interconnected
We must care for what God gifted us – all forms. Our actions glorify God or detract from our relationship with God when disordered	“We need to minimize the use of non compostable, non recyclable items in our churches and schools. What about a Catholic thrift store?”	Beatitudes can lead to new behaviors; Our scripturally based CST and the Gospels demands that we care	We are all interconnected and every abuse affects us all
Human Dignity – seeing all as creations of God and holy	We need to practice subsidiarity and social peace	To be Christian means to care; If we do this it leads to the Kingdom of God	“We are all one – all are integral to everything else”



We must care about the dignity of the human worker, pollution of water, air, soil, just wages for workers	We lose our humanity when we devalue or deem someone else worthless or less than a person	“If not us, who? We harm our spirits, our family, our friends, if we do not act with care...”	Understanding, caring and acting are what bring my faith to life
We are called to respect all – doctrine seems to override justice and Catholic teaching	“How can we recalibrate our Spirits to walk like Jesus ... to help in ways that provide love and dignity to all; especially the poor”	There are consequences (spiritual and physical) when we do not live out our reasons for being here (God’s plan)	God calls us to be stewards of creation and each other
Educating about the Incarnation essential – God’s love made visible in all aspects of the created world	If is an opportunity to be courageous in faith	God wants us to welcome everyone	“Because all humanity is our brothers and sisters who are made in the image of God and we are responsible to love and care for all creation. We are all connected”



Now What:

What Can Catholics Do? How Are You Being Called to Serve?

There are seven categories participant identified as areas where they could do something to care for creation and the poor: Parish Life, Acquire Skills, Active Service and Hospitality, Immigration and Refugees, Dialogue, Prayer, and Involving Young People. Each category was mentioned a significant numbers of times and the order is not based on frequency.

Parish Life:

Participants are looking for welcoming places of worship to contribute to society and grow spiritually – to be re-ignited in faith. They are also looking for leadership on creation care education and initiatives from parish leaders and priests. They are looking to find ways to introduce or grow creation care at parish level (and collaborate with other parishes doing this work) so that their faith lives reflect creation care (sustainable investments; reduction of styrofoam use; Greener Lent practices; sustainable energy).

“Recharge the battery and have more faith and ignore the negative feelings.
Embrace hope!”

“Develop speakers and workshops, leadership in parishes and greater community”

“Educate the priests and leaders in our diocese on care of God’s creation”

“We can live the Gospel more clearly + open my mind, my lips, my heart – DAILY! -
outside of Mass”

“Be more conscious of all aspects of creation ... God is our hope”

“Promote chicken coops [and community gardens or CSAs] at local parishes”

Acquiring Skills

Participants noted several ways that they wanted to acquire skills in making better environmental choices

- Investing in socially responsible way
- Voting responsibly
- Shopping responsibly – reducing plastics, address consumerism
- Responsible eating and plant based diets (food / meat /meatless options)
- Diminish water use/misuse
- Education – history, resources, guides; reinstate Just Faith classes
- Develop speakers and workshops
- Lobbying – prayerful resistance and advocate for voiceless; systemic changes
- Tiny House Movement
- Foam Recycling

“Write letters to editors, write congress, the White House to protest. Resist and persist!”

“...staying politically involved, voting, calling representatives, seeking into the problems and not just complaining”

Now What: What Can Catholics Do? How Are You Being Called to Serve?

Active Service and Hospitality

People wrote about how they wanted to become more active and involved with community efforts concerning creation care and care of the poor / those excluded.

They wanted their parish lives to also include tangible ways to become more involved in local community issues. They wanted support from the Diocese for this.

“What can I do to make Hickory Soup Kitchen more environmentally responsible?”

“Strengthen the Wheels of Blessing ministry at our church”

Immigration and Refugees

Participants are looking for ways to be more welcoming to our immigrants – being aware of and receptive to the needs of immigrants and refugees. They spoke of supporting immigrants at their workplaces and in the church.

“Ways to reach out to protect our immigrants”

“Speak out when people are targeted. Find out how to serve. Contact legislators. Volunteer as ally to those being deported or otherwise unfairly treated”

Dialogue

People wrote about wanting to prayerfully dialogue more (instead of escaping) with what is happening in the world – to make meaning from what they are experiencing. They spoke of dialoguing with community members, politicians, parish leaders, religious leaders and Bishop.

“... find ways to handle the righteous anger of destroying democracy and respect for each other”

“Put articles in our Franciscan newsletter”

“Speak out and find commonalities to where we can speak to one another”

“...allow all voices to be heard, check my perspective”

“Can our bishops in North Carolina address the ecological problems in our state & dialogue with the governor & legislature about solving some of these harmful practices?”

Now What: What Can Catholics Do? How Are You Being Called to Serve?

Prayer

Participants wrote of how they were praying for strength, discernment, bravery, courage, inspiration. They spoke of being in need of prayer for their journeys of faith. They also spoke prayerfully about taking time to remember to find God in all things and sharing this with others.

“Praying for ways that lead me to action, consumerism, composting”

“I will pray to the Holy Spirit for bravery and discernment”

“I am eager to create a prayerful community that is grounded in contemplative silence to hear God’s wisdom and direction”

“...constantly remind myself and others that God is in all things”

Involving Young People

Participants thought that young people must be engaged in this process. This involves education, inspiration, service, and energy.

“Bring in more young people”

“Allow the Catholic Youth curriculum to include all about environmental issues and climate change and how everything is connected”

“Re-educate adults and youth in tenets of our faith and ecological integration”

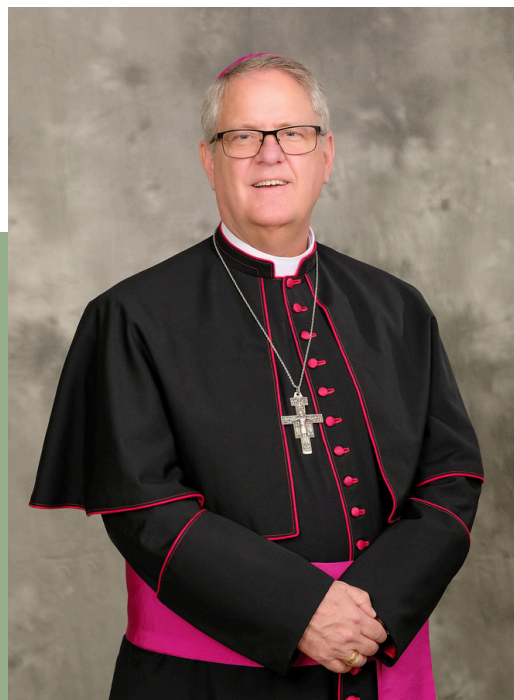


Questions for Our Bishop

Since there were 75 questions, we decided to offer an overview of the requests by theme and the percentage of times requested. But rest assured that Bishop Martin has received a copy of each individual request.

% of requests	Themes
36%	Encourage priests, pastors, seminarians, parishes, and Catholic schools to be trained in and support creation care, creation care teams, Catholic Social Teaching (CST), and Just Faith programs
23%	Leadership role is needed for diocese, bishop, and pastors concerning creation care, immigration, LGBTQ+ persons, and systemic change
16%	Guidance to best care for Earth, the poor and marginalized
7%	Dialogue -- how this will be achieved, especially with other faith traditions (Interfaith Dialogue)
7%	How can we be people of hope?
5%	More education on creation care and CST at diocese level for laity, parents, young people, children
5%	Can the diocese do better at lobbying? advocacy?

**Better integration of creation care with other ministries
1% of Requests**



“

“Love ya – Mean it!”

“No question but a “very large” thank you for your humanity and truth ... I am so grateful you are here in Charlotte”

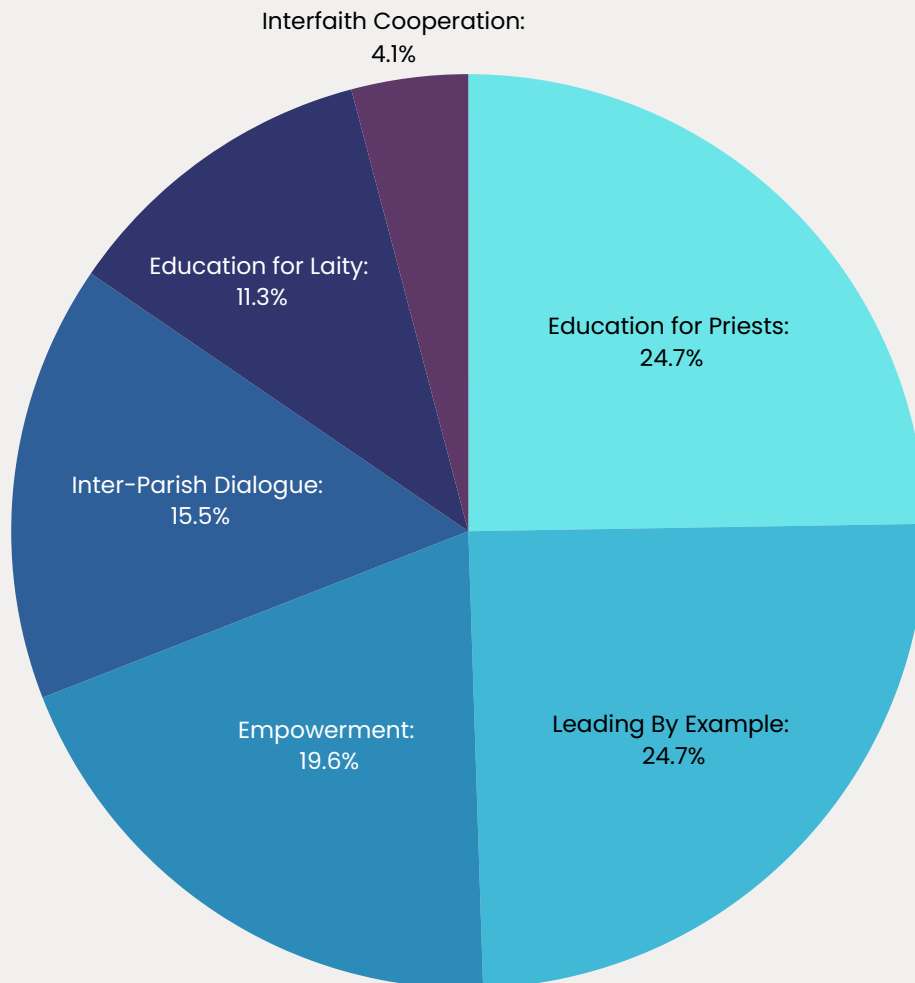
Thank you Bishop Martin for your word today, I received it. In Jesus name. Amen.

”

Request for Diocesan Support

The comments below were gathered from the feedback cards that participants completed at the end of the conference. A total of 62 suggestions were made for the Diocese, with 8 being specific requests that did not fit within the scope of the feedback cards or were too detailed for any single category.

Below is an overview of the themes and the percentage of requests for each category based on the total number of comments received.



Walking with the Spirit
CONFERENCE

February 8, 2025
Sisters of Mercy, Belmont