

## We must Keep on Keeping Going

The Season of Creation-September 1st to October 4<sup>th</sup> has ended for this year. However, the theme *'to hope and to act'* Rom 8:23-25, invites us to continue our search for ways to ensure that the pleas of Laudato Si', '*.. the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor ..*,' are heard anew in our parishes. The dark evenings and shorter days over the next few months, could give us time to gather with eco-friendly groups and failing their existence a few friends in our locality to plan a celebration for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of Laudato Si' in May 2025.

Pope Francis wrote: *'...in the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come...'*<sup>1</sup> Hope is the central message for the coming jubilee year. Gathering in small groups strengthens the hope within the heart of each person. It also maximises the hope and energy within the group and its capacity to act. The result of our coming together with others may seem small, however, to quote the anthropologist, Margaret Mead: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*<sup>2</sup>

*"Hope does not disappoint,"*<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis tells us, because it offers the certainty of God's love. (Rom 5:5) - to love God is to love what God loves. Working towards an eco-friendly parish may take several years- not easy to accept in our fast-paced, result based world! Knowing that our beautiful earth is loved by God will help us contemplate the beauty of the world in which we live and give us a sense of awe which can move us to do what we can to care for God's creation.

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<sup>1</sup> Spes Non Confundit, Pope Francis 09.05.2024

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Mead 15.11.2016 <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1071> (15.08.2024)

<sup>3</sup> Spes Non Confundit (3)

The challenges relating to climate change and loss of biodiversity are enormous. Despite constant reminders, it is difficult for many in our local communities to comprehend the urgency of acting to restrain the climate and ecological crises. Many parishioners who are willing to act, often do not know where to start or what their actions might look like. A possible starting point could be to identify what good things are already happening and recognising the person or group who is responsible. Success, no matter how small can build on success.

Eco-Congregation Ireland (ECI)<sup>4</sup> an ecumenical group offers vast supportive resources to begin the journey towards an eco-friendly community. A starting point might be to download and complete ‘An environmental check-up’ or audit. It will help to identify your parishes’ current environmental good practice and future priorities. This is not a test! -just pointers to help the group to get started. Then sign up to join ECI – there is no fee, you will be glad to learn! The benefits of doing so are myriad. To progress along the journey to become an Eco-friendly parish a user-friendly guide is provided, and examples of good practice can be found on the website and in a newsletter that is published monthly.

Parishes vary - from rural to urban and with socio-economic differences too. Hence, there can no best-fit plan that will work across all parishes. One of the many strengths of ECI is that variety of parish make up and background is recognised. Each

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<sup>4</sup> Eco-Congregation Ireland is an inter-denominational project operating under the auspices of the Church in Society Forum – a standing committee of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting.  
[www.ecocongregationireland.com](http://www.ecocongregationireland.com)

one can progress at its own pace with this dictum in mind: *‘Do what you can, where you are, with what you have!’*<sup>5</sup>

Following the initiative suggested in March 2023 by the Irish bishops many parishes are planning to leave 30% or more of the Church grounds vacant for nature by 2030.<sup>6</sup> Others have joined local Church groups and environmental associations like the ‘tidy towns’ to garner as much support as possible in their efforts to make care of creation a priority in their locality.

No matter what shape the eco-journey takes in our parishes -we must ensure that ‘we keep on -keeping going’ as our athletes did this summer at the Paris Olympics. The light of hope for the care of creation needs be kept alive. The cries of those in poverty and our earth are ongoing and relentless. The good news is that each of us can with small actions make a difference: ‘All it takes is one good person to restore hope,’ (Laudato Si’. 71)

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<sup>5</sup> Theodore Roosevelt Although this quote is widely attributed to Theodore Roosevelt, he credits it, in his *Autobiography*, Chapter IX, to Squire Bill Widener of Widener’s Valley, Virginia

<sup>6</sup> [www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/returning-to-nature/](http://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/returning-to-nature/)