

**Mission Statement:**

The Green Committee of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, on behalf of the parish community, works to advocate for Catholic principles and priorities in environmental issues and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable. The committee works to inspire the parish community to discern and act in ways that reflect our duty to care for God's creation.

**Members:** Ann Akey, John Cabrera, Paul Chestnut, Laura Chiu, Eleanor Hansen, Laisz Lam, Gerard McGuire, Katia Reeves, and Suzanne Ribbe.

Email distribution members: Rosemary Gill, Walt Lundin, and Juanita Marquez.

**Meetings:** Fourth (4th) Monday of the month, 7:30 pm, at the Pastoral Center.

**Membership:** We welcome new members to join us in this effort for the common good. Please contact Laura Chiu at [lauraleechiu@gmail.com](mailto:lauraleechiu@gmail.com) or Katia Reeves at [katia.reeves@sbcglobal.net](mailto:katia.reeves@sbcglobal.net)

**Background:**

From Bishop Patrick McGrath on the Catholic Green Initiative:

"God created human beings in His own image as stewards and recipients of His wonderful handiwork. As a people of faith, we are today called to celebrate the splendor of God's creation, to be good stewards of the Earth and to safeguard the integrity of all creation. Catholics around the world have already initiated many innovative ecological projects that have highlighted the need for all of us to live more sustainably and to leave a lighter 'ecological footprint'.

"In response to this call to environment stewardship, I [Bishop McGrath] have formed [2009] The Catholic Green Initiative of Santa Clara County. This local initiative is a joint project of the Diocese of San Jose, Catholic Charities, Santa Clara University, and the Presentation Retreat and Conference Center. Several committees within this initiative are creating educational programs and action initiatives to encourage and assist the San Jose [Diocese] Catholic community to live and operate more simply and sustainably."

Our committee was formed and continues working in support of this stewardship of the environment initiative which is also part of the National Catholic Coalition on Climate Change.

**Accomplishments (July 2011 - June 2012) listed in the St. Francis Pledge action format:**

**Pray:**

1. Printed 300 beautiful St. Francis Pledge cards that we handed out at the parish picnic and later made available at the three churches for the feast of St. Francis, Oct 4.

2. Requested the pulpit reading of the St. Francis Pledge on Oct 2 at all the Masses which the Liturgical Committee fitted in the Masses that weekend.

3. Through the year, requested inclusion in the Prayers of the Faithful prayers for the protection of the environment and those impacted by climate change.

**Learn:**

4. Have liaison to Diocese Catholic Green Initiative of Santa Clara County.

5. Attended "Adapting to Climate Change and Sea Level Rise" presentation at City Council Chambers which showed areas of Palo Alto that will be flooded due to creeks overflow and sea level rise unless extensive levies are built around the Bay.

6. Attended "A Religious Response to Climate Change: The Moral Imperative of Responding to Global Warming" presentation sponsored by CA Interfaith Power & Light (CIPL) and Acterra. Environmental message from Pope Paul in 1967 was cited as key driver of the Moral Imperative to act.

7. Conducted a walk-through the Pastoral Center and OLR site with an arborist from Canopy to determine locations to plant more trees and suggestions of appropriate varieties. Identified one spot in front of the Pastoral Center that is available for a City tree planting and have made the request to the city.

8. Attended the Cool Congregations Workshop at University Lutheran Church for training and tools to bring back to our parish to measure and reduce carbon footprint. The Diocese also sent representatives.

9. Publicized in parish and attended the CIPL pre-release screening of "Last Call to the Oasis" documentary on water issues at Trinity Church in Menlo Park.

10. Publicized in parish and attended "Cooler Smarter: Practical Steps for Low-Carbon Living" at World Centric presented by Union of Concerned Scientists. Useful web site [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org)

**Assess:**

11. In collaboration with Chuck Tully who provided the parish utilities meter readings for 2009, 2010, and 2011, have determined our yearly energy usage. This provided insight for opportunities to conserve energy and reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Reduced the parish buildings' emissions by 12.5% in 2010 and 3.5% in 2011 thanks to the efforts at all three sites.

12. Working with the Diocese to evaluate potential use of solar panels for parish buildings.

**Act:**

13. Held a successful Bike / Walk to Mass campaign with parish-wide participation and awarded prizes at the 2011 parish picnic.
14. Held a water taste test at the picnic comparing tap water vs various brands of bottled water. This was enlightening to the many participants.
15. Invited Acterra representatives to the picnic who brought energy efficiency information and signed up those interested in having home energy audits.
16. Had a very popular waste and recycling activity for children at the picnic with prizes for all participants donated by PA Zero Waste.
17. Worked with Building and Maintenance Committee to continue identifying energy use reductions. Example: more energy efficient appliances installed at Dermody Center and OLR kitchen.
18. Continued monitoring thermostats and requesting parishioners to keep sanctuary doors closed when the heaters are ON.
19. Supported the Bishop's drive to reaffirm the St. Francis Pledge by gathering signatures after all Masses on Earth Day. The signatures were included with the others in the Diocese by the Diocese Catholic Green Initiative and sent to Washington DC.
20. Online support of bills or proposals for legislature green initiatives.

**Advocate:**

21. Had a Green table at the picnic with environmental handouts such as the Monterrey Aquarium Seafood Choices cards, membership recruitment poster, and St. Francis Pledge cards.
22. Continue updating the Green Committee webpage with our latest activities information.
23. Hosted Dr. Pamela Bjorklund who spoke about the Spirituality of Simple Living at the Spirituality Tuesday on April 24.
24. Continue periodic postings of relevant information on the bulletins' Green Corner.
25. Wrote the Green Committee editorial article for the bulletins.