



BECAUSE WE ARE CATHOLIC

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CALIFORNIA SERVES AND ADVOCATES FOR THE POOR, VULNERABLE AND THOSE IN NEED NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE CATHOLIC, BUT *because we are Catholic.*



“AS STEWARDS OF GOD’S CREATION, WE ARE CALLED TO MAKE THE EARTH A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN FOR THE HUMAN FAMILY. WHEN WE DESTROY OUR FORESTS, RAVAGE OUR SOIL AND POLLUTE OUR SEAS, WE BETRAY THAT NOBLE CALLING.”

– Pope Francis (01/18/2015)

Diocese of Stockton Focuses On Environmental Stewardship



Years before Pope Francis wrote about care for our common home in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*, the Diocese of Stockton was already practicing its own kind of environmental stewardship. Created in 2005, the Environmental Justice Project at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Stockton, has been tirelessly working for more than 10 years to help steward God’s creation.

Yolanda Park has been working with the Environmental Justice Project for about two years, but has been Program Manager for just a few months. Despite her short time with the organization, she is committed to encouraging environmental stewardship throughout

the diocese. “I think that environmental justice is an umbrella group in the sense that it threads through everything such as housing, safety, transportation and so much more,” Park said.

Because of the Environmental Justice Project, many parishes within the diocese have become more environmentally aware. Park said that parishes have been focusing on recycling and energy efficiency. Earlier this year, Church of the Presentation in Stockton embraced solar power with the installation of 535 solar panels on its roof. Other parishes, such as St. Frances of Rome in Riverbank, Cathedral of the Annunciation and St. Bernadette Parish, both in Stockton, have formed Social Justice Ministries. Based in Catholic social teaching, Social Justice Ministries promotes the dignity of all humans. Included in this service to others is caring for creation through Environmental Justice.



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The educational efforts of the Environmental Justice Project have continued to thrive through the years, as well. In addition to its monthly newsletter, the Environmental Justice Project has created workshops on Laudato Si and Catholic Social Teaching. In addition, it is also working with Climate Reality to lead environmental justice training in the fall. An Environmental Justice and Catholic Social Teaching toolkit has also been created to help other dioceses learn the importance of having an Environmental Justice Project as part of Catholic Charities.

Park believes it's important for all parish ministries to work together for the common goal of caring for the environment. "It's really important that all Catholics—bishops, priests, parishioners—understand that every ministry touches on and includes environmental justice," Park said, adding, "If it weren't for our bishop's support, our program wouldn't be as successful as it is."

Park also emphasized the importance of the Environmental Justice Project's work with other area organizations, from both inside and outside the Catholic community. Cathedral of the Annunciation is partnering with the Environmental Justice Project to form the Catholic Voices Coalition. The coalition will bring together the Social Justice Ministries of each parish to work together as one united Catholic voice. "We are very excited about that coalition and we are looking forward to its involvement," Park said. The Project is also involved with Restore the Delta, whose goal it is to help fisheries and farming thrive in the area again, and PUENTES, a Stockton group who encourages healthy, sustainable living through community gardens. Park also mentioned the importance of involvement in the general plan in local cities, such as Stockton, Modesto and Ceres. "It's important that the Catholic voice not just be local, but also reach across the region and the state," Park said.

Park is dedicated to environmental stewardship and is thankful that Pope Francis has brought caring for the environment into the forefront through Laudato Si. When asked why she feels so strongly about the Stockton Diocese's Environmental Justice Project, Park said, "Catholic social teaching is our foundation. Action without faith is not good enough." She added, "We do it because we are Catholic. It's a part of our faith."

Please visit

California Catholic Conference
www.cacatholic.org/because-we-are-catholic

For more information on the great resources available from the Environmental Justice Project at the Diocese of Stockton visit
www.ejstockton.org