



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.*



NURTURING AND CHERISHING CREATION IS A COMMAND GOD GIVES NOT ONLY AT THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY, BUT TO EACH OF US. IT IS PART OF HIS PLAN; IT MEANS CAUSING THE WORLD TO GROW RESPONSIBLY, TRANSFORMING IT SO THAT IT MAY BE A GARDEN, A HABITABLE PLACE FOR EVERYONE. – Pope Francis

Laudato si' Sparks Clean Energy in California's Monterey Diocese

INSET PHOTO: Deacon Warren Hoy presenting 600 letters from parishioners supporting Monterey Bay Community Power to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors.

One-third of the parishes, offices and facilities of the Diocese of Monterey have gone solar, and the counties of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz now draw on 100 percent carbon and nuclear-free energy largely thanks to efforts of local Catholics.

The diocesan office and the late Bishop Richard Garcia led the way in union with the faithful in the effort. Now the office runs on 100 percent solar energy, while 18 of the 46 parishes and two of the 12 schools have made the move. More are in process.

Adding in the number of facilities that are preparing for the transition, about half of the diocese's facilities will soon draw power from a renewable source.

The diocesan Office of Social Concerns, collaborating with local solar companies and consultants, devised a way that parishes could go solar with little overhead risk.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEACON WARREN HOY/DIOCESE OF MONTEREY

Solar panels installed at St. Michael's Parish, Boulder Creek, Calif.

The diocese offers low-interest loans to parishes for the necessary equipment and installation. Parishes begin to save as soon as the equipment becomes operational since the savings on utility bills exceed loan payments.

Continued on next page



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEACON WARREN HOY/DIOCESE OF MONTEREY

Green Power informational banners at the Green Parish kick-off training event at Resurrection Parish, Aptos; In the background to the left — the late Bishop Richard Garcia who was present for this event.

Father Murrin of Boulder Creek's St. Michael's Parish, touched by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*, noted he was personally motivated by the realization that there is no single group that could make a more positive impact on the environment globally than the Catholic Church — if only for the number of buildings owned by the Church worldwide. St. Michael's Parish responded quickly becoming a model parish for the Green Diocese, Green Parish project.

**THE PARISHES AND SCHOOLS IN THE
MONTEREY DIOCESE THAT HAVE
IMPLEMENTED THIS SOLAR INITIATIVE
NOW GENERATE MORE ENERGY FOR THE
GRID THAN THEY CONSUME.**

The diocese is now investigating a way that this surplus clean energy produced can be put to the service of the disadvantaged, assisting those who cannot pay their power bill. As a nonprofit, the diocese cannot receive payment for the surplus energy, so it is now examining the possibility of creating a special charity account for this purpose.

Beyond this *Green Diocese, Green Parish* solar initiative, Catholics in the Monterey Diocese were searching for more ways they could make a difference. Responding to this desire, the diocese began close collaboration with the Romero Institute — a nonprofit interfaith organization dealing with public policy — and its subsidiary Green Power to explore what could be done.

Simultaneously, three of the counties within the diocese were looking at launching Community Choice Energy (CCE) programs, allowing local communities the freedom to choose the sources of energy they purchase.

The collaboration between the diocese, the late Bishop Richard Garcia, the Romero Institute and Green Power proved a powerful force. With the clear and expressed support of their bishop, Catholics in the diocese were mobilized to act as crucial agents in community advocacy in the establishment of the local clean energy power company, Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP).

Now, through MBCP, all residents and businesses throughout Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties who do not actively opt-out receive 100 percent carbon-free and nuclear-free energy.

The impact continues to spread as the Diocese of Monterey is being honored for best practices in a large display at the Vatican's international ecology conference. The Romero Institute also is working to replicate this model of community action to advance the cause of clean energy within other dioceses in California and in other institutions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

Diocese of Monterey — Family Life and Social Concern:

dioceseofmonterey.org/family-life-social-concerns

CA Catholic Conference *Laudato si'* Resources:

catholic.org/care-for-our-common-home