



On Ecological Education: Educating Hearts & Minds

“Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature.”

Laudato Si’: On care for our common home, 215

In part four of our seven-part series on the [Laudato Si’ goals](#), we look at ‘ecological education’ and how the Family of Holy Cross is responding to this need. Engaging in ‘ecological education’ means reimagining our institutions and educational standards to embrace integral ecology and to prioritize ecological awareness-raising and transformative action at every level of society. As this example from Bangladesh shows, Holy Cross are actively working in schools, local communities, and regions to promote Laudato Si’ themes, foster dialogue, and organize practical restoration efforts, animating people and protecting creation for present and future generations.

Educating Hearts and Minds: Ecological Education in Bangladesh

By Brother Nirmal Gomes, CSC



We have to prevent harm to Earth from our careless action if we want a livable planet for the next generation. Ecology Club showed me that I always want to be an active caregiver and protector of our Mother Earth.

Tanzim-ur-rashid, class 9, St. Philip's High School and College



Bangladesh is a land rich in biodiversity and beauty. Its low-lying lands are home to lush forests and rivers teeming with life. As the sixth most densely populated country in the world, it is also widely recognized as a nation among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Recognizing the dangers of climate change and environmental degradation, Bangladesh has made ecological education part of its national curriculum for students in grades two to ten for many years. In the last two decades, national reforestation and sustainable development efforts have renewed hopes for sustainable living and paved the way for the expansion of ecological education at every level, transforming our institutions and our communities.

With the leadership of the Bishops Conference Justice and Peace Commission, the collective response in Bangladesh to the Church’s Laudato Si’ Action Platform has resulted in workshops, seminars, and awareness-building and reforestation programs throughout the country. The priests, brothers, and sisters of Holy Cross in Bangladesh are responding in our educational institutions by promoting ecological integrity in classrooms and local communities, organizing ecological clubs and awareness programs, and engaging in direct reforestation projects that combine education and action at the grassroots level.

One exciting example is the National Nature Summit series of festivals that are held in different provinces to raise awareness and promote the “voice of youth on climate change”. The National Nature Summit series is an

ongoing project of the Notre Dame Nature Study Club at Notre Dame College (Dhaka), founded and administered by the Congregation of Holy Cross. Thousands of students, parents, educators, and environmentalists participate in these events throughout the country, unified by our founder's vision of "educating hearts and minds" and the call of our global Church to care for our common home.



All creatures are interdependent on one another in Earth's ecosystem. Harmony is its most essential function. I want to dedicate my life to care and protection of this precious system, Mother Earth.

Miftahul Jannat, class 9, St. Philip's High School and College

Suggested Reflection Questions

- Which local movements, organizations, or other partners could you work with on this issue? Which opportunities do you see to promote ecological education where you live and work?
- With which local movements, organizations, or other partners could you connect on this issue?



Action

- Deepen your understanding of this goal by reading chapter six of *Laudato Si'*, "Ecological education and spirituality."
- Create a plan for engaging in ecological education in your family, school, and/or on social media (see LS 213).
- Connect with ecological education efforts in your local community, institutions, and on social media.

Prayer for Transformative Action

Creator God, you have called us to a new moment in time,
A time for cultivating hearts and minds and embracing new perspectives,
that we might develop new ethics and habits for the restoration of ourselves and Mother Earth.

In your compassion, O God, inspire our generosity for one another and for all creation,
That we might rise to the challenge of our time and bring about a future of hope and mutual belonging.
Amen

