

A reflection on St. Simon Parish in relationship to Laudato Si':

Saint Simon Parish is one of 52 parishes within the Diocese of San Jose, CA. Our church was built in 1957, and as our community grew, so did our facilities and ministries to serve our community. From 1957 -1964 a rectory, convent, and school were built. In 1996 a Parish Center was added, and then in 1999 our Church was remodeled. We are located to the north side of Santa Clara County, sandwiched in between many smaller suburbs that make up 'Silicon Valley'. We have in our midst many tech companies and benefit from their technology as well as the ongoing research from universities such as Santa Clara, Stanford, and San Jose State. We are blessed to have within thirty minutes of our parish rolling hills with bike and hiking paths, or natural preserves and estuaries for watching birds and animals in their natural environment.

The St. Simon Community is made up of 1700 families that come from many of the surrounding suburbs allowing for a diverse range of families. We currently celebrate six masses each weekend, all in English. The community we serve has a wide range of needs: from mental health issues, procuring basic shelter, food, and clothing; to accepting of those in our community that are marginalized.

Our mission statement proclaims: *"Saint Simon Parish fosters Christ-centered discipleship through lifelong spiritual formation, open sharing of our gifts and active participation in our Church, schools, and greater community."* This mission has been actualized since the establishment of our Outreach and Social Justice Council in 2008. This Council is integrated into our Parish Leadership organization. The Council oversees the activities of many parish ministries whose focus is to address issues of the poor, homelessness, hunger, and the environment.

We believe direct service projects for individuals and families are the best way to get parishioners engaged in God's message and the parish community. We facilitate a collaborative effort between St. Simon Parish, St. Simon Parish School, and the parish Faith Formation programs for Children and Youth Ministries. We have been very proactive in supporting the environment and began addressing issues as early as 2011. Like most parishes in the country, the COVID pandemic forced suspension of many of our programs. As we reopen and re-engage our ministries, we find that many of the social issues in California have changed, are having a big impact on our efforts. We contend with drought, wildfires, the high cost of living and housing, and a growing population of the poor and unhoused. While we have been very proactive around environmental issues, we now find that we need to reset and reestablish key programs and practices, and we need to elevate our thinking, and our mission, that environmentally sound practices are not just "nice-to-have" in our parish, but are essential to address problems we face day-to-day.

All of our Parish Leadership Councils have been presented with the Laudato Si' Action Platform and they have embraced the first year Action Plan for our parish. We look forward to continuing things we stated and addressing new challenges before us. One of those challenges will be around educating and creating awareness of the Laudato Si' Action Platform within St. Simon Parish and School community. This platform will provide our parishioners and school families with critical, reliable and truthful information to educate and create awareness within them. We are confident that the community will embrace this plan, be fed spiritually and carry on God's work with grateful hearts. We will begin with an emphasis on "Ecological Education" and "Ecological Spirituality" and enhance the work we have begun with "The Cry of the Poor", and "Ecological Economics".