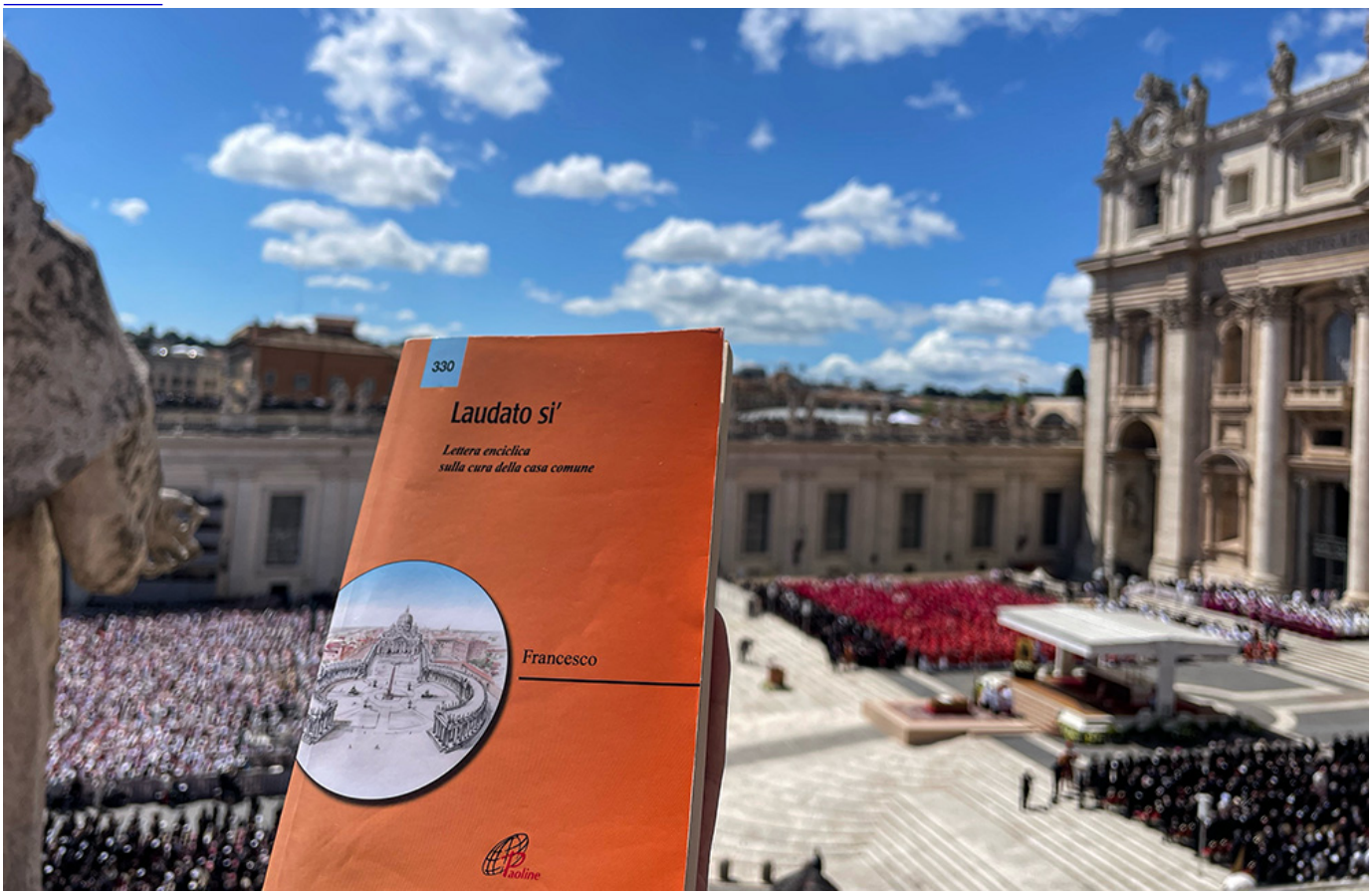
News
EarthBeat



A copy of the encyclical "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home," at Pope Francis' funeral in St. Peter's Square on April 26, 2025. (Tomás Insua)



by Brian Roewe

NCR environment correspondent

View Author Profile

broewe@ncronline.org
Follow on Twitter at @brianroewe

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

December 30, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A pope seen as an environmental champion dies. His successor shows signs he will continue that ecological legacy.

A new administration in the U.S. targets climate and environmental justice policies. Countries around the world stagnate in efforts to curtail global warming.

There's no doubt 2025 has been a momentous year on the faith-and-environment beat.

None loomed larger here at EarthBeat than the death of Pope Francis — widely viewed as a global leader and conscience on environmental matters — coming a day after Easter Sunday in April, and just weeks before the 10-year anniversary of his landmark encyclical "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home."

While not the first pope to speak on environmental topics, Francis magnified them in unparalleled ways as he made creation care a pillar of his 12-year papacy and focused church attention at a time when crises like climate change and biodiversity loss became more pronounced around the globe.

How the Catholic Church might continue Francis' environmental legacy was partly answered in the early months of his successor, Pope Leo XIV. The first U.S.-born leader of the Roman Catholic Church so far has used words and actions to demonstrate his intentions to continue the work of Francis and others in amplifying church teachings and actions on creation.

As this year comes to a close, here's a month-by-month look back at some of the most prominent stories covered on the pages of EarthBeat.



Topanga Canyon inhabitants look on as the Palisades Fire burns in the hills between Pacific Palisades and Malibu Jan. 8, 2025, in Topanga, California. (AP/Etienne Laurent)

January

Jan. 8:
Catholic church, school destroyed in Pacific Palisades wildfire
By Timothy J. Burger

Corpus Christi Church outside Los Angeles was leveled as wind-whipped fires devastate communities in L.A. County. "So much of it has been wiped away," local pastor says.

Jan 27:
Trump environmental rollbacks pose a threat to life, Catholic groups say
By Brian Roewe

Two U.S. Catholic environmental groups, Catholic Climate Covenant and the North American chapter of the Laudato Si' Movement, urged President Trump to reverse plans at the start of his second term to expand fossil fuels, roll back regulations and exit the Paris climate accord.

February

Feb. 3:
Interfaith climate group shuts national office amid Trump environmental attacks
By Brian Roewe

For more than two decades, Interfaith Power and Light has galvanized faith voices around climate change and environmental justice. Its leaders said their work as a top moral voice will continue through its 40 state and regional affiliates.

Feb. 18:
Faith groups' environmental projects halted by Trump's climate funding freeze
By Aleja Hertzler-McCain, Adelle M. Banks, Religion News Service

More than 300 faith communities have lost access to grant funds that were intended to plant trees in disadvantaged urban communities, environmental faith leaders who managed the grants told RNS.

March

March 10:
'Yes to life, no to mining': Sisters in El Salvador join church's protest
By Rhina Guidos

Sisters participated in the Salvadoran church's campaign, "Yes to life, no to mining," calling for the restoration of a law against metal mining in the Central American country.

March 21:
Faith groups blast 'evil' EPA rollback plans, 'climate change religion' comment
By Brian Roewe

The Trump administration's blueprints for remaking the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency outlined 31 regulations that it aimed to eliminate or significantly scale back. Faith leaders said the rollbacks would harm human and environmental

health.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis is seen in a video message released Aug. 30, 2024, discussing his prayer intention for the month of September, which focused on care for the environment and for the poor. Francis, who died April 21 at age 88, had made ecological concerns a cornerstone of his papacy. (CNS screengrab/Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network)

April

April 21:
Pope Francis leaves legacy as environmental conscience for the world
By Brian Roewe

The Argentine pope, who died April 21 on Easter Monday, made ecological concern a cornerstone of his 12-year papacy and positioned care of creation as both a nonnegotiable pillar of the Christian faith and "essential to a life of virtue," as he wrote in his landmark encyclical *Laudato Si*'.

April 21:
Pope Francis had the moral courage to stand up for the Earth and its people
By Christiana Figueres

Figueres, the Costa Rican diplomat and Paris Agreement architect as the top climate official at the United Nations, wrote after Francis' death that we need the moral courage that Francis exemplified — a willingness to speak truth to power and to call for radical transformation when it is needed.

May

May 9:
Before he was pope, Leo XIV said it's time for action on climate change
By Brian Roewe

How might Pope Leo XIV continue Pope Francis' environmental legacy? A review of his past comments and actions as Cardinal Robert Prevost offered some clues to his commitment to care for our common home.

May 23:
Bishop John Stowe urged Appalachia to heed the call of Laudato Si'. Here's how parishes are responding.
By Brian Roewe

The Diocese of Lexington in eastern Kentucky has garnered international attention for its all-of-diocese approach to implementing *Laudato Si'*. "[It is] one of the most comprehensive and inspiring examples of ecclesial commitment to integral ecology," said Alonso de Llanes, program manager for the Vatican's Laudato Si' Action Platform.

May 29:
Laudato Si': A drop in the ocean or a powerful oceanic undercurrent? It's up to us.
By Tomás Insua

In a reflection for the 10-year anniversary of Francis' encyclical, Insua, the co-founder and first executive director of the Laudato Si' Movement, wrote that the papal document has the potential to become as transformative as *Rerum Novarum*, which opened the fruitful chapter of Catholic social teaching. But that outcome, Insua wrote, is now up to us.

June

June 24:
Up to 89% of the world wants more climate action. These Catholics find hope in that.
By Rebecca Randall

People's climate anxiety can feel worse when it seems like nobody cares. However, 80-89% of the global population wants more climate action from governments, according to studies. What happens when people realize they're part of the majority?

Jun 25, 2025
Vatican program to turn Laudato Si' words into environmental action presses forward
By Brian Roewe

In the aftermath of Pope Francis' death, questions surfaced asking how pillars of his papacy like environmental concern will continue, both under Pope Leo XIV and within the wider Catholic world. One way is through the Laudato Si' Action Platform,

which officials behind the Vatican program say they remain determined to carry forward as a blueprint to transform Francis' words into actions toward sustainability and ecological conversion.



Pope Leo XIV visits a field where the Vatican has planned to establish a solar farm on land surrounding the Vatican Radio shortwave transmission center at Santa Maria di Galeria outside Rome June 19. (CNS/Vatican Media)

July

July 1
Bishops of Asia, Africa, Latin America unite in unprecedented climate appeal
By Brian Roewe

The 34-page letter sounding the alarm on climate change was the first-ever joint appeal issued by the continental conferences of Catholic bishops in Latin America, Africa and Asia, representing 821 million Catholics.

July 8:
Catholic solar projects in peril as GOP bill slashes clean energy tax credits
By Brian Roewe

For religious organizations, the elimination of clean energy rebates in Republicans' One Big Beautiful Bill Act jeopardizes financing options for clean energy projects and is expected to result in millions of dollars less in energy cost savings that could otherwise be reinvested in other church ministries and programs.

July 17:
In aftermath of deadly Texas floods, local Catholics offer rapid response
By Gregg Brekke

Catholic Charities in the San Antonio Archdiocese was among the many Catholic groups working tirelessly to help Texas Hill Country residents affected by devastating July 4 floods that killed at least 132 people.

July 31:
Vatican strikes solar farm deal to become the world's first carbon-neutral state
By Nicole Winfield, Associated Press

Italy agreed to a Vatican plan to turn a 430-hectare (1,000-acre) field north of Rome, once the source of controversy between the two, into a vast solar farm that the Holy See hopes will generate enough electricity to meet its needs and turn Vatican City into the world's first carbon-neutral state.



A hunter's moon rises behind a statue of St. Francis of Assisi on the grounds of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion in Champion, Wisconsin, Oct 8, 2022. (OSV News/CNSSam Lucero)

August

Aug. 19:
Sisters, activists praise appeals court order in Oak Flat case
By Chris Herlinger

A federal appeals court on Aug. 18 temporarily blocked a land exchange that would have advanced a copper mine on Apache sacred land in Arizona.

Aug. 21:
After 800 years, St. Francis' 'Canticle of the Creatures' still offers radical vision
By Daniel P. Horan

2025 marked the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's famous composition of the "Canticle of the Creatures." Despite the popularity of the poetic and theologically rich prayer, columnist Dan Horan wrote it is striking how little attention is paid to what the Canticle conveys of St. Francis' radical theological vision of creation and its powerful insights still worth pondering eight centuries later.

September

Sept. 4:
Legacy of 'green' papal teaching takes root at Vatican ecology center
By Justin McLellan

In early September, Pope Leo XIV inaugurated the Borgo Laudato Si', a new center for integral ecology begun by Pope Francis on Vatican-owned property in Castel Gandolfo that will serve as a hub for sustainable practices and ecological education both within and outside the church.

Sept. 23:
Thousands of Catholics oppose Trump plan to erase scientific basis for climate regulations
By Brian Roewe

Catholic and other faith-based organizations submitted nearly 10,000 comments opposing the Trump administration's attempt to revoke the EPA's "endangerment finding," the bedrock environmental policy underpinning federal regulations on polluting emissions that drive climate change and harm human health.

Pope Leo XIV blesses a chunk of ice from a glacier in Greenland.

Pope Leo XIV blesses a chunk of ice from a glacier in Greenland during the opening session of an international conference celebrating the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home," at the Mariapolis Center in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, Oct. 1. The ice block was fished out of the Nuup Kangerlua fjord in Greenland after becoming detached from the ice sheet. (CNS/Vatican Media)

October

Oct 1:

Pope Leo calls for 'true ecological conversion' from words to action on environment

By Brian Roewe, Justin McLellan

At the start of a conference marking the 10-year anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Leo XIV said the challenges identified in Francis' encyclical are "even more relevant today" a decade later, and he encouraged all citizens of the world to take an active role in political discussions at all levels to minimize damage to the environment.

Oct. 3:

At Laudato Si' conference, Catholics stress hope, heart to animate church on climate

By Brian Roewe

Catholics at the "Raising Hope for Climate Justice" conference looked back at the impact of *Laudato Si'* in the past decade, but also where church efforts around creation care must move going forward. Greater appeal to the heart, the pope and other speakers suggested, is needed to sway more people both inside and outside the church to address climate change and other environmental challenges.



The statue of Christ the Redeemer is lit up in green on World Environment Day in Rio de Janeiro, June 5, 2025. Brazil is playing host to the COP30 United Nations climate change conference Nov. 10-21 in Belém. (OSV News/Reuters/Pilar Olivares)

November

Nov. 11:
Catholic Church in Brazil mobilizes to bring 'prophetic' voice to UN climate summit
By Eduardo Campos Lima

The annual United Nations climate summit for the first time took place near the Amazon rainforest. That setting led Brazilian bishops and other Catholic organizations in Latin America to mobilize an unprecedented Catholic presence at COP30.

Nov. 26:
UN climate summit in the Amazon falls short on fossil fuel phaseout plan
By Eduardo Campos Lima, Brian Roewe

Despite papal calls for greater political will on climate change, nearly 200 nations at COP30 could not reach consensus on proposed roadmaps to phase out fossil fuels and end deforestation, and they omitted the words "fossil fuels" from any of the final texts.

December

Dec. 16:
Parishes clean up damage, help those displaced by floods in Western Washington state
By Andrew Foster, OSV News

Several Catholic parishes and schools across Western Washington shut down operations due to historic flooding in the state in the first part of December that led to evacuations. Several Catholic groups assisted in relief efforts.

Dec. 17:
Laudato Trees program in DC Archdiocese plants its 1,000th tree
By Brian Roewe

While many families were looking to cut down Christmas trees, Laudato Trees — a small group of Catholics working to expand tree canopy across the Washington D.C. Archdiocese — celebrated the 1,000th tree it planted on church property since it formed in 2021.

Five most-read EarthBeat news stories

1. ‘A pope in muddy boots’: Viral photos of Leo XIV reveal pastoral care, by Brian Roewe
2. Hundreds of Catholic sisters walk Atlanta streets to pray for social, environmental justice, by Fiona Murphy, Religion News Service
3. Pope prays for conversion of those resisting climate action at new Mass, by Justin McLellan, Catholic News Service
4. Vatican program to turn Laudato Si' words into environmental action presses forward, by Brian Roewe
5. Pope's prayer for September: Respecting, protecting God's creation, by Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

Advertisement