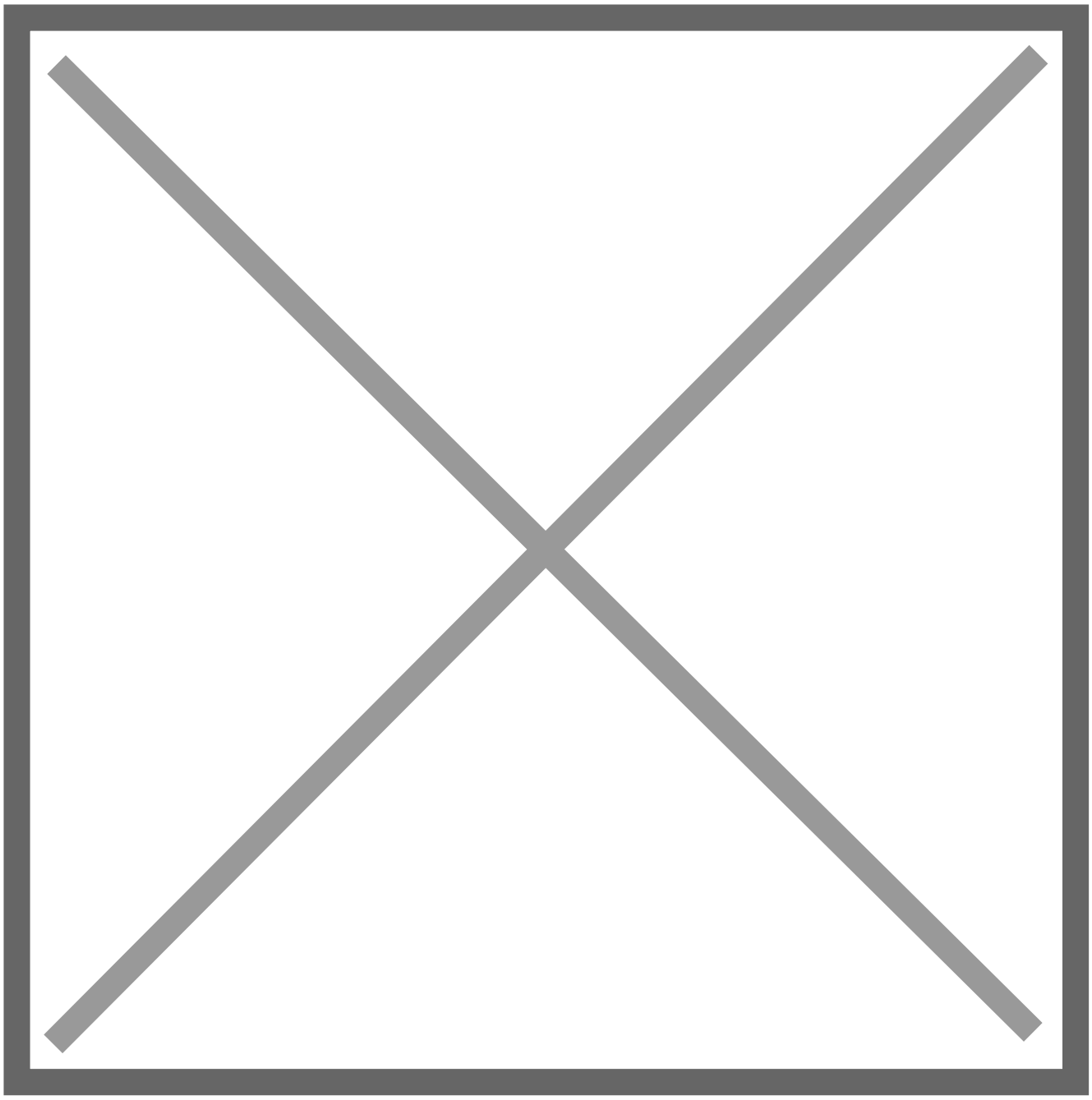
EarthBeat



Hikers wait in line to have their pictures taken on Devil's Bridge in Sedona, Ariz., Feb. 7, 2026. Devil's Bridge is the largest natural sandstone arch in the area, offering a moderate 1.8 to 4.6-mile roundtrip hike, popular for its stunning, walkable, 54-foot high, 100-foot drop, bridge-like structure. (OSV News/Bob Roller)

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Lent is about changing the trajectory of our lives. We try to nudge our life toward God; toward love, kindness and generosity. In Scripture, we repeatedly see tax collectors and sinners offered the chance to repent and change their ways. There's truth in the old saying: "It doesn't matter where you've been, only where you're going." The question is not: What did I accomplish yesterday? Rather: What is the Lord asking of me today?

We can consider trajectories in society as well. We want to set the conditions in society for people to do good and avoid evil. Today, there is a lot of pessimism about the future, but I want to lift up one hopeful trajectory: We are becoming more and more conscious of the environment.

For decades, our popes watched the growing scientific consensus and spoke about the moral response to the threat of climate disruption. Well over 30 years ago, St. John Paul II asserted the greenhouse effect was becoming a crisis. Sixteen years ago, Pope Benedict XVI decried cultural indifference to climate change. Ten years ago, Pope Francis authored a landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si*', an urgent call to care for God's creation. And there is little doubt today of Pope Leo XIV's commitment to addressing the climate crisis.

We have the task of responding locally. Our own archdiocese's Laudato Si

Commission seeks to increase our care for creation.

One recent example of their work: You might notice more compostable plates and reusable utensils at fish fry gatherings this Lent. Indeed, individuals and organizations across our country are stepping up to protect the environment.

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Another example: Every day, Americans are saving 30 gallons of water compared to the average American in 1980. Americans are making changes to ensure our children will have clean air, water and a safe climate.

However, too often the conditions around us do not help us do right by our children and by God's creation.

On Feb. 12, the Environmental Protection Agency made a major reversal which harms our ability to protect human health and the climate. In 2009, the agency affirmed the scientific consensus: Greenhouse gases are overheating the planet and exacerbating air pollution.

Since 2009, the worsening floods, hurricanes, heat waves and wildfires have made this abundantly clear. This scientific finding of the threat of climate change was the basis for many policies protecting human life and health the past 16 years. For the EPA to now revoke its scientific finding is incomprehensible.

As the EPA was signaling this action in the fall, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops sharply criticized the move in uncharacteristically blunt language in a letter to the agency: "the EPA completely ignores the unambiguous plain language and congressional intent of the Clean Air Act, science evidence, and adverse health impacts of climate change."

Pollution and greenhouse gases present an undeniable threat to our home. We were already on a precarious trajectory to prevent more extreme weather and loss of life from pollution. We need more action, not less, to address these important issues and their unacceptable impact on the vulnerable.

Like the popes and bishops speaking up to protect God's creation, our Catholic faith calls all of us to bring our values to public life, too. You can join churches and

millions of Americans in conserving resources, advocating for change and supporting initiatives to give our children a cleaner, healthier world.

The trajectory of future generations depends on us. This Lent, wouldn't it be beautiful to put intention toward God's creation in our prayer, our fasting and our almsgiving?