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5 ways to green your parish

Carol Meyer | Dec. 1, 2010 Eco Catholic

Getting your whole parish to be concerned about the Earth may seem harder than knocking down the walls of Jericho. But I?m here to tell you it can be done and fairly easily, because I?m convinced that the Spirit wants a healthy Earth and will more than do its share. Let me briefly share how a small, older, rather ordinary parish became a green oasis in our diocese.

It all started three years ago when another woman and I decided to get green ministry going in our church. Our pastor was supportive and gave us the green light (no pun intended!). We had no trouble recruiting eager people for our Green Committee. We jumped right in with simple and visible projects like selling cloth bags, organizing a monthly glass collection, setting up recycling bins, and producing a bulletin column of sustainable ideas.

We left no stone unturned, and sought to make Earth care a part of all aspects of our parish life, including education and worship. Our efforts were well-received, and the coup of getting a big spread in our diocesan newspaper gave credibility to what we were doing and made parishioners proud.

We?ve continued being creative and bold for God?s Earth. In subsequent posts, I?ll share more details about our best projects. But for now, here are some ideas on how you can get started.

1. Form a Green Team, for the support and institutional recognition.

2. Do a facility energy audit and start make energy-efficient changes that save money, and you?ll gain support even from the skeptics.

3. Invite donations and stock the parish kitchen with real dishes and cups, napkins, etc., and encourage their use. You may have to wash a few dishes in the beginning, but it?s a small price to pay.

4. Set up clearly-labeled recycling bins everywhere, and train people to use them. At a recent game night, I caught our pastor throwing an aluminum can in the trash. A loving and public chastisement did wonders for raising awareness!

5. Educate through adult programs. Our film series in Lent went over very well, as did an eco-retreat, and a symposium called Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream.

I encourage you to take those first steps in congregational Earth stewardship, because once you do, the Spirit?s momentum will carry you forward. I invite your comments and questions. I?ll assist as I can.

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