

Stewards of the Future

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the enyclical Laudato Si





THE POWER TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE:

Featuring the voices of Laudato Youth, the plight of those affected by climate change, and environmental justice matters exploring Integral Ecology in the African worldview? Sharing Stories of Young People Amplifying Voices for Ecological Conversion in their Laudato Si Clubs in schools, Universities, Dioceses and Communities

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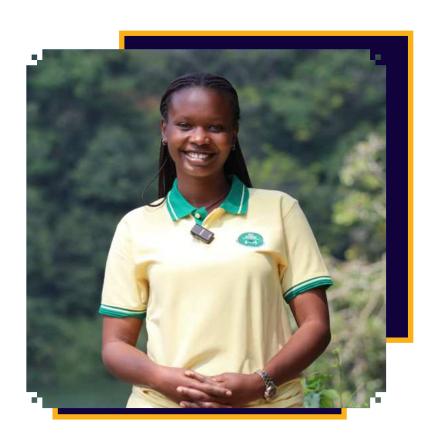
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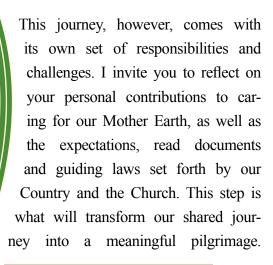
Editor's Note

ear Pilgrim of Green Hope,

Welcome to the distinguished 10th edition of the Laudato Voices Magazine. As we reflect on our shared journey since the inception of our publication, we are profoundly grateful for your continued presence and support. It is nothing short of remarkable to witness the progress we have made together, guided by the grace of the good Lord.

This edition holds special significance as we commemorate the Jubilee Year and 10th anniversary of the encyclical Laudato Si. Our theme "Pilgrims of Green Hope" draws inspiration from our desire to build a hopeful world and from the Church's Jubilee Year theme, "Pilgrims of Hope." It serves as an opportunity for us to align our mission with the imperative of fostering a collective journey towards environmental stewardship and sustainability in Uganda and beyond attracting even scholars from the world's great academic institutions with our unique niche of Laudato Si clubs helping our reader reflect on intergral ecology in the African worldview and stories of young people advocating for ecological conversion.





Our mission remains steadfast: to empower youth to take climate action through our Laudato Si clubs. These platforms provide a space for young people to engage with mentors and environmental issues, grounded in the African cultural and spiritual understanding of Integral Ecology. The wisdom of our indigenous heritage is intricately woven into our identity, guiding us in our efforts. In this edition, we explore the intersection of ecology, science, and technology, as well as the critical connections between food, biodiversity, mental health, and the environment.

We also discuss pressing issues, such as the growing internal and external deserts. We feature highlights from our Green Hope pilgrimages to Assisi, Italy, and significant natural heritage sites in Uganda and our experience of entering the Holy Door.

This year, we also celebrate the 10-year anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si. This is so amazing. We are honored to share a special interview with Vatican Radio in Rome, where our mentor discusses our impact in implementing the Pope's message in Uganda and beyond.

This conversation highlights our commitment to advancing an African interpretation of Laudato Si, amplifying voices that resonate with the Church's social teachings on the environment.

We feature contributions from friends of the Laudato Youth Initiative at Gregorian University in Rome and the University of Notre Dame, USA, as well as insights from our Laudato Youth Mentors. Their perspectives enrich our understanding of the intersection between faith and environmental stewardship.

As you engage with this amazing 10th edition, we encourage you to embrace the challenges ahead with positivity and to take meaningful action on your journey towards green hope in this Jubilee year. Thank you for being a vital part of our mission.

Ms. Immaculate Kisembo
Editor-in-Chief
Laudato Voices Magazine



Vatican Radio Interview

LAUDATO SI AT 10 YEARS

The Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis Laudato Si' released in 2015 which called for a global ecological conversion, marks its 10th anniversary this year 2025. The document released on the eve of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change urges humanity to care for our "common home" through sustainable living, social justice, and environmental stewardship. Now, a decade later, the world has witnessed both progress and persistent challenges. Faith communities, environmental organizations, and policymakers have launched initiatives promoting renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and climate justice, inspired by the Holy Father's call. However, the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and pollution have exacerbated global warming, leading to an increase of heat waves, droughts, wildfires, and floods.

Sr. Jacinta: Welcome to Vatican Radio! Today, we have the pleasure of speaking with Br. Adolf Mugume, a dedicated religious of the Congregation of Holy Cross, who is here to share his witness and expereince as a mentor of the Laudato Youth Initiative which has given hid to the Popes call action in Laudato Si as it celebrates its 10th anniversary. Br. Adolf, thank you for joining us.

Br Adolf: Thank you for having me! It's an honor to be here today.

Sr. Jacinta: To begin, could you tell us a bit about yourself and your apostolate?

Br Adolf: My name is Br. Adolf Mugume, a religious of the Congregation of Holy Cross, and I was born and raised in Fort Portal Diocese, Uganda, in a little beautiful Country Village of Saaka. I have been involved with mentoring the Laudato Youth Initiative since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This initiative grew out of the need to give Hope.

My role focus majorly on Faith Formation and Mentorship of Youth Leaders, inspiring them to embrace integral ecology and nurture stewards of the future, who value social justice,

grounded in the teachings of Pope Francis in his encyclical, Laudato Si', as well as Catholic Social teachings and SDG 13. I aim to empower youth to take action for our planet and model the way to sustainable living, encouraging them to become

active participants in the ecological conversion that we are called for by the Church to address the exacerbating global warming.

Sr. Jacinta: That's wonderful! What triggered you to begin a sustainability Project like the Laudato Youth Initiative?

Br. Adolf: The need to give hope amidist the exacerbating climate change and the urgent need for





OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS
ON LAUDATO SI BY ADOLF

RADIO

THE TABLET STEWARDS OF THE FUTURE
LAUDATO SI ACTION PLAT FROM
LYI RESPONDING TO LAUDATO SI

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Laudato Youth Initiative (LYI)

climate action, especially during the pandemic times that were heightened with environmental degradation in communities. Witnessing the effects of pollution and the climate injustice taking place during the pandemic motivated me to create a platform where youth who were locked in their homes could engage in meaningful action. In response to the message of the encyclical Laudato Si', we emphasize our shared responsibility to care for our common home and encourage young people to unite and be the change they want to see as stewards of the future.

Sr. Jacinta: Why did you choose to focus on the youth for this initiative?

Br. Adolf: I chose to front the youth because they are the future leaders who will inherit the consequences of today's environmental decisions. Engaging them fosters a sense of responsibility and hope, allowing them to become champions for change in their families and communities. We are also mentoring a generation of Laudato Youth who will grow up with the understanding of faith and values needed to approach environmental issues differently from what we are seeing today.

Sr. Jacinta: When did the Laudato Youth Initiative officially begin?

Br. Adolf: While our initiative started virtually during the pandemic with many community engagements arranged via media in 2020, we began in-person engagements in April 2022 after being hosted by John Paul Justice and Peace Centre-Kampala. A year later we launched a special program; of Laudato Si Clubs in Schools, Universities, Diocesese and communities.

Sr. Jacinta: Can you share some of the initiatives you've conducted to combat climate change?

Br. Adolf: Absolutely! Some key initiatives include the one million tree planting campaign, interfaith conferences, the laudato Si Festival, digital storytelling to fill the information gap and sentise people about the message of Laudato Si', community clean-up drives, and awareness workshops on waste management, the burning of fossil fuels, research and innovations, teaching practical in which we can apply ecological and social teachings in situations like hunger, poverty and confronting the realities of deforestation, poor waste management and other forms of pollution that are currently giving rise to heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and floods. We're also promoting sustainable agricultural practices and looking forward to partnering with local



organizations to promote renewable energy solutions.

Sr. Jacinta: It sounds like the Laudato Youth Initiative is making a significant impact on society. Can you elaborate more?

Br. Adolf: Certainly! The initiative has significantly influenced young people by integrating the message of Laudato Si' and Catholic Social teachings into their lifestyles. The game changer has been the innovation of "Laudato Si Clubs" where young people are united for action. This has led to a growth in our outreach across Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. Our youth are becoming advocates for sustainable practices, influencing their families and communities, and contributing to a broader initiative that emphasizes unity and social justice.

Sr. Jacinta: We have learned that Mental health awareness is also a focus for the Laudato youth. Why is that important in relation to the care of creation?

Br. Adolf: Well Mental health awareness is crucial because climate change has been shown to cause feelings of despair and anxiety among young people. For example, Immaculate Kisembo, one of our youth leaders, revealed in her cuurent article that "the current heatwaves in Uganda are affecting students' ability to concentrate in school. By addressing mental health, we recognize the interconnectedness of human well-being and a healthy environment." Our initiative promotes holistic care that encompasses both the external and internal environments.

Sr. Jacinta: What is the way forward for the Laudato Youth Initiative?

Br. Adolf: The way forward involves calling upon the Church and environmental enthusiasts to partner with us to expand our outreach. We aim to continue mentoring young people to take synodial appraoch of uniting with practical solutions to respond

to the message of Laudato Si in their Clubs to adopt sustainable practices and enhance educational programs while advocating for a unified effort that prioritizes ecological health and the needs of the improvished.

Sr. Jacinta: Are there any gaps that still need to be addressed despite the progress made?

Br. Adolf: Yes, there are still gaps that need urgent attention, such as insufficient funding for grassroots initiatives and a lack of comprehensive environmental education on the crisis. More also needs to be done at church levels to educate Christians about the meaning of this enyclical. We need to ensure that the voices of young people and the poor are included in discussions about climate action.

Sr. Jacinta: As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si', what final thoughts would you like to share with our audience?

Br. Adolf: As we all know this anniversaryfalls in a jubilee year of Hope so it is an opportunity for us to reflect and embrace the renewal foster commitment to a deeper conversion to mark a new begining in our efforts for ecological care. It serves as a call to action for all of us to deepen our commitment to ecological conversion and inspire others to support ecological initiatives and movements. Together, we can create a legacy of stewardship and care for our common home that future generations will be proud to inherit. I encourage everyone to get involved, educate themselves, and take action, as every small step counts in the journey toward ecological justice.

Sr. Jacinta: Thank you, Br. Adolf, for sharing your insights and experiences about the Laudato Youth Initiative and its vital role in promoting environmental stewardship. We appreciate your commitment to this important cause!

Br. Adolf: Thank you for having me! It's been a pleasure to share.

Director's Word

(Mr. Kahwa Benard



Modeling Practical Solutions for Climate Conservation

The demands for practical models to address climate change are increasing each passing day.

The weather extremes have continued due to human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. The evidence that humans are causing climate change, with drastic consequences for life on the planet, is overwhelming. Addressing climate change will require many solutions—and there is no magic bullet and on e - fits - allsolution.

Nearly all of these solutions exist today. It only requires right approaches and context-based

practical solutions. Aiming at large-scale models that the world is busy debating on is good. Granted. However, individual actions and localized solutions can play an equally important, if not better, role in addressing climate change. Laudato Youth initiative, with our mundane resources, is prioritizing practical models to address this challenge.

First, Reforestation and Afforestation Forests play essential role in absorbing water from the atmosphere, reforestation making (planting trees in deforested areas) and afforestation (planting trees in areas that were not previously forested) crucial solutions to combat climate change. **Protecting** existforests and preventing deforestation is just as important as planting new trees. sustainable Ensuring forestry practices can help preserve vitalecosystems. Urbanization is increasing Uganda therefore creating urban green spaces to reduce emissions by porating more green spaces, such as urban forests, parks, and rooftop gardens is paramount. These not only help absorb floods in cities but also improve air quality, reduce urban heat island effects, and enhance biodiversity. Moreover, sustainably-managed forests are the best climate protectors. Natural forests are not the best way to protect the climate. Ugandan forests are in a critical state. That is why support for forest owners is crucial if we are serious about climate mitigation. Initiatives such as urban forests and parks contribute to climate change mitigation.



Climate Education and Advocacy; one of the most powerful solutions to combat climate change is spreading awareness and advocating for policies that prioritize sustainability. Engaging communities especially youth who are the majority is a guarantee for climate change mitigation knowledge and protection. After all it's the population that will be making decision in the next few years. As public demand for climate action increases. governments, businesses, and organizations are more likely to implement effective solutions.

Education Campaigns to raise awareness about the science of climate change, its impacts, and actionable solutions is vital for empowering people to take individual and collective action.

Regenerative Agriculture and land use; Appreciating that Uganda is an agrarian country and agriculture is a significant emitter of greenhouse gases, but it also holds the potential for solutions. Regenerative farming practices go beyond sustainability, aiming to restore soil health, increase biodiversity, and sequester carbon in the ground. We train farmers in agroforestry-- integrating trees into agricultural landscapes to enhance carbon sequestration, improve soil fertility, and provide additional revenue sources for farmers through timber or fruit production. Additionally, we emphasize rotational grazing—the practice that involves moving livestock between different pasture areas to allow the land to recover and increase the ability of the soil to store carbon.

Digital media for climate change mitigation; the practical digital media campaigns

not only advance knowledge but create engagements enabling climate change mitigation solutions. Information about environment and climate change the mindsets

and challenge target audience to act. The biggest challenge to climate change adaptation measures acceptance is behavioral change. Uprooting such behaviors goes a long way in addressing the issue.

Important to note is that at the core of our work, we let beneficiaries not be passive, we make them active sources of information and fully involved in the projects. This is why it is important to focus much more on them and work with them, for example, primary beneficiaries local people to ensure intrinsic value.



Faith Farm - Kampala

Laudato Youth Leaders, in collaboration with the John Paul II Justice and Peace Center (JP2JPC) and

of living for young people through hands-on training and employment opportunities.



HCFM represented by Maria, embarked on a transformative pilgrimage to the Fruits of Faith Farm, located in Kampala. This initiative is part of our commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable living. The farm, which has branches in Arua, Moroto, and Fort Portal, specializes in horticulture and is dedicated to uplifting the standards

A Natural Oasis

Upon entering Fruits of Faith Farm, we were immediately enveloped by the beauty of nature, surrounded by a diverse array of plants, birds, and ani-

mals. This lush environment serves as a living classroom for young people, where they can learn the importance of preserving our natural resources.

The farm features over 20 varieties of bam-

boo and a range of medicinal plants, including the Mabujja tree, which gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic for its health benefits, such as alleviating headaches and flu symptoms.

Empowering Youth Through Agriculture

The primary mission of Fruits of Faith Farm is to equip young people with the skills they need to earn a sustainable living. The farm employs youths and provides them with training in agriculture and environmental conservation. This handson experience not only builds their capacity but also instills a sense of responsibility towards the environment. As Laudato Youth, this pilgrimage has been both an exciting



Urban Farming Innovations.

In an era where urbanization presents challenges, Fruits of Faith Farm embraces urban farming techniques to maximize limited land resources. Here, we witnessed the integration of digital technologies, such as hydroelectric power, to enhance sustainability. Water is supplied to the crops via an innovative system that combines natural resources with organic manure, resulting in healthy and nutritious greens. This approach aligns with our goal of promoting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13, which focuses on

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This lush environment serves as a living classroom for young people, where they can learn the importance of preserving our natural resources.

Diverse Agricultural Practices.

The farm features various sections that highlight sustainable practices:

- Fish Farming: Natural water holes have been transformed into fish ponds, demonstrating innovative aquaculture methods.
- *Floriculture:* A variety of flowers are cultivated to beautify gardens, showcasing the aesthetic potential of sustain able agriculture.
- *Vegetable Nursery Beds:* The farm enhances urban food security by growing a variety of vegetables, with lettuce being particularly in high demand. This initiative promotes healthy nutrition within the community.

Eco-Friendly Infrastructure

The farm also boasts eco-friendly cottages built with natural stones that allow water to pass through, preserving the land's natural topography. This sustainable construction method exemplifies the farm's commitment to environmental conservation. The key Lessons Learned include:

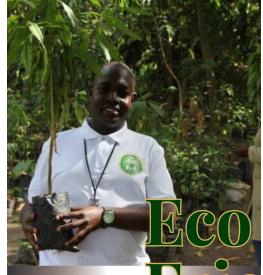
- Every Action Counts: Each of us has the power to make a difference in our communities through simple actions in environmental conservation.
- Food Security & Conservation: We cannot separate food security from environmental stewardship; they go hand in hand.
- Action Over Words: Real change requires action-oriented efforts rather than mere discussions.
- *Long-Term Commitment:* Conservation work necessitates passion and patience, yielding results over time.
- **Youth Involvement:** Engaging young people in conservation efforts is crucial for sustainable progress.













Friendly



As we prepare for our upcoming Sustainable Living Month program in April 2025, we are excited to launch initiatives encouraging all our clubs and partners to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives. We will focus on reducing waste, conserving power and water, and implementing the skills we've learned during our visit to Fruits of Faith Farm.







As Sarah, our Laudato Clubs President, aptly stated, "Together, we can cultivate a greener, more sustainable future." The visiting team was leaders by Fr. Apire Berry, CSC our Laudato Youth Initiative Chaplain, Maria Holy Cross Family Ministries - Uganda, Kirikuwmino Sarah our Clubs President and Innocent B of John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre.



Youth as Catalysts for Climate (Action and Peace:

Insights from our input at the University of Nairobi Literature

On 13th March, were presented a paper at the University of Nairobi conference Literature Conference, where our esteemed Laudato Youth Research editor, Augustine Bahemuka, a peace scholar, social justice advocate and social environmentalist and Publications editor, Immaculate Kisembo, an English Language teacher at Holy Cross Lake View S.S. Jinja with specialization in Linguistics, dedicated to the fields of language documentation, preservation, and mental health and environmental education presented an enlightening paper titled "The Role of the Youth in the Promotion of Peace and Humanity." This conference underscored the vital contributions of young people in addressing pressing global issues, particularly climate change and peacebuilding.

The presentation emphasized the growing recognition of the pivotal role that youth can play in tackling climate change and environmental degradation throughout Africa. Research indicates that young individuals possess the creativity and political engagement needed to advocate for sustainable solutions and hold leaders accountable (Barford et al., 2021a). A study highlighted in Johnson et al. (2013) further reveals that East African youth are eager to engage as responsible citizens, disseminating critical information to their communities and becoming agents of change in environmental conservation. The conversation about youth-led climate action in Africa can be viewed through two lenses: marginalization, which addresses the exclusion of youth from policy-making, and mobilization, which amplifies their voices through civic engagement and activism (Anyidoho et al., 2012).

The Laudato Youth Initiative: A ray of Hope

Founded in 2022, the Laudato Youth Initiative (LYI) aims to empower young people in Uganda to combat environmental challenges and promote sustainability, inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si' (2015), the catholic social teachings, the desire to respond to SDG13 and National Environmental Laws.

Mr. Augustine Bahemuka LYI - Research Editor



The Initiative is grounded in the belief that equipping youth with environmental education will cultivate a generation of environmentally conscious leaders who can inspire humanity to become better stewards of the Earth. Evidence suggests that enhancing young people's capabilities to confront climate-related issues is essential for fostering a sustainable future in Sub-Saharan Africa (Johnson et al., 2023).

LYI seeks to inspire young leaders through a variety of programs that connect them with peers and mentors across a network of twelve Laudato Si Clubs in East Africa. These clubs facilitate activities focused on five key areas: tree planting, climate education, research and publications, Raising awareness through Media and sustainable environmental projects.

Fostering Climate Action and Peace Through Education

Enhancing Ecological Knowledge: The Initiative prioritizes environmental education, enabling members to share knowledge about climate change and its impacts. Regular meetings, workshops, and conferences foster peer learning based on shared experiences.





Participants discuss the detrimental effects of human activities on the environment—such as deforestation and poor waste management—and exchange practical solutions for conservation. Engaging in activities like tree planting and environmental clean-ups not only raises awareness but also inspires activism among youth.

Developing a Sense of Ecological Responsibility: Hands-on experiences with nature, including tree planting and environmental clean-ups, are central to LYI's activities. Members learn to nurture trees, focusing on planting fruit and indigenous varieties that benefit both the environment and communities. This transformative experience instills confidence and a sense of responsibility in youth, motivating them to seek solutions to ecological and social challenges.

Promoting Self-Care through Nature: The importance of mental health awareness in educational settings is increasingly recognized, as many adolescents face mental health challenges. The Initiative creates spaces where young people can express themselves freely while engaging with nature. Activities like planting trees and walking in biodiverse areas cultivate mindfulness and appreciation for the environment. This connection enhances self-care among participants, enabling them to take better care of their mental and physical well-being.

The Laudato Youth Initiative utilizes various media platforms such as social media campaigns, podcasts, videos, and webinars to educate and engage young people about climate change. By sharing impactful stories, providing resources, and encouraging community involvement, they aim to inspire action and foster a collective commitment to environmental stewardship.

The need to integrate mental health awareness in education institutions has attracted increased attention, as it is critical in enabling learners to thrive holistically. The global picture revealed by WHO (2024) raises serious concern as one out of seven adolescents (10-19 years) experiences a mental disorder; and even worse, suicide ranks third among the leading causes of death among those aged 15–29 years.

These findings are parallel to Uganda where nearly 20% of adolescents experience mental health challenges; and suicide cases reported among learners

in school are on the rise (WHO, 2021; Daily Monitor 2025). Adolescence is a critical stage in human development given the physiological and physical changes learners experience; amidst rapid sociological, digital and ecological changes in their surroundings. Yet, studies on mental health in children and adolescents recommend orphans, HIV/AIDS-affected youth, former child soldiers and refugees as high-risk groups (Iversen et al. 2021); however, omit children from climate-affected areas.

The government has initiated programs aimed at promoting mental well-being among students, with emphasis on the importance of peer support and counselling services, which can create channels for open and free communication for learners (MoES, 2022). However, there is a need to broaden the spaces for learners to express themselves freely outside the classroom environments, where they can not only interact with each other, but with nature (Kisembo, 2025). The Initiative has a network of school clubs in both primary and secondary schools through which learners freely interact with each other, and nature as they participate in activities such as planting trees and flowers, and weeding young trees, and nature walks, inter alia. Connection with nature has a therapeutic calming effect as it draws individuals to mindfulness, gratitude and appreciation of nature, thereby cultivating a sense of responsibility to protect and conserve the environment. This sense of care for the environment transposes into a sense of self-care among learners, which enables them to take care of themselves, mentally and physically.

The insights shared at the University of Nairobi conference reinforced the essential role of youth in driving climate action and peace initiatives. As they engage with their communities and advocate for sustainable practices, young people are not only addressing environmental issues but also fostering a culture of peace and responsibility for future generations. The Laudato Youth Initiative stands as a testament to the power of youth-led movements in creating lasting change across Africa and beyond.



Prioritizing Mental Health:

A Call to Action for Uganda's Education System Amidst a Crisis

AUTHOR: MS IMMACULATE KISEMBO

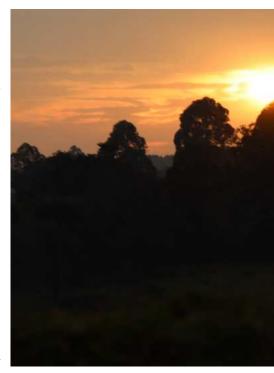
As Uganda transitions to a new competency-based curriculum, it is crucial that the Ministry of Education not only focuses on reducing the pressure of examinations but also addresses the pressing mental health issues that are affecting young people in schools. The recent alarming statistics reveal that 17.6% of school-going children in Uganda are battling depressive disorders, with rising rates of anxiety and insomnia. This crisis cannot be ignored any longer.

Just imagine should it be acceptable for very little children to seen on a Boda Boda heading to school at 6:00Am in the morning? What kind of sleep are these kids receiving, and how does it affect their mental health and development? The reality is concerning. As reported in a recent study published in the New Vision on March 14th, insufficient sleep and the stresses of modern education are taking a toll on the mental well-being of our youth.

Research conducted by Prof. Helen Weise and supported by leading institutions highlights the urgent need for better sleep and mental health support in our schools. The implications of sleep deprivation on the cognitive and emotional development of students are profound. The lack of adequate rest not only hampers academic performance but can also lead to long-term psychological issues, thereby compromising the future of our young people.

The climate crisis, with its accompanying heat waves, has exacerbated the situation, as noted in my previous article on the mental health struggles caused by extreme weather. However, the challenge extends beyond environmental factors; systemic issues within our education system, such as early school hours and excessive workload, contribute significantly to the mental health crisis.

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is a critical component of overall health. It is essential for learning and development, yet our current educational framework seems to neglect this fundamental aspect. Schools are meant to be safe havens for learning, but when they inadvertently become sources of stress and anxiety, they fail in their primary mission.



Mental Health

is not a luxury; it is a necessity

Kisembo

To address this growing crisis, we must advocate for the following:

- 1. Implement Policies for Adequate Rest: The Ministry of Education should consider revising school hours to ensure that children have enough time for rest and recuperation. Proper sleep is vital for cognitive function and emotional stability.
- 2. *Integrate Mental Health Education:* Schools should incorporate mental health education into the curriculum, equipping students with the tools to understand and manage their mental health.
- 3. Provide Accessible Mental Health Resources: Establish mental health support services within schools, including counseling and wellness programs, to assist students in navigating their emotional challenges.

4. *Engage Parents and Communities:* Creating awareness around the importance of mental health among parents and communities.

As we reflect on the good future of education in our glorious Uganda, it is imperative that we do not overlook the mental health of our students for it has alot to say about the future. The statistics are clear, and the time to act I think is now because its not too late. By prioritizing mental health and proper hours of rest, we can create an educational system that not only values academic achievement but also nurtures the well-being of our youth thus creating a conducive environment for young people to thrive in todays dynamic society.



In the Pearl of Africa, is the glorious Uganda that cradles the banks of Lake Victoria, with a faith story of hope and sacrifice that has transcended generations. The Uganda Martyrs, a group of young Christians who stood firm in their beliefs against the tyrannical rule of King Mwanga II in the late 19th century, are revered not just for their unwavering faith but also for their deep connection to the land and its resources. Their legacy, interwoven with the threads of ecological sustainability, serves as a beacon of hope our Laudato Si Clubs and commitment to caring for creation and cultivate hope for more action.

Uganda is a Country where lush greenery, diverse wildlife, and fertile soils flourish and is known as the home of the Uganda Martyrs who were not only devoted followers of Christianity; they were also stewards of their land. They understood the intricate balance between nature and spirituality, recognizing that their faith was intrinsically tied to the environment that nurtured them. *They planted* trees, tended to gardens, and practiced sustainable farming, ensuring that their community thrived while respecting the earth.

As the missionaries

introduced Christianity. the Martyrs embraced the teachings that emphasized respect. stewardship of creation. They learned that God's creation was not merely a resource to be exploited but a sacred trust to be cared This understanding deepened their commitment to ecological sustainability, aligning their faith with the rhythms of nature.

However, as King Mwanga II sought to assert his power, he saw the growing influence of Christianity as a threat. The Martyrs faced an agonizing choice: to abandon their faith and conform to the king's demands or to stand firm in their beliefs, risking their lives. They chose courage over fear. Their martyrdom not only marked a pivotal moment in Uganda's history but also ignited a flame of consciousness ecological that would burn brightly for generations to come.

In the wake of their sacrifice, the Ugandan landscape began to change. The communities inspired by the Martyrs' bravery rallied together to honor their legacy by advocating for faith and now protection of the environment through the totems they treasured. That is why many tribes and cultural

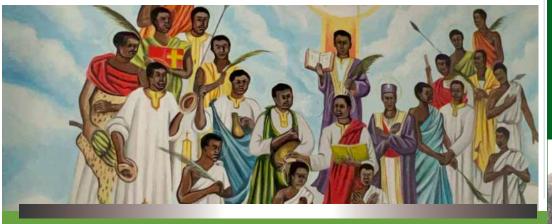
kingdoms still strongly treasure totems something that tiggers Laudato Youth to raise voices calling up these institutions to take a lead in caring for creation. Planting trees in memory of Martyrs and heroic legacy makers of the ministries where our Laudato Si Clubs are located, we appreciate the fact that lush forests served as sanctuaries for wildlife and a source of sustenance for the people. The Martyrs' story should be seen as catalyst for the church and conservation initiatives in Uganda, reminding us that just like the Martyrs our faith callsus to protect Mother earth.

Today, as Uganda grapples with the challenges of deforestation. change, and habitat loss, the spirit of the Martyrs lives in our hearts as Laudato Youth. We now strive to teach young people about the importance of caring for the environment, drawing parallels between the sacrifice of the Martyrs and the responsibility to safeguard the planet. Our school/University/Parish/ Diocese and Community programs ecological restore degraded lands, promote sustainable agriculture, need to be enhanced and more people should join hands with us to

The Legacy of the Uganda Martyrs in Ecological Sustainability

protect biodiversity, inspired by our steadfastness and love of the Martyrs gift of sacrifice. Their blood is a seed of faith and hope for our Country and the rest of Africa.

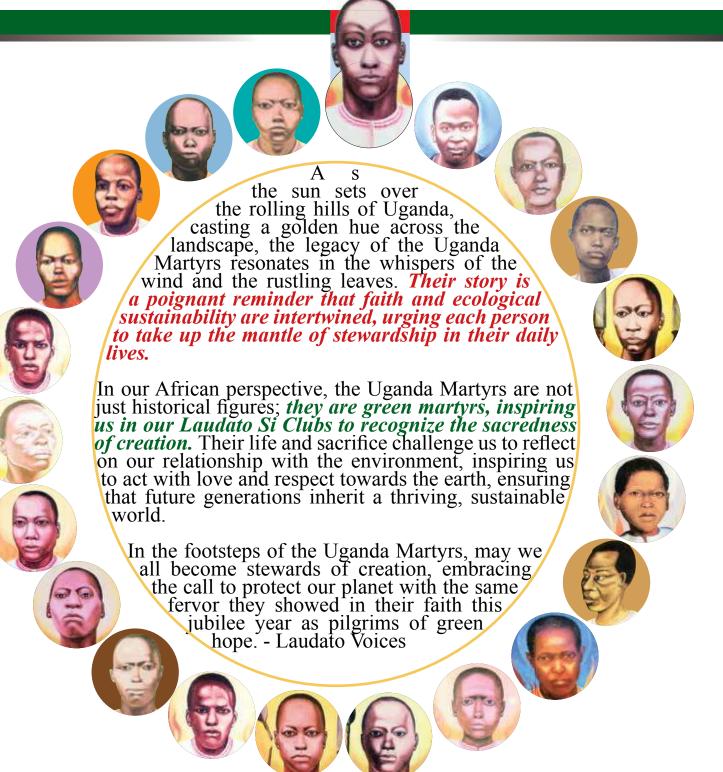
In the villages like Katoosa the church and, families gather in large numbers to comemorate and share stories of the Uganda Martyrs, not only as martyrs of faith but also as champions of ecological sustainability to mention St. Adolf Mukasa Rudigo Patron of farmers and hardsmen. The edlers tell tell stories of how this young man, in his quest for truth, taught the importance of living in harmony with nature. In those stories we are encouraged to honor the earth by practicing traditional farming preserving methods. indigenous plants, and cultivating biodiversity.





Ecological Sustainability and the Uganda

MARTYRS









HOW A UGANDAN CATHOLIC YOUTH-LED INITIATIVE IS RESPONDING TO LAUDATO SI'

Posted March 20, 2025

Across Uganda, young people are leading the charge in climate action, blending faith with tangible solutions. From schools and universities to dioceses, these youth are pioneering sustainability projects that extend beyond borders, now reaching Kenya and Tanzania. At the heart of this effort is the <u>Laudato Youth Initiative</u> (LYI), a dynamic force housed at the John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre in Uganda's capital Kampala. Though operating from a modest one-room office, LYI coordinates a vast network of passionate young leaders committed to ecological transformation.

A FAITH-DRIVEN INITIATIVE

Brother Adolf Mugume, C.S.C., has been instrumental in mentoring these youth, guiding them to develop African-centered solutions to climate challenges. Under his leadership, LYI participants have engaged in tree planting, civic education, mental health awareness, media advocacy through digital storytelling, and scientific sustainability innovations. Their approach leverages social media and technology to engage Uganda's youth—among the youngest population in the world—in climate action that resonates with their experiences.



"We are called to care for our common home, as urged by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*," Brother Adolf explains. "Our work is deeply rooted in Catholic social teachings, Ugandan environmental laws, and even the Story of the Uganda Martyrs, which inspires conversations on faith, ecological sustainability, and cultural values. We must act now, aligning our efforts with the call of *Laudate Deum* and the urgency of <u>Sustainable Development Goal 13</u>."

YOUTH BRIDGING GENERATIONS

Their approach involves establishing "Laudato Si Clubs" and mentoring a generation of climate-responsive young individuals known as "Laudato Youth." One inspiring young leader within LYI is Sarah Kirikumwino, a recent high school graduate and Laudato Si' Clubs leader. She has facilitated intergenerational dialogues, ensuring that youth and elders work together for sustainability.

"Sarah is helping young people see themselves as part of the solution, not the problem," Brother Adolf reflects. "By guiding elders to appreciate sustainable practices through community service, she fosters cross-generational learning and acceptance."

INNOVATION AND ACTION IN THE FIELD

The initiative is hands-on, with youth immediately applying their skills to climate projects. LYI members actively document climate change stories, such as Immaculate Kisembo's report on rising heat waves affecting students. Meanwhile, young innovators are addressing environmental hazards with practical solutions. At Holy Cross Lake View S.S.S in Jinja, students developed a solar tracking system to optimize energy efficiency and designed a miniature helicopter for flood and landslide rescue missions.





"The dedicated teachers at Holy Cross are true educators," Sarah notes. "They instill values of faith and service while preparing students to tackle real-world problems with creativity and resilience."

GROWING BEYOND BORDERS

LYI's impact is expanding, driven by its commitment to grassroots engagement. "True change comes from within the community," Brother Adolf emphasizes. "By involving local churches, leaders, and families, we ensure our initiatives are more than just temporary interventions—they become part of the community's way of life."

Recent projects reflect LYI's widening reach:

- A one million tree planting drive promoting reforestation and ecological restoration.
- · Smart agriculture initiatives that teach sustainable farming techniques.
- The Pilgrims of Green Hope Jubilee Year Campaign, mobilizing faith communities in climate action.
- Research and Publication efforts, including <u>presentations on fostering environmental responsibility</u> at key academic events.

While LYI operates with limited resources, the commitment of its members is unwavering. "With strategic partnerships and the generosity of well-wishers, we can exponentially grow our impact among East African youth," Brother Adolf notes.

As LYI continues to expand, it is not only addressing immediate climate concerns but also shaping a generation prepared to face future environmental challenges. By integrating faith with action, the Laudato Youth Initiative is proving that young people are not just participants in the climate effort—they are leading it.

One Million Tree Planting Drive

Promoting reforetsrtaion and ecological restoration





Smart agriculture initiatives that teach sustainable farming techniques and co existing with nature with climate-related topics, including living soils, biodiversity, regenerative, agroforestry, water







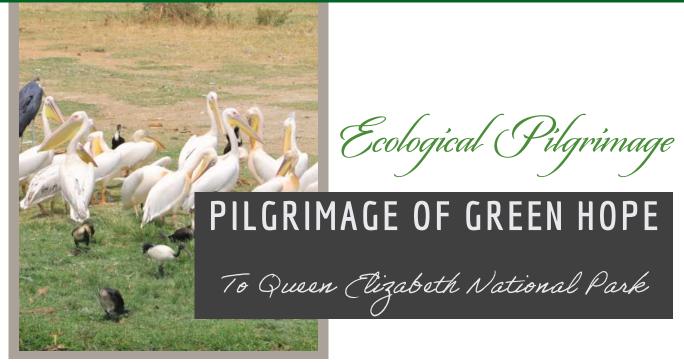








Our Green Hope Pilgrimages



THIS JUBILEE YEAR INVITES US TO EMBRACE THE EXPERIENCES OF RENEWAL AND SPIRITUAL REFLECTION. WE HAVE EMBARKED ON PILGRIMAGES THAT ALLOW US TO RECONSIDER OUR PAST ACTIONS AND ALIGN OURSELVES WITH A PATH THAT PREPARES US TO FACE THE FUTURE WITH COURAGE

As Pilgrims of Green Hope, our focus is on fostering a healthier environment. In a world grappling with injustices, the repercussions of toxic wars, and climate change, our mission is to actively be part of the people rejuvenating hope for our Mother Earth. When God first created the universe. Humanity was entrusted the with the duty of stewardship. Yet today, our planet's beauty has diminishing in our hands, marked by the extinction of countless plant and animal species, many of which have vanished entirely. This pilgrim for us was one of hope to see the efforts of UWA in conserving our Countries rich heritage at the equator, wildlife and bio- diversity. Our journey began at the equator, where the region experiences a tropical climate, although its relatively hotter than its neighboring areas. This enriching experience of learning about our country and promoting tourism in the Pearl of Africa has been greatly enhanced by the warmth of its people. It is essential to embrace sustainable practices, particularly in ecological heritage sites like Queen Elizabeth National Park.

Water is vital for all aquatic life; the amazing thing is the aquatic animals coexist with the non-marine animals like elephants which depend on Kazinga channel corridor for their food and water. Thhis is exceotionally pristine. Kazinga Channel which connects lake







Edward to Lake George, we found a thriving ecosystem supporting diverse wildlife, including crocodiles, Buffalos, hippos etc., all thriving in these the fresh waters. As we traversed this landscape, we recognized the importance work done by the rangers who guided us and explained to us the life and rights of animals enlightening us more to under why their rights must be respected; we also leant about their ability adapt to environmental changes, often retreating during heat as a survival instinct. Additionally, migratory birds from Europe are spotted here in winter, showcasing their own adaptations to seasonal shifts in search for survival.

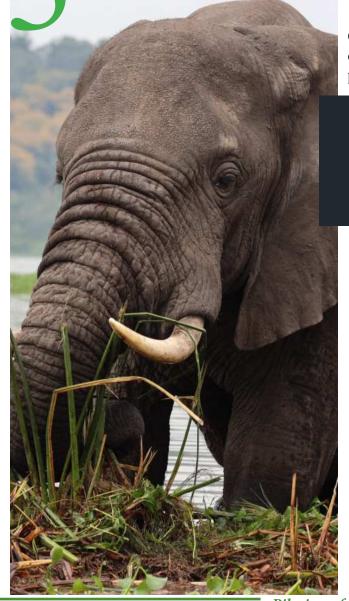
Our actions as Laudato Youth will reflect a genuine desire for renewal this year, reminding us that the present state of our planet is a direct result of our

ELEPHANTS

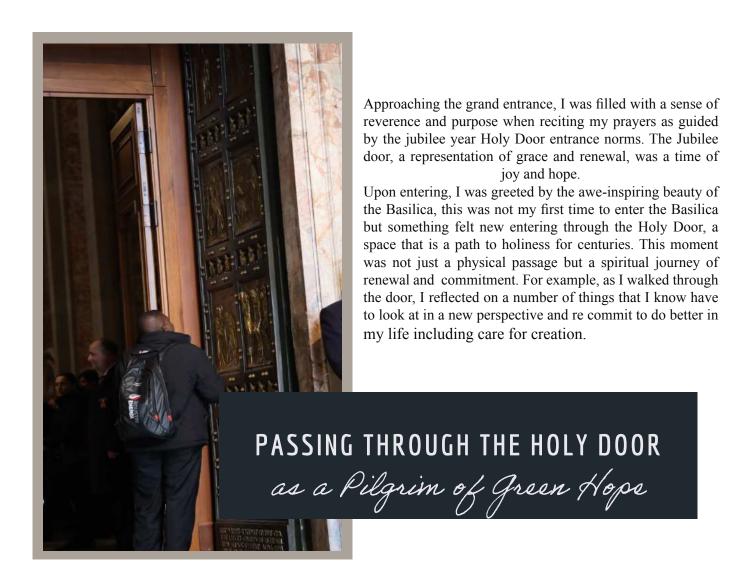
Feeding in Kazinga Channel

stewardship. While it's easy to place blame on one another for the current state of affairs, we each play a crucial role. If our actions do not combat climate change, they will inevitably work against us. As we raise our voices and take collective action against climate change, we must also reflect on our individual contributions. Our planet deserves a rebirth.

Let us rekindle the deep respect our grandparents had for nature and work together for peace and justice as we reconcile humanity with the natural world. Join us on this journey as Pilgrims of Green Hope, focusing on actionable steps that will ensure a climate-resilient future for our shared home. This edition will feature amazing stories of our action response that may inspire you to join us in taking actionable steps.







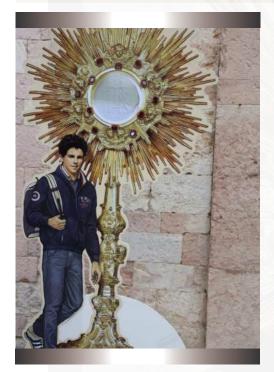
"THE EXPERIENCE OF PASSING THROUGH THE JUBILEE DOOR AT ST. PETER'S BASILICA IN ROME WAS DEEPLY SYMBOLIC AND MOVING.

Inside, I joined other pilgrims in prayer and reflection.

As I stepped out of the basilica, I felt invigorated, The experience at St. Peter's Basilica, for me marked by the passage through the Jubilee door, served as a powerful reminder of my responsibility as a Green Hope Pilgrim—dedicated to nurturing the planet for future generations.











'WE ARE A GENERATION THAT NEEDS MORE UNITY AND GOD TO EFFECTIVELY USE OUR GIFTS, TO TAILOR EFFECTIVELY THE INNOVATIONS AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS THAT WE LIVE WITH. SCIENCE IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF GOD. SCIENCE IS KNOWING GOD AND GIVING HIM THE REVERENCE THAT IS DUE IN OUR LIVES'.

The visit to sites associated with St. Francis of Assisi and Blessed Carlo Acutis in Rome was a profound experience that deepened my faith and commitment to environmental stewardship as part of the year-long Pilgrimage of Green Hope, commemorating the Jubilee Year of Hope.

St. Francis of Assisi and His Church

The journey began at the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, where I was struck by the saint's deep connection to nature and simplicity. St. Francis, known as the patron saint of ecology, emphasized the importance of caring for God's creation, a principle that resonates with the Laudato Youth Initiative's mission. I reflected on St. Francis's famous prayer, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace," recognizing that promoting environmental justice is essential for achieving peace in the world.

Olive Gardens

Next, I walked through the famous olive gardens near the basilica of St. Clare, the inspiration for me was of peace and abundance fruits from man's sanctifying activity of work. It reminded me of the importance of the home kitchen gardens we have in Uganda. The olive tree is often associated with resilience and hope, qualities that are vital for young environmental advocates. In these gardens, I participated in a small gathering where participants shared stories of their environmental efforts, such as organizing tree-planting initiatives and community clean-ups. This experience reinforced the idea that just as olive trees endure harsh conditions, so too can young people thrive and make a difference in the face of climate challenges.

Blessed Carlo Acutis's Tomb (Mass for his canonization will be on April 27th 2025)

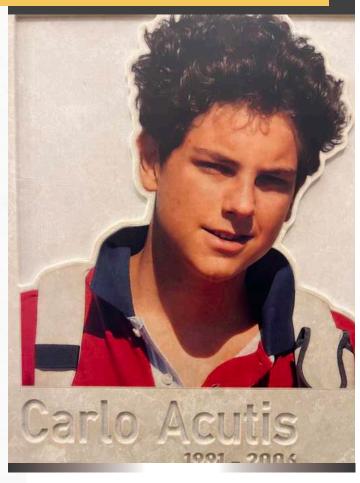
The visit then continued to the tomb of Blessed Carlo Acutis, a young Italian who was beatified in 2020 and is now recognized as a model for the youth who used the media to promote devotion to the Eucharist. This reminded me of our Laudato Youth Leaders' enduring faith to promote ecological awareness even using the media. As I stood before Carlo's tomb, I was inspired by his dedication to using technology for the good, particularly in promoting the Eucharist and the faith among young people. Carlo's example illustrates how youth can blend their passions with their faith, and I envisioned ways to enhance more digital storytelling innovations into the Laudato Youth

BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS

We had a community Mass in the Parish Church where his body rests which was a great inspiration and moment of communion in prayer with a bigger East African community involved in the pilgrimage.

The Place Where Carlo's Heart Is

A particularly moving moment occurred at the site where Carlo's heart is displayed, symbolizing his unwavering love for God and others. The same church is where St. Francis used to go to pray before proceeding to his mission endeavors.



"The world needs us to know our neighbors (those in need, like the story of the good samaritan), the world also needs us to know God and use our unique gifts to make Him known and loved.

Both Francis and Carlo denounced their riches to do the will of God by serving others! What Am I, or are you denouncing?



The Jubilee
Experience
A time of Spiritual
Renewal



The Laudato Youth Initiative's approach to Laudato Si action response is based on the African philosophical concept of caring for creation rooted in two fundamental aspects: the Communitarian response (ubuntu) - uniting for climate action and the Uganda Martyrs Model of integrating the cultural and spiritual Legacy. Amidst the environmental and climate crises that our world faces today, the connection between Uganda's Martyrs and integral ecology has yet to be fully explored. Our initiative invites schools, universities, dioceses, parishes, communities to reflect on how we can embody care for creation and the catholic social teachings in our daily lives.

In his recent talk at the 60th anniversary of the Uganda Martyrs Bishop Joseph Anthony Zziwa, President of the Episcopal Conference of Uganda, said the relationship between Sainthood, Martyrdom, Integral Ecology and Catholic theology provides a rich body of teaching that delves into the relationship between sainthood, martyrdom, and integral ecology. Throughout history, saints and martyrs have demonstrated an attachment to nature, a practice that dates back to early Christian communities.

For these early Christians and our grandparents nature was seen as a divine act of creation, offering a scriptural message that highlights its significance.

When we see nature revenging on humanity it means we have lost sense of its sacredness. If nature is understood as part of God's creative act, and we recognize its value then we shall be praising the creator. While nature itself is not God, it is a manifestation of His creative wisdom (as referenced in Exodus 20:4-6; John 5:21; Colossians 1:21-23). Rather than viewing nature as something to be subdued, we are called to appreciate it as a gift from God. The Uganda Martyrs serve as a poignant reminder of our vocation to stewardship of creation. This inspires us to care for creation.

LISTEN TO HIS FULL MESSAGE



When we reflect the Symbolic Relationship Between Humanity, Nature, and God: The Uganda Martyrs exemplify the intrinsic connection. They remind us that our existence and well-being are interdependent with the rest of creation. Pope Francis emphasizes this Laudato Si, calling us to conserve forests, water bodies, wetlands, soils, and other elements of nature. We take on the challenge of managing waste responsibly, ensuring that our actions do not harm human or animal health, and enforcing our Countries' laws that protect our environment.

In as much as totems are attributed to many cultures in Uganda, the Martyrs preserved their cultural totems, which represented various aspects of nature. Each clan was symbolized by an animal or living creature, such as the Colobus Monkey for St. Buzabalyawo and the Bushbuck for St. Charles Lwanga.

A creation of Taga F. Nuwagaba and co-written by Nathan Kiwere, *Totems of Uganda* is a full-color illustrated book with totemic species and accompanying stories of the same. The book captures Central Uganda's cultural history and translates all totems into over seven languages. It links the totems with their visual representations so that they can be widely identified, especially by the younger generation.

For example, on page 66, you will find illustrations of Ente Ngoobe which is a totem in the South Western part of Uganda, among the Banyankole cultural tribe. Here, Taga showed that the totem's ideology is not only unique to the Baganda of central Uganda but to all tribes. This aspect demonstrates the similarity

in African culture; regardless of geographical location. In his book, he added "When animals were becoming scarce, Kintu, with the general consent of his people, made a rule that certain kinds of animals should be taboo to certain families. Thus, those particular species of animals were left to other families, and the animals were given a better chance of multiplying than if every man had been free to hunt every species for food. Each family abstained from that particular kind of animal of which they had partaken with ill results, and that animal was tabooed by them, and became their totem."

Renowned Wildlife ambassador, Jane Goodall writes in the foreword: "I believe Totems of Uganda - Buganda Edition will inspire young people to investigate and learn about their own cultural roots, which will help them understand their people better". In respect to this form of presentation, it unites us and also reminds us of how our ancestors lived in harmony. This connection to nature highlights the strong values we hold in Africa and Uganda regarding relationship with environment.

Thus these are strong values that inform our efforts in embracing Integral Ecology where all our Laudato Si clubs are invited to embrace this concept as part of God's divine plan. This understanding reminds us of our origins as humans and the reality to which we shall return. The practical implications of this are evident in the lives of the Uganda demonstrated Martyrs, who that loving nature involves conserving it and protecting all its elements. And when we love nature, we shall love God the

creator.

Looking back on the life of St. Adolf Mukasa Ludigo a martyr from Fort Portal Dioceses in Katoosa Paris, Kyenjojo district. His shrine is made of rocks that have existed for thousands of years. These twenty-two rocks correspond with the number of the catholic martyrs killed in 1885 and 1886 and that is what makes these rocks become an icon of the Catholic Martyrs.

The life of St. Adolf Ludigo is significant because he is also the patron of farmers and herdsmen, a true embodiment of integral ecology. Adolf Mukasa Ludigo, Like other Uganda Martyrs met his death at Namugongo on June 3, 1886 at the age of twenty-four. From the examples of our Uganda Martyrs, we learn and are invited to love nature, recognizing it as a reflection of God's creation. The challenges posed in Laudato Si invite us to act in ways that honor our commitment to stewardship and care for our common home. By aligning our actions with the principles of integral ecology, we can cultivate a culture of respect for creation that honors the legacy of the Uganda Martyrs and their profound connection to nature.

Laudato Si Clubs are committed to integrating ecology into the African worldview by inspiring climate action and telling stories of ecological conversion that will inspire people of our time and the generations to come. Knowing that together as pilgrims of hope in this Jubilee year of hope, we will take meaningful steps toward nurturing our environment and ensuring a sustainable future for us today and the generations to come.

Laudato voices

Raising Awareness through Media



Laudato Youth of Nyakasura School at VOT Radio to talk about sanitation and hygiene in schools and homes. The importance of planting of trees and how to Care for the environment.

March 13th, our Laudato Si Club members from Nyakasura School had the incredible opportunity to go live on the airwaves at VOICE OF TOORO (V.O.T FM)! During the broadcast, they engaged in a meaningful discussion focused on vital topics such as sanitation and hygiene in both schools and homes. They emphasized the importance of maintaining clean and healthy environments, not just for themselves but for the well-being of our communities. Additionally, they highlighted the critical role that tree planting plays in preserving our ecosystem, discussing how trees contribute to cleaner air,

combat climate change, and provide habitats for wildlife.



The conversation encompassed a broader perspective on environmental stewardship, urging listeners to recognize their responsibility in caring for our planet. We are grateful to the Natural Resources Defense Initiative (NRDI) for organizing this event and providing our Laudato Youth with a platform to amplify our voices for Mother Earth.





Jubilee Radio for Jubilee Year, a media house amplifying voices for "Pilgrims of Green Hope"



Our conversations proved to be incredibly fruitful, as we explored the radio's essential role in rebranding Catholic media in Fort-portal Catholic Diocese and its commitment to enlightening God's people about this special Jubilee Year. Re-branding with new media empower youth to take climate action through our Laudato Si clubs. These platforms provide a space for young people to engage with mentors and environmental issues, grounded in the African cultural and spiritual understanding of

Integral Ecology. The wisdom of our indigenous heritage is intricately woven into our identity, guiding us in our efforts.

We were truly amazed by the fantastic work they're doing to spread the message of "The Joy of the Family."



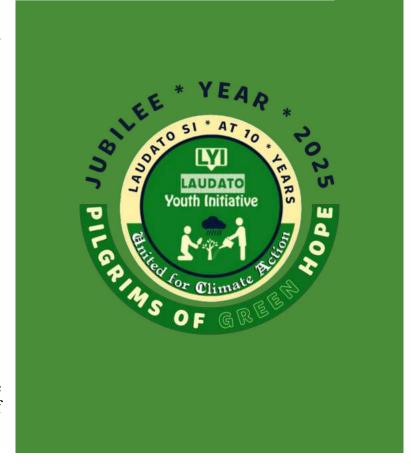
Laudato Youth had an absolutely enriching experience spending time with Fr. Ronald Musinguzi Atwoki, the Managing Director of 105.6 Jubilee Radio, along with his enthusiastic new media team.





Our Laudato Si Clubs

Through our Laudato Si clubs, which serve as a community platform for addressing environmental issues with practical solutions rooted in African Ecological Values and Principles. We aim to amplify voices and enhance action for our African interpretation of Laudato Si, and respond to the Church's Social Teachings regarding the environment, creating a synergy that integrates these essential church documents with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 13, as well as our Ugandan environmental laws. This approach enables a cohesive and effective response to the challenges we face in line with respecting the role of sceience and research."



Exclusive Interview



Doreen: Hello Sarah! arah: How are you today?

Doreen: I am okay, thank you!

Sarah: That's great to hear! I understand you're a student at Moreau Nursery and Primary School. Are you a leader in your school? If so, can you share your leadership journey and what your role entails?

Doreen: Yes, I'm the leader of the Laudato Si Club. As members, we focus on taking care of our environment.

Sarah: That's wonderful! What inspires you to write the stories and poetry that you do as a member of the Laudato Si Club?

Doreen: I write to raise awareness and to stop the harmful actions that are damaging our environment.

Sarah: Can you give me examples of these harmful actions?

Doreen: Sure! Some of the bad actions include charcoal burning and cutting down trees.

Sarah: And how do you believe these actions affect us today?

Doreen: These trees are essential for rainfall formation. When we cut them down, we don't get enough rainfall, which leads to droughts.

Sarah: Absolutely! Deforestation also contributes to rising temperatures. What message would you share with young people to help us create a climate-resilient future?

Doreen: I would tell them to plant more trees and flowers and make sure to water them. It also helps to beautify their surroundings!

Sarah: Earlier, you mentioned you're a leader in the Laudato Si Club. Are there any specific activities you engage in, like planting trees or crops around the school? Doreen: Yes, we have many trees around our school, and we also plant vegetables.

Sarah: That's interesting! How do these vegetables benefit you as students? Doreen: The vegetables promote our health and provide us with energy for other activities.

Sarah: Do you have a school canteen to serve those vegetables?

Doreen: No, we don't have a canteen.

Sarah: I see. You must have noticed a lot of litter in the outside community. I must say, your school is quite clean and free from plastic waste. What advice would you give to people in your community about managing plastic waste?

oreen: I advise them to recycle plastics after teaching them how to do it properly.



Pilgrims of Green Hope

arah: That's great! Do you know how to create products from recycled plastics? *Doreen: Yes, I do!*

Sarah: What kinds of products can you make?

Doreen: For example, we can make dustbins!

Sarah: Wow, that's an impressive way to recycle! Have you encountered any obstacles or seen people suffering from the effects of climate change?

Doreen: Yes, I have.

Sarah: What have you observed?

Doreen: I've seen that people living in bad climates sometimes get sick, like developing cancer, and they often have poor health overall.

Sarah: That's very true. A healthy environment leads to healthy people.

Doreen: Yes!

Sarah: This is the Jubilee Year. What do you think young people can do in conjunction with the Jubilee Year?

Doreen: We are planning to organize community cleaning activities.

Sarah: That sounds fantastic! When you say community cleaning, what does that involve?

Doreen: It involves sweeping, picking up plastics, and finding ways to reuse them.

Sarah: It's wonderful to hear how you're creating bonds in the community through these efforts. Did you know that by participating in community cleaning, you're also raising awareness?

Doreen: Yes, I understand that it's about love for one another and caring for our environment.

Sarah: Thank you, Doreen, for sharing your insights and inspiring us to take action for our common home!

Doreen: Thank you for having me!

CLICK HERE TO WATCH FULL INTERVIEW

Doreen's Call for Action



In a world increasingly grappling with environmental degradation, the voice of young advocates is more important than ever. Doreen, a passionate student and leader of the Laudato Si Club at Moreau Nursery and Primary School, embodies the spirit of change that we need to protect our planet.

I feel very bad when I see the destruction of our green environment. Doreen expresses



MOREAU NURSARY AND PRIMARY -LAUDATO SI CLUB PRESIDENT

Click to Watch the full story on YouTube

Doreen's Call to Action: A Young Advocate for Our Common Home



Behind every Laudato Youth leader is a mentor

Doreen's story begins with her deep connection to nature and her understanding of our shared responsibility to care for it. "Our common home is surrounded by green," she says, emphasizing the beauty of the trees, flowers, and lush grass that enrich our lives. However, she has witnessed the alarming consequences of environmental neglect—prolonged droughts, declining rainfall, and alarming health issues like cancer. "I feel very bad when I see the destruction of our green environment," Doreen expresses, highlighting her concern for both the planet and the people living on it.

Doreen believes that collective action is essential. "I advise people to take care of our common home," she urges, advocating for simple yet impactful actions like planting more trees and nurturing flowers. Her message resonates particularly with the youth, as she recognizes the power, they hold in shaping the future. "We can make our Uganda and nation shine," she asserts, reinforcing the idea that the efforts of young people can lead to a healthier environment for generations to come.

However, Doreen does not shy away from addressing the challenges posed by harmful practices. "Some people destroy our environment by cutting down trees and burning charcoal," she points out, calling attention to the disregard for governmental messages aimed at environmental protection. Her plea is clear: "Listen to the messages about caring for our environment," she implores, emphasizing the importance of awareness and education in fostering a culture of sustainability.





Doreen's commitment to environmental stewardship extends beyond mere words;

As a leader, she actively participates in initiatives that promote ecological responsibility, inspiring her peers to join her in creating a greener future. She believes that by taking care of nature, the community cannot only combat the current environmental crisis but also ensure a safe and healthy world for future generations.



Young Leaders in Laudato inspiring change mitigation, Hope and Action response

Doreen's voice reminds us

of the potential that lies within young advocates. Her passionate call to action serves as an inspiration for all of us to reflect on our relationship with the environment and to take meaningful steps towards its preservation. As we listen to Doreen, we are encouraged to join her in advocating for our common home—because the world needs more voices like hers, championing the cause of environmental care and sustainability.





GO GREEN LAUDATO SI CLUB - NAIROBI



THE 3Es CLIMATE FRESK

Workshop was held on 1st February 2025

NAIROBI- KENYA

OUR GO GREEN LAUDATO SI CLUB OF Nairobi was privileged to receive AN INVITATION FROM THE 3Es GROUP TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CLIMATE FRESK WORKSHOP THAT WAS CONDUCTED in Kileleshwa, Nairobi. The 3Es ORGANIZATION IS DEDICATED TO PROMOTING ENERGY, CLEAN **ENVIRONMENTAL** AND **COMMUNITY** STEWARDSHIP, EMPOWERMENT. THE CLIMATE FRESK ACTIVITY ITSELF IS AN ENGAGING AND INTERACTIVE PUZZLE THAT USES CARDS TO ILLUSTRATE THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS CLIMATE CHANGE. PARTICIPANTS COLLABORATE TO ARRANGE THESE CARDS, ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES AND TRACING THEIR FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES.



One of the primary concerns highlighted during the workshop was our dependence on fossil fuels in daily life, especially in the transportation and industrial sectors. The consequences of this dependence are severe resulting in devastating impacts such as drought, social unrest, increased disease spread, and entrenched poverty.

To conclude the workshop, participants were divided into groups to brainstorm the potential solutions to these pressing challenges. The groups focused on the following innovative strategies; Climate education. Raising awareness in schools and institutions through Climate Freak activities. Community engagement. Organizing events to promote green jobs and career opportunities. Policy advocacy; leading policy formulation and advocacy efforts at the national level. Strategic partnerships. Seeking partnerships to further amplify the cause.

These group initiatives are aimed to drive meaningful change and address the environmental challenges discussed during the workshop.

We are the change makers we have been waiting for, as Pilgrims of Green Hope we are committed to securing a brighter future. Let us "Unite and act now" towards a common goal; building a sustainable future for all. Our club member says in Swahili, "Umoja ni nguvu, utengano ni udhaifu"—Unity is our strength.. Together as Laudato youth, we can make a difference by joining forces with others for climate action. Let's rise as one and shape the future of tomorrow.



I hope you are doing well and thriving in this busy city of Nairobi. Hopefully, capitalism hasn't taken too much of a toll on you. Have you had a moment to sit down and unwind amidst the fast pace this city sets? Who am I kidding with this question?

Oh, before I forget—I read both the books you sent me, and can I just say how visionary you are? I especially loved the first one because you highlight your childhood in it, and you know how I am with anything nostalgic. Keep going, and don't hesitate to send me more of your work. I'll be your free proofreader—until, of course, you officially publish and become a bestseller. Then, you'll have to pay me something!

I spoke to my mom the other day, and she inquired about your family back home. Of course, I didn't have an answer, but I'm hoping you'll let me know how they're doing so I can inform her.

As for me, I am very well. Life has been kind. Dandora is still Dandora—or maybe not exactly the same because, remember that piece of land we were claiming? We finally reclaimed all of it! I'll find pictures and send them to you. And while we're on this, our Go Green Laudato Club is thriving.



We're all learning on the job—both in leadership and climate action—but the experience is amazing. We've made great connections in the environmental conservation space, and our parishes are supporting the cause. All I can say is, great things are yet to come. That's what happens when your team is aligned, shares the same vision, and has great mentors.

I know climate action doesn't really appeal to you, but since when have I ever only talked about things you like? Haha.

Last time we met for coffee, we talked about the countries we've visited. Other than the Pride of Africa, I've only been to the Pearl of Africa, so you did most of the talking.

I remember you praised Rwanda for being spotlessly clean, and in the next minute, you said—and I quote— "All this climate change awareness, advocacy, activism, or action should stop. The West should just allow developing countries to pollute as much as they did by mining and using fossil fuels. Once we're developed, then we can all start using clean or renewable energy."

My response was, "Right, you do have a point—but tell that to the capsizing islands in developing nations." And this is one of the reasons I like you—you challenge me.

Now, you're probably wondering if I wrote to give you a climate change awareness lecture. Well, yes.

And today, I come prepared with a full thesis to support my stance, because I can't risk my very good friend actually believing that developing countries should be allowed to pollute just because they are developing. So, let's do some damage control:

Developing Countries Suffer the Most – While wealthier nations have more resources to adapt, poorer countries face extreme weather events, food insecurity, and displacement. Droughts, floods, and hurricanes are becoming more frequent, destroying agriculture and infrastructure.

Economic Growth Doesn't Have to Mean Pollution – Countries like Kenya, Morocco, and Rwanda

are proving that clean energy (solar, wind, hydro) can drive economic progress without excessive pollution. Investing in renewables creates jobs, attracts international funding, and reduces reliance on expensive fossil fuels.

Delaying Action Will Cost More in the Long Run – The longer we wait, the more expensive and difficult it becomes to adapt. Climate disasters are already causing billions in damage annually. Proactive investment in green energy and climate resilience is far cheaper than rebuilding after disasters.

I rest my case—for now. But don't think I won't bring this up again over our next coffee! Take care, and write back soon.

Yours, Hidaya



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Well, Yes!



Pilgrims of Green Hope



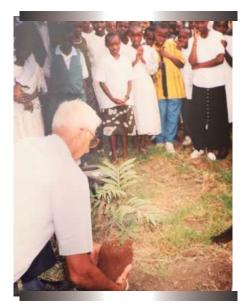


Dear pilgrims of green hope, as we embrace this Jubilee year, the Laudato Si Club of Holy Cross Lake View S.S.S is excited to embark on a transformative green pilgrimage journey of hope to creatively address environmental challenges and inspire more students and staff to embrace the culture of sustainability within our school and the community. Our club has been a ray of hope for climate action since its establishment by the Laudato Youth Initiative. We have made significant strides in promoting climate literacy, using debates to raise awareness about climate change, science and innovation projects, planting potted plants around the school, smart garden adventures and planting more flowers, engaging creative writing to explore the link between mental health and climate issues, and planting numerous fruit and indigenous trees both on campus and in the surrounding area etc.

Our annual Laudato Si Green Festival has since 2023 served as an opportunity for our members to engage in ser-

vice-learning activities while encouraging local organizations and neighboring institutions to embrace corporate social responsibility in caring for our common home. We have celebrated green Laudato Si Masses, conducted social media advocacy, and shared inspiring stories and poetry through this "Laudato Voices" magazine and Media. By addressing school assemblies on special days like womens day, we have communicated the importance of fostering a climate-resilient generation and building an environmentally sustainable school community. Our efforts to clean the school in weekends is an effort that aims to implement the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), and to repurpose plastics mitigate material waste in our school, all contributing to a culture of environmental stewardship in our school.

This year, under the guidance of theschool chaplaincy and the Laudato Youth Initiative, we are excited to celebrate the legacy of our founder Fr. Bob Hesse, C.S.C by launching a sustainability month and a pilgrimage to Bugembe parish where he was laid to rest, we will unvail the Fr. Bob Hesse Legacy environmental Sustainability Project.



Fr. Bob Hesse, C.S.C., planting a tree with Children. This attests the importance of celebrating his green initiative legacy

This special activity will allow us to unite the school and community to collectively honor and amplify the voices of our school's founder as a part of our Jubilee year celebrations focused on green hope.



Through the lens of the Laudato Youth Initiative, we will delve into the life and legacy of Fr. Bob Hesse, recognizing his remarkable contributions and the values that shaped his vision to start our school. Pope Francis highlights the environment one of the neglected poor. This project will not only enrich our understanding of our school's history but also inspire us to emulate Fr. Bob's commitment to building a better world. We believe that important figures like him laid a strong foundation for the brighter future

we are enjoying today, and by exploring his stories and legacies, we can inspire our school community on a journey of hope, this Jubilee Year of Hope.

Our Major activities of the year will focus on; visibility of the club in the school, pilgrimage to Bugembe Parish, sustainable living challenge in school, debates, poetry, publications, waste management, general house keeping practices of healthy and safety, filling the knowledge gap, planting the Bob Hesse Memori-

al Tree, benchmaking with other clubs and seekings creative and innovative ways of how we can apply skills of scientific innovations to solving climate change related challenges. Most importantly will be the grand Laudato Si Green festival for community engagement among others; read a few of our publications;

Tyra: Finding My Voice
The Raising Heat Waves
Mental Health Support







LSiC - HCLV S.S.S

Fr. Bob Hesse, C.S.C., was also Known as "Fr. Robert Hesse, C.S.C.,)

IF YOU TRULY LOVE NATURE, YOU WILL FIND BEAUTY EVERYWHERE

Nature is the breathtaking art of God, with heaven's splendor reflected both above and beneath our feet. We are all cherished children of our great Mother Nature, finely connected and interdependent. If we safeguard our precious wild places, we will ultimately ensure the preservation of ourselves and future generations.

Nature is not merely a place to visit; it's our home, our sanctuary, and our lifeblood. It doesn't hurry, yet everything is accomplished in perfect harmony. There's no Wi-Fi in the forest, but I promise you'll discover a far more profound and meaningful connection — one that nourishes your soul and awakens your spirit.

Nature and truth are inextricably linked, immutable, and inseparable in their majestic beauty and love. Nature always seems to be whispering secrets to us, as if she possesses some profound wisdom to impart. Indeed, she does. The earth has its enchanting music for those who will listen, and the mountains beckon us to respond.

So, let's rise up, with strength and might and save nature, for it affects us all. Every action count, every voice matters, and every collective effort brings us closer to preserving the beauty and wonder of our planet. Let's act together, with compassion, wisdom, and urgency.

As every artist dips their brush in their own soul and paints their own nature into their pictures, so too can we infuse our lives with the vibrant colors of nature, allowing its beauty to inspire, guide, and transform us. By embracing nature's splendor, we'll not only ensure a brighter future for ourselves but also for generations to come. Laudato Youth We go



and caring for TREES!

NANYONJO PATIENCE AND NIKITAH FLORENCE S.2 LSiC - HCLV SSS.

Finding my Voice

the Laudato Si' Club, I envisioned an exciting experience filled with activities like designing posters, carrying out alot of campaigns and maybe even replacing few classes for hands on environmental initiatives. However, I quickly discovered that it was far more challenging than I had anticipated. Some students mocked our efforts, asking, "What's the point?" of going around planting trees and flowers or picking trash while others simply ignored us. Even a few teachers appeared indifferent, which was disheartening. I found myself questioning whether our actions truly made a difference or not. Despite the setbacks, my friends in the club remained determined. And recently our mentor, Madam Immaculate, started talking to us and she often reminds us, "Even the smallest act of love for the Earth is a step toward change." It was during this time of uncertainty that I dis-

hen I first joined

covered my voice—through art. I have began to creating vibrant murals around the school that depict flourishing nature, hands cradling the planet, and rivers flowing into blooming flowers. With the help of my friends, we are also put up posters with messages promoting care for our environment. Gradually, people have began to take notice.

One day, a younger student approached me and exclaimed, "I love your painting! I want to join the club too." At that moment, I realized that change doesn't always have to be loud and dramatic. Sometimes it manifests in small acts, like planting a tree, picking up litter, or infusing hope into a wall through art. Admittedly, there are still those who don't seem to care, but I do. My friends too do. And that's more than enough to keep us pushing forward.



CLIMATE CHANGE: A CALL TO ACTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time, and it's essential that we take immediate action to reverse its effects. Human activities such as deforestation, bush burning, and the release of greenhouse gases and exhaust fumes have led to a significant increase in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, damaging the ozone layer and causing rising temperatures.

The consequences of inaction are dire. If we fail to address climate change, our country risks becoming a desert, losing its reputation as the "Pearl of Africa." Rising temperatures are already being felt worldwide, and it's up to us to take action. It's everyone's responsibility to conserve the environment, and collective action can make a significant difference. We must recognize that climate change is not just an environmental issue but also a social, economic, and humanitarian one.



Science and innovation can provide solutions to combat climate change. By harnessing wind energy and solar power, we can reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and lower our carbon footprint. Additionally, advancements in technology can help us develop more efficient and sustainable infrastructure, transportation systems and agricultural practices. However, it requires a concerted effort from individuals, communities, organizations, and governments to implement these solutions.

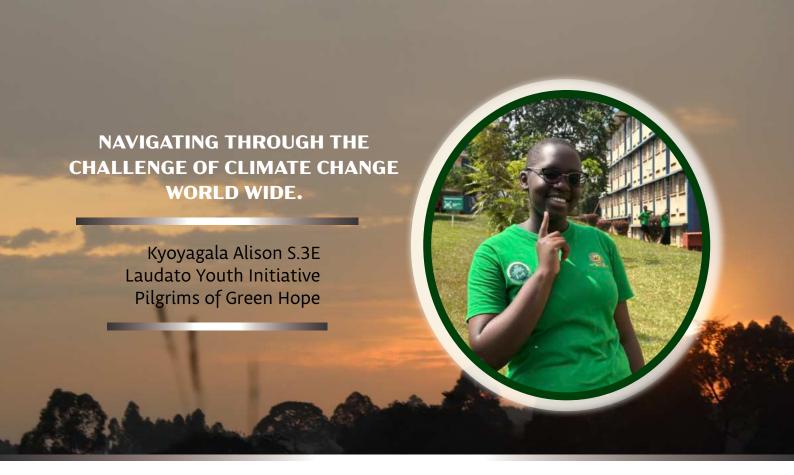
So, what can we do? We must start by sensitizing people about the dangers of climate change through various channels, such as writing articles, composing songs, and acting. We must also



KITIMBO PRECIOUS, Laudato Si Club of Holy Cross Lake View SSS.

songs, and acting. We must also take practical steps, including planting trees to reduce carbon dioxide levels and toxic fumes, using public transport, bicycles, or walking to reduce exhaust fumes, and switching to gas and electricity for cooking instead of cutting down trees.

It's not too late to make a change. By working together and implementing these measures, we can reverse the effects of climate change and ensure a sustainable future for Uganda and the world. We owe it to ourselves, our children, and future generations to take action and protect the planet. We must prioritize sustainability, invest in renewable energy and promote eco-friendly practices. As Pilgrims of Hope, the time to act is now.



Climate change has become a pressing global issue, addressed by almost every country worldwide. Since the 1800s, human activities have been the primary driver of climate change, mainly due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. This process generates greenhouse gas emissions, which act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures. The main greenhouse gases responsible for this are carbon dioxide and methane. produced when fuels are burned.

Other significant contributors to climate change include deforestation, industrialization, and pollution. Deforestation, the massive cutting down of trees on a large scale, reduces the number of trees available to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, leading to its accumulation. Trees play a vital role in regulating the climate, and their destruction has severe consequences. Furthermore, industrialization has led to increased emissions from facto-

ries, vehicles, and other human activities.

Climate change has far-reaching consequences, affecting ecosystems, human health, and the economy. Increased temperatures worldwide are causing melting of glaciers, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events. Rising temperatures also lead to increased drought and wildfires, devastating communities and ecosystems. Moreover, climate change has severe implications for global food security, as changing weather patterns and rising temperatures impact agricultural productivity.

However, it's not too late to save our planet from this catastrophe. The evolution of science and technology has provided various solutions to combat climate change. Utilizing alternative energy sources, such as solar energy, wind energy, and biogas, can significantly reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Additionally, planting more trees and restoring forests can help absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Individu-

als can also make a difference by limiting their carbon footprint, reducing energy consumption, and promoting sustainable practices. It's everyone's responsibility to fight against climate change. We must work together to reduce our carbon footprint, invest in renewable energy, and promote sustainable practices. Governments, corporations, and individuals must collaborate to develop and implement effective climate policies. We owe it to ourselves, future generations, and the planet to take action. The time to act is now, and we must stand together to combat the challenge of climate change.

Therefore, I urge you to stand up for our planet and join the fight against climate change. Together, we can make a difference and ensure a sustainable future for all. We must recognize the urgency of the situation and take collective action to mitigate the effects of climate change. The future of our planet depends on it.

HEAT WAVES

TASUTA JOY MARY S.I D

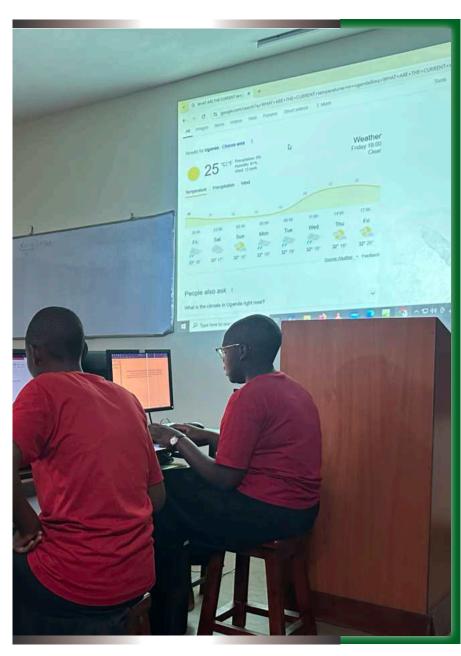
We are fortunate in Uganda to be surrounded by lush trees and green vegetation. Seeing our environment thrive brings me joy.

However, I feel saddened when I see Ugandans cutting trees which leads to drought, soil erosion and contributes to global warming.

Global warming refers to the rise in the temperatures on the earth's surface. This issue directly affects Ugandans causing our crops to wither, our streams to dry up and make our lives miserable.

To combat this environmental crisis, I urge all Uganda's to adopt simple yet effective principles that promote environmental conservation. Let's stop cutting down trees for firewood and instead use biogas, solar energy or other sustainable practices for cooking. We can also join environmental clubs, organizations or initiatives that teach sustainable practices and promote eco-friendly living.

Together, we can create simple yet effective rules, such as "cut one tree, plant five". Together, we can protect our beautiful country, preserve our natural resources and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.



As responsible citizens, it's our duty to take action and make a positive impact on our environment. Let's join hands ,take ownership of our actions and strive to create a better, greener Uganda. United for Climate Action

THE ENVIRONMEN-TAL CHALLENGES DEMANDING IMME-DIATE ATTENTION AND ACTION

The Environment is the natural world in which people, animals and plants live. The environment, once a place full of life, it has now turned into a place filled with worries, death and sorrow due to the numerous challenges.

The world is grappling with a host of pressing environmental challenges that demand immediate attention and action. From climate change-induced disasters to biodiversity loss and plastic pollution, the biggest environmental problems of 2025 paint a stark picture of the urgent need for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Over the years, there has been a significant change in weather and climate elements globally. Scientists have confirmed that climatic conditions are no longer the same as they used to be. This change has always been a serious threat to nature and the people and continues to be for now and for the future.

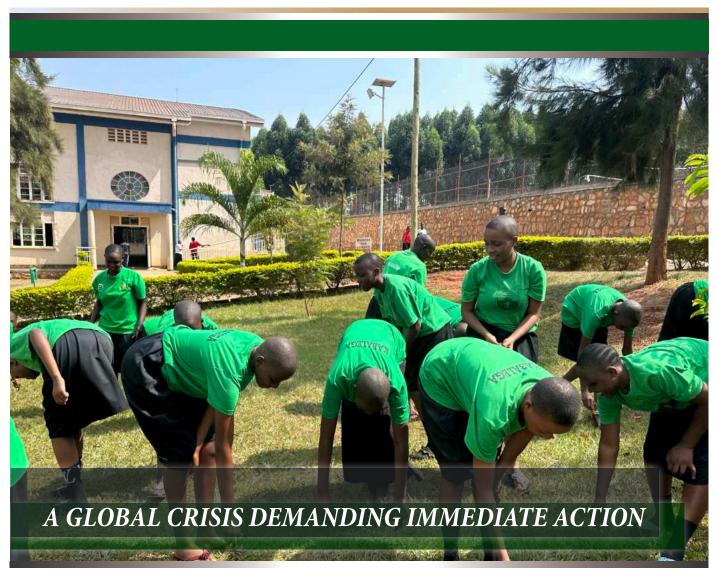
Global warming. Global warming primarily from fossil fuels, has resulted in several consecutive months of record-breaking temperatures with 2023 being the hottest year in history. The global average temperature of 0.120c, surpassing previous records. Greenhouse gas concentrations, including carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, reached new highs in 2023. These emissions blanket the earth, trapping the sun's heat and leading to global warming.

Plastic pollution. Disposal of plastics has become a major environmental issue. In 1950, the world produced more than 2 million tons of plastic per year. By 2015,



this annual production swelled to 419 million tons, exacerbating plastic waste in the environment. Currently, roughly 14 million tons of plastic make their way into the oceans every year, harming wildlife habitats and the animals live in them. Research indicates that if no action is taken, the plastic crisis will grow to 29 million tons per year by 2040.Including microplastics, the cumulative number of plastics in the ocean could reach 600 million tons by 2040. The environment is crying for our help. The ignorance, negligence, and lack of proactive measures by people have contributed to the current crisis. It is time to rise up and protect our motherland for future generations and for our benefit. United for Climate Action,

NAKAGOLO ASUMATI AND NAMBOGWE RACHEL LAUDATO SI CLUB OF HOLY CROSS LAKE VIEW



The environment is at a critical juncture, facing unprecedented threats from climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion. These interconnected issues are escalating at an alarming rate, jeopardizing the delicate balance of ecosystems and the future of humanity. Despite growing awareness and efforts to address these challenges, the current situation remains dire. Climate change, in particular, is a ticking time bomb, threatening to devastate communities worldwide. The earth's average temperature has risen by approximately 1.1 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial levels,

primarily due to human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes. The consequences of climate change are already being felt, with more frequent and severe heat waves, hurricanes, wildfires, and Intergovernmental floods The Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that global warming must be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid catastrophic impacts. However, current policies and commitments fall short of this target, putting the world on a track for 2.5 to 3 degrees Celsius increase by the end of the century. This would lead to irreversible damage, including the collapse of ecosystems, food and water shortages, and the loss of biodiversity. The silent extinction crisis, driven by habitat destruction, overexploitation of resources, and pollution, is already underway. According to the World Wildlife Fund, wildlife populations have declined by an average of 60% since 1970, with iconic species like elephants, tigers, and polar bears at risk.

Biodiversity loss undermines the resilience of ecosystems, reducing their ability to provide essential services like clean air, water, and fertile soils. Pollution, in its The environment is at a critical juncture, facing unprecedented threats from climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion. These interconnected issues are escalating at an alarming rate, jeopardizing the delicate balance of ecosystems and the future of humanity. Despite growing awareness and efforts to address these challenges, the current situation remains dire. Climate change, in particular, is a ticking time bomb, threatening to devastate communities worldwide. The earth's average temperature has risen by approximately 1.1 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial levels, primarily due to human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes. The consequences of climate change are already being felt, with more frequent and severe heat waves, hurricanes, wildfires, and floods. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that global warming must be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius t

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Biodiversity loss undermines the resilience of ecosystems, reducing their ability to provide essential services like clean air, water, and fertile soils. Pollution, in its various forms, poses a significant threat to both environmental and human health. Air pollution, caused by vehicle emissions, industrial processes, and burning fuels, is responsible for millions of premature deaths annually. Microplastics have infiltrated even the most remote corners of the planet, contaminated water sources and entering the food chain. The role of inequality in environmental degradation cannot be overstated. Vulnerable communities, particularly in developing countries, bear the brunt of environmental impacts, while wealthier nations contribute the most to greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption.

Despite the grim outlook, there are reasons for hope. Renewable energy technologies, like solar and wind power, are becoming more affordable and widespread, offering a viable alternative to fossil fuels. Conservation efforts have successfully saved some species from extinction, and reforestation projects are restoring degraded landscapes. The global youth movement, led by activists like Greta Thunberg, a Swedish environmental activist has brought unprecedented attention to the climate crisis, pushing governments and corporations to take action. She continues to be a leading voice in the fight against climate change, inspiring a new generation of activists and leaders to take action. However, success depends on implementation and enforcement.

The path forward requires a fundamental shift in how we live, produce, and consume. Key actions include transitioning to renewable energy, protecting and restoring ecosystems to preserve biodiversity, adopting sustainable practices in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, and ensuring justice by supporting vulnerable communities. Individuals also have a critical role to play, from reducing their carbon footprint to advocating for systemic change. Governments, businesses, and civil societies must work together to create a sustainable future. The environment is a reflection of humanity, and it's time to act. Our survival depends on it. We must therefore take bold action to protect the planet.

AYIKORU HOPE ELIZABETH PRESIDENT, LAUDATO SI CLUB OF HOLY CROSS LAKE VIEW SSS.







LAUDATO SI CLUB NYAKASURA SCHOOL





BY. KOBUSINGE RITAH, AND KAHUNDE JUDITH LAUDATO YOUTH AT NYAKASURA SCHOOL

Dear Humanity

Where is all our integrity?
For we have lost it all just for the greed of quantity
Forgetting about the quality
Look now what we have done
For we have lost all our dignity
Just because of the mentality
That turned up to be a reality.

But why? Why?

Why humanity?
Who bewitched you?
Why destroy our mother nature?
And yet destroying her is destroying ourselves
Yet we feel free to abuse her to serve our own greed.

Her unrival beauty was all free for us to view

But now look
Look at the trees that were green
Look at the air that was clean
And now the atmosphere has changed
And the evidence is all around
And now we are living in a dead world
A world full of suffering and pain
But What is the gain?
What is the gain to drain the sun and stop the rain?

Imiss those days
when it would rain and shine
And everything was fine
Oh my it's oh my
That is all the greedy can say
They treat mother nature
as a toy which they can play with and dump
And now we have to pay the consequences
And live in this filthy world

But dear humanity

There is a call for change because it is never too late to change
For we are tired of these tears, fears and nightmares
So let us rise and plant a tree
Because a future without a tree is doomed
Now it is the time
The time for us to move from that grave
The time to be brave
It is the time for us to pay the price for what mother nature has given us

This fight is not about age
Is not about height
Is not about gender
Nor is it about wealth
But is about you and me
Working together
Working together to plant a tree
and save mother nature
This is the that we need to be safe
This is the love that we need to
move forward and not backwards

Imagine

Imagine living in a world that is so green Hearing sweet melodies from birds in the clear, sky in between Rains flowing into our veins As morning sun shines bright Oh what a splendorous view that would be

So why?

Why can't we let our lungs breathe again? Let us see the light in the stars Feel it in the music Enjoy the flowers The plumage of birds Because a future without a tree is doomed.



audato Si Club leaders recently paid a courtesy visit to the Laudato Si Club at Nyakasura School, where they had the opportunity to observe the various projects the students are actively undertaking.

s Pilgrims of Green Hope, we firmly believe Athat young people are the torchbearers of the sustainable future we aspire to achieve. "The passion and talents they exhibit are a testament to the preferred future that the Laudato Youth Initiative champions", remarked Sarah, the president of the Laudato Si Clubs. Her words reflect the inspiring commitment of these youth to environmental stewardship and their role in creating lasting change.

yakasura school stands out as one of the cleanest and well-sustained schools in the Country and it is also the only school in Uganda and perhaps Africa where boys wear kilts as their school uniform.





Ecological/Tourism Legacy program by Laudato Youth at Nyakasura School

As we step into April, the Laudato Youth at Nyakasura School are thrilled to declare this month as Sustainability Month in response to the Laudato Youth Initiative's plea for all its Laudato Si clubs to start a practical activity program, dedicated to honoring the remarkable legacy of the founders of their institutions and explore about their work and heritage in sustainability thus bring it back to life as their inspiration and way of engaging the entire school community in uniting for climate action. Lieutenant Commander Ernest Ebohard Calwell, Founded Nyakasura School in 1926. It stands as the oldest and most well-preserved educational institution in Uganda, a true testament to both academic excellence, tourism and environmental stewardship.

Commander Calwell, a retired Scottish naval officer and missionary, envisioned a school that would not only provide education but also foster a sense of pride and heritage and so does the Laudato Youth Initiative. As I always tell my students "they are the elders of tomorrow" - Mr Daniel

Historically, with the support of King Kyebambe III of Tooro, Calwell established Nyakasura School, introducing British public-school traditions and even launching the country's first cricket pitch. His innovative spirit led Nyakasura to being the first school in Uganda to generate electricity via a small dam built in 1930. The Laudato Youth at Nyakasura School are committed to rejuvenating this legacy by diving into sustainable scientific innovations and research to develop creative solutions to climate change in our school, region, and country.

Nyakasura School is not just an academic institution; it is a cultural landmark, attracting many visitors who come to experience our rich heritage and inspiring the

spirit of storytelling which in the African perspective of the Laudato Youth Initiative is a way of transmitting values. We have unique values at Nyakasura school and this is our time to share them with others and nurture a spirit of justice and peace, hard work and faith. Recently two students Kobusinge Ritah and Kahunde Judith featured an amazing Poem entitled DEAR HUMANITY

Our schools' unique dress code, featuring the iconic Scottish kilts for boys, emphasizes our history while we look towards a sustainable future.

Throughout the year the club will engage in various sustainability activities to honor Commander Calwell's commitment to the environment and health education. Among these activities, we will plant a memorial tree symbolizing our dedication to protecting our planet for future generations. We will showcase our nursery tree project, to serve the community by planting trees from our nursery bed, engage all stakeholders in embracing environmental protection and promoting healthy living in Tooro and Uganda at large.

The health of our youth, particularly in light of the rising prevalence of HIV/AIDS, concerns us deeply as stewards of God's creation.

Nyakasura School not only serves as an educational giant in the Tooro sub-region but also stands as a beacon of cultural tourism, located near the Amabere Caves and attracting visitors who admire our historical architecture and rich legacy. Our Laudato Si Club will organise a pilgrimage of green hope walk around the hills and heritage site where possible visit the palace.













Our school just concluded celebrating its centenary of existence, to honor the countless individuals who have passed through our doors. These alumni have made significant contributions to Uganda, embodying our motto, "To Minister and Not to Be Ministered Unto." This is the legacy the Laudato Youth of Nyakasura School would wish to uphold, amplifying voices of young people to care for creation and advocate for health living.



At Nyakasura, you can explore iconic spots that mark the beginning of many remarkable journeys. This experience is not merely about reliving the past; it's about connecting with the stories that have shaped our region and nation's history and are now defining the identity of Fort Portal as a vibrant tourism city. You will be struck by the boys dress code of kilts as their uniform and the well preserved classrooms with iconic traditional desks looking like new.

Our club, in collaboration with the school, is planning special events that offer guided tours that highlight the legacies in the school and those of the founder. These tours will showcase the evolution of tourism within educational institutions in Uganda. Visitors will have the opportunity to see artifacts such as vintage desks, school records, and tata lorries, providing a fascinating glimpse into life before modern technology where students navigated their studies without use of computers, and other technologies. This journey through time will reflect Nyakasura School's enduring legacy while honoring the values and traditions that remain its core. We will also celebrate our national heritage, including the establishment of the country's first cricket pitch, and recognize the innovative spirit of our founder, who led Nyakasura to become the first school in Uganda to generate electricity through a small dam built in 1930. This will also help us enhance our green sustainability science and innovation activities and projects in the school.

With the Goal of transforming the Laudato Si Club of Nyakasura School into a champion of an ecological, cultural, and educational heritage site, we aim to foster a deeper appreciation of the schools' heritage and the profound impact individuals have had on the academic, ecological, and social fabric of Tooro and the broader country. This initiative will also provide a unique experience for our students, nurturing their love for creation and attracting tourists who seek out green pilgrimages to nearby sites like Amabere Caves, Hakigere and Saaka Hills thus inspiring young people to venture in creative scientific innovations, study agriculture, tourism and sustainability courses as a way to mentor stewards of the future. Through this program, we aim to inspire a greater understanding of our school's environmental, geographical, and historical significance, setting a positive example for other educational institutions and clubs nationaly guided by the Laudato Youth Initiative to adopt similar sustainable practices. Ultimately, we hope to encourage schools nationwide to embrace sustainability, playing a vital role in shaping a brighter future for all.

The Power of Public Awareness in Environmental Action

The recently concluded walk that exemplified how public awareness can serve as a catalyst for action, inspiring participants to take concrete steps toward protecting their environment. Whether it's reducing water consumption, planting trees, or advocating for policies that prioritize sustainability, every action counts

Themed: "Water and Environment for Climate Action" and organized by the Uganda Water and Environment organised a week-long event that is celebrated annually by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) through the Water Resources Institute Uganda (WRI). This year, it held its 8th event from March 17th to Friday, March 21st, 2025.

In an era marked by pressing environmental challenges, the role of public awareness in influencing public opinion and fostering community participation cannot be overstated. We believe that when people are informed and engaged, they are more likely to take action, whether it be through advocacy, lifestyle changes, or participating in initiatives aimed at mitigating environmental issues. Addressing the myriad of challenges related to water, energy and the environment is a collective effort that requires the commitment and involvement of every individual.

A shining example of the impact of public awareness in Uganda is the annual Environment Week, which culminates in a significant event known as "The Walk." This initiative is designed to raise awareness, amplify voices, and drum up support

for environmental causes. By bringing together community members, stakeholders, and advocates, The Walk serves as a powerful platform for educating the public about critical environmental issues, including water scarcity, pollution, and climate change.

The impact of The Walk extends beyond mere participation; it creates a ripple effect that resonates throughout the community. Participants often leave with a deeper understanding of the environmental challenges facing their region and are motivated to share this knowledge with others. This dissemination of information helps to shift public opinion and encourages more individuals to join the conversation about environmental stewardship.

Moreso, the Walk fosters a sense of community ownership over local environmental issues. When individuals come together for a common cause, they strengthen social bonds and cultivate a culture of collaboration. This collective spirit is essential for driving meaningful change, as it empowers community members to take initiative in their own neighborhoods. From organizing clean-up drives to advocating for sustainable practices, the possibilities for community engagement are endless.

Mitigating or adapting to water and other environmental challenges requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond awareness-raising. It demands actionable steps from individuals, communities, and policymakers alike.



Mr. Daniel participated in the run, and our Laudato youth of Nyakasura school took part in the radio talk show at (V.O.T FM) with NDRI on 13 March 2025, During the broadcast, they engaged in a meaningful discussion *focused on vital topics* such as sanitation and hygiene in both schools and homes.







clean and healthy environments, not just for themselves but for the well-being of our communities. Additionally, they highlighted the critical role that tree planting plays in preserving our ecosystem, discussing how trees contribute to cleaner air, combat climate change, and provide habitats for wildlife. The conversation encompassed a broader perspective on environmental stewardship, urging listeners to recognize their responsibility in caring for our planet. We are grateful to the National Research and Development Institute (NRDI) for organizing this event and providing our Laudato Youth with a platform to amplify our voices for Mother Earth and the community's well-being. Furthermore, the youth also participated in a debate.

These and many more are good and creative ways to encourage all of us to get involved in different activities and rally support in all forms to improve lives and livelihoods and spearhead our role as stewards. The lessons learned from the walk will be applied to other environmental initiatives. By understanding the importance of public awareness, organizations and initiatives can develop effective strategies to engage communities in various environmental campaigns.



This can include workshops, educational programs, and social media campaigns that highlight the interconnectedness of environmental issues and the importance of collective action that the Laudayo Youth Initiative is trying to model.



Public awareness plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and encouraging community participation in environmental issues. The case of The Walk illustrates the powerful impact that a collaborative effort can have on raising awareness and inspiring action. As we face increasing environmental challenges, it is essential that we all take part in this collective effort. By working together, we can create a more sustainable and resilient future for our communities and the planet. Let us step forward, raise our voices, and act for the environment-because together, we can make a difference.

Our Laudato Youth at MMU in featured article in the MMU graduation Magazine

INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGH LEARNING



This article aims to promote environmental education as a core curriculum component for all students. Education, encompassing formal learning, public awareness, and training, should be acknowledged as a transformative process that empowers individuals and societies to unlock their maximum capabilities. Its significance lies in promoting sustainable development and enhancing people's abilities to tackle environmental and developmental challenges. Education possesses the potential to shape people's attitudes and behaviors towards their surroundings. Environmental education specifically emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to effectively address and solve environmental problems.

One of the key aspects of environmental education is raising awareness among all groups of students regardless of their major of study. By educating people about the current state of the environment, the causes and consequences of environmental problems, and the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems, individuals become more conscious of the urgent need for action. Environmental education provides a platform to communicate scientific findings, share real-world examples, and highlight the interconnectedness of environmental issues with social, economic, and cultural aspects of our lives. In addition to individual actions, education also plays a significant role in shaping policies, practices, and institutions. It equips future leaders, policymakers, and professionals with the knowledge and tools necessary to address environmental challenges effectively.

By integrating environmental education into formal curricula, vocational training programs, and professional development initiatives, societies can ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into various sectors and decision-making processes. Furthermore, education promotes a sense of environmental stewardship and fosters a connection with nature. It encourages individuals to appreciate the intrinsic value of the environment and recognize the need for its protection. Through hands-on experiences, outdoor activities, and environmental projects, education instills a sense of wonder and respect for the natural world, fostering a lifelong commitment to sustainable practices.

Therefore, education serves as a powerful tool in solving environmental problems and promoting environmental awareness on a global scale. The role of education goes beyond simply imparting knowledge; it plays a vital role in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards the environment. By raising awareness about pressing environmental issues, such as climate change, deforestation, and pollution, education enables individuals to comprehend the magnitude and complexity of these challenges. Moreover, environmental education fosters the development of critical thinking skills, enabling individuals to analyze environmental problems from multiple perspectives and propose innovative solutions. Therefore, embracing and investing in comprehensive environmental education is a crucial step towards building a sustainable and resilient future for all.

Long Live MMU Height for Progress





THE LAUDATO YOUTH INITIA-TIVE: A BEACON OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Laudato Youth initiative is a powerful movement inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si focusing on ecological conversion and sustainability. This Catholic youth-led initiative, based in Kampala, aims to mentor ecologically responsible citizens by establishing Laudato Si Clubs in schools, universities, parishes, and dioceses throughout Uganda and beyond. The initiative focuses on uniting young people for climate action, encouraging hands-on responses to environmental challenges, and promoting ecological and biodiversity-related research and innovations. It also inspires community engagement through service learning activities that address vital social and environmental issues, in accordance with the message of Laudato Si, the Millennium Development Goals on ecology and biodiversity, and Catholic social teachings regarding the environment and human development.

Pope Francis confronts the environmental crisis and highlights the urgent need for a global response to challenges such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. He advocates for a fundamental shift in humanity's relationship with the planet, stressing the interconnectedness of all life and the necessity of caring for the Earth as our common home.

According to the Uganda National Population and Housing Census 2024, a remarkable 72.3% of the population is aged 30 and below, amounting to over 33 million individuals out of a total of 45 million. This demographic reality underscores the critical need for youth involvement in initiatives that will shape their future. The Laudato Youth Initiative recognizes this and actively mentors and empowers young people to take an active role in building a sustainable future, encouraging them to care for our shared home. Pope Francis emphasizes the responsibility of future generations in his call for environmental action, urging the youth to "become the architects of a more sustainable and equitable world."



The encyclical particularly underscores the role of education in helping young people understand the environmental crisis and develop a sense of responsibility towards the Earth. The Pope views youth as essential agents of change, acknowledging their capacity for critical thought and passionate action. He encourages them to draw inspiration from the wisdom of previous generations and to harness the power of solidarity and collective action.

We are encouraged to "become the architects of a more sustainable and equitable world." - Pope Francis.

of climate change are evident in the communities surrounding our university, and we aspire to be at the forefront of the journey toward ecological conversion as pilgrims of green hope.

THE LAUDATO SI CLUB AT MMU:A RAY OF HOPE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

As a vibrant member of the Laudato Si Club at MMU, I feel compelled to share with you one of the most pressing global issues we face today: climate change. This phenomenon is altering weather patterns, impacting ecosystems, and posing significant challenges to biodiversity, food security, and human health. However, within this crisis lies a tremendous opportunity for positive change particularly through youth involvement in environmental conservation and climate action. Our club is actively engaged in initiatives such as tree planting, community outreach, service learning, and charity work. We are also exploring green scientific innovations and research aimed at enhancing our understanding and positively impacting the community around our university through raising awareness and action based community service programs.

As you may know climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperature, precipitation, and other atmospheric conditions on Earth. Human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial practices, have significantly increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, leading to global warming. The effects of climate change in our region and Country are extensive and devastating. Altered weather patterns result in more frequent and severe storms, droughts, and wildfires, disrupting agricultural production and threatening the livelihoods of millions. Else where in the world, glaciers are melting, polar ice caps are shrinking, and rising sea levels pose threats to coastal communities worldwide. Additionally, climate change leads to social and economic consequences, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities and causing scarcity and displacement due to extreme weather events. Therefore, addressing climate change is not merely an environmental issue; it is a matter of social justice.

Mitigating climate change involves reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and hydroelectric power. A critical aspect of this mitigation is the preservation and restoration of ecosystems. Forests, wetlands, and oceans serve as carbon sinks, absorbing significant amounts of carbon dioxide. Our campus seats on the banks of Lake Saaka hence the club envisions being at the centre of protecting the vital ecosystems and promoting reforestation efforts to give a good example to communities surrounding the Lake as an essential step towards mitigating the impacts of climate change. We are inviting every young person to discern their role in promoting behavioral change and environmental conservation efforts.

Given that our generation will be among the most affected by climate change, we, as youth, are uniquely positioned to advocate for change and raise awareness. This is a core emphasis of the Laudato Youth Initiative. From organizing community-based activities to participating in international climate summits, Laudato Youth have emerged as a powerful force in fostering corporate social responsibility and engaging in interfaith initiatives that promote unity and action for our sustainable common home. We work closely with authorities to support and implement government policies that protect the environment, ensuring that these initiatives are well communicated and understood within our communities.

Last September, our university's Laudato Si Club facilitated an online interfaith conference with five universities in Texas to discuss the season of creation. Our members have been actively involved in service learning activities within the community, engaging in conversations around climate justice and poverty alleviation. As we embrace this Jubilee Year of Hope, we are eager to enhance our response to Sustainable Development Goal 13, which focuses on Climate Action. We aim to foster collaborations for peacebuilding and address emerging issues, while also emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans and ecology, mental health, and youth empowerment on campus and the community.

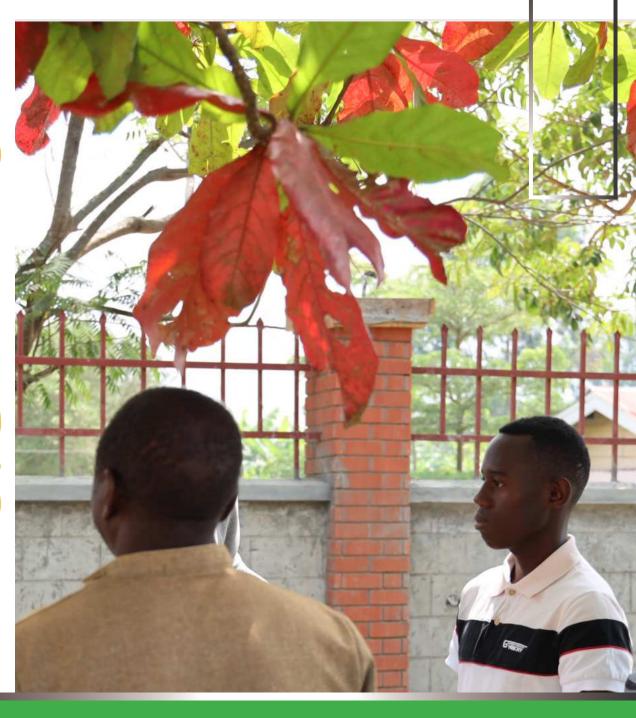
Through various initiatives, we strive to inspire our peers to take action against climate change. This includes hosting workshops, awareness campaigns, and increasing tree planting efforts, alongside numerous other community initiatives.

Dear reader, it is crucial for us all to recognize that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. However, it also presents a unique opportunity for us to unite across borders and generations to protect our planet for the sake of future generations. As young people, we possess the power to shape the future of environmental conservation and climate action. By understanding the causes and impacts of climate change, advocating for effective mitigation efforts, and promoting sustainable practices, we can lead the way towards a more sustainable world.

We invite you to learn more about the Laudato Youth Initiative and how you can become involved in making a positive impact on our environment. Visit us at www. laudato-youthinitiative.org to discover more.

Murungi Annest President, Laudato Si Club of MMU Bachelor of Environmental Sciences,

LSiC - MMU



Together, let us be the leaders and changemakers our world needs. Let us embody the spirit of stewardship that Pope Francis calls for in his encyclical and work collaboratively to ensure that our common home is preserved for generations to come."





Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of the Lenten season, a time when Christians, come together to reflect and renew our faith. This sacred period starts with the smearing of ash on our foreheads, a powerful reminder of our call to embrace three essential principles: *Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving*.

In the Old Testament, the act of smearing ash signified the desire for forgiveness and our humility before God. As we embark on this journey as, *Pilgrims of Green Hope*, we were remided to be ambassadors of a "Green Lent." As one of our key initiatives is to pracatically care for our Mother Earth, a commitment that we hope to embrace during this lent period.

We all know lent and the Jubilee year challenge us to embrace acts of renewal, and charity. As Pilgrims of Green Hope, we should see taking care of God's creation as a vital form of this charity that is needed for the betterment of all humanity.

Opening of lent Fr. Muhumuza the Laudato Club chaplain at Mountains of the Moon University emphasised these key aspeacts of Prayer, Fasting and Alms giving.

The message for us is to invite you to embody the spirit of Green Lent and honor our responsibility to protect and nurture the environment.

Let us practice Green Lent together.

Let us be true ambassadors of the Earth.

It is not just my responsibility; it is our shared duty to care for God's creation.

Join us in this journey of faith and stewardship!



The Powerful 7.7 Magnitude Earthquake that Struck Mandalay, Myanmar (28.03.2025): An Eye-Opener for people in the Great Rift Valley of Western Uganda

On March 28, 2025, a powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck near Mandalay, Myanmar, causing widespread destruction and loss of life. This natural disaster serves as a stark reminder of the vulnerabilities in the face of climate change to re-evaluate our role and impact on the natural environment. Its a great pity to see the suffering humanity is going through as a result of natural calamities however, we need to open up an evaluate our own common homes and regions to see what is happening, particularly for those of us living in the Great Rift Valley of western Uganda. The events in Myanmar compel us to reflect on the state of our common home and reconsider our actions, especially concerning activities like mining and quarrying that may weaken the geological support mechanisms in our earthquake-prone zones.

The Geological Context of the Great Rift Valley

The Great Rift Valley is a tectonically active region, making it susceptible to earthquakes. In Uganda, particularly in areas like Saaka, mining and quarrying activities have raised concerns about destabilizing the geological structures that provide support for the rift. Such human activities not only compromise the land but also increase the likelihood of geological hazards, such as earthquakes and landslides.

Historical context is essential when discussing the implications of our actions. In 1964, Fort Portal experienced an earthquake that caused significant damage, with buildings collapsing and infrastructure compromised. Similarly, the 1994 earthquake struck the region, resulting in collateral damage across several districts. The lessons learned from these past incidents highlight the importance of understanding our environment and the risks associated with our activities.

Lessons from Myanmar: An Urgent Call to Action

The recent earthquake in Myanmar serves as an eye-opener, illustrating the destructive potential of natural disasters and the dire consequences that can arise when communities are unprepared. Reports indicate that thousands were displaced, infrastructure was decimated, and many lives were lost. The aftereffects of such earthquakes often extend beyond immediate destruction; they can lead to long-term socio-economic challenges, including displacement, poverty, and health crises.

The situation in Myanmar reinforces the necessity of valuing the teachings of Pope Francis's encyclical, Laudato Si', which calls for a deep examination of the condition of our common home. In Chapter One, the encyclical encourages us to assess what is happening to our environment and understand our role in nurturing it.

Practical Steps Forward: Valuing Our Common Home

1. Sustainable Practices: It is crucial for us to reevaluate our mining and quarrying practices in the Great Rift

Valley. We must adopt sustainable methods that minimize environmental degradation and consider alternative livelihoods that do not compromise our geological integrity.

- 2. Community Awareness and Education: Building awareness about the risks of living in an earthquake-prone area is essential. Communities should be educated about the potential dangers of mining activities and the importance of maintaining geological stability.
- 3. **Disaster Preparedness:** Drawing inspiration from the lessons learned in Myanmar, local authorities should develop and implement disaster preparedness plans. These plans must include early warning systems, evacuation routes, and community drills to ensure that residents are ready in the event of an earthquake.
- 4. Advocacy for Policy Changes: Engaging with policymakers to advocate for stricter regulations on mining and quarrying can help protect our environment. We must push for policies that prioritize ecological sustainability and community safety.
- 5. Embracing Laudato Si': Finally, we must take to heart the messages of Laudato Si' and embody its call to action. By fostering a culture of stewardship, we can ensure that we honor our environment, protect our communities, and work toward a sustainable future

In conclusion, the earthquake that struck Mandalay, Myanmar, is a powerful reminder of the vulnerabilities we face in the Great Rift Valley. Let us learn from this tragedy and take proactive steps to safeguard our common home, ensuring that we value the environment and the teachings of Laudato Si' as we navigate the challenges ahead. Together, we can create a more resilient and sustainable future for ourselves and generations to come.

Fred Ayebale Laudato Club Leader Mountains of the Moon University!

Fort Portal Catholic Diocese

Laudato Si Club











Time has come for young people to go beyond their limited potential and step out into the value of technology usage. On the 10th of February 2025. I had a talk show hosted by the Dicesan Youth Chairperson Francis Kasagama Araali. Here talking to young people about Youth Digital Inclusion and Social Media Management.

As a young person who had been mentored by a religious leader Br. Adolf Mugume CSC in the field

of communication it's always a pleasure pass on the same knowledge my fellow young people. As a Catholic, diving into the field of communication is very important considering the fact that the church is raising a generation that is fully aware of skyrockethe ting technology. Every year the church celebrates communications day meaning it has dived into the

path technology and corporate communication is leading us to. It is very true that we are exploring many initiatives in the technological world. As Laudato Youth Initiative, Youth Digital Inclusion is very key to us as our mentor teaches to engage in proper social media usage. While I shared with youth of the fort portal Diocese I mentioned that proper usage

of social media can help one to build a brand, engage with people to build corporate networks and help us advertise what we do and and through that we get to know a lot of valuable things through research. While young people lay their hands on advanced technology, it's important to note that creativity and innovation should be at the peak. While we are having technological advancement our creativity should be above it. Young people are driving change

tanding pinnacle that hold energies and potentials that can provide solutions to obstacles. We are a generation that is unstoppable beyond thinking and action. We are who we are because of what we hold. Lets equip the young people this world is on high speed. It's good to train the youth right from birth to adulthood, from the garden to industries. We need science. Let's make a scientific youth and the world will change. With a scientific youth we are able to work on agriculture and production which is the backbone of Uganda. Africa and the world and we fight diseases in homes and communities. This will be the world's

obstacle towards building our po-

tential if our talents were all uti-

lized. Young people are an outs-

everywhere we go. Young people are stepping up to fight obstacles in all sectors of the economy.

success in leadership and

While we use social media we need to be disciplined, be open to corporate networks and friendships, keep private life out of social media, avoid instances of misinformation, be sure of what you share because

misinformation spreads so fast and it disorganizes systems. While we navigate this technological path as young we need guidance and we should be open to opportunities. Let us all consider youth digital inclusion.



using technology in different fields searching for possible solutions to particular problems like one we have at hand the climate change crisis

The dreams of youth hold the key to unlocking a nation of possibilities. We see the world differently and with our gifts and passion as our guide, we can conquer any

Bishop McCanley's Legacy Rededication



Nestled on the picturesque Virika Hill in Fort Portal City, Virika Cathedral has been a symbol of hope and faith since its construction in 1967, with its dedication following in 1968. This sacred space, established by Bishop Vincent Joseph McCauley a figure celebrated for his exemplary life serves as a pillar of faith and hope the diocese.

As the first Bishop of this Cathedral, Servant of God Bishop Vincent Joseph McCauley not only nurtured the religious community but also touched the lives of countless individuals who sought his wisdom and faith guidance. Today, Our Lady of Snows Virika Cathedral stands as a testament to a vibrant Christian life filled with faith and hope.

The Inauguration of Virika Cathedral was a celebration of Hope be-

cause Bishop McCauley indeed was instrumental in its re-designing to be an earth quake proof structure, where he ministered to the people of God and built bridges between Catholics and Anglicans in the area.

As we imagine a world of peaceful co-existence among nations in our world his life is an inspiration and this place of worship, he built has remained a uniting home for people in the region. Every season of lent we see different faith denominations come together for the way of the Cross prayer for peace and celebrate faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ said a reliable source.

1964-79: As a leader in the conference of East African Bishops (AMECEA), he supported refugees and helped establish the Catholic University of East Africa in 1979. This is a great contribution to building not just buildings but also forming minds and hearts.







His famous for his quote 'The Gospel, the Church, must be incarnated in the African culture in which we live." was an acknowledgement of African cultures as units of strong family bonds which celebrate faith with Music. This event was celebrated with the a melodious choir that gave the congregation and opportunity to worship and praise God in a special way.

Our Lady of Snows Virika Cathedral has undergone three renovations, with the most recent renovation taking place in 2024 hence its re-opening on March 2, 2025. This Jubilee Year sees our Lady of Snows Cathedral Virika inspiring Christians with through its breathtaking beauty to pray and renewal their faith. During the blessing ceremony, His Lordship Bishop Dr. Robert Muhiirwa, Akiiki urged the faithful to embark on pilgrimages throughout this Jubilee Year, emphasizing that Virika Cathedral is a prime destination for those seeking to renew their faith and seek indulgences.

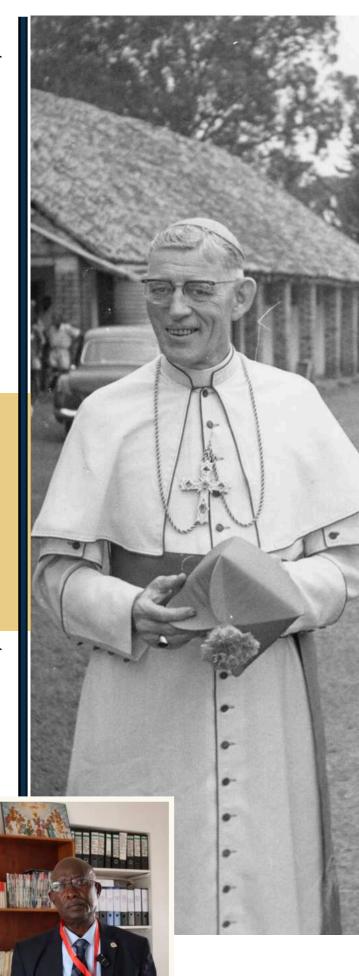
The rededication echoes Bishop McCauley's profound spiritual teachings, such as "with mary you can never go wrong." More importantly, the Cathedral embodies his dedication to service, reflecting the values he instilled in the community. As the diocese prays for the cause of his beatification, it is essential to recognize that he not only built this Cathedral but also laid the foundation for a community of Christians committed to their faith, embarking on spiritual journeys, nurturing families, and fodging religious paths for future generations. The response of the faithful to their Christian vocation has been one of faith, hope, peace, and justice.

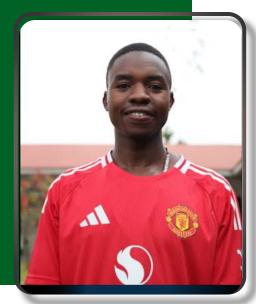
As we continue to pray for the beatification of Servant of God Bishop Vincent Joseph McCauley, may his intercession help propagate the good works he initiated, allowing peace, justice, faith, and purity to flourish among among the people of God. If you are seeking a personal devotion for healing, wisdom in your studies, praying for Christian Unity or you also feel troubled by the influx wars, refugees

among others Bishop McCauley is the right person to pray through and nurture devotion.

Servant of God Bishop McCauley Pray for us!

Sarah Kirikumwino Laudato Youth Initiative





I remember a time when I cried about not having shoes, only to stop when I saw someone without legs. This perspective shift reminds us that while we often look to God or external circumstances when we feel discontent, we must recognize that what we have now is a dream for many. It's essential to ask ourselves what we are doing to improve our situation, rather than solely focusing on what we have yet to achieve.

As youth, it is crucial to acknowledge that we share the responsibility for our environment. We should not bite the hand that feeds us. Consider the analogy of an axe visiting a forest while one tree may think of the axe as one of their own because it has a handle made from their wood, it ultimately represents a threat. It's not the act of betrayal that harms us; it's our own actions that can lead to destruction. We must recognize

So, how can we, as young people, benefit economically from our environment while ensuring its protection?

Sustainable Agriculture: Embrace organic farming practices. Regardless of where we come from, we can unite to promote healthy, environmentally friendly farming methods, ultimately reaping the benefits.

Eco-Tourism: Promote travel and tourism in our regions. Whether becoming a tour guide or establishing a tourism site, we can create opportunities for ourselves while protecting our natural surroundings.

Green Entrepreneurship: Start sustainable businesses that align with environmental values. For instance, one can cultivate a forest while operating a canteen that utilizes the shade provided by the trees, creating a win-win scenario for both business and nature.

Renewable Energy Projects: While we may not have the technical knowledge to implement solar or wind projects ourselves, we can engage with local authorities, religious leaders, and government representatives to propose and initiate such projects.

like the Laudato members in Fort Portal Catholic Diocese who collect litter. These actions not only clean our environment but can also be monetized by recycling materials.

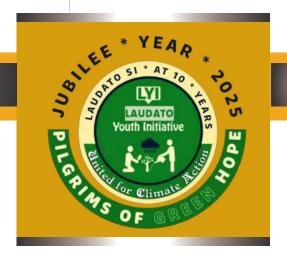
- 6. Waste Management Initiatives: Form organizations or companies focused on waste collection and management in our communities. By doing so, we can obtain tenders and empower ourselves economically.
- 7. **Creative Projects:** Innovate by using waste products as raw materials for manufacturing goods that can be sold in the market. This not only reduces waste but also generates income.
- 8. Advocacy and Policy Engagement: Collaborate with local governments and network to push for policies that support environmental conservation and youth empowerment.

As young leaders, we have the opportunity to transform our environment into a source of economic empowerment while nurturing it for future generations. Let us come together, take action, and be the change we wish to see. Together, we can create a sustainable future that benefits us all.

that, although we see ourselves as advocates for environmental conservation, we can also be agents of harm.

Conservation and Restoration Initiatives:

Participate in community clean-up efforts,



St. Adolf Holy Cross Parish, Kanyabachope





Rev Fr. Dr. Ronald Kawooya, CSC explains to the Laudato Youth leaders about the Reconciliation Gardens

St. Adolf Parish Kanyabachope has Initiatited a new strategy regarding the implementation of Laudato Si. They have worked on aparish model strategy . Begining with the election of SCC leaders and one of the members deals with Sanitation on SCC level who doubles as Laudato Si person to cordinate the LYI activities. Having such membere will help in full filling out Laudato Youth Initiative agenda from SCC, to Church, Sub-Parish, Parish level. We look forward to sharing more from this initiative

Laudato Youth at the Parish preparing for games





Environmental Education: Foundation for a Sustainable Future.





Pupils at St. Adolf Holy Cross Parish Kanyabachope - Fort Portal Gathered to share talents, presenting poems about the environment and the Importance of Environmental Education. We know environmental education is a fundamental pillar in raising awareness among citizens and communities about environmental issues. It plays a crucial role in informing and educating people on how their daily actions can impact the environment and suggests practical ways to contribute to its preservation.

In an era where climate change and the loss of biodiversity represent growing threats, environmental education is increasingly becoming an indispensable element of a sustainable future.



Celebrating the 10th Aniversary of Laudato Si!

Preparations are underway for the celebrations commemorating the 10th Anniversary of Laudato Si, scheduled for May 15th and 16th 2025 at the Munyonyo Martyrs Shrine in Uganda.

According to a letter from the Archdiocese of Kampala, in collaboration with the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Secretariat, the Laudato Si Centre Comboni, and the John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre, along with the Laudato Youth Initiative, this event will unite the global Church in reflecting on the decade-long impact of Laudato Si.

The Kampala Archdiocese and its partners have organized a two-day Laudato Si Encounter at the Uganda Martyrs Basilica in Munyonyo. The aim of this gathering is to pray, listen, and share insights on the achievements of the first ten years of Laudato Si, while also engaging in discussions about the necessary hopes and actions for the future as Pope Francis emphasizes, "Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan" (LS 164).

The first day, Thursday, May 15th, 2025, will focus on Partner Institutions involved in implementing Laudato Si. Members will come together to discuss, share experiences, and collaborate on strategies for working in Synodality, establishing actionable steps to make a positive impact on Ugandan society.

The second day, Friday, May 16th, 2025, will welcome all invited guests to participate in a Holy Mass led by the Archbishop of Kampala, His Grace Paul Ssemogerere. This will be followed by a keynote address centered on Laudato Si, speeches from selected speakers, including religious leaders, government officials, and personal testimonies.



An exhibition showcasing tools and initiatives aimed at preserving our planet will also be featured.

The Archbishop invites everyone to join this significant event, as we come together to renew our commitment to caring for our shared home and responding to the urgent needs of both the Earth and the marginalized.

Additionally, on March 26th, Br. Adolf, our Laudato Youth Initiative mentor, was hosted by Vatican Radio in Rome to reflect on the impact of Laudato Si over the past decade and the role of the Laudato Youth Initiative in inspiring the youth, Church and local communities in Uganda to respond to the Popes' message in Laudato Si.

Stay tuned for more information about our anniversary activities, including being part of the Fort Portal Diocese Annual Youth Conference scheduled for 14th to 18th May 2025. This will see us celebrate Laudato Si Week and the anniversary with fellow young people, while we engage in care for creation activities and reflect on the 10 Years of Laudato Si and our message of renewing our commitment to green hope this jubilee year.





Divine Mercy S.S.S

A Prayer for Our Earth

And we gather here, in faith embraced;
To mend our world
— yours and mine.
Under sunlit skies and winds that blow
Cyclical renewal in nature's grace.

We stand together, pray we jive; — Bond of souls, none will be apart.
In justice and mercy, our voiccombine;
As stewards of Earth, we love the light.

So give us courage,
Lord to do and be;
It is impactful to our core,
proving that one cares.
With faith as our compass,
we'll answer the call
Loving and protecting their
creation,
our everything.



Poems

Beautiful World

Beautiful world So it seems But is this really what is should be

Beautiful world Yes indeed I hope one day well still have trees

And birds and bees
Please oh please
Let this world still be green
If I live to fifty three
With there still is land?
Enough for me to struggle to see
Its full extensive beauty

Beautiful world Hear my plea Do not give up on you and me.

AMONGIN ALLEN ELISHA

Mother Nature

Look at the hospitality of Mother Nature! It gives everything to all creature. There are no strangers under the tree. Enjoy the shadow and fruits for free. There is a home for birds. And refreshing place for the herd.

This virtue is our culture, Follow it in your future Always welcome with smiling face Win the heart with life's race Fortunate knocks with its best,

Extinction of Nature

Both we know, conserving the nature, Can share the feature from age to age, Massive cutting down of trees, swamp drainage,

Have broken the next chain, Impressing our own favours,

Reckless jumping of plastics on bare grounds.

Burning them in open air, Fumes from industries, vehicles plus factories

Break the next chain.

Outbreak of unknown diseases, No medicine to cure chain Cries everywhere, East to West, Suffering till death We are driving to darkness

Shows on televisions and radios,
Concerning nature!
Pretending to be deaf, stories, reports
Fliers on road sides,
We cannot see! As if they are filled
With foreign bodies
Oh, my brothers and sisters, we are
stuck!Unless we learn how to fight.
For the next generations to come,
No way!
Sensitized, but only offering a blind,

Eye and a deaf ear! Now I fear to be in air just because I don't know chemicals are contained there!

For the animals and plants,
Are going extinct than extinct forever,
The extinction of nature is riding us,
To a miserable life until death;
I am tired of murdering nature,
Lets raise, nurture the remaining
To gain the lost.

Poem by kobugabe Martha Laudato Si club member













Explore top Eco-activities to comemorate WORLD WETLANDS DAY.

Friendly Smart Framing

On the 2nd of February every year, we join the global community to celebrate World Wetlands Day, a vital reminder of the significance of wetlands in our environment and communities. This day marks the adoption of the Convention of Wetlands on February 2 1971 in Ramsar, Iran. The theme for World Wetlands Day 2025 was ''Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future''.

In Uganda, our wetlands are beautiful landscapes and crucial ecosystems that support biodiversity, purify water, and offer livelihoods to countless families serving as a cornerstone of our country's ecological and economic well-being.

Wetlands play a key role in regulating water quality, mitigating flood risks, and sequestering carbon, thereby contributing significantly to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. However, these invaluable resources are under threat from pollution, encroachment, and climate change. It is our responsibility to protect and preserve these ecosystems for future generations.

Let us unite to promote sustainable practices, raise awareness about the vital importance of wetlands, and collaborate to restore and conserve these precious ecosystems. By doing so, we can ensure that Uganda's wetlands continue to flourish, supporting both our environment and our communities.





The Ant and the Grasshopper

The ant diligently prepares for the rainy season, storing food, while the grasshopper sings and plays. When the rains come, the grasshopper finds itself unprepared and seeks help from the ant, who reminds it of the value of hard work and foresight.

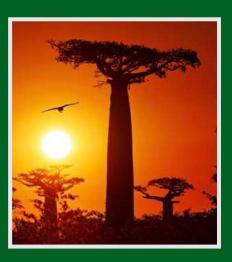
story speaks to the importance of planning and sustainability in agricultural This practices. should educate Laudato Youth and communities about climate resilience and sustainable farming practices, encouraging collaboration among farmers to share resources and knowledge. By weaving this fable into discussions about security and environmental management, reinforces the importance of community unity in tackling ecological challenges and emphasizes the need for collective action in safeguarding our agricultural heritage in Uganda.



The Lion and the Mouse

A classic fable that has African roots tells of a lion who spares a mouse's life. Later, when the lion is caught in a hunter's net, the mouse returns the favor by gnawing through the ropes and freeing the lion.

This story illustrates the principle of mutual aid and the idea that every member of the community, no matter how small, has value and can contribute to the greater good. Digital adaptations of this tale can highlight ecological themes such as the balance of ecosystems and the importance of all species in maintaining environmental health. this narrative, promotina communities can inspire unity and collaborative efforts in wildlife conservation and habitat protection, understanding that every action counts in preserving the planet.



The Tale of the Baobab Tree

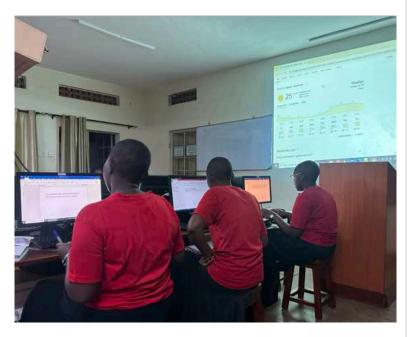
In many of our African cultures, the Baobab tree is revered as the "Tree of Life." It is said that the Baobab tree was once a proud and beautiful tree that boasted about its size to the other trees. The gods, displeased with its arrogance, uprooted it and planted it upside down, resulting in its distinct appearance.

story conveys importance of humility and interconnectedness nature. This story emphasizes significance the ecological of the Baobab tree, which provides food, shelter, and water to numerous species and communities. By highlighting the tree's role in sustaining life, these stories foster a deeper appreciation for biodiversity and the need for environmental stewardship, promoting collective responsibility among community members to protect their natural resources and trees that hold a community significance.

A Call to Action for Our Environment

Rising Heat Waves in Uganda could be heading us for a Health Crisis

In recent years, my mother land Uganda like many other Countries in the world has become increasingly vulnerable to the devastating effects of climate change, particularly in the form of rising temperatures and heat waves during the dry season.



Laudato youth at Holy Cross Lake view visit the lab to investigate the Climate heat rising
Crisis and how it may impact them and the society to be able to sentise their school community about the Crisis and invite them to be the change they want to see

These escalating climate conditions have emerged as significant threats to various sectors, including education, agriculture, and public health. The urgency to address these environmental changes should prompt numerous initiatives, particularly from organizations. Laudato youth recently launched a one million tree planting drive aimed at fostering individual, institutional, and organizational responses to this crisis.



To understand this further. The Uganda National Meteorological Authority reports that average temperatures in the country have risen by approximately 1.3°C over the past century, with projections indicating an increase of 2-3°C by 2050 (Uganda National Meteorological Authority, 2022). This rise has resulted in more frequent and intense heat waves, especially in northern and northeastern Uganda, where temperatures can now soar above 40°C (104°F).

The consequences of these heat levels are far-reaching. In educational settings, students are increasingly finding it difficult to concentrate and perform academically under extreme heat conditions. A study conducted by the Ministry of Education and Sports revealed a 15% drop in student attendance during the hottest months, significantly impacting learning outcomes (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2021).



Their findings were educative and inspirational in their efforts to caring for the environment.

Teachers have also reported decreased productivity and heightened fatigue, contributing to a less effective educational environment. In light of these pressing challenges, the Laudato Youth Initiative has taken significant steps by inspiring young people to take action, borrowing the indigenous wisdom of elders to encourage individual and communal responsibility in tree planting and other sustainability practices aimed at combating climate change and promoting environmental sustainability. Thus recognizing the critical role that trees play in mitigating heat by providing shade, improving air quality, and regulating local climates.

For me it is my humble appeal to you all our readers that each of us has a contribution to make. If we unite for climate action, as advocated by Laudato Youth and many other environmentally enthusiastic people, we can make significant strides toward improving our environment today and safeguarding it for future generations. Tree planting initiatives foster a sense of responsibility for our common home, encouraging individuals to engage actively in environmental stewardship. As trees are planted across schools, communities, and public spaces, they not only contribute to temperature reduction but also enhance biodiversity and promote community engagement.

The Laudato Youth Initiative has already championed and inspired the participation of various stakeholders, including individuals, schools, parishes, and community groups. We are now rallying support from local organizations to adopt environmental action as part of their corporate social responsibility, creating a powerful example of collective action against climate change.

The one million tree planting drive serves as a scalable model for other companies and institutions to follow. By investing in tree planting, organizations can contribute to carbon sequestration, enhance local ecosystems, and foster community involvement. Moreover, such initiatives can align with corporate social responsibility goals, making them

appealing to businesses looking to improve their public image while making a tangible impact.

As we navigate the challenges posed to us by the rising heat waves, it is crucial for individuals, institutions and communities to take proactive measures to protect themselves, recognizing that this crisis is also a health emergency. Off my head I would think of these few recommendations:

- **1. Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to prevent dehydration, especially during peak heat hours.
- **2. Limit Outdoor** Activities: Avoid strenuous activities during the hottest parts of the day. If outdoor work is necessary, take frequent breaks in shaded areas.
- **3. Wear Appropriate Clothing:** Dress in lightweight, light-colored clothing to help regulate body temperature. Cover your head if possible.
- **4. Create Shade**: Use umbrellas, canopies, or natural shade from trees to protect against direct sunlight when outdoors. Schools could consider conducting classes under tree shade if it is safe for students.
- **5. Promote Tree Planting:** Engage in or support local tree planting initiatives to help combat the urban heat effect and improve air quality.
- 6. Educate the Community: Raise awareness about the impacts of climate change and the importance of environmental stewardship within local communities. If this message has reached you that means you can reach someone else far away.
- 7. Advocate for Policy Change: Encourage local governments and institutions to implement policies that promote sustainable practices and mitigate climate change effects. Sometimes it's easy to think of what the government is supposed to do but does your institution or organization have an environmental policy with daily small practices that en-

hance and contribute to environmental protection? Uganda's rising heat waves present a significant challenge that affects multiple facets of our life, from education to agriculture. For me the simple Laudato Youth Initiative's tree planting drive exemplifies a proactive and impactful response to this crisis. By prioritizing environmental stewardship and encouraging collective action, Uganda can work towards a more sustainable future. It is essential for individuals, organizations, and communities to make concerted efforts to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change for the well-being of current and future generations.

The climate change crisis in Uganda is not merely an environmental issue; it is a looming health crisis that demands urgent attention. As temperatures continue to rise, the ramifications on education, agriculture, and public health are becoming increasingly severe.

We must collectively embrace the responsibility to protect our planet and ensure a livable future for generations to come. It is time to act decisively, plant trees, and inspire others to join this critical fight against climate change with many other ways. It's not just planting trees, what more can I do as an individual or a sector of the government. We need to see more urban tree planting initiatives, we need to see more localized policies and commitments to environmental sustainability made by organizations. We need good role models for the young people. Together, we can cultivate a greener, healthier Uganda for ourselves and the future. My article is aimed at analyzing the critical intersection of climate change and health in Uganda, emphasizing the urgent need for action. By highlighting the importance of initiatives like the Laudato Youth Initiative's one million tree planting drive, we can inspire others to engage in meaningful efforts to combat climate change and protect our environment. Together, we can make a difference.

What is happening to our common home

No One is Safe with the Fast-Paced Climate Change in Uganda

Recent catastrophic events in Uganda have underscored the urgent reality of climate change and its devastating impact on communities. A severe thunderstorm in Kalangala District has wreaked havoc, leading to the collapse of the Central Police Station, destruction of over 300 homes, and tragically claiming the lives of people. This disaster has drawn attention to the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather conditions attributed to climate change, raising concerns about safety and preparedness across the nation as we approach the wet season in April.

The Uganda Red Cross Society has reported that among the deceased are Hassan Waswa, a barber, Geoffrey Sekiwere, a porter, and a police officer whose identity remains unspecified. In addition, 13 people have sustained injuries and are receiving treatment at Kalangala Health Centre IV (Monitor, 2025). The Uganda Red Cross has mobilized response teams to assess the situation and provide aid, coordinating with the Office of the Prime Minister to facilitate necessary support (Nile Post, 2025).

Experts have long warned that Uganda is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. According to a report by the World Bank, climate change is expected to exacerbate the already severe weather patterns in East Africa, increasing the likelihood of extreme rainfall and flooding (World Bank, 2021). This places communities at risk, particularly those living in areas prone to natural disasters, such as Kalangala, Kasese, Bududa and many others.

Furthermore, a study published in the journal "Environmental Research Letters" highlights that developing countries like Uganda face significant challenges in adapting to climate change due to limited resources and infrastructure (Brown et al., 2020). This lack of preparedness can lead to increased loss of life and property during such disasters. We need to take individual reaponsibility and heed to the message of climate response and action in our homes and communities. Its clear that our societies still have climate change deniers but its high time we assimilated the truth and listen to the government and other stake holders advises on climate change.



As climate change continues to accelerate, the need for effective disaster preparedness and response strategies becomes increasingly critical. This event in Kalangala should serve as a stark reminder that no one is safe from the impacts of climate change, and urgent action is needed to protect our families and vulnerable communities throughout Uganda. This safety and action begins with me and you.

As you know the rapid pace of climate change poses a significant threat to public safety in Uganda and elsewhere in the world. With extreme weather events becoming more common, it is essential for both the government, local organizations and individuals to invest in disaster preparedness and infrastructure improvements to safeguard lives and property in the face of an uncertain climate future.

These events sadden us we pray for those who have lost their lives and property. Those who have mo where to put a head that they may find confort in God and the generous hearts of neighbors for all the help they may need.





More needs to be done to empower communities for Climate Resilience







FROM HEAT WAVES TO FLOODS: WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

In Uganda, we typically embrace the rainy and sunny seasons as essential parts of our lives. However, these once-celebrated periods have devolved into cycles of disaster and hardship.

For months, we have been enduring the scorching heat of the dry season, grappling with oppressive heat waves that pose serious health risks due to the arid air and dust, which often lead to illnesses like the flu. These extreme temperatures have also wreaked havoc on the agricultural sector, with crops wilting under the relentless sun, ultimately stunting the economic growth of a nation heavily reliant on agriculture.

Recently, our Laudato Youth Research Editor highlighted the detrimental effects of these heat waves on students' mental health. In many schools, the sweltering conditions make it unbearable for students, as some institutions lack even the basic shade of trees to provide a breath of fresh air. As a result, many students yearn to return home, only to find that their homes are equally affected by the heat. The longing for rain has become palpable, with many counting down the days until relief arrives.

Now, the rains have finally come, bringing both hope and despair. While the downpour can benefit farmers, it also presents a significant challenge. This flooding cannot simply be labeled a natural disaster; it is a human-induced crisis. The heavy rains often begin in the early hours and continue throughout the day, leading to flooding in well-developed areas, disrupting businesses, transportation, and leaving many homeless. Students find themselves unable to attend school due to submerged roads and bridges, while patients struggle to reach hospitals as vehicles become trapped in the deluge.

With seasons shifting and the stakes rising, mental health concerns are on the rise. Students are unable to attend school, parents face challenges in getting to work due to impassable roads, and patients are cut off from medical care. The stability of our mental well-being is at risk.

Is this a problem of development or a consequence of poor planning? While it is essential for us to advance technologically, we must also prioritize our health and well-being. The floods we are experiencing can be attributed to both the questions posed above and human activities. Poor waste management has led to blocked drainage systems, preventing proper water flow. We are complicit in creating this disaster, but we can also be part of the solution.

We must work together to ensure that urbanization and modernization flourish sustainably; otherwise, we risk losing the opportunity to create meaningful change.

PILGRIMS OF GREEN HOPE

Imagine stepping outside one morning to find that the trees have filed a lawsuit against humanity for deforestation, the rivers are protesting pollution, and the birds are staging a silent strike -no chirping, no singing, just silence. Sounds ridiculous, right? But in many ways, creation has already been crying out for justice, and we have been hitting the snooze button on God's divine wake-up call. This year, as we embrace the Laudato Youth Initiative theme "Pilgrims of Green Hope," to reawaken lost hope and amplify voices for Laudato Si' we must stop treating environmental issues like that persistent "low battery" notifications we ignore until our devices shut down.

The time for passive concern is over and we need urgent action, bold leadership, and a collective awakening to the reality that without a healthy planet, there is no future. Creation's lawsuit against us creates the urgency of Green Hope. Pope Francis, in Laudato Si', does not sugarcoat the truth: The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor.

We are not just talking about a few wilting plants here and there, our

forests are vanishing, our rivers are choking, and our climate is rebelling. East Africa is no exception to this crisis. The Congo

Basin-the second largest rainforest

in the world

is shrinking due to deforestation. The once-mighty Lake Victoria is now a dumping ground for industrial waste. Desertification is creeping into once-fertile lands, leaving communities in hunger and despair. If we don't act now, our grandchildren might read about elephants and rhinos the way we read about dinosaurs. Is that the legacy we want to leave?

A hilarious but honest reality check! Let's be real, how many times have we heard people say, "But God will take care of everything"? Yes, He will. But guess what? God also expects us to do our part. If Noah had sat around waiting for divine intervention instead of building the ark, he and his family would have needed swim lessons real fast. God has already given us the tools: intelligence, science, faith, and the

ability to act. He is not going to come down from heaven to sort our waste, replant our forests, or clean up oil spills. That's our job! Biblical Roots of Environmental Stewardship. Our responsibility is deeply rooted in Scripture. In Genesis 2:15, we read: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Notice He didn't say, "exploit it, abuse it, and then blame someone else when it falls apart."

Psalm 24:1 reminds us: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." If someone lent you their house for a few months, would you trash it and then expect a thankyou note? That's exactly what we are doing to God's creation. Even the prophet Isaiah had something to say:

The mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands, Isaiah 55:12. But let's be honest, at this rate, the trees are not clapping instead they're waving frantically for help.

A DIMINE WAKE UP CALLS TO SAVE OUR COMMON HOME

To businesses: Sustainable practices are not just for PR campaigns. If your profit margins are built on environmental destruction, what exactly are you profiting from?

To religious leaders: The pulpit is powerful. We preach about charity and love, but what about love for the earth? Call your congregations to action! Let our churches and mosques lead the way in reforestation, conservation, and sustainability.

Leaders, Business Owners, and Stakeholders, Wake Up! Let's talk about those in power -governments, corporations, religious leaders, and policymakers. You hold the keys to large-scale change. While it's great to tweet about climate change and hold fancy summits, the earth needs more than just words. It needs unity for action.

To governments: Pass and enforce environmental protection laws. Ban single-use plastics. Invest in clean energy. Stop giving permits to industries that destroy ecosystems in the name of "development."

To individuals: Stop acting like someone else will fix it. Your small actions like planting trees, reducing waste, conserving water do matter. If millions of people take small actions, they add up to massive change.

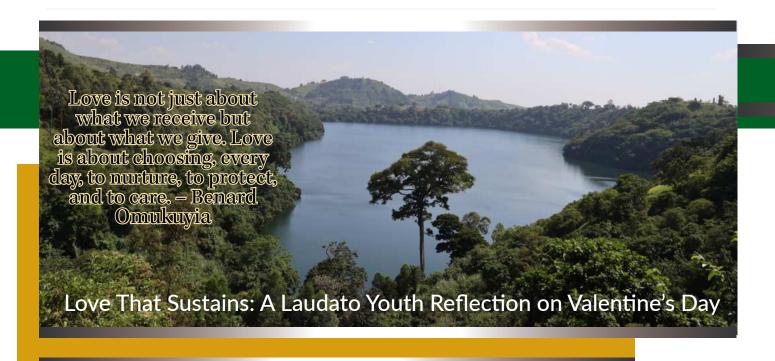
A Call to Radical, Faith-Driven Action – Pope Francis insists that "a change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic, and social power". So, what are we waiting for? If your church has land, start a tree-planting initiative, if you run a school, make environmental education part of the curriculum, if you work in government, push for policies that protect rather than exploit nature, if you are a young person, don't just talk, organize, volunteer and innovate. As Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan Nobel laureate, wisely said: "The generation that destroys the environment is not the generation that pays the price." Let's not be the villains in history books. Let's be the heroes who turned the tide for our planet.

Hope in Every Step-As "Pilgrims of Green Hope," we walk not in despair but in faith, believing that every small act of care contributes to the greater restoration of creation. East Africa has the potential to be a beacon of ecological renewal, but it starts with us. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: "The book of nature is one and indivisible; care for the environment requires attention to human ecology." Our journey is not just about saving the earth, it is about healing our relationship with God, creation, and one another. We can no longer afford to sit back and hope that things will get better on their own. It's time to rise, take responsibility, and act. The earth is watching. Future generations are counting on us. And most importantly, God is calling.

As Pope Francis warns, "The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth" and let's be honest, if the planet had a nose, she'd probably be holding it by now. This isn't just a poetic warning; it's a flashing red light on the dashboard of creation and ignoring it won't make the problem go away. Mother Nature has been remarkably patient, absorbing our pollution, deforestation, and reckless waste like a long-suffering parent cleaning up after messy children but even parents have their limits. If we don't start treating the planet like the sacred gift it is, instead of a disposable convenience, we might wake up one day to find that nature has stopped negotiating and started retaliating. So, let's drop the excuses, ditch the waste, plant more trees than tweets, and act like the responsible stewards God called us to be before the only "green" left on earth is in history books and old photographs.

What will your step toward Green Hope be today?

Hellen Agaba Baine Mendoza College of Business University of Notre Dame USA, Indiana



Today, the world celebrates love—a word so powerful yet often misunderstood. We exchange gifts, write heartfelt messages, and express affection in ways big and small. But have we ever paused to ask: What kind of love do we celebrate? Is it a love that lasts? A love that nurtures, protects, and sustains?

Pope Francis, in Laudato Si', invites us to expand our understanding of love beyond romance—to embrace love as care for our common home, the earth that sustains us. If we say we love, then shouldn't that love extend to the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the world we will leave behind for future generations?

What if love wasn't just about what we feel—but about what we protect? As we reflect today, I invite you to consider: Is our love deep enough to care not just for one another, but for the planet that holds us all?

The Depth of Love: Beyond Words and Feelings

Laudato Si' challenges us to see

love as an emotion and a radical commitment to life in all its forms. Pope Francis writes, "Everything is connected" (Laudato Si', 91). If everything is interwoven, then the way we treat the earth reflects how we love—not just nature, but also the people who depend on it.

Think about this: If we truly love, why do we tolerate actions that harm the environment, knowing they will impact future generations? Why do we allow our lifestyles to contribute to pollution, deforestation, and climate change? Love, when it is real, seeks the good of the other. And love for the earth means ensuring its beauty, vitality, and health for all who come after us.

Love in Action: Ecological Conversion

Pope Francis calls for an "ecological conversion", a transformation of heart that reshapes our relationship with the natural world. Just as in human relationships, love must be renewed, nurtured, and expressed through tangible actions. In the same way that couples make daily sacrifices for one ano-

ther, those who love creation must make daily choices to protect it.

- 1. Could we consume less and cherish more?
- 2. Could we replace wastefulness with mindfulness?
- 3. Could we shift from convenience to conscious care?

This Valentine's Day let's move beyond temporary gestures of love and embrace lasting expressions of care—for each other and for the world we inhabit.

Simplicity: Love Without Possession

Pope Francis challenges the culture of consumerism, urging us to rediscover the beauty of moderation: "Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little" (Laudato Si', 222). Love, whether for people or for the earth, is not about control or exploitation—it is about reverence, appreciation, and gratitude. Perhaps this Valentine's Day, instead of extravagant gifts, we can celebrate love in ways that truly nourish the soul:

- 1. Taking a walk in nature and marveling at its beauty
- 2. Preparing a simple meal with local, sustainable ingredients
- 3. Planting a tree as a living symbol of enduring love

Love does not demand ownership; it seeks the flourishing of the beloved. If we say we love the earth, do our actions show it?

Gratitude: Seeing the World as a Gift

At the heart of Laudato Si' is a call to gratitude—to recognize creation not as a resource to be used but as a sacred gift to be cherished. Pope Francis urges us to "look at the world with greater attention and love" (Laudato Si', 97). How often do we pause to truly appreciate the wonder of creation?

Imagine if we treated the earth with the same tenderness and care that we show to someone we love. Imagine if we protected its forests as fiercely as we would protect a child. Imagine if we spoke of its beauty with the same awe as when we describe someone dear to us. Love is not indifferent; it delights

in the beloved. Does our love for the earth reflect this kind of devotion?

A Love That Knows No Borders

Love is not just about those closest to us. It is also about those unseen—the poor, the vulnerable, and the generations yet to be born. Environmental destruction is not just a crisis of nature; it is a crisis of justice. The poorest communities suffer the most from climate change, deforestation, and pollution, despite contributing the least to these problems. Can we claim to love while remaining indifferent to this suffering? Love is action. It is solidarity. It is a call to heal the world—not just for us, but for those who come after us

A Love That Endures

This Valentine's Day, let love be more than a sentiment. Let it be a force that transforms—not just our relationships, but the way we live on this planet. Pope Francis reminds us, "We need one another; we have a shared responsibility for others and the world" (Laudato Si', 229). Love is not just about what we receive but about what we give. Love is about choosing, every day, to nurture, to protect, and to care. If we love this world, let us show it. If we love the people in our lives, let that love extend to the home we all share.

This Valentine's Day, may we embrace a love that does not fade—a love that sustains, heals, and preserves. May our love for one another extend to our common home, ensuring that this he beauty of creation endures for generations to come.

Benard Omukuyia, Doctoral Student, Gregorian University Rome Italy







ilgrims of
Green Hope:
Champions of
a Sustainable Future

"A better, greener, and more just world is possible" - Mininah

In a world often clouded by despair and uncertainty, a new generation of visionaries rises; individuals who refuse to accept the status quo. We are the Pilgrims of Green Hope, journeying with purpose, fueled by the competence to act and the belief that a better, greener, and more just world is possible.

Laudato Youth are not defined by just age, status, or experience. They are change makers on any journey to transform our common home they have had to plant trees where deserts threaten to spread, mentored students who champion sustainability in our schools, activists who speak for the voiceless, and innovators who find solutions to the world's greatest environmental challenges. Each step they take is not just them themselves but for me, for you and generations to

come. Then why cant we join them on the green hope journey?

Their path is not easy. There are moments of challenges, obstacles that seem insurmountable, and voices that dismiss their efforts as insignificant. Yet, they press on, knowing that every tree planted, every mind awakened, and every action taken in faith brings the world closer to healing.

I count myself lucky to be part of the people raising a voice of Hope from our compass. I believe it is not a passive force but an active force with a belief in change backed by relentless effort. Together we envision a future where rivers run clean, forests stand tall, and humanity lives in harmony with nature.

To be a Pilgrim of Green Hope is to walk with courage, to inspire others to join the journey, and to never give up, no matter how difficult the road may be. The pilgrimage is long, but with every step, we light the way for the future.

My appeal is to invite you dear reader to join us in this transformative journey. Together, we can nurture a more sustainable and greener Mother Earth. Will you walk with us?

Kafuko Mininah Mass communication student and media advocate for sustainability, Islamic University Uganda

Emotional well Bieng and Stress Management

HOW TO LOOK SMARTER AND MORE INTELLIGENT

By Isaac Kalembe Akiiki

Being smart isn't just about what you know—it's also about how others perceive you.

Psychology suggests that appearing intelligent involves body language, communication, confidence, dressing style, and social behaviour.

Whether you are in a job interview, social gathering, or professional setting, knowing how to present yourself can leave a lasting impression.

1) The power of first impressions

People form opinions about you within seconds of meeting you.

These quick judgments are influenced more by your appearance, tone, and body language than by your actual intelligence.

This is due to the Halo Effect, a psychological principle where people assume that someone who looks smart must be intelligent.

How to make a strong first impression:

- Dress appropriately and neatly;
- Stand and sit with confidence;
- Use a friendly but professional tone, and; Maintain a composed and approachable facial expression.
- 2) Dress smart to appear intelligent Your clothing choices impact how others perceive you. Research shows that well-dressed individuals are often seen as more competent and knowledgeable.

Tips to dress smartly:

- Choose well-fitted clothes—avoid outfits that are too tight or too loose;
- Stick to classic colours like black, navy blue, gray, and white for a professional look;
- Avoid excessive prints, slogans, or overly casual clothing;
- Keep accessories minimal—simple jewelry, a watch, and polished shoes can enhance your look, and;
- Maintain good grooming—clean nails, a neat hairstyle, and fresh breath contribute to an intelligent appearance.

Psychological Insight:

Studies indicate that people who wear glasses, especially with thick frames, are often perceived as more intelligent.

3) Smart body language (The way you move matters)

- Your gestures, posture, and expressions influence how intelligent you appear.
- Confident body language signals competence and leadership.

Psychological tips for smart body language:

- Stand and sit upright—slouching makes you look uninterested;
- Use hand gestures while explaining things to appear more knowledgeable;
- Maintain eye contact—it shows attentiveness and self-assurance;
- Avoid fidgeting, as it makes you seem nervous, and;
- Keep a calm and composed expression, with a subtle smile for approachability.

Psychological Insight:

A Princeton University study found that people with steady eye contact are often seen as more intelligent and trustworthy.

Pilgrims of Green Hope

4) Communication – speak smartly The way you talk influences how people perceive your intelligence.

The words you choose, your tone, and your delivery matter.
Psychological tips for speaking smartly:

- Use clear and simple language—avoid unnecessary jargon;
- Speak at a moderate pace—rushing or speaking too slowly can make you seem less confident;
- Expand your vocabulary but keep it natural;
- Avoid filler words like "um," "like," and "you know";
- Be an active listener—nod, paraphrase, and respond thoughtfully, and:
- Tell stories and use real-life examples to explain concepts.

Psychological insight:

Research from the University of Chicago shows that using slightly sophisticated words (without overcomplicating speech) makes a person appear more intelligent.

5) Knowledge is key – Keep learning You can't fake intelligence forever. True smartness comes from continuous learning.

Ways to expand knowledge and appear smarter:

- Read books, articles, and newspapers regularly;
- Stay informed about current affairs and industry trends;
- Listen to educational podcasts and watch informative videos;
- Engage in intellectual discussions to refine critical thinking skills, and;
- Improve problem-solving abilities by thinking logically and analytically.

In Uganda, heavy down pours have become stack reminders of the recurrent problem of flash floods. Many argue that flooding a global problem experienced in the developed world. True! However, that would be an easy scapegoat in Uganda's case where the causes of flooding are largely attributed to our own negligence, weak institutional frameworks, poor infrastructure, compounded lack of political will and elite state capture. A quick scan through social media reinforces the public outcry about plastic pollution, particularly caused by poor disposal of single-use plastic bags (kaveera) and bottles. Single-use plastics have indubitably simplified our ways of life; however, overuse, over-production, poor disposal and inefficient waste management systems have raised serious threats to human safety. environmental security and ecosystem integrity.

Single-use plastics are non-biodegradable, as they cannot be fully absorbed into the soil. As a result of poor waste disposal, plastics end up in already inadequate and malfunctional water drainage systems; hence causing water clogging and flooding on rainy days. Single-use plastics undermine the integrity of ecosystems as they affect water infiltration and absorption, and release minute quantities of plastics, which are detrimental to biodiversity and cause water contamination. In 2002, Bangladesh was the first country to implement a total ban on single-use plastics, which set the precedence elsewhere. In Africa, only 16 countries have passed total bans on use, marketing and importation of plastic bags, including Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda. Uganda falls in the category where we have laws against use of plastic bags, but implementation has remained a thorny issue. This can be attributed to lack of political will and public awareness, and unclear policy direction, etc. This article appeals for a swifter process of transition of all stakeholders - the public, manufacturers, civil society and government – into the use of sustainable carrier bags in Uganda.



Considerably, the transition of the public, who are the endusers of single-use plastic bags and bottles, is very critical. Adoption of biodegradable carrier bags for shopping, for instance, requires aggressive awareness campaigns about the health and environmental risks posed by single-use plastics so that the public can appreciate the link between their behaviour and consequent flash floods. The financial implication of this transition should be highlighted as well, given that biodegradable bags may come at a small cost, estimated at Ush. 500. However, sustainable practices, such as re-use, reducing and re-cycling (3Rs) can address this challenge as people can adopt the habit of re-using their paper bags when going to the local markets and grocery stores. Transition will also require disruptive and innovative campaigns, for instance, sticking anti-litter posters in commuter taxis, public buses and taxi parks as a stark reminder to the public not to litter plastics, but rather dispose them at designated points. Disposal of plastic bottles at source, for instance, retail shops and markets; and public buildings is most ideal as it eases collection by plastic re-cyclers. Pope Francis encourages environmental education in schools, where learners are cultured into sustainable practices and caring for the environment.

Needless to say, production and distribution of plastics is a big business; hence total ban of single-use plastics could imply business disruption. However, strategic planning helps businesses to convert such inevitable threats into prospective opportunities. In this case, businesses can smoothly transit from dealing in single-use plastics to biodegradable paper bags. In fact, these businesses have a moral obligation to mitigate the health and ecological risks posed by use of plastics; and to ensure proper disposal and management. On their part, the government has an upper-hand in overseeing these multi-faceted transitions through offering necessary support to manufacturers and distributors of plastics; but most importantly, the political will to enforce the legal framework on plastics use, production and disposal.

Noteworthy, the total ban of single-use plastics is not a silver bullet to the problem of flash floods in Kampala and other places; however, it will be a progressive step in the addressing plastic pollution of our environment and natural ecosystems.

Augustine Bahemuka Research Editor – Laudato Youth Initiative abahemuka@outlook.com

Engaging partners for sustainable climate solutions

I had the pleasure of participating in the 2nd edition of the Africa Climate Finance Conference, organized by the Climate Finance and Sustainability Centre at Makerere University Business School, in collaboration with the Uganda Institute of Banking & Financial Services. This event brought together a diverse group of participants to engage in thought-provoking discussions surrounding crucial issues related to climate finance.

One of the main themes addressed was the continent's overreliance on foreign aid for climate adaptation and mitigation. The conversation highlighted the urgent need to localize climate finance, ensuring

Climate Finance
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that resources are directed towards initiatives that resonate with local communities. Additionally, there was a focus on the potential of carbon markets to support climate financing, allowing for innovative solutions to emerge from within Africa itself.

We also explored the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge into climate strategies, as well as the necessity of providing access to affordable and sustainable cooking solutions. The discussions further delved into the financial gaps that exist within households, which often hinder effective climate action.

A key call to action that emerged from the conference was the need to drive locally-led adaptation efforts to bridge these financing gaps. The involvement of young people was emphasized, leveraging their affinity for technology to foster innovative solutions. Moreover, there was a recognized need for collective behavioral change to address the human contributions to climate change, alongside a more profound focus on the socio-cultural dimensions of climate financing.

As we move forward, it is imperative that we take these insights to heart and work collaboratively to create sustainable financial frameworks that empower communities and drive meaningful change. Together, we can build a resilient future that priotizes local solutions and embraces the potential of our youth.



Augustine Bahemuka

Youth Adaptation Forum

We joined the World's Largest Youth Adapation Newtwork in Africa



I attended a conference at the Youth Adaptation Forum organized by the Global Center on Adaptation, where I participated in panel discussions focused on adaptation strategies for sustainable living that communities and individuals can implement. This initiative filled us with enthusiasm as youth united in the fight against climate change. Numerous young leaders, experts, and policymakers gathered at Makerere University, to:

Highlight youth-driven adaptation initiatives and advocate for climate education Enhance awareness and understanding of adaptation

Strengthen collaborations and expand the African Youth Adaptation Network and foster innovations in sustainable climate change solutions





Global Center on Adaptation: Youth Leadership to Build Climate Resilient Economies.

Climate change has become a pressing global issue, prompting governments worldwide to intensify their efforts in combating its effects. In this critical landscape, youth-led initiatives, such as the Laudato Youth Initiative, are stepping up to play significant roles in addressing climate challenges.

While the fight against climate change encompasses both mitigation and adaptation strategies, it is essential to recognize that adaptation is a pressing need. Across the globe, we are witnessing the tangible impacts of climate change, and as we strive to adapt and mitigate, we must remember that our efforts are not solely for the world at large; rather, they are for ourselves and future generations. The reality of a deteriorating environment has shaped our vision, and our collective fight against this threat is fueled by shared commitment and determination.

Although mitigation initiatives are vital, they should not overshadow the urgency of adaptation. We must develop practical measures that communities can implement to cope with our changing climate. This requires the active and sustained engagement of stakeholders and local communities, emphasizing the importance of strengthening and scaling advocacy efforts to promote climate resilience.

As Laudato Youth, we firmly believe that adaptation is the most urgent solution to the climate crisis.









It is crucial for young people to understand the global goals surrounding adaptation, enabling them to raise awareness and mobilize action in light of the pressing challenges we face. Together, we can pave the way for a more resilient future, where communities are equipped to thrive in the face of climate change. — Sarah, For Laudato Youth Initiative



Easter Message from the Laudato Youth Initiative

Dear Friends and Fellow Stewards,

As we celebrate the joyous season of Easter, we are reminded of the profound themes of renewal, hope, and transformation that resonate deeply within our and protection of our environment. hearts and our world. Just as the resurrection of Christ signifies new beginnings and the triumph of life over death, to: we too are called to rise and embrace the opportunities before us to heal our planet 1. As the Jubilee Year Invites us Emand foster a sustainable future.

ecosystems, the diverse species, and the delicate balance of nature that sustains all life. However, we must also acknowledge the challenges we face: the escalating climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, and the socio-economic inequalities that threaten our communities and our common home.

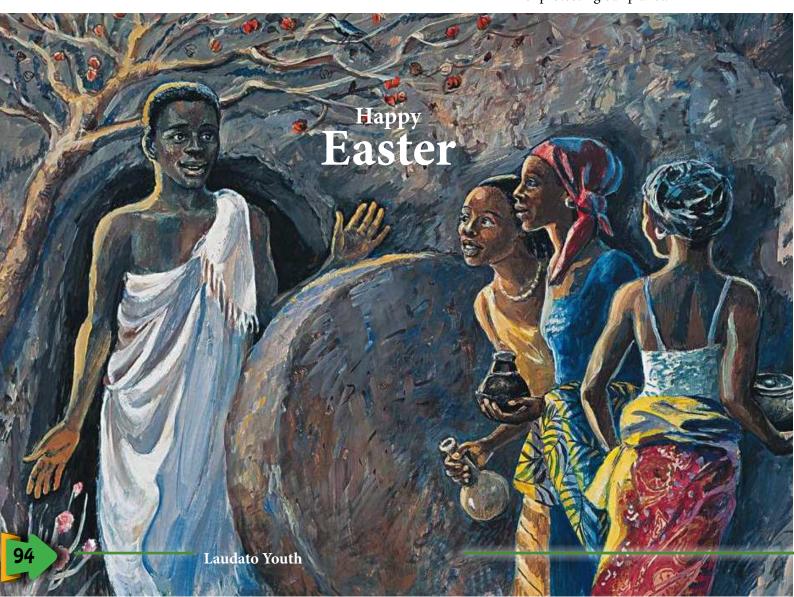
empowered to be agents of change, inspired by the message of hope that Eas- tal justice and sustainability, and lift up ter brings. Let us take this opportunity those who are working tirelessly to make

to recommit ourselves to the values of a difference. stewardship, compassion, and solidarity. Together, we can cultivate a spirit of col- 3. Like Jesus Act with Love: Show laboration, where every action, no matter compassion for those affected by enhow small, contributes to the restoration

- brace Renewal: Just as the rains, green pastures and flowers of Easter breathe This Easter, let us reflect on the beauty new life into the world, let us reflect on of creation that surrounds us the vibrant our lives and plan to change something s or renew our commitment to caring for creation. Engage in local climste action activities and conservation efforts by planting trees, or support initiatives that promote sustainability in your community.
- 2. Foster Hope: Share stories of positive change and innovation that inspire As young stewards of the earth, we are others. Recognize the power of youth voices in advocating for environmen-

vironmental degradation and climate change. Stand in solidarity with vulnerable communities and support initia-In the spirit of Easter, we encourage you lives that address their needs and aspirations. As we gather with family and friends this Easter, let us also remember our responsibility to the earth and to each other. Together, we can be a beacon of hope and a force for positive change. Wishing you a blessed Holy Week and joyful Easter filled with peace, love, and a renewed spirit for our shared mission of protecting our planet. remember our responsibility to the earth and to each other. Together, we can be a beacon of hope and a force for positive change.

> Wishing you a blessed Holy Week and joyful Easter filled with peace, love, and a renewed spirit for our shared mission of protecting our planet.



Uganda A Country with Diverse

A Country with Diverse Forests and Biodiversity Supporting Livelihoods

Uganda, often referred to as the "Pearl of Africa," is renowned for its stunning landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and remarkable biodiversity. Among its most valuable natural resources are the diverse forests that sprawl across the country, providing essential services and resources to local communities. These forests are not only home to a variety of flora and fauna but also play a crucial role in supporting the livelihoods of many Ugandans.

One of the most significant ways in which forests support local communities is through the provision of firewood. In Uganda, a large percentage of the population relies on biomass energy, with firewood being the primary source of fuel for cooking and heating. Many households, especially in rural areas, depend on nearby forests to gather firewood, which is often collected by women and children. This practice not only provides essential energy for daily living but also fosters a sense of community, as families often come together to collect firewood, share stories, and strengthen social bonds.

Moreover, forests in Uganda are vital sources of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), which contribute significantly to local economies. Communities often gather wild fruits, nuts, mushrooms, and medicinal plants from the forests. For example, the indigenous communities in the Alber-



tine Rift region rely on forests to harvest honey, which is not only a source of nutrition but also a source of income through local markets. The sustainable harvesting of these resources encourages biodiversity conservation, as communities become more invested in preserving their forest ecosystems. In addition to providing fuel and food, forests offer a habitat for wildlife, which in turn supports ecotourism—a growing industry in Uganda. National parks like Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Murchison Falls National Park attract tourists from around the globe who come to witness the unique biodiversity, including the famous mountain gorillas. The revenue generated from tourism creates job opportunities for local communities, ranging from tour guides to hospitality services, further enhancing their livelihoods. However, Uganda's forests face significant threats from deforestation, land conversion for agriculture, and illegal logging. As the population

continues to grow, the demand for land and resources increases, often at the expense of these vital ecosystems. It is imperative to adopt sustainable forest management practices that balance the needs of local communities with the conservation of biodiversity. The threat to forests is a threat to the community and biodiversity.

It's important to note therefore that Uganda's diverse forests are a treasure trove of biodiversity that supports the livelihoods of countless communities across the country. By recognizing the value of these forests and promoting sustainable practices, we can ensure that future generations continue to benefit from the resources and services they provide. Protecting Uganda's forests is not only an environmental necessity but also a commitment to the well-being and prosperity of its people. Together, we can preserve this natural heritage for years to come.



The fig tree, or Banyan Tree

ISAAC KALEMBE

tree, whose scientific name is Ficus natalensis but variously known as a Natal fig, is of historical importance to Bunyoro-Kitara and the Great Lakes region in general.

According to UNESCO, the **omutoma** is perhaps the world's oldest source of textile, mainly in Africa, especially for the monarchs and the wealthy, but it is shrouded in a lot of mystery.

That is why this tree is known as "the natural heritage tree of all mankind".

This sacred tree is Known as **Omutoma** in Bunyoro-Kitara, Omutuba in Baganda, **Omuthoma** among the Bakonjo, and Bito among the Luo-speaking communities.

This tree is used for such various rituals as **amahasa** (the twin ceremony), marriage, death and births. Its barkcloth adorns cultural sites, ceremonies and shrines.

Besides, **embugo** (bark cloth) were (and still are) worn by medicine men/women, witch doctors, kings, in burials, in installing heirs, among others.

Physical characteristics

The Omutoma is an evergreen tree of 6-21 metres high, with a rounded spread and dense crown. The trees can grow up to two metres in diameter, upright

The bark on young branches is hairy but smooth and grey on older branches and often with aerial roots hanging down from branches.

The whole plant exudes copious milky latex. The leaves are dark green, thin and papery or slightly leathery.

Types of emitoma

There are 32 Ficus species recorded, 14 of which are commonly used by the people.

These include Omutoma Nyakabito (Ficus natalensis) and Omutoma gwa Nyamaizi (literally "Nyamaizi's tree" - characterised by smooth and small leaves). The latter is a common Mutoma species.

Uses of Omutoma

Traditionally, the backcloth was purposely made to be used as burial shrouds, bedding and clothing; and carpeting the floor of the kings' palaces, especially in Tooro and Bunyoro. With time, the bark cloth was

replaced by cotton and other clothing materials.

Here below are some of the uses of omutoma:

- Source of textile: In Bunyoro-Kitara, as was the case elsewhere in Africa, the omutoma was a source of textile.

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- Source of textile: In Bunyoro-Kitara, as was the case elsewhere in Africa, the omutoma was a source of textile.

It is used for the manufacture of embugo (barkcloth) (orubugo, sing.) which were traditional textiles - worn as clothes and headgear such as hats.

- It is used in burying the dead;
- It is used as bedding material;
- It is used for making apparels new items like tablemats, shoulder bags, handbags, briefcases, purses, cushion covers, among others;
- It has value to supply animal feeds and soft wood;
- It is also used as mats, blankets/bedsheets, wrapping the dead (they reportedly have some mummifying substances), among others;
- It is used for live fencing;
- It has medicinal value.

Research has shown several fig species has over 100 compounds. Its bark aerial, roots and leaves are used medicinally.

It is used in the treatment of colds, cough, sore throat, dysentery, wounds, acne and pimples, cataracts, worms, cholera and stomach ulcers:

- It is an important agro-forestry tree, good for inter-cropping with coffee and bananas, hence it enhances crop productivity;
- It symbolises good health and longevity. During the traditional naming ceremony, especially of empaako (praise names), the last ritual is the planting of the Omutoma tree to signify perpetuity and abundant life of the clan as represented by a rich natural characteristic of this tree;
- Its leaves are an essential item in sealing Omukago (blood-brotherhood or pact).

The entire process involved use of coffee, a new bark-cloth, a knife, two branches of a fig tree and branches of the ejubwa grass.

This brotherhood pact was supposed to create friendship among people. It helped to bring about peace and friendship in communities;

- As one of the oldest known human foods, fig fruits have a very high safety profile; and,
- It has been reported that skin contact with latex may provoke allergic reactions like dermatitis, asthma and anaphylaxis, while orally administered latex may cause hallucinosis.

Processing textile

Preparation of the bark peeling into orubugo goes through a process called okukomaga, using ensaamo - a well-crafted mallet with a cylin-

drical head that has deep smooth round wrinkles.

The process, which requires some skill and energy, involves the use of ensaamo - a specially made heavy, grooved mallet.

The whisky-coloured cloth is made from pounding the fibrous inner bark of the tree. As the craftsman hits the bark with the mallet, the fibrous bark becomes thinner and larger.

Omutoma, the saprophyte

Omutoma tree has a habit of growing on other trees that it can suffocate to death, including growing on other mitoma.

Regeneration

When the tree bark is harvested, another one grows back on the same spot and has a superior bark cloth.

On the same tree, a bark can be harvested over four times (at intervals of not less than a year) before the tree starts to yield an inferior product.

No wonder, one Kinyoro proverb goes, "Abasaija mitoma; eharaiga neharaiguka" (literally, "A man is like a ficus natalensis tree (Omutoma); you peel off its back as it redevelops", implying men's resilience or never-say-die attitude.

The story of creation

In the Bunyoro-Kitara myth of creation, Ruhanga (God) propped up heaven and earth, which were initially very close, with Omutoma Nyakabito, (Ficus natalensis); among others.

Even the rebellious prince Kato, when he founded Buganda king-

dom, alluded himself to this tree, saying he had sprouted likewise, "Nyowe mezere nk'omutoma" (hence the name Kimera).

The Mutoma-Babiito connection Called Bito in Luo but Mutoma in Runyoro-Rutooro, this tree is a landmark for the cradleland of the Babiito Dynasty.

It's a tree under whose shade the hut of Nyatwor, the Mukwongakati mother of the four Babiito brothers - Nyarwa, Isingoma Mpuuga Rukidi, Kato Kimera and Kiiza - was built.

Accordingly, the emissaries who went to bring these brothers to succeed the Bacwezi at Mubende Hill (they were sons of the Mucwezi prince Kyomya, who was the half-brother of Omukama Ndahura) decided to call themselves the Babiito rather than Bacwezi.

Indeed, this place - the cradleland of the Babiito - located in former Kihura county (now Murchison Falls National Park) came to be called Tebito - a name it holds todate.

The Kitoba connection

The name of Kitoba Sub-County (now Town Council) in Hoima District, Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom, is derived from the Mitoma trees that were prevalent during the Luo migration of the 16th Century.

When the Luo reached the place, as they plotted to invade the important Cwezi shrine at Parajwoki (another Luo name meaning Ekicweka ky'Abarogo n'Abasezi ("place of witches and wizards"), they named their camp Kitoba because of these trees.

Parajwoki is located at the foothills of Wampanga ranges just to the east of Parajwoki CoUParish.

The shrine is believed to have been located at Mukihani - a gorge in the nearby hill.

From Kitoba, the Luo invaders had inched closer to the shrine, first camping at my home village Dwoli - a Luo word for kraal (most likely they herded their cattle there).

Apparently, another meaning of Dwoli in Luo "administrative unit".

The Luo invaders had hoped to elicit the cooperation and support of the caretaker priests of the shrine and residents of the area.

When this was not forthcoming, the Luo christened the place Parajwoki out of frustration.

Whether the Banyaparajwoki (people of Parajwoki) were that diabolical, is hard to fathom.

However, the name has stuck todate as have been Kitoba, Dwoli and Karongo.

Having failed to make a direct attack on the shrine, the invaders made a detour to Karongo (Luo word for "crowd") - located some three km along the Buseruka road, where Kabaleega International Airport and the planned oil refinery are located - so that they could muster enough courage and resources to launch the attack at the

shrine.

It is said this strategy was successful as the Luo had a clear view of Parajwoki and they gathered enough intelligence about it.

However, the local priests used this chance to fill up the shrine and hide many artefacts, including the throne and heath (fireplace).

By the time the invaders overrun the shrine, there was little to find. And the priests were obstinate, obscurant and non-cooperative.

Most of them simply fled while those who stayed behind, opted to silence. This reinforces the reason why the invaders named the village Parajwoki.

It is worth mentioning that during the reign of the Bacwezi, the Omukama (king) combined the roles of national ruler and chief priest.

However, these two roles were separated when with the Babiito, assumed kingship. This could be because of such incidents as what happened at Parajwoki.

(This article, first written on September 29, 2024, has been revised on March 23, 2025)

ABOUT ISAAC KALEMBE

Isaac Kalembe Akiiki is an accomplished professional communicator, editor, writer, proofreader, and fact checker.

Kalembe has expertise in public re-

lations, communication, social media, customer care, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, investment, agriculture, culture and world history.

Born on November 22, 1968 in a Christian family of five children, Kalembe is a Munyoro hailing from oil-rich Hoima District in mid-western Uganda.

He is married with children.

Now re-engaged in entrepreneurship, Kalembe worked in the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) for about 20 years.

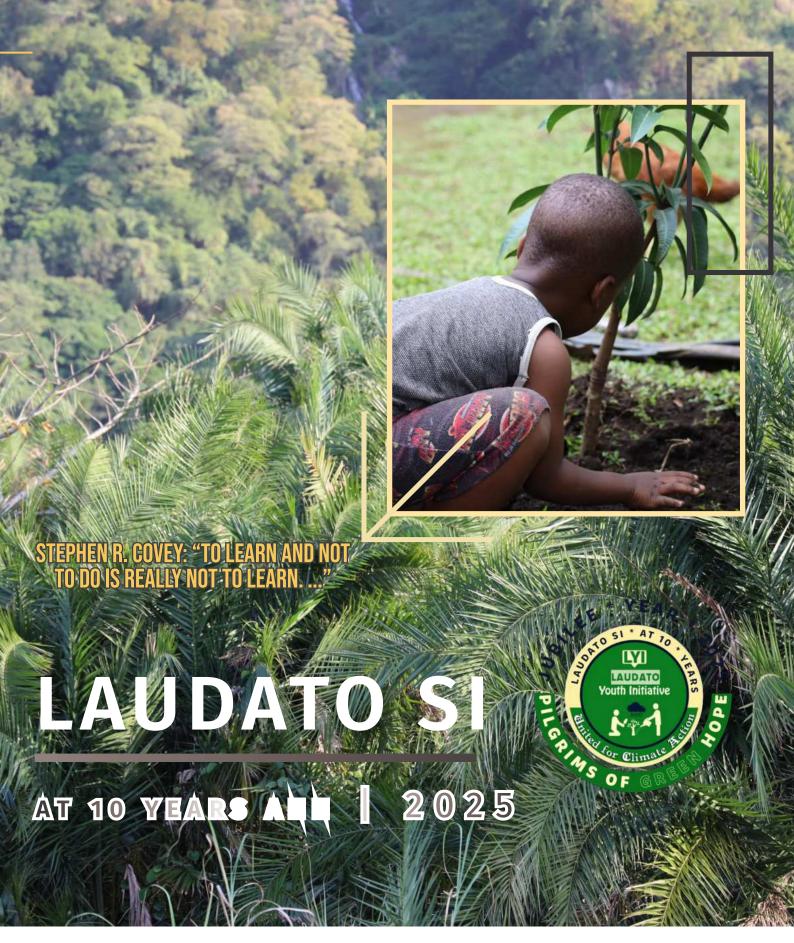
He is also the outgoing Omutalindwa (Speaker) of the Rukurato (Parliament) of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom in mid-western Uganda.

Kalembe is author of Omukama Cwa II Kabaleega: A Life and Legacy, 1853-1923 - an epic book about the kingdom's heroic king.

His other literary works (though still work in progress) include:

- The Babyasi Clan (camera-ready)
- An Illustrated History of the Clans of Bunyoro-Kitara (ongoing)
- A Comparative Analysis of the Clans of Bunyoro-Kitara (ongoing)
- A Spectrum of Legends and Tales from Bunyoro (ongoing)
- Bunyoro through the Pen: A Collection of Articles (ongoing)
- Isaac Kalembe: The Humble Boy from Rural Hoima (ongoing autobiography)





The Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis Laudato Si' released in 2015 which called for a global ecological conversion, marks its 10th anniversary this year 2025. The document released on the eve of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change urges humanity to care for our "common home" through sustainable living, social justice, and environmental stewardship. Now, a decade later, the world has witnessed both progress and persistent challenges. Faith communities, environmental organizations, and policymakers have launched initiatives promoting renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and climate justice, inspired by the Holy Father's call. However, the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and pollution have exacerbated global warming, leading to an increase of heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and floods.

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