

An Engineer's Family Reflection
Laudato Si' Action Platform Reflection
On Care for Our Common Home
Menich Family 2023

I began to write a reflection on how we, as a family, are living the seven goals, and how we might better meet those goals. Having a strong connection to our natural world and actively working to reduce our carbon footprint, I thought this would be a repetitive exercise in listing what we have accomplished thus far, and the goals we had already in place to continue on this path of walking more softly on our precious earth. Then my husband asked me a question. He asked me, "Why do you feel a need to input this onto the Action Platform? What do you hope to achieve by doing this? Is this worth the effort or just a distraction?"

With some reflection, I knew why I felt this powerful need to join the Action Platform. I believe that this database is a powerful gathering of voices ***put into action***. It is not solely a place to chat or *like* what we see, but to learn and to share and to put into action what we know to be right. ***Behold! Consider! Respond!*** It is not a distraction but rather a way to focus our efforts on measurable goals. Having actionable goals is having hope, and having hope is everything! So, yes, this is very much worth the effort!

Our dear Pope Francis asked us to join in this action. Our loving Cardinal Cupich sends his pleas as well. But first and foremost, our Divine Master, Most High, Glorious God, whose creation we are affecting in so many ways, has commanded that we love one another. Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our brothers and sisters in Christ extend to all of creation. He reminds us that sun is our brother, water is our sister... Creation is a gift and it is part of our family. Each being is created with dignity, with value and with beauty. So as I write this reflection under the *family sector*, I realize that I write this reflection keeping all of creation in mind.

"Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience" (Laudato Si', 217)."

My husband and I are both electrical engineers. We grew up watching the early episodes of StarTrek which we both believe influenced our decisions to work with technology. I recall the day my father took my brothers and I to see StarWars. This was highly unusual because my father didn't normally take us to the movie theatre, but being an engineer himself, he thought it vitally important that we see this movie that had promised new and exciting special effects. Thinking about this today, I'm reminded of the juxtaposition of StarTrek versus StarWars. StarWars was the far superior entertainment experience, but StarTrek was the reality I wanted for my life because the message I took away was that all of creation was to be treated with dignity. StarWars on the other hand, had a message that peace comes only with great sacrifice and loss of life. The Lamb of God has already been sacrificed. "May the force be with you!" sounded loving to an innocent ear, but our Lord says it better, "Peace be with you!"

I'm not really sure why this analogy comes to my mind, but it seems to fit how I feel the world is today. 'May the force be with you.' sounds as if I am praying for you to have strength, yet peace is the ultimate strength. I'm not trying to vilify StarWars because I believe the writers meant the true force to be one of peace, but I'm using this as an imperfect example. I just find myself disappointed in these messages that sound enlightening and uplifting, but they fail in our mission, in what our Lord asked of us. He commanded that we love one another!

And he said... "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers (and sisters) of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40) "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink." (Matthew 25:40) I wondered who it is that is most least among us? Who could be most least than the dirt under our feet? Yet how dependent we are upon the soil. It is sister soil who produces our daily bread. The Lord provided us with sister soil and we are to love her and feed her and give her water. We are called to treat her with dignity. Too often I see garbage on the ground, in the city along the parkways, and in the country where people have cars and old washing machines decaying in their yards. We blindly equate pollution with poverty - as if the poor don't care and they create this situation. Yet how often do I see the wealthy poisoning their laws to rid of weeds? The beautiful lawn might not seem very polluted but, in fact, some weed killers are found to be most destructive to sister soil (and to ourselves). We are called to *feed her* (fertilize) and to *give her drink* (water) and she, in return, is called to *love us* with her bounty of fruits. When we love one another it is the perfect symbiosis that our Lord intended.

Today I find myself a licensed professional engineer living in a house with Alexa (whom I appropriately call "Computer" as on the Starship Enterprise) and having spent a lifetime working with signals-in-space and power systems. I ask myself, where is this all going? My husband and I have spoken at great lengths to this question. Nikola Tesla once said, "Not all technology is progress." As a species we have learned to manipulate our Lord's creation to meet our needs. We literally take the stones from the earth, crush them, melt them, manipulate them into shapes and forms that we combine with plant matter and animal remains. We have created everything from pottery, to glass to jewelry, to medicine, to electronics that send out waves through conductors of copper, water and air. We travel atop the seas and beneath the waves. We fly through the skies and to the moon and send Voyagers to the stars. We think ourselves demigods - all powerful. But all we are doing is studying His creation and using what He created and often abusing what He entrusted unto us. Then we lie to ourselves and say to one another, "Look what we created." We lie to ourselves and believe we are wise. But we are foolish! Where is all of this going? In order to reach the stars we have oppressed our brothers and sisters including sister water and brother air. So many people have suffered to provide the materials required to "create" "our" world. So many lands and waters have been damaged and left for dead. What are we doing? Where is all of this going? In as much as we believe we create, we destroy so much more. We have been careless and we have sinned, for we have separated ourselves from His creation. We need to pause. We need to pray. We need to listen and follow the sense and knowledge that He has graced so many with. With wisdom and humility, we need to move forward in a manner dignifying to our Lord. How do we do this? This

is not *our* creation, it is *His* creation and until we honor our Lord with all of our heart, our mind and our soul, we truly do not deserve His mercy. Our God is all-loving and always ready to forgive, but we must repent or we will be lost. It is not our creation!!! We are crucifying His creation once again. I have felt lost standing at the foot of the cross, helpless, witnessing what is happening, but I realized that I am not helpless, for I am Simon! We are all Simon if we choose to be. We can each carry that cross and allow creation to flourish. Why stand around and watch just for the hope of a resurrection that has already happened? Our Lord was crucified because the people were afraid of their own death if they tried to help. We now know that the second death can do us no harm. It is time for us to carry the cross and with many, the burden will be light. We just have to love His creation - all of it!

The Lord gave us minds, and we developed technology to bring us peace from pain and suffering and hunger and nakedness. We need to use this technology wisely so that it can bring all that we need rather than all that we want. Technology is not the problem, in fact, technology may be the answer to healing His creation. It all depends on how we use it. With force? or with peace?

So our reflection is truly coming from a technological viewpoint as will our action plan. We read so often that technology is the culprit, but technology has fed the world, has cured many diseases, and technology eases pain. Technology could be our saving grace if we use it properly and choose to not use it when it causes harm. Technology can be something as simple as a watering can to water a garden and as complicated as nuclear power to electrify the grid.

Lord have mercy on us, for we know what we do, but we are struggling to change our ways. Please enlighten the darkness of our hearts, our minds and our souls. Please, we humbly ask that you give unto us true faith so that we might fully glorify all that you have provided; certain hope that we can amend our ways; perfect charity to give of ourselves in the mission you have called us to; sense and knowledge to foster the gifts you graced us with and to use them wisely such that we might better carry out your holy and true command which is ***to love one another***, a love that extends to all of our brothers and sisters of your Divine creation. Amen.