



Saint Philip Neri Catholic School
Where tradition meets innovation



Saint Philip Neri Catholic School

Laudato Si' Action Platform School Reflection

About Our School

St. Philip Neri Catholic School is an Elementary and Middle School with classes spanning from preschool to 8th grade. We teach children from three to fourteen years of age and our current enrollment is around 260 students.

The school is part of the Diocese of Oakland, California, USA, and is located on Alameda Island in the San Francisco Bay Area. The role of our school is to educate the whole child and promote respectful, responsible, life-long learners. Parents, teachers, and staff work together to prepare our students academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

St. Philip Neri Catholic School has a long history in Alameda, being established on the present site in 1959 by Father O'Brien and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, with Sr. Matilda Carmel as its first principal. Our school is accredited by the Western Catholic Education Association and the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

The faculty and staff of Saint Philip Neri Catholic School recognize parents as the primary educators. We embrace all children and provide an environment that combines rigorous academics with faith, culture and community. We challenge students to be respectful, responsible, reverent life-long learners, and we instill in our students the desire to grow in personal knowledge of Christ, recognize His presence in others, and live out His Gospel message. Our holistic based approach to education means that we take the environmental challenges outlined in Laudato Si' seriously and recognize that this issue will require the collective effort of our full world community.

The patron saint of our parish school is St. Philip Neri, who was revered for his joyous approach to sharing the word of God and as a devoted supporter of the poor and less fortunate. Answering the cry of the poor in the Laudato Si' call to action has been the most active part of our service efforts, but we

are currently working to expand our reach by reducing our environmental impact throughout the school.

About the Local Environment and Community

Our school is located on Alameda Island, a part of the historic land of the Chochenyo Muwekma Ohlone people. We recognize their contribution to the care and stewardship of this land, and we hope to honor their legacy by continuing to care for it. As an island on the Bay, residents of Alameda have a great respect for the Pacific Ocean that flows along the Bay and in through the estuary bringing a bounty of marine life to our doorstep. The Bay also connects us to Silicon Valley and all the riches of the greater Bay Area. The city of Alameda has around 80,000 residents and a diverse community. It hasn't lost its small-town charm and is a place where people look out for each other and say "hello" when they walk by.

The school shares its site with the St. Philip Neri Parish Church and our pastor, Fr. Joseph, and associate pastor, Fr. Paul, split their time between our church and our sister church, St. Albert The Great, located about two miles away on Bay Farm Island.

Our school draws from a wide range of socio-economic groups from varied cultural backgrounds, and we work to celebrate the diversity of our community in our school activities. The majority of our students come from families that practice the Catholic faith, but we welcome students of other faiths as well. Our school promotes high achievement in academic standards and we remain a competitive school that attracts families from across the area.

Our Response to the Laudato Si' Encyclical

Since the 2015 release of the Laudato Si' encyclical, the Diocese of Oakland has taken seriously Pope Francis' prophetic call for an ecological conversion. With leadership from the staff of Bishop O' Dowd High School, including Michael Downs and Annie Prutzman, each of the 56 schools in our Diocese have been called upon to proactively respond to Laudato Si' by finding representatives who will focus on this work at their respective school. These representatives are each planning an approach to sustainable practices and promoting ecological values at their school site with support across the system of schools in the Oakland diocese.

This strategic approach has involved schools embedding ecological values into school programs, promoting practices that foster an ecological and sustainable culture, improving their waste

management systems and reducing their campus's carbon footprint, and encouraging members of the community to engage in caring for our common home.

At St. Philip Neri Catholic School, we have been making strides to improve our ecological sustainability by utilizing our local green energy resources, teaching our students the importance of caring for our planet, and having student eco-leaders on our student leadership council to help keep our community engaged. We are growing and expanding our efforts to reduce our environmental impact each year. Specifically, we have:

- A school garden with a year-round master gardener on staff to care for it
- Weekly garden science classes for students in Preschool, TK, and K-5
- Active on-site composting in our garden as well as city compost and recycling services
- All of the electricity we use at the school and parish comes from renewable energy sources via our local power company
- Our student Green Team in fifth grade assists with daily lunch cleanup and waste management
- A dedicated position for an "Ecology Leader" on our Student Leadership Council

The Laudato Si' Action Platform and Goals

The Laudato Si' Action Platform empowers our worldwide Catholic Church and all people of good will to respond to Pope Francis' encyclical on caring for our common home. Those of us at St. Philip Neri School feel it is our mission to engage our students with contemporary environmental social justice issues so they willingly commit to a hope filled future where they know that their actions can change the world and help save our planet. Here is how we are addressing the seven goals of Laudato Si' so far:

1. **Response to the Cry of the Earth:** efforts to reduce water waste by using drip irrigation in our school garden; renewable energy that powers our school and church, reducing fossil fuels in order to move toward carbon neutrality; composting and recycling programs throughout our school to minimize the amount of our waste going to landfills

2. **Response to the Cry of the Poor:** fundraising for local charities such as the Alameda Food Bank and national charities such as the CRS Rice Bowl initiative to alleviate hunger; participation in the Adopt-A-Family program for the Christmas season each year, which

provides help to families with financial hardship; participation in the Meals-On-Wheels program to provide help with food scarcity in our community

3. **Ecological Economics:** consideration of ethical consumption on things we purchase to run the school such as recycled paper and materials; utilizing certified companies that use ethical practices; staff are encouraged to make sure all lights, fans and heating and cooling units are switched off at the end of the day in classrooms and meeting spaces

4. **Adoption of An Eco-Conscious Lifestyle:** minimizing the use of resources and energy throughout the school; using online learning platforms instead of paper, when possible; asking students and staff to bring reusable water bottles to school; making some school projects with only reused household items to raise consciousness about waste reuse; hosting three to four school uniform swap events each year to encourage the reuse of clothing as opposed to solely purchasing new school uniforms (families are also encouraged throughout the year to reach out to the school if they are in need of uniforms and need to make an exchange); hosting events such as the “Walk-&-Roll To School Day” that encourage students and families to come to school via greener methods (walking, biking, carpooling...) to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels

5. **Ecological Education:** growing seasonal produce in our school garden that we share with students and our school community; students from preschool through the fifth grade attend weekly classes in the school garden space on environmental awareness; the school is working towards embedding lessons on sustainability across the curriculum and through all grades

6. **Ecological Spirituality:** we plan to further coordinate our efforts on how we address ecological spirituality by crossing over lessons from our school’s religion classes and the lessons in garden classes as we build our Laudato Si’ action plans

7. **Emphasis on Community:** community engagement in our sustainability journey by including the students and families in our school-wide events and school projects; we look forward to further involving our community in helping to increase our sustainability at school and in our local area as we continue creating our Laudato Si’ action plans

Update for 2023/24 school year:

We have made several improvements to our waste management at Saint Philip Neri recently. At the beginning of the school year, we purchased and installed new triple stream waste bins around the school campus so we are able to better sort our waste into landfill, compost, and recycling. We hosted a representative from our local waste management provider to give a presentation for students, families, faculty, and staff on improving our refuse disposal around our campus and in our community. Then, in the weeks following the presentation, we began having volunteer middle school students monitor the waste bins during lunch time each day when the younger students are eating. This has greatly improved our separation and sorting during the time when our school produces the most waste.

There has also been some effort to reduce our energy consumption this year. We have seen a decrease in our electric bill by one third over last year by having faculty and staff stay diligent about turning off lights, heaters, and air filters when they are not needed. We are also in the process of replacing all of the long tube fluorescent lights around the school with more energy efficient LED light fixtures. Furthermore, the water heaters in our school building were aging and in need of replacement, so new units have been installed which should be more energy efficient.

Finally, our action plan this year included the formation of a Climate Consciousness Committee, which has been greenlit by the school board and held its first meeting this Winter. This committee will be integral in the continuation of the sustainability work we have done so far for our school community.