

# Climate-Sensitive Religious Education Curriculum in the Unified Schools of the Archdiocese of Lipa

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## ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church recognizes the role of Catholic schools in teaching the faith to students and how it can be applied in their daily lives. With the global challenge we face due to climate change, the education sector plays an essential role in promoting awareness, adaptation, and mitigation against climate change. This study describes the possibility of integrating climate sensitivity into the religious education curriculum for the senior high school level, the Unified Schools of the Archdiocese of Lipa (USAL). Through a focus group discussion among religious education teachers of USAL, climate sensitivity is found in the elements of the religious education curriculum through the objectives, contents, learning experience, and assessment. A climate-sensitive religious education curriculum in USAL is evident through the integration of environmental education into religious education subjects by the teachers on selected lessons for the senior high school level that aims to bring out the relationship between the faith being taught and the action that the students must do toward the environment to care and protect it. Thus, climate sensitivity bridges how one must live the faith in favor of God's creation.

**Keywords:** Catholic Social Teaching, Climate Change, Curriculum, Environment, Laudato Si'

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## Introduction

The world is facing the same fate when it comes to climate change. In our present time, climate change affects the world as we experience it and is evident in the rise of sea level, global warming, stronger storms, droughts, heatwaves, loss of species, insufficient food supply, more health risks, poverty, displacement (United Nations Climate Action, n.d.). It is not only now that climate change has affected the world, but over the last century, it has already threatened the development and health of many people and nations (Maxwell & Blashki, 2016). Climate change is defined as long-term temperatures and weather pattern shifts caused by natural or man-driven activities (United Nations Climate Action, n.d.), producing greenhouse gas emissions that cause heat to be trapped in the earth's atmosphere (Fawzy et al., 2020). This issue is not a future threat we are looking ahead to but a current challenge we are trying to resolve (Bangay & Blum, 2010) through joint efforts of humanity. In the Philippines, climate change is heavily felt since it is a disaster-prone country that ranks third as the most impacted country in the world adding that the self-report of Filipinos revealed that they have low levels of knowledge of it (Bollettino et al., 2020). Another factor to be considered is that this is our generation's problem (Alcantara et al., 2022). Through the Climate Change Commission launched in 2011, the National Climate Change Action Plan 2011-2028 was made to act and mitigate the impacts of climate change in the country in coordination with civil society organizations, academe, and the business sector (Climate Change Commission, n.d.).

Climate change is an intergenerational issue and needs the action not only of adults but also the young ones who will be directly affected by its effects in the near future. This intergenerational effect of climate change includes the engagement of the students in the adaptation and mitigation process, which can be done by letting them be aware through education (Trott et al., 2023). The role of education as a starting point for spreading awareness of climate change is seen as an important factor that needs to be considered by the education sector (Jones & Podpadec, 2023). The national government is continuously responding to the challenges of climate change by focusing on

action and raising awareness through inclusive approaches to community-centered and bottom-up programs and integrating environmental education into formal schooling (Hoffmann & Muttarak, 2020). Both formal and non-formal education, from primary, secondary, tertiary, and even adult education, are some of the keys to addressing climate change challenges (Bangay & Blum, 2010) through integrating adaptation and mitigation in particular lessons (Perez & Bua, 2019). Teaching students about climate change adaptation and mitigation is considered a powerful tool for taking effective actions in dealing with climate change (Feinstein & Mach, 2020). Integrating climate change education into the subjects taken by the students helps increase their knowledge and actions toward climate change, which will help them develop attitudes and skills to motivate them in addressing the current challenges in the environment (Caroll-Monteil, 2023). But despite all of these, teaching students about climate change will fail if there is inadequate support from the school and inconsistent integration across applicable course subjects (Cincera et al., 2022).

Seeing the potential of education as a decisive factor in responding to the intergenerational effect of climate change, this study aims to describe the possibility of integrating climate sensitivity into the religious education curriculum for the senior high school level of Catholic schools in Batangas, the Unified Schools of the Archdiocese of Lipa (USAL) in particular. The main purpose of this paper is to answer how climate sensitivity can be integrated into the elements of the curriculum through the objectives, contents, learning experience, and assessment as implemented by the religious education teachers of USAL through a focus group discussion. In answering this question, a unified integration of climate sensitivity in religious education curriculum may be proposed that will contribute to the ongoing effort of the global community in facing the challenges of climate change through spreading awareness, adaptation, and mitigation.

## The State of Education in Climate Change

The education sector plays an important role in the different facets of humanity and society,

including ecology. Awareness of climate change begins in school since it is the seedbed where the learnings of young minds are being molded (Lopez & Malay, 2019). Despite the ravaging effects of climate change throughout the world, schools offer great opportunities for mitigation and adaptation to combat climate change (Anderson, 2012). It is also crucial for schools to give climate change education to achieve the formation of environmental attitudes from an early age (Moshou & Drinia, 2023). The unequivocal ecological issues the world is facing have their answers mainly on the education of those who will inherit the future. It was noted by Babia et al. (2022) that students who have needed competencies for the mitigation and adaptation of climate change could be contributors to environmental sustainability and climate change education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also acted on climate change, benefiting the students and the teachers as part of its Educational Sustainable Development for 2030 in 2019. It led the Asian country members to develop teacher education programs for climate education and proper dissemination of information for mitigation and adaptation (Fujii, 2022). The importance of people's awareness of climate change and the importance of environmental education is much needed in the world. It calls for environmental citizenship, where people become environmentally literate with political, social, economic, and civic issues and can afford to act individually against climate change (Ho & Seow, 2017). With this type of education, environmentally literate citizens can become agents of change toward a more sustainable community in mitigating the rapid effects of climate change. The key to better understanding and studying climate change is informing the students if not all the citizens, of social topics around them (Kurtde Fidan, 2017).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education has been integrating climate change education guided by the Climate Change Act of 2009, where key concepts about climate change were discussed across grade levels (Department of Education, 2021). Prior to this, the Philippines had a long-standing environmental education curriculum tradition in schools compared to neighboring countries, despite the many reforms done in its

educational system (Hoffmann & Muttarak, 2020). With the Climate Change Act of 2009, the Department of Education ordered the integration of Climate Change Education or at least integration of it into the subject areas of primary and secondary schools (Fernandez et al., 2014), including Health, Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies), Science, Edukasyong Pagpapakatao (Values Education), Disaster Risk-Reduction Management, Earth Science, and Earth and Life Science. In addition to these subjects, religious education, as a values-based subject, is also crucial in teaching climate change education (Essi, 2013). Through the integration of climate change education, students will be able to know the boundaries and connection of their actions toward the environment (Micayabas, 2015). Genizera et al. (2022) added that climate change education is visible not only through the contents of the subjects in basic education but also through the extracurricular activities, programs, and projects to make an impact in caring for the environment. These activities include creating clubs and organizations to protect the environment, gardening, recycling, clean-up drives, and promoting advocacies within and outside the school (Micayabas, 2015).

Despite the efforts done by the education sector in the Philippines, the study by Ho and Seow (2017) revealed that many teachers in the basic education sector are incapable of teaching climate change action. In reviewing some literature on climate change education, different aspects have been focused on depending on the locale of the researchers that most fit their participants. In the study of Lopez and Malay (2019), the school, as a source of initial information on climate change, only ranks third, following the internet and television. This would show how schools, even if students stay there most of the time, still do not become their primary source of information. This result is similar to the study of Barreda (2018), where the education sector falls behind other sources of initial information about climate change. Insights on the way climate change education is integrated are said to be shallow and lack the proper way of countering it. Different pedagogical approaches have become the cause of inefficient and insufficient ways of teaching ecologically aware students. Galang (2010) further discussed that reexamining the way of teaching ecological care is a necessity. Touching

the students' lives through the effects and causes of climate change must be taught to increase their environmental concern, action, and awareness. These findings are crucial in the preparedness of students and teachers who will guide them into a sustainable future. Moshou and Drinia (2023) found that teachers are also encountering difficulties because of unclear ideas and misunderstandings about the concepts of climate and weather, pollution, and climate change. This is the greatest challenge among teachers; how can we be true educators of a climate-sensitive education across subjects without neglecting and being faithful to our respective subject areas?

Being part of and in obedience to the teachings of the Church, Catholic schools are committed to having a prior disposition to the Church's Tradition (Franchi & Davis, 2021) to help students and teachers encounter Jesus (Garcera, 2019). There is no doubt that Catholic educational institutions have the same goal of pro-environmental education. As a way of giving a Christian education, Catholic schools have the task to lead the examples of the Church to students in contributing to the common good and participation in society, bearing in mind the hope in them (Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1984). The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) sees Catholic schools as indispensable allies of the Catholic Church in the mission of evangelization (Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, 2015). One significant role of religious education is to put Christ at the center of the students' ethical activities (Estioko, 2008), leading to the demands of the environment to have good stewards – a commitment towards human flourishing and promotion of dignity (Cattaro et al., 2021). This role is one of the goals of religious education, which is to transform society per the principles of the Catholic Church (Bual & Madrigal, 2018) and serve the global community (Cattaro et al., 2021). Thus, being under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church, Catholic schools are mandated to commit to protecting God's creation in response to climate change, which must be personal and communal (Catholic Climate Covenant, 2015). Such emphasis on faith and mission will lead to Catholic schools' active participation in the Church's mandate to be faithful stewards of God's creation.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has issued pastoral letters regarding the care for the environment concerning the Catholic educational institutions' duty. Catholic schools were tasked to give particular importance to the theme of the integrity of creation (CBCP, 1948), initiation of ecological programs, environmental protection activities, and sustainable development projects (Quevedo, 2003), integration of *Laudato Si'* and climate change mitigation in their curriculum and programs including the use of renewable energy supply (Valles, 2019), and institutionalization of celebrating the Season of Creation and *Laudato Si'* week in coordination with the CEAP (David, 2022).

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (2018) considers the prophetic role of schools in letting students see the good news despite the negative things happening in our world. CEAP included ecological integrity as part of its pillars for transformative education through the JEEPGY (Justice and Peace, Ecological Integrity, Engaged Citizenship, Poverty Reduction, Gender Equality, and Youth Empowerment) program. CEAP wants to form students who are sensitive to the environment and respect the environment as our common home. Thus, they give suggested activities and strategies for the Catholic schools in light with the teachings of the Catholic Church to promote ecological integrity, namely: integration of ecological integrity to both academic and non-academic programs; capacity building of teachers for school-based activities for the environment; mobilizing students towards environmental activities; observation of significant environmental events like Earth Day; the celebration of the Seasons of Creation annually from September to October 4; creation of green spaces in campus; doing ecological solid waste management; and campaigns against single-use plastics.

## **A Climate-Sensitive Education Curriculum**

With all the mentioned facts and scenarios in terms of climate change, Catholic teachings, and the state of education about climate change, urgency is seen as something we cannot neglect anymore. This paper leads to determine how the schools, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Lipa in particular, practice and promote the care for

God's creation as integrated with their curriculum and how it can be improved. A curriculum, as the framework of learning, is a plan of action that includes strategies for the desired goal of education (Talla, 2012). This would mean that learning would lead to success if there is a proper grounding in the curriculum. In designing the curriculum, certain elements must be included, such as the objectives, learning experience, content, and evaluation (Talla, 2012).

The local and foreign literature cited in this study has indicated the importance of a curriculum that protects the environment/ecology in response to climate change. Educational institutions in the 21st century have crafted an environmental-focused curriculum to lead students to become earth-friendly citizens and contribute to the interrelated global village (Hagos & Dejarme, 2008). The Department of Education (DepEd), together with CHED, has introduced environmental education into their curricula and had reorientation to achieve the demands of the urgency on climate sensitivity response (Cabilao Valencia, 2018). Environmental education has been merged with some subjects in the basic education curriculum to have responsible and environmentally literate students who would safeguard the progress of the country's environment (Punzalan, 2020). It is without a doubt that through the efforts of DepEd, the inclusion of environmental education into the K-12 was standardized (Department of Education, 2015), making both urban and rural schools learn, practice, and promote the care for the environment and act for the awareness and mitigation of climate change (Baroro et al., 2016). Learning competencies of environmental education are already stipulated in the curriculum guide of DepEd, but the challenge is how teachers will facilitate learning to invoke and touch the hearts and minds of the students to have a behavioral change in favor of environmental protection (Soliman & Marasigan, 2021). With K-12 curriculum programs, universal access to education is given while involving students in a just and humane society and caring for the environment (Adarlo & Jackson, 2016).

Following the K-12 curriculum, implementing a climate-sensitive curriculum requires a constructivist pedagogical approach while being inquiry-based toward a reflective

understanding, collaborative, and integrative practice (Rivera, 2017). In a constructivist approach, students are led to create knowledge, meaning, and conclusions on their own (Ndlovu, 2013). The emphasis given to the learner-centered identity of the K-12 curriculum is a challenge to teachers because we are still dominated by teacher-directed lessons while having student-centered lessons (Joong et al., 2019). Thus, proper integration of lessons, especially in religious education subjects, must be done by considering the elements of the curriculum being applied to lessons.

Climate sensitivity is about the efforts and decisions made to consider the effects of the actions that may harm the environment and trigger more of the impact of climate change (Pruneau et al. 2010). In view of the foregoing literature on climate change education in this study, a climate-sensitive curriculum may be viewed as a curriculum comprising two things – teaching climate and making students change to improve the environment (Stevenson et al., 2017). A climate-sensitive curriculum in the Philippine setting includes integrating climate change education in science and humanities-related subjects that aim to spread awareness on climate change adaptation and mitigation, leading to a change in behavior and attitudes toward the environment. Thus, integrating climate sensitivity into the religious education curriculum will foster a practical relationship between the faith and practice taught to students for certain topics involving the environment and care for God's creation.

## Methodology

This research employs a qualitative descriptive study to describe the possibility of integrating climate sensitivity into the religious education curriculum of the Unified Schools of the Archdiocese of Lipa (USAL) and how it is practiced and implemented by religious education teachers. A qualitative descriptive approach in research is employed to focus on discovering the experience and gaining insights that informants may share (Kim et al., 2016). Aside from the available related literature and studies, the researcher used a focus group discussion (FGD) where a group of participants was gathered to discuss topics that will help draw from

their experiences the necessary details needed for the study (Nyumba et al., 2018). These necessary details pertain to the possible integration of climate sensitivity into the religious education curriculum of USAL, specifically in its objectives, contents, learning experience, and assessment. The FGD follows a semi-structured way of interviewing to gather additional depth to the supplied questions in a dialogic exchange (Husband, 2020). The questions given to the participants are:

1. Is there a time that you integrate environmental education into religious education subjects? If so,

why?

2. In what topics do you usually integrate environmental education into religious education?

3. In what ways do you let your students practice caring for the environment?

4. How do you check the learnings of the students after the discussion?

5. (Last question before ending the FGD) What other concerns/insights do you have pertaining to

**Table 1: Analysis of the integration of environmental education into religious education**

Area	Gathered Data	Themes
Objectives	Understand the importance of God's creation. Know why God created us. See God in creation. Relate one's life to the environment. Contemplate the gift of life. Conserve, care for, and protect the environment. Promote advocacies for the environment.	Doctrinal   Internalization   Promotion
Content	Creation stories (Creation of the world and the first Parents) Commandment (Thou shall not kill) Baptism (Kingly office of Christ – leadership) Care for our Common Home (Laudato Si') Death as an impending reality (showing the connection between life and the environment)	Biblical  Christian Living   Doctrinal
Learning Experience	Doing online advocacies for the environment. Creating visual arts regarding the environment. Practicing CLAYGO. Practicing proper waste segregation. Writing an action plan for caring for the environment. See-Judge-Act environmental scanning activity	Promotion   Mitigation   Awareness
Evaluation	Reflection paper Pen and paper quiz	Cognitive

the integration of climate change education into religious education?

The focus group discussion participants were eight senior high school religious education teachers randomly selected from different USAL member schools through their principals/coordinators. After identifying the participants, the survey questions were given to them to prepare for the focus group discussion. The researcher gathered the group via Zoom meeting and was asked for consent to record the discussion as part of the data privacy. After the focus group discussion, thematic analysis was done, which helped identify patterns gathered from qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The collected data were analyzed and synthesized to unify the similar themes of the practices and implementation done by the participants in teaching climate sensitivity in religious education subjects.

## Findings

After reviewing related literature and studies regarding environmental education, Catholic teachings on the environment, and the role of Catholic schools, the focus group discussion gave a clear practice of integrating environmental education into religious education in the Unified Schools of the Archdiocese of Lipa. The information collected from the participants was important in identifying the present practices in integrating environmental education into religious education subjects to make a uniform integration that will become helpful in promoting a climate-sensitive curriculum. The answers of the participants differ, and how they integrate environmental education differs from one another, especially when it comes to the topics concerned.

Table 1 shows the elements of the curriculum: objectives, content, learning experience, and assessment. These elements will be the areas of concern of the focus group discussion. The second column contains the summarized responses of the participants pertaining to the questions given. The last column contains the themes generated from the responses of the participants. The table shows the analysis of the experiences shared by the participants of the focus group discussion

from the Unified Schools of the Archdiocese of Lipa. The diverse experiences and practices of the participants in integrating environmental education into religious education are shown and categorized by the elements of the curriculum. The participants have different approaches to integrating care for the environment despite using the same textbook in this focus group discussion.

The objectives of the religious education subjects related to environmental education are diverse and can be themed into three, namely, doctrinal, internalization, and promotion. Understanding the importance of creation, the reason why God created us, and seeing God in creation fall on the doctrinal theme. These are based on the perspective of the teachings of the Church, especially in relation to the faith they are teaching to students.

“Nag-iintegrate kami ng about sa environment for them to understand the importance of everything around us, especially the environment (we are integrating environment for them to understand the importance of everything about us, especially the environment)” -Participant 1

“We let them realize the importance of the gift of life in relation to everything created” -Participant 4

“At the end of the lesson, bilang mga katiwala, dapat may advocacy silang maisip para mapangalagaan at maprotektahan ang environment as a precious gift from God (At the end of the lesson, as stewards, they must have an advocacy to care and protect the environment as a precious gift from God)” -Participant 7

The content of the religious education subjects mentioned by the participants is limited due to the specific course subjects and topics that they are teaching based on the books they are using. The topics that were mentioned by the participants where environmental education is integrated were the creation stories, commandments specifically “Thou shall not kill”, the kingly office where we partake in baptism, caring for the common home where the lesson came from Laudato Si, and the reality of death where they show the connection between the life and death of all creatures.

“Nasasama sa discussion namin sa creation syempre yung environment kasi dito nakikita yung halaga ng bawat nilikha ng Diyos, lalo na yung pagiging stewards natin sa sangnilikha. Kasama na dito yung short discussion on Laudato Si ni Pope Francis (Environment is included in our discussion in creation because the importance of all creatures is seen here, especially us becoming stewards of creation. Included here is the short discussion on Laudato Si of Pope Francis)” -Participant 8

“Sa kingly office nababanggit ko nag environment kasi as part of the kingly office sa binyag, hindi naman about becoming head tayo eh, but on how we become good protectors of everything given under our jurisdiction dahil stewards tayo hindi lang basta nagwawaldas (In the kingly office I mention the environment because as part of our kingly office in baptism, it is not about becoming the head but on how we become good protectors of everything given under our jurisdiction because we are stewards and not just abusers)” -Participant 6

“We discuss briefly Laudato Si, especially the term “common home” described by Pope Francis and the role of man as stewards” -Participant 1

When it comes to the learning experience employed by the participants, some of their activities strengthen and remind the students about the rules that their schools are implementing, such as the CLAYGO policy and proper waste segregation. The creativity of the students is also challenged through online advocacies and visual arts regarding the environment. Students are also guided in writing an action plan regarding the care of the environment in their community, and they will have an environmental scanning activity using the See-Judge-Act format.

“Nireremind namin ang students pagkatapos ng klase sa mga school rules na meron na naman tungkol sa pangangalaga ng environment kahit sa simpleng paraan kagaya ng CLAYGO at yung proper segregation of waste na minsan nakakalimutan na nila (We are reminding the students after the class about the school rules that are existing regarding the care for the environment such as the CLAYGO and proper segregation of waste that they sometimes forget)” -Participant 3

“One of their activities is to write an action plan that will be useful when it comes to their community. This is a simple activity but helpful for their awareness on the needs of their community to care for the environment since we ought to be stewards.” -Participant 4

“Tinuturo ko sa kanila yung See-Judge-Act format para mag analyze ng situation sa lugar nila at makita nila yung mga danger sa environment na nababalewala kasi nakasanayan na nila (I am teaching the the See-Judge-Act format to analyze the situation in their area for them to see the danger towards the environment that are neglected because they are already used to it)” -Participant 2

For the evaluation, the participants gave similar answers about the integration of environmental education in religious education subjects. They have agreed that writing a reflection paper assesses whether the students learned something in the discussions. Most often, pen and paper quizzes measure what the students are learning.

“Most of the time naman ay internalization ang nagagawa namin like writing a reflection paper on how they see God in all creatures lalo na yung makita nila yung importance ng bawat nilikha ng Diyos sa buhay nila (Most of the time is we do internalization like writing a reflection paper on how they see God in all creatures, especially the way they see the importance of each of God’s creation in their lives)” -Participant 7

“We basically do pen and paper quiz” -Participant 4

“On my part, madalas combination ginagawa namin, may part na quiz and may part na essay (On my part, most of the times we do a combination, there is a part of the quiz and a part for the essay)” -Participant 8

Aside from the practices done by the participants, challenges were also highlighted in the sharing of experiences during the focus group discussion. The participants speak of the inadequate integration of environmental education in their topics due to the lack of factual and scientific knowledge that hinders them from fully explaining the realities of climate change.

“Kapag sinasama namin ang environmental education, hindi naming mapalalim ang discussion dahil hindi rin kami ganoong ka aware sa mga scientific explanation nito (Whenever we include environmental education, we cannot deepen the discussion because we are not that aware about its scientific explanations). We just give them the basic knowledge and the impacts of climate change.” -Participant 5

Another challenge is the continuous practice of the students regarding the care for God’s creation, which is uncertain because there is no stable and continuous monitoring and integration inside and outside of school. Duplication of activities is also happening.

“What then after the discussion and activities? We cannot monitor the students the whole time whether they continuously practice care for the environment in simple things like proper segregation outside the school. Sometimes, we are just duplicating the activities done in other subjects” -Participant 4

It also appears that the different ways of teaching the subjects by old and new teachers, with the anticipation of the future teachers, of religious education also pose a challenge because of their different perspectives regarding the topics despite using similar textbooks.

“Kapag may bagong teacher, may bagong style din sya ng pagtuturo and pag integrate kaya minsan hindi nagagawa ng ayos yung mga activities kasi nga baguhan pa (When there is a new teacher, the teacher has a new style of teaching and integration, sometimes the activities are not done properly because the teacher is still a newbie)”

-Participant 8

## Discussion

The result of the focus group discussion was grouped and thematized to see the focus of their implementation of the elements of the curriculum. Regarding the objectives, the themes of doctrinal, internalization, and promotion were drawn from the responses. These objectives are somehow patterned on the traditional formatting

of objectives when it comes to teaching religious education through the three dimensions of faith – doctrine, moral, and worship. The Catechism for Filipino Catholics briefly explained that the three essential dimensions of faith speak of believing, doing, and trusting (Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, 1997). Galang (2010) specified that touching students’ lives through the effects and causes of climate change must be taught to increase their environmental concern, action, and awareness. The proper alignment of the objectives in achieving such output must be clearly stated to give a clear direction in preparing the students. Both environmental and religious aspects are connected when there is a clear plan for integrating the lesson. This planning prepares the students and the teachers who will guide them into a sustainable future.

The contents of the lessons that are integrated with environmental education are very limited due to the specific topics provided to them, such as the creation stories and care for the common home in scripture-related subjects, ten commandments in morality-related subjects, baptism in sacraments-related subjects, and death in eschatology related subjects. The topics were thematized into biblical, Christian living, and doctrinal. Gifford and Nilsson (2014) stated that faith-based topics are big factors that impact the treatment of students towards the environment because the faith that has been taught and handed over to them is being considered as their guide in living a good life. The contents provided by the participants are manifestations of their commitment as part of a Catholic institution to have a prior disposition on the teachings of the Church (Franchi & Davis, 2021) so that they will be able to help the students encounter Jesus through the Church’s teachings (Garcera, 2019). Thus, the data gathered from the participants gives evidence that religious education has the same goal of providing pro-environmental education.

In terms of learning experience or the activities done in and outside the classroom, the participants gave the students almost the same learning experience aside from lectures and discussions. The responses were thematized into promotion, mitigation, and awareness. The participants are leading the students to a constructivist way of teaching so that students

will be able to construct knowledge, meaning, and conclusions on their own (Ndlovu, 2013). Similarly, they help the students contribute to the common good and participate in society, bearing in mind the hope in them (Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1984). The learning experience and activities provided by the participants answer the call of CEAP (2018) to have integrative activities to protect the environment, such as the mobilization of students for environmental activities, campaigns and advocacies, and ecological solid waste management.

For the evaluation, the participants gave similar assessments for the students who were writing reflections and taking quizzes, which are both considered cognitive. These types of evaluation fall on the assessment of learning, which tests the knowledge when taking quizzes of the students, and assessment as learning, which helps the students be involved in the process of learning when writing reflections (McEwan, 2021). Showing this result, it is still a challenge for teachers how to invoke and touch the hearts and minds of the students to have a behavioral change in favor of environmental protection (Soliman & Marasigan, 2021) because of the lack of assessments employed. The assessments given are not long-lasting because, according to Cattaro et al. (2021), religious education should commit to human flourishing and the promotion of dignity.

Before the focus group discussion ended, the participants raised some problems in integrating environmental education into religious education subjects. They have different thoughts about the effectiveness of the integration and the practice. These different perspectives can be seen in the focus group discussion because not all of them aim for the same objectives and do the same activities. The lack of preparation and scrutiny of the subjects in integrating the contents of our faith into environmental education is also a challenge because realizations on the connection between the topic and the care for the environment sometimes came only during the discussions. These challenges are realities that led to the schools not being the initial source of information about climate change (Barreda, 2018). The way environmental education is being taught must be fortified by strengthening the capacity of teachers to teach it to avoid shallow discussions (Galang, 2010) due to their unclear

ideas and misunderstanding about climate change (Moshou & Drinia, 2023).

## Conclusion

A climate-sensitive religious education curriculum is present in the Unified Schools of the Archdiocese of Lipa (USAL). This is evident through the integration of environmental education into religious education subjects by the teachers in selected lessons for the senior high school level. Based on the focus group discussion, a climate-sensitive religious education curriculum in USAL speaks of the relationship between the faith being taught and the action the students must take toward the environment to care for and protect it. It bridges how one must live the faith in favor of God's creation. The participants mentioned the importance of teaching environmental education related to our Catholic faith primarily because God is the creator of all, and humanity is the steward of creation. The objectives of lessons where environmental education is integrated are focused on doctrinal, internalization, and promotion that are centered on biblical, Christian living, and doctrinal contents. The learning experiences employed by the participants in the integration revolve around the promotion, mitigation, and awareness of environmental education. The way the participants assess the students' learning falls on the cognitive level only since they give pen-and-paper quizzes and write reflection papers.

Moreover, due to the lack of deeper knowledge and understanding about climate change in terms of awareness, mitigation, and adaptation, teachers are having difficulties further explaining its causes and impacts. This would mean that better implementation of such integration needs preparation so that the teachers know more about it. Furthermore, the continuity and consistency of the students' practice of caring for God's creation in their own little way, may it be inside or outside the campus, is still in question due to the lack of monitoring and guidance after the lessons were taught or after the activity was implemented. Thus, based on the result of the focus group discussion, it may be said that there is a clear integration of environmental education toward climate change despite the different techniques and styles used by

the religious education teachers of USAL.

## Recommendations

After learning how environmental education is integrated into religious education subjects at the senior high school level of the Unified Schools of the Archdiocese of Lipa, the researcher saw that there is room for improvement and that attention is needed.

1. Religious Education teachers must have a solid background and training in environmental education, especially regarding climate change and proper integration into religious education subjects.
2. Religious education teachers must also have a solid foundation on what they teach, especially new teachers, to further understand the doctrines they present to students and avoid misinterpretation.
3. A unified lesson plan/curriculum must be crafted by the religious education teachers of USAL to fully engage students in the care for the environment with a clear direction and activities.
4. Proper coordination with other subjects must be done for cross-subject integration to avoid the duplication of activities.
5. Extracurricular activities proposed by the CBCP, such as the celebration of Seasons of Creation, may be implemented to emphasize Laudato Si's teachings. Joining in archdiocesan or parish advocacy toward the environment may also encourage the students and teachers to feel the presence of the Church community in caring for the environment.

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