

Open new windows on our mission

# Jesuits

Caring for our common home

2024



For Jesuits, mission partners and friends



## VIRIDIS Scientific Circle: for the planet and for the people

Dominika Mąka; Krzysztof Kuczma; Zofia Pietrzyk; Teresa Stanek  
Ignatianum Academy, Krakow  
Province of South Poland

**Take action! The world needs pro-ecological inspiration! The VIRIDIS Scientific Circle, group of enthusiastic students, shares their experience and knowledge of creation, making young people aware of the need to care for the planet and for those in need.**

We are students at the Jesuit University *Ignatianum* in Krakow (Poland). We come from various places, we study in different departments, we have different career plans, but we are united by our concern for creation, nature and the people who surround us. Our student-led ecological VIRIDIS Scientific Circle (under the care of the Institute of

Philosophy) is a way of bringing together students who are looking for ways to respond to Pope Francis' call in the encyclical *Laudato si'*.

We are betting on development! Our academic supervisor says, "Ecology and conservation of nature are both easy and difficult, simple and complex." So we broaden our

knowledge by reading scientific publications and familiarising ourselves with environmental news. We want to have a real impact on protecting the planet and reach the widest possible audience. Therefore, a large part of our activity is writing and publishing short articles on social media addressing environmental issues, which are at the same time linked to



our other interests, like psychology, journalism, cultural studies, pedagogy, political sciences, etc.

However, we are not limited to the virtual space! The real world, the one we experience through our senses, is even more important to us. In a series of meetings with students, we discussed how to talk to children about ecology. Invited guests involved in environmental activities and environmental education on a daily basis assisted us. Very inspiring meetings! They are helping us to promote the idea of environmental responsibility among young boys and girls in an accessible way.

We want to better understand reality. So, it is worth considering participating in a scientific conference. We did it recently! Olivia, pre-

vious president of the Circle, prepared a presentation on the effects of the war in Ukraine on the country's environment. Dominika, the current Vice-President of the Circle, highlighted another problem: "During the presentation, I spoke about the snow leopard, which is one of the most endangered species in the world. How many species have disappeared for ever!" The conference gave us an opportunity to reach another audience and to broaden our horizons.

We also go beyond the walls of the university. As part of the "Bee happy" campaign, we used an open-air game format to distribute flower seeds to students so that they could use them at home. By doing so, we wanted to draw attention to the important role of pollinating insects. There are several insect hotels around

our university, too! "When organising the 'Bee happy' campaign, I personally did not realise the seriousness of the situation at the beginning. However, by handing out seeds to the students, I realised that what we were doing was much more important than we might have thought," says Zofia, a member of the Circle.

A workshop in the Krakow's forest sanctuary, *Las Wolski*, was also a mind changing experience. Through various tasks such as painting in marble sand or creating a scent wand, we were able to experience contact with nature in an interesting way. This type of activity allowed us to stimulate our sensitivity, take a break from the hustle and bustle of the city and see in nature what surrounds us every day and escapes us in our hurried life. So, we could



appreciate what we have and what surrounds us.

### Reaching out to the whole community of the *Ignatianum*

The goal of our activities: combining environmental activities with the integration of the academic community of the *Ignatianum*. In the run-up to Christmas, we organised an activity of repairing damaged Christmas tree decorations together in a relaxed atmosphere, thus trying to counteract the consumerism that accompanies this period and shape an alternative lifestyle. "Refurbishing old baubles and giving them new life allowed me to see the world from a slightly different perspective. I noticed that not everything has to be thrown away just after using it. Things that seemingly

no longer serve their purpose can be repaired. All it takes is a little willingness and creativity. In this way, we cut down on consumerism and can have a lot of fun at the same time," says Krzysztof, a member of the Circle.

We try to listen to students' expectations in order to encourage them to be active, because we know that we are the generation that can make a difference in the world. We feel that the world needs us. And enthusiasm is very much needed! We want our university to graduate young people who are aware of the problems of society and the lack of care for the planet, men and women who will want to and be able to counteract this.

viridis@ignatianum.edu.pl

Kiosk for the "Bee happy" campaign to encourage people to plant flowers and thus help pollination.

“ We know that we are the generation that can make a difference in the world. ”