

# Professor suggests ways families, parishes can reconnect to the land

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Chris Thompson, academic dean at the St. Paul Seminary and a board member of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, says he would like to see all Catholic universities teach a course in agriculture to help Catholics understand their need to have a connection to the land and the environment.

In an interview with *The Catholic Spirit*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, he offered these tips to help families and parishes cultivate a deeper appreciation for agriculture and God's creation.

For individuals and families:

- Start a backyard garden. "Learn with your children the experience of raising food, even if it's at a modest level. This changes your attitude toward your land."
- Eat dinner together as a family. "The dinner table is one of the most important pieces of real estate in the Catholic home. ... It's a fantastic place where the human person comes into contact with lower creation in a very intimate way."
- Bake bread. "Even if it's no good, you'll eat it with pride and joy because it's something you've made and it's something that has expressed the person."
- Visit a farm or farmers' market. Meet the people who grow your food.
- Shop mindfully. "If we can illuminate our habits of consumption and really introduce principles of justice and principles of stewardship in our habits of consumption, that would be huge."
- Purchase local, seasonal food directly from a farmer through a Community Supported Agriculture program. To find one of these farms near you, go to [www.localharvest.org/csa/](http://www.localharvest.org/csa/).
- Go for a walk. Encounter God in nature.

For parishes:

- Feature the products of local Catholic organic farmers at parish festivals.
- Develop a partnership between an urban parish and a rural parish.
- Purchase locally produced food for school programs.
- “Ideally, parishes would have little gardens, and the produce would go to the poor, or they would have a Mary garden where they would grow flowers. Get out there and raise something, and you’ll enter into a relationship with the Creator that reaches back to the deepest roots of our faith.”

For more ideas, visit the National Catholic Rural Life Conference website at [www.ncrlc.com](http://www.ncrlc.com).