

## USING THE PRAYER RESOURCE FOR MEETINGS OR REFLECTION TIME

Prayer is an important part of any meeting for focus, to reinforce Catholic identity and to call God's blessing on the proceedings. Prayer time is also formative as it allows those present to examine aspects of life, faith and experience.

The prayers in this package focus on Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si* and its challenge to the world about the treatment of the environment and all of creation. The encyclical is subtitled '*on care for our common home*'. An encyclical is a letter issued by the Pope to the Church on an issue of great significance. Pope Francis addresses *Laudato Si* to 'every living person on the planet...".

Each prayer should take between 10 and 20 minutes. We recommend that the prayer structure be as follows:

**Acknowledgement of Country:** an acknowledgement is provided with this resource.

**Light a candle:** this is optional, but it does remind those gathered that we pray in Jesus' name.

**Read the Introduction and extract from *Laudato Si* (front of card):** ask those gathered to comment on Pope Francis' words – you might use the question 'What words or ideas resonate with you from this extract?'

**Reading:** invite someone from the group to read the reflection passage – these have been chosen to support the key message of the *Laudato Si* extract you have just discussed.

**Consider the focus question (in the circle):** allow time for those present to reflect on and discuss the question – some questions focus on the individual and others on the ministry more broadly.

**Finish with the scripture quote and prayer:** invite someone from the group to read the scripture passage. You might say 'We will now listen to God's word'. Then invite the group to read the prayer together – a short introduction to the prayer is provided.

## USING THE PRAYER RESOURCE FOR MEETINGS OR REFLECTION TIME

Prayer is an important part of any meeting for focus, to reinforce Catholic identity and to call God's blessing on the proceedings. Prayer time is also formative as it allows those present to examine aspects of life, faith and experience.

The prayers in this package focus on Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si* and its challenge to the world about the treatment of the environment and all of creation. The encyclical is subtitled '*on care for our common home*'. An encyclical is a letter issued by the Pope to the Church on an issue of great significance. Pope Francis addresses *Laudato Si* to 'every living person on the planet...".

Each prayer should take between 10 and 20 minutes. We recommend that the prayer structure be as follows:

**Acknowledgement of Country:** an acknowledgement is provided with this resource.

**Light a candle:** this is optional, but it does remind those gathered that we pray in Jesus' name.

**Read the Introduction and extract from *Laudato Si* (front of card):** ask those gathered to comment on Pope Francis' words – you might use the question 'What words or ideas resonate with you from this extract?'

**Reading:** invite someone from the group to read the reflection passage – these have been chosen to support the key message of the *Laudato Si* extract you have just discussed.

**Consider the focus question (in the circle):** allow time for those present to reflect on and discuss the question – some questions focus on the individual and others on the ministry more broadly.

**Finish with the scripture quote and prayer:** invite someone from the group to read the scripture passage. You might say 'We will now listen to God's word'. Then invite the group to read the prayer together – a short introduction to the prayer is provided.

# **1. Everyone and everything matters**

In Laudato Si', Pope Francis reiterates the fact that in our world nothing is expendable, no creatures have less value than others, no person has more right to the Earth's resources.

*...economic powers continue to justify the current global system where priority tends to be given to speculation and the pursuit of financial gain. [§56] These situations have caused sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course. Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. ... The problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis. We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations. [§ 53]*

## READING

Suu Kyi sees compassion as always aligned to courage. To live compassionately, she says, is to courageously see the connection between ourselves and those who suffer. Not only do we see the connection and become aware of it, but we allow ourselves to feel it. Finally, it is not just to see and feel the connection but to act on it, to courageously take responsibility for those who suffer. ... human life is “infinitely precious.” Compassion is about remembering this, allowing ourselves to see it again and again. It is about making the compass connection between ourselves and the other, never forgetting that the other nation, the other community, the other family’s child is as precious as ours. The birth of every child, as Suu Kyi says, is like “a new star in our firmament” – the birth of every child. (Newell, 2015, pp. 17, 18)

***How do we  
live and act in our  
ministry as though  
we carry within us  
the blessing of God  
for everyone and  
everything?***

*And why do you  
worry about clothing?  
Consider the lilies of the  
field, how they grow; they  
neither toil nor spin, yet I  
tell you, even Solomon in  
all his glory was not clothed  
like one of these.*

*Matthew 6:28*

***Let’s celebrate the blessing of God in all  
creation as we pray***

God of the glistening sun on the ocean,  
the wind whispering in the trees,  
the laughter of children,  
the wisdom of the elders.  
Help us to recognise  
the oneness of all things  
and celebrate human creativity,  
compassion, endurance and love.  
Empower us to recognise  
the oneness of all things  
in the wonder of Your creation.  
Amen





## **2. Connectedness:** ***We are all part of creation***

The key theological lesson of *Laudato Si'* is Pope Francis' challenge: we are all part of the one created world.

*Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it ... [§139]*



## READING

We depend on nature not only for our physical survival. We also need nature to show us the way home, the way out of the prison of our own minds. We got lost in doing, thinking, remembering, anticipating - lost in a maze of complexity and a world of problems.

We have forgotten what rocks, plants, and animals still know. We have forgotten how to be - to be still, to be ourselves, to be where life is: Here and Now.

Whenever you bring your attention to anything natural, anything that has come into existence without human intervention, you step out of the prison of conceptualized thinking and, to some extent, participate in the state of connectedness with Being in which everything natural still exists.

To bring your attention to a stone, a tree, or an animal does not mean to think about it, but simply to perceive it, to hold it in your awareness. When walking or resting in nature, honour that realm by being there fully. Be still. Look. Listen. See how every animal and every plant is completely itself. Unlike humans, they have not split themselves in two. They do not live through mental images of themselves, so they do not need to be concerned with trying to protect and enhance those images. The deer is itself. The daffodil is itself. (Tolle, 2011, pp. 77, 78)

*What can  
we learn from the  
natural world? How  
does your ministry  
celebrate  
connectedness?*

*But ask the  
animals, and they will  
teach you; the birds of the air,  
and they will tell you; ask the  
plants of the earth, and they will  
teach you; and the fish of the sea will  
declare to you. Who among all these  
does not know that the hand of the  
Lord has done this? In God's hand  
is the life of every living thing and  
the breath of every human  
being.*

*Job 12:7-10*

***Let's acknowledge our connectedness with  
each other and our world as we pray***

God of all creation,  
your spirit dances throughout the earth.  
You give drink to the trees,  
shade for the birds,  
bread for the hungry.  
You bring life and make all things holy.  
Flood our hearts with your grace,  
so we may sow seeds of love,  
justice and beauty,  
and reflect your kingdom here on earth.  
We ask this through your Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

(<https://cafod.org.uk>)



### **3. The legacy and gift of St Francis of Assisi**

Pope Francis refers to St Francis of Assisi as his guide and inspiration and he situates Laudato Si' within the spirit and teaching of this great figure of the Church.

*I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace. [§ 10]*



## READING

Revolution is another word for conversion. Francis led a revolution of love, peace and compassion in his day. A contemporary Franciscan response to our ecological crises should be participation in the sustainability revolution, a movement in human society no less dramatic in scale than the Industrial Revolution. This conversion, this turning, is already underway. In fact, many businesses are leading to this effort, as they recognise that we are entering a new era of environmental uncertainty, and that reducing energy use and pollution through wise design is good for the bottom line as well as the planet. ... achieving sustainability will require us to eliminate the very concept of waste, for it does not exist in nature. (Delio, 1999, p. 165)

*How can we  
adopt a Franciscan  
approach to ecological  
sustainability in our  
ministry and our  
own lives?*

*Let the  
heavens be glad,  
and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that  
fills it; let the field exult, and  
everything in it. Then shall  
all the trees of the forest  
sing for joy before the  
Lord.*

*Psalms 96:11-13*

## **Let's pray in the words of St Francis:**

Be praised, my Lord, for all creation.  
Brother Sun, who brings the day and light.  
Sister Moon and for the stars which you have set  
shining and lovely in the heavens.  
Brothers Wind and Air and every kind of weather  
by which You uphold life in all your creatures.  
Sister Water, who is so useful, humble, precious and pure.  
Brother Fire, through whom you give us light in the darkness.  
Sister Earth, our Mother, who nourishes us and sustains us,  
bringing forth fruits and vegetables of many kinds  
and flowers of many colours.  
Blessed are those who endure in peace.  
Amen

(Adapted from the *Canticle of Creation* by St Francis of Assisi  
[catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=3188](http://catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=3188))



## **4. The human roots of the ecological crisis**

Pope Francis highlights the human causes of the current ecological crisis in *Laudato Si'*. It is our choices, our economic system, our ignorance of the impact of our lifestyles on the planet that have caused the current crisis.

*Once more, we need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals. Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention. Moreover, biodiversity is considered at most a deposit of economic resources available for exploitation, with no serious thought for the real value of things, their significance for persons and cultures, or the concerns and needs of the poor. [§190]*



## READING

The amount of greenhouse gases we humans are emitting into the atmosphere, and the changes that is causing in our climate's behaviour, are without historical precedent. The terms "greenhouse effect" and "global climate change" do not adequately describe what is happening. Human activity is disturbing our climate and the integrity of the planetary life support system. Thus, we are facing what should be called human-caused global climate disruption. Even though climate change is a global phenomenon, most of the impacts will vary in different location, frustrating efforts to predict them. Highly destructive storms, fuelled by increased energy, will harm more areas of the world. If all glaciers on the Himalayan Mountains melt, the critical snowpack, which provides water for 40 percent of the human population, will be lost. (Delio, 1999, p. 118)

*Where are there opportunities for our ministry to reverse its footprint on the earth? What does your own footprint look like?*

*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*  
*Isaiah 43:19*

## **As we consider human impact on our Earth, we pray together**

Confront us Creator God  
with the results of our treatment of the Earth.  
Disturb us with the science.  
Unsettle us with the global impact statistics.  
Enable us to change and walk gently  
on our common home.  
Assure us that every action counts.  
Amen



## **5. The situation is serious**

Laudato Si' reiterates frequently the seriousness of the present ecological crisis and Pope Francis calls on all people to take urgent action.

*Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences... Our common home is being pillaged, laid waste and harmed with impunity... We cannot allow certain interests – interests which are global but not universal – to take over, to dominate states and international organizations, and to continue destroying creation. People and their movements are called to cry out, to mobilize and to demand – peacefully, but firmly – that appropriate and urgently-needed measures be taken. I ask you, in the name of God, to defend Mother Earth. [§161]*



## READING

When the full scope of the damage we live by is fully taken in, it is undeniably crushing. I think we've all felt a terrible sense of being frozen in the headlights of an unstoppable juggernaut that is the globalised coal- and oil-based military-industrial-media economy, along with its vast web of national corporate power relations, digital information, options, and gossip. It is greased equally by foreign wars and the seamless collusion of all who enjoy the comfortable living conditions and infinite distractions of the industrially developed countries of the world. All of us on board the juggernaut have chosen to live obliviously towards its immense destruction of the earth's natural capital. We have deregulated ferociously unrestrained corporate entities, licensing them to exploit the earth's "resources" without mercy, just as if they were limitless. (Murphy, 2016, p. 123)

*Where is the  
urgency of the  
ecological crisis in our  
ministry and in your  
own community?*

*... you do not  
even know what  
tomorrow will bring.  
What is your life? For you  
are a mist that appears for  
a little while and  
then vanishes.*

*James 4:13-14*

***Let's pray for the courage  
to accept the reality  
of the state of our Earth***

For the commitment  
to speak up for change.  
For the patience  
to take one step at a time.  
For the hope  
to imagine a different future.  
Help us Creator God,  
to lead the way through our  
actions toward ecological  
renewal and sustainability.  
Amen



## **6. Climate change harms the poor**

In Laudato Si' Pope Francis reminds us that it is the poor who will bear the brunt of the ecological crisis facing our world.

*...the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest. [§ 48]*



## READING

Efforts to address climate change must take into account creation and its relationship to “the least of these” (Matthew 25). Too frequently we observe the damaging impacts from climate-related events ... across the globe, particularly on poor and vulnerable communities. We know that the communities served by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) are already experiencing the tragic consequences of climate change. Increasingly limited access to water, reduced crop yields, more widespread disease, more frequent and intense droughts and storms, as well as conflict over declining resources – are all making the lives of the world’s poorest people even more precarious.

(<http://www.usccb.org/.pdf>)

*Where is  
climate poverty  
evident in our  
ministry and in  
your own  
life?*

*How does  
God’s love abide in  
anyone who has the  
world’s goods and sees  
a brother or sister in  
need and yet refuses  
help?*

*1 John 3:17*

## ***Gathering these thoughts together, let’s pray***

Help us God of love and patience,  
in the everyday of our busy lives,  
to stop and consider the plight  
of those affected by climate change.  
Farmers fighting years of drought,  
families who lose homes in bushfires,  
those living in communities  
threatened by rising sea levels,  
the people who can’t breathe  
the air of our own cities,  
the sea waters littered with plastic,  
the forest stripped bare.  
Help us God of love to speak out  
for the Earth and all people.  
Amen



## **7. Solidarity: Working together for Earth**

To save the world from ecological catastrophe, all people need to stand up and act. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls for dialogue and common action. He addresses the encyclical to 'every living person on this planet'.

*The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity. Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge. This prevents us from confronting environmental problems effectively. An open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements, among which ideological conflicts are not infrequently encountered. The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that "realities are greater than ideas" [§201]*

## READING

As heirs to the biblical tradition, we believed that the planet belonged to us. We never understood that this continent had its own laws that needed to be obeyed and its own revelatory experience that needed to be understood. We have only recently considered the great community of life here.

The indigenous peoples of this continent tried to teach us the value of the land, but unfortunately we could not understand them, blinded as we were by our dreams of manifest destiny. Instead we were scandalised, because they insisted on living simply rather than working industriously. We desired to teach them our ways, never thinking that they could teach us theirs... we never saw ourselves as entering into a sacred land, a sacred space. We never experienced this land as they did – as a living presence not primarily to be used but to be revered and communed with. (Berry, 2016, p. 24)

*How can  
your ministry  
build solidarity in  
the fight for  
the Earth's  
future?*

*Give ear, O  
heavens, and I will  
speak; let the earth hear the  
words of my mouth May my  
teaching drop like the rain, my  
speech condense like the dew;  
like gentle rain on grass, like  
showers on new  
growth.*

*Deuteronomy 32:1-2*

## ***Let's pray together this vow from Active Hope***

I vow to myself and each of you  
To commit myself daily to the healing of our world  
and the welfare of all beings.  
To live on Earth more lightly and less violently  
in the food, products and energy I consume.  
To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth,  
the ancestors, the future beings, and  
my brothers and sisters of all species.  
To support each other in our work for the world  
and to ask for help when I feel the need.  
To pursue a daily practice that clarifies my mind,  
strengthens my heart and supports me  
in observing these vows.

[activehope.info/vows.html](http://activehope.info/vows.html)




## **8. The challenge of technology**

We live in a world of constant change, of pioneering technologies which have the capacity to both enhance our lives and to distract us from the everyday. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis warns us about the increasing power of technology. He argues that technology severs our biological connectedness with nature and creates the illusion that the world simply exists for us to use.

*There is a growing awareness that scientific and technological progress cannot be equated with the progress of humanity and history, a growing sense that the way to a better future lies elsewhere. This is not to reject the possibilities which technology continues to offer us. But humanity has changed profoundly, and the accumulation of constant novelties exalts a superficiality which pulls us in one direction. It becomes difficult to pause and recover depth in life. [§113]*





Our air-conditioned, plugged-in level of material comfort estranges us from the earth and even from the sense of what is natural. And it insulates us from the high cost of this intensely self-centred way of living, leaving that to be borne out of sight by other people, other species, the earth as a whole. We live at maximum distance from the fact that we are here only temporarily, that we will age and die. Not only do we not respect our host and acknowledge the bounty and beauty earth pours out for us, we comprehensively distract ourselves from that by any means available. (Murphy, 2016, p.115)

*How has  
technology  
changed your life  
in the past 10 years?  
How has our ministry  
changed?*

*Do not say,  
“What do I need, and  
what further benefit can be  
mine?” Do not say, “I have  
enough, and what harm can  
come to me now?” In the day of  
prosperity, adversity is forgotten,  
and in the day of adversity,  
prosperity is not  
remembered.  
Sirach 11: 23-25*

***Let's place our words and ideas around our  
changing world before our God***

God of gentleness and compassion  
Help us to seek serenity in the busyness of life.  
May we value relationships in an  
era of online connection.  
May we embrace the power of technology  
with balances in place.  
May we treasure the moments of human  
connection which sustain our communities.  
Amen



## **9. The throwaway culture**

The throw away mentality invades all aspects of our lives today – from coffee cups to clothing, plastic bags to relationships. Laudato Si' challenges all people to embrace renewable resources.

*We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximizing their efficient use, reusing and recycling them. A serious consideration of this issue would be one way of counteracting the throwaway culture which affects the entire planet, but it must be said that only limited progress has been made in this regard. [§22]*



## READING

Slowly but surely, a mounting obsession with consumerism has replaced prudence with an extravagant throwaway culture, resulting in an unfathomable amount of trash: more than two billion tons of solid waste are created globally every year, weighing about five times more than all the people on the planet.

Not only does the waste have an enduring, destructive impact on waterways and ecosystems, but the endless production of cheap plastics, electronics and fast fashion is also accelerating climate change and poisoning life with chemicals, dyes, microplastics and fibers and seeping landfills. The biggest culprits are the wealthy economies; the supply chains serving the richest 10% of the planet are driving 50% of carbon emissions. If we don't take urgent action, these practices are simply going to destroy the Earth as we know it. (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/>)

*Where do  
you see the  
challenge of the  
throwaway culture  
in your daily life?  
What can we do to reduce  
waste and recycle  
more in our  
ministry?*

*Be strong and  
courageous. Do not  
be afraid; do not be  
discouraged, for God will  
be with you wherever  
you go.  
Joshua 1:9*

***As we consider new ways to  
reuse let us pray together***

God of past, present and future  
Help us to build communities  
which are sustainable.  
To build homes  
which recycle and reuse.  
To nurture workplaces  
which reduce waste.  
Give us hearts  
which yearn for greener pathways.  
Amen




## **10. Towards a new theology**

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis encourages all people to reconsider the universe story and the interrelationship between all living beings on our planet. This requires a new way of seeing our Earth, our relationships with all living things and our understanding of God.

*The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that "contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves. [§159]*





## READING

The theology of creation in *Laudato Si'* is in profound continuity with that which underpins *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) and *Misericordiae Vultus* (2016) – about the immeasurable abundance of God's mercy. 'Not one sparrow is forgotten before God'. But we have forgotten. The environmental theologian Carmody Grey reminds us that Dostoyevsky believed that we should ask forgiveness of the birds... how much more should we pray for all creatures, on whom we are mutually dependent?... Evolution is a process of moving towards a more complex life, to a greater degree of relatedness, consciousness and deeper union. The Spirit of God is seeking to create newness in our lives, calling us to a fresh wholeness that requires much letting go of what we have known, and co-creating with God an undreamt-of future for our Church, for our world and for ourselves... The gospel life is about a new future in God. (O'Leary, 2017, p73)

*How does  
the theology of God in  
all things challenge your  
view of the world?  
What might change in our  
world if all people  
embraced this  
understanding of  
God?*

*The kingdom of  
heaven is like a mustard  
seed that someone took and  
sowed in his field; it is the smallest  
of all the seeds, but when it has  
grown it is the greatest of shrubs  
and becomes a tree, so that the  
birds of the air come  
and make nests in its  
branches.*

*Matthew 13:31-32*

***As we contemplate new understandings  
of our world, let us pray***

God of wisdom,  
Help us to embrace new ways of seeing  
our world and our connections  
with all living beings.  
Open our hearts to others  
as expressions of your love.  
Inspire us to encourage, empower and  
enable others to seek new ways of living the  
Gospel in a changing world.  
Help us to live always with love, peace,  
mercy and justice.  
Amen