

Catechist Version *Our Common Home: A Laudato Si'* Toolkit 1

Overview

This presentation is created to help Catechist teachers to first understand what an encyclical is, then more specifically, an overview of the nine themes of Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. It can be used as a reflection of the presentation given to their students, or as a stand-alone. This presentation includes prayers at opening and closing, questions to promote discussion and consideration, suggestions for action, and resources for continued education. Not all information presented in this toolkit need be used, and can be adapted accordingly.

Materials (May not all apply)

Activity sheets
Time to Act sheet
Snacks

Room Set-Up

Preferably chairs arranged in one large circle. Arrangement dependent on group size.

Welcome and Greet!

Opening Prayer

One person reads each verse until finished.
St. Francis' Canticle of the Sun

O most High, almighty, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing!

Praised be my Lord God with all creatures;
and especially our brother the sun,
which brings us the day, and the light;
fair is he, and shining with a very great splendor:
O Lord, he signifies you to us!

Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind,
and for air and cloud, calms and all weather,
by which you uphold in life all creatures.

Praised be my Lord for brother fire,
through which you give us light in the darkness:
and he is bright, and pleasant, and very mighty,
and strong.

Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon
one another for God's love's sake,
and who endure weakness and tribulation;
blessed are they who peaceably shall endure,
for you, O most High, shall give them a crown!

Praise you, and bless you the Lord,
and give thanks to God, and serve God
with great humility.

Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon,
and for the stars,
which God has set clear and lovely in heaven.

Praised be my Lord for our sister water,
which is very serviceable to us,
and humble, and precious, and clean.

Praised be my Lord for our mother the Earth,
which sustains us and keeps us,
and yields divers fruits, and flowers of
many colors, and grass.

Praised be my Lord for our sister,
the death of the body, from which no one escapes.
Woe to him who dies in mortal sin!
Blessed are they who are found walking
by your most holy will
for the second death shall have no power to do
them harm



Purpose/Outline We are here to learn about Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si', meaning "Praise Be to You," what Pope Francis is saying in it, and how to use our hands to respond to his call to action.

Icebreaker (Suggestion)

Give everyone a piece of paper that is big enough to fit both hands, and have each person draw/outline their hand on the left side of the paper. Then on each finger, have people write creatively a talent they have (ie singing) or interest (ie soccer). Outside the hand outline, write a word or phrase from the opening prayer that was meaningful to them. The right side of the paper will be used later.

Afterward, have everyone present their "hand".

For groups larger than 15, facilitator can draw one big hand on the board, and ask for volunteered answers to complete the activity.

Point 1--Encyclical

What is it? An encyclical is a formal letter issued by a pope to the universal Catholic Church concerning teachings, moral, and disciplinary matters. It is sometimes also addressed to people of goodwill, such as in the case of Laudato Si'. It is not necessarily infallible, but as it does come from the pope, it carries an authority that should not be ignored.

Adapted from CCC.

Why is it important? An encyclical helps everyone to better understand how to apply the teachings of Sacred Scripture and Catholic Tradition, especially in the light of a particular issue.

Adapted from Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM).

Laudato Si' Key Message: Climate change is a moral issue for all Catholics and people of goodwill. Despite contributing the least to climate change, the poor and vulnerable suffer most from the consequences of improper care of the earth, and it is high time we take responsibility for our consumer-driven culture.

Point 2--Laudato Si

Theme (8 out of 9)	Response/Discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet. <p>Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming...They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. (25)</p>	<p>Who is most affected by climate change? Why?</p> <p>Relate personal experiences: Are you personally affected? Do you have students that are affected?</p> <p>Teachers can relate the creation story to this theme: We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (2) God made us out of the very earth, therefore as we take care of our bodies, we ought to take care of the earth.</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conviction that everything in the world is connected. <p>“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)</p>	<p>Are we connected with the president? With the pope? (Yes)</p> <p>“Individual decisions have social consequences.”--Bishop Blaire</p> <p>Littering → gutter → ocean → fish → fisherman → can't sell goods → less seafood to eat also → livelihood/his family</p> <p>(Ex. Feb. 13 '15, fisherman found plastic bits in steelhead fish in British Columbia)</p> <p>Examples of connections?</p> <p>Inverse also true, one person doing good can affect others as well (ex. Mother Teresa)</p> <p>Teachers can relate the 10 commandments to this theme: Commandments 5-10 deal with people and society. In any one of those, our choices connect and affect others, as well as the earth. Example: Gen 6:11-12 “11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology's influence on society. <p>“We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels -- especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas -- needs to be progressively replaced without delay.” (165)</p>	<p>Who has items of technology? (ie phone, computer) How might technology be harmful?</p> <p>Facts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> In 2009, discarded TVs, computers, peripherals (including printers, scanners, fax machines) mice, keyboards, and cell phones totaled about 2.37 million short tons. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Wastes - Resource Conservation - Common Wastes & Materials - eCycling." Web Accessed April 11, 2015. E-waste represents 2% of America's trash in landfills, but it equals 70% of overall toxic waste. Slade, Giles. "iWaste." Mother Jones, 2007. Web Accessed April 11, 2015. It takes 530 lbs of fossil fuel, 48 lbs of chemicals, and 3k lbs of water to manufacture one computer and monitor. Electronics TakeBack Coalition, A Project of the Tides Center. "Facts and Figures on E-Waste and Recycling." Web Accessed April 11, 2015. <p>https://www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-e-waste</p> <p>Teachers can relate the tower of Babel to this theme: Although primitive, technology was used to create a tower. But this tower was for the glory of man, and not God, therefore the end result was multiple languages and the scattering of people.</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The call to find other ways of developing an inclusive society, that allows the sharing of resources and improves human dignity. <p>“Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress.” (194)</p>	<p>What does progress look like? Getting a low grade the first time, working hard, then getting a higher grade the next time.</p> <p>Also, historically we didn't have recycling and now we do, that's progress.</p> <p>Cell phone, going from a fat device to a thin one.</p> <p>Personal examples?</p> <p>Where would you like to see progress made the most?</p> <p>Teachers can relate Catholic Social Teachings, Jesus' mission, and scripture: Ex: Luke 3:11 “And he would answer and say to them, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The value given to each creature in proper proportion. <p>“Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose.” (84)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every one/thing plays a unique role in Creation - reliant on each other, interconnected, etc. “More important” seems to send the message we could kill animals rampantly because they're “less important.” We want to emphasize that while humans are special because we are created in the image of God, all of Creation is beloved by God and has inherent worth. 	<p>Do animals have greater value than plants?</p> <p>Which is more important: whale or mosquito?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Whales play an important role in stabilizing the aquatic food chain and reproduction of other species. As more whales are killed the food distribution in the ocean becomes destabilized and causes changes in the food supply of many other kinds of marine life. Whale watching and various other spectating activities have brought in billions of dollars helping stimulate economic growth in various cities, states and countries. <p>http://www.whalefacts.org/why-are-whales-important/</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mosquitoes are a reliable and necessary food source for creatures ranging from fish to birds Mosquito larvae grow in water and feed on waste that floats and clogs the surface of the water, keeping the waste from choking off nitrogen and oxygen necessary to the survival of plants below <p>http://animals.mom.me/mosquitoes-valuable-ecosystem-8494.html</p> <p>Are animals more important than humans? Why/not?</p> <p>Teachers can relate Genesis with this theme: God said that what he made was good, which means nothing was made without reason.</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The human meaning of ecology. <p>“We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the underprivileged, and at the same time protecting nature.” (139)</p>	<p>What is ecology?: the branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings.</p> <p>What are some examples of how we relate to nature? (ie sunsets, stars, birdsong, grass for playing on, etc)</p> <p>How might taking care of our earth restore dignity to people (ie showers, not living in filth) and combat poverty? (create jobs by cleanup crews, light rail (alternative modes of transportation).</p> <p>Teachers can relate the Eucharist to this theme: The Eucharist is symbolized in the bread and wine, which is created by human hands. Communion with Christ involves communion with Creation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The serious responsibility of international and local policies. <p>“...in the absence of pressure from the public and from civic institutions, political authorities will always be reluctant to intervene...” (181)</p>	<p>What do you think the founding fathers would think of our country now?</p> <p>Your students are the generation that will be next getting ready to vote and participate in the workings of our country. Now is the time to start learning how to hold politicians responsible, so that when the time comes, they can use their voice on behalf of our country. The government was never made to dominate the people, it was made to serve the people.</p> <p>Teachers can relate Pontius Pilate to this theme: Pontius Pilate was unwilling to intervene in the defense of Jesus, whom he knew was innocent (Luke 27:23-24), and so allowed Jesus to die. This is what happens when people in power do nothing; innocent people suffer.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle. <p>“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. (21)</p> <p>These problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish.” (22)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We throw away stuff and resources, we throw away people, especially the most vulnerable (unborn, elderly) 	<p>What does this mean? Quickly reducing things to garbage.</p> <p>Where have you seen evidence of “the throwaway culture”? Throwing away paper without recycling it.</p> <p>How might our “throwaway” attitude toward objects affect people? Not caring about little things leads to not caring about big things. Human trafficking, homelessness, and avoiding the issue.</p> <p>Teachers can relate contemporary issues such as abortion, euthanasia, loss of species to this theme: When we don’t care about the “little” things (plastics we toss) we won’t care about “medium” things (animals), until finally we have that attitude to “big” things (unborn, elderly).</p>



Point 3--Pope Francis' Call to Action

“Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.” (19)

Briefly give examples of environmental action (ie. less water bottles), then have people get into groups. First draw other hand on the right side of the paper that was used during the icebreaker. Then as a group, decide how to answer Pope Francis' Call to Action. Try using the talents/interests of the left hand to inspire actions. (Ie love of music → write a song and put it up on youtube). You can also take a theme and write how to answer it (Ie throwaway culture → a pledge to consider your lifestyle and how it can become more environmentally friendly)

Brief presentation of results.

For groups larger than 15, facilitator can draw one big hand on the board, and ask for volunteered answers to complete the activity.

Closing

Remember our goals:

- To get together to talk about the state of our environment and our relationship to it and to each other.
- To open our hearts to the crisis of both the environment and disadvantaged peoples.
- To take action together for the Common Good on all levels of society.

Adapted from VIS.

Have Hope!:

“We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread. Furthermore, such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile.” (212)

Offer and Provide: Chosen resources (if any).

Prayer Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

O Lord, grant us the grace to respect and care for Your creation.

Lord, hear our prayer.

O Lord, bless all of your creatures as a sign of Your wondrous love.

Lord, hear our prayer.

O Lord, help us to end the suffering of the poor and bring healing to all of Your creation.

Lord, hear our prayer.

O Lord, help us to use our technological inventiveness to undo the damage we have done to Your creation and to sustain Your gift of nature.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Dismissal or Fellowship: Adapted from USCCB.

Thank the participants for sharing their reflections and wish them safe travel home. Or, you may wish to invite participants to share in refreshments and fellowship after the session. Ensure that contact information is available, and if applicable, an invitation to future events, website, blog, etc., as well as any resources, materials, goody-bags, etc. If possible, stay awhile to answer any questions and/or receive comments or feedback.

