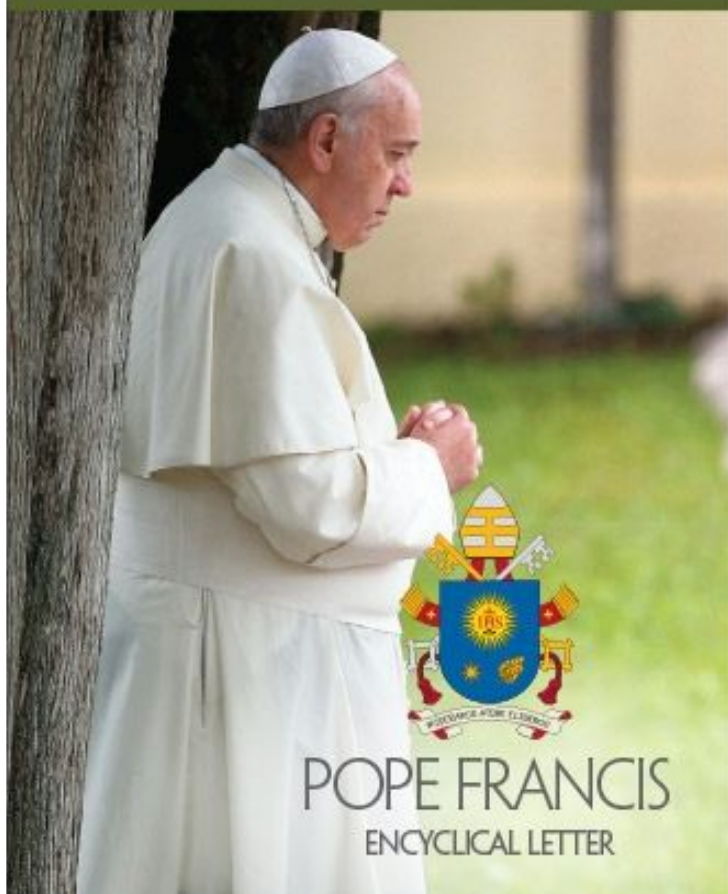


ON CARE FOR OUR
COMMON HOME
LAUDATO SI'



Laudato Si' Book Club

*Catholic Charities of Stockton
Environmental Justice Program*



Overview

This 8 day book club is created to help groups of people read Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, and discuss it with the aim of unpacking the goodness it holds. Often it is easier to read something of this magnitude as a group so as to gain the insight of others, as well as offer your own. This guide includes prayers, reflections, questions to promote discussion and consideration, suggestions for how to answer Pope Francis' Call to Action, and resources for continued education. Not all information presented in this program need be used, and can be adapted accordingly.

Materials (may not all apply)

Copy of *Laudato Si'*
Answer Pope Francis' Call to Action sheet
Snacks

Room Set-Up Preferably chairs arranged in one large circle. Arrangement dependent on group size.

Opening Prayer

Prayer of Intercession

O Lord, grant us the grace to grow deeper in our respect of and care for your Creation.

Lord, hear our prayer.

O Lord, help us to recognize the sacredness all of your creatures as signs of your wondrous love.

Lord, hear our prayer.

O Lord, help us turn from the selfish consumption of resources meant for all and to see the impacts of our

choices on the poor and vulnerable.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

A prayer for our earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.



Day 1--Introduction

Introductions Briefly everyone introduces his or herself and a goal they have for this series.

Opening Prayer Prayer of Intercession

Start Beginning questions:

- What do you think an encyclical is, and do you think it is mandatory to accept it?
- What has been your understanding of Laudato Si'?

Adapted from National Catholic Reporter (NCR), CatholicMom.com,
and Catholic Climate Covenant (CCC)

Brief open response to initial discussion questions.

Purpose/Outline We are here to read and learn about Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si', meaning "Praise Be to You," it's importance, what the themes are, what Pope Francis says about them, and to respond to his call to action.

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 all 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 Catholics and all 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.

Nine Themes:

- A Moral and Spiritual Challenge. The ecological crisis, Pope Francis writes, is a summons to profound interior conversion—to renew our relationships with God, one another, and the created world.
- Care for God's Creation. God created the world and entrusted it to us as a gift. Now we have the responsibility to care for and protect it and all people, who are part of creation.
- Protecting human dignity is strongly linked to care for creation. We are All Connected. We are connected to the rest of the human family, to the created world, and to those who will come after us in future generations.



- Impact on the Poor. People in poverty have contributed least to climate change, yet they are disproportionately impacted by it. As a result of excessive use of natural resource by wealthy nations, those who are poor experience pollution, lack of access to clean water, hunger, and more.
- Called to Solidarity. We are one human family and have a shared responsibility for others and for creation. Wealthy countries have a responsibility to reduce consumption of non-renewal resources and should help poorer nations develop in sustainable ways.
- Technological and economic development must serve human beings and enhance human dignity, instead of creating an economy of exclusion, so that all people have access to what is needed for authentic human development.
- Supporting Life, Protecting Creation. Concern for nature is incompatible with failure to protect vulnerable human beings, such as unborn children, people with disabilities, or victims of human trafficking.
- A Time to Act. Pope Francis calls for a change in lifestyle and consumption. We can make important changes as individuals, families, and communities, and as civil and political leaders.
- Hope and Joy. "Injustice is not invincible" (no. 74) and we act knowing that we seek to live out God's vision of renewed relationships with God, ourselves, one another, and creation.

Excerpt from "Laudato Si': On Care For Our Common Home" bulletin insert, USCCB.

All of this is summed up in a proposal to initiate an honest dialogue at every level of social economic and political life, to create obvious decision-making progress, and a reminder that nothing will work if we don't have a formed and responsible conscience, and an ecological conversion.

Adapted from VIS.

The following materials were taken from [A reader's' guide to 'Laudato Si'](#) by National Catholic Reporter and [Laudato Si': A Community Conversation](#) by CatholicMom.com.

Point 2--LS: The introduction

The pope begins the encyclical by summarizing his presentation and citing earlier popes and other religious leaders who have spoken about the environment. He says Sister Earth "cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her."

Questions:

1. Where have you seen harm inflicted on Sister Earth (Paragraph 2)?
2. Why do you think few people knew that Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI spoke out on environmental issues (4-6)?
3. St. Francis of Assisi has been called the patron saint of the environment. What is attractive about him (10-12)?
4. Pope Francis concludes his introduction with an appeal (13-16). What is your response?
5. What has stood out for you in his introduction?

Closing prayer

End--Fellowship



The Environmental Justice Project
Catholic Charities Diocese of Stockton



Day 2--Chapter 1 What is happening to our common home

Welcome

New person's introductions

Opening prayer

Pope Francis is a firm believer in the need to gather the facts in order to understand a problem. Chapter 1 presents the scientific consensus on climate change along with a description of other threats to the environment, including threats to water supplies and biodiversity. He also looks at how environmental degradation has affected human life and society. Finally, he writes about the global inequality of the environmental crisis.

Questions:

1. What was your first impression of Chapter One of Laudato Si? Was it what you expected? Did it disturb you and if so, how?
2. How has pollution affected you or your family personally?
3. What does the pope mean by a "throwaway culture" (22)? Do you agree with him? Why?
4. What does the pope mean when he says, "The climate is a common good" (23)?
5. What is the evidence that climate change is happening and is caused by human activity (23)? What will be its effects?
6. The pope says "access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right," yet many poor people do not have access to it (27-31). Why is this? What can be done?
7. Why does the pope think biodiversity is important (32-42)? What are the threats to biodiversity?
8. What are the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development, and the throwaway culture (43-47)?
9. Why does the pope believe "we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation" (48)?
10. Why does the pope think that simply reducing birth rates of the poor is not a just or adequate response to the problem of poverty or environmental degradation (50)?
11. "A true 'ecological debt' exists, particularly between the global north and south," the pope writes (51). What does he mean?
12. Why does the pope think the response to the world's environmental crisis has been weak (53)?
13. What experiences in your life have helped you to have a more global picture of the world of our common home?
14. Are there steps we can take to do our part to address the issues Pope Francis outlines in Chapter One?

Closing prayer



End--Fellowship

Materials taken from A reader's guide to 'Laudato Si' by National Catholic Reporter and Laudato Si': A Community Conversation by CatholicMom.com.

Day 3--Chapter 2 The Gospel of Creation

Welcome

Opening prayer

The pope argues that faith convictions can motivate Christians to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters. He begins with the biblical account of creation and then meditates on the mystery of the universe, which he sees as a continuing revelation of the divine. "Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth." He concludes, "The earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone."

Questions:

1. According to Francis, the Bible teaches that the harmony between the creator, humanity, and creation was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations (66). What does it mean to presume to take the place of God?
2. How does Francis interpret Genesis 1:28, which grants humankind dominion over the earth (67)?
3. How does Francis use the Bible to support his view that the gift of the earth with its fruits belongs to everyone (71)?
4. In reflecting on the mystery of the universe, what does Francis mean by saying that "creation is of the order of love" (77)?
5. What is our role "in this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems" where "we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation" (79)?
6. Francis says, "Creating a world in need of development, God in some way sought to limit himself in such a way that many of the things we think of as evils, dangers or sources of suffering, are in reality part of the pains of childbirth which he uses to draw us into the act of cooperation with the Creator" (80). How do you understand this?
7. Where in our culture do we see evidence of giving a disordered priority to lesser creation, animals and plants, or the earth itself, over humanity? How can we help counterbalance this tendency?
8. Alongside revelation contained in Scripture, "there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night" (85). How have you experienced God in creation?
9. What is your reaction to the hymn of St. Francis of Assisi (87)?
10. "The Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property" (93). When can the right to private property be subordinated to the common good?
11. What was the attitude of Jesus toward creation? (96-100)?



Closing prayer

End--Fellowship

Materials taken from A reader's guide to 'Laudato Si' by National Catholic Reporter and Laudato Si': A Community Conversation by CatholicMom.com.

Day 4--Chapter 3 The human roots of the ecological crisis

Welcome

Opening prayer

Although science and technology "can produce important means of improving the quality of human life," they have also "given those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world." Francis says we are enthralled with a technocratic paradigm, which promises unlimited growth. But this paradigm "is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit." Those supporting this paradigm show "no interest in more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations. Their behaviour shows that for them maximizing profits is enough."

Questions:

1. What is Francis' attitude toward technology? What does he mean by the technocratic paradigm (101, 106-114)?
2. How does Francis argue that "technological products are not neutral," (107, 114) that "the technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economic and political life" (109)?
3. Francis says, "We are all too slow in developing economic institutions and social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources" (109). What does he mean? Why does this happen?
4. Francis asserts that "by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion" (109). Why does he say this? Do you agree?
5. Francis argues, "To seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem which comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system" (111). What are the true and deepest problems of the global system in Francis' mind?
6. Francis calls for a broadened vision (112), "a bold cultural revolution" (114). What would that look like?
7. What does Francis mean by "modern anthropocentrism" (115)?
8. For Francis, "the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity" (119). What does Francis mean by "practical relativism" (122) and cultural relativism (123)?
9. Why does Francis argue that any approach to integrated ecology must also protect employment (124)?
10. What does Francis see as the positive and negative aspects of biological technologies (130-136)?

Closing prayer

End--Fellowship



Day 5--Chapter 4 Integral Ecology

Welcome

Opening prayer

Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behavior, and the ways it grasps reality. We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis that is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

Questions:

1. Why does Francis argue that "we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental" (139)?
2. What would it mean to have "an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature (139)"?
3. Why does Francis think it is important for us to understand ecosystems and our relationship to them (140)?
4. Why do "we urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision" (141)?
5. How does the environment of our homes, workplace, and neighborhoods affect our quality of life (147)?
6. How does poverty, overcrowding, lack of open spaces, and poor housing affect the poor (149)? Why are these environmental issues?
7. What does Francis mean by "the common good" (156)?
8. What are the consequences of seeing the earth as a gift that we have freely received and must share with others and that also belongs to those who will follow us (159)?
9. "What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us" (160)?
10. Why does Francis say, "Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain" (161)?
11. What does Francis mean when he says, "An ethical and cultural decline ... has accompanied the deterioration of the environment" (162)?
12. In our self-centered culture, how can we share the importance of interconnectedness with our children?

Closing prayer

End--Fellowship



Day 6--Chapter 5 Lines of approach and action

Welcome

Opening prayer

What is to be done? Francis calls for dialogue on environmental policy in the international, national and local communities. This dialogue must include transparent decision-making so that the politics serve human fulfillment and not just economic interests. It also involves dialogue between religions and science working together for the common good.

Questions:

1. The word "dialogue" is repeated throughout this chapter. What does it mean and why does Francis think it is important?
2. Francis speaks of the need for a global consensus for confronting problems. Why is it needed, and how is it going to be achieved (164)?
3. Why does he think that "the post-industrial period may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history" (165)?
4. What does Francis see as the successes and failures of the global response to environmental issues (166-169)?
5. What international strategies does Francis oppose in responding to the environmental crisis (170-171), and which does he support (172-172)?
6. Francis argues, "The same mindset which stands in the way of making radical decisions to reverse the trend of global warming also stands in the way of achieving the goal of eliminating poverty" (175). What is this mindset?
7. "Given the real potential for a misuse of human abilities," Francis argues, "individual states can no longer ignore their responsibility for planning, coordination, oversight and enforcement within their respective borders" (177). What does that mean for the United States?
8. "The Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics," Francis says. "But I am concerned to encourage an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good" (188). What is the proper role of the church in political, economic and environmental issues?
9. Francis is critical of many business practices, has no faith in the marketplace to safeguard the environment, and sees a robust role for government in the regulation of the economy and protecting the environment. How will Americans respond to this? How do you?
10. What does Francis mean when he says, "There is a need to change 'models of global development' " (194)? What is wrong with the current models? What would the new models look like?
11. What are the separate roles of religion and science, and how can they dialogue and work together (199-201)?



Closing prayer
End--Fellowship

Materials taken from A reader's guide to 'Laudato Si' by National Catholic Reporter and Laudato Si': A Community Conversation by CatholicMom.com.

Day 7--Chapter 6 Ecological education and spirituality

Welcome

Opening prayer

We need to change and develop new convictions, attitudes and forms of life, including a new lifestyle. This requires not only individual conversion, but also community networks to solve the complex situation facing our world today. Essential to this is a spirituality that can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. Christian spirituality proposes a growth and fulfillment marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.

Questions:

1. Throughout this encyclical, Francis links concern for the poor with the environment. Why does he do that?
2. Francis is critical of a consumerist lifestyle (204). Why? What would a new lifestyle look like?
3. What could be the political and economic impact of a widespread change in lifestyles (206)?
4. What does Francis see as the role of environmental education in increasing awareness and changing habits (210-211)?
5. What does Francis mean by an ecological spirituality, and how can it motivate us to a passionate concern for the protection of our world (216)?
6. Self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation we face today, according to Francis. What is the role for community networks? Governments?
7. What are the attitudes that foster a spirit of generous care (220-221)?
8. Granted all of the problems we face, what gives Francis joy and peace (222-227)?
9. Love must also be civic and political, according to Francis. "Social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a 'culture of care' which permeates all of society." How can we encourage civic and political love in the United States?
10. Francis proposes that the natural world is integral to our sacramental and spiritual lives (233-242). How have you experienced this?
11. How is this encyclical going to change your life?
12. It can be hard to make huge changes all at once. What is one small step you can take this week to take better care of the environment?

Challenge

In many homes, "stuff" seems to reproduce overnight. Pick one closet or room to go through this week. Find at least one bag's worth of items to donate to your local charity or thrift store. For extra credit, try to go the whole week without buying anything other than food.



Closing prayer

End--Fellowship

Day 8--Follow Up: How is it going?

Welcome

Opening prayer

Throughout this series we have discussed various action steps we can take to respond to Pope Francis' Call to Action.

1. What actions have we put into practice?
2. What has been successful?
3. What has been difficult?

Last meeting we had the challenge to pick one closet or room to go through this week and find at least one bag's worth of items to donate to your local charity or thrift store. For extra credit, we were to try to go the whole week without buying anything other than food.

1. How did that work out for you?
2. Did anything surprise you?
3. How did you feel while doing the challenge?

Despite the hardness of hearts and the destruction, Pope Francis tells us:

205. Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us.

He reminds us though, in paragraph 211, that we have to keep acting in response to the environmental crisis, that we can't have a done-it-once-I'm-good attitude. We have to actually ingrain within ourselves good habits. He says that laws and regulations aren't good enough if we don't enforce them. He writes:

211. There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity



which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity.

Day 8--Follow Up: How is it going?

Pope Francis knows, and says in paragraph 232, that:

Not everyone is called to engage directly in political life. Society is also enriched by a countless array of organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment, whether natural or urban. Some, for example, show concern for a public place (a building, a fountain, an abandoned monument, a landscape, a square), and strive to protect, restore, improve or beautify it as something belonging to everyone. Around these community actions, relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges. Thus, a community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism. These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences.

Above all, Pope Francis doesn't want us to get overwhelmed by the challenge of the environmental crisis. He wants us to have hope, and to always look to God, knowing that He will not abandon us. We just need to keep moving forward.

Let's do a little activity, to help keep us going.

On a piece of paper provided, decorate it using the available materials, and place the provided quote somewhere on it. Then take it home and put it somewhere where you can see it, and may it remind you that you are not alone, and your efforts aren't wasted.

Materials: Art paper
 Art supplies (pencils, pens, markers, etc.)
 Quote
 Magnets

212. 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.

Closing prayer

End--Fellowship

