Youth Version Our Common Home: A Laudato Si’ Toolkit 1

Overview
This presentation is created to help either groups or individuals to first understand what an encyclical is, then more specifically, an overview of the nine themes of Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si’. 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
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 sister the moon,
and for the stars,
which God has set clear and lovely in heaven.

Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind,
Praised be my Lord for our sister water,
and for air and cloud, calms and all weather,
which is very serviceable to us,
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!

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

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

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<tr>
<th>Theme (8 out of 9)</th>
<th>Response/Discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>● The intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet. 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)</td>
<td>Who is most affected by climate change? Why? Relate personal experiences.</td>
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The Environmental Justice Project Catholic Charities, Diocese of Stockton
| The conviction that everything in the world is connected. | Are we connected to the president? To the pope? (Yes) |
| "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) | "Individual decisions have social consequences."—Bishop Blaire |
| Technology's influence on society. | Littering → gutter → ocean → fish → fisherman → can’t sell goods → less seafood to eat also → livelihood/his family |
| "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) | Examples of connections? |
| (Ex. Feb. 13 ‘15, fisherman found plastic bits in steelhead fish in British Columbia) Inverse also true, one person doing good can affect others as well (ex. Mother Teresa) | |
| The call to find other ways of developing an inclusive society, that allows the sharing of resources and improves human dignity. | What does progress look like? |
| "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) | Getting a low grade the first time, working hard, then getting a higher grade the next time. |
| | Also, historically we didn’t have recycling and now we do, that’s progress. |
| | Pope installing showers outside Vatican. |
| | Personal examples? |
| | Where would you like to see progress made the most? |

Facts:


- The value given to each creature in proper proportion.

“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)

Do animals have greater value than plants?

Which is more important: whale or mosquito?

1. 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.

2. Whale watching and various other spectating activities have brought in billions of dollars helping stimulate economic growth in various cities, states and countries.

http://www.whalefacts.org/why-are-whales-important/

1. Mosquitoes are a reliable and necessary food source for creatures ranging from fish to birds

2. 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

http://animals.mom.me/mosquitoes-valuable-ecosystem-8494.html

Are animals more important than humans? Why/not?

- 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.

- The human meaning of ecology.

“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)

What is ecology?: the branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings.

What are some examples of how we relate to nature? (ie sunsets, stars, birdsong, grass for playing on, etc)

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).
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<tr>
<th>The serious responsibility of international and local policies.</th>
<th>What do you think the founding fathers would think of our country now?</th>
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<td>“...in the absence of pressure from the public and from civic institutions, political authorities will always be reluctant to intervene...” (181)</td>
<td>Your generation will be 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, you can use your voice on behalf of our country. The government was never made to dominate the people, it was made to serve the people.</td>
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<th>The throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.</th>
<th>What does this mean? Quickly reducing things to garbage.</th>
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<td>“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. (21) These problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish.” (22)</td>
<td>Where have you seen evidence of “the throwaway culture”? Throwing away paper without recycling it.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td>- we throw away stuff and resources, we throw away people, especially the most vulnerable (unborn, elderly)</td>
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At end: 1 or 2 groups speak which themes most impactful and why.

**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.

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The Environmental Justice Project
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Stockton
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).

Follow Up (to finish before next session): Create a map of your neighborhood. Include as much nature as possible (i.e. trees), and any issues you see (i.e. litter, lack of light, etc.).

Prayer

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:

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.

Adapted from USCCB.