

Laudato Si' for young people

A session to explore Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'* with young people aged 11+. If you plan to use all the activities, allow an hour and a half.

Laudato Si' is part of Catholic Social Teaching. Watch *CST in three minutes* to find out more.

Key outcomes of the session:

- To know what *Laudato Si'* is and how it fits into the teachings of the Catholic Church
- To understand the links to stewardship and the call to love our neighbour
- To be able to put the call from Pope Francis into practical action

Activity one [10 minutes]

Watch CAFOD's [Laudato Si' animation](#).



Explain that: *Laudato Si'* is Pope Francis' 2015 letter, or encyclical. The phrase means "praise be to you" and the title is taken from a canticle (or hymn) written by St Francis of Assisi, whose name the Pope chose when he was installed as Pope. St Francis is the patron saint of the environment. Encyclicals offer Catholics guidance from the Pope concerning issues which affect their lives and beliefs. They often address new technologies or modern issues which aren't directly addressed in the Bible. The Pope is guided by Catholic teachings, the Bible and the Holy Spirit. He also seeks the advice of experts in the relevant field. In this

particular letter, the Pope is not only writing to Catholics, but to everyone who lives on Earth, because it is our common home.

Discuss the following:

- What is an encyclical?
- What is being asked of us?
- Why is Pope Francis writing about this?
- Is the Church saying anything new?
- What has the environment got to do with people and religion?

Activity two [10-15 minutes]

You will need:

- Reflection sheet (page 6)
- Pens/pencils

Hand out the reflection sheet and pens. Read the quote together. Give the young people time to sit alone to reflect on it, while also thinking about a place familiar to them where they enjoy spending time. Invite the young people to share some of their reflections. Then ask them to think about how they would feel if that place no longer existed and what impact this would have.

Explain that: Pope Francis' invites to everyone to look after the earth and all of its people. When we damage our earth, as well as damaging the environment, we also cause damage other people. Humans are a part of the environment too and those who pay the greatest price are people who already live in poverty. Christians believe that God created the whole earth, so it is special. Creation shows God's great love for all life.

Activity three [30-40 minutes]

You will need:

Any resources that you might have in the room (pens, paper, teabags, bins, posters, chairs etc.). They will represent wealth and resources. At the end of the task, ask the young people to restore everything to its rightful place. If the room is particularly bare then you may wish to leave some paper clips, biro or other bits of stationary around for the young people to collect.

This activity should be challenging and have no set rules! Use any difficulties the young people face to start a discussion about the practicalities of sharing the world's resources with all people.

1. Divide the young people into groups and then give them one minute to collect as many 'resources' as possible. Only one person at a time from each team can collect but everyone in the group should have a chance to do this task. Fine groups that do not follow this rule by taking away resources. The objects collected represent all the Earth's wealth and resources. When they have completed this task, ask the young people to choose a name for their country.

2. Explain that object X is water, object Y is diamonds, etc. Emphasise that we cannot make more, there is only a finite amount of resources. Ask them to consider:

- Are you happy with your resources?
- Which country would you choose to be in and why?
- What might be the impact on the community of this amount of resources?

3. Ask all the young people to work together to make sure that everyone has as much as the wealthiest in the game at this moment. Leave them to figure out how to do this! Discuss:

- Is it possible?
- What are the challenges in doing this?
- Are our Earth's resources disposable? Can we get more when we run out?

4. Finally, ask the young people to work together to make sure everyone in the game has an equal amount. Again, leave them to figure out how to do this. Afterwards, ask them to discuss in their groups:

- Who was this most difficult for?
- How does everyone having the same amount affect the attitudes of those in the wealthier countries?
- Is it fair that everyone has an equal amount? Is it just?

Debrief:

- What does it mean to consume? You may wish to ask the young people how many mobile phones they have had or how often new phones come out. How does this link to the game?
- What does disposable mean? Do we need something new just because it is 'new'?
- What are the effects of wanting more and more? Mobile phones require precious metals which are becoming scarce.
- Why do we want more? What drives this need within us? Why did you want more during the game?
- What would happen if everyone in the world (more than 7 billion people) all wanted more and more? Can the world sustain everything everyone wants?
- In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis quotes Saint Pope John Paul II: "...human beings frequently see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption." Would you agree? Why / why not?

Activity four: All in! [15 minutes]

You will need:

- Blank footprints to decorate (see page 5)
- Coloured pens and pencils
- Quotes from *Laudato Si'* (see page 4)

Ask each young person to take one or two blank footprints. Ask them to write/draw on their footprint two or three pieces of information about what they have learned or pondered today about the following:

- The steps they are going to take to tackle climate change
- The steps others could take on this issue
- How climate change can impact people worldwide
- Quotes from *Laudato Si'* (hand out)

Explain that in *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says “young people demand change”. They are leading the way to changes in the world encouraging others to follow in their footsteps.

Prayer and reflection

Divide the young people into small groups. Give each group a section of the prayer and five minutes to practice praying it aloud together. The young people can lead the prayer.

Use the footprints the group has created or objects related to the natural world as a prayer focus.

A prayer for our Earth

All powerful God, you are present in the 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 your 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. Amen.

(From Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*)

QUOTES FROM *LAUDATO SI'*

“The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.”

“Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.”

“Besides, we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor.”

“We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalisation of indifference.”

“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.”

“If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn realise that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith.”

“So what they all need is an ‘ecological conversion’, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.”

“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

“In practice we continue to tolerate that some consider themselves more human than others, as if they had been born with greater rights.”



Where is the place?

Why is it special to you?

What can you see?

What can you smell?

“ *The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves.* ”
Laudato Si', 84

What colours can you see?

What are you doing there?

What emotions are you experiencing?