

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS



2021 FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION
Called to Tend to a Flourishing Garden of Life

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS

INTRODUCTION

Catholic Climate Covenant thanks you for joining with thousands of others to host a 90-minute educational session designed to assist you, your family, parish, school, diocese, religious community, or other Catholic institution begin to discern how best to engage with Pope Francis' call to join him in a 7-year sustainability and "eco-conversion" journey through the Vatican's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform.

For any groups or individuals who decide to engage with the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (LSAP) and **pledge** to begin (or continue) their ecological conversion journey, this program will be only the beginning. We hope today's program assists you and your community think about how you wish to engage with the LSAP further and to brainstorm what actions/activities will work best for your community. By participating in today's program you already check three of the seven **LSAP goals**: response to the cry of the Earth, ecological spirituality, and community involvement and participatory action.

BACKGROUND

Since 2006, Catholic Climate Covenant has inspired and equipped Catholics to care for creation and care for the poor. Since 2012, in collaboration with our 20 national partners, the Covenant has provided the Feast of St. Francis (FOSF) program, an outline for a 90-minute program focused on Catholic social teaching and creation care.

WHY HOST THIS EVENT?

By hosting a Feast of St. Francis event, you are joining thousands of Catholics and other people of faith who want to learn, grow, and respond to the Church's teaching on caring for creation and the poor.

Pope Francis was so inspired by St. Francis of Assisi that he is the first Roman pontiff to take the saint's name. Since the beginning of his papacy, he has challenged us to make care for creation and care for the poor a cornerstone of our Catholic witness.

This year also marks the 42nd anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi being named the patron saint of those who promote ecology by St. John Paul II. This program is designed to be used to celebrate the 2021 Feast of St. Francis (October 4.) However, we encourage you to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis at any time that is convenient to your parish, school, religious community, or other group.

CUSTOMIZE THIS PROGRAM

This is **YOUR** program and we hope you will feel free to **adapt/modify** it to meet your needs, audience, or other factors. If you don't have 90 minutes, choose the segments that may work best for your community. If you need to split or skip the group discussion or the activities, please do so. We also provide you with an **adapted program for virtual** or individual/family use.



BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

We are pleased to offer the very popular *Blessing of the Animals* liturgy for your use! You may choose to hold the blessing on October 4th and then hold a separate 90-minute Feast of St. Francis program on a day of your choosing, or you can do both on the same day. You will need to speak to your pastor (or deacon/lay leader) about leading the Blessing of the Animals.

INVITE AND INSPIRE OTHERS

Register your Feast of St. Francis event at the Godsplanet.us website if it's open to others. While there, you can check out the downloadable materials for your use and learn what others are doing! This is the website where U.S. Catholics can go to read stories, share stories, and connect with others engaging with the LSAP.

After your event has passed, you can also share photos and stories from your gathering on the [News and Events](#) page, where it says Submit your creation care story here.

FACILITATOR NOTES

Video

To view the video on the day of your presentation, there are two options:

- If you have internet access in the location of the program, you can view it directly from [YouTube](#).
- If you will not have wi-fi access, you can [download it](#) and save the video to your computer.
- For displaying the video, you will need a computer, a projector, speakers and a screen. If you are not downloading the video to your computer, you will need an internet connection. The projector will need to connect to your computer and the speakers can be connected either to your computer or the projector, depending on your equipment.

What You'll Need

Most of the materials you will need for a successful educational event can be found in this Facilitator Guide. The program includes opening and closing prayers, readings, link to a video, discussion questions, and suggested activities.

You will also want to gather:

1. **The Participant Program Guide:** (which does not include these facilitator notes or script)
Make enough copies for all your participants. https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/files/resource/attachment/FOSF2021Participant-6_0.pdf
2. **For the Advocacy Activity:** To participate in the recommended advocacy activity, you will need a few laptops with internet access or you can ask participants to use their smartphones to access the activity online. You can also give participants [this link](#) to complete the advocacy action on their own. (Direct link: <https://catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/catholicclimateactionfosf>) There will also be a QR Code in the program so participants can access the activity directly with their smartphones.
3. **Writing Supplies:** You will need several poster-size sheets of paper for each group, paper, pens or pencils, markers, and tape. These will be needed for the silent reflection, group discussion, and activity time.

LET'S BEGIN! (THE PROGRAM)



FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS

2021 Program Guide WITH FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS & SCRIPT

NOTE: Facilitator instructions are in Red and Green, and Italics denote the script for the facilitator.

WELCOME

Script: *Welcome to the 2021 Feast of St. Francis program, "Ecological Conversion: Called to Tend to a Flourishing garden of Life." For the next 90 minutes, we will focus on defining "eco-conversion, why Pope Francis has called the global church to a 7-year journey to sustainability, and bringing the encyclical, Laudato Si' to life. We will also brainstorm how our community (name your community) may join this important global church effort.*

OPENING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

(Read in unison)

Please join me in this opening prayer.

In the name of the father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

Prayer for Ecological Conversion

God of the sun and the moon, of the mountains, deserts and plains,

God of the mighty oceans, of rivers, lakes and streams

God of all creatures that live in seas and fly in the air

of every living thing that grows and moves on this sacred Earth.

We are formed by Christ into Your People,

called to bring the world into Your marvelous light.

As the Body of Christ, we are messengers of ecological vocation.

We are entrusted with caring for this Earth which You have created.

Help us to love and respect it; to repair what we have damaged;

to care for what You have made good and holy.

Give us the wisdom and the passion to change our minds, our hearts and our ways.

Let us be mustard seeds in our world bringing about ecological conversion which grows and spreads to every corner of the Earth.

For our sake now and for every generation which is to come.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

~Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2002 (used with permission)



READINGS (10 MINUTES)

(Ask for volunteers for each reading)

Reading #1

Parable of the Mustard Seed ~Mark 4:30-32

"He said, "To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade."

Reading #2

The theme of this program comes from this Pope John XXIII quote:

"We are not on earth to guard a museum, but to tend to a flowering garden of life."

Reading #3

A reading from *Laudato Si'* 217

The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. Christians all need an "ecological conversion", whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.

Reading #4

Pope St. John Paul II in his General Audience Address on 17 January 2001 was the first Pontiff to use the term "ecological conversion".

"Unfortunately, if we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God's expectations. Man, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth's habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydrogeological and atmospheric systems, turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrialization, degrading that "flowerbed" - to use an image from Dante Alighieri (*Paradiso*, XXII, 151) - which is the earth, our dwelling-place.

We must therefore encourage and support the "ecological conversion" which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading. Man is no longer the Creator's "steward", but an autonomous despot, who is finally beginning to understand that he must stop at the edge of the abyss.... At stake, then, is not only a "physical" ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a "human" ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment more in conformity with the Creator's plan."

Reading #6

Elizabeth Johnson, Professor Emerita of Theology at Fordham University and a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph, writes:

". . . We all share the status of creaturehood; we are all kin in the evolving community of life now under siege; our vision must be one of flourishing for all. The immediate aim is to establish and protect healthy ecosystems where all creatures, including poor human beings and plants and animals being driven to extinction, can thrive. The longer-term goal is a socially just and environmentally sustainable society in which the needs of all people are met and diverse species can prosper, onward to an evolutionary future that will still surprise.... guide us at this critical time of Earth's distress, to practical and critical effect": A flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God."

(Elizabeth Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, Bloomsbury: London, 2014, pp. 285-86).



SILENT REFLECTION TIME (8 MINUTES)

Script: Please take the next 8 minutes to silently reflect on the readings. You have paper and pen/pencil to jot down your thoughts.

- What stood out/impacted you in these readings?
- How does the Parable of the Mustard Seed speak to you as you consider the need to work to ensure that we “cultivate a flowering garden of life” and a “flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God”?
- What common thread/message do you see in the readings by Pope John XXIII, Pope St. John Paul II, and Pope Francis (in *Laudato Si'*)?
- How can people of faith work toward what Prof. Johnson states as our “longer-term goal of “a flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God”?

VIDEO (15 MINUTES)

Script: We will watch a short video that will explain the concept of “eco-conversion”; an introduction to the Ignatian Eco-examen as part of a discernment process; how one religious community is engaging with the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform; and a prayer from Pope Francis that makes us consider the intertwined cry of the Earth and cry of the poor in this pandemic era.



IGNATIAN ECOLOGICAL EXAMEN (15 MINUTES)

Invite participants to get into groups of three to five people. You may need to help the group divide in an equitable and timely manner.

Script: Please gather in groups of three to five people. You will have 15 minutes to reflect and discuss within your group these questions that are part of the Ignatian Ecological Examen.

Using the questions of the *Ignatian Ecological Examen*, let us begin to reflect on how we are called by God to this journey of eco-conversion. In your small group, take turns reading each statement and question out loud. Reflect on each question individually and then share with your group. Take each question one at a time. Remember that the Ecological Examen isn't a one-time exercise, but an ongoing reflection that over time may lead to "conversion."

1. Gratitude:

I give thanks to God for creation and for being wonderfully made.

Where did I feel God's presence in creation today?

2. Awareness:

I ask for the grace to see creation as God does – in all its splendor and suffering.

Do I see the beauty of creation and hear the cries of the earth and the poor?

3. Understanding:

I ask for the grace to look closely to see how my life choices impact creation and the poor and vulnerable.

What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation?

How can I turn away from a throwaway culture and instead stand in solidarity with creation and the poor?

4. Conversion:

I ask for the grace of conversion toward ecological justice and reconciliation.

Where have I fallen short in caring for creation and my brothers and sisters?

How do I ask for a conversion of heart?

5. Reconciliation:

I ask for the grace to reconcile my relationship with God, creation and humanity, and to stand in solidarity through my actions.

How can I repair my relationship with creation and make choices consistent with my desire for reconciliation with creation?

6. Prayer:

I offer a closing prayer for the earth and the vulnerable in our society.

Pick one word that summarizes your prayer and write it on the poster paper.

Place the poster paper around your room.

Source: <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/2017/10/04/ignatian-ecological-examen> and ecoexamen.org.



ACTIVITY/IES (35 MINUTES)

As the facilitator you can decide if your group will tackle both activities within the 35 minutes allotted. You can let people do Activity #1 (advocacy) during the program together, or on their own after the program.

Script: *Let us gather back as a full group. We will now complete a short advocacy activity (or you can have them do it on their own after the program) and (or) continue the discernment process we started with the Ignatian Ecological Examen.*

1) Advocacy Activity (5 MINUTES)

If you are doing the advocacy activity as a group, have a few laptops available for people to sign the email to Congress and President Biden asking that the United States show global leadership on climate action during the coming COP 26 meeting in Glasgow in early November. Have the laptops open to this webpage:

<https://catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/catholicclimateactionfosf>

Script: *Catholic Climate Covenant invites you to send this **Climate Action message** to your Members of Congress and President Biden. Your message will be delivered immediately to Members of Congress and President Biden (as an email or fax.) Your message will be counted as part of the total number of individuals signing the climate action **petition**.*

Script: *Take action right now by going to this link:*
<https://catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/catholicclimateactionfosf>

You will be appealing for strong, bipartisan climate action to your Members of Congress and President Biden. You can also access the advocacy action on your smartphones with the QR code.



Want to do more? You can seek institutional signatures from you pastor, bishop, or another Catholic institutional leader! The Covenant will deliver the related [Catholic institutional letter](#) by late October to Members of Congress and President Biden. This could be part of your LSAP goal work!

2) Laudato Si' Action Platform Discernment Process (30 MINUTES)

As the facilitator you can moderate this discussion or delegate another person. This “discernment process” is the **first step** in deciding if and how your community will respond to His Holiness’ call to join him in the 7-year sustainability and eco-conversion journey. If your community has already decided to participate in LSAP, use the time to talk about possible future actions and activities. As the facilitator, take a look at the links below so you may be able to explain them to the group. You may wish to have a laptop available to show the various links to the group.

Script: *Pope Francis invites us to join him in a seven-year journey to sustainability and “eco-conversion.” To assist us in the journey, the Vatican has created the Laudato Si’ Action Platform (LSAP) to bring Laudato Si’ to life in our communities. Pope Francis called it “a seven-year journey that will see our communities committed in different ways to becoming totally sustainable, in the spirit of integral ecology.”*

Let us read the following information (you may choose to ask for volunteer readers) and as a full group begin the discernment process of how we, as a (family, parish, diocese, school, religious community, etc.) might engage with the Laudato Si’ Action Platform.



What is the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (LSAP)?

The LSAP is a Vatican website that offers:

- *Laudato Si'* Plans, which your institution, community, or family can use to discern and implement your response to *Laudato Si'*. (Coming in October 2021)
- Guidance on actions that help build a better future through the *Laudato Si'* Goals
- Recognition of your progress
- Resources and guidance on ways to take action, including metrics and recognition of achievements.
- Ways to connect directly with other participants with inspiring stories of people who are taking action.

What is GodsPlanet.us website?

To further assist you, Catholic Climate Covenant and its partners have created a United States Catholic community centered campaign, Godsplanet.us where you can find U.S. focused resources, stories, an events calendar, advocacy opportunities, a small grants program, and campaign communication resources to help your U.S. Catholic community or family engage with the LSAP.

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform identifies Seven Sectors within the global Catholic Church, you can participate in the LSAP in one (or a couple) of sectors:

- Family (or individual)
- Parish and diocese
- Educational Institutions
- Healthcare Institutions
- Organizations and groups
- Economic Entities
- Religious Orders



Script: *Which sector best describes our community?*

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform identifies Seven Goals

Script: *Let us read this section which describes the seven goals of the LSAP*

The **LSAP includes seven goals**, each with possible actions you can take to achieve each goal. Look at the following chart of the LSAP 7 goals and **possible** actions (these actions are examples and not the only ones you can undertake!) The LSAP (after it's fully launched on October 4th, 2021) will have a longer list of actions and accompanying resources for your use.

1. Response to the Cry of the Earth

- greater use of clean renewable energy and reducing fossil fuels in order to achieve carbon neutrality
- promoting carbon footprint reduction efforts
- encouraging efforts to protect and promote biodiversity
- guaranteeing access to clean water/air for all
- reflecting with the *Ecological Examen* or another spiritual guide

2) Response to the Cry of the Poor

- defending human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as people of color, communities living in poverty, indigenous communities, immigrant communities, or children at risk through slavery



3) Ecological Economics

- promoting ethical investments, sustainable production, fair trade, and ethical consumption
- divesting from fossil fuels and any economic activity harmful to the planet and the people
- reinvesting in renewable energy
- Check if [Catholic Energies](#) can assist your community go solar and/or be more energy efficient

4) Adoption of Simple Lifestyles

- moderation in the use of resources and energy
- avoidance of single-use plastic
- adoption of a more plant-based diet and reduced meat consumption
- reducing food waste
- greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation
- Joining the [Ignatian Solidarity Network](#) mini challenges or the Sisters of Mercy Meatless Mondays challenges

5) Ecological Education

- re-thinking and re-designing educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirit of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action
- promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education
- Reading a book by a favorite eco-theologian
- Organizing a *Laudato Si'* study

6) Ecological Spirituality

- recovering a religious vision of God's creation
- encouraging greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude
- promoting creation-centered liturgical celebrations
- developing ecological catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation

7) Community Involvement and Participatory Action

- promoting advocacy campaigns such as the Climate Action [Catholic Institutional Letter](#) and [Individual Petition](#) that are part of this program's advocacy activity.
- encouraging rootedness in local territory and neighborhood ecosystems

Script: *Let us brainstorm the types of activities listed above that we could do as we begin (or continue) our eco-conversion and sustainability journey.*

Which of the **LSAP goals*** that are listed above would you like to tackle as a family or as a parish, diocese, educational institution, or religious community (or any other of the 7 sectors)?

***NOTE:** The LSAP website will (as of October 4th) have sample [Laudato Si'](#) plans and resources to help your community. Check [Godsplanet.us](#) for examples of how other Catholics in the United States are embarking on the LSAP 7-year journey. You need only pledge your commitment to embark in the seven-year sustainability journey at the moment at the LSAP website [here](#). Later, come back to the LSAP and delve into the action plans and different footsteps you can take under each goal, with resources to help you on your journey. And you will find U.S.-based resources, inspiration and networks to help you on the journey on the website [Godsplanet.us](#).



REGISTER YOUR COMMITMENT!

Script: *Are we ready to pledge our commitment to enter into a 7-year sustainability journey? If we aren't ready, can we commit to gather again to continue this discussion?*

Are you, your family/community ready to respond to His Holiness' call to embark on a 7-year eco-conversion and sustainability journey? Pledge your commitment to enter into this seven-year journey on the LSAP website by completing this [registration form](#) to pledge your and/or your community's commitment to develop your *Laudato Si'* Plan. You can register and pledge as any of the seven sectors listed above.

TAKE ACTION!

Script: *How will you/we organize to take action?*

- **Consider forming a "Creation Care Team"** and register it with Catholic Climate Covenant. Creation Care Teams (in parishes, dioceses, educational institutions, religious communities) are the best way to organize and inspire your community to take action on care for creation and care for the poor!
- **Already have a Creation Care Team?** You are several steps ahead of others in your eco-conversion journey! The actions your team has already accomplished can count toward your community's LSAP journey's metrics.
- Remember to check Catholic Climate Covenant's [resources](#) and [programs](#) for information and assistance in your care for creation efforts, and [share your creation care stories and actions here on Godsplanet.us](#)

CONCLUSION AND CLOSING PRAYER

Script: *Thank you for participating in the 2021 Feast of St. Francis program. Today we took an important step in discerning our journey to eco-conversion and living Laudato Si'. Let us continue praying for God's guidance as we live in more sustainable and just ways.*

Closing Prayer (2 MINUTES)

Script: *Please join me in prayer:*

Facilitator reads the part marked "L" and participants join for "ALL".

*L: Creator God, source of all life,
We praise and thank you for the many gifts of this day.
For the blessing of your presence*

ALL:

- In each star in the sky and every flower in the field;
- In each creature who roams our common home and every grain of wheat that nourishes;
- In each drop of water which sustains us and every person who loves and cares for us.

L: God of mercy and compassion, forgive us for the times that we fail to recognize your presence among us.

ALL:

- Forgive us our blindness to the daily miracle of creation
- Forgive us our deafness to the cries of Earth and those made poor by our greed
- Forgive us our hardness of heart that separates us one from another



*L: God of abundance, we pray, give us the grace to know that we are ONE in you.
Give us the grace*

ALL:

- To welcome your creatures abandoned and forgotten
- To care for our common home; and
- To live in right relationship
with you, our God,
with neighbors near and far, and
with all of your wondrous creation.

Give us the grace to become your beloved community.

L: Gracious God, we ask this through the power of your Great and Holy Spirit whose breath gives life to the world.

All: Amen

~Ann Scholz, SSND (used with permission)

**Thank you for participating in the 2021 Feast of St. Francis Program
For more information visit: CatholicClimateCovenant.org**

ADDENDUM

Here are the website links mentioned in the program that you may wish to visit after the program:

- Catholic Climate Covenant: catholicclimatecovenant.org
- Vatican's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform: laudatosiactionplatform.org
- Godsplanet.us: godsplanet.us
- For more information on the Ignatian Ecological Examen: ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/2017/10/04/ignatian-ecological-examen and ecoexamen.org.
- Catholic Energies: catholicenergies.org

