



# Earth Day Guide 2016

## Earth Day Program Outline:

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- » Video and discussion
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This Earth Day guide will help you plan a one-hour celebration at your parish or school. You can pick the time/date for your celebration. As always, please feel free to contact us at [programs@catholicclimatecovenant.org](mailto:programs@catholicclimatecovenant.org) to discuss your program or if we can answer any questions.

Thank you for helping care for Creation and our vulnerable sisters and brothers.

## Introduction:

April 22, 2016 marks the 46th anniversary of [Earth Day](#), a secular celebration that many faith communities have incorporated into their annual calendars. This year, we join with the Earth Day Network to celebrate "[Trees for the Earth](#)."

## Why trees?

1. Trees help lessen the impact of climate change. They absorb carbon dioxide from our atmosphere. In fact, an acre of mature trees absorbs annually the same amount of carbon dioxide produced by driving the average car 26,000 miles.
2. Trees help us breathe clean air. Trees absorb pollutant gases (nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide and ozone) and filter particulates out of the air by trapping them on their leaves and bark.
3. Trees help communities. Trees help communities achieve long-term economic and environmental sustainability and provide food, energy and income. This is especially beneficial for poor communities overseas.

## Opening Prayer: A Prayer for Our Earth (from *Laudato Si'*)

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.

## Scripture Reading #1: Genesis 1:12

The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

## Scripture Reading #2: Matthew 13:18-23

Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.

## Scripture discussion:

After the scripture readings discuss how both readings speak to the issue of "Trees for the Earth". God calls us to protect what he has called "good". Are we being good sowers? Are we caretakers of Creation?



## Video and discussion:

We have put together three separate short videos ([link](#)) for your Earth Day program. The program can be done at a time of your choosing close to Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please watch each segment, pause, and then use the discussion questions to spur conversation and dialogue.

For the video part of the program you will need a computer and projector, and WiFi. If your location does not have Wi-Fi you may need to download the video from YouTube using [this free downloader](#). After each segment you will pause for the discussion questions.



A. This segment will help you ground the discussion about why trees are important. In “Why Trees” you will learn the basics about why trees are important to human well-being, and how they relate to climate change.

Discussion questions:

1. What did you learn about trees and carbon sequestration that you didn't know before? How and why are trees important? How can we make an impact on climate change by focusing on trees?
2. How do trees help us reduce the impact of climate change and help us with energy efficiency?
3. How are trees crucial to human life and community well being?
4. What does our faith say about caring for Creation and how does this imperative lead us to planting trees?

B. This segment will introduce Laudato Si', our response to the encyclical and caring for Creation as part of our faith responsibility. “St. Bernadette's Primary Celebrates National Tree Day” is about Catholic school children planting trees in a garden.

Discussion questions:

1. How does our faith call us to act to protect Creation?
2. How does the encyclical Laudato Si' affect your commitment to Creation care? Has Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si', impacted the way you think about the environment? How?

3. How can/has your parish or school fully respond(ed) to the call for Creation care in Laudato Si'?

C. This segment takes our discussion to the global scale. It introduces the concepts of how climate change and deforestation impact the world's most vulnerable populations. “Women of TIST” video is about Kenyan women planting trees in order to alleviate the problems caused by deforestation and climate change.

Discussion questions:

1. Discuss how tree planting helps the environment, families, and keeping the community alive.
2. How have these women achieved so much with so few resources?
3. If these women can take such great actions to protect Creation with so few resources, how can we do our own part in our own lives?
4. How does tree planting answer the Pope Francis' call to “care for our common home”?



## Activity:

Choose from any of the ideas below. Be sure to incorporate at least one of the hands-on activities that can be accomplished within your Earth Day celebration time.

1. Plant a tree (or trees) on your church or school grounds, or in your community.

For information about how to plant trees in your community contact your local parks department or check the information provided by a) [National Wildlife Federation](#), b) [National Tree Day](#), c) [Arbor Day](#).

The tree planting could be accompanied by a blessing from your pastor.

2. If tree planting in your community is not possible you may wish to consider donating to our partner [Catholic Relief Services](#). Your donation will help mothers in Guatemala plant fruit trees to improve their soil, create more food for their families, and provide additional income. *Simply indicate Climate Capable 1550 738 0224 in the Special Request line.* You can also donate to [TIST - the International Small Group and Tree Planting Program](#). This is the group featured in the Earth Day video. We are excited to partner with them to “grow clean air.”
3. Give away a packet of seeds or a tree seedling to parishioners to plant at home.

4. Include the bulletin insert and prayer during Mass on a Sunday near Earth Day.
5. If your pastor wishes to also include an Earth Day / Creation care message during a homily, time could be given after Mass for everyone to fill out a small index card saying what action they will take to be better caretakers of God’s Creation. The index cards could either be taken home as a reminder of their commitment or put in the offering basket and blessed at the altar.
6. If your parish or school has an active [Creation Care Team](#), Earth Day might be the perfect time to give them a blessing. If you don’t have a Creation Care Team, offer a blessing to various other people, like the grounds keepers, the recyclers, the facilities managers, etc. who help make the parish or school more “green.”
7. For youth groups: Invite them to write and pray the prayers of petition focused on their greatest Earth concerns. Young children could draw pictures of trees and they could be displayed in the back of church or taped to the ends of the pews.
8. Visuals: If you wish to incorporate visuals into either during your Earth Day celebration or during Mass, you could include a statue of St. Francis; a globe or big picture of the Earth; the elements of earth, air, water, and fire; a banner; a display of sacred objects from the Earth brought by parishioners; or a mobile of Earth objects.
9. Art: If you have artists in your parish or school, you may wish to incorporate liturgical dance, the display of original Earth artwork or photographs, a special choir piece or solo relating to the glory of God’s creation, or a nature story/testimonial used somewhere in the liturgy (if you are having a special “Earth Day” Mass, or in your Earth Day celebration).
10. Advocacy: Set up a table for people to folks to sign a [petition](#) or write a letter to a member of Congress related to a Creation care issue.



## Closing Prayer:

### Pledge of Commitment ([from USCCB](#))

#### To Protect and Heal God's Creation

This Pledge of Commitment may be read in unison or in alternation:

We have come to renew our covenant with God and with one another in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We have come to help protect God's creation.

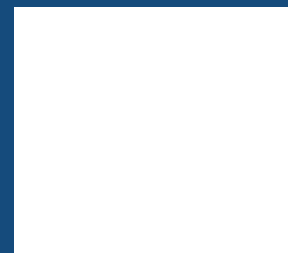
We have come as followers of Jesus to commit ourselves anew to one another and to heal injustice and poverty.

We have come to stand together against all threats to life.

We have come to discover some new beauty every day in God's creation: the sunrise and sunset, birds, flowers and trees, rainbows in the sky, the stars, the many forms of life in the forest.

We have come to listen to the "music of the universe"- water flowing over rocks, the wind, trees bending in the wind, raindrops pattering the roof.

We will remember always that God speaks to us through the beauty of his creation, and we will try our best to answer God's call to reverence all that he has created.



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## Earth Day 2016: Trees for the Earth

"There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions . . . 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."(Laudato Si' 211)

Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si' calls us to protect the Earth, our common home. Earth Day is an opportunity to respond to the pope's call. This year's special Earth Day theme is "Trees for the Earth."

### Why trees?

1. Trees support life in us and in countless other creatures.
2. Trees help stop climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the air and storing it in their bodies.
3. Trees prevent soil erosion, clean our water, and add grace and beauty to our homes and communities.
4. Trees help communities achieve long-term economic and environmental sustainability, especially in the poorest communities around the world.

### Everyone Can Plant a Tree & Help Fight Climate Change

Anyone can plant trees. Planting a tree will help reduce carbon dioxide, a main contributor to climate change. Planting a tree at your home or parish or supporting others' tree-planting efforts makes a difference.

For more information on how to care for God's Creation go to [www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org](http://www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org).



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A prayer for our Earth, from Laudato Si'

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## Día de la Tierra 2016: Árboles Para la Tierra

“Es muy noble asumir el deber de cuidar la creación con pequeñas acciones cotidianas . . . tratar con cuidado a los demás seres vivos, utilizar transporte público o compartir un mismo vehículo entre varias personas, plantar árboles, apagar las luces innecesarias. Todo esto es parte de una generosa y digna creatividad, que muestra lo mejor del ser humano.”  
Laudato Si’ No. 211

En la ‘Encíclica Laudato Si’, el Papa Francisco nos llama a proteger la Tierra, nuestro hogar común. El “Día de la Tierra” es una oportunidad para responder a la llamada del Papa. El tema especial para este Día de la Tierra es “Árboles para la Tierra.”

### ¿Por qué los árboles?

1. Los árboles mantienen la vida en nosotros y en todas las criaturas.
2. Los árboles ayudan a detener el cambio climático mediante la eliminación de dióxido de carbono del aire y lo almacenan en sus cuerpos.
3. Los árboles impiden la prevención de la erosión del suelo, limpian nuestra agua, y añaden gracia y belleza a nuestros hogares y comunidades.
4. Los árboles ayudan a comunidades lograr alcanzar la sostenibilidad económica y ambiental a largo plazo, especialmente en las comunidades más pobres del mundo.

Nosotros podemos plantar un árbol y a combatir el cambio climático

Cualquiera puede plantar árboles. Plantar un árbol ayudará a reducir el dióxido de carbono, el principal contribuyente al cambio climático. Plantar un árbol en su casa o parroquia o apoyar los esfuerzos de plantación de árboles hará una gran diferencia.

Para obtener más información sobre cómo cuidar la Creación de Dios vay a [www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org](http://www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org).



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## Oración por nuestra tierra

Dios omnipotente, que estás presente en todo el universo y en la más pequeña de tus criaturas, Tú, que rodeas con tu ternura todo lo que existe, derrama en nosotros la fuerza de tu amor para que cuidemos la vida y la belleza. Inúndanos de paz, para que vivamos como hermanos y hermanas sin dañar a nadie. Dios de los pobres, ayúdanos a rescatar a los abandonados y olvidados de esta tierra que tanto valen a tus ojos. Sana nuestras vidas, para que seamos protectores del mundo y no depredadores, para que sembremos hermosura y no contaminación y destrucción. Toca los corazones de los que buscan sólo beneficios a costa de los pobres y de la tierra. Enseñanos a descubrir el valor de cada cosa, a contemplar admirados, a reconocer que estamos profundamente unidos con todas las criaturas en nuestro camino hacia tu luz infinita. Gracias porque estás con nosotros todos los días. Alíéntanos, por favor, en nuestra lucha por la justicia, el amor y la paz.



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