

All Creation Gives God Praise

Protecting Biodiversity in a Time of Climate Crisis



Catholic Climate Covenantsm
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

Earth Day 2019

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Introduction

Thank You!

Your work as an event host is critically important. You are raising awareness of our need to care for Earth and help people take real action. You are making a difference! On behalf of creation and vulnerable peoples throughout the world, we thank you!

If you have questions about this program, please contact info@catholicclimatecovenant.org.

Catholic Climate Covenant's 2019 Earth Day program calls upon us to live more faithfully and act more justly with all creation. This year, we focus on the issue of protecting biodiversity and saving endangered species.

This program guide contains everything you need to host an event. This program may be used by a parish, school, youth group, university, religious community, or other group that is interested in exploring how we as Catholics can live up to the Catechism's call to "respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment." At a time when we are witnessing the demise of more and more species, how can we ensure the ability of all creation to remain a vibrant chorus of praise to the Creator?

Earth Day

April 22, 2019 marks the 49th anniversary of Earth Day, a secular celebration that many faith communities have incorporated into their annual calendars for awareness and action. Catholic Climate Covenant is joining with the Earth Day Network in its campaign to Protect Our Species, (<https://www.earthday.org/campaigns/endangered-species/earthday2019/>)

Human activity (climate change, deforestation, habitat loss, trafficking and poaching, unsustainable agriculture, pollution and pesticides) is directly linked to the rapid reduction of plant and wildlife populations throughout our common home. We are the main drivers of species loss, but can also be the main protectors of all of God's creation.

In this hour-long program, your community will delve into the scriptural and ethical dimensions of our call to be stewards of all of God's creation, examine the importance of biodiversity and species loss, and discuss how we, as Catholics, must respond.

Your Responsibilities

As the event facilitator, you have a few responsibilities to make sure the event runs smoothly, but feel free to share responsibilities with others in your community! This is YOUR program. If you feel that you would like to adapt it to your particular needs, audience, or other factors, please do so. As a facilitator, it is your job to:

- **Set a date and time:** First, we note: While the Covenant has produced these materials around a particular date (Earth Day, April 22), we are fully cognizant that this year, Earth Day falls on Easter Monday and it may be difficult to host an Earth Day program at that time. Therefore, you should feel free to celebrate Earth Day at any time during the Easter Season, or at a time that is convenient for your parish, school, or religious community. The program is designed to last one hour.
- **Find a location:** Ask your pastor, parish council, or school principal whether you can use the church building as your event location. If that space is not available, you might try your local library, recreation center, or civic center. Make sure the location has Internet access and enough chairs for everyone.
- **Invite people:** Make sure your parish or other organization knows about the event. Ask your parish administrator or office staff to advertise it via newsletter or bulletin.
- **Keep the event on schedule:** Suggested times are included in each section. Set an alarm on your phone or watch to ensure that the group's time is respected.
- **Choose the group activity:** You know your community and know how best what activity suits them best.
- **Choose volunteers** to read the various readings.
- **Ensure you have all the materials needed** (see below).

What You Will Need:

- Internet service: The event includes a short [video](#) which can be downloaded. It can also be watched directly on [YouTube](#) if you have Internet access at the event location.
- Computer and projector: You'll need a computer and a projector to show the video. Generally, computer speakers alone are not loud enough so you should bring a portable speaker to amplify the sound that accompanies the video.
- If you are doing the prayer/pledge activity, you will need pens/pencils, cut-out leaves, and a large cut-out tree (instructions below)
- If you are signing the Catholic Climate Declaration as individuals, you will need this [downloadable form](#) or this [link](#) to the website. If your institution wishes to sign the Catholic Climate Declaration please go to [here](#) for more information.

- If you are starting a Creation Care Team, you will need this [Handout](#).
- Copies of the Participant Program Guide.

Welcome and Prayer (5 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Leader: Creator God, we pray for our brothers and sisters of the air: chickadees, cardinals, blue jays, owls, crows, seagulls...

All: Give us a sign through them to decrease the pollution in the air we breathe.
Creator God, let us pray.

L: Creator God, we pray for our brothers and sisters of water: shellfish, algae, salmon, trout, frogs...

All: Wake our compassion at the sight of their wounds so that we cease polluting the water.
Creator God, let us pray.

L: Creator God, we pray for our brothers and sisters of the earth: squirrels, deer, maples, the pine trees, the tomato plants and the worms...

All: May their humility and simplicity inspire us to live according to your will.
Creator God, let us pray.

L: Creator God, we pray for the world's leaders and policymakers, for mayors, governors, and presidents of companies.

All: May they hear the call from God through other creatures and make sustainable, wise decisions.
Creator God, let us pray.

L: Creator God, we pray for our community.

All: We ask you give us the courage to act regarding our environment and not to succumb to the temptation of wasting.

Creator God, let us pray.

—Adapted from Prayer by the Green Church Project, Montréal, Canada

READINGS (7 minutes)

(Ask for volunteers to read each of the following)

Reading #1

"The world is facing a mass extinction of species. All species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods (insects and arachnids), fish, crustaceans, corals and other cnidarians, and

plants have declined, in many cases, severely. Human civilization has had a negative impact on most living things. We are amidst the largest period of species extinction in the last 60 million years. Normally, between one and five species will go extinct annually. However, scientists estimate that we are now losing species at 1,000 to 10,000 times the normal rate, with multiple extinctions daily. Habitat destruction, exploitation, and climate change are driving the loss of half of the world's wild animal population."

— *Earth Day Network Global Species Decline Factsheet*

Reading #2

"It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. **Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.**"

— *Laudato Si' 33*

Reading #3

"Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection. For each one of the works of the "six days" it is said: "And God saw that it was good." "By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws." Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church 339*

Reading #4

"The ecological age fosters the deep awareness of the sacred presence within each reality of the universe. There is an awe and reverence due to the seas and the continents; to all living forms of trees and flowers; to the myriad expressions of life in the sea; to the animals of the forests and the birds of the air. **To wantonly destroy a living species is to silence forever a divine voice.**"

— *Thomas Berry, The Dream of the Earth*

Reading #5

...creation ...is almost like another sacred book whose letters are represented by the multitude of creatures present in the universe."

— *Pope John Paul II, General Audience Jan 30 2002*

Reading #6

“To follow Jesus is to be a wholemaker, essentially to love the world into new being and life.”

— Sr. Ilia Delio, *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness*

Video (13 minutes)

<https://youtu.be/1CED8o7mKI>

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

In small groups of 5-7 people discuss the following:

- 1) Which reading or video segment most impacted you? Why?
- 2) What are some religious-ethical responsibilities for protecting biodiversity and endangered species?
- 3) How should we respond to the silencing of divine voices of thousands of species that no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us?
- 4) Sr. Ilia Delio tells us that “To follow Jesus is to be a wholemaker, essentially to love the world into new being and life.” Do you see your ministry of creation care as part of making the world whole, and bringing the world to new being and new life? How is protecting biodiversity a way to follow Christ?

Group Activity (10 minutes)

You will need to prepare for the following activity and choose which of the additional activities your group will undertake.

Before the Program:

Cut out leaf shapes on paper for everybody to use during the program there are enough pencils/pens for everyone, and blu-tack or similar to attach them. Free printable templates for leaf shapes can be found at: https://www.firstpalette.com/tool_box/printables/leaves.html

If you want to make a large cardboard tree, you could project the simple outline from the link below onto a large sheet of cardboard, and then color it in using paint: <https://www.firstpalette.com/printable/tree.html>)

During the program:

- 1) Hand everyone a leaf-shaped piece of paper with pens/pencils.
- 2) While a [hymn](#) is being played/sung, invite people to prayerfully write one-word or one-sentence prayers for creation (they could be 'thank you', 'sorry' or 'please' type prayers) or a pledge for creation ("To protect God's creation I will...." on their leaves and bring them up to stick on the front.
- 3) You could have a large cardboard tree outline at the front, and encourage people to stick their prayers on the tree or the leaves can be stuck on a wall or poster board.
- 4) Inform them that if they wish to submit their name and contact information to receive information on how to protect God's creation, they should write their name, address, and email on the back of the leaves. Mail the leaves to: Catholic Climate Covenant, 415 Michigan Avenue, N.E., Suite 260, Washington, D.C. 20017. Or have a computer open to our [webpage](#) and encourage participants to join us as a supporter.

Other activity ideas:

- 5) If your parish, school, or religious community hasn't signed the [Catholic Climate Declaration](#) they can do so [here](#). If you wish to sign the Declaration as individuals go here or they can sign using this [downloadable form](#). Please mail the form to Catholic Climate Covenant, 415 Michigan Avenue, N.E., Suite 260, Washington, D.C. 20017
- 6) Start a Creation Care Team! Learn more [here](#). (See this [Handout](#))
- 7) **A Suggested extension activity:** If your group wishes to plan a **longer-term activity** to promote biodiversity, we suggest this activity from the [Saint Kateri Conservation Center](#), the [Saint Kateri Habitat Program](#). The program aims to inspire and support Catholics to restore backyards, gardens, farms, parks, forests, meadows, rivers, and wetlands to healthy habitats for people and wildlife.

Your group can create Saint Kateri Habitats that provide at least two of the following six elements:

- Food, water, cover, and space for wildlife, including habitat for pollinators (e.g., bees) and other terrestrial and aquatic organisms
- Native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers, such as milkweeds and goldenrods for monarch butterflies
- Food, water, cover, and space for people, including vegetable gardens, flower gardens, community-supported gardens, indoor gardens, and farms
- Ecosystem services, such as pollination, clean air and water, carbon storage for climate regulation, and religious faith arising from interactions with the "Book of Nature"
- Clean energy and sustainable practices of gardening, landscaping, and farming

- Sacred spaces for worship, prayer, and contemplation, including Mary gardens, prayer gardens, and rosary gardens. Any kind of garden, natural area, farm, or green space can be a sacred space and treated as such.

NOTE: At least one Catholic religious expression is required, which may include crosses, way-side shrines, grottos, stations of the cross, Saint Kateri Habitat signs, or statues of Mary, and angel, or a saint, such as Saint Francis of Assisi. To learn more and to register your Saint Kateri Habitat go to: <https://www.kateri.org/saint-kateri-habitat-2/>

Thank you and Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Closing Prayer

Lord of all Creation, Maker of Heaven and Earth, Good Provider,

Today we come before you in grief, in shame, to lament the loss of beautiful creatures.

We grieve the more than one-in-four flowering plants, the one-in-five mammals, the nearly one-in-three amphibians, and the one-in-eight birds that are vulnerable to being wiped out completely.

We acknowledge that we play a part in this dying by our carelessness, ignorance, and indifference. Forgive us our part in the death of healthy ecosystems and the resulting extinction of your creatures.

Refresh our love for all you have made. Renew our resolve to advocate, fight, nurture and defend our fellow creatures. Thank you for those who care for the earth - the gardeners, the activists, the scientists, the zoologists - sustain them and protect their hearts as they strive and grieve.

We thank you for the magnificent world which you have bestowed upon us. We thank you that you can do more than all we ask or imagine and so we ask for your help - restrain human evil, energize us for service, fill us with courage and hope.

May your world ever be very very good.

Amen

—Prayer from [Common Grace](#)

Thank you for participating in this Earth Day program! This program is a beginning. We hope you and your community will continue to work with us to protect all of God's creation.

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(Read silently before starting the program)

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Group Activity (10–15 minutes)

Follow your group leader's guidance.

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