



PARTICIPANT GUIDE

simple living

**God's Vision of
Abundant Life**

2023 EARTH DAY PROGRAM



simple living: God's Vision of Abundant Life

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Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 MINUTES)

OPENING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

(Read In unison)

Vision of Wholeness

God of grace,
creator of a world of plenty,
the heavens declare your glory
and the earth your generosity.
In love, you created us
and in your likeness you made us
to be partners in creation.
In greed, we have turned away
and have marred your image in us
to fashion a fragmented world.

Renew in us your vision of wholeness,
that the rich may restore wealth to the poor
and the poor share blessings with the rich.
Revive in us a passion for justice,
that the tyranny of profit be quelled
and whispers of freedom find voice.
Refresh in us our sense of calling,
that we may follow Christ in serving others
and live simply with those who simply live.

Amen.

~By [Annabel Shilson-Thomas/CAFOD](#) (Used with permission)



Readings (10 MINUTES)

READING #1

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:3-12).

A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

READING #2:

Towards a new lifestyle, passages from *Laudato Si'*

A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products. They prove successful in changing the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production. When social pressure affects their earnings, businesses clearly have to find ways to produce differently. This shows us the great need for a sense of social responsibility on the part of consumers. "Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act." Today, in a word, "the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle." (#206) ... We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other. Unless we do this, other creatures will not be recognized for their true worth; we are unconcerned about caring for things for the sake of others; we fail to set limits on ourselves in order to avoid the suffering of others or the deterioration of our surroundings. Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment. These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society. (#208)

READING #3

"The Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. Actions could include reducing waste and recycling, adopting sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, active mobility (walking, cycling), and avoiding single use items (e.g., plastic, etc.)." ([Laudato Si' Action Platform's Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles Goal](#))

READING #4

These are some responses to a survey conducted by *Salt Magazine*:

"The biggest incentive for living a simpler lifestyle is...

- Live simply so others may simply live
- To contribute to the equality of people by not using more than one's fair share of the earth's resources
- Because of the poor
- Simplifying gives life meaning and value
- Simplifying makes one feel less rushed
- Simplifying allows one to live as Jesus lived
- Becoming less "thing"-centered frees people to focus on relationships
- Learning to put others first; learning to prioritize - learning to become less selfish
- Helping the environment
- Contributing to your own health by gaining a longer and better life."

~ [Simple Living Leads to Spiritual Growth A Catholic Volunteer Network Archives Resource](#)



Video (11 MINUTES)

You can watch directly on [YouTube](#) or [download](#) the video to your computer.

Small Group Discussion (15 MINUTES)

(Follow your facilitator's instructions)

- 1) How has the secular understanding of "abundant living" (i.e., accumulation of wealth, abundant material possessions, consumerism, throwaway society) impacted our common home and our relationship with God?
- 2) What is a faithful understanding of "God's vision of abundant living"?
- 3) How would your life and the life of your community change if you/your community adopted a simpler lifestyle and promoted a faithful vision of abundant living on Earth?
- 4) What is your biggest incentive for living a simpler lifestyle? What is your biggest obstacle?

Suggested Actions (20 MINUTES)

(Follow your facilitator's instructions. The following worksheet will help you and decide how you and your family and our larger community can take some concrete actions to live more simply and sustainably. The worksheet includes directions on how to pick at least one small and one bigger action for both you/your family and for your community.)

Creating a Living Simply Action Plan

Below are some ideas* to get you and your community started on living simply. This is not an exhaustive list, and you are encouraged to add your own ideas. Remember, you can start small and build upon your efforts.

In the **Worksheet below**, there are two columns after each suggested action to choose from: one for individual/family action and one for community (parish, school, etc.) action.

Pick at least one small action step and one bigger action step for you /your family and for your community. Some of the suggested actions are more individual/family actions and some are more appropriate for a community.

- 1) **Your individual/family actions:** From the list **choose at least one activity from the small steps section and one activity from the bigger steps section that you/your family can commit to do** in the coming months (or write-in your own). **Write your commitment at the end of the worksheet.**
- 2) **Community action discussion:** Which actions on the list did you choose for the possible "community action"? As a group, **discuss at least one simple living action your parish, school, or religious community could commit to do** in the coming months. How could you and your community get these done? **Write your proposed action at the end of the worksheet.**



Abundant Living Worksheet*

A list with living simply, sustainably, and in solidarity as an individual, a family, and community ideas:

Small Steps

	Individual/ Family	Community
Know your carbon footprint and take steps to reduce it. You can calculate your carbon footprint with this free carbon footprint calculator from the EPA or this Lifestyle Calculator from the United Nations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have at least one meat-free day every week. (To help you, check out resources from the Sisters of Mercy and from Meatless Mondays .)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commit to reduce pesticides/herbicides on your lawns and try planting more native trees and plants .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commit to buy nothing "new to you" (repurpose, borrow, thrift, use neighborhood "Buy Nothing" groups, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Challenge yourself, your family, and your community to walk, cycle, or use public transportation everywhere you can to benefit your mind, body, and soul.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make your family and community meetings and events planet-friendly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose Fairtrade tea, coffee, chocolate and use real dinnerware. • Do the cleaning and washing up with environmentally friendly products. • Reduce the amount of paper you print for mass, for events and for meetings. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce your use of energy in your facilities and at home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use LED light bulbs and turn them off when they're not needed. • Adjust your thermostat (68 or lower in the winter and 78 or higher in the summer). • Turn off electronics when not in use. • Encourage people to walk to mass and meetings or to carpool (display bus or train information in the parish). • Check you are recycling and composting as efficiently as possible. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Challenge yourself to a personal, family, or group 'unplugged' day – everyone can pledge to live without their tablets, phone, TV, or radio. Instead head outside, visit a park, enjoy each other's company and God's creation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make time for silence and prayer in your day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your ideas: _____

*For online version (with access to links) of the Abundant Living Worksheet go [here](#).



Bigger Steps

	Individual/ Family	Community
Conduct an energy audit of your home , parish , school , etc. Check with your local utility about getting an energy audit done for your home or church facilities. Depending on what you discover you could reduce your carbon footprint by insulating buildings, increasing insulation, installing ground source heat pumps and/or solar panels. For more information on solar and energy efficiency programs check www.CatholicEnergies.org .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check that your energy (at home and parish/school) is from a renewable source. If it isn't, take steps to switch to renewable source .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Switch to low-flow faucets and toilets.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turn your lawns into meadows ! Set aside part of your parish or community grounds for a wildlife garden or community vegetable garden , complete with insect hotels, bat boxes and bird houses. Start a gardening club with a seed, sapling, or harvest swap. (Check the St. Kateri Conservation Center for ideas)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support your local Catholic Charities. They can help you become a collection point for a foodbank, or a support service for the homeless. Find out how they are supporting refugees in the area and how you as a parish/community can help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commit to buy nothing (except essentials such as groceries, medicines) for a month or a year. This could be your clothes, furniture, household electronics, etc. This is a step up from "buy nothing new to you".	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Switch to an ethical bank (at home and in the parish or community) that doesn't invest in fossil fuel projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set aside time to read and reflect on Laudato Si' as a family, parish, or community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Form an action group at church. We are all strengthened when we act together as a community: consider forming a Creation Care Team .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Join the Encounter Campaign to advocate for just energy and climate policies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enroll in the Laudato Si' Action Platform as an individual/family or as a community (parish, school, etc.) NOTE: www.GodsPlanet.us is a website created to accompany the U.S. Catholic Community as it embarks on this seven-year sustainability journey and where you will find lots of resources and information. By completing this worksheet, you have created the action plan for the Simple Lifestyles goal of the Platform!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your ideas: _____



Your Simple Living Commitments

After you have read and discussed the above list, what will you and your community commit to do? Write your commitments of how you will live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with God’s creation and how your community might live more simply and sustainably. Take the worksheet home and let it help you get started in your journey to a simpler and more “abundant life”. You can access the online version of the worksheet [here](#) or scan the QR code



Individual/family commitment: _____

Possible* community (parish, school, religious order, etc.) commitment: _____

*We understand that you may need to have further discussions and planning meetings to decide on your community commitment(s).

Want to share your commitments?

You are invited to submit your “Simple Living Commitments” both as individuals/families and as a community [click here](#) or scan the QR code.

We would love to know of your commitments and share the ideas and actions as possible stories on www.GodsPlanet.us. You can also take a photo of your group gathered or in action and email it to us with your commitment(s) with the words “Simple Living Commitments” in the subject line to info@catholicclimatecovenant.org, and we can share the photo(s) on social media.





Closing

CLOSING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

(In unison)

Creator God,

As we feast our eyes on autumn reds and yellows,
we sense your creative power.

As we marvel at the uniqueness of each winter flake,
we rejoice that you know us each by name.

As we hear the songs of birds of spring,
we yearn to sing your praises.

As we breathe the delicious scents of summer flowers,
our souls rest in your love.

Forgiving God,

We have not lived out our responsibility to be
faithful stewards of creation.

For this, we seek your pardon.

Our over-consumption has impacted the poorest
members of our human family most of all.

For this, we ask your mercy.

Our actions have endangered both the lives of our
children today as well as those yet to be born.

For this, we seek your forgiveness.

Living God,

As we meet you in nature,
inspire us to see anew our place in the web of life.

In our daily lives,
help us to make daily choices that reflect global solidarity.

As we reflect on the teaching of our faith,
equip us to advocate for laws and policies that
reflect your call to faithful stewardship.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

(From USCCB handout for [World Day of Peace 2010](#))

*Some of these ideas come from CAFOD's [LiveSimply campaign](#).

*For many of these actions, we provide you with links for more information.

You can go to the online version to access all the links [here](#) or scan the QR code



For more information: info@Catholicclimatecovenant.org