



FACILITATOR GUIDE

simple living

God's Vision of Abundant Life

2023 EARTH DAY PROGRAM



Introduction for Facilitator

“Thank You” for stepping up and agreeing to lead this Earth Day program! As an event host/facilitator for the 2023 Earth Day program, your efforts are extremely important to help build a movement of Catholics who care for Our Common Home.

PROGRAM DETAILS

This program guide contains everything you need to host/lead an Earth Day event.

In this hour-long program, your community will have an opportunity to pray, learn, discuss, and discern how to take concrete actions, as individuals and as a group, to live simply and yet more abundantly.

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 engage with the “Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles” goal of the [Vatican’s Laudato Si’ Action Platform](#).

The program is designed as an in-person event. However, we also provide you with some guidance in case you wish to have an online/virtual event.

WHAT IS EARTH DAY?

Earth Day is a secular celebration that many faith communities have incorporated into their annual calendars for awareness and action. Friday, April 22, 2023, marks the 53rd anniversary of Earth Day. This year, the secular Earth Day organization is continuing the theme of “[Investing in Our Planet](#)”. Catholic Climate Covenant’s 2023 Earth Day program is designed to activate the U.S. Catholic community to complementary concrete action against overconsumption, materialism, and the throwaway culture.

The Covenant’s program can also be used during *Laudato Si’* week (May 21-May 28, 2023) or anytime throughout the year and beyond that fits your community’s schedule.

List Your Event: You are invited to list your Earth Day [events](#) on EarthDay.org’s events site. We encourage you to do so and let the world know that the U.S. Catholic community is taking action on climate. You may also wish to [list your event](#) in the “[We Are All Part of God’s Plan\(et\)](#)” campaign website [www.GodsPlanet.us](#).

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

PLANNING FOR YOUR EVENT

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 group’s particular needs, please do so. As a facilitator, it is your job to:

Set a date and time

Though designed to commemorate the 53rd anniversary of Earth Day (Saturday, April 22nd,) please feel free to schedule the program at a time that is convenient for your parish, school, or religious community. The program is designed to last approximately one hour, but feel free to schedule extra time if you’d like to give participants more flexibility and time for discussion.

Find a location

If you are planning an in-person event, you will need to find a location. Ask the appropriate authority (your pastor, parish council, or school principal) whether you can use the facility 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 is accessible to all, has internet access, and enough chairs for everyone.

If you are planning an online meeting, you will need access to a Zoom-type system. You can also send the individual program link to people in your community so that they can participate in the program on their own at home, helping to increase actions. You may also consider meeting online after your in-person event to discuss how your community can start working on the suggested community simple living actions your group highlighted during the event.



Invite people

Make sure your parish or other organization knows about the event and publicize as far in advance and as often as you can. Ask your parish administrator or office staff to advertise it via a newsletter or bulletin. You can also send out emails, evites, Facebook messages, posts on other social media, make fliers and calls, etc.

Keep the event on schedule

Suggested lengths of time for each section of the program are included. Feel free to extend (or shorten) the program to fit your community's needs. Set an alarm on your phone or watch to ensure that the group's time is respected.

Prepare materials for the group activity:

1. Make copies of the Participant Program. If in person, you will need to have sufficient printed copies of the participant program, as well as paper and pens/pencils.
2. If the program is virtual/online, make sure you send the participants a copy of the [Participant Program](#) via email prior to the event.
3. 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.
4. Computer and projector: If your event is in person, you'll need a computer, video cords 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.
5. If you decide to use the program virtually (in an online platform), you will need access to a Zoom (or other platform) account.
6. Choose four volunteers to help with the various readings.
7. You are invited to submit your community's "Simple Living Commitments" (both as individuals and as a community [here](#).) 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 at info@catholicclimatecovenant.org along with your commitment(s) and we can share on social media.





simple living: God's Vision of Abundant Life

LET'S GET STARTED | 2023 PROGRAM GUIDE

A reminder: This is the Facilitator version of the program guide (with facilitator notes and script). Your facilitator instructions are in **GREEN**, and the *Script* (what you will read) is in italics.

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 MINUTES)

Script: *Welcome to the 2023 Earth Day Program. Today we will be commemorating the 53rd anniversary of Earth Day (and/or) the 8th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home.*

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)

(Have up to four volunteers ready to read each of the readings)

Script: *In the next few minutes, we will read several passages to ground ourselves in the concepts of abundant living and simple and sustainable lifestyles.*

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)

(Small groups should be about 3-5 people. If meeting virtually, we suggest using breakout rooms. Each group should discuss the questions 1-4.)

Script: *In groups of 3-5 people discuss the following questions. You will have 15 minutes for discussion. Please ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.*

- 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)

(You can have the small groups stay together or come back as a larger group for the discussion of possible community actions. You may wish to read aloud each of the instructions in the worksheet to keep the group(s) on task. If meeting virtually, you may choose to be in breakout rooms or work as one larger group.)

Script: *For this section you will have 20 minutes to look over the worksheet 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

Script: *Thank you for being part of this important Earth Day 2023 program. I hope you leave here today with a commitment to live the abundant life that God has gifted you. I'd like to thank everyone for coming and being such wonderful participants in this program.*

We will now close with a short prayer. Please join me in prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

(Facilitator reads bold, everyone joins and reads in unison the prayer. If meeting virtually, please ask everyone to mute so that they may read the prayer without causing audio issues.)

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,

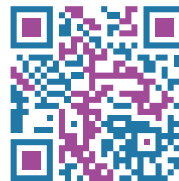
As we meet you in nature,
inspire us to see anew our place in the web of life.
In our daily lives,
help us to make daily choices that reflect global solidarity.
As we reflect on the teaching of our faith,
equip us to advocate for laws and policies that
reflect your call to faithful stewardship.
We ask 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



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

For more information: info@Catholicclimatecovenant.org