



# The Way of Francis:

## Seeking Peace & Justice for All Creation

2023 FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS  
PARTICIPANT PROGRAM GUIDE

# Feast of St. Francis Program

## 2023 FACILITATOR PROGRAM GUIDE

**Gathering/Centering Music:** [Let Justice Descend](#), by Kathleen Noone Deignan, CND Founding Director Deignan Institute for Earth and Spirit, Iona University

Let justice descend, you heavens, like dew from above,  
like gentle rain let the clouds drop it down.  
Let the earth open and salvation bud forth;  
let righteousness spring up with them!  
I, the LORD, have created this.

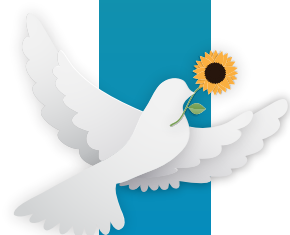
~Isaiah 45-8

### Opening Prayer (1 MINUTE)

**Saint Francis's Prayer in Praise of God, Given to Brother Leo**

**In Unison:**

You are holy, Lord, the only God, and Your deeds are wonderful.  
You are strong.  
You are great.  
You are the Most High.  
You are Almighty.  
You, Holy Father are King of heaven and earth.  
You are Three and One, Lord God, all Good.  
You are Good, all Good, supreme Good, Lord God, living and true.  
You are love.  
You are wisdom.  
You are humility.  
You are endurance.  
You are rest.  
You are peace.  
You are joy and gladness.  
You are justice and moderation.  
You are all our riches, and You suffice for us.  
You are beauty.  
You are gentleness.  
You are our protector.  
You are our guardian and defender.  
You are our courage.  
You are our haven and our hope.  
You are our faith, our great consolation.  
You are our eternal life, Great and Wonderful Lord, God Almighty, Merciful Savior.  
Amen.



## Readings (10 MINUTES)

### Reading #1

“LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail”. We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air, and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.” (*Laudato Si’* #1-2)

### Reading #2

“Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of “environmental refugees”, people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it – and often their possessions as well – in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources?...Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all. May this be clear to world leaders and to those at every level who are concerned for the future of humanity: the protection of creation and peacemaking are profoundly linked! For this reason, I invite all believers to raise a fervent prayer to God, the all-powerful Creator and the Father of mercies, so that all men and women may take to heart the urgent appeal: If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. ~*Message of His Holiness Benedict VI* for the celebration of The World Day of Peace, January 1, 2010

### Reading #3

“Humanity is waging war on nature...The fallout of the assault on our planet is impeding our efforts to eliminate poverty and imperiling food security. And it is making our work for peace even more difficult, as the disruptions drive instability, displacement, and conflict...It is no coincidence that seventy per cent of the most climate vulnerable countries are also among the most politically and economically fragile. It is not happenstance that of the 15 countries most susceptible to climate risks, eight host a United Nations peacekeeping or special political mission. As always, the impacts fall most heavily on the world’s most vulnerable people. Those who have done the least to cause the problem are suffering the most. Even in the developed world, the marginalized are the first victims of disasters and the last to recover...Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere.”

~António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, address at Columbia University: “*The State of the Planet*”, Dec. 2, 2022



## Reading #4

“Nonviolence is not the same as pacifism. It is a spirituality, a way of life, an ethic that is potentially universal, and a proven, often-effective approach to preventing or interrupting violence, to protecting vulnerable people and the planet, to promoting just peace... I believe that nonviolence is essential to the logic, the paradigm toward which humanity has to shift if we and the beautiful planet that we call home are going to survive.

~Marie Dennis, Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, Pax Christi International March 24, 2023,  
[Notre Dame Lecture Nonviolence: Central to Catholic Teaching on Peace](#)

**Script:** *We will now watch a short video to center ourselves in the life of St. Francis, focus on the call for non-violence to creation, and reflect on one of Laudato Si's beautiful prayers.*

## Video (10 MINUTES)

Watch on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/fosf23video>

## Small Group Discussion (25 MINUTES)

**In groups of 3-5 people, discuss the following questions. You may wish to take notes of main points during your discussion.**

- 1) In the video we hear about the life of St. Francis and his devotion to peace and justice. What do you think St. Francis would do/say if he was living in the 21st century? How does Pope Francis invite us to follow St. Francis when it comes to responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor? What does he mean when he speaks of “the violence in our hearts...reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life”?
- 2) In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis states, “This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her”.  
  
What are some examples (locally, regionally, nationally, or globally) of the Earth crying out because of the harm we have done to her?
- 3) How do the quotes from Pope Francis and Pope Benedict demonstrate that peace and justice for creation are profoundly linked?
- 4) UN Secretary General Guterres asserts that “making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century”? How can you participate in shifting the current paradigm of violence and injustice toward “preventing or interrupting violence, to protecting vulnerable people and the planet, to promoting just peace... if we and the beautiful planet that we call home are going to survive”?



## Activities (30 MINUTES)

### a) I am Cheo

As you watch this video, pay close attention to Cheo's words describing who he is, the locations he identifies with, and his vision of what is happening to his world. You may wish to take special note of Cheo's words. You will return to your small groups after watching the video to discuss and write your own "I Am..." poem. You will use the template below to help you write your poem.

**I am Cheo** (Hispanic Access Foundation): <https://bit.ly/lamCheoYT> (8 MINUTES)

### "I Am..." Poem Template

The poem "I Am Cheo" is a recitation of a sense of place and purpose, of community relationships, and a call to action. You are invited to create your own "I Am..." poem. In groups of 3-5, discuss each of the prompts (get ideas from each other!) and then fill out this poem template individually to create your own "I am..." poem. (15 MINUTES)

I am (first name) \_\_\_\_\_

I am the land of (add your connection to land/place(s)) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(add description of these places)

\_\_\_\_\_

Near (add names and qualities of special natural place(s) in your life with a short description of special natural place(s))

\_\_\_\_\_

I am (describe your family/community relationships; who you are in the world: I am a parent/uncle/friend/colleague/parish member etc.; name people who are important to you)

\_\_\_\_\_



I am (add something from creation that you connect with; a plant, tree, mountain, river and be sure to add a descriptive phrase to it)

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And my roots are (where/what in creation are you rooted to or you feel connected to? Add a descriptive phrase!)

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But I see things that are not well: (List and describe things that are happening on Earth that you connect with...pollution, war, poverty, loss of biodiversity, wildfires? Things that are disappearing?)

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So, what can I do?

I can (list actions you can take to seek justice and peace for all of creation)

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I am (describe yourself as a person responding to the call to be seekers of non-violence and instruments of peace and justice)

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I am (first name) \_\_\_\_\_

Congratulations! You have created your own "I Am..." poem to help you connect to your unique sense of place, community relationships, and purpose!

Consider sharing your poem with us! Send us the poem and/or record yourself reciting your poem. Email it to [info@catholicclimatecovenant.org](mailto:info@catholicclimatecovenant.org). We may share it on social media!



## b) Advocacy Activity (10 Minutes)

### Letter sign-on

Take action by joining with others and sign the letter asking President Biden, Secretary Yellen and Special Envoy John Kerry, a key climate negotiator for the United States, to stand up for ALL of creation and the most vulnerable by including discussions on climate finance in the COP 28 agenda.

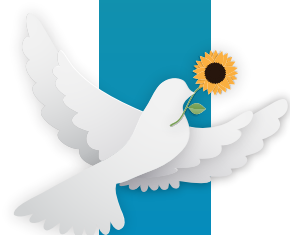
**Take Action:** Add your name to the sign-on letter asking President Biden, Secretary Yellen, and Special Envoy John Kerry, a key climate negotiator for the United States, asking **that the United States place sovereign debt forgiveness and restructuring on the agenda of COP28** to be held in Dubai this November and December. Right now, unlike years past, the issue is not on the table! **The topic of climate finance and international debt relief must be included on the COP 28 agenda.**

You can access the advocacy action and letter using this link: [bit.ly/BidenKerryLetter](https://bit.ly/BidenKerryLetter), using the QR code (or follow your facilitator's instructions).

**Background:** Our world continues to be hit by more frequent climate catastrophes and we are witnessing the gravity of the human and economic costs of climate change. Yet developing nations are being forced to choose between a) funding climate adaptation or b) paying off their debt (a combined \$440 billion); and, they are choosing the latter.

The holding of debt is an injustice that allows wealthy nations to exert control of many countries in the developing world. Just as St. Francis lived out care for creation and care for the most vulnerable, we are called to do the same.

Take a stand for justice and peace for ALL of creation by calling upon President Biden, Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, and Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry to include the topic of climate finance and international debt relief on the agenda during COP 28.



## Closing Commitment Prayer (5 MINUTES)

(Adapted from the **Message of the Holy Father Francis for the celebration of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, May 25, 2023**)

**ALL:** “Let justice flow on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:24)

**Leader:** Creator God, you want justice to flow forth wherever it is needed. You want us to strive to be just in every situation, to live according to your laws and enable life to flourish.

**All:** For only then can justice and peace flow like a never-failing stream of pure water, nourishing humanity and all creatures.

**Leader:** Immersed in your creation, we also sense the maternal heartbeat of the earth. In order to grow as people, we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life.

**All:** Creator God, help us dwell on your heartbeat, the heartbeat of all humanity, and the heartbeat of creation. Today they do not beat in harmony; they are not harmonized in justice and peace. Too many of our brothers and sisters are prevented from drinking from that mighty river.

**Leader:** You call us to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation.

**All:** The effects of this war can be seen in the many rivers that are drying up. Consumerist greed, fueled by selfish hearts, is disrupting the planet’s water cycle. The unrestrained burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests are pushing temperatures higher and leading to massive droughts. Alarming water shortages increasingly affect both small rural communities and large cities. Predatory industries are depleting and polluting our freshwater sources through extreme practices such as fracking for oil and gas extraction, unchecked mega-mining projects, and intensive animal farming. “Sister Water”, in the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, is pillaged and turned into “a commodity subject to the laws of the market”.

**Leader:** We can, and we must prevent the worst from happening by coming together like so many streams, brooks, and rivulets, merging finally in a mighty river to irrigate the life of our marvelous planet and our human family for generations to come.

**All:**

- **We commit** to join hands and *take bold steps* to “Let Justice and Peace Flow” throughout our world, and to heal our common home so that it can once again teem with life.
- **We commit** to join the mighty river by transforming our *hearts* so as to renew our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from you, our Creator.
- **We commit** to add to the flow of this mighty river by transforming our *lifestyles* and repenting of our “ecological sins”.
- **We commit** to adopt lifestyles marked by *less waste* and unnecessary consumption, especially where the processes of production are toxic and unsustainable.
- **We commit** to cooperate in your ongoing creation through *positive choices*: using resources with moderation and a joyful sobriety and making greater use of available products and services that are environmentally and socially responsible.
- **We commit** to transform the *public policies* that govern our societies and shape the lives of young people today and tomorrow so that the mighty river may continue flowing.





- **We commit** to *raise our voices* to halt this *injustice* towards the poor and towards our children, who will bear the worst effects of climate change.

**Leader:** As followers of Christ on our shared synodal journey, we will live, work, and pray that our common home will teem with life once again.

**All:** May the Holy Spirit once more hover over the waters and guide our efforts to “renew the face of the earth”.

**Leader:** Go in peace, serving Christ and loving God’s creation!

**All:** We go in peace, serving Christ and tending God’s creation!

**Leader:** You are invited to share Christ’s peace with one another as you leave.



*Together for our Common Home*

For more information: [CatholicClimateCovenant.org](https://CatholicClimateCovenant.org)  
and [info@catholicclimatecovenant.org](mailto:info@catholicclimatecovenant.org)

