

Laudato Si' for youth leaders

A session to explore Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Ideal for young people aged 11+. Activities can be used separately or together to make a whole session. If you are planning on using all the activities, allow an hour and a half. *Laudato Si'* is part of Catholic Social Teaching. Check [CST in three minutes](#) to find out more.

Key outcomes of the session:

- To know what *Laudato Si'* is and how it fits into the teachings of the Catholic Church
- To understand the links to stewardship and the call to love our neighbour
- To be able to put the call from Pope Francis into practical action

Activity one [10 minutes]



Watch [CAFOD's *Laudato Si'* animation](#). Discuss the following:

- *What is an encyclical?*
- *What is being asked of us?*
- *Why is Pope Francis writing about this matter?*
- *Is the Church saying anything new?*
- *What has the environment got to do with people and religion?*

Notes: *Laudato Si'* is the name of Pope Francis' latest letter, or encyclical. The phrase means "praise be to you" and the title is taken from a canticle (or hymn) written by St Francis of Assisi. St Francis, whose name the Pope chose when he was installed as Pope, is the patron saint of the environment. Encyclicals offer Catholics guidance from the Pope concerning issues which affect the lives and beliefs of Catholics. They often address new technologies or modern issues which aren't directly addressed in the bible. The Pope is guided to write these by Catholic teachings, the bible and the Holy Spirit. He will also seek the advice of those who are expert in the relevant field.

In this particular letter, the Pope is not just writing to Catholics, but to everyone who lives on Earth because it is our common home.

Activity two [10-15 minutes]

You will need:

- Paper
- Pens/pencils

Share the following quote from *Laudato Si'*:

"The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves." *Laudato Si'*, 84

Give the young people time to sit alone reflect on the quote. As part of this, ask them to think about a place that feels familiar to them and/or they enjoy spending time:

- *What makes this place special?*
- *How do I feel when I'm there?*

If time allows, use the attached reflection sheet or you may wish them just to focus on the two questions above. Ask the young people to share some of their reflection. Now ask them to think about how they would feel if that place no longer existed and what impact this would have.

Notes: Pope Francis' invites to everyone to look after the earth and all of its people. When we damage our earth, as well as damaging the environment, we also cause great damage to other people. Humans are a part of the environment too and those who pay the greatest price are people who already live in poverty. Christians believe that God created the whole earth, so it is special. Creation shows God's power and great love for all life.

Activity three [30-40 minutes]

You will need: Any resources that you might have in the room (pens, paper, teabags, bins, posters, chairs etc.). They will represent wealth and resources. At the end of the task, ask the young people to restore everything to its rightful place. If the room is particularly bare then you may wish to leave some paper clips, biro's or other bits of stationary around for the young people to collect.

1. Divide the young people into groups and then give them one minute to collect as many 'resources' as possible. Only one person from each team can be collecting at once but everyone in the group should have a chance to do this task and fine any group that doesn't follow this rule by taking away resources. The objects collected represent all the Earth's wealth and resources. When they have completed this task, as the young people to think of a name for their country.
2. After, you may choose to then tell the young people that object X is water, object Y is diamonds, etc. Also, emphasise the point that we cannot make more, there is only a finite amount of resources. Ask them to consider their current position and the following questions:
 - *Are you happy with your resources?*
 - *Which country would you choose to be in and why?*
 - *What might the impact of this be on the community the person/group represents of the amount of resources that they have?*
3. Ask all the young people to work together and make sure that everyone has as much as the wealthiest in the game at this moment. Discuss:
 - *Is it possible?*
 - *What are the challenges in doing this?*
 - *Are our Earth's resources disposable? Can we get more when we run out?*
4. Finally, instruct the young people to work together to make sure everyone in the game has an equal amount. After, ask the young people to discuss in their groups:
 - *Who is this most difficult for?*
 - *Is it fair that everyone has an equal amount? Is it just?*
 - *Do you think that this consequences of everyone having the same is having effect on the attitudes of those who are living in wealthier countries or living extravagant lifestyles?*

Note: This is supposed to be challenging and with no set rules! Use any difficulties the young people face to start a discussion about the practicalities of sharing the world's resources with all people.

Notes: In the encyclical, Pope Francis quotes Saint John Paul II: "...human beings frequently see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption."

Debrief:

- **What does it mean to consume?** *You may wish to ask the young people how many mobile phones they have had or how often new phones come out. How does this link to the game?*
- **What does disposable mean?** *Do we need something new just because it is 'new'?*
- **What are the effects of wanting more and more?** *Mobile phones require precious metals which are becoming scarce.*
- **Why do we want more?** *What drives this need within us? Why did you want more during the game?*
- **What would happen if everyone in the world (over 7 billion people!) all wanted more and more?** *Can the world sustain everything everyone wants?*

Activity four: All in! [15 minutes]

You will need:

- Blank footprints to decorate
- Coloured pens and pencils
- Quotes from *Laudato Si'* attached to this document

Ask each young person to take one or two blank footprints. Ask them to write/draw on their footprint two or three pieces of information about what they have learnt/reflected on about the following:

- The steps they are going to take to tackle climate change
- The steps others could take on this issue
- How climate change can impact people worldwide
- Statistics from the [climate change infographic](#)
- Quotes from *Laudato Si'* (below)

Notes: Explain that in *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says "young people demand change". They are leading the way to changes in the world encouraging others to follow in their footsteps.

Prayer and reflection

Divide up the whole group into 5 smaller groups. Give each group a section of the prayer and give them five minutes to practice praying it aloud together. The young people can lead the prayer. You may wish to place the footprints the group has created or have objects related to the natural world as a focus during the prayer.

A prayer for our Earth

All powerful God, you are present in the 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 your 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. Amen.

This prayer was published in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

QUOTES FROM LAUDATO SI'

"The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change."

"Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded."

"Besides, we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor."

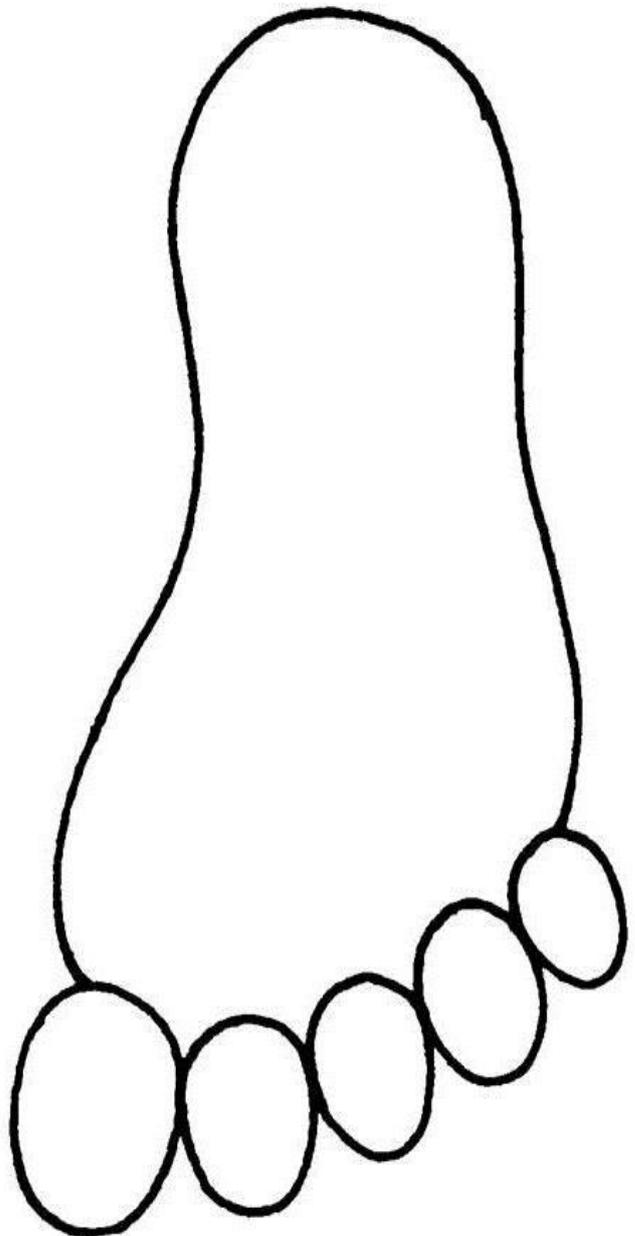
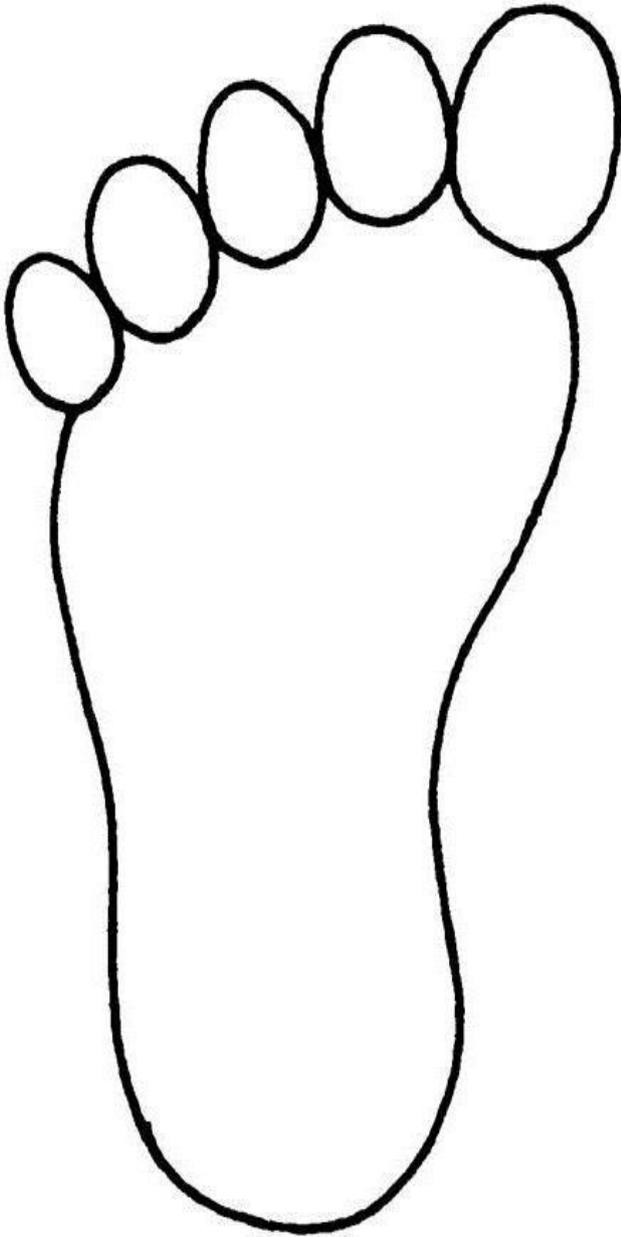
"We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference."

"Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices."

"If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith."

"So what they all need is an "ecological conversion", whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience."

"In practice we continue to tolerate that some consider themselves more human than others, as if they had been born with greater rights."



Where is the place?

Why is it special to you?

What can you see?

"The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves." Laudato Si', 84

What can you smell?

What colours can you see?

What are you doing there?

What emotions are you experiencing?