



# Monday: The Beauty of Our Common Home

## Keywords

**Stewardship Environment Responsibility Solidarity  
Biodiversity Gospel Values**

### Introduction

This lesson plan provides:

- Three video-based discussions
- Two reflective exercises
- One extension exercise
- One prayer and reflection
- One activity

Each of the above aims to facilitate dialogue about our common home.

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Play the video below, made by various artists in advance of the Paris Conference on Climate Change (COP21) for Friends of the Earth.

**Watch:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSnOXbaXzfM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSnOXbaXzfM)

### Discussion

- Did any of the images, either spoken or visual, strike you in particular?
- What do you think the line 'Heaven's poetry to us' means?
- Do you think the main problems regarding the environment are caused by 'stress, speediness and too much greediness'?
- How appropriate is it to describe the earth as a mother?

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### Laudato Si'

In 2015, Pope Francis issued an encyclical called *Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home*. In it, the Pope criticises consumerism and irresponsible development, warns about climate change and environmental destruction, and calls all people of the world to take 'swift and unified global action'.

**Watch:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG-8fQ1-qN0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG-8fQ1-qN0)

### Discussion

- Make a list of the threats to our common home that are identified in the video. Share them with a partner, and then a small group. Write your list in your religion journal.
- Now, look at signs of hope. Where does the encyclical find hope?
- Do you think that young people can make a significant difference?

### Reflective Exercise

What difference have you made in your life to protect our common home? Write your answer in your religion journal.



In the encyclical Pope Francis also compared the earth to a mother. Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother River and Mother Earth. The name of the encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, comes from a song of praise written by St Francis of Assisi, and is said to have been written in late 1224.



Statue of St Francis of Assisi © Mazur/www.catholicnews.org.uk

**Watch:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpPSZkmr\\_Js](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpPSZkmr_Js)

### Discussion

- Why do you think St Francis speaks of Brother Sun and Sister Moon, of Brother Wind and Sister Water?
- What difference would it make if we treated the earth and all its creatures and elements as brothers and sisters?

In 2013, Pope Francis explained why he took his name:

Some people wanted to know why the Bishop of Rome wished to be called Francis. Some thought of Francis Xavier, Francis De Sales, and also Francis of Assisi. I will tell you the story. During the election, I was seated next to the Archbishop Emeritus of São Paulo and Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Clergy, Cardinal Cláudio Hummes: a good friend, a good friend! When things were looking dangerous, he encouraged me. And when the votes reached two thirds, there was the usual applause, because the Pope had been elected. And he gave me a hug and a kiss, and said: 'Don't forget the poor!' And those words came to me: the poor, the poor. Then, right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars, as the votes were still being counted, till the end. Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation; these days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we? He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man ... How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor! (Address of the Holy Father Pope Francis, Saturday, 16 March 2013)

- What three aspects of St Francis does Pope Francis mention?
- Pope Francis is the first pope to take the name Francis. Does that surprise you?

### Activity

Place signs reading 'I Agree' and 'I Disagree' on either side of the room. All students should stand in the centre of the room and the teacher will call out each of the below statements in turn. As the statements are read, move to the side ('I Agree' or 'I Disagree') that best represents your opinion on the statement. Discuss your reasons for each decision.

- The choices I make do not have a large impact on the earth.
- It is up to governments to care for the earth – it is not the responsibility of individuals.
- Science will solve the climate crisis.
- Religious people have a particular responsibility to care for the earth.

### Prayer and Reflection

Use either:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5-5UFd5OxQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5-5UFd5OxQ)

A slow-paced examination of conscience about the environment.

OR

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSDFiqs1Fpk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSDFiqs1Fpk)

A prayer for our earth from *Laudato Si'*.



### Extension Exercise

(Exercise adapted from Royal Society of Chemistry)

This exercise, 'Protecting the Earth: How Big is your Ecological Footprint?', can be done as homework if time is not available in class. The following questionnaire can be taken online at: [www.rsc.org/Education/Teachers/Resources/jesei/ecofoot/students.htm](http://www.rsc.org/Education/Teachers/Resources/jesei/ecofoot/students.htm)

## Protecting the Earth: How Big is your Ecological Footprint?

How many earths would we need if everyone on the planet had the same standard of living as you? Work through this questionnaire to find out how much land is needed to support your lifestyle – your 'ecological footprint'. Your ecological footprint is the area of land needed to support your lifestyle. If we need any more planets than just the one we have, then your lifestyle is not sustainable.

### How much water do you use?

- Do you have a bath every day? If yes, score 14.
- If you have a bath once or twice a week, score 2.
- Do you shower every day instead of having a bath? If so, score 4.
- If you only take a shower once a week, score 1.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

### What kind of food do you eat?

- Do you have meat with every meal? If yes, score 85.
- Do you eat a mix of animal protein and vegetarian dishes? If yes, score 50.
- Do you eat mostly vegetarian dishes? If yes, score 30.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

### How do you shop?

- When your family go shopping, do they buy mostly locally produced fresh vegetables, bread and meat from local butchers, greengrocers, farmers' market? If so, score 2.
- Or do they tend to buy more packaged, processed food? If so, score 15.
- Or do they buy a combination of imported, local, fresh and processed food? If so, score 5.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

### Where do you live?

- If you live in a small flat, score 7.
- If you live in a terraced house, score 15.
- If you live in a large flat, score 12.
- If you live in a semi-detached house, score 23.
- If you live in a detached house, score 33.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

Divide your score by the number of people who live in your home.

### Where do you go on holiday and how do you get there?

- If you flew as far as Australia last year, score 155.
- Or did you fly to Asia or North or South America? If so, score 85.
- Or did you just fly as far as Europe? If so, score 20.
- If you didn't fly anywhere, but travelled by road or rail in Ireland, score 10.

ENTER YOUR SCORE



### Heating your home

In this section start with 45 points since heating a house usually uses energy obtained by burning fossil fuels. This releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. To soak it up, trees will have to be planted, using up precious land. So, subtract points for each energy-saving thing you do.

- Does your family set the thermostat low, putting on a jumper before turning it up? If so, subtract 5 (from 45).
- Is your home well insulated? If it is, subtract another 15.
- If your home is double-glazed, subtract 5.
- Does your family only turn on the heating when absolutely necessary, rather than leaving it on the timer all year? If so, subtract 10.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

### How much electricity do you use?

For most people, the electricity they use comes from burning fossil fuels which releases carbon dioxide. So, start with 75 points and subtract points for every electricity-saving thing you do.

- Do you always switch off the lights if a room is no longer in use? If you do, subtract 10.
- Do you always switch off the TV, computers and other electrical equipment rather than leaving them on stand-by? If you do, subtract 10.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

### How do you get to school?

- Do you normally get a lift to school? If so, is it in a modern car with a small engine? If so, score 40.
- Or is it in a big 4x4? If so, score 75.
- Or is the car something in between these two? If it is, score 50.
- If you don't get a lift to school, do you travel by bus or train? If so, score 25.
- If you walk or cycle to school, score 3.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

### How much paper do you use?

- If you always buy books, instead of borrowing them, score 2.
- If you always borrow books, score 0.
- If you sometimes borrow and sometimes buy books, score 1.
- Do you always share your magazines and newspapers? If yes, add 5.
- Or do you throw them in the bin once they are finished with? If so, add 10.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

### How much rubbish do you throw away?

You can't help but create some waste, and what you throw away has to be disposed of in landfill sites, using up valuable land. So, start this section with a score of 100 points and subtract points for every waste-reducing thing you do.

- Have you or your family visited the bottle bank in the last month to throw away your empty glass bottles? If you have, subtract 15.
- Do you save your waste paper for recycling? If you do, subtract 17.
- Do you keep your used cans to recycle rather than just throwing them in the bin? If you do, subtract 10.
- Do you recycle empty plastic containers? If you do, subtract 8.
- Does your family keep kitchen and garden waste for composting? If they do, subtract 5.
- If you reduce the amount of waste you generate by buying less, mending and reusing old things, buying second-hand clothes, subtract 15.

ENTER YOUR SCORE



### Total score

Add up all of the above to make your total score here.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

### Grand total

Now, many of the amenities that we use every day, such as roads, shops, schools and leisure centres, make their own demands on land. So, to take this into account, double your score here.

ENTER YOUR SCORE

## How many hectares are needed to support your lifestyle?

Each point in your score represents one-hundredth of a hectare used. Work out how many hectares your lifestyle has an impact upon by dividing your grand total by 100. Now find out how many 'earths' we would need if everyone on the planet were to use the same amount of land (i.e. share the same standard of living) as you:

**2 hectares or less** Well done! If everyone lived like this, then human existence would be both sustainable and fair as there is enough land on the earth to support the whole population at this level of land use. At present, about two-thirds of the global population have an ecological footprint of less than 2 hectares each.

**2 – 4 hectares** Your footprint is below the European average! But, it is double the area that would be available if land were distributed evenly amongst the population of the earth. If everyone on the planet lived like you then we would need at least one extra planet to provide enough land to support us. About 15% of the world's population falls into this category.

**4 – 6 hectares** Your footprint is close to the European average. It is about three times the land area that would be available if all the land on earth were divided up fairly, so for everyone to live like you we'd need another two planets. About 7% of the world's population falls into this category.

**6 – 8 hectares** Your footprint is larger than the European average but still smaller than the average North American one. If everyone lived like you we'd need another three whole planets to support us because you are using up four times your share of the earth if it were divided up equally amongst the whole population.

**More than 8 hectares** Your footprint is close to that of the average North American. If everyone on the planet lived like this we would need at least four additional planets to support us because you are using up five times what your share of the earth would be if it were divided up equally amongst the whole population. About 5% of the world's population have a footprint this big.

### Reflective Exercise

- What can we do?
- What action could you take to make your own ecological footprint smaller? Make a list. If you can think of any actions that aren't included in the questionnaire, add them to your list as well.
- Which of these could you start tomorrow?
- Describe how these actions would reduce the impact your life has on the environment.
- Which changes are not possible in the immediate future, and why?
- Make a list of the actions your school could make to reduce its ecological footprint.
- Make a list of the actions the government could make to reduce its ecological footprint.





# Thursday: Protecting Our Common Home

## Keywords

**Grandeur Conservation Scenario Challenge Awakening Franciscan Sustainability Origin Green Firm Resolve**

## Introduction

This lesson plan provides:

- Two video-based discussions
- One poetry-based discussion
- Two reflective exercises
- One extension exercise
- Six activities

Each of the above aims to facilitate dialogue about our common home.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis describes our common home as 'like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us'. If we truly believe this, how can we do it so much harm? How can we not protect it?





**Activity**

Imagine that you could see the world through the eyes of the following. Describe your experience. You may need to use the internet to research these scenarios.

Scenario	Experience
A honeybee	
A migrant fleeing their home	
A person living in a polluted, overpopulated city who is suffering from lung disease	
A woman and child in Bangladesh who have been rescued from flooding	
An orphan in Haiti whose family have been killed in a hurricane	
A child living in an overpopulated neighbourhood with no access to green space	
An adolescent in their room unable to switch off their technological devices	
A person compulsively shopping online	



In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis calls us to 'contemplate with wonder, the universe in all its grandeur and beauty'. By doing this, we offer praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### Discussion

The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins has written a poem called 'God's Grandeur'. The poem begins with the line, 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God.' Read the poem and answer the accompanying questions.

#### God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

- What theme dominates the poem?
- Explain the term 'grandeur of God'.
- Describe the things man has done to the world?
- What will be the impact of this treatment on nature?
- According to the poet, what offers protection to the earth?
- Why do you think this poem is relevant to the message that Pope Francis is delivering in *Laudato Si'*?

### Reflective Exercise

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis presents us with a challenge to 'let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life' (Earth Charter, 2000, 4).

- How do we do this?
- And what are the benefits of protecting our common home?



**Watch:** <https://youtu.be/EtF-vDvJ6p0>

**Discussion**

Having watched the video, describe the ways in which these three actions are connected.

**Activity**

Create a poster or any form of artistic display that promotes how we can help protect our common home. The artistic display must use the phrase 'All you need is light, soil and water'.



**Reflective Exercise**

Consider the importance of education in the above video. Where does the sharing lead?

**Extension Exercise**

Saint Teresa writes, 'I am a little pencil in the hands of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world'. Imagine that you are that pencil in God's hands. What gifts and talents are unique to you that could bring about an ecological change in your school, your family, your community, your country and ultimately the world?

**Activity**

Pope Francis is the first pope to take the name 'Francis'. He took the name because of St Francis of Assisi.

- Research the life of St Francis of Assisi and explore the reasons why Pope Francis took his papal name from this saint.
- Explore the Franciscan Order. Read about the work that they do and consider the following question: would St Francis be proud of the work of the Franciscan Order in Ireland today? Give reasons for your answer.





### Faith, Hope and Love

Pope John Paul II gave the title 'Saint of Ecology' to St Francis in 1979. When writing the 'Way of Life' for the first Franciscan Order, St Francis wrote: 'The Rule and Life of the Friars Minor is this, namely, to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ' ([www.franciscans.ie/franciscan-way-of-life/](http://www.franciscans.ie/franciscan-way-of-life/)). He directed his followers to follow the Gospel values. St Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, having been inspired by the Gospel values, introduces us to the three theological virtues – Faith, Hope and Love. This is a good place to start when exploring motivating factors for making the world a better place.



#### Faith

In the sacrament of baptism we were given the gift of our faith and in the sacrament of confirmation, we are sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our faith can give us the strength and courage to overcome the obstacles in our lives – even a challenge as great as a global crisis.

#### Hope

The Gospel message is a Good News message. It is a message of hope that no matter what challenges life puts in our way God is with us. 'I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.' (Mt 28:20)

#### Love

Jesus said, 'And now these three things remain; faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love.' Love is at the heart of our common home. Therefore, love ought to be at the heart of protecting our common home. 'True love is love that causes us pain, that hurts yet brings us joy ... that is why we must pray to have the courage to love.' (Mother Teresa, 'No Greater Love')

### Faith, Hope and Love in Action

Faith, Hope and Love ought to inform the actions and behaviours of all Christians. An example of Faith, Hope and Love in action can be seen in the publication *Franciscans and Environmental Justice: Confronting Environmental Crisis and Social Injustice* (Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Rome, 2011). This document contains the Franciscan Mission in the area of Peace and Integrity of Creation. It examines the relationship between ecology and justice. It identifies four situations of ecological crises in which the Franciscans are working: (1) Indonesia: Mining Industry and the Dream of Prosperity; (2) The Enigma of Abundance and the Degradation of the Environment in Africa; (3) A Reflection on Amazonia and Environmental Justice; (4) New Orleans: We Have Not Here a Lasting City ([www.franciscans.ie](http://www.franciscans.ie)).

In the article entitled 'New Orleans: We Have Not Here a Lasting City', Rita M. Hickey OSC states that 'Our city must learn the lesson that the God-given balance of the environment and the dignity of all God's people must be respected and nurtured' (p. 18).



**Activity**

Imagine that you are working in New Orleans as a missionary. Write a letter to the people of New Orleans explaining the above statement. In your letter, outline:

- Your understanding of the earth as a gift from God and what we mean by the 'dignity of all God's people'.
- How your faith helps you to understand the relationship between our treatment of the earth and the effect this has on other people.
- Some steps that might help people to improve our ecological situation and show that they are guided by the three theological virtues: faith, hope and love.

At the end of this document, the Franciscan Order is given an instruction about where to start the discussion about the environmental crisis.

We can begin by discussing in our friaries and in our ministries the following questions:

- What are the principal environmental problems of our region? Who benefits from them?
- How do these problems affect the lives of the people in the region?
- What groups work to address these problems?
- How might we become involved in addressing problems of environmental justice in our region?

(Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Rome, 2011, p. 19)



**Activity**

Divide into groups of four. Identify an area in your locality, or an area of concern to you, that is experiencing environmental injustice. Using the Christian example of St Francis, answer the questions above in relation to the environmental issue you are concerned about. When addressing the last question, create an action plan detailing how you might take steps to protect our common home.



## An Irish Project

**Watch:** <https://youtu.be/FXUA95sBfik>

### Discussion

- Having watched the video, explain the phrase 'A bold promise to the world!'
- Had you heard about **Origin Green**?
- What do you know about it now?

Further information about **Origin Green** is found at: [www.origingreen.ie](http://www.origingreen.ie)

Read the list of bullet points that contain facts about **Origin Green**.

- Launched in 2012
- National sustainability programme
- The only sustainability programme in the world that operates at a national level
- Unites the Government, private sector and food producers
- Set and achieve measurable sustainability targets
- Reduce environmental impact
- Serve local communities
- Aim: that every farm and food manufacturing business throughout Ireland will be on the road to sustainable production by the end of 2016
- 2008 – Bord Bia begins initial research
- 2009 – Bord Bia receive carbon footprinting training
- 2010 – Assessment of the food and drink industry
- 2011 – Bord Bia's research is complete
- 2012 – Bord Bia pilot new sustainability charter
- 2013 – Bord Bia host inaugural Global Sustainability Conference
- 2014 – Over 360 food and drink manufacturers registered interest
- 2015 – Over 470 food and drink manufacturers registered interest & carbon footprinting being used in the areas of lamb, pigs and poultry

### Activity

- Create a timeline to represent the development made by Origin Green. Do not limit yourself to the information here. Refer to the website for a more detailed image of the developments made by Origin Green.
- Origin Green has 122 verified members. (You will find the list at [www.origingreen.ie](http://www.origingreen.ie))  
Explore the list of members and identify the following:
  1. The percentage of companies you know on the list
  2. The percentage of companies you use from the list

We are called to 'protect our common home'. We need to take responsibility for the work that needs to be done during this global ecological crisis. Let us strive to care, connect and share.

