

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME: INTRODUCING YOUNG PEOPLE TO LAUDATO SI'

helping youth encounter the world

Preparation

Purpose:

Participants will be introduced to the key concepts in *Laudato Si'*. Using the analogy of “home” they will explore our interconnectedness with each other and with the well-being of the earth, and will be challenged to be creative with coming up with ideas they can implement to make a real difference. The lesson concludes with inviting them to sign the Catholic Climate Covenant’s St. Francis Pledge.

Session at a Glance (sample schedule)

- 7:00 p.m. Focus Activity: *Human Knot*
- 7:20 p.m. Naming Experience: *Happy Home and Not-So-Happy Home*
- 7:35 p.m. Sharing the Faith Message: *Our Common Home*
- 7:55 p.m. Integrating the Faith Message: *Home Repairs*
- 8:10 p.m. Connecting the Faith Message: *Catholic Climate Covenant*
- 8:25 p.m. Closing Prayer
- 8:30 p.m. Good Night!

Materials Needed

- Laptop or tablet and projector or TV to show video clip
- Speakers for video and music sound
- Newsprint & markers
- Pens
- 1 piece of paper for each small group (of 7 or 8 participants)
- Video clip: Top 10 Things You Need to Know about Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si'* ([youtube.com/watch?v=a_lqFTYLc_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_lqFTYLc_4))
- Optional: Copy of the America Magazine article found at americamagazine.org/top-ten-takeaways-laudato-si
- 10 pieces of cardstock (or copy paper) to create 10 mini-posters. Write one of the following in each poster:
 - Spiritual perspective
 - Effects on the poor
 - Technocratic mindset
 - Authoritative teaching
 - Christian/Biblical roots
 - Everything is connected
 - Embrace of science
 - Selfishness and indifference
 - Global dialogue and solidarity
 - Ecological conversion

- If at all possible, request each participant to bring a mobile device (i.e. [cell phone, tablet, etc.](#)) that can access the internet to class
- Optional: If you do not have access to the internet in your meeting space, print the link to the Catholic Climate Covenant on cards to give to each participant so they can sign up at home ([catholicclimatecovenant.org](#))
- Copies of Closing Prayer: *We are Messengers of Ecological Vocation* (1 per participant)

Prepare in Advance

- Prior to the session contact participants and ask them to be sure to bring their cell phones, tablets or other mobile devices to class to access the internet.
- If you don't have access to internet in your meeting room, download the video clip onto your computer or a flash drive.
- Using the 10 pieces of cardstock or copy paper write one of the themes from Fr. James Martin's video clip or article on each piece of paper.
 - Spiritual perspective
 - Effects on the poor
 - Technocratic mindset
 - Authoritative teaching
 - Christian/Biblical roots
 - Everything is connected
 - Embrace of science
 - Selfishness and indifference
 - Global dialogue and solidarity
 - Ecological conversion
- Make copies of the Closing Prayer: *We are Messengers of Ecological Vocation* (1 per participant)
- Set up laptop and speaker to show video clip.

Process

Focus Activity: *Human Knot* (20 minutes)

1. Invite participants to gather in groups of seven or eight. Each group should stand and form a circle facing inward. Tell them they should extend their arms and grab a hand of two different people in the circle, but NOT the hand of the person standing on either side of them. This should result in a knot of hands and arms in the center of the circle.
2. Tell the groups they will have 15 minutes to unravel themselves without letting go of the hands they are holding. If they do it correctly, they will end up with a circle with everyone holding hands.

(Occasionally it may be necessary for someone to temporarily let go of a hand so that their arm is not twisted backwards, but they should immediately resume holding hands after they have turned. Sometimes when the unraveling is done some of the participants may be facing outward.)

3. Allow groups to work for the full fifteen minutes, or until all groups have successfully unraveled and created a complete circle. When time is up, tell groups to stop even if every group has not completed the task.



4. Process the activity by asking the groups how they were able to untangle (to whatever point they were able to do it). Ask the group for examples from their experience of how the actions of one person or persons affected them or the group. Point out how connected each person was to the rest of their group: as one person moved, all the other members were affected.

Naming Life Experience: *Happy Home and Not-So-Happy Home* (15 minutes)

1. Invite participants to remain in their same groups and be seated. Ask them to brainstorm a list of feelings and behaviors that describe a happy home. Give them five minutes to come up with a list.
2. Go around the room asking each group to name one of the items on their list that has not already been mentioned by another group. Write those items on the board or on a piece of newsprint.
3. Now ask the group to write another list, this time naming what a home is like when something serious goes wrong – like when someone is ill, is in trouble, or loses a job. What are the feelings and behaviors in the home? Give the groups five minutes to create the second list.
4. Repeat the sharing procedure, going around the room soliciting new ideas and writing them on the board or on a second piece of newsprint.
5. Remind your participants:

All homes have good and bad times. There are times when your home has experienced some of the things on the first list and times when your home has experienced some of the things on the second list. Just like our “Human Knot” activity we did at the beginning of this session, we all know that what affects one member of our home, affects everyone living in it. When someone is seriously ill, it affects everyone in the home. If someone is in trouble, everyone feels it. If someone loses a job or there are money problems, everyone ends up acting differently.

Every one of us would much rather be in a home that can be considered a “happy home” than in one that is in “trouble.”

Sharing the Faith Message: *Our Common Home* (20 minutes)

1. Pope Francis recently released an encyclical entitled *Laudato Si'* which is translated “Praise Be to You” and subtitled “On Care for Our Common Home.” It is about the home we share with the rest of humanity, our common home, the earth.
2. Point to the second list on the board or newsprint and tell participants that just like things are different in our homes when something is wrong, so too there are many signs that things are very wrong with our common home, the earth.



3. Say something like:

Many scientists tell us that the earth is in trouble. In many real ways, she is sick and she is rapidly losing resources. Just as your home reacts when things aren't right, so too the earth re-acts to those things that are troubling her. One of the most significant ways is through climate change.

In some ways climate change can be analogous to the "atmosphere" in your home when things have gone bad.

4. Read some of the feelings participants put on the second list. (Items like: [tension](#); [anger](#); [distancing self](#); [anxiety](#); [depression](#); etc.)
5. In the large group, invite participants to name some of the things that are happening to the earth now as a result of climate change. Write these items on the board or on newsprint.
6. The United States Environmental Protection Agency lists the following items as signs of climate change:
- High temperatures
 - Changing rain and snow patterns
 - More droughts
 - Warmer oceans
 - Rising sea level
 - Wilder weather
 - Increased ocean acidity
 - Shrinking sea ice
 - Melting glaciers
 - Less snowpack
 - Thawing permafrost

(Additional information on each of these effects can be found at the EPA website.)

7. Explain to participants that the Catholic Church has a long and rich history of authoritative teachings on social justice issues. With the release of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis has added concern about climate change and our common home to the list of teachings on contemporary moral issues.
8. Invite participants to view the video clip from Fr. James Martin, S.J. as he explains the top 10 messages of Pope Francis encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

(For a written summary of this video clip go to the *America* magazine article [Top Ten Takeaways from Laudato Si'](#) at americamagazine.org/top-ten-takeaways-laudato-si)

[Top 10 Things You Need to Know about Pope Francis' Laudato Si'](#) video clip can be found at: [youtube.com/watch?v=a_lqFTYLc_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_lqFTYLc_4))



Connecting the Faith Message: *Home Repairs* (15 minutes)

1. While participants are watching the video clip, post your 10 prepared mini-posters, one with each of the ten items from the video clip or article. When the clip is over divide the ten items among the participants so that each small group is working with one of the items. (For this activity, a “small group” can be as small as two people depending on the number of participants in the session.)
2. Challenge each small group to come up with one concrete idea that young people can do using their assigned theme as inspiration. Move around the room helping participants come up with ideas.
(For example: They can pray for the poor; they can recycle and buy things at thrift stores instead of always buying something new; they can learn about what science is saying about climate change; they can challenge their own parish to be more ecologically aware; they could sponsor a Fair Trade Fair, etc.)
3. Give the groups 10 minutes to work on ideas and then have all the groups share their idea with all the participants.

Integrating the Faith Message: *Catholic Climate Covenant* (15 minutes)

1. Invite participants to use their mobile devices to connect to the website for the Catholic Climate Covenant pledge. Explain the pledge is called the St. Francis Pledge after St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology. The pledge can be found at catholicclimatecovenant.org
(If your group has access to a computer, you can also do this online using the computer, but since most youth have access to either a cell phone or a tablet, asking them to use those devices to sign up in class will go rather quickly. If you do not have access to the internet in your meeting room, explain the Covenant, give them the link and tell them sign up at home.)
2. Explain that the St. Francis Pledge commits them to respond to the moral call for action on climate change. By pledging they commit to praying, acting, and advocating to solve climate change. Remind them that as Catholics we do have a moral obligation to do all three. Assure them that how they choose to fulfill those commitments is up to them.
3. When they go to the website there will be a place for them to register online. If they scroll down the page there are several suggestions for things they can do to make a difference.
(Remember to remind them of the things they came up with themselves.)
4. Tell them that as participants in the Covenant they will receive periodic updates on things they can do to make a difference. Be sure to tell them there is no cost for participating in the pledge.
5. Give each participant a chance to sign the pledge.



Closing Prayer: *We are Messengers of Ecological Vocation* (5 minutes)

1. Invite participants to prepare for prayer and distribute copies of the *Closing Prayer* handout.
2. Begin with the Sign of the Cross and guide the participants through the prayer.

(Additional CRS resources on climate change and *Laudato Si'* can be found at crs.org/climate-change)

About the Author:

This session was written by **Christina J. Semmel**, National Certified Youth Ministry Leader with over 35 years of parish ministry experience. Chris is currently a Bernardin Scholar in the DMin program at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois. She was the consultant on the Youth in Solidarity resources for the CRS Rice Bowl program in 2015 & 2016 and is an author for *Youth Ministry Access* (Center for Ministry Development). Chris also teaches *Evangelization & Catechesis* and *Practices of Youth Ministry* in CMD's National Certificate Program and she is the former Communications Officer for the National Association for Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders (NACYML) and serves on the Certification Commission.



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We Are Messengers of Ecological Vocation

- Right:** God of the sun and the moon,
Of the mountains, deserts and plains
- Left:** God of the mighty oceans, of rivers, lakes and streams,
- Right:** God of all creatures that live in sea and fly in the air
- Left:** Of every living thing that grows and moves on this sacred Earth.
- Right:** We are formed by Christ into Your People;
Called to bring the world into Your marvelous light.
- Left:** As the Body of Christ, we are messengers of ecological vocation.
- Right:** We are entrusted with caring for this Earth which You have created.
- Left:** Help us to love and respect it;
- Right:** To repair what we have damaged;
- Left:** To care for what You have made good and holy.
- Right:** Give us the wisdom and the passion to change our minds, our hearts and our ways.
- Left:** Let us be mustard seeds in our world;
- Right:** Bringing about ecological conversion which grows and spreads to every corner of the Earth;
- Left:** For our sake now and for every generation which is to come.
- All:** We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

Adapted from Catholic Earthcare Australia 2002
Found in *A Day of Prayer – A Faith Reflection for Climate Change*
5th of June 2009 – World Environment Day
Carmelite Coalition on Climate Change catholicsandclimatechange.org or carmelitengo.org