

# Laudato Si'

## CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

### Study guide

Includes:

- passages from the encyclical
- witnesses from around the world and UK parishes
- reflections
- discussion questions
- ideas for action
- prayers.





Inspired by  
Pope Francis'  
encyclical,  
*Laudato Si'*

## Introduction

*This study guide, brought to you by CAFOD and SCIAF, is inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*: Care for our common home.*

*The papal encyclical offers us an opportunity to reflect on the world around us, and to respond to the signs of the times. We are called to reject the contemporary 'throwaway' culture and to open our eyes to see how God is present throughout creation.*

*We bear witness to the reality facing many of our sisters and brothers across the world, who are being pushed deeper into poverty due to the changing climate.*

*Whilst climate change is critical, it is one symptom of a much deeper problem about how we organise our common home. Pope Francis invites us to a change of heart; individually, as a community, and at an international level, so we may truly respond to "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" #49.*

*In what the Holy Father calls 'the Gospel of Creation', we are encouraged to bring the Good News of our faith to these situations. We are asked to adopt an attitude of profound respect and care towards ourselves, our neighbours and our beautiful sister earth, as an expression of our love for God.*

**Laudato Si'* is a profound invitation to everyone on the planet, and its influence will be felt for many years to come.*

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## How to use this study guide

This study guide invites you to reflect on some of the themes of the papal encyclical, and explore ways of taking action. It is not intended to be a complete guide, but is an initial way of engaging with Pope Francis' important message.

Follow the enclosed leader's notes for tips on how to run each session. Each session follows the same pattern.

We hope you find inspiration in this short guide to read, or re-read, the beautiful and prophetic full text of *Laudato Si'*.

## Creation is a caress of God

### Passages from *Laudato Si'*

**# 1** 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.


**# 12** What is more, Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness.

**# 11** If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.

**# 82** It would be mistaken to view other living beings as mere objects subjected to arbitrary human domination.

Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus.

**# 146** It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best.



**“Think of the earth.  
It is life. The forest is  
life. Water is life.”**

***Witness: We are the guardians of the forest***

*Davi Kopenawa Yanomami is founder and President of the Hutukara Yanomami Association, which defends the rights of the threatened Yanomami and Ye'kuana indigenous people of the Brazilian Amazon.'*

“Our country, Brazil, is very beautiful,” says Davi Kopenawa passionately, “full of harmony, trees, it has lots of clean water. But the Brazilian Government does not want to protect and preserve nature. It wants to take the wealth from the land. It will destroy the forest, it will destroy the indigenous people... So that is why I am worried and angry, very angry.”

Small-scale illegal gold miners and farmers have repeatedly invaded Yanomami indigenous territory, burning down the forest and polluting rivers. On top of this, the Yanomami and Ye'kuana people are increasingly feeling the impacts of climate change, affecting their health and environment.

Like all his people, Davi is deeply attuned to the natural world, and the changes he perceives are profound. “We indigenous communities are saying, look at the sky, it’s changing, the sun is changing, the rain is changing.”

Davi warns that the world will suffer if the rainforest is destroyed. “The people in the cities, we want them to listen and believe us. They don’t see how things are changing.” From his home in Watoriki, ‘The Mountain of the Wind’, he urges us to act: “Think of the earth. It is life. The forest is life. Water is life.”

The Yanomami and Ye'kuana people speak up for our threatened planet: “Hutukara defends the people, the land, the forest, the rivers, the animals, clean air, health and education. We, the Yanomami people, are the guardians of the forest of our country.”

**“God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good.”**

Genesis 1:31

## Reflection

We believe each and every human person is valued and loved by God, especially those who are living in poverty. Indeed, all of creation reflects God’s goodness.

Pope Francis calls us to see people, creatures, the soil, water, mountains, “everything... as a caress of God” #84. The Lord’s abundant love shines throughout the world, bringing all of creation into this embrace.

We are called to be open to the wonders of creation, and to lift our hearts and minds to praise the Lord, together as one family. This requires us to be still, to listen to our neighbours and our sister earth, and hear what God is saying to us.

Davi from the Yanomami community has a profound connection with the earth, and he defends it from exploitation. He understands that mining not only threatens the environment, but also their culture and way of life. We are all called to be guardians of God’s creation.

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## Discuss

● Davi says, “Think of the earth. It is life.” How would you describe your relationship with your surroundings; with the birds and the sky?

● Saint Francis invites us to see “nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us” #11. How can we listen to what God is saying to us today through the environment and our neighbours living in poverty?

● In what ways has the world become a place where harm is inflicted on the earth and people living in poverty?

## Act

● Go out into a nearby park or garden, and bring back a symbol which speaks to you. Reflect on what this means with your neighbour. If you are unable to go outside during the session, set aside time to do this during the week.

## Pray

*I believe in God and in nature as an inheritance which humanity has in common.*

*I enjoy the smell of the earth and the caress of the sun, the wind and the rain. I enjoy the song of the birds and the murmur of the breeze that rustles the trees.*

*I like contemplating the crops, listening to the sigh of the corn fields, seeing the surge of the rice fields and waiting for the smell of ripe fruit.*

*I believe in all God’s creatures, large and small.*

A creed for creation by Erasmo Valiente, Jesuit Development Service, El Salvador.

## *The climate is a common good*

### Passages from *Laudato Si'*

**# 2** This sister [the earth] 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.

**# 21** The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.

**# 23** The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.

**# 25** Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.

**# 138** Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. This necessarily entails reflection and debate about the conditions required for the life and survival of society, and the honesty needed to question certain models of development, production and consumption. It cannot be emphasised enough how everything is interconnected.

**# 158** In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.



*“When I look at the sea I can’t forget my memories of Typhoon Yolanda.”*

***Witness: The Lord gave me the strength to swim***

*In November 2013, one of the most powerful cyclones ever to make landfall hit the Philippines. During Typhoon Haiyan, known locally as Yolanda, the wind gusted up to 235km an hour, whipping up the sea and tearing over a million houses apart.<sup>2</sup>*

Edzil was out at sea in a fishing boat when Typhoon Haiyan struck. “There were big waves,” remembers the young fisherman from Leyte Island. “The boat rocked and went over. I held onto anything I could. I swam for three hours. The water felt freezing. My mind was confused. I thought I would die that day. I did not know how I could keep swimming. The Lord gave me the strength to swim.”

Edzil didn’t know it then, but over 6,000 people lost their lives in the storm and 14 million were affected. “There were many people on our boat,” he says, “and all the others died. I was worried about my parents because I love them.”

Back on land, a 12-foot-high wall of fast-moving water obliterated everything in its path – including Edzil’s home. Luckily, his parents took refuge in a stronger house: “Thank God the house had a second floor” he says. “They were safe. There were many people there – tight like sardines.”

Following his extraordinary survival, Edzil has new plans: “I have a mission now – to look after my parents. I want to go back to school and become an engineer. I have a good brain, like Albert Einstein!”

He puts on a cheerful face, but his relationship with the sea has changed forever. “I don’t want to be a fisherman,” he says. “Our sea is not clean, it is dirty. There are dead people in it. When I look at the sea I can’t forget my memories of Typhoon Yolanda.”

**“Can we say that there is real progress?”**

*The Catholic Bishops of the Philippines, 1988*

**Reflection:**

Edzil will never forget what happened to him in the typhoon: it has scarred him for life.

Climate change is making disasters more frequent and more intense. It is the most vulnerable communities who are hit hardest.

The Catholic Bishops of the Philippines released a document in 1988 entitled *What is happening to our beautiful land?* In this they ask, “We often use the word progress to describe what has taken place over the past few decades. But can we say that there is real progress? The poor are as disadvantaged as ever and the natural world has been grievously wounded.”

The hand of greed has plundered the earth’s resources for profit, having forgotten that God is the Lord of all. Many of our global neighbours who are living in poverty bear witness to this injustice on a daily basis.

We recognise the times we have turned away from protecting creation. We are called to change our lives, and to lead all creatures back to reflect God’s glory.

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**Examination of conscience**

*We invite you to undertake an examination of conscience, and reflect on ways you may have turned away from loving God, our neighbour and the earth.*

- How do my actions show that I love my neighbour, especially those who are living in poverty?
- Do I strive to cherish and protect creation, remembering that God is the creator of all? In what ways do I do this?
- What are my dreams and ambitions? How do these reflect the Christian conviction that “less is more”? #222

**Act**

Watch the film *The common good* on the DVD or at:

[cafod.org.uk/climatereflections](http://cafod.org.uk/climatereflections)

**Pray**

*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 earth and not  
prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty,  
not pollution and destruction.*

*Extract from ‘A prayer for our earth’, Laudato Si’*



## A universal family

### Passages from *Laudato Si'*

**# 9** As Christians, we are called “to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale.”

**# 47** When media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously.

**# 52** 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 globalisation of indifference.

**# 92** When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one.

**# 92** 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.

**# 232** Around community actions, relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges. Thus, a community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism. These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences.

***“The livesimply journey has opened our eyes to the endless opportunities available for us all to make a difference”***



***Witness: Travelling the livesimply journey***

*Brenda Underwood is livesimply co-ordinator at the Brentwood Cathedral parish of St Mary and St Helen's. The parish was the first Cathedral to win this national award for living simply, sustainably, and in solidarity with people in poverty. Brenda tells us her story:*

To be honest, the idea of becoming a *livesimply* parish was a little daunting at first. But nevertheless we took up the challenge and started to ponder about where this journey might take us.

Engaging the parish community has to be the foundation of *livesimply*. Recognising this, we used the parish newsletter to inform everyone about the exciting possibility of becoming a *livesimply* parish. We invited parishioners to share their ideas.

Lots has happened since then. We now hold an annual '*livesimply* week' where we take up a different challenge each day. This year included a walk, Mass and picnic, a prayer vigil, and a food bank collection.

The challenges people set themselves range from walking to church, to just making someone smile! We also did an environmental audit of the parish buildings and changed hundreds of light bulbs to low energy alternatives. We are applying to become a Fairtrade parish. *Livesimply* provides a real opportunity to pause for thought and to consider the impact of our actions and inactions.

We were delighted to be told that after months of hard work we had won the award! However, we know that the award is but a step along the way. They say that travel broadens the mind – certainly the *livesimply* journey has opened our eyes to the endless opportunities available for us all to make a difference.

**“By making choices to live sustainably and simply, we act as responsible stewards of creation”**

Father Martin Boland, Dean of St Mary and St Helen's parish

## Reflection

When we look around us today, we see more and more how people are becoming indifferent to each other's needs. It is not fair that some should have everything, and others should have nothing.

Pope Francis calls us to break down the walls of indifference, and renew our understanding of the bonds that unite us. The *livesimply* programme is a wonderful example of what can be achieved when communities come together to care for creation.

As Father Martin Boland, Dean of St Mary and St Helen's parish, says, “By making choices to live sustainably and simply, we shift attitudes, make change possible and act as responsible stewards of creation. In this way, the smallest action releases a ripple of hope whose energy can be harnessed for the common good.”

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## Discuss

- Pope Francis says, “We are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage” #92. What do you think this means?
- What inspires you about the *livesimply* parish described here? In what ways is your parish like this one, and in what ways is it different?
- What do you think it means to flourish in relationship with God, our neighbour, ourselves and the earth?

## Act

- Watch the film: *Who is my neighbour?* On the DVD or visit: [cafod.org.uk/climatereflections](http://cafod.org.uk/climatereflections)
- Make a commitment to care for the world's poorest people and the earth by making simple daily gestures. Read our tips: [cafod.org.uk/playyourpart](http://cafod.org.uk/playyourpart)
- Find out more about being a *livesimply* parish: [cafod.org.uk/livesimply](http://cafod.org.uk/livesimply)

## Pray

*Living God,  
have mercy on us,  
for the times we forget  
that we belong to each other.*

*You call us to be still,  
to hear the whisper of our Sister Wind,  
to feel the radiance of our Brother Sun,  
to be nourished by our Mother Earth.*

*Renew us in your healing love.  
Inspire us to water the earth,  
and nurture one another,  
so all may flourish.*

*Together, as one family,  
may we always sing your praise.  
Through Christ our Lord, Amen.*

*Amen*

Rachel McCarthy/CAFOD

## *We were made for love*

### Passages from *Laudato Si'*

# **58** For all our limitations, gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us, since we were made for love.

# **160** What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.

# **217** What [Christians] need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.

# **226** We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full.

# **227** One expression of this attitude is when we stop and give thanks to God before and after meals. I ask all believers to return to this beautiful and meaningful custom.

# **231** Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.

# **236** It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. The Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.



***“We need to think not just of ourselves right now, but what’s going to happen to future generations.”***

***Witness: A pilgrimage for creation***

*An Easter pilgrimage in the diocese of Northampton brought parishioners from five churches together to contemplate the beauty of creation and the dangers of climate change.*

“This pilgrimage was something we wanted to do to make a difference,” explains Alban MacDonald, who helped organise a fifty-mile walk through the beautiful Bedfordshire countryside.

“The climate change theme was spot on for us,” says Alban. “We need to think not just of ourselves right now, but what’s going to happen to future generations.”

The pilgrimage took place as part of CAFOD’s *One Climate, One World* campaign, which is calling on politicians to work together to tackle climate change and support the transition to sustainable energy.

Tessa Wiseman, who took part in the pilgrimage, points out “We are all affected by a changing climate, whether here or overseas. People in countries such as Peru, Kenya, and Bangladesh are already feeling the effects and it’s the most vulnerable communities that are at risk.”

After each walk, the group sat down over well-earned tea and cake to reflect, using topics suggested by CAFOD’s postcard reflections. They signed action cards urging Britain’s political leaders to stop climate change pushing people deeper into poverty.

As Alban explains: “My message to political leaders is to take climate change seriously, and reflect carefully on what climate change is doing, not just to our communities but really to the poorest communities in the world.”

**“Love makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world”**

*Laudato Si’* #231

### **Reflection:**

We are reminded that we were made for love, and this gives us hope. We are all called to a change of heart, “to live wisely, think deeply and love generously” #47.

All of us are called to a deep conversion, to see how Christ is present throughout creation. This change affects us both individually and as a community, and it moves us to treat the world and each other with tenderness and care.

As Alban explains, this requires a deep commitment to caring for our common home, by acting in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the present and in the future.

One way of expressing our commitment is to speak out for justice, and hold our leaders to account for their actions. As Pope Francis tells us, “love makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.” #231

May we live out our vocation with joy, giving thanks and praise to God.

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### **Discuss**

- Pope Francis asks us, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” #160. What is your answer to this question?
- The Eucharist is “an act of cosmic love” #236. In what ways can we respond to God’s love through our actions?

### **Act**

- Speak out in solidarity with our sisters and brothers across the world who are affected by the changing climate. Find out how you can take action at [cafod.org.uk/oneclimate](http://cafod.org.uk/oneclimate)
- Write to your MP. Explain that you’re prepared to act to tackle climate change and ask them what they are going to do. Find out who your MP is at: [theyworkforyou.com](http://theyworkforyou.com)

### **Pray**

*Say this grace before sharing food together.*

*Generous God,  
you embrace all of creation,  
and bless us with gifts of life.*

*As we break this bread,  
we praise you for your goodness,  
we give thanks to those who  
grew our food,  
and we remember those who are hungry.*

*May we be moved by the Holy Spirit  
to share these gifts as one family,  
and so catch a glimpse of your Kingdom,  
of justice, peace and love.*

*Amen.*

Rachel McCarthy/CAFOD

## What next?

We hope that using this guide has been fruitful in your process of reflecting and responding to *Laudato Si'*. Below are some opportunities for further action, bearing in mind the words of Pope Francis: “local individuals and groups can make a real difference.” #179

● **Pray:** Join us in praying for our earth and our global family: [cafod.org.uk/pray](https://cafod.org.uk/pray)

● **Reflect:** Further reflect on our relationship with creation through our *One Climate, One World* reflection cards: [cafod.org.uk/climatereflections](https://cafod.org.uk/climatereflections)

● **Campaign with us:** Add your voice to our *One Climate, One World* campaign. Visit [cafod.org.uk/oneclimate](https://cafod.org.uk/oneclimate) to encourage our leaders to care for our common home.

● **Live simply and sustainably:** As an individual - could you switch to a green energy supplier, or make more journeys on foot? Find ideas for you and your parish: [cafod.org.uk/playyourpart](https://cafod.org.uk/playyourpart)

As a parish – ask your church to take part in the national *livesimply* award: a meaningful way for parishes to show their commitment to tackling climate change and poverty: [cafod.org.uk/livesimply](https://cafod.org.uk/livesimply)

● **Go deeper on climate change:** Explore the facts on climate change and find ways to respond at [cafod.org.uk/climate](https://cafod.org.uk/climate)

● **Children and young people:** Find resources on the environment and climate change: [cafod.org.uk/education](https://cafod.org.uk/education)

● **Keep in touch:** Get in touch with your local contact: call 0303 303 3030 or email [supportercare@cafod.org.uk](mailto:supportercare@cafod.org.uk) Find out about the latest campaign news, events and resources, and see how your campaigning is making a difference in our monthly e-bulletins. Sign up here: [cafod.org.uk/campaignsignup](https://cafod.org.uk/campaignsignup)

Good luck!

### End notes

Since 2007, CAFOD has supported the Hutukara Yanomami Association (HAY), which works to protect Yanomami and Ye'kuana indigenous rights to land, health, bilingual education and cultural preservation.<sup>1</sup>

CAFOD continues to work with local communities in the Philippines who are recovering from the typhoon: building disaster-resistant homes and schools, providing better water and sanitation systems and helping people find new livelihoods.<sup>2</sup>

### Picture credits:

Annie Bungeroth, Esther Gillingham, Ben White, CAFOD. Front and back cover illustration: Nadine Smoczynski.

**“Let us sing as we go. May our struggles  
and our concern for this planet never take  
away the joy of our hope.”**

***Laudato Si’ #244***

Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, is an open dialogue with all people on the care of our common home. As a Catholic community, we are called by our faith to stand alongside poor communities and love God’s creation. CAFOD and SCIAF bring witnesses from partners overseas and in the UK, to help shed light on this important teaching and what it means for us all today. We hope you will embrace the opportunity to reflect, act and pray on this message, and we wish you every grace and blessing.

**Cardinal Vincent Nichols**

*The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales*

**Archbishop Philip Tartaglia**

*The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland*



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Just one world

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