



*Querida Amazonia*  
*[Beloved Amazon]*

Study Guide on Select Themes

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## OVERVIEW

This reflection/discussion guide, for use with Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Querida Amazonia* [*Beloved Amazon*], can help individuals and small groups explore and dialogue with aspects of this important document related to listening to "the cry of the poor," the rights of indigenous persons, solidarity, and action to care for God's creation. It does not cover all themes in the apostolic exhortation. The guide includes a template for small group discussion, as well as questions for either individual or small group reflection on particular themes in the document.

## MATERIALS

If using this guide in a small group setting:

Make the following materials available in advance:

- Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Querida Amazonia* [[Beloved Amazon](#)], which is online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) and available for purchase at [www.usccb.org/store](http://www.usccb.org/store).
- The [Background on the Call to Care for God's Creation](#) handout, included later in this guide.
- The brief video (<https://youtu.be/C-o-pCaJ7GY>) by the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM).
- [This backgrounder](#) on Racism and the Native American Experience, also found at [usccb.org/racism](http://usccb.org/racism).

Bring to the session:

- A Bible
- A few copies each of *Querida Amazonia* [*Beloved Amazon*], the Background on the Call to Care for God's Creation handout, and the backgrounder on Racism and Native American Experience. (If the means are available, consider making these available via portable electronic devices such as ipad or tablet)
- Copies of the [Taking Action](#) and [Additional Resources](#) handouts found later in this guide
- Equipment to show the REPAM video, if you have not asked participants to watch it in advance.

## ROOM SET-UP

If you are using this guide as an individual, choose a prayer space that is quiet yet sufficiently well-lit and free from outside disturbances or distractions.

If meeting in a small group setting, arrange the chairs in a circle and set up a prayer space with an open Bible on a low table in the center of the circle.

Open the Bible to Luke 12:6.

## MEETING OUTLINE

### I. Introductions – 5 minutes

If using this guide in a group setting, invite everyone to briefly introduce himself or herself, and to share why he or she came. Keep the introductions brief.

### II. Opening Prayer & Introductory Reflections – 5 minutes

Read Luke 12:6 aloud:

“Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God.”

Pope Francis reflects on this verse in *Querida Amazonia*:

“God our Father, who created each being in the universe with infinite love, calls us to be his means for hearing the cry of the Amazon region” (no. 57).

*Pause* for silent reflection for about 20 seconds.

We now pray:

**All:**

God of all creation,

How splendid and majestic is the world you created!  
It reveals your glory; it teaches us about you.

When you made us in your image,  
you gave us this command:  
care for the world and for all the creatures in it,  
for this is our common home.

Yet your holy creation cries out,  
for our home is “burdened and laid waste,”  
scorched and scarred.<sup>1</sup>

Come among us  
that we might remember our interdependence.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 2

Let us see the face of your Son in those who suffer  
from the destruction of our common home.

Help us to be stewards  
who honor you in the world you have made  
for the good of all creation  
and for future generations.

May your justice reign forever!

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

### III. Background Information – 5 minutes

Catholics and all people of good will are invited to reflect on Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Querida Amazonia*, or *Beloved Amazon*.

An apostolic exhortation is a particular kind of papal teaching that communicates the mind of the pope on a certain topic. It is often used to share the conclusions reached by the Holy Father after consideration of the recommendations of a Synod of Bishops. It can also be used as a way for the pope to exhort (encourage) the faithful to a deeper life of Christian discipleship. In this case, Pope Francis released *Querida Amazonia*, or *Beloved Amazon*, following the Special Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region on October 6-27, 2019, which focused on a wide variety of topics, including integral ecology, the rights of indigenous peoples, and mission, among others. Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation reflects on these and other topics and concerns.

Archbishop José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles and President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, describes *Querida Amazonia* in this way:

*"Our Holy Father Pope Francis offers us a hopeful and challenging vision of the future of the Amazon region, one of earth's most sensitive and crucial ecosystems, and home to a rich diversity of cultures and peoples. . . He also calls on all of us in the Americas and throughout the West to examine our 'style of life' and to reflect on the consequences that our decisions have for the environment and for the poor."*<sup>3</sup>

The "Background on the Call to Care for God's Creation" handout found later in this guide may also be helpful in providing a quick overview of Catholic teaching on care for creation as it relates to the apostolic exhortation.

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<sup>2</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Prayer to Care for God's Creation, <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/care-for-gods-creation-prayer.cfm>

<sup>3</sup> Statement of Archbishop José H. Gomez in USCCB press release, Feb. 12, 2020

#### IV. Reflection and/or Discussion – 30 minutes

If using this guide as an individual, continue to the reflection/discussion question pages.

If using this guide in a group setting, provide guidelines for the discussion. Remind participants that the purpose of the discussion is to explore our faith and how we are to live it out in the world, not to debate with one another. Some groups find it helpful to use the “mutual invitation” method to move the sharing along. Each participant shares his or her reflections on a question, and then invites another person who has not shared to do so. Be sure that everyone has an opportunity to respond to each question.

To help create a positive space for faith sharing, ask the participants to observe these simple guidelines:

- Listen carefully.
- Use “I” statements. (Take responsibility for what you express. Do not speak for “them.”)
- Help all to participate. (Do not dominate the conversation.)
- Stay on the topic and stay focused on Pope Francis’ message.
- Be respectful and charitable at all times.

Use the discussion pages below.

#### V. Follow up Actions – 10 minutes

Review the handout on “Taking Action.” Reflect on ways to follow-up on the discussion, including how to engage family members, workers, owners, voters, and members of the global human family.

- Brainstorm what actions you can take to **better understand the realities and experiences** of communities highlighted in the apostolic exhortation, including those impacted by environmental exploitation.
- Identify what **lifestyle changes** you can make as an individual or family to better protect God’s creation.
- Join the U.S. Catholic bishops, Catholic Relief Services and others to **advocate for laws and policies** that address environmental problems, especially as they affect poor and vulnerable people.
- As a family, parish, school, or other community, **take the St. Francis Pledge** ([CatholicClimateCovenant.org](http://CatholicClimateCovenant.org)) to care for creation and persons in poverty.

## Closing Prayer – 5 minutes

Offer intentions based on today's reflections and conversation. The response is: "Lord, hear our prayer."

- We pray for the ability to "hear the cry of the poor" and listen to the stories and experiences of our brothers and sisters in the Amazon region, let us pray to the Lord...
- We pray for God's help to make changes to our lifestyles in order to further the globalization of solidarity, not marginalization, let us pray to the Lord....
- *[Additional intentions may be offered.]*

End with the following excerpt from the prayer that concludes *Querida Amazonia*.

### A Prayer to Mary, Mother of the Amazon Region

Mother of life,  
in your maternal womb Jesus took flesh,  
the Lord of all that exists.  
Risen, he transfigured you by his light  
and made you Queen of all creation.  
For that reason, we ask you, Mary, to reign  
in the beating heart of the Amazonia.

Show yourself the Mother of all creatures,  
in the beauty of the flowers, the rivers,  
the great river that courses through it  
and all the life pulsing in its forests.  
Tenderly care for this explosion of beauty. . .

Mother, look upon the poor of the Amazon  
region,  
for their home is being destroyed by petty  
interests.

How much pain and misery,  
how much neglect and abuse there is.

Mother whose heart is pierced,  
who yourself suffer in your mistreated sons  
and daughters,  
and in the wounds inflicted on nature,  
reign in the Amazon,  
together with your Son.  
Reign so that no one else can claim lordship  
over the handiwork of God.

We trust in you, Mother of life.  
Do not abandon us  
in this dark hour.  
Amen.

## Dismissal or Fellowship

Thank the participants for sharing their reflections and wish them safe travel home. Or, you may wish to invite participants to share in refreshments and fellowship after the session. Some groups may want to close with sharing the sign of peace. If there will be future sessions, be sure to announce details about the next meeting.



## LISTENING TO THE CRY OF THE POOR

"Let us . . . listen to one of the voices that was heard: 'We are being affected by the timber merchants, ranchers and other third parties. Threatened by economic actors who import a model alien to our territories. The timber industries enter the territory in order to exploit the forest, whereas we protect the forest for the sake of our children, for there we have meat, fish, medicinal plants, fruit trees'<sup>4</sup>" (no. 11).

"If we wish to dialogue, we should do this in the first place with the poor. They are not just another party to be won over, or merely another individual seated at a table of equals. They are our principal dialogue partners, those from whom we have the most to learn, to whom we need to listen out of a duty of justice, and from whom we must ask permission before presenting our proposals" (no. 26).

"Dialogue must not only favor the preferential option on behalf of the poor, the marginalized and the excluded, but also respect them as having a leading role to play" (no. 27).

### Questions

1. Pope Francis invites us to listen to the voices of those affected by environmental and economic exploitation in the Amazon region. What means exist for people of faith to "listen" to these voices?
2. Watch this brief video (<https://youtu.be/C-o-pCaJ7GY>) by the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM). What surprises or challenges you?
3. The call to recognize the "leading role" that poor communities should play applies not only to our brothers and sisters in the Amazon region, but also in the U.S. where we live, work and worship. Where are the voices of persons in poverty being heard? Where is dialogue lacking?

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<sup>4</sup> Red Eclesial Panamazónica (REPAM), Brazil, *Síntesis del aporte al Sínodo*, 120; cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, 45.

## RIGHTS OF THE ORIGINAL PEOPLES

*If possible, read the entirety of nos. 11-16 and 19. Otherwise, read the following excerpts:*

“It is well known that ever since the final decades, the Amazon region has been presented as an enormous empty space to be filled, a source of raw resources to be developed, a wild expanse to be domesticated. . . . None of this recognizes the rights of the original peoples; it simply ignores them as if they did not exist, or acts as if lands on which they live do not belong to them . . . They were considered more an obstacle needing to be eliminated than as human beings with the same dignity as others and possessed of their own acquired rights” (no. 12).

“The businesses, national or international, which harm the Amazon and fail to respect the right of the original peoples to the land and its boundaries, to self-determination and prior consent, should be called for that they are: *injustice and crime*. . . . The incidents of injustice and cruelty that took place in the Amazon region even in the last century ought to provoke profound abhorrence, but they should also make us more sensitive to the need to acknowledge current forms of human exploitation, abuse and killing” (nos. 14-15).

### Questions

1. What do you know about the treatment of the original peoples in the Amazon region, past and present? How did the description of some of these realities in numbers 11 to 16 surprise or challenge you?
2. How are the experiences and struggles of the original peoples in the Amazon region similar or different from those of Natives Americans in the United States? (For information on the experience of Native Americans/Alaskan Natives in the U.S., see [this backgrounder](#) on Racism and the Native American Experience, also available at [uscgb.org/racism](http://uscgb.org/racism). See also the statements of the U.S. bishops on this topic, listed in the backgrounder.)
3. Why does Pope Francis express shame and ask forgiveness on behalf of the Church in no. 19?

## SOLIDARITY, NOT MARGINALIZATION

"If God calls us to listen both to the cry of the poor and that of the earth, then for us, 'the cry of the Amazon region to the Creator is similar to the cry of God's people in Egypt (cf. *Ex* 3:7). It is a cry of slavery and abandonment pleading for freedom'<sup>5</sup> (no. 52).

"The equilibrium of our planet also depends on the health of the Amazon region . . . The cry of the Amazon region reaches everyone because 'the conquest and exploitation of resources . . . has today reached the point of threatening the environment's hospitable aspect'<sup>6</sup> . . . The interest of a few powerful industries should not be considered more important than the good of the Amazon region and of humanity as a whole" (no. 48).

"The challenge, in short, is to ensure a globalization in solidarity, a globalization without marginalization'<sup>7</sup> (no. 17).

### Questions

1. Pope Francis has often reflected that "everything is connected." How is the Amazon region a symbol of the interconnectedness of the ecosystem—and of the global community?
2. What might a "globalization of solidarity" look like? How might God be calling you to help make that kind of globalization a reality?

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<sup>5</sup> *Preparatory Document for the Synod on the Pan Amazon Region*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Saint John Paul II, *Address to an International Convention on "The Environment and Health"* (Mar. 24, 1997), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Saint John Paul II, *Message for the 1998 World Day of Peace*, 3: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 90 (1998), 150.

## WE ARE CALLED TO ACT

"Frequently, we let our consciences be deadened . . . Such evasiveness serves as a license to carrying on with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption" (no. 53).

"A sound and sustainable ecology, one capable of bringing about change, will not develop unless people are changed, unless they are encouraged to opt for another style of life, one less greedy and more serene, more respectful and less anxious, more fraternal" (no. 58).

"All of us should insist on the urgent need to establish 'a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems'<sup>8</sup>" (no. 52).

### Questions

1. Conscience formation is a lifelong process that requires encounter, prayer, and study. If your conscience has been "deadened" to the impact on others of your own lifestyle and consumption choices, what actions can you take to revive it?
2. What changes can you commit to making in your own life in order to better care for our brothers and sisters in the Amazon region?
3. How can you help advocate for better policies and structures to protect ecosystems around the world? (See the Take Action pages in this guide for ideas.)

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<sup>8</sup> *Laudato Si'*, 53: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 107 (2015), 868.

## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

"For the Church to achieve a renewed inculturation of the Gospel in the Amazon region, she needs to listen to its ancestral wisdom, listen once more to the voices of its elders, recognize the values present in the way of life of the original communities, and recover the rich stories of its peoples" (no. 70).

"Indeed, 'from the heart of the Gospel we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement.'<sup>9</sup> For Christian communities, this entails a clear commitment to the justice of God's kingdom through work for the advancement of those who have been 'discarded.' It follows that a suitable training of pastoral workers in the Church's social doctrine is most important" (no. 75).

### Questions

1. Pope Francis names several ways that the Church can listen in the Amazon region. Why is this necessary? How can your own faith community become part of this process of listening?
2. How well is the connection between evangelization and human advancement reflected in faith formation in your family, parish, school, or other faith institution? How can this connection be strengthened?

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<sup>9</sup> Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Nov. 24, 2013), 178; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 105 (2013), 1094.

## BACKGROUND ON THE CALL TO CARE FOR GOD’S CREATION

Pope Francis’ encyclical letter [Laudato Si’](#) was released in June 2015. The title is taken from the first line of the encyclical, “Laudato Si’, mi Signore,” or “Praise be to you, my Lord”—the words of Saint Francis of Assisi in a beautiful canticle reminding 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. Pope Francis addresses *Laudato Si’* to “every person on the planet,” for we all share a common home—the earth. Several themes are addressed in this encyclical:

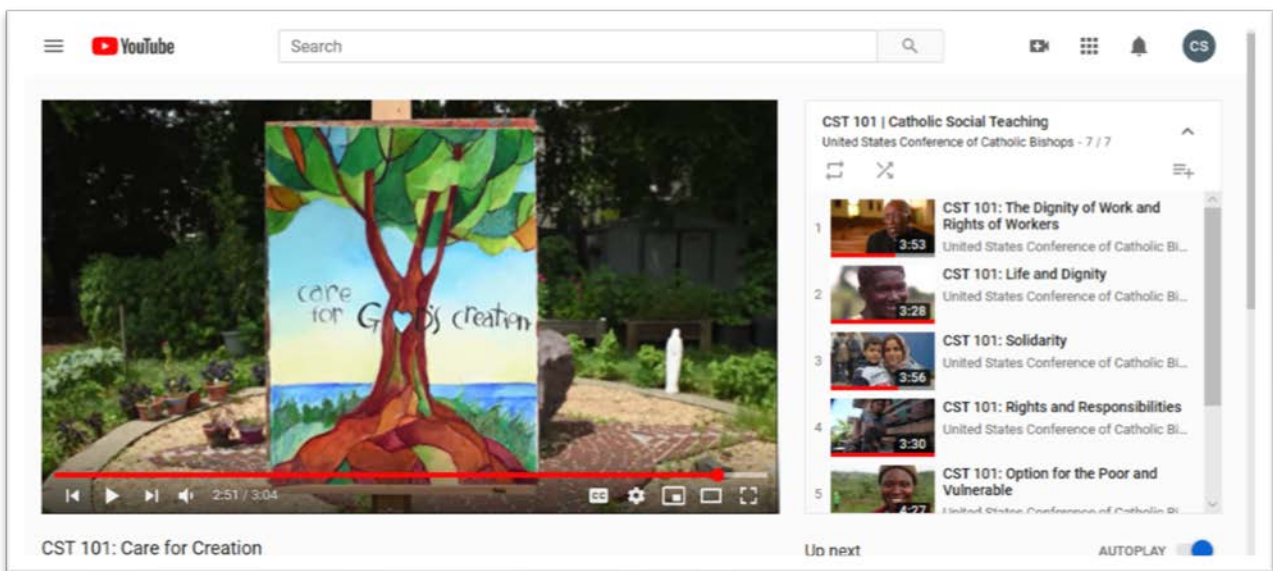
- **A Moral and Spiritual Challenge.** The ecological crisis, Pope Francis writes, is a summons to profound interior conversion—to renew our relationships with God, one another, and the created world.
- **Care for God’s Creation.** God created the world and entrusted it to us as a gift. Now we have the responsibility to care for and protect it and all people, who are part of creation. Protecting human dignity is strongly linked to care for creation.
- **We are All Connected.** We are connected to the rest of the human family, to the created world, and to those who will come after us in future generations.
- **Impact on the Poor.** People in poverty have contributed least to climate change, yet they are disproportionately impacted by it. As a result of excessive use of natural resource by wealthy nations, those who are poor experience pollution, lack of access to clean water, hunger, and more.
- **Called to Solidarity.** We are one human family and have a shared responsibility for others and for creation. Wealthy countries have a responsibility to reduce consumption of non-renewal resources and should help poorer nations develop in sustainable ways.
- **Technological and economic development** must serve human beings and enhance human dignity, instead of creating an economy of exclusion, so that all people have access to what is needed for authentic human development.
- **Supporting Life, Protecting Creation.** Concern for nature is incompatible with failure to protect vulnerable human beings, such as unborn children, people with disabilities, or victims of human trafficking.
- **A Time to Act.** Pope Francis calls for a change in lifestyle and consumption. We can make important changes as individuals, families, and communities, and as civil and political leaders.
- **Hope and Joy.** “Injustice is not invincible” (no. 74) and we act knowing that we seek to live out God’s vision of renewed relationships with God, ourselves, one another, and creation.

*Laudato Si’* is the most recent encyclical to focus on care for God’s creation, but it was not the first. *Laudato Si’* builds on a long history of Church teaching emphasizing the need to care for our common home. For example, in [Caritas In Veritate](#), Pope Benedict XVI reflects on the environment as “God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole” (no. 48. See also nos. 49-51).

Similarly, St. John Paul II's *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (1987) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991) invite consideration of the moral dimensions of development and its impact on creation. We "cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization," he writes in *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (no. 34). In *Centesimus Annus*, he reflects on the threat of consumerism and overconsumption (no. 37).

In addition, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2006) devotes [an entire chapter](#) to "Safeguarding the Environment" and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses respect for the integrity of creation, stewardship, and moderation of consumption out of concern for those who are vulnerable and for future generations (for example, paragraphs 339, 2404-06, 2415, and 2432).

Two statements of the Catholic bishops of the United States focus specifically on care for God's creation: [Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good](#) (2001) and [Renewing the Earth](#) (1991). The CST101 video from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services provides a brief summary of Catholic teaching on caring for God's creation. It is available at <https://youtu.be/TCcl7DoGRW0>.



## TAKING ACTION

### Taking Action at Home

Brainstorm what **lifestyle changes** you can make as an individual or family to reduce your own consumption in order to better protect God’s creation. Here are some ideas based on those Pope Francis mentions in *Laudato Si’* (no. 211):

1. Use fewer paper and plastic products – e.g. use a re-usable water bottle
2. Reduce water consumption – e.g. take shorter showers, wash dishes by hand, etc.
3. Don’t cook more than you will consume
4. Compost (instead of disposing) food waste
5. Recycle
6. Reuse instead of disposing
7. Use public transportation, carpool, walk, or ride a bike
8. Conserve electricity – e.g. turn off lights and buy energy-efficient appliances
9. Plant trees

### Taking Action in my Parish, at School, or at Work

Brainstorm what **institutional changes** you can make in your parish, faith community, school or workspace. Here are a few ideas:

1. Use this *Querida Amazonia* reflection/discussion guide to prayerfully reflect with your faith community on Pope Francis’ call for all people to listen and respond to “the cry of the poor” in the Amazon region (no. 8).
2. Visit the website (<https://redamazonica.org/en>) of the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM) to find reflections on the realities faced by communities in the Amazon region as well as a creative *Laudato Si’* podcast series. REPAM is a project of the nine Churches of the Amazon region, inspired by Pope Francis and supported by the Latin American Bishops’ Conference, or CELAM.
3. With your faith community, learn more about Native Americans/Alaskan Natives in your own community.
4. Ensure that learning about care for God’s creation is part of faith formation for both adults and youth. Educational resources, homily helps, and more are at [www.usccb.org/environment](http://www.usccb.org/environment).
5. Do an energy audit to identify where energy consumption could be reduced. Such an audit will benefit the earth—and your institution’s budget!
6. Consider going solar. Explore whether efforts are happening in your local community to form solar cooperatives, in which institutions purchase affordable solar energy in bulk.
7. Implement recycling and composting.
8. At events where food or beverages are consumed, and in cafeterias, replace disposable cups, plates, and silverware with washable or compostable items.
9. Donate leftovers to local soup kitchens, or cook only what will be reasonably consumed.



10. Offer employees benefits for using public transportation or carpooling.
11. Conserve electricity – e.g. turn off lights and air conditioning during non-business hours and buy energy-efficient appliances.
12. Plant trees on your institution's property.
13. Take the St. Francis Pledge (below).
14. Find out about and join efforts to care for creation in your local community.
15. Find out what other faith communities across the United States are doing to care for God's creation: [www.wearesaltandlight.org/success-stories-act](http://www.wearesaltandlight.org/success-stories-act)

## Taking Action in my State

1. Encourage lawmakers to improve and update public transportation options. When effective and far-reaching public transportation systems are in place, fewer cars clog the roads to emit greenhouse gases and air-polluting contaminants.
2. Join local efforts of groups working with elected officials and community leaders to explore ways your local community can do business in sustainable ways, reduce harmful emissions, and use renewal energy.
3. Organize or participate in local and state Earth Day celebrations to raise awareness of the challenges of climate change and move towards sustainability.
4. Pay attention to legislation going before the state legislature that concern climate, emissions, or energy policies. Urge legislators to remember that people who live in poverty in your state may suffer the most from climate change and that legislative measures should include provisions that address disproportionate economic impacts, e.g., in heating and transportation costs.
5. Consider how we can allow the Holy Spirit to move us toward innovative, creative solutions that create jobs and care for people and God's creation.

## Taking Action Nationally

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops urges that legislative action on climate change should include provisions that (a) ease the burden on low-income communities and those who live in poverty; (b) offer relief for workers who may be displaced because of climate change policies; and (c) promote the development and use of alternate renewable and clean-energy resources, including the transfer of such technologies and also technical assistance that may be appropriate and helpful to developing countries in meeting the challenges of climate change. Write to your senators and representatives in Congress and participate in action alerts from the U.S. Catholic bishops and Catholic Relief Services. Let Congress know that you care about climate change and support action on a national level that includes the three key priorities above. For background information on the issue, go to [www.usccb.org/environment](http://www.usccb.org/environment) and the Catholic Climate Covenant [catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://catholicclimatecovenant.org).

Across the United States, Catholics are taking the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor and joining the Catholic Climate Covenant. The St. Francis Pledge is a promise and a commitment by Catholic individuals, families, parishes, organizations and institutions to live our faith by protecting God's Creation and advocating on behalf of people in poverty who face the

harshest impacts of global climate change. To join the Covenant, you commit to act on each of the five elements of the St. Francis Pledge.

## The St. Francis Pledge

I/We Pledge to:

- PRAY and REFLECT on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- LEARN about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
- ASSESS how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations- contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
- ACT to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
- ADVOCATE for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### United States Catholic bishops' Environment/Environmental Justice page

(<http://www.usccb.org/environment>)

The Catholic Church brings a distinct perspective to the discussion of environmental questions, by lifting up the moral dimensions of these issues and the needs of the most vulnerable among us. This unique contribution is rooted in Catholic teaching calling us to care for creation and for "the least of these" (Mt 25:40). This page includes helpful materials and resources such as:

- *Laudato Si'* [handout](#) and [discussion guide](#)
- [Caring for God's Creation: Resources for Liturgy, Preaching, and Taking Action](#)
- [Church Teaching on Ecology prior to Pope Francis](#)
- [Pastoral Aids and Homily Helps for Catholic Social Teaching: Care for Creation/Stewardship](#)
- [Background on Global Climate Change](#)
- [U.S. Catholic bishops' statement on Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good](#)
- Stories about [communities supporting environmental justice](#) with help from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development

**Laudato Si' Advocates Program** (<http://www.usccb.org/environment>) The U.S. Catholic bishops' Environmental Justice Program (EJP), in association with the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), have introduced an initiative called the *Laudato Si'* Advocates Program. The Program is designed to equip college-age individuals with skills to advocate for legislation that promotes the integral ecology described in *Laudato Si'*. Advocates receive a small stipend, attend a training summit in Washington, D.C., and receive instruction in advocacy.

### Two Rivers, A Report on Catholic Native American Culture and Ministry

([http://www.usccb.org/cs\\_upload/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/284740\\_1.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/cs_upload/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/284740_1.pdf)) After completing an in-depth survey of Native American/Alaskan Native Catholic Ministry, the USCCB Subcommittee on Native American Affairs published the results and also background on Native culture and Native Catholic ministry in the United States. In the report, the Subcommittee suggested action items based on the information gathered in the report.

**Catholic Climate Covenant** ([www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/)) brings Catholic people and institutions together to care for the people God loves and to live justly on God's earth. Visit the website to access resources, stories, opportunities for action, and the [St. Francis Pledge](#).

**Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM)** (<https://redamazonica.org/en>) is a Catholic network that promotes the rights and dignity of people living in the Amazon. It is a project of the nine Churches of the Amazon region, inspired by Pope Francis and supported by the Latin American Bishops' Conference, or CELAM. REPAM exists to bring to the world's attention the fragile situation

of indigenous people in the Amazon and the critical importance of the Amazon biome to the planet—our common home. The REPAM website is multi-lingual and the English mirror site includes reflections on the realities faced by indigenous persons as well as a creative *Laudato Si'* podcast series.

**To Go Forth** (<https://togoforth.org/category/care-for-creation/>) is a blog of the USCCB Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development. Dozens of articles reflect on *Laudato Si'* and the call to care for our common home.

### **We Are Salt and Light** ([WeAreSaltAndLight.org](http://WeAreSaltAndLight.org))

This website of the United States Catholic Bishops' Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development helps Catholics respond to Jesus' call to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Mt. 5:13-16). The website includes resources, assessment tools, videos, and more than 100 [inspiring stories](#) of real Catholic communities being salt and light. A number of stories feature local examples of Catholic communities caring for creation.

### **Children's Books on Caring for God's Creation** ([www.usccb.org/twofeet](http://www.usccb.org/twofeet))

Created in collaboration with Loyola Press, *Green Street Park* and *Drop by Drop* offer parents, teachers and children in grades K-5, examples of how to participate in solutions to important problems that affect the lives and dignity of others. Both storybooks focus on caring for God's creation.



In *Green Street Park*, Philip learns about how St. Francis of Assisi loved God's world and cared for it. His teacher, Sr. Mary Clare, challenges Philip and his friends to act as St. Francis would. With help from their parents, the children engage the mayor and the entire community in fixing their park.

In *Drop by Drop*, a U.S. classroom gets a visit from a worker for [Catholic Relief Services](#), who tells the story of a village in the country of Burkina Faso, in Africa. The story is about a girl named Sylvie, who is unable to attend school because it takes her several hours every day to collect the water her family needs. Her community becomes involved in a special Water Project, and the class of students in the U.S. decides to help other communities like Sylvie's have access to water.

