



LIVING **LAUDATO SI':**

A FAITH-SHARING RESOURCE
FOR SMALL GROUPS

“We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

—Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

faith. action. results.

OVERVIEW

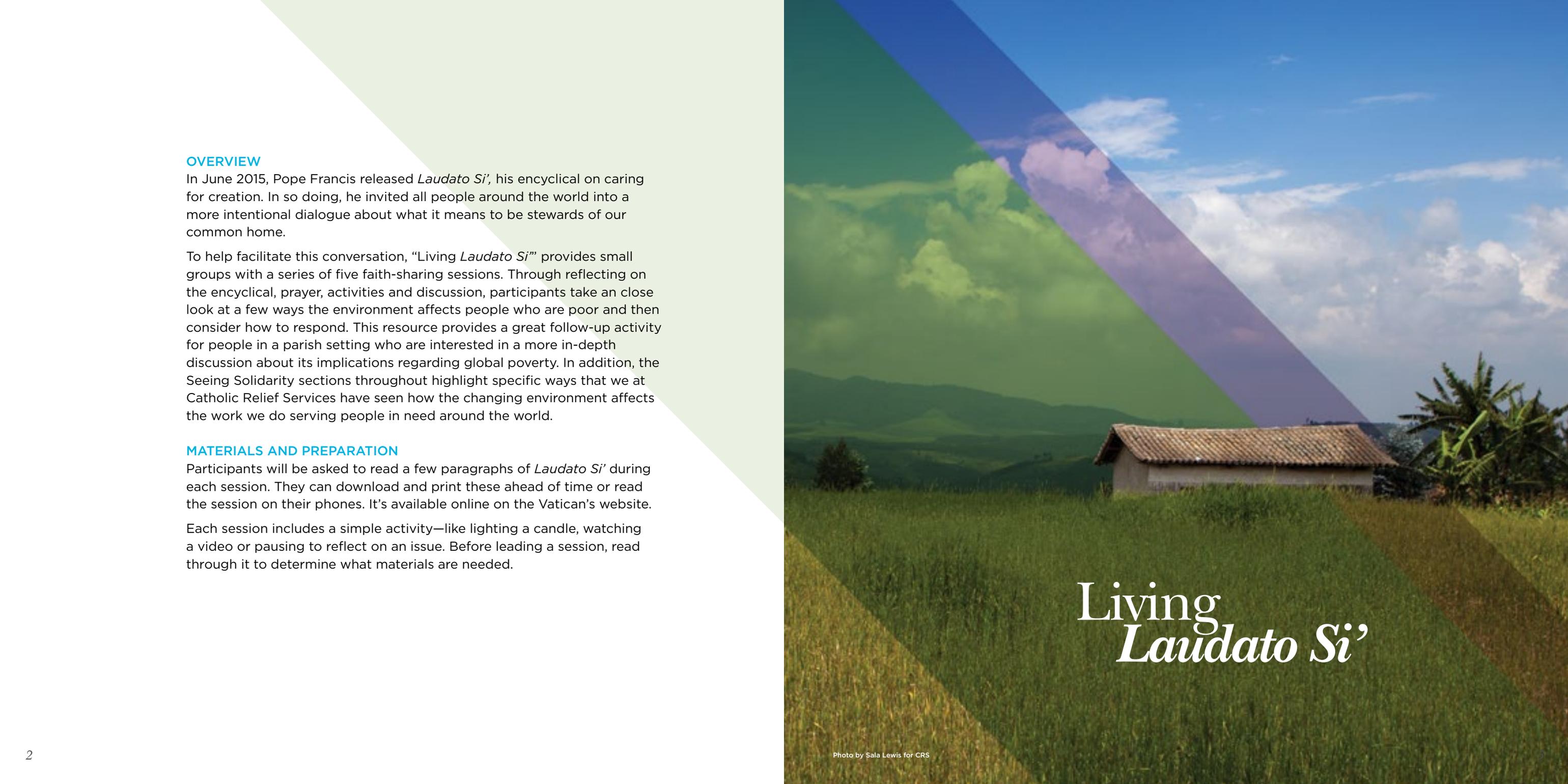
In June 2015, Pope Francis released *Laudato Si'*, his encyclical on caring for creation. In so doing, he invited all people around the world into a more intentional dialogue about what it means to be stewards of our common home.

To help facilitate this conversation, “Living *Laudato Si'*” provides small groups with a series of five faith-sharing sessions. Through reflecting on the encyclical, prayer, activities and discussion, participants take an close look at a few ways the environment affects people who are poor and then consider how to respond. This resource provides a great follow-up activity for people in a parish setting who are interested in a more in-depth discussion about its implications regarding global poverty. In addition, the Seeing Solidarity sections throughout highlight specific ways that we at Catholic Relief Services have seen how the changing environment affects the work we do serving people in need around the world.

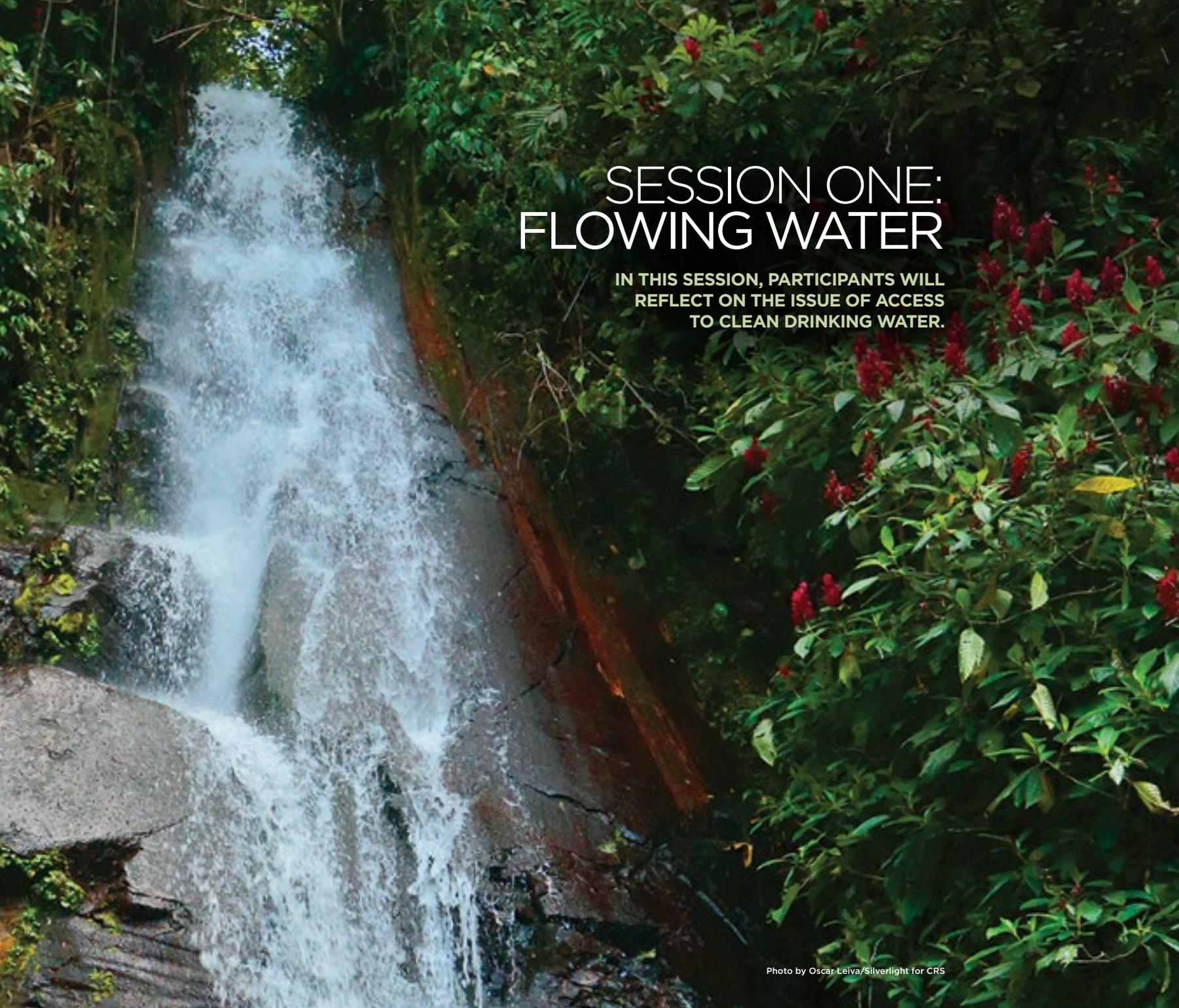
MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Participants will be asked to read a few paragraphs of *Laudato Si'* during each session. They can download and print these ahead of time or read the session on their phones. It's available online on the Vatican's website.

Each session includes a simple activity—like lighting a candle, watching a video or pausing to reflect on an issue. Before leading a session, read through it to determine what materials are needed.



Living *Laudato Si'*



SESSION ONE: FLOWING WATER

IN THIS SESSION, PARTICIPANTS WILL
REFLECT ON THE ISSUE OF ACCESS
TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER.

Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

OPENING PRAYER

*God of all creation, we thank you for flowing water,
for its quenching, cleansing power, for all that grows and flourishes
under its care. We name those things for which we are grateful.*

(Pause)

*God of all creation, we know that so many of our sisters and brothers
lack the water they need. We know, too, that at times water is destructive,
tossing communities about in storms—flooding towns, villages, homes.
We name those people, places and things for which we'd like to pray.*

(Pause)

*God of all creation, we ask that you be present in a special way as
we contemplate your gift of water, your presence in creation.*

Amen

ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Read “The Issue of Water” in *Laudato Si'*, sections 27–31

SEEING SOLIDARITY

Some residents of Manila—the capital city of the Philippines—live in particularly precarious conditions. In the early 1990s, a lowland area of rice paddies began filling with water, exacerbated by high tides on one side of the community and runoff from higher ground on the other. The water is now 5 to 7 feet high, with no drainage possible. Families that once lived in cement houses on the ground now live in bamboo homes that can be raised every few years to accommodate constantly increasing water levels. They cannot relocate because of high housing costs. Additionally, new families migrating for factory work are increasing the population density. That, when coupled with no sanitation infrastructure, leads to ongoing health risks that become critical during disasters.

ACTIVITY: Access to Water

More than 750 million people around the world lack access to safe, clean water. Women and children often spend hours a day walking long distances to collect it.

Try it. How long does it take you to access clean water? In fact, how many options for clean water do you have that are within a 2-minute walk from where you're sitting? Invite participants to get up and see how many points of access to clean water they can find—and if they're able to bring any back to the group. How long did it take you?



PROCESS: Questions to ponder

- In the excerpt from *Laudato Si'*, does Pope Francis raise any issues that strike a particular chord with you? How can you respond to the pope's invitation?
- What do you feel when you view the image from the Philippines? How might this image fit into Pope Francis' invitation—and how can you respond?
- What did the **Access to Water** activity reveal? Was there any sense of discomfort or obligation? How might these revelations influence your daily outlook?

CLOSING PRAYER: Water That Is Holy

God of the oceans, the rivers, the streams and the puddles.

Creator of rain and morning dew, quencher of thirst.

We see you in those good things you have made; we seek you in all creation. In your holy water, we meet you. There you welcome us into your family through Baptism; there you commission us to go out and serve one another.

Amen

In Christ, we have our example: **Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist.** (John 13:5) His words echo in our ears: **As I have done for you, you should also do.** (John 13:15) And so we do likewise, recognizing the sacredness in your creation, in water.

Place a basin of water at the front of the room. Those gathered form a line and approach the basin. The first person takes the second person's hands, dips them in the water and then dries them. The second person does the same for the third, and so on, until the last person washes the hands of the first.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE: Conserve water

This week, get a sense of how much water you use—whether it means taking less time in the shower, turning off the water while brushing your teeth or being more mindful while doing the dishes. And then see how much you can save.



SESSION TWO: ALL THAT GROWS

IN THIS SESSION, PARTICIPANTS
WILL REFLECT ON THE EFFECTS OF
HUMAN INTERVENTION—LIKE BIOLOGICAL
TECHNOLOGIES—ON THE ENVIRONMENT.

OPENING PRAYER

*God of all creation, we thank you for the living soil,
for its nurturing care, for all that grows and blossoms from it.
We name those things for which we are grateful.*

(Pause)

*God of all creation, we know that so many of our sisters
and brothers go hungry because the earth around them is cracked,
dry and dead. We name those people, places and things
for which we'd like to pray.*

(Pause)

*God of all creation, we ask that you be present in a special way
as we contemplate your gift of soil and all that grows from it.*

Amen



Photo by Heidi Yanulis for CRS

ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Read “New biological technologies” in *Laudato Si'*, sections 130–132

SEEING SOLIDARITY

As Pope Francis notes, sometimes human intervention in the environment can be a good—and necessary—thing. In Madagascar, countless farming communities lost their entire crop in 2013 in the wake of Cyclone Haruna. These hardworking farmers just needed a little help getting back on their feet. The CRS seed fair pictured above is helping them do just that. Farmers receive agriculture vouchers to purchase seeds, tools and livestock, and vendors benefit from a safe, structured venue where they can sell their goods.

ACTIVITY: Traveling food

In the United States, food often travels between 1,500 and 2,500 miles from farm to table. That means a ton of fuel is burned transporting it, not to mention the energy it takes to preserve it. Pope Francis invites us to consider the “human interventions” that affect our environment.

Try it. List the food and drinks you’ve consumed today and try to map them back to their source. Be realistic—how many “human interventions” did it take to get from farm to plate to your stomach?

PROCESS: Questions to ponder

- In the excerpt from *Laudato Si'*, does Pope Francis raise any issues that strike a particular chord with you? How can you respond to the pope’s invitation to care for creation?
- How do you react to the many kinds of “human interventions” that occur in our environment? How does the scene from Madagascar affect your thinking?
- Think about your own food consumption habits. Are there any that are particularly helpful to the environment? Or any that seem harmful?

CLOSING PRAYER: Commissioned by Soil

God of the earth, of the soil, of the dirt.

God of all things that grow, and sprout and bloom.

*We see you in those good things you have made; we seek you in all creation. May we learn ways to cultivate food that both nourishes our bodies and our planet. May we never take for granted the sustenance that comes forth from that soil that enables us to continue your good work. May we take for our own the words of Ecclesiastes: **One who pays heed to the wind will never sow, and one who watches the clouds will never reap.** (11:4) May we be moved to act, to match our hunger for nourishment with a hunger for justice—both for our brothers and sisters, and for our planet.*

Amen

Place a container of dirt in the center of the room. Invite participants to approach it in pairs. Each person should use the soil to make the sign of the cross in the hands of the other, repeating the mantra from Ecclesiastes: **One who pays heed to the wind will never sow, and one who watches the clouds will never reap.**

WEEKLY CHALLENGE: Eat locally

How intentional are you about where your food comes from? How informed are you about the impact such decisions have both locally and globally? Challenge yourself to answer these questions this week.

OPENING PRAYER

God of all creation, we thank you for the community of nature, for all those natural wonders that occur in each moment of which we may be hardly aware. We name those things for which we are grateful.

(Pause)

God of all creation, we know that so many of our sisters and brothers suffer in broken ecosystems and that because of forces beyond their control, their natural community is ravaged for key resources, thus causing harm. We name those people, places and things for which we'd like to pray.

(Pause)

God of all creation, we ask that you be present in a special way as we contemplate your gift of ecological wholeness and our own place within your creation.

Amen

SESSION THREE: INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEMS

IN THIS SESSION, PARTICIPANTS WILL REFLECT ON HOW THE ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY AND ECONOMY ARE ALL INTERCONNECTED.

ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Read “Environmental, Economic and Social Ecology” in *Laudato Si’*, sections 138–142

SEEING SOLIDARITY

It goes without saying that if the Department of Nariño, Colombia, can sell the coffee it grows to specialty coffee roasters in the United States, then something’s going right with the ecosystem. But as Pope Francis reminds us, we can’t separate the ecological from the social and economic. And the social and economic ecology of Nariño is less than ideal. That’s why the CRS Borderlands project is supporting more than 3,000 coffee farmers in conflict-affected communities along the Colombia-Ecuador border. We’re helping them increase their yields—and incomes—improve their coffee quality and sell their coffee to buyers in the United States.

ACTIVITY: EcoSnap

“If everything is related, then the health of society’s institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life,” Pope Francis writes. He goes on to quote Pope Benedict’s *Caritas in Veritate*: “Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment.” How often do we recognize this interconnected reality in our everyday lives?

Try it. Grab your phone and go out into your immediate “ecosystem.” Find something that points to the relationship between institutions, the environment and human life. Maybe it’s a very obvious example of how violations of solidarity harm the environment; maybe it’s a more subtle reminder of how all things work together. Take a photo and share your reflections with the group. (Consider projecting your photos so everyone can see and share.)



Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

PROCESS: Questions to ponder

- In the excerpt from *Laudato Si’*, does Pope Francis raise any issues that strike a particular chord with you? How can you respond to the pope’s invitation?
- Where are those places that you easily overlook the interconnectedness of God’s creation? How might you better recognize this “harmonious ensemble” in the future?
- How can a more “harmonious” outlook serve those who are poorest and most vulnerable?

CLOSING PRAYER: Sticks and Stones

God of all creation, three in one, whole, complete,

*We see you in those good things you have made; we seek after you in all creation. We know that all things can conspire together for your greater glory if we but allow them to. May we serve you in creation, allowing what you have made to work as one for you. We hear the words of Christ: **That they may be one, as we are one.** (John 17:22) May we join the social and the ecological in building up the Reign of God.*

Amen

Gather together various pieces of nature, like sticks, leaves and stones. Invite each participant to take one. Invite them to come to the center of the space and build a pile with the items they’ve gathered. As they place their piece of nature, invite them to name one social element (health care, immigration reform, education, etc.) that contributes to a more integrated human ecosystem.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE: Make the social, ecological—and vice versa

Pope Francis very clearly articulates that the social and ecological are very interrelated. One concrete way you can make a global difference is by buying, learning and educating others about—and advocating for—fair trade. Fair trade products are made in conditions that respect the worker and the environment.

Visit crsfairtrade.org to learn more.



SESSION FOUR: ENERGIZING GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

IN THIS SESSION, PARTICIPANTS WILL REFLECT
ON HOW INTENTIONALITY IN THEIR DAILY LIFE
MAKES A DIFFERENCE AROUND THE WORLD.

Photo courtesy of the Heartland Center

OPENING PRAYER

God of all creation, we thank you for our global community, for the air that connects us, the common planet we share, the natural experiences we all have in common no matter where we live around the globe. We name those things for which we are grateful.

(Pause)

God of all creation, we know that our inaction as a global community so often exacerbates the hardship so many of our brothers and sisters encounter day after day. We name those people, places and things for which we'd like to pray.

(Pause)

God of all creation, we ask that you be present in a special way as we contemplate our responsibility as a global community to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

Amen



Photo by Karl Grobl for CRS

ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Read “Dialogue on the Environment in the International Community” in *Laudato Si'*, sections 164–172

SEEING SOLIDARITY

In Kolkata, India—a large urban slum—families sort through garbage to find items of value that will help them earn a living. Conditions are perilous, and living among garbage means poor air quality and polluted water. Communities like Kolkata are often forgotten in the international arena of global politics, but they are affected first and worst by global inaction to climate change.

Show the video [CST 101: Care for God's Creation on CRS' YouTube channel](#)

ACTIVITY: Calculating your carbon footprint

We all have a carbon footprint and contribute—perhaps unknowingly—to an unsustainable use of energy. And embedded within that unsustainable energy use is a great injustice: the earth cries out as resources are continuously destroyed, and the poor cry out for equitable access to our shared home.

- **Try it.** A quick search on the internet will reveal several carbon footprint calculators. Choose one, and find your individual and group footprints.

PROCESS: Questions to ponder

- In the excerpt from *Laudato Si'*, does Pope Francis raise any issues that strike a particular chord with you? How can you respond to the pope's invitation?
- Global solidarity reminds us that we are all responsible for all—something often forgotten in conversations on international stewardship and sustainability. How can you model this sense of solidarity, taking into account both the cries of the earth and the poor?
- What contributes most to your carbon footprint? How might you be able to reduce it?

CLOSING PRAYER: A Single Candle

God of all creation, a community of three inviting a community of all,

*We see you in those good things you have made; we seek after you in all creation. You ask us to be good stewards of the earth and invite us to collaborate in your great work. You call us to come together as one human family sharing one common home. We ask that your Holy Spirit come upon and guide us as we continue to more closely interconnect our lives. We ask that we may do so in justice, peace and prudence so that we too, like the early disciples, **may have all things in common.** (Acts 2:44)*

Amen

- Give each person a candle. From one common flame, invite each person to step forward, one by one, light their candle and name something in their lives into which they'd like to shine a light.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE: Use less energy

Do a serious assessment of your daily routine. Where is your carbon footprint most apparent? Are you able to walk or bike instead of drive? How many lights do you turn on to light a single room? How much energy goes into producing the food you eat? How might simplifying your life conserve energy?



SESSION FIVE: A SPIRITUALITY OF INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

IN THIS SESSION, PARTICIPANTS WILL REFLECT ON
HOW SIMPLE LIVING BRINGS US JOY AND PEACE.

Photo by Kim Burgo /CRS

OPENING PRAYER

*God of all creation, we thank you for our global community,
for the air that connects us, the common planet we share,
the experiences we have in common—no matter where we live
around the globe. We name those things for which we are grateful.*

(Pause)

*God of all creation, we know that our inaction as a global
community so often leads to the hardship so many of our brothers
and sisters encounter day after day. We name those people, places
and things for which we'd like to pray.*

(Pause)

*God of all creation, we ask that you be present in a special way as
we contemplate our responsibility as a global community to hear
both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*

Amen

ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Read “Joy and Peace” in *Laudato Si'*, sections 222–227

SEEING SOLIDARITY

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them ... But seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.” (Matthew 6:25–34)

Photo by Philip Laubner/CRS



ACTIVITY: Canticle of the Sun

“When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them,” Pope Francis writes. He goes on to reflect on a famous hymn by Saint Francis of Assisi, typically known as “Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon.” (Sections 84–88 of *Laudato Si'* provide part of the text and further reflection, while searching the internet will deliver the rest.)

Try it. Create a piece of artwork that reflects how your heart is moved by the wonder of creation. Consider writing a poem, making a painting or composing your own prayer.

PROCESS: Questions to ponder

- In the excerpt from *Laudato Si'*, does Pope Francis raise any issues that strike a particular chord with you? How can you respond to the pope’s invitation?
- How do the words of the Gospel resonate with your personal spirituality? In what ways does your faith life assume an integral eco-spirituality—and in what ways might you desire growth? What role does simplicity play?
- Describe the experience of creating your artwork. Was it easy or hard? Why?

CLOSING PRAYER: Praised Be

Praised be you, God of all creation,

We see you in those good things you have made, in the light of brother sun and sister moon; in the rush of brothers wind and air, in the cool touch of sister water and in the nourishing bounty of our mother the Earth.

Amen

■ Invite those gathered to share some or all of their own reflective art. End with “A prayer for our earth” found in *Laudato Si'*, section 246.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE: Kenosis, or self-emptying

In your ongoing ecological conversion, how can you continue to remove those things in your life that get in the way of hearing the cries of the earth and the poor? How can your personal fast become a feast for our one human family and our common home?



Visit confrontglobalpoverty.org/climate-change for free tools that can help you urge lawmakers to enact policies that respect God's creation.

Catholics Confront Global Poverty is an initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services. As the official voice of the Catholic Church in the U.S., we call on Catholics and our nation to defend the lives and dignity of people living in poverty worldwide, through advocacy and action.

THREE BILLION PEOPLE ARE AT RISK.

Many people in the developing world live simply. They contribute little to climate change. Yet they are the ones feeling it first—and they will be hit the hardest if we do nothing.

In rural areas, farmers and fishers who depend on the Earth for nourishment and livelihoods are already feeling the effects of climate change.

Droughts and floods mean losses to income, crops, livestock and homes. Pests and disease are on the rise, threatening crops and human health. Shifting rainfall patterns leave farmers uncertain when to plant. Higher temperatures shorten crop lifecycles and decrease yields.

We must help communities adapt to a new reality of a harsher climate. But adapting requires more than compassion. It's essential that the United States take a leadership role in addressing climate change and supporting efforts that help poorer communities adapt to our changing climate.



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