

Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor

A prayer vigil in solidarity with vulnerable people affected by climate change

MATERIALS

Audio-visual equipment and internet access

Baskets to collect letters

Bible open to Genesis 1:9-12

Copies of the solidarity vigil for the leader, cantor and readers

Copies of letters to members of Congress personalized for your community. (See options below and letters on pages 7–8.)

Music for “[Canticle of the Sun](#),” OCP, and song sheets for participants

Pens for participants

Table (on which to place symbolic objects)

Symbolic objects to represent each story:

A pitcher or basin of water

Soil

Bread or other symbol of food

Videos from CRS’ website and YouTube channel:

- [“CST 101: Care for God’s Creation”](#)
- [“Ethiopian Women Pray for Rain”](#)
- [“Julio’s Interview”](#)
- [“Behind the Scenes: Lake Poopó”](#)
- [“Climate Change | It Changes Everything”](#)

PREPARATION

- Set up the vigil space:
 - Place the table in a central place at the front of room. Place the symbolic objects at the back.
 - Place baskets, copies of letters to Congress and pens at the front of the room.
 - Test videos.
 - Place a Bible and a copy of the solidarity vigil at the podium or lectern.
- Prepare the cantor to lead “[Canticle of the Sun](#),” OCP.
- Prepare one leader and six readers. Give each reader a copy of this solidarity vigil with their part highlighted.
- Invite and prepare three participants to bring the symbolic objects up to the table at the appropriate time.
- Prepare someone to cue the PowerPoint presentation and play the videos.
- Prepare the letters to your members of Congress. Choose from one of the following two options:

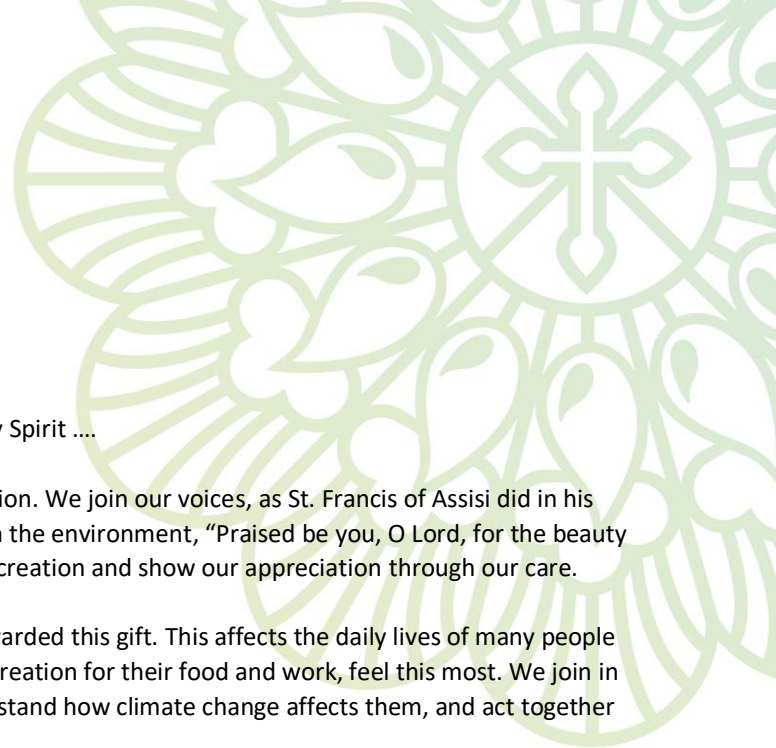


OPTION 1: PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFY THEIR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS DURING THE VIGIL.

- This option is preferable if participants represent many districts (i.e., a university setting where students are from different states or different parts of the state).
- This approach requires participants to access the internet. You can either set up laptops/tablets connected to Wi-Fi or rely on participants to use their smartphones.
- If you choose this option, make copies of each letter as is from pages 7-8 for each participant. Each person will need three letters: one for each of their two senators and one for their representative.
- During the event, you will show participants how to identify their senators and representative, and how to address the letters. They will complete the letters with the date of the event and the name of the community (parish, school, etc.) that is hosting the solidarity vigil, and other information.
- During the letter-writing section, offer to show participants how to find their members of Congress online at confrontglobalpoverty.com/toolkit, using the “Find your district” button under the section labeled “Meet with Congress.” Ask them to enter their ZIP code when prompted. After they enter it, the names of their two senators and representative will pop up. They should write the full names of their senators and representative at the top of their letters on the lines, “The Honorable _____” and “Dear Senator(s)/Representative _____”

OPTION 2: ORGANIZERS PREPARE THE LETTERS WITH SENATORS’ AND REPRESENTATIVES’ NAMES IN ADVANCE.

- This option is preferable if the majority of participants are from the same state and district.
- Copy and paste the sample letter on pages 7-8 into documents with your institution’s letterhead. Visit confrontglobalpoverty.com/toolkit, “Find Your District” under “Meet With Congress,” and enter your institution’s ZIP code. Your senators’ and representative’s names will pop up.
- Pre-address the letters to the senators and representative listed. Add the date of the event and the name of the community (parish, school, etc.) that is hosting the solidarity vigil.
- Print copies for participants. Each participant will receive three letters: two for their senators and one for their representative.
- Letters will have the most impact if they are hand delivered to local offices. [Check out these tips](#) on how to set up a meeting with your member of Congress. And, after your visit, [let Catholics Confront Global Poverty know](#) you had a meeting and how it went.
- If you can’t hand deliver the letters to members, it’s best to mail them to their local or district offices. If you are mailing letters to several states and/or districts, be sure to mail the letters separately to each senator and representative. You can find senators’ addresses by visiting www.senate.gov, and representatives by visiting www.house.gov.
- It helps to send along a copy of any press coverage of the solidarity vigil along with the letters. Also, be sure to follow up with each member of Congress you sent a letter to so you’ll know whether they received it.



Welcome

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 1.

Opening prayer

LEADER: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

Today, we gather to pray in thanksgiving for the goodness of creation. We join our voices, as St. Francis of Assisi did in his Canticle of the Sun, and as Pope Francis echoed in his encyclical on the environment, “Praised be you, O Lord, for the beauty and goodness of the created world!” We thank God for the gift of creation and show our appreciation through our care.

We also join together because we realize we have not always stewarded this gift. This affects the daily lives of many people around the world. The poorest and most vulnerable, who rely on creation for their food and work, feel this most. We join in solidarity today to pray for these people, learn their stories, understand how climate change affects them, and act together to create a better world.

Scripture reading

READER ONE: A reading from the book of Genesis:

“Then God said: Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear. And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared. God called the dry land ‘earth,’ and the basin of water he called ‘sea.’ God saw that it was good. Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And so it happened: the earth brought forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw that it was good.” (Genesis 1:9-12)

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: Thanks be to God.

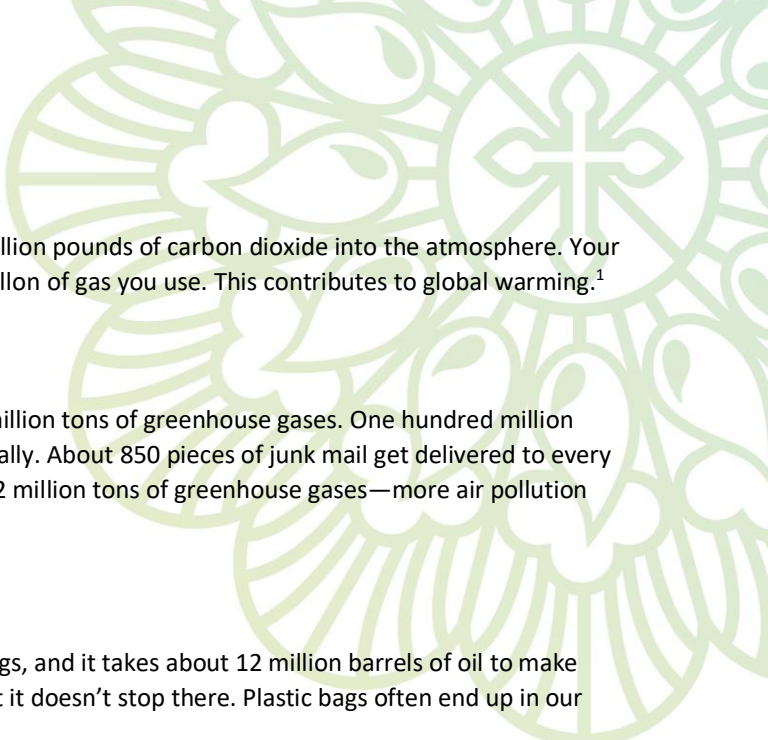
Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor: Reflection and Ritual

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 2.

PLAY VIDEO: [“CST 101: Care for God’s Creation”](#) from CRS’ YouTube channel.

LEADER: Cardinal Turkson’s words at the end of the video are powerful. He says caring for creation calls for unity and a reciprocal relationship between people and their environment. “We received the earth as a garden. It would be very unfair if we pass on the earth as a wilderness.” We—the people in this room—share a common home with all of creation, and also with everyone in our house, on our block, in our city, in our country, on the other side of the world. The common home is our planet, which we have been given by God as a gift, and which reflects God’s goodness. But when that home is damaged, not everyone feels it in the same way. Although we all rely on the earth for food and sustenance, many in our global family are more vulnerable to changes to the environment and have fewer resources to adapt. Furthermore, vulnerable communities are typically those least responsible for degrading the environment. For example:

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 3.



READER TWO: Each year, drivers in the United States release 3.3 trillion pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Your car alone releases around 24 pounds of carbon dioxide for every gallon of gas you use. This contributes to global warming.¹

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 4.

READER TWO: Each year, throwing away junk mail produces 56.2 million tons of greenhouse gases. One hundred million trees are destroyed to produce 100 billion pieces of junk mail annually. About 850 pieces of junk mail get delivered to every household in the United States. Throwing them away results in 56.2 million tons of greenhouse gases—more air pollution than every car in New York City and Los Angeles combined.²

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 5.

READER TWO: Each year, Americans use about 30 million plastic bags, and it takes about 12 million barrels of oil to make them. That leads to carbon dioxide build-up in our atmosphere. But it doesn't stop there. Plastic bags often end up in our landfills or in our oceans, disrupting the ecosystem.

LEADER: How many of us experience the effects of climate change in our daily lives? For us in this room, things might not seem much different than they did 10 years ago, but the poorest people on the planet are feeling the change. Even most the Americans who have been affected by natural disasters can still adapt, stay safe and protect their families from the worst. This is not the reality across the globe.

May we remember that we are all part of one common home, and that the energy we consume each day—in ways we may not even be aware of—directly impacts people who depend on the environment for their food and work.

[Pause]

LEADER: We will now take part in a prayer ritual to remind us that we all share the same resources and live in one common home.

READER THREE: Water. Water is a beautiful gift from God. Our seas, lakes and waterfalls are some of God's most gorgeous creations. Water is also life. Most of us use water without thinking to drink, cook, clean, bathe, brush our teeth, flush the toilet and sustain our plants. Every person around the world needs clean water on a daily basis to live, but not everyone has such easy access. Severe drought, for example, makes it extremely difficult for many people to find water.

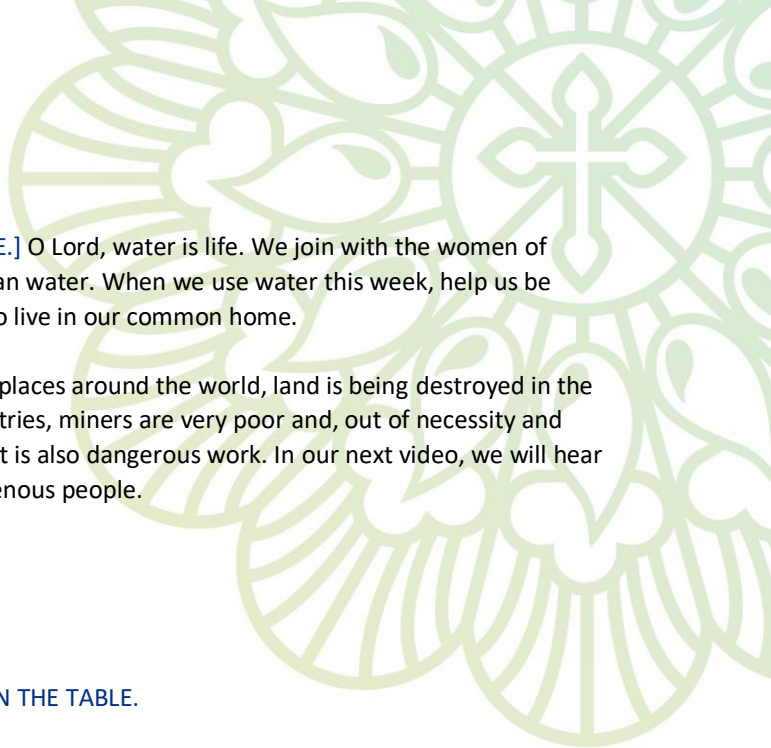
CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 6.

PLAY VIDEO: "[Ethiopian Women Pray for Rain](#)" from CRS' YouTube channel.

PARTICIPANT BRINGS A BASIN OR PITCHER OF WATER AND SETS IT ON TABLE.

¹ Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

² Source: [TakePart.com](#)



READER THREE: [READS AS PARTICIPANT SETS BASIN ON THE TABLE.] O Lord, water is life. We join with the women of Ethiopia to pray for rain, and that all people will have access to clean water. When we use water this week, help us be mindful of our usage, and how important water is to all people who live in our common home.

READER FOUR: Soil. Soil is essential for the food we grow. In many places around the world, land is being destroyed in the hunt for resources, like oil, coal and precious metals. In many countries, miners are very poor and, out of necessity and desperation, take part in destroying the land they need to live on. It is also dangerous work. In our next video, we will hear Julio Cusirichi Palacios, from Peru, share what this means for indigenous people.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 7.

PLAY VIDEO: "[Julio's Interview](#)" from CRS' website.

PARTICIPANT BRINGS UP SOIL AND SETS IT NEXT TO THE WATER ON THE TABLE.

READER FOUR: [READS AS PARTICIPANT SETS SOIL ON THE TABLE.] O Lord, you created the earth, yet there was no one to till the ground until you created human beings in your own image. May we remember that from the beginning of time we have been endowed with the great gift of caring for the land. Let us remember to be conscious about buying products that were made in a way that respects the earth and those whose lives depend on it every day.

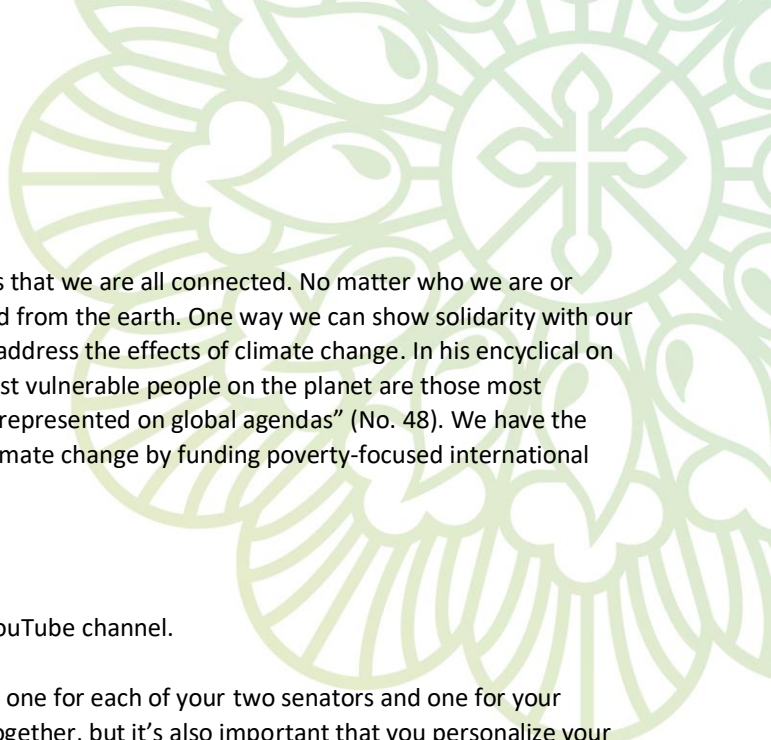
CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 8.

READER FIVE: Food. When we eat, we do so for nourishment, enjoyment and as a ritual to build community with our friends and family. Eating is also a spiritual act. In the Our Father, we pray for "our daily bread." Yet, how often do we stop to reflect before a meal or snack about where the ingredients come from? Our food comes from the labor of the hands, feet and bodies of others—labor that is often backbreaking, underpaid and underappreciated. In our next video, we will see how the effects of climate change have dramatically altered a community's ability to access food and livelihoods.

PLAY VIDEO: "[Behind the Scenes: Lake Poopó](#)" from CRS' YouTube channel.

PARTICIPANT BRINGS UP BREAD OR OTHER SYMBOL OF FOOD AND SETS IT ON THE TABLE.

READER FIVE: [READS AS PARTICIPANT SETS BREAD OR OTHER SYMBOL OF FOOD ON THE TABLE.] We pray that we will be mindful of our consumption, especially our eating and drinking, as we remember our connectedness and the effects of our actions on others. We also pray that "our daily bread" and that of our brothers and sisters around the world is seen as a gift from God rather than something to be exploited. Give us the courage to recognize that everything we consume comes from somewhere and affects someone, and give us the determination to act accordingly.



Letter writing

LEADER: These symbols of our planet’s natural resources remind us that we are all connected. No matter who we are or where we live, we need water, soil and our “daily bread,” cultivated from the earth. One way we can show solidarity with our most vulnerable brothers and sisters is by asking our legislators to address the effects of climate change. In his encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis reminds us that the most vulnerable people on the planet are those most affected by climate change. He also says the issue is “insufficiently represented on global agendas” (No. 48). We have the power to speak up and ask our members of Congress to address climate change by funding poverty-focused international assistance, particularly the Green Climate Fund.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 9.

PLAY VIDEO: “[Climate Change I It Changes Everything](#)” from CRS’ YouTube channel.

LEADER: In a moment, I will distribute three letters to each person: one for each of your two senators and one for your representative. We make a difference when we lift up our voices together, but it’s also important that you personalize your message to Congress. I invite you to take a few moments to edit your letters by adding your name, a few lines about why this issue is important to you, and your signature and home address. Please also fill in the blanks about this event, noting our name and your role here (student, parishioner). After you finish your letters, place them in a basket at the front.

DISTRIBUTE LETTERS AND PENS.

[IF YOU ARE ASKING PARTICIPANTS TO FIND THEIR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 10. Direct them to use their smartphones, laptops or tablets. Ask them to visit confrontglobalpoverty.com/toolkit, click “Find,” enter their ZIP code and find their senators and representative. **IF YOU WILL HAND DELIVER LETTERS:** Adapt these instructions if a group of your participants will be hand delivering the letters to local congressional offices.]

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 11.

Closing prayer

READER SIX: As we close, we offer this prayer from Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si’*:

All-powerful God,
You are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

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

Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the Earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

Amen

Closing song

CANTOR LEADS: “[Canticle of the Sun](#),” OCP.



The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Address: _____

Dear Representative _____,

My name is _____, and I am deeply concerned that many poor farmers and their families around the world are seeing longer droughts, erratic rainfall, greater flooding and more damage to their crops from pests and disease, attributed to climate change. Such conditions are significantly impacting smallscale farmers' ability to provide food for their families and earn sustainable incomes.

As a _____ at _____, I am learning about this issue and how to help our brothers and sisters in need. On ___/___/___, we hosted a prayer vigil for members of our community to learn about, pray for and advocate to help people facing climate change and hunger.

I care about this issue because _____

It is my deep conviction that we have a moral obligation to act in the face of this situation. There are many ways to help poor families adapt to the changing climate, but more funding is needed to support such efforts. Pope Francis has asked that countries like the United States, which have a great bounty, provide "the financial resources and technical assistance needed to help [poor countries] deal with climate change and promote sustainable development." This is why it is essential to support robust funding for poverty-focused international assistance programs, particularly the Green Climate Fund. It is important to me, your constituent, that you take such action.

Thank you for hearing my concerns.

Sincerely,

Home address:





The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Address: _____

Dear Senator _____,

My name is _____, and I am deeply concerned that many poor farmers and their families around the world are seeing longer droughts, erratic rainfall, greater flooding and more damage to their crops from pests and disease, attributed to climate change. Such conditions are significantly impacting smallscale farmers' ability to provide food for their families and earn sustainable incomes.

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