



CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME

**a prayer service to  
reflect and act on  
climate change**

[crs.org/act](https://crs.org/act)

Text ACT to 677-68

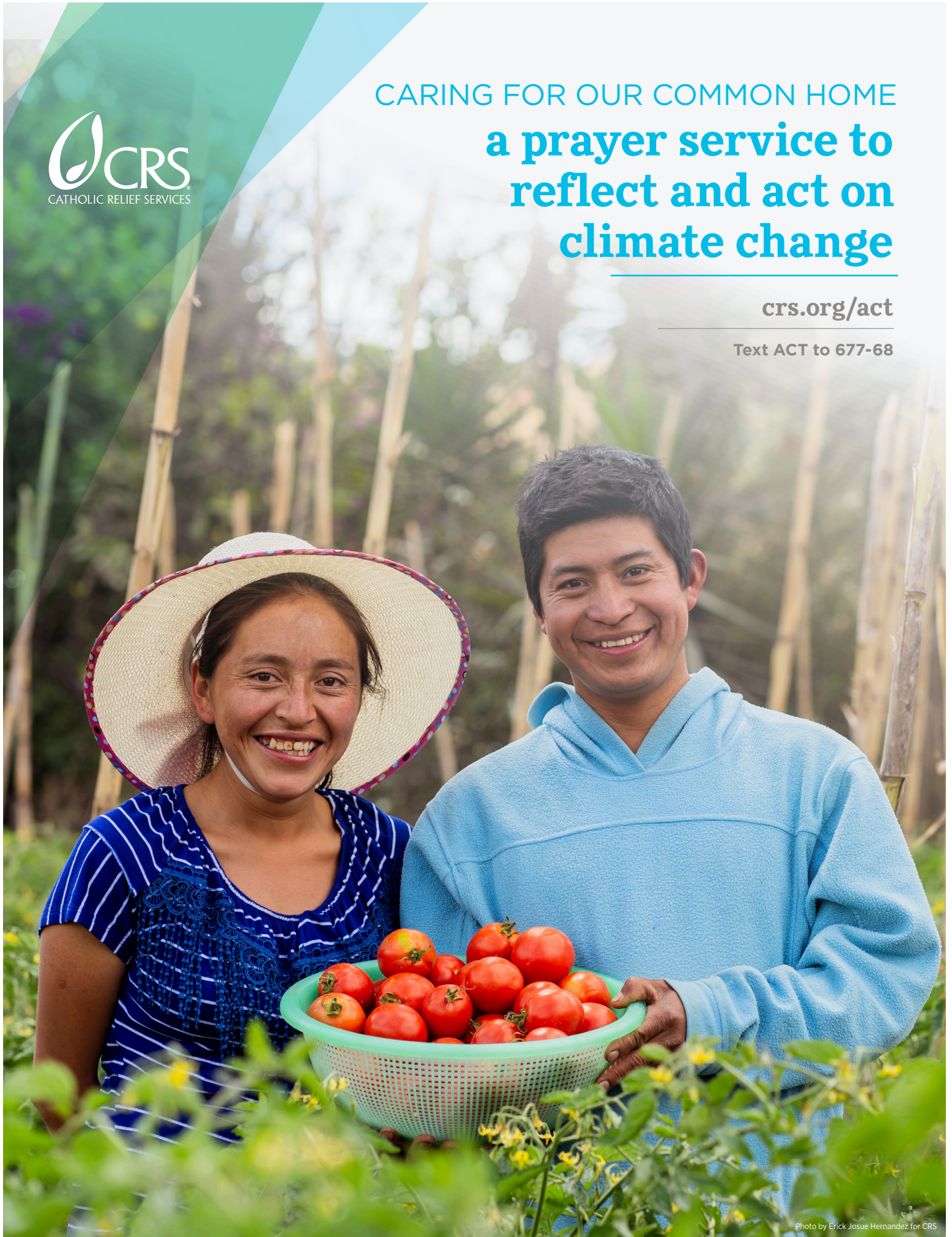


Photo by Erick Josue Hernandez for CRS



## OVERVIEW

Climate change continues to be an urgent challenge for our world today and especially affects people who live in poor and vulnerable communities. How are families around the world being impacted by changing weather patterns that bring severe storms and inclement weather? And how can we act now to care for our common home and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our sisters and brothers who are experiencing the effects of climate change the most?

This prayer service provides materials to learn, pray, reflect and act on climate change. Through stories, Scripture and Church documents, reflections and small group discussions, participants are invited to consider how they might live out the call to address climate change and take action today for our global family.





## FACILITATOR NOTES

You can use this resource in its entirety as a stand-alone prayer service with reflection and small-group discussion. Or you can adapt it to fit into another event. Using parts of the introduction, Scripture reflection and commissioning prayer sections, you can create a 30-minute prayerful experience for your community.

This prayer service includes three main sections:

Part 1: An Introduction to Climate Change.

Part 2: Reflecting on Our Common Home and Climate Change.

Part 3: Taking Action for Our Global Family.

### MATERIALS

- Readings included in handouts.
- Candle.
- Basket with flowers or fruit and vegetables.
- Copies of the "Cultivate and Care Reflection" handout for each participant.\*
- Copies of the "Reflection Questions" handout for each small group.\*
- Copies of this prayer service for the leader and two readers.\*
- Copies of the "Prayer for Climate Change" for each participant.\*
- Equipment to show **"The Story of Eulalio" video** and to play instrumental music for reflection.

*\*If you are offering a virtual prayer service, you'll want to ensure your participants have electronic handouts.*

### PREPARATION

- For Part 3: Taking Action, determine if you are using option 1 or 2, or both. If you are doing option 2, you can find the most updated advocacy letter about climate change by visiting CRS' climate change campaign on [crs.org/act](https://crs.org/act).
- Set up the room so that participants will be able to share in groups of four. If holding the prayer service virtually, consider setting up break out rooms for your participants.
- Place the basket, candle and Bible on a table in the center of the room. Distribute the handouts and pens to each participant. If hosting a virtual prayer service, send handouts electronically to participants.
- Select one facilitator per group who will ensure that everyone in the group has a chance to speak.
- Select two readers for the whole group.

# PART 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

## INTRODUCTION AND OPENING PRAYER (3 MINUTES)

**LEADER:** Our world is currently facing a climate change crisis. Sparked by the industrial revolution, changes to the world's climate have been intensifying in recent decades. These changes are being caused by a rapid increase in emissions from fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas. The poor distribution and indiscriminate abuse of the earth's resources put at risk the permanence of humanity and that of all the species on the planet.

Pope Francis alerts us in *Laudato Si'* to the urgent need to protect our common home. He challenges us to unite the entire human family in the pursuit of sustainable development. And he urgently asks us to enter into a new dialogue on ways to build a better future for our planet. We must have a conversation that unites us, because the environmental challenge we are experiencing, and its human roots, concerns us all.

In name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** *Amen.*

**LEADER:** Let's begin by praying the "Prayer for Climate Change."

*(Refer to Prayer for Climate Change handout.)*

## STORIES OF CLIMATE CHANGE (20 MINUTES)

**LEADER:** What do you already know about the impact of climate change?

*(Allow a couple of minutes for answer.)*

The effects of climate change have impacted all of us, at home and abroad. But they have hit poor and vulnerable communities the hardest. Often these communities live in low-lying coastal zones, dry arid regions or flood-prone areas, making them more susceptible to droughts and flooding—devastating homes and communities, disrupting livelihoods and causing an increase in hunger and migration.

We're going to watch a video that will introduce our brother Eulalio from Honduras and see how he is taking control of the challenges that climate change has produced in his area through the support of CRS.

*(Play ["The Story of Eulalio" video.](#))*


**READER 1:** This is only one of many stories we know about the effects of climate change on small farmers and what they are doing to overcome those challenges.

More frequent and severe weather changes are directly impacting millions of farmers around the world who depend on the ability to grow and harvest crops for their livelihood. It also destroys homes and displaces families, causing economic instability and inequality.

These changes disrupt the efforts of communities and families who have been working hard to lift themselves out of poverty. Instead of being able to thrive, they are fighting merely to survive.



Photo by Nancy McNally/CRS



**LEADER:** In small groups of four, discuss the reflection questions in the “Stories about Climate Change” section of your reflection questions handout. When 10 minutes have passed, we’ll come back together and share a couple of reflections in the large group.

*(Give participants 10 minutes to discuss the following questions.)*

- What stood out to you in the story? What resonated with you? What challenged you?
- Have you or someone close to you experienced the effects of inclement or severe weather? What was that like?
- Is there anything you are currently doing personally or in your community to care for our common home and address the issue of climate change?

**LEADER:** Let’s come back together. Are there one or two people who would like to share their reflections with the large group?

*(Take one or two reflections from the group.)*

## PART 2: REFLECTING ON OUR COMMON HOME AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### A REFLECTION ON SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION (20 MINUTES)

**LEADER:** Now that we’ve reflected on stories of how climate change is impacting our own lives and the world, let’s turn to Scripture and Catholic Tradition to reflect on how we can enlighten our response to these situations. We will respond to each reading by saying together, “Dear God, open our hearts to cultivate and care for our common home.”

**READER 1:** A reading from the book of Genesis.

God created mankind in his image. ... God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. (Gen. 1:27-31)

**ALL:** *Dear God, open our hearts to cultivate and care for our common home.*

**READER 2:** A reading from the book of Leviticus.

For six years you may sow your field, and for six years prune your vineyard, gathering in their produce. But during the seventh year, the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest, a sabbath for the Lord, when you may neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. It shall be a year of rest for the land. (Lev. 25: 3-5)

**ALL:** *Dear God, open our hearts to cultivate and care for our common home.*

*(Give a moment for quiet reflection and then invite the reader to begin the reading on Tradition.)*

**READER 1:** A reading from Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. (13)

We need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair. Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems. (61)

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature. (139)

**ALL:** *Dear God, open our hearts to cultivate and care for our common home.*

**READER 2:** A reading from Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*.

The environment is 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. (48)

**ALL:** *Dear God, open our hearts to cultivate and care for our common home.*

*(Give a moment for quiet reflection.)*

**LEADER:** Now, in small groups of four, discuss the reflection questions in the "Climate Change, Scripture and Tradition" section of your reflection questions handout. After 15 minutes have passed, we'll come back together and share a couple of reflections in the large group.

*(Give participants 15 minutes to discuss the questions.)*

- What is the challenge that Scripture and Tradition presents to us today about climate change, and how can we respond to it?
- Why is the Church insistent on caring for creation and for those who are affected by climate change?
- What are some ways you might help those who are affected by climate change in your own community? In your country? Around the world?


*(Take one or two reflections from the group.)*

## PART 3: TAKING ACTION WITH OUR GLOBAL FAMILY

**LEADER:** We recognize that the effects of climate change are present in many places around the world and that we must act together to serve those who are most vulnerable. With a people-centered approach, we can work to find sustainable solutions that help us better care for God's creation and each other, and to become better stewards of the Earth, the common home we share.



Photo by Dooshima Tsee/aniel Etter for CRS



As prophetic advocates in our community, we are called to plant and nurture seeds of change through prayer and action. After reflecting on our experiences and the stories we've heard along with Scripture and Tradition, let's put our faith into action using the gifts and strengths we were created with.

We're going to take some time now to move from reflection into action.

### OPTION 1. CULTIVATE AND CARE REFLECTION (15 MINUTES)

**LEADER:** You each have a copy of the "Cultivate and Care" reflection handout. Take a few minutes for prayerful reflection on how God calls each of us to cultivate and care for creation and for others. First, write down lifestyle changes you could commit to as an individual or family. Then, write down the gifts and skills that you can use to effect change locally and worldwide. As an example, you could write:

**I will plant seeds of change by committing to these lifestyle changes:**

- Being more mindful of waste by implementing reusable water bottles, grocery bags and other items.
- Being more mindful of food waste by not purchasing or cooking more than I can reasonably consume.

**Gifts and skills I can nurture to enact change in the local and global community:**

- Write letters to my representatives in Congress.
- Implement climate change lessons, discussions and activities in my ministry program.
- Organize a fundraiser at my parish to raise awareness of how climate change affects people around the world and donate the proceeds to Catholic Relief Services.

*(Give participants five minutes to write down their lifestyle changes and gifts/skills. Ask them to fold the paper where they have written their lifestyle changes, leaving their names visible. Play a reflection song of your choice in the background.)*

**LEADER:** Now that you have finished, would anyone like to share one or two items from their list?

*(Allow time for participants to share with the group).*

Thank you all for sharing! Now I would like to ask each of you to bring your piece of paper to the front of the room and place them in the garden basket. As you place it in the basket say, "Lord, help me to cultivate with care."

*(Once everyone has placed their notes in the basket, continue to the next section.)*

### OPTION 2. LETTERS TO CONGRESS (15 MINUTES)

**LEADER:** Now that we've made our personal commitments to address climate change, we are going to act together as a community. We're going to write to our members of Congress, asking them to address the issue of climate change to ensure people who are the least responsible and have the most to lose are not further harmed. Advocating with our elected officials is one of the most effective tools we have to positively impact the lives of our sisters and brothers around the world.

*(Action may be taken digitally or by handwriting letters. Share the relevant instructions with your participants, depending on which method you choose for your event.)*

### **DIGITAL ACTION INSTRUCTIONS**

**LEADER:** Digital actions—such as email—are the fastest way to share your message with your members of Congress. You can access the relevant action alert in one of two ways:

1. Visit CRS' climate change campaign on [crs.org/act](https://crs.org/act) and click on the "Act Now" button.
2. Text **CLIMATE CHANGE to 677-68**. You'll receive a direct link to the action alert in response to your text message.

Whether you access the advocacy action alert on your phone via text or the website, you'll see a blank text box that you can edit to personalize your message. Be sure to say who you are and why you care about this issue. Personalized messages to Congress are 10 times more effective than ones that are not personalized!

### **OFFLINE ACTION INSTRUCTIONS**

**LEADER:** We've passed out copies of the latest CRS advocacy action alert on climate change as well as blank paper, pens and envelopes. You can use the language in the action alert to help you craft your own letters to your members of Congress. Be sure to make your ask clear and to include who you are and why you care about this issue. Your members of Congress want to know why this issue matters to you! When you have finished your letter, please hand it to me.

### **NOTES FOR LEADER**

- Copies of the advocacy action alert can be found by visiting CRS' climate change campaign on [crs.org/act](https://crs.org/act) and clicking on the "Act Now" button.
- Delivering your letters: Decide how you will share these letters with your members of Congress. Your letters will have the most impact if they are hand-delivered to the local offices by organizing a meeting with key members of your community. If this is not feasible you may mail the letters to their offices. Be sure you send the correct letters to the correct members of Congress.



Photo by Lisa Murray for CRS



## COMMISSIONING PRAYER (3 MINUTES)

**LEADER:** Let us come together and conclude our time in prayer.

Dear God, you have called us from the beginning of time to be in harmony with our sisters and brothers, with all creation and with you.

Today, the ambition of few has taken away from many the goods of the earth. Your precious creation is struggling to regenerate itself because we have been careless and have been consuming what was also meant to be for those who would come after us.

We have forgotten that you created this world for all, and we have been using it, each time more, only for personal interests.

We pray that we may embrace your call to care for our common home.

We ask you to help us to be attentive to the cry of the planet, to the cry of those who have been dispossessed by our greed.

We humbly ask for your blessing so we may find new ways or rediscover paths to care for the land, the water, and the air.

We pray that all our sisters and brothers who are experiencing the effects of climate change discover that they are not alone, that when they turn their eyes in search of support, they can find help in us. Give us a generous heart so that hope may be reborn in the tender care of our common home and one another.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

**Amen**

*(At the end of the prayer remind everyone to pick up their note to keep as a reminder of their commitment.)*



Photo by Dooshima Tsee/CRS



# Prayer on Climate Change

## CARING FOR ONE PLANET, ONE FAMILY



*Oh God, creator and owner of all that exists,  
you have given us rule over the works of your hands,  
and put all things at our feet because you made  
everything good.  
However, our ambition has led us to act selfishly,  
to find ways to use up your gifts  
and discard them when they are no longer useful to us.*

*Little by little, we have been wearing out what seemed to be endless,  
and very late we realized that  
where there were waters in which the fishermen sailed,  
now there are deserts and abandoned boats.  
Where there were trees in which birds nested,  
now there are ashes from logs consumed by fires.  
Where there were fields where animals grazed,  
now there is a world of concrete.  
Where there was joy when the rain watered the lands,  
now there is sadness because the rain's intensity devastated the crops.  
Where there were houses where families grew up,  
now there are memories flooded by the rising rivers and seas.  
Where the brightness of the stars and the moon could be seen,  
now the night sky lights up with car headlights.*

*Holy Father, do not let us be indifferent to what is happening around us.  
Send your Holy Spirit  
to water our arid hearts with hope,  
stoke in us the flame of fraternity,  
make us set the world on fire with acts of justice in favor of those who suffer most,  
transform our attitudes and make our minds fertile to new ways of living,  
enlighten us to propose, support and defend projects and laws that protect the environment,  
take our hands to till ways of solidarity,  
and make our works and words bear fruit.*

*Send your Holy Spirit  
like a wind that changes the way we relate to each other and to nature,  
like a fresh breeze that purifies our intentions,  
like fire that ignites our being with your love for our common home and those who live in it.  
Make us overflow with joy once again when we contemplate your wonders.*

**Amen**



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### STORIES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

- What stood out to you in the story? What resonated with you? What challenged you?
- Have you or someone close to you experienced the effects of inclement or severe weather? What was that like?
- Is there anything you are currently doing personally or in your community to care for our common home and address the issue of climate change?

### A REFLECTION ON SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

- What is the challenge that Scripture and Tradition presents to us today about climate change, and how can we respond to it?
- Why is the Church insistent on caring for creation and for those who are affected by climate change?
- What are some ways you might help those who are affected by climate change in your own community? In your country? Around the world?

## CARE FOR CREATION IN SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

### Genesis 1:27-31

"God created mankind in his image. ... God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good."

### Leviticus 25:3-5

"For six years you may sow your field, and for six years prune your vineyard, gathering in their produce. But during the seventh year, the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest, a sabbath for the Lord, when you may neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. It shall be a year of rest for the land."

### *Laudato Si'*

"The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change." (13)

"We need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair. Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems." (61)

"We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis, which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." (139)

### *Caritas in Veritate*

"The environment is 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." (48)

## CULTIVATE AND CARE



Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

Examples from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* of how we can cultivate and care for our planet by making small lifestyle changes:

- Use less heating by wearing warmer clothes.
- Avoid use of plastic and paper.
- Reduce water consumption.
- Recycle.
- Plant trees.

**I will plant seeds of change by committing to these lifestyle changes:**

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**Gifts and skills I can nurture to enact change in the local and global community:**

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by texting ACT to 677-68 to get the latest  
CRS campaign news and alerts.

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[crs.org/act](https://crs.org/act)