

*Laudato Si'*  
**CHAMPIONS**

# Student Workbook

Name: .....

School: .....



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# Welcome!

Hello and welcome to the Laudato Si' Champions training sessions! "But what is a Laudato Si' Champion?" you cry, "and how do I become one?" We thought you might ask and this workbook is here as your trusty guide.

## Why should I get involved?

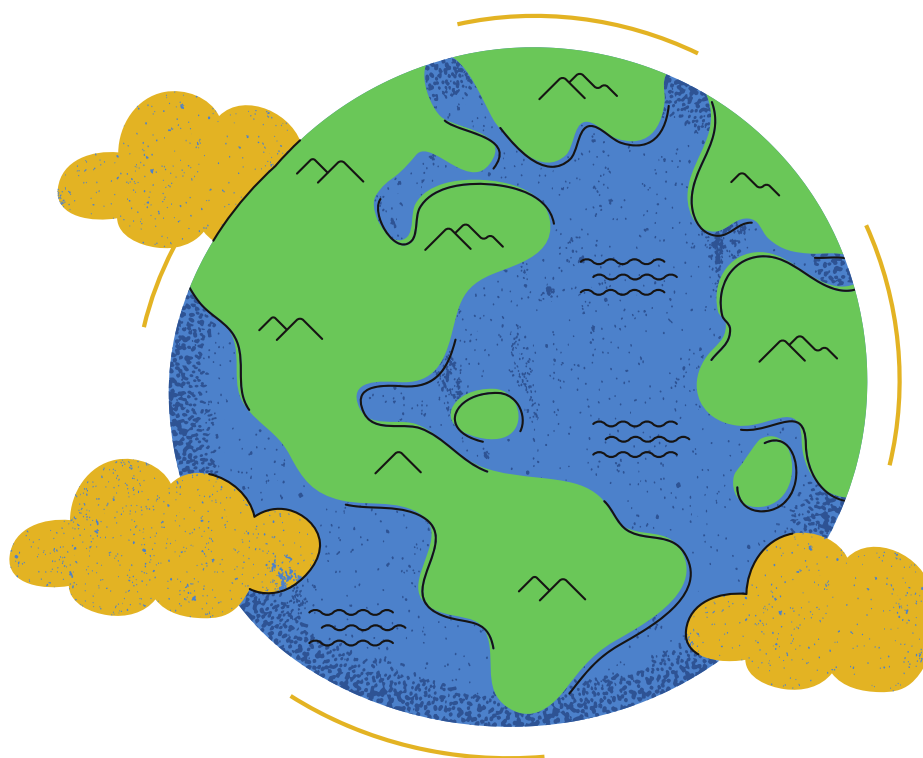
We hear about climate change all the time. It's on the news, social media, and maybe even in your school. But how do you know where to start? Which actions are the right choices for the planet? Do our efforts make a difference? How does climate change relate to religious beliefs? The world of climate change and sustainability can be mysterious, which is why we're here!

This toolkit is here to help you take action in your school community. Across six training sessions and one group project, we'll find inspiration in Pope Francis' letter, Laudato Si'. From climate change newbies to experienced eco-warriors, this is the place for you.

## What is a Laudato Si' Champion?

In 2015, Pope Francis wrote a letter titled "Laudato Si" about how we need to care for our common home. This letter is where Laudato Si' Champions get their name. It's all about helping the Earth and its people because it is our responsibility as stewards of God's amazing creation. To be a Laudato Si' Champion means you:

- Understand what Pope Francis teaches us in his letter Laudato Si'
- Believe in the value of your actions in tackling climate change
- Celebrate the sacred beauty of God's created Earth
- Live the values of Laudato Si' in your daily lives and actions



## What will I learn in these training sessions?

Hold on to your hats because we'll cover many exciting topics in the coming sessions. (Also, we like to avoid fast fashion here, so please do hold onto those hats to wear again at a later date). Each session focuses on a question to help us learn more about Laudato Si' and what we can do to help the Earth.

### 1. How do we see our relationship with the Earth?

We start by diving into climate change and how humans impact the Earth, understanding what Pope Francis calls the cry of the Earth. We'll learn about the difference between dominion and stewardship. And we'll reflect on our relationship with God's creation.

### 2. How do we impact the Earth and its people?

We'll cover some key ideas from Laudato Si', like integral ecology and the cry of the poor, as we start to think about the global impact of our local actions. You'll develop a personal mission statement outlining your commitment to the environment.

### 3. How can we act with love towards our common home?

This session is where things start to get really exciting. Using our knowledge of Laudato Si' from the first two sessions, we're going to start taking action. In groups, you'll begin planning a project that will help the environment in your school, inspired by Laudato Si'.

### 4 & 5. How can we make a difference?

Your projects are starting to take shape, and you're taking the lead. These two sessions allow you to check in with your group and get what you need to make your project happen. With guided exercises to keep you on track, you'll be well on your way to becoming Laudato Si' Champions.

### 6. How do we live as Laudato Si' Champions?

It's time to celebrate our success in our last session on this programme. Each group will give a 5-minute presentation about your projects, explaining what you did, why you did it, and what you plan to do next. After that, you'll be a Laudato Si' Champion!



# Session 1

## How do we see our relationship with the Earth?

"Our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. [...] This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her."

- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 1-2

## What are we learning?

In today's session, we will:

- Understand what humans are doing to the Earth.
- Discern the differences between dominion and stewardship.
- Respond to our relationship with the Earth.

## Today's prayer



Dear God,

Together, we pray for your guidance as we explore our relationship with your amazing creation, the Earth.

We pray that we may grow with you as stewards of your beautiful creation, caring for our common home together in our school and community.

Praise be to you!

Amen

## *Activity:* What happened when we all stopped

Have you ever wondered what would happen if we all stopped? What would happen to the Earth if we stopped producing waste and greenhouse gases? This poem by Tom Rivett-Carnac thinks about that. It takes inspiration from the COVID-19 lockdowns, where the world slowed down as we stayed at home.

In this activity, we will talk about the environment and our relationship to it. How we see the Earth affects how we act, so let's take a moment to reflect as we read this poem together.

- Watch "What happened when we all stopped" together

- Write down your thoughts to the following questions:

In your own words, summarise the poem. What is it about?

Are there any images that stick out to you?

What is the mood of the poem? Does it stay the same throughout?

What makes the voice move from a 'whisper' into a 'thunder'?

- Discuss your answers with the people sat next to you

# What happened when we all stopped

by Tom Rivett-Carnac

It starts as a whisper  
A word on the air  
It can't quite be heard  
But you know that it's there

As gentle as sunlight  
As tenacious as hail  
in its route to the heart  
It could not but prevail

And the people looked up  
From their day-to-day tasks  
Their day-to-day jobs  
And their day-to-day masks

They heard or they felt  
Where the whisper could lead  
And they looked with eyes wide  
At what that might mean

And once they could see it  
They hadn't a chance  
To resist the sweet song  
Of the deep spell it cast

But the feeling it brought them  
At first glance was pain  
As they lifted their eyes  
On the land they had claimed

Since they saw at last  
As if raised from a dream  
They were almost alone  
On the land and the sea

For the trees had almost gone,  
And the bees had almost gone,  
And the creatures in their shells by the  
seas had almost gone

And the people felt sad  
As they saw their new Earth  
But they knew this was it;  
One wild chance for rebirth

Breaking new ground, seeds rolling  
down  
Smell of the earth on your hands and  
your brow

No time for sorrow, we're building  
tomorrow  
The sound of things growing now  
keeps us around

As the wildness grows  
And the deep wood grows  
And the sense that the future's  
come to meet you grows

There's no chance we can rest, we  
must do our best  
This moment can lead us back  
home, that's our test.

It starts as a whisper  
A word on the air  
It can't quite be heard  
But you know that it's there

It then spoke like thunder  
Until we all moved  
And we could, and we did  
And it's done

She's renewed.



# What happened when we stopped?

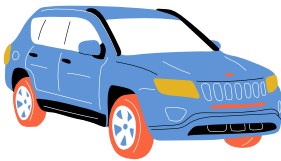
## The Impact of COVID-19 Lockdowns on Nature

In the first COVID-19 lockdown during Spring 2020, something amazing happened. People around the world started reporting the return of Nature to urban environments. There were noticeable drops in our carbon emissions. These effects show us that collective action can have huge impacts. For example:



**36% of people in the UK were spending more time outdoors**  
For many people, walks in nature and meeting friends in parks became a great source of comfort. Green spaces became important for our health and social life. The same report also showed that not everyone has access to green spaces.

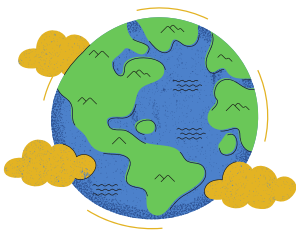
(ONS, 2021)



**Air pollution dropped by up to 48% in the UK due to the reduced road travel**

This drop in pollution shows the impact of daily traffic on our atmosphere. This report estimates that air pollution causes 40,000 early deaths in the UK each year. So, there were benefits to humans too.

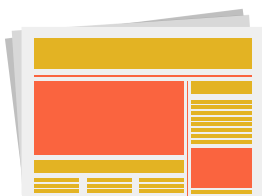
(University of York, 2020)



**Daily global emissions fell by 17% in April 2020**

Before the lockdown, CO2 emissions rose by 1% each year. But, the global emissions from driving cars, flying planes, and using energy were all reduced during the lockdowns.

(Le Quéré et al., 2020)



**Reports of nature returning to urban areas spread worldwide**

A herd of goats in Wales. Pods of dolphins in Istanbul. We saw news headlines reporting wildlife's return to urban areas left, right, and centre.

Sadly, these effects did not last when the lockdowns ended. Greenhouse gas emissions went back up. We became too busy again to make space for nature and wildlife. Yet, as Rivett-Carnac's poem explores, these events show that we have an incredible capacity to change.



# Tipping Points: What scientists are saying about climate change

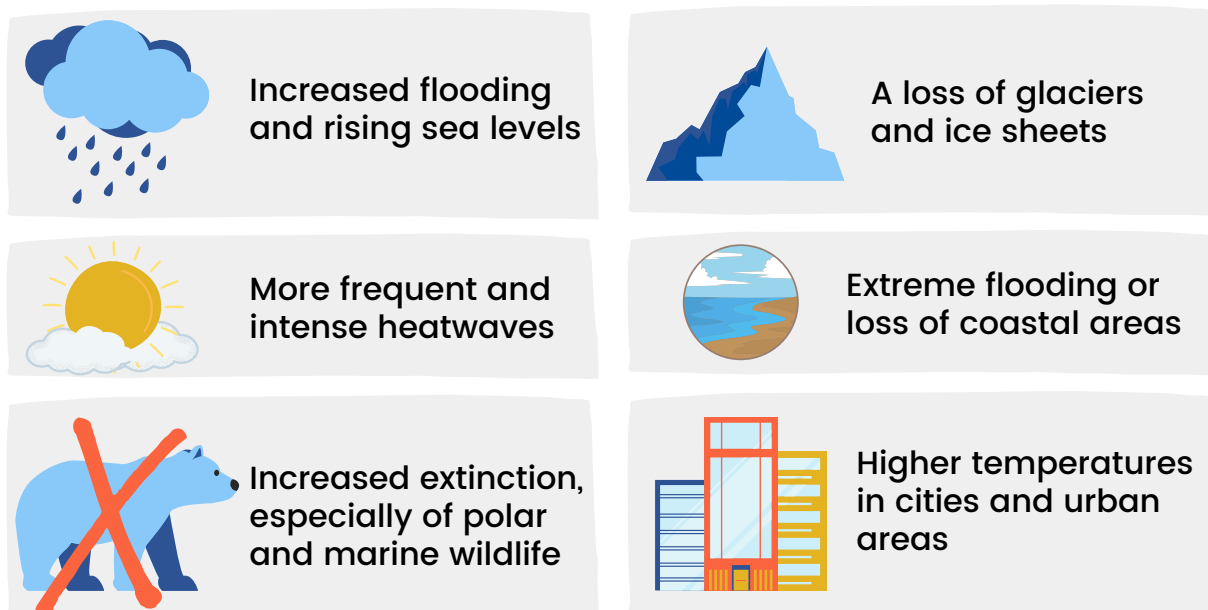
In 2021, a group of scientists released a report about their latest understanding of climate change. The group are known as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

They included predictions of what would happen as the Earth's temperature rises. They also detailed "tipping points" for when this damage may become irreversible. Some of these tipping elements include:

- The loss of forests like the Amazon
- The ice sheets melting in the Arctic, Antarctic, and Greenland
- The rise of sea levels and temperatures
- The loss of heavy rain seasons called monsoons

The IPCC report says that they expect the Earth's temperature to rise by 1.5°C in the next 20 years. This increased temperature will have many effects on the climate, reaching those tipping points.

Some of these effects are as follows:



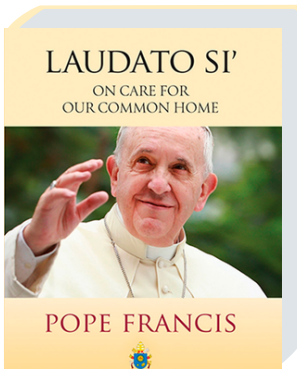
Preventing or mitigating the effects of rising global temperatures will take a collective effort from individuals, communities, businesses, and governments.

## Pause and Reflect

Take a moment to pause and reflect on what we've learnt so far.

- Have you learnt something new about climate change? How does this knowledge make you feel?
- Think back to the poem we read at the start. Does this offer a different perspective on what's happening to our planet?
- Offer your thoughts as prayers to God as we ask for guidance in these times.

# Introducing: *Laudato Si'*



In 2015, Pope Francis published a letter entitled "Laudato Si'", meaning "Praise be to you, my Lord". Its subtitle was "On Care for our Common Home". He addressed it to "every person living on this planet", asking us to come together and look after our shared planet (3).

He starts by saying, "I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home". But why does he say "dialogue"? Well, a dialogue is a type of conversation; it is not fixed or one-sided, and neither is *Laudato Si'*. When you write a letter, you expect the other person to reply. So, how can we reply to Pope Francis' letter in a dialogue about our Earth?

Luckily, Pope Francis isn't expecting us all to write letters in reply, as this would use a lot of paper and isn't eco-friendly. Instead, he asks us to reply with "decisive action, here and now" (161).

From "little daily actions" to "community actions", *Laudato Si'* is something we converse with through our movement in the world (231; 232). He reminds us that "Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care [...] makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world" (231).

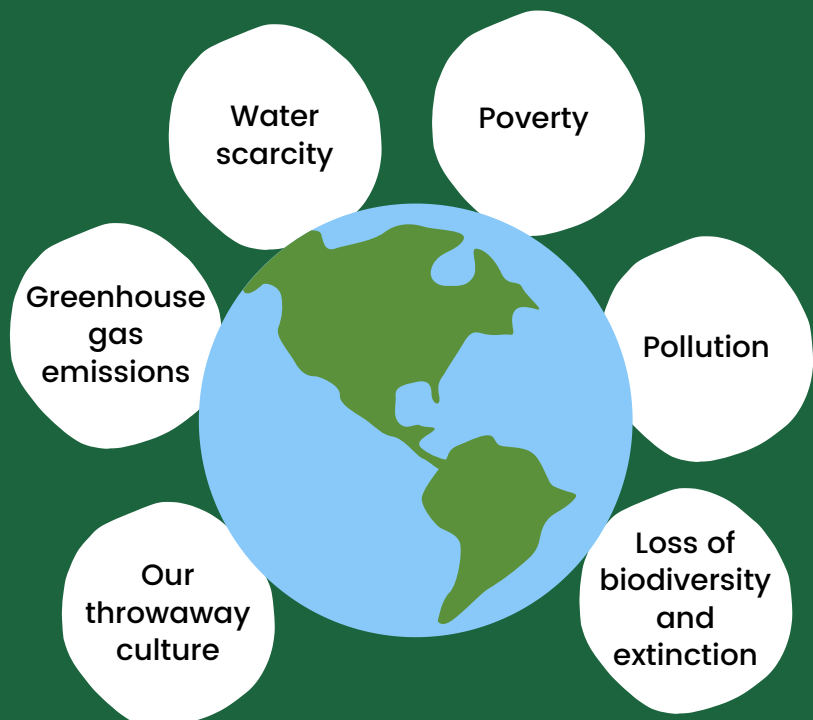
Pope Francis also emphasises that "young people demand change" (13). That means you! You and your generation's efforts to hold adults accountable and care for our planet are vital. So, make your voices heard in this dialogue because your voice matters.

## What is happening to *our common home?*

Pope Francis's first challenge is identifying what's happening to our common home. He says:

"The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." (21)

*Laudato Si'* identifies areas of human action that harm the Earth and contribute towards climate change. (Just like the scientists in the IPCC report!) These include:



# Pope Francis on *Dominion and Stewardship*

Now we know what's happening to our common home, what can we do about it? Well, we need to think carefully about our relationship with God and his Earth. In the Genesis account of Creation, it says:

"God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion [...] over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'" (Genesis 1:28)

This passage has sparked debate among Christians for a long time. Some read "dominion" as meaning to rule and have control over. Others argue it means "stewardship" because the Genesis account continues to say humans should "till [the Earth] and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). In the "stewardship" sense, Creation is a gift humanity looks after for God.



Here is an extract from *Laudato Si'* on dominion and stewardship:

"We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us [...] on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man "dominion" over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature. [...]"

"We must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures."

"Our 'dominion' over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship." (67; 117)

# Activity: Dominion or Stewardship?

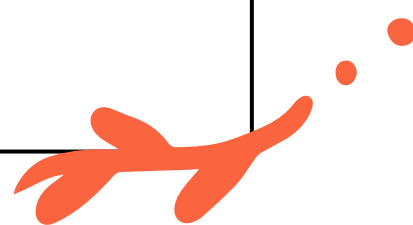


- Read the statements about different attitudes towards the Earth
- Write whether you think this fits with dominion or stewardship
- Think about the effect of those statements. Write the impact they would have on our planet



<i>Statement</i>	<i>Stewardship or Dominion?</i>	<i>Their impact/effect</i>
We have power over all other animals and beings.	Dominion	This attitude allows people to harm animals. It could encourage people to eat more meat, which has a large environmental impact.
The Earth is God's creation, and we have a special role to protect it.		
We have a right to use natural resources as we see fit.		
It is our responsibility to look after the planet for future generations.		
We should live in harmony with nature and all the Earth's creatures.		
The Earth is a gift from God to use and rule over as we wish.		

Here's an example!



# *Reflection:* Your last encounter with nature



In today's session, we've learnt about climate change from scientists and Pope Francis. We've also considered the differences between stewardship and dominion.

Take a moment to reflect on how this applies to your daily life. Does it change your relationship with the Earth? How will you act towards nature going forwards?

- Write a few sentences about your last encounter with nature

- Reflect on how you responded to nature in this encounter

Did you act with stewardship or dominion?

How did your actions impact the Earth?

- Would you act differently next time? How and why would you change your actions?

# Session 2

## How do we impact the Earth and its people?

"We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference."

- Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 52

"I've learnt that no one is too small to make a difference."

- Greta Thunberg (2019)

## What are we learning?

In today's session, we will:

- Understand integral ecology.
- Discern the links between the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.
- Respond with our mission to build a sustainable future.

## Today's prayer



Dear God,

We pray for your love and guiding spirit as we reflect on the impact of our actions on the Earth and its people.

As we respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, we ask that you help the poorest members of our global community and inspire us to care for your creation in every aspect of our lives.

Praise be to you!

Amen

# Activity: Eco-choices

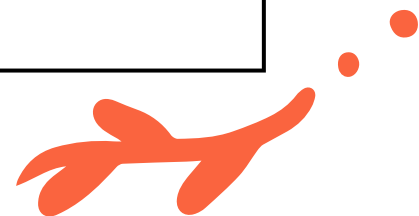


- 1 minute writing down activities you do every day
- 1 minute writing how those 5 activities impacts the environment
- 2 minutes writing what you could do to reduce that environmental impact

*Activity*                      *Environmental impact*                      *Your eco-choice*

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Environmental impact</i>	<i>Your eco-choice</i>
Brushing your teeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses water (how much water? where is the water from?)</li> <li>• Toothpaste (in a plastic container? do the ingredients pollute water?)</li> <li>• Toothbrush (made from plastic?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth</li> <li>• Switch to a plastic-free toothpaste</li> <li>• Use a toothbrush made from recycled or sustainable materials</li> </ul>

Here's an example!



# Think Global → Act Local

## How our small actions make big impacts

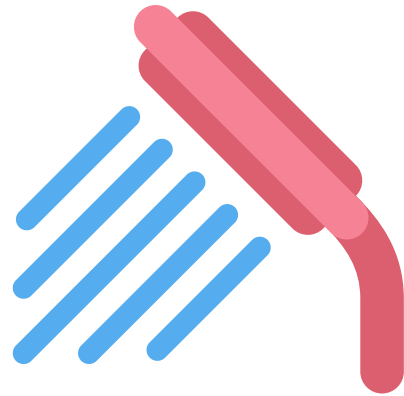
When talking about climate change, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Newspapers and politicians tell us it's scary or hopeless, that the problem's too big for us to handle. It's important to remember that **our actions make a difference**. Together we can prompt extraordinary change. Every environmental choice, or "eco-choice", we take has an impact. From brushing our teeth to what we eat for lunch and even our daily shower, every choice matters

Let's take a closer look at how individual actions create collective change.

### Example: Your daily shower

Let's consider the environmental impact of your morning shower.

- A 10-minute shower uses 150 litres of water on average (WaterWise, 2009)
- That adds up to **54,750 litres of water on showers per person each year**
- 62% of the UK's annual water footprint is imported from other countries (WWF, 2008)
- **40% of the world's population experience water scarcity** each year. '55 million people globally are affected by droughts every year' (WHO, 2018)
- Taking 3-minute showers can save the average household up to 230,000 litres of water each year (WaterWise, 2009)
- If the UK's 27.8 million households made this change, that's **6.39 trillion litres of water saved annually**. (ONS, 2021)



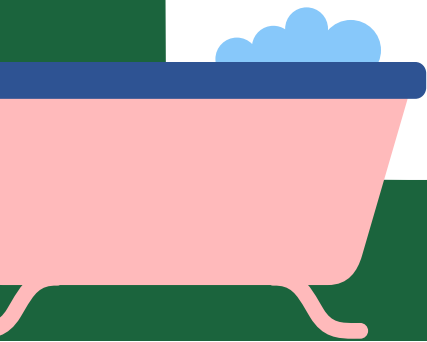
Imagine the impact that could have, not just on the UK's need for importing water but on the world's increasing water scarcity. While we're not considering energy and water suppliers here or the environmental impact of our soaps and shampoos, this small daily change is just one example of how **individual actions can add up to collective change**.

## Thinking globally, acting locally

Bishop John Arnold sums this up fantastically in a Pastoral Letter from 2019. He says we need to think about climate change on global levels but take action in our local communities. He continues:

**"A great deal of difference can be made through a number of small actions in our personal lives. [...] These may seem almost trivial, but they are significant ways where we can make an impact for the good. We show the goodness of our faith by our actions."**

In this approach, we can start joining up our thinking about climate change. We can reflect on the importance of every choice we make. Take a moment to think about how global thinking informs your eco-choices.





# Pope Francis on *Integral Ecology*

Looking at the eco-choices we face daily, it's clear that our actions matter. Big or small, our choices impact the Earth and its people.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis says since "today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an **integral ecology**" (137).

But what exactly is **integral ecology**, and why is it important for living sustainably?

## What is *ecology*?

First things first, let's talk about ecology. Ecology is "the scientific study of the interrelationships among organisms and [...] their environment" (Allaby, 2015). In other words, it's about the connections between living things and their environment.

You've probably come across ecology in many different topics at school without even realising it. Here are some examples of ecological studies and models:



## \* What is *integral ecology*?

Pope Francis argues that ecology needs to go beyond humanity's relationship with nature. We also need to consider financial, political, social, and religious factors. Let's read this extract from *Laudato Si'*:

"A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor [...]"

Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society."

"An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. [...] Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world." (LS: 91, 139, 230-231)

# Answering the cries of *the Earth and the Poor*

Integral ecology teaches us that everything is interconnected. We are just as dependent on one another and the environment as the Earth is on us to protect it from exploitation. But what can we do with this knowledge? How can integral ecology help us live more sustainably? In *Laudato Si'*, we read:

"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.**" (49)

Here, Pope Francis offers a really helpful way for us to think about integral ecology. The Earth and its poorest people are suffering, and we must answer the cries of both to live sustainably as stewards of God's Creation.



## The cry of the *Earth*

The Earth calls out to us as humans take more than their fair share of Nature's resources, abusing God's beautiful gift. Some signs of the Earth's cries include:

- Rising temperatures
- Mass extinction
- Habitat destruction
- Rising sea levels
- Extreme weather changes

## The cry of the *Poor*

The poor call out to us, suffering the worst effects of climate change and experiencing injustice and inequality. Some signs of the Poor's cries include:

- Political injustice
- Economic poverty
- Social inequality
- The most vulnerable in our society



## *Pause and Reflect*

Take a moment to pause and reflect on what we've learnt so far.

- How did reflecting on your daily eco-choices make you feel? Will you change your actions going forwards?
- Think back to our first session when we learned about stewardship. Does integral ecology influence your stance on stewardship?
- Offer a prayer to God for the most vulnerable people in society as they face injustice and suffer the harshest effects of climate change.

# Activity: Which choices?



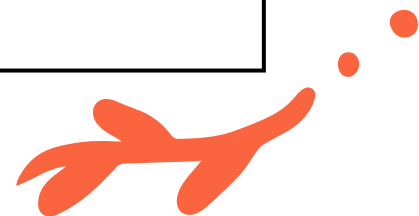
- Look back at some of the eco-choices you identified earlier
- Are these choices accessible to everyone?
- What changes need to happen to make them more accessible?

*Eco-Choice* *Is this choice accessible to everyone?*

*Alternative eco-choice*

<i>Eco-Choice</i>	<i>Is this choice accessible to everyone?</i>	<i>Alternative eco-choice</i>
Taking the bus instead of the car	Buses are often inaccessible for disabled people, mothers with pushchairs, and the elderly. Their high prices can exclude low-income groups.	Redesigning buses to make them more accessible and affordable.

Here's an example!





# The cry of the poor...

We all share the planet. The Earth is our common home, and we all have the same responsibility to care for it, right? When listening to the cry of the poor, it's not always so straight forwards.

The fact is, **climate change doesn't impact everyone equally**. Those all-important eco-choices aren't an option for some minority groups. Social inequalities, such as racism, sexism, classism, and ableism, are all factors in climate change. When we're thinking about sustainable choices, it's important to **find equal and fair solutions**. Eco-choices need to support the most vulnerable people in our society.

The idea that minority groups face climate change's harshest impacts is known as "climate justice". **Climate justice "seeks to redress global warming by reducing disparities in development and power"** (UN, 2009). Climate justice looks for fair solutions to environmental issues. Answering the cry of the poor ensures we support the people who suffer the effects of climate change the most. Let's take a closer look at climate justice in action:



Women and girls are 14 times more likely to die during a natural disaster. Yet, 67% of decision-making roles about the environment worldwide are held by men. (UN Women UK, 2021)



70% of the global poor rely on natural resources for their livelihoods, making them the most vulnerable to climate change's adverse effects. (UN, 2015)



In the US, Black and Hispanic minorities were up to 63% more likely to suffer health damage due to air pollution than non-Hispanic white groups. (Tessum et al, 2019)

Let's unpack the first of these statistics. So, women and girls are more likely to suffer fatalities in a natural disaster. Why is that?

Women earn 30% less than men on average, sometimes resulting in economic instability and poorer quality housing. As they're often the primary caregivers, they are more likely to look after children and elderly relatives. This factor leaves them to care for many people during a natural disaster. Women also receive poorer healthcare than men. So, they have an increased risk of dying from injuries after a natural disaster. Yet, the people making the decisions about the environment and climate change are mostly men. So, is it any wonder that women's needs aren't accounted for when responding to natural disasters?

This is what Pope Francis means by **responding to the cry of the earth AND the cry of the poor**. The problems of climate change link with social justice, so only by addressing both will we fix the problem.



# What can we do?

## Developing your hopeful mission

Climate change is a global problem, which sometimes makes it challenging to recognise what we can do to help. It's easy to pass it off as someone else's problem or responsibility. Yet, as stewards of God's wonderful creation, we know we all need to play our part as we hear the cries of the Earth and the poor.

Does it still sound a bit daunting? We're here to help! We're going to think about what motivates us to take action and imagine what that change might look like by writing mission statements.

### What is a mission statement?

Mission statements are like a guide, a blueprint, or a compass. Companies and schools often have mission statements to guide their actions. Your mission statement is there to help you keep your goals in mind. It can navigate your actions towards a sustainable future.

'Mission' comes from the Latin 'mittere', meaning 'to send'. So, remember to think about how the beliefs, values, and motivations in your mission statement can give something amazing to the world.

You can use your mission statement to:



Help recenter your actions if you feel lost or overwhelmed



Remind you why you're taking these this sustainable journey



Record your journey- your mission statement isn't fixed, and you can revise it as you go!

Top Tip! Try sticking a copy of it in your room or somewhere where you can read it every day. This technique can help remind you why you're doing what you're doing.

### Staying hopeful

**"Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope" (LS, 244)**

Finding hope in the face of adversity is a struggle many of us face, especially when it comes to climate change. In fact, it's so common that the media has termed it

"climate anxiety". Surveys have shown affects up to 77% of students (Global Action Plan, 2020). So, how can we stay hopeful and keep acting for the common good?

Hope has a special meaning for Christians as one of the three theological virtues, alongside faith and charity. "Hope is the power by which we [...] praise God and to serve him", finding "our true happiness" in God in the process. (YouCat, 308).

When it comes to addressing climate change, finding hope that's rooted in our spirituality can allow us to:

- Look towards a positive future where we care for our common home
- Inspire trust in God, especially through tough times, that lead towards sustainable action



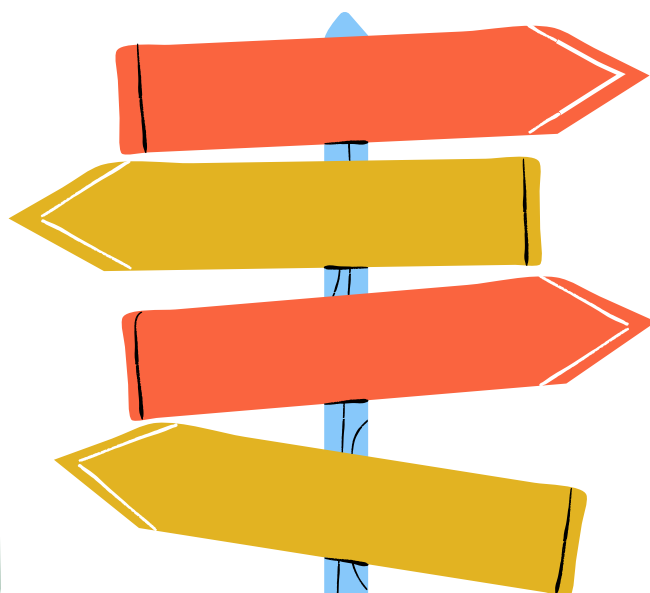
As you write your mission statement, think about where you find your hope for our Earth's future. Use this source of hope to motivate your actions.



## Your direction of travel

"Would you tell me please which way I ought to walk from here?"  
 "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat  
 "I don't much care where—" said Alice,  
 "Then it doesn't matter which way to walk," said the Cat.

– Lewis Carrol, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland



Like the Cheshire Cat says, it doesn't matter which way you walk if you don't know where you're going. When we're writing our mission statements, it's essential to think about our direction of travel.

If a sustainable future is our goal, how will we know when we've arrived? What steps do we need to take to reach our destination? Keep your end goals in mind as you map your journey.

# Reflection: Mission Possible



- Imagine that reaching a sustainable future is a journey you need to take. To plan for that journey, you need to consider the following:

## 1. Motivation

Why do you want to take this journey?

What's your motivation for helping the environment? These motivations sit at the heart of your actions.

## 2. Mission

What do you want to do to help the environment? What talents and skills do you have to offer?

Write down three key goals to help direct your mission and guide your journey.

1.

2.

3.



### 3. Materialise

How will you know you've achieved your mission?

What is it like when you reach your destination?

It will look like...

It will feel like...

It will sound like...



### 4. Map

How do you plan to get there? What actions will you take? Write down three key steps you need to take to arrive at your destination.

1.

2.

3.





Once you have imagined what your sustainable journey might look like, write it up as a mission statement. You can format this in any way you like, whether it's a few sentences, a poem, an acronym, or something else entirely!

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for writing a mission statement. The box is currently blank and occupies most of the page below the instruction.

# Session 3

## How can we act with love towards our common home?

"A community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism. These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. [...] These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences."

- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 232

## What are we learning?

In today's session, we will:

- Understand the seven Catholic virtues
- Discern how we can develop ecological virtues
- Respond with what actions we can take in our school's community

## Today's prayer



Dear God,

We give thanks and gratitude to you as we take this journey towards living more simply and sustainably.

We ask for your blessing as we begin to take action in our school, inspired by the beauty of your creation and guided by ecological virtues.

Praise be to you!

Amen

# What is a virtue?

Getting enough sleep, biting your nails, drinking enough water, and picking your nose are all examples of habits. Some of them are good, and some of them... not so much. But how do you know which habits are good or bad?

Many cultures, traditions, and religions guide us on what it means to be a good person. They can help us know which habits to nurture and which habits harm us. In the Catholic tradition, we call them virtues and vices.

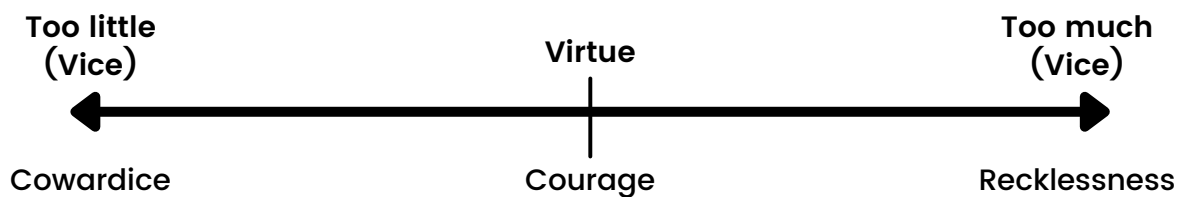


**Virtue:**  
"a habitual and firm disposition to do good"  
(CCC, 1833)



**Vice:**  
"repetition of sins" and "can be classified according to the virtues they oppose"  
(CCC, 1876; 1866)

One helpful way to think about virtues and vices is to imagine different habits on a scale. A virtue sits at the balanced midpoint of the scale. They have just the right amount of that quality to move your actions towards good. Too much or too little of that quality leads to vice. This way of thinking about virtues/vices comes from the Greek philosopher Aristotle. It's known as the "golden mean".



Let's take courage, sometimes known as fortitude, as an example. We need courage to find the right way to act, even when that way is difficult.

But with too much courage, we become reckless and might harm ourselves or others. Too little courage leads to cowardice, preventing us from acting.



# Activity: Virtues and vices

- Read through the list of words on your worksheet
- Circle 3 words you think will help us live more sustainably
- Underline 3 words you think will make sustainable living more difficult

Wisdom	Courage	Friendship	Love
Impatience	Faith	Creativity	Fear
Selfishness	Carelessness	Moderation	Wealth
Respect	Boastfulness	Anger	Community
Technology	Nature	Greed	Patience
Laziness	Family	Hope	Narrow-minded
Charity	Fashion	Kindness	Adaptable
Impulsive	Prayer	Vanity	Resilience

**Which word is the most important to you?**

Write a few sentences about why you think this word is the most important for you.

**Which word do you find challenging?**

Is there a word you struggle with? Write a few sentences about how this word impacts your actions towards the Earth and its people.

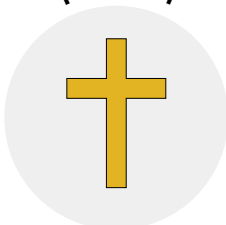
# The seven Catholic virtues

In the Catholic tradition, there are seven virtues. Catholic teachings tell us that we can flourish by practising these virtues. They help us achieve excellence in life, do good in the world and grow our relationship with God. We can split these virtues into two main categories.

## Theological Virtues

These virtues relate to God. They are like a divine gift from God. They are the foundation of our goodness, turning our actions towards God.

### Faith



The power to believe in God, recognising that God is truth

### HOPE



The power to trust in God, praising and serving God as our source of true happiness

### Charity



The power to love God, each other and ourselves, uniting us as neighbours

## Cardinal Virtues

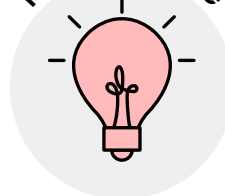
These are the chief attitudes and attributes that lead us to do good. They often are part of our thoughts and character. While these are human abilities, God's grace supports them.

### Prudence



The wisdom to know what's right and good, learning how best to achieve those goals

### Fortitude



The courage to keep pursuing what's good, even in the face of obstacles

### Justice



The respect for the rights of every person, recognising them as a neighbour

### Temperance



The balance of our desires and wants, moderating our desires

# Pope Francis on Ecological Virtues

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis talks about cultivating ecological virtues:

"Nature as a whole not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence. The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with him. Discovering this presence leads us to cultivate the 'ecological virtues'. [...]"

"Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment." [...]"

"Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience."  
(LS, 88; 211; 217)

What does Pope Francis mean when he talks about ecological virtues? Well, virtues can help us act selflessly and lovingly towards nature. They help us see God in nature. God's spirit is part of every living thing. By practising those virtues, we can strengthen our connection with God through nature.

Notice how Pope Francis speaks about 'cultivating' ecological virtues? Practising ecological virtues is like looking after the seeds to make them grow. We must put in the work to live a virtuous life and fulfil our role as stewards. In doing so, we can flourish in harmony with God, each other, and the Earth. Let's take a look at what the virtues again with an ecological focus:

## Theological Virtues

Faith



**Belief in God**

Understand the sacred beauty of God's creation and our responsibility as stewards

Hope



**Trust in God**

Turn our sustainable actions towards God in praise and gratitude

Charity



**Love God and each other**

Respect and love the Earth as God's creation

Prudence



**Wisdom to know what's good**

Learn which actions are good for the Earth and its people

Justice



**Respect the rights of every person**

Answer the cries of the poor as we build an equal, sustainable future

## Cardinal Virtues

Fortitude



**Courage to keep pursuing what's good**

Keep taking environmental action, even when things get tough

Temperance



**Balance our desires and appetites**

Encourage us to live simply and produce less waste

# Reflection: Your mission, your virtues



In session 3, we developed our mission statements. In those statements, we reflected on our core motivations for caring for our common home. Now that we understand ecological virtues, let's reflect on our mission statements.

- Read your mission statement from last session

- Consider how your mission statement reflects the virtues

Does your mission statement reflect any of the cardinal or theological virtues?

Which virtues are at the heart of your mission?

How do you feel about this reflection?

- Reflect on whether you need to change your habits to achieve your mission statement. Why is this?

# Planning your project

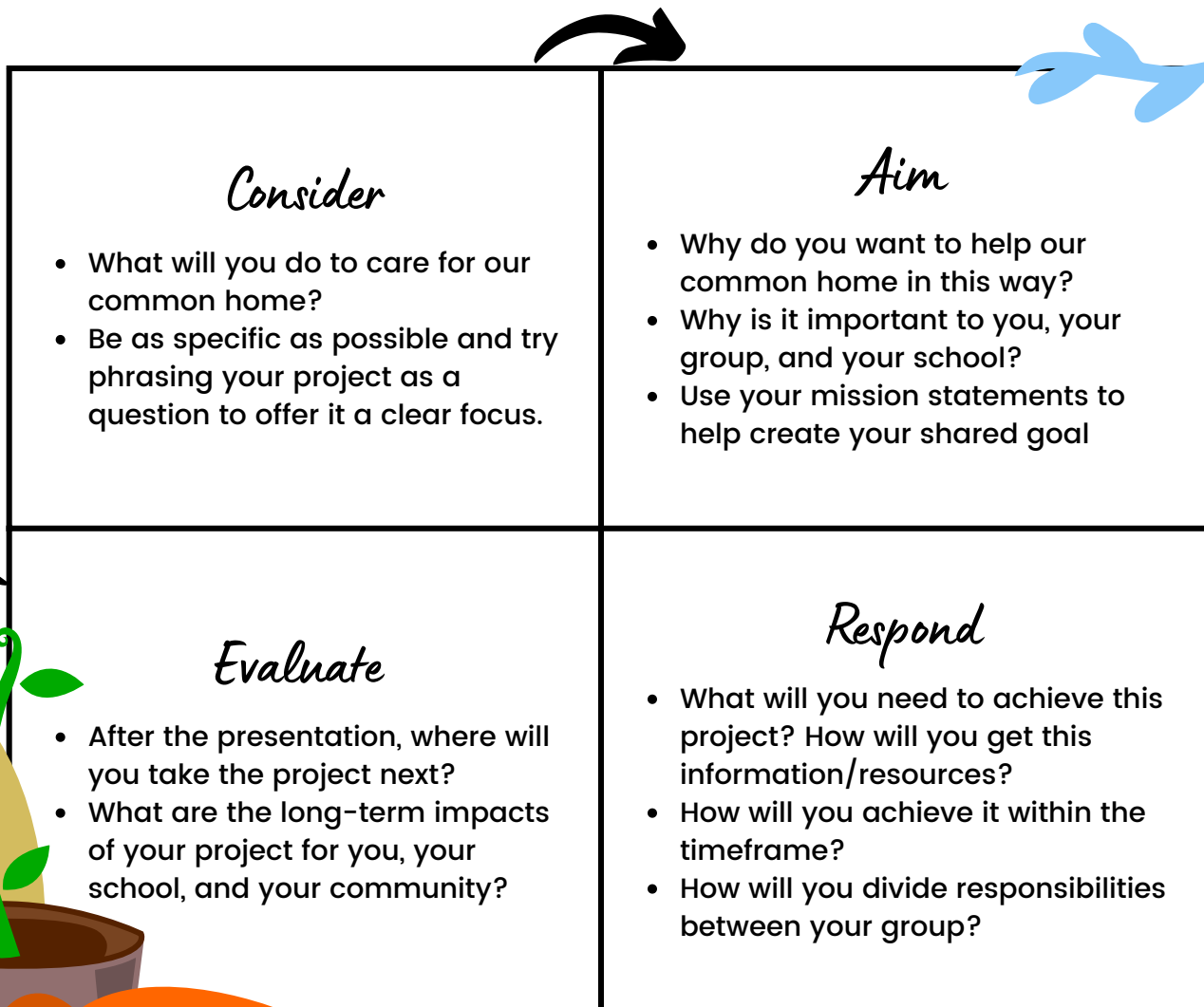
The time has come, your wait is over, the anticipation is brewing... you get the picture. It's time to start planning your project and put your knowledge of Laudato Si' into action.

## The brief

Your task is to design a project that cares for our common home, inspired by what we've learnt from Laudato Si'. It must positively impact the environment in your school community. It needs a clear goal that's achievable within the time available. You will work in a group of no more than 5. In our final session, you will show your project's outcomes to the class in a 5-minute presentation.



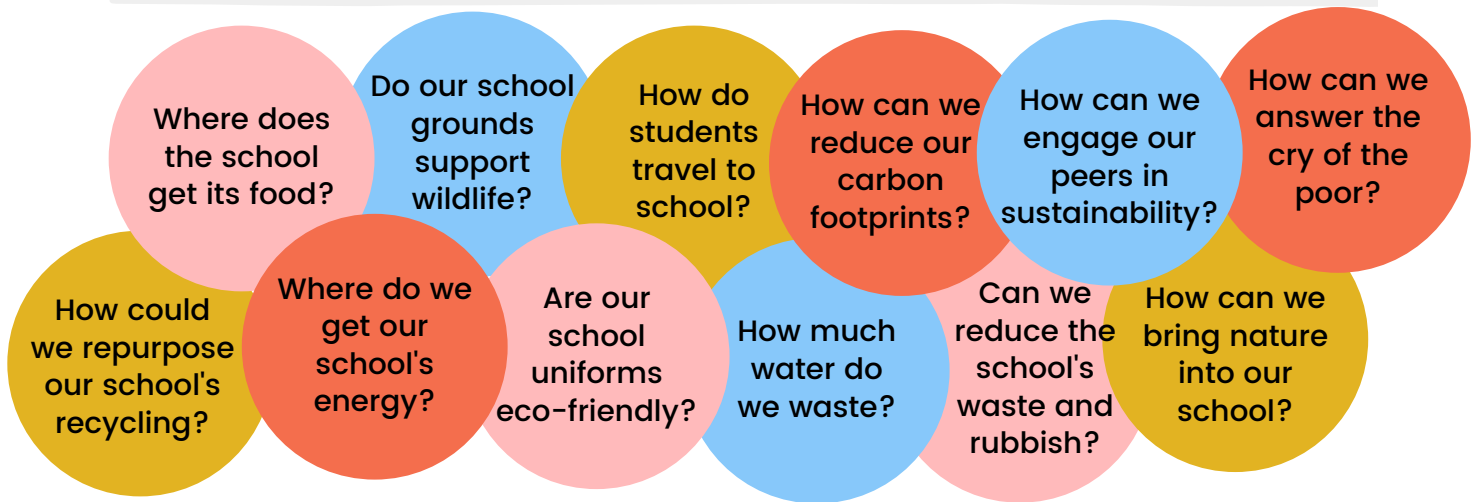
Remember that Laudato Si' is all about "On Care of Our Common Home". So, use the C.A.R.E. approach to guide your project planning:



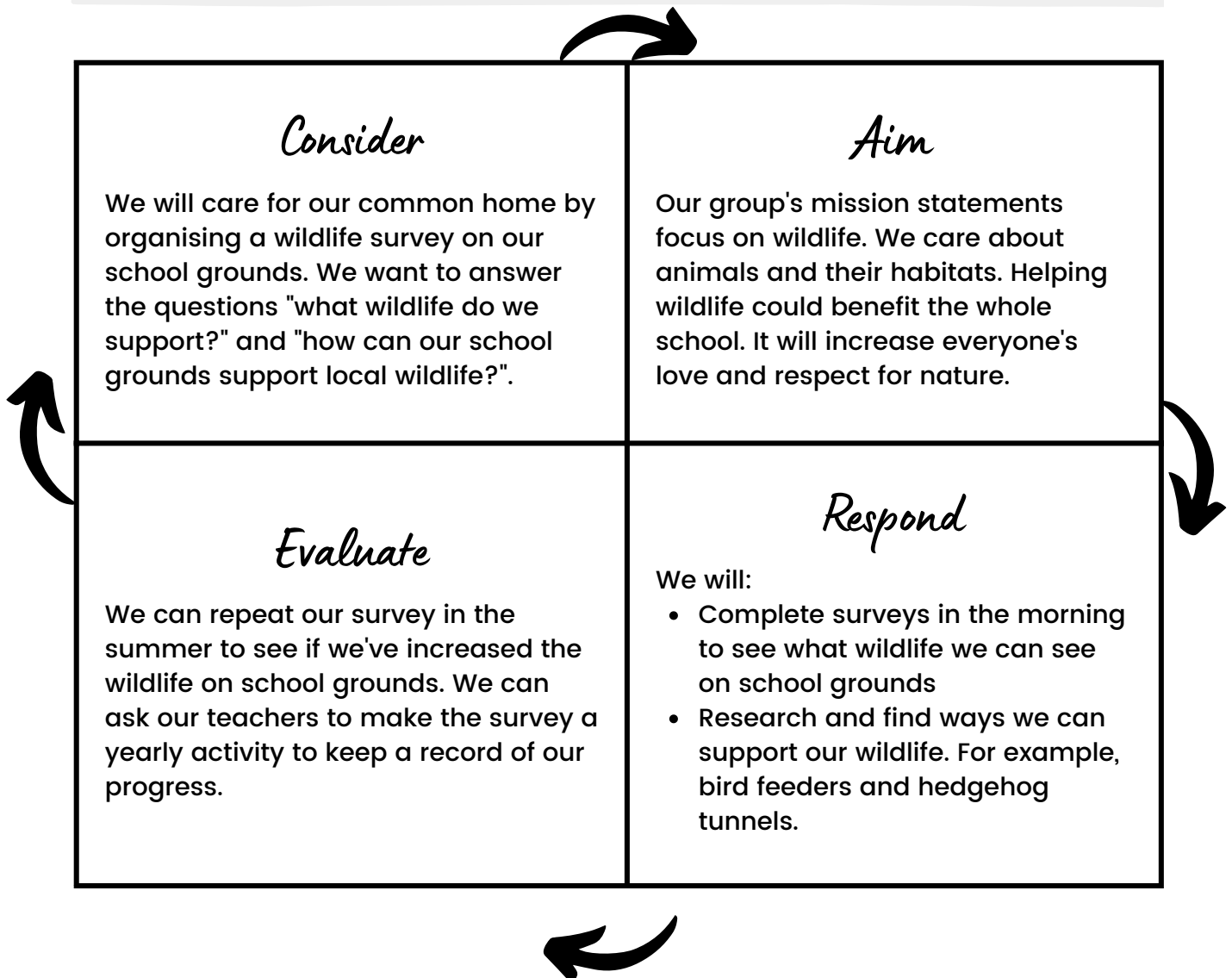


# Project ideas

Here are some questions to get you started with your project.  
Feel free to think of your own!



Let's see an example of what a project plan could look like using the CARE model:





# Activity: Planning your project

- Spend a few minutes with your group talking about your mission statements

Which areas of sustainability to you share a common interest in helping?

- Brainstorm some ideas for your project

How can you help care for our common home?

- Use the C.A.R.E grid to help your project take shape.

<p><i>Consider</i></p> <p>What will you do to care for our common home?</p>	<p><i>Aim</i></p> <p>Why do you want to help our common home in this way? Why is it important to you, your group, and your school?</p>
<p><i>Evaluate</i></p> <p>What are the long-term impacts of your project for you, your school, and your community?</p>	<p><i>Respond</i></p> <p>What will you need to achieve this project? How will you obtain this information/resources? How will you achieve it within the timeframe?</p>

- Plan a project timeline. Which tasks need to happen first? Are any of them time sensitive?

*Start*

*Finish*



- Set a clear goal for what you will achieve by the next session. Divide the tasks equally between you.

By next session, we will...

To achieve this goal, we need to...

Who is responsible for this task?

# Session 4

## How can we make a difference?

"The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes [...] The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences."

- Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 161

## What are we learning?

In today's session, we will:

- Understand the Catholic church's teaching on sustainability as we recap Laudato Si'
- Discern what Laudato Si' means to me
- Respond with the progress of our projects as we live Laudato Si'

## Today's prayer



Dear God,

Today, we continue to make a difference at our school as we care for our common home. You have guided us as the stewards of your creation, and we give thanks for our growing ecological knowledge as we live Laudato Si' together.

Guide our hearts to act with charity, faith and hope as we continue our mission.

Praise be to you!

Amen



## Activity: Recapping Laudato Si'

We've learnt a lot about Laudato Si' so far. As we start to put this knowledge into action through our projects, let's take a moment to reflect. In this activity, we'll recap the Catholic church's teaching on sustainability.

- Watch the CAFOD Laudato Si' video to recap what we've learnt so far



- Write down your thoughts and reflections about the video

Summarise the key ideas in Laudato Si'

Did you learn something new about Laudato Si' from the video?

What does Laudato Si' mean to you?

- Discuss your answers with the person sat next to you

# Progressing your project plan

## using C.A.R.E.

Your project is starting to take shape. You have your idea, and it's beginning to look like it could be something special. So, what happens now?

If you remember, your project brief was to "design a project that cares for our common home". This means you need to translate your project plan into action as we live *Laudato Si'* in our daily lives. Let's take a closer look "Respond" section of our C.A.R.E. acronym to explore this in more detail.

In the initial brainstorming phase, you probably focused on our C.A.R.E approach's "Consider" and "Aim" sections. So, you should know your project's "what?" and "why?". Moving to the Respond part, we need to concentrate on "how?" you can achieve your project's goals.

### Gathering information

How will you measure your project's impact? Answering this question will help you be specific about the problem you want to tackle. You might need to measure quantities of waste food from your school canteen. Or you could track electricity use.

### Collecting resources

Consider what you need to complete your project. Check with your teacher if they can help you. For example, ask if they could print off the flyers for a fundraising event. Or organise interviews with teachers about sustainability in your school.



### Respond

#### Creating a timeline

Keep your team on track by creating clear deadlines for each task. Use the timeline from your plan to help you. Remember that you have your presentations in our last session together. So, think about what you can achieve within this time.

#### Working as a team

*Laudato Si'* teaches us that we can only build a sustainable future by working together. The same is true of your project! Steps to successful teamwork include:

- Share responsibilities equally between you.
- Make time to listen
- Talk and share ideas

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- Share responsibilities equally between you.
- Make time to listen
- Talk and share ideas





# Activity: Project Progress

- Report back on your progress since the last session

Since last session, we have...

- Plan what you need to do next

Next, we need to...

Who will do this task?

Deadline?

- Summarise your goals to achieve by the next session

By next session, we will...

*Your notes...*

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# Reflection: Giving Gratitude

- Take a moment to pause and reflect on your project so far
- Which aspects of Laudato Si' does your project reflect?

## Laudato Si' Key Terms

- Climate justice
- Integral ecology
- The cry of the earth
- The cry of the poor
- Stewardship

- Thinking about your project, write three things that you feel grateful for
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.

- Write your thoughts as a prayer or poem, expressing gratitude to God for your blessings

# Session 5

## How can we keep making a difference?

We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread. Furthermore, such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile.

- Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 212

## What are we learning?

In today's session, we will:

- Understand the role of faith in addressing climate change
- Discern what an ecological school could look like
- Respond with the progress of our projects as we live Laudato Si'

## Today's prayer



Dear God,

All-powerful and ever-loving God, we thank you for the gift that is creation. We see your wonder and grace in everything from the smallest seed to the mightiest tree.

As we celebrate your beautiful creation, the Earth, fill us with hope and love as we cultivate a sustainable future through our work.

Praise be to you!

Amen



## Activity: Imagining an Eco-School

- Imagine your school in 5 years winning an award for being the most environmentally friendly school in the country

What changes have taken place for your school to reach this achievement? Here are some areas to consider:

- Energy
- Food production
- Education
- Spirituality
- Transport
- School uniforms
- Technology
- Nature
- Waste and recycling

- Draw and label your eco-school- be as creative and colourful as you'd like!

Tip: Start small by imagining a classroom. Then, expand your ideas to the whole school.

# Imagining an eco-school

So far, we've reflected on how Laudato Si' asks us to take individual and community action for our common home. This exercise invites us to dream of a future where your whole school acted in this way.

What did it feel like to imagine your school as a hub of environmental action? The school you drew might have looked different to the school you know. But, that transformational change is possible.

There are so many ways we can bring eco-schools to life. Here are just a few:



Renewable energy



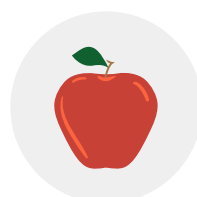
Bringing nature indoors



Zero-waste school



Beekeeping



Plant-based menus



Garden to grow food



Carpooling groups



Outdoor worship



On-site recycling



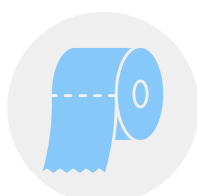
Eco-curriculum



Second-hand uniforms



Sourcing food locally



Compost toilets



Technology-free classroom



Beautiful grounds

Do you want to learn more?

Watch this 5-minute video on the world's most eco-friendly schools.

## Pause and Reflect

The saying goes "if you can dream it, you can do it". So, why don't we?

- What's stopping us from turning this imagined eco-school into a reality?
- Are there challenges in the way? How can we overcome them?

Take a few minutes to discuss these questions with the person next to you.

# Planning your presentation

As your project takes shape, it's time to celebrate your successes and reflect on what it means to be a Laudato Si' Champion.

In our last session, your group will give a short presentation about your project. This presentation allows the class to share their ideas and give thanks together. Here are some criteria for your presentation:

*Maximum of 5 minutes*

Everyone will have the same amount of time to present, so use your five minutes wisely. Use your time to reflect on your project and how it relates to Laudato Si'.

*Slides are optional*

Your group can keep it old school with a spoken presentation. Or you can use slides or a poster to get creative. The choice is yours!

*Everyone must contribute!*

Your project was a group effort, so your presentation should be too. Everyone must contribute something to the presentation. So, divide the work evenly amongst the team.

## What should we include?



When writing your presentation, reflect back on the C.A.R.E model you used to plan your project. Answer these key questions in your presentation:

**Consider-** What did you do?

- What did you do to care for our common home?

**Aim-** Why did you do it?

- Link this to Laudato Si'
- Why is this topic important in your school?

**Respond-** How did you do it?

- What went well?
- Did you face any barriers/problems?

**Evaluate-** What will you do next?

- Think about the long-term impacts for your school

# Activity: Planning your presentation



- Report back on your progress since the last session

Since last session, we have...

- Is there anything you still need to complete to finish your project?

Next, we need to...

Who will do this task?

Deadline?



- Begin planning your presentation. Use the C.A.R.E. model to address the presentation's key questions.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Consider</i></p> <p>What did you do to care for our common home?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Aim</i></p> <p>Why did you do it? Why is this topic important in your school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Link this to Laudato Si'</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Evaluate</i></p> <p>What will you do next? Think about the long-term impacts for your school</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Respond</i></p> <p>How did you do it?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What went well? Did you face any barriers/problems?</li> </ul> </p>

- Summarise your goals to achieve by the next session

By next session, we will...

*Your notes...*

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## Reflection: Faith and the climate

- Read this extract from *Laudato Si'*

"Science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both.

Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realise that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality.

If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it." (LS, 62-3)

- What is Pope Francis saying here? Summarise his argument in your own words.

- Reflect on the role of your beliefs in responding to climate change

- Is religion important in addressing climate change? Why/why not?

# Session 6

## How do we live as Laudato Si' Champions?

"We come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. [...] Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope."

- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 244

## What are we learning?

In today's session, we will:

- Celebrate our success in short presentations as we bring our projects to a close
- Respond with where our ecological journey as *Laudato Si'* Champions will go next

## Today's prayer



Dear God,

We give thanks and praise to you as we celebrate together today. In becoming *Laudato Si'* Champions, we reflect on all the wisdom you have shared with us.

We, the guardians of your creation, the stewards of our common home, ask for your blessing as we take your message out into the world and care for the Earth in your name.

Praise be to you!

Amen

# Presenting your project

Today is the day! You're presenting your work to the group. You get to share the fantastic projects you've completed together. It's a time for celebration and gratitude as you graduate as Laudato Si' Champions.

If you're starting to feel a tad nervous about your presentation, you're not alone. Pre-presentation butterflies are entirely normal. So, here are a few tips to help you prepare:



**1. Pause to breathe:** Try taking to deep breaths to calm yourself before the presentation. Offer your thoughts to God as a silent prayer.

**2. Talk to your team:** This presentation is a group effort to chat with your team and support one another.

**3. Keep to time:** Everyone has the same amount of time to deliver their presentation. So, make sure you stick to the 5-minute limit.

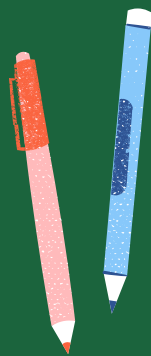
## Giving feedback

We've done some amazing work through these Laudato Si' Projects. So, let your peers know by offering them some feedback. There's always room for growth and improvement. Let's look at one way that you can share your response with your peers.

### What went well?

The best part of your project was...

You showed a good understanding of...



### Even better if...

Next time, you could include...

To improve your project, you could...

Remember! Your feedback should be about the project rather than the presentation style. Be kind and helpful with your words.

## *Reflection:* Laudato Si' and Me



Congratulations! You've completed your training and are now a Laudato Si' Champion. Take a moment to reflect on your experience. Give thanks for everything you've learned and achieved.

- Reflect back on our sessions together and everything you have learnt

- What does Laudato Si' mean to you?

- How will you live Laudato Si' in your daily life going forwards?

# What's next?

So, you've done it! You've designed and done a project to help our common home. You're a Laudato Si' Champion for sustainability in your school. But what comes next?

There are loads of activities you can do as a Laudato Si' Champion. Here are just a few...

## Keep making eco-choices

Remember when we looked at those daily choices in Session 2? Keep finding ways to make those eco-friendly choices at home and at school. Research new alternatives to live simply and sustainably.

## Join an eco-club (or start one!)

Ecology clubs are great ways to make changes in your school. You can keep your projects going and champion the environment with your classmates. If you don't have an ecology club in your school, why not get some friends together and start one?

## Raise your voice

Write a letter to your local MP about sustainability in your area. Join your student council to help make changes in your school. Raise your voice and ask leaders to care for our common home.

## Volunteer with a local charity

There are loads of environmental charities and groups across the UK. See if there are any groups or events in your local area so that you can get involved.

## Start a conversation

Do your friends or parents know about Laudato Si'? Start a conversation with them about the environment. The more we talk about these issues, the more people will hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

# Key terms

<i>Climate justice</i>	The idea that finding solutions to climate change must involve creating a fairer, more equal world. (See integral ecology)
<i>Cry of the earth</i>	The call to hear nature's suffering
<i>Cry of the poor</i>	The call to hear the suffering of the poorest and most vulnerable people
<i>Dominion</i>	The belief that humans have the right to control the Earth. Humans are in charge of creation on God's behalf.
<i>Ecology</i>	The study of the connections between living things and their environment
<i>Encyclical letter</i>	A letter written by a Pope that he sends out to all Catholic churches worldwide
<i>Integral ecology</i>	The idea that human activity and the natural world are deeply connected. Care for creation and care for humanity are inseparable
<i>Laudato Si'</i>	An encyclical letter by Pope Francis on caring for our common home. The title <i>Laudato Si'</i> means to "praise be to you".
<i>Stewardship</i>	The belief that the Earth is a gift from God. We have a shared responsibility to look after God's creation
<i>Sustainability</i>	An action that can be carried on for a long time without harming the environment
<i>Vice</i>	A negative habit or behaviour that turns away from God and the common good
<i>Virtue</i>	A positive habit or behaviour done in the service of good and to come closer to God



# *Recognitions*

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