



ECO-SPIRITUALITY

Behold God in Everything!



FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS
2022 FACILITATOR GUIDE

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS

INTRODUCTION

Catholic Climate Covenant thanks you for joining with thousands of other people of faith to host a 90-minute* educational session designed to assist you, your family, parish, school, diocese, religious community, or other Catholic institution as we grow in our understanding of the concept of “eco-spirituality”, one of the seven goals of the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform.

**The program is adaptable. You may choose to add time (especially if doing the contemplation exercise outdoors) or only do parts of the program.*

BACKGROUND

Since 2006, Catholic Climate Covenant has inspired and equipped Catholics to care for creation and care for the poor. Since 2012, in collaboration with our 20 national partners, the Covenant has provided the Feast of St. Francis (FOSF) program, a guide for a 90-minute program focused on Catholic social teaching and creation care. You can find previous years’ FOSF programs [here](#).

WHY HOST THIS EVENT?

By hosting a Feast of St. Francis event, you are joining thousands of Catholics and other people of faith who want to learn, grow, and respond to the Church’s teaching on caring for creation and the poor.

Pope Francis was so inspired by St. Francis of Assisi that he is the first Roman pontiff to take the saint’s name. Since the beginning of his papacy, he has challenged us to make care for creation and care for the poor a cornerstone of our Catholic witness.

This year also marks the 43rd anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi being named the patron saint of those who promote ecology by St. John Paul II.

This program is designed to be used to celebrate the 2022 Feast of St. Francis, which is on October 4. However, we encourage you to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis at any time that is convenient to your parish, school, religious community, or other group.

CUSTOMIZE THIS PROGRAM

This is **YOUR** program, and we hope you will feel free to **adapt** it to meet your needs, audience, or other factors. If you don’t have 90 minutes*, choose the segments that may work best for your community. If you need to split or skip the music, group discussion, Franciscan contemplation, or activities, please do so. We also provide you with an adapted **program for online or individual/family use**.

**Please note that if you need to change the venue (go outside) for the Franciscan contemplation, you may wish to add 10-20 minutes to the program so that you can accommodate the time needed to move outdoors for the suggested contemplative exercise.*

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

We are pleased to offer the very popular [Blessing of the Animals](#) liturgy for your use! You may choose to hold the blessing on October 4th and then hold a separate 90-minute Feast of St. Francis program on a day of your choosing, or you can do both on the same day. You will need to speak to your pastor (or deacon/lay leader) about leading the Blessing of the Animals.



FACILITATOR NOTES

Decide if you will be having an in-person event or an online (i.e., Zoom) event. This Facilitator Guide is written for an in-person event but also has information for leading an online event.

We provide you with:

- a) [Participant Program Guide for an in-person event](#) (printable)
- b) [Participant Program Guide for an online/individual event](#) which may be used in an online setting (i.e., Zoom) or by individuals wishing to use the material by themselves or with a family/small group.

CHOOSE THE DATE/TIME

The Feast of St. Francis is celebrated on October 4th. However, you may use this program at any time during the [Season of Creation](#) (September 1st- October 4th) or at another time that is convenient to your community.

The program is 90 minutes long. However, you may wish to give yourself extra time to allow for transition times, especially if using the Franciscan Contemplation Exercise (as it is preferable to be done outdoors).

LOCATE/SCHEDULE A ROOM (VENUE) FOR THE PROGRAM

If having an in-person event, ensure that the room/space has enough seating for expected participants. The event room should be able to be arranged so that small groups can gather for discussion. See if you can find a room with easy accessibility to an outside space (for Franciscan contemplation exercise).

You will also need to decide where and how the images that participants will share can be displayed. Check to see if taping on walls is allowed or if you will need to display the images brought by participants on easels or on tables/chairs.

If having an online event, you will need to have access to an online program (such as Zoom) that allows you to have breakout rooms (for small group discussions if gathering more than five people).

INVITE AND INSPIRE OTHERS

Register your Feast of St. Francis event at the [Godsplanet.us](https://www.godsplanet.us) website (this is the website where U.S. Catholics can go to read stories, share stories, and connect with others engaging with the LSAP). If your program is open to others in the community, you may use [this form](#) to submit your event to the Events Calendar. While there, you can check out the downloadable materials for your use and learn what others are doing as they engage with the [Laudato Si' Action Platform \(LSAP\)](#)!

After your event has passed, you can also share photos and stories from your gathering on the [News and Events page](#) where it says **Submit your creation care story** or [here](#).

INVITATIONS/PROMOTION

Invite members of your parish, school, religious community, etc., to attend the Feast of St. Francis program. You may use [this text](#) in a newsletter/bulletin insert and/or [this flier](#) for promotion.

Important: If possible, your program participants should be reminded to select and bring to the event an image (photo, drawing, image) of someplace/something where they “behold God”. This request is included in the newsletter/bulletin insert and in the flier.



VIDEO

To view the video on the day of your presentation, there are two options:

- If you have internet access in the location of the program, you can view it directly from [YouTube](#).
- If you will not have wi-fi access, you can [download it](#) and save the video to your computer.

For displaying the video, you will need a computer, a projector, speakers, and a screen. If you are not downloading the video to your computer, you will need an internet connection. The projector will need to connect to your computer and the speakers can be connected either to your computer or the projector, depending on your equipment.

For online event: Programs like Zoom allow you to share the video directly from YouTube or you can download and share from your desktop. Be sure to allow sound sharing.

MUSIC (Optional)

There are two links to musical selections in the program. Both links take you to a Dropbox folder. You may download the music or play directly from the links if you have internet in your venue. External speakers are recommended.

1. **Centering/Gathering music** before program begins: [All Creature's Lament](#), Climate Vigil Songs, Potter's Gate Worship Project in Partnership with Climate Vigil.
2. **Closing recessional hymn:** [Brother Sun \(Giving Glory\)](#), Climate Vigil Songs, Potter's Gate Worship Project in Partnership with Climate Vigil.

What Else You Will Need

Most of the materials you will need for a successful event can be found in this Facilitator Guide. The program includes links to the suggested music, opening prayer and closing hymn, readings, link to a video, discussion questions, a contemplation activity, and suggested actions to strengthen your community's eco-spirituality practices.

You will also want to gather:

1. **The Participant Program Guide:** (which does not include these facilitator notes or script,) and is found after the Facilitator Guide. Make enough copies for all your in-person participants.
If doing an online event, you can screen share the [Online/Individual Participant Guide](#) and if you have the emails of participants you can choose to send them the link or a copy (as an attachment) as well.
2. **For the suggested actions:** You may wish to print copies of this [Season of Creation and Laudato Si' Week activity ideas](#). Participants will also have a QR code available to access the ideas online. (For *online event*, share <https://bit.ly/fosf22activities> in chat with participants.)
3. **For Readings:** You will need up to four volunteers to be readers or you will need to ask for volunteers at the event.
4. **For contemplative activity:** If you can move outdoors for the contemplative activity, this would be best. It is okay if you must stay indoors, however it won't be as connected to nature as if you were outdoors.

You can choose to hold the contemplative activity as a large group or have people do the activity individually. If doing the exercise as a large group, you, or someone you designate should "lead" the contemplation and read slowly the text slowly. If doing individually, remind them they have 20 minutes and should return to the main room after 20 minutes.

Online event: You can either choose to do the contemplative exercise as large online group (indoors) or allow individuals to go outside on their own if they wish.

LET'S BEGIN! (THE PROGRAM)



FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS

2022 Facilitator In-Person Program Guide

WITH FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS & SCRIPT

NOTE: Facilitator instructions are in Purple and Green, and Italics denote the script for the facilitator.

OPTIONAL: Gathering/Centering Music: *All Creature's Lament*, Climate Vigil Songs, Potter's Gate Worship Project in Partnership with Climate Vigil. This song is a reimagining of All Creatures of our God and King.

For more information on Climate Vigil Songs album go to www.ClimateVigil.org.

(You may play *All Creature's Lament* as participants gather before the beginning of the program. Give participants a couple of minutes of silence after the song so they may reflect on their centering quotes)

Centering reading before program begins.

(Please read each of these quotes slowly and take time to silently reflect.)

"The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything." - Julian of Norwich

"Everything in nature has a trademark, God's trademark: the stripes on a shell and the stripes on a zebra; the grain of the wood and the veins of the dry leaf; the markings on the dragonfly's wings and the pattern of stars on a photographic plate; the panther's coat and the epidermal cells of the lily petal; the structure of atoms and galaxies. All bear God's fingerprints." - Rev. Ernesto Cardenal, *Abide in Love*, 1972

"The Cosmos is an externalized and manifested expression of the indescribable reality that is GOD." - Contemplative theologian Beatrice Bruteau, 1930-2014

WELCOME

Script: *Welcome to the 2022 Feast of St. Francis program, "Eco-spirituality: Behold God in Everything! "*

For the next 90 minutes (this will depend on whether you have adapted the program), we will focus on the concept of eco-spirituality, one of the seven goals of the Vatican's Laudato Si' Action Platform. In this program we will explore the meaning of eco-spirituality, discuss how it strengthens and deepens our faith, and how we might integrate eco-spirituality as we engage with the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

Read in unison

Script: Please join me in this opening prayer. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

Pledge of Commitment to Protect and Heal God's Creation

We have come to renew our covenant with God and with one another in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We have come to help protect God's creation.

We have come as followers of Jesus to commit ourselves



anew to one another and to heal
injustice and poverty.
We have come to stand together against all threats to life.
We have come to discover some new beauty every day in
God's creation: the sunrise and sunset,
birds, flowers and trees, rainbows in the sky, the stars, the
many forms of life in the forest.
We will remember always that God speaks to us through
the beauty of creation, and we will
try our best to answer God's call to reverence for all creation.

- Prayer adapted from Prayers to [Care for Creation](#), by the USCCB

READINGS (10 MINUTES)

(You will need to have 4 pre-designated readers or ask for volunteers for each reading)

Reading #1

St. Francis of Assisi's first biographer, Thomas of Celano describes the way of Francis like this:

"Who could ever express the deep affection Francis bore
for all things that belong to God?
Or who would be able to tell
of the sweet tenderness he enjoyed
while contemplating in creatures
the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator?
From this reflection
he often overflowed
with amazing, unspeakable joy
as he looked at the sun,
gazed at the moon, or observed the stars in the sky."

- From [Augustine and Francis: The Saints of Laudato Si'](#), *Church Life Journal*, A Journal of the [McGrath Institute for Church Life](#)

Reading #2

From *Laudato Si'*:

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that "contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves". (*Laudato Si'* #233)

and

It is no coincidence that, in the canticle in which Saint Francis praises God for his creatures, he goes on to say: Praised be you, my Lord, through those who give pardon to your love." 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. (*Laudato Si'* No. 91)

Reading #3

"If we don't know how to love what's right in front of us, then we don't know how to see what is. So we must start with a stone! We move from the stone to the plant world and learn how to appreciate growing things and see God in them. In all of the natural world, we see the *vestigia Dei*, which means the fingerprints or footprints of God.



Perhaps once we can see God in plants and animals, we might learn to see God in our neighbors. And then we might learn to love the world. And then when all of that loving has taken place, when all of that seeing has happened, when such people come to me and tell me they love Jesus, I'll believe it! They're capable of loving Jesus. The soul is prepared. The soul is freed, and it's learned how to see and how to receive and how to move in and how to move out from itself. Such individuals might well understand how to love God".

- Fr. Richard Rohr, <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/contemplating-creation-2021-10-10>

Reading #4

"The human person is created to see God in every aspect of life, charged with divine energy, and to love what he or she sees. In this respect scripture is written daily in the supermarkets, nursing homes, playgrounds, post offices, cafes, bars, and in the scripts of home and community life. God is not hovering over us; God is the amazing depth, breadth, imagination, and creativity in culture, art, music, poetry, science, literature, film, gyms, and parks – all in some way speak the word of God. Every place is the place to find God, and God is in everything".

- Sr. Ilia Delio, *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness* (Orbis Books)

INDIVIDUAL SILENT REFLECTION TIME (8 MINUTES)

Script: *Please take the next 5 minutes to reflect silently on the readings.*

- When/where do you see the footprint of God?
- How does "the way of St. Francis", as described by Thomas of Celano, invite us to see all of creation as "kin"?

VIDEO (13 MINUTES)

Script: *We will watch a short video that will explain "eco-spirituality", one of the seven goals of the Laudato Si' Action Platform and then take part in a beautiful contemplation/prayer from the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.*



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

(3-5 people, with groups of three being preferable)

Script: *Please gather in groups of three to five people. You will have 15 minutes to reflect and discuss these questions within your small group and share the image you selected to bring today. After you have shared your selected image with your group, please place the image (add instructions of where they can tape/place their images). After your small group sharing, feel free to walk around the room quietly and look at all the displayed shared images.*

Online event: If more than 5 people are participating you will probably need to use the Breakout Room feature.

- 1) **5 minutes:** How did the readings and video enrich your understanding of eco-spirituality and how it is or can be part of your life and your faith community? Can you think of ways to strengthen your and your community's eco-spirituality practices?
- 2) **5 minutes:** Share the photo/picture/graphic you brought along with you and share with your small group why you chose this image/how you **behold** God (*Vestigia Dei*, God's fingerprints or footprints) in the image.

SHARING OF IMAGES (5 MINUTES)

As you finish sharing with your small group, follow your program host's instructions of where to place/share your image so it can be seen by the larger group. Walk around the room and look at all the images shared. Contemplate the many ways people behold (sense: see, hear, feel, smell) God.

Online event: Have participants share their images through the Chat feature. Have participants look at the shared images and contemplate the many ways people behold God.

A FRANCISCAN CONTEMPLATION EXERCISE (20 MINUTES)

Full group or individual use: This is **preferably a full group activity** but may be done individually. As a facilitator, decide the best option for your group. If doing an online event, decide if you will be staying as a group (and thus using the "indoor" directions, or allowing participants to follow the contemplation exercise on their own.)

Time: You will have 20 minutes for the contemplation exercise. If moving outdoors and then back indoors, you may need to add 5-10 additional minutes to the program to allow for a change in setting.

This exercise is best done outdoors. However, if going outdoors is not possible (due to weather, because the event is at night, or you are doing a virtual event) it may be done indoors. If done indoors, please make sure that all the shared images remain visible to participants. These images will assist with the contemplation exercise. For the "Connect" section there are specific "outdoor" and "indoor" versions. For an online event, you will need to share the requested participants' images through the CHAT feature.

For full group exercise: the facilitator (or a volunteer) reads the text out loud, pausing, for at least 2 minutes, between each segment to allow time for contemplation.

For individual activity: Individuals may engage in the exercise independently by following the written text. Remind them they have 20 minutes.



THE FRANCISCAN LECTIO OF CREATION

(adapted from contemplation exercise by Rev. Dr. Lawrence Jay, Executive Director of Rolling Ridge Retreat Center)

Script: *We will participate in a Franciscan Lectio of Creation, a Franciscan contemplation exercise developed by Rev. Dr. Lawrence Jay. Based on Franciscan spirituality, the teaching of St. Clare, and the example of St. Francis of Assisi, the Franciscan Lectio of Creation is Lectio Divina with a Franciscan twist that creates a new approach for the “divine reading” of nature as a way to more fully know God and connect with the Creator. The 4C’s of the Lectio (connect, consider, contemplate and care) are meant to engage the whole self, head, heart, and hand for creation care.*

If exercise is done indoors, add this to the script:

To assist us to be able to open our sense to creation, please feel free to look at the images we have shared.

1. CONNECT: *Open all your senses to experience the Creator through creation.*

To become more aware of their surroundings, naturalists learn to be still and to engage their five senses. Sit quietly for a few moments. Be present in the moment by calming your mind and stilling your spirit. Slowly open your eyes and expand your peripheral vision to see all that is around you.

If outdoors:

Slowly open your eyes and expand your peripheral vision to see all that is around you. Next, begin to tune in to the sounds around you with your ears. As you take deep breaths, allow your nose to smell the air and sniff the multitude of scents surrounding you. Engage your hands as you tactilely explore your environment; and if you are daring (and know something about the local plants), extend your tongue and taste creation’s bounty.

Next, begin to tune in to the sounds around you with your ears. As you take deep breaths, allow your nose to smell the air and sniff the multitude of scents surrounding you. Open your whole self to the Creator through creation’s loving gaze and embrace. After a few moments focus your attention and connect with one creature. Be with it; connect with God through it; do not rush.

(Pause and reflect)

If indoors:

Slowly open your eyes and expand your peripheral vision to see all that is around you. Look at all the images participants have shared or imagine being in your favorite outdoor place. Next, begin to tune in to the sounds around you with your ears. As you take deep breaths, recall the scents of your favorite outdoor place. Allow your memory to recall the smell of the air and the multitude of scents surrounding you. Imagine all your senses exploring that particular place. Open your whole self to the Creator through creation’s loving gaze and embrace. After a few moments focus your attention and connect with one of the shared images or a memory. Be with it; connect with God through it; do not rush.

(Pause and reflect)

2. CONSIDER: *Think about your connections through scripture and science.*

Given your “creation connection”, what thoughts are triggered as you consider what you know from scripture and science? Think about what this teaches about your relationship with God and all the Creator has made. How do the environmental realities we face today challenge this relationship? Also consider: What do you like best about being in nature? What is “good” and “beautiful” to your senses? How is God revealed through nature?

(Pause and reflect)



3. CONTEMPLATE: *Prayerfully bring to the Creator your considerations in love.*

Given your “considerations”, what feelings are stirring in your heart? Bring this to prayer as you look on creation with love through the Spirit and allow your contemplations on nature to draw you closer to God. Also contemplate: How do you feel about creation? What are you experiencing as “true”? What passions are unfolding in your heart regarding your relationship to the planet because of your relationship to God and commitment to Christ?

(Pause and reflect)

4. CARE: *Live and love like the Creator in kinship with creation.*

Given your time seeking the Creator in creation, what can you do to live out your growing convictions? How can you imitate the Creator’s love and care for creation as a “brother”, a “sister”, a “neighbor”, given the current environmental realities we face as a global community?

To CARE, choose:

- A change to make in your lifestyle (eat less meat, be more cognizant of your carbon footprint and aim to reduce it, eliminate single use plastics, etc.)
- A relationship (with creation and/or with God) to address or to learn more about through study and reflection.
- A form of art to express your growing passions and commitments.
- An example to follow from nature or from someone whose creation care you admire.

Your commitment to creation care is your “eco-vocation”, your ecological spirituality.

(Pause and reflect)

At end of 20 minutes, please return to the full group.

SUGGESTED GROUP ACTION (10 MINUTES)

This is a full group activity

Script: *We are invited to reflect and discuss how we may as a community engage with the eco spirituality goal of the Laudato Si’ Action Platform.*

Discuss as a group a possible follow-up activity that lifts the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform’s eco-spirituality goal.

Here are two possible actions: For more information on these possible activities [go here](#) or use QR code.

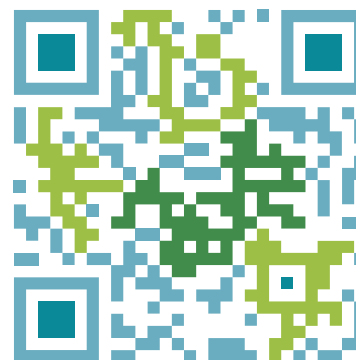
Season of Creation Banner

Talk to your pastor about displaying this Season of Creation Banner during the Season of Creation (Sept. 1st- Oct.4th) (NOTE: This activity will be probably be for planning next year’s Season of Creation).

Mass for Creation

Ask your bishop and/or diocesan staff about celebrating a “Mass for Creation” (sometimes also called a “*Laudato Si’* Mass” or “Green Mass”) during *Laudato Si’* Week (May) or Season of Creation (Sept 1st-Oct. 4th). In many dioceses the bishop (and/or auxiliary bishops) has celebrated the “Mass for Creation”. This is a wonderful worship experience that truly lifts our concern for all of God’s creation.

If one (or both) of these actions is chosen for follow-up, who will take the lead in the process of planning and implementation?



CONCLUSION AND CLOSING PRAYER (2 MINUTES)

Script: *Thank you for participating in the 2022 Feast of St. Francis program. Today we delved into and experienced one of the Laudato Si' Action Platform's goals: eco-spirituality. I hope that the program has been illuminating, enriching, and abounding in God's grace and that you will continue pursuing the practice of eco-spirituality, both personally and communally. Please join me in the closing prayer.*

In Unison

The Garden is Rich

The garden is rich with diversity
 With plants of a hundred families
 In the space between the trees
 With all the colors and fragrances.
 Basil, mint and lavender,
 Great Mystery keep my remembrance pure,
 Raspberry, Apple, Rose,
 Great Mystery fill my heart with love,
 Dill, anise, tansy,
 Holy winds blow in me.
 Rhododendron, zinnia,
 May my prayer be beautiful
 May my remembrance O Great Mystery
 Be as incense to thee
 In the sacred grove of eternity
 As I smell and remember
 The ancient forests of earth.

- Chinook Psalter (from [Environment and Sustainability Prayers](#), Xavier University)

OPTIONAL - Closing Hymn

[Brother Sun \(Giving Glory\)](#), Climate Vigil Songs, Potter's Gate Worship Project in Partnership with Climate Vigil. A meditation on Cantic of the Sun, this song is a modern reimagining of

St. Francis' hymn, but this time in a gospel style. For more information on Climate Vigil Songs album go to www.ClimateVigil.org.

Thank you for participating in the 2022 Feast of St. Francis Program
For more information visit: CatholicClimateCovenant.org

