



FACILITATOR GUIDE

# feast of St. Francis

The Healing Power of Love in Action:  
Creation Care in a Time of Pandemic & Partisanship

# Feast of St. Francis

## INTRODUCTION

Catholic Climate Covenant thanks you for joining with thousands of others to host an educational session highlighting the urgent need for action on creation care, climate change, and how to begin healing from partisanship. In particular, this year's program focuses on St. Francis' Cantic of Creation and how it guides our path so we can take action to protect life, preserve all that sustains life, and care for our common home.

## 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 19 national partners, the Covenant has provided the Feast of St. Francis (FOSF) program, a template for a 90-minute program focused on Catholic social teaching and creation care.

## WHAT IS 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. 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 41st 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 go in conjunction with the 2020 Feast of St. Francis (October 4.) However, we encourage you to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis at any time that is convenient to your parish, school or other group.

### Customize this Program

This is YOUR program and we hope you will feel free to adapt/modify 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 the educational sections and the activities, please do so. This program can also be adapted to be virtual, as needed. Please see the [Online/Individual version](#).

### Blessing of the Animals

Many have asked us for a [Blessing of the Animals](#) liturgy and we are pleased to offer one 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

### 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, [download the video](#) and save it on your computer.
- For displaying the video, you will need a computer, 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 speakers can be connected either to your computer or the projector, depending on your equipment.

### What You'll Need

All the materials you will need for a successful educational event can be found in this Facilitator Guide. The program includes opening and closing prayers, readings, a video, discussion questions, and suggested activities.

1. **Participant Program Guide:** (does not include facilitator notes or script). Make enough copies for all your participants.
2. **For the Advocacy Activity:** To participate in the recommended advocacy activity, you will need either a couple of laptops with internet access and/or you can ask participants to use their smartphones to access the online action. You can also give all participants [this link](#) for them to take the advocacy action on their own. (Direct link: <https://catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/FOSFPledge2020>) Participants also have a QR Code in their programs so they may access the activity directly with their phones.
3. **Materials:** You will need several poster-size sheets of paper for each group, markers, tape. These will be needed for the group discussion time.
4. **Optional:** Make copies of the USCCB *Laudato Si'* postcard to distribute to participants. (To see information on the postcard go here: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/laudato-si-postcard>)



# Feast of St. Francis

## 2020 Program Guide WITH FACILITATOR NOTES AND SCRIPT

NOTE: Facilitator instructions are in **orange** or say **L.** *Italics* denote the script the facilitator reads.

### OPENING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

#### The Breath of the Almighty

**L:** *Lord God, loving Creator,  
You fashioned us from clay,  
And breathed life into us.  
We are made and loved by you.*

**All:** The Spirit of God has made me,  
And the breath of the Almighty has given me life.

**L:** *Heavenly God,  
Your Spirit fills us with hope  
And lights the path to fullness of life.  
Hear us!  
As we cry out to you, uncertain and afraid.*

**All:** The Spirit of God has made me,  
And the breath of the Almighty has given me life.

**L:** *In your mercy, Lord,  
Grant us the strength to rebuild  
When all seems lost.  
And the courage to reach out  
To those in pain.*

**All:** We take from creation much more than we need,  
We threaten your world through indifference and greed.

**L:** *May we be good stewards of all that you give,  
Protecting creation wherever we live.*

**All:** The Spirit of God has made me,  
And the breath of the Almighty has given me life.

~Prayer: Linda Jones/CAFOD



## READING AND VIDEO (15 MINUTES)

### Reading (READ BY FACILITATOR)

#### An introduction to the Canticle of Creatures.

*The Canticle was written in three sections (each at a different time of St. Francis' life):*

**Part 1:** A praise to God for His creations such as "Brother Sun", "Sister Moon", "Brother Wind", "Sister Water".

*This section of the Canticle was written at the end of St. Francis's life (1224) as he was recovering from an illness with St. Claire and the Poor Sisters in San Damiano. At this point in his life, St. Francis was almost completely blind, and yet through his suffering, he composed this song of praise of God for all the wonders of creation.*

**Part 2:** A praise for those who forgive for the love of God and who endure trials in peace.

*The second part of the Canticle was composed when Francis reconciled the bishop and the podestà (Chief Magistrate) of Assisi. He sent his friars to sing the first part of the canticle in front of them which led to their reconciliation.*

**Part 3:** A praise for "Sister Bodily Death", and to those "whom death will find in Your most holy will".

*According to tradition, the first time the Canticle was sung in its entirety was by Francis and Brothers Angelo and Leo, two of his original companions, on Francis' deathbed. The final verse praising "Sister Death" was said to have been added only a few minutes before Francis' death.*

From: <https://www.cathdal.org/home/canticle-of-the-creatures-the-hymn-of-st-francis-of-assisi-that-inspired-laudato-si>

## VIDEO (10 MINUTES)

### Group Discussion (15 MINUTES)

**Facilitator:** Groups should be no larger than 5 people.

*You will have 15 minutes to discuss in groups the videos and the reading.*

1. What images or words stood out for you in the video?
2. The first part (in purple) of the Canticle of Creatures highlights St. Francis' seeing the interconnectedness of ALL of God's creation.

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,  
all praise is yours, all glory, all honor,  
and all blessing.  
To you, alone, Most High, do they belong.  
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.  
All praise be yours, my Lord,  
through all you have made,  
and first my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day;  
and through whom you give us light.  
How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendor;  
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.  
All Praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon  
and the stars; in the heavens you have made them,  
bright, and precious, and fair.  
All praise be yours, my Lord,



through Brothers wind and air, and fair and stormy,  
 all the weather's moods,  
 by which you cherish all that you have made.  
 All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water,  
 so useful, humble, precious and pure.  
 All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
 through whom you brighten up the night.  
 How beautiful is he, how cheerful!  
 Full of power and strength.  
 All praise be yours, my Lord, through our Sister  
 Mother Earth, who sustains us and governs us,  
 and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

**Question:** What do you give praise to in creation?

3. The second part (in blue) and third part (in green) of the Canticle speak to our present political partisanship and global pandemic.

All praise be yours, my Lord,  
 through those who grant pardon for love of you;  
 through those who endure sickness and trial.  
 Happy are those who endure in peace,  
 By You, Most High, they will be crowned.  
 All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death,  
 From whose embrace no mortal can escape.  
 Woe to those who die in mortal sin!  
 Happy those she finds doing your will!  
 The second death can do them no harm.  
 Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks  
 And serve him with great humility.

**Questions:**

- What broken relationships do we need to grant pardon to, so as to heal political partisanship?
- What can we learn about enduring illness and pain from St. Francis?
- How does the Canticle speak to us about seeking healing for creation, our bodies during illness, and our political structures during a time of partisanship?

## Readings (10 MINUTES)

**Facilitator:** You will need to get four volunteers to read the following readings.

### Reading #1 | 1 John 4:7-12

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us



## Reading #2

“A prayer that does not lead you to practical action for your brother—the poor, the sick, those in need of help, a brother in difficulty—is a sterile and incomplete prayer.” **Pope Francis, Angelus, July 21, 2013**

## And

“A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.” **Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est (God is Love), no. 14**

## Reading #3

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. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also “macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones”. That is why the Church set before the world the ideal of a “civilization of love”. Social love is the key to authentic development: “In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity”. In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us. (*Laudato Si'* 231)

## Reading #4

Many of the saints learned the path to merciful love but Saint Francis of Assisi stands out. In his youth, Francis wanted to be a famous knight but he was wounded in battle. After he recovered, he started to wander into abandoned churches to pray. Praying before the San Damiano cross, he had a deep personal experience of God’s compassionate love. The event that changed his life was his encounter with the leper. As an ambitious youth who sought fame and glory, Francis had a great disdain for lepers; as soon as he saw a leper, he would hold his nose and run away. After he experienced God’s merciful love in the San Damiano cross, Francis met a leper along the road. Instead of showing disgust, Francis dismounted his horse, gave the leper alms and kissed the leper’s hand. This experience marked a profound turn of events in his life. By experiencing God’s love for him in the crucified Christ, Francis experienced the same goodness of God in the kiss of the leper. Recounting the experience at the end of his life he wrote: “What was bitter had turned into sweetness of soul and body.”

Through the cross he came to a new awareness of God’s merciful love. Love opened him up to the divine mystery at the heart of everything. He realized that the God of his life was the God of every life and he called all creatures “brother and sister.” Each and every thing, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, had infinite value because it reflected God in its own unique being - earthworms in the middle of road, bees freezing in winter - Francis attended to every creature with grace and respect. He called himself “brother” not as a title but as a structure of reality. He lived in solidarity with all creation because his life was part of every other life—bird, tree, rabbit, human—all were bound together in the compassionate love of God. Even at the end of his life when he was blind and wracked with disease, as expressed in the Canticle of Creatures. His inner world was light-filled; his life shows that when we live in the gift of God’s merciful love, we discover the whole Earth as “pregnant with God.” We discover the truth of ourselves as part of a cosmic family and we live with a new reality of belonging together, bound in the heart of God’s mercy. ~**Ilia Delio, OSF, Earth Community and Mercy Consciousness**





## Group Discussion (20 MINUTES)

**Facilitator:** Each group should be given at least three sheets of poster-sized paper, a marker, and some tape.


**Facilitator:** During this discussion time, please read the questions and use the paper to list your answers. When you have finished creating the three lists (A, B, C) please use the tape to place them on the wall (or find another place in the room where they can be displayed.) You will have 20 minutes.


1. Think about what you have learned about St. Francis in the video and in the readings. How did St. Francis embody the idea that “love is God” and put love into action? How does the Canticle of Creation embody “love is God”? **List the ways it does on a piece of paper. (List A)**
2. Pope Francis and Pope Benedict speak of the “concrete action of love”. What examples can you share of how you and/or your community display “love in action”? **List them on a piece of paper (List B).**
3. In *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis speaks of love as both civic and political. How do you and/or your community act on the civic and political aspects of the love of God? **List examples of love as a civic and political action on a piece of paper. (List C)**
4. **Compare the three lists.** What strikes you about what you wrote on lists A, B and C? What is listed in your lists? Is something in all three lists?

## Activity (25 MINUTES)

**Facilitator:** This is where you may wish to hand out copies of the USCCB postcard.

Look at the [USCCB's \*Laudato Si'\* 5th anniversary postcard](#). Each group should discuss the questions that follow the postcard image. Group Discussion should take 10 minutes and the suggested action(s) should take 15 minutes.





**As Catholics, we are called to:**

- uphold life and the dignity of each human person
- support families and future generations
- love the poor and vulnerable
- advocate for basic rights and a just economy
- be in solidarity with all, as one human family
- care for all of God's creation

**Grounded in our Catholic Tradition, now is the time to protect the earth for our children and grandchildren.**

**PRAY** to hear God's call to live our faith for the common good, knowing that everything is interconnected.

**LEARN** how the climate crisis is a profound moral issue greatly affecting the poor and vulnerable.

**TELL** your local and national leaders to protect creation.

**Praise be to you, our Lord, God of all Creation!**

**Learn more!**  
[usccb.org/environment](http://usccb.org/environment)  
[wearesaltandlight.org/cst101](http://wearesaltandlight.org/cst101)  
[catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://catholicclimatecovenant.org)

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POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato Si'*

PHOTO: PETER COOPER





## Group Discussion (10 MINUTES)

- Are the things listed examples of "Love in Action"?
- Are there things listed on the card also on your lists (A, B, C)?
- Are any of these things on your list?
  - Protecting life
  - Creation care
  - Racial justice
  - Feeding the hungry
  - Welcoming immigrants/refugees
  - Caring for the sick
  - Healing broken relationships
  - Voting/legislative advocacy

### Take Action

**Suggested Action: Taking Civic and Political Action (15 minutes)**

### Take the Pledge

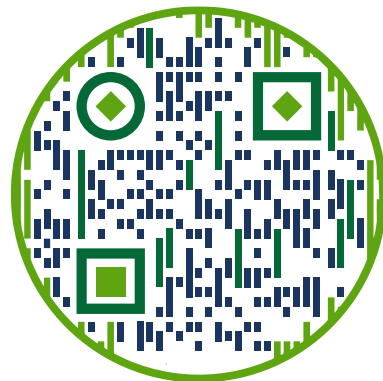
Take the Pledge to Vote to Protect Life, Foster Human Dignity, and Promote the Common Good... and then VOTE! To take the pledge go here: <https://catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/FOSFPledge2020>

**Facilitator:** *The Catholic Bishops of the United States published [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States](#), a "teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics, which provides guidance for all who seek to exercise their rights and duties as citizens". In the document the Bishops state that Catholics are called to "bring their faith and our consistent moral framework to contribute to important work in our communities, nation, and world on an ongoing basis". Quoting the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the document reminds us that "It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person... As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life" (nos. 1913-1915).*

*How will you participate as a faithful citizen in promoting the common good and love in action during this election season?*

Here are three actions you can take:

- Take the Pledge to Vote to Protect Life, Foster Human Dignity, and Promote the Common Good...and then VOTE!! To take the pledge go to: <https://catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/FOSFPledge2020> or use this QR code.
- Hold conversations with family and friends about the need to be active in public life and how to protect life, preserve that which sustains life, and care for creation. When you take the pledge to Vote to Protect Life, Foster Human Dignity, and Promote the Common Good you will receive an email with resources to assist you with these conversations.
- Share copies of the USCCB's *Laudato Si'* 5th anniversary post card with friends, family, and your church community. The postcard is available in multiple download forms, including Spanish versions. (Go here to learn more and download the postcard: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/laudato-si-postcard>)



## Closing Prayer (1 MIN)

**Facilitator:** *Please join me in the closing prayer*

### SAINT FRANCIS AND THE FRANCISCAN BENEDICTION (ADAPTED)

**ALL:** May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live from deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of God's creation, so that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer illness, pain, rejection, injustice, hunger, and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with just enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in the world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done:

To bring justice, kindness, and healing to all our children, all our neighbors who are poor, and all of creation.

**L:** *And the Blessing of God, who Creates, Redeems and Sanctifies, be upon you and all you love and pray for this day, and forever more. Amen.*



Thank you for participating in the 2020 Feast of St. Francis Program  
For more information visit: <http://www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org>

