



INDIVIDUAL &
VIRTUAL GUIDE

Feast of St. Francis

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

Feast of St. Francis

2020 Program Guide FOR INDIVIDUAL & VIRTUAL USE

SPECIAL NOTE

This version was created for those who will be using the Feast of St. Francis 2020 program as individuals or as small groups online (virtual gatherings) due to Covid-19 physical distancing rules.

- An online group should plan to have a facilitator and volunteer readers. Facilitators, please see Facilitator Program Guide. Facilitators may wish to email participants the program guide ahead of time and let participants know that they should have at least three pieces of paper and a pen. Facilitator should also ask for volunteer readers.
- An online group can easily participate in the group discussions. One of the group discussions is slightly modified for online groups and for individual use.
- The suggested activities were designed to make them accessible to all types of groups and individuals.
- If using the program as an individual, please read all parts, reflect individually, and then try to gather (virtually if needed) with members of your parish, school, religious community to discuss as a group the questions that follow the readings and the video.



OPENING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

(Individual participant reads entire prayer)

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

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' 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)

Watch on [YouTube](#).

Group Discussion (15 MINUTES)

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)

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)

NOTE:

If participating in an online group, each participant should create their own lists A, B, C.

Participants can discuss and brainstorm together what could go on each list. If participating alone (individually), please brainstorm things that can go on lists A, B, C and then have a conversation with friends or members of your parish/school about examples of “love in action”.

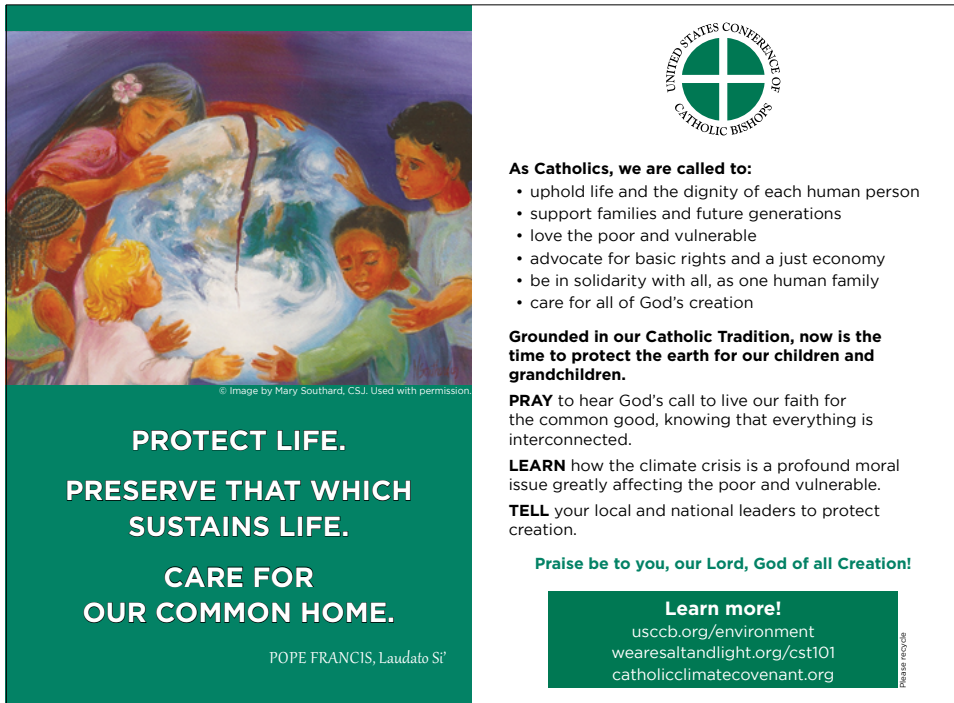
1. Think about what you have learned about St. Francis in the video and in the readings. How did St. Francis embody the idea that “love is God” and put love into action? How does the Canticle of Creation embody “love is God”? **List the ways it does on a piece of paper. (List A)**
2. Pope Francis and 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)

Look at the [USCCB's *Laudato Si'* 5th anniversary postcard](#) below:



**PROTECT LIFE.
PRESERVE THAT WHICH
SUSTAINS LIFE.
CARE FOR
OUR COMMON HOME.**

POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato Si'*

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
wearesaltandlight.org/cst101
catholicclimatecovenant.org

Please recycle

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

Note:

Due to the pandemic, this year's suggested actions were designed to be both individual and group actions. Take the [Pledge to Vote to Protect Life, Foster Human Dignity, and Promote the Common Good](#), hold conversations with family and friends about Faithful Citizenship, civility, and vote!

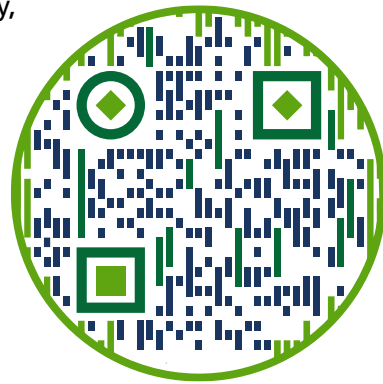
Suggested Action: Taking Civic and Political Action (15 minutes)

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* (<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-title>), 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:

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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)

SAINT FRANCIS AND THE FRANCISCAN BENEDICTION (ADAPTED)

(Individual participants read all parts)

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.*



Catholic Climate Covenantsm

Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

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

