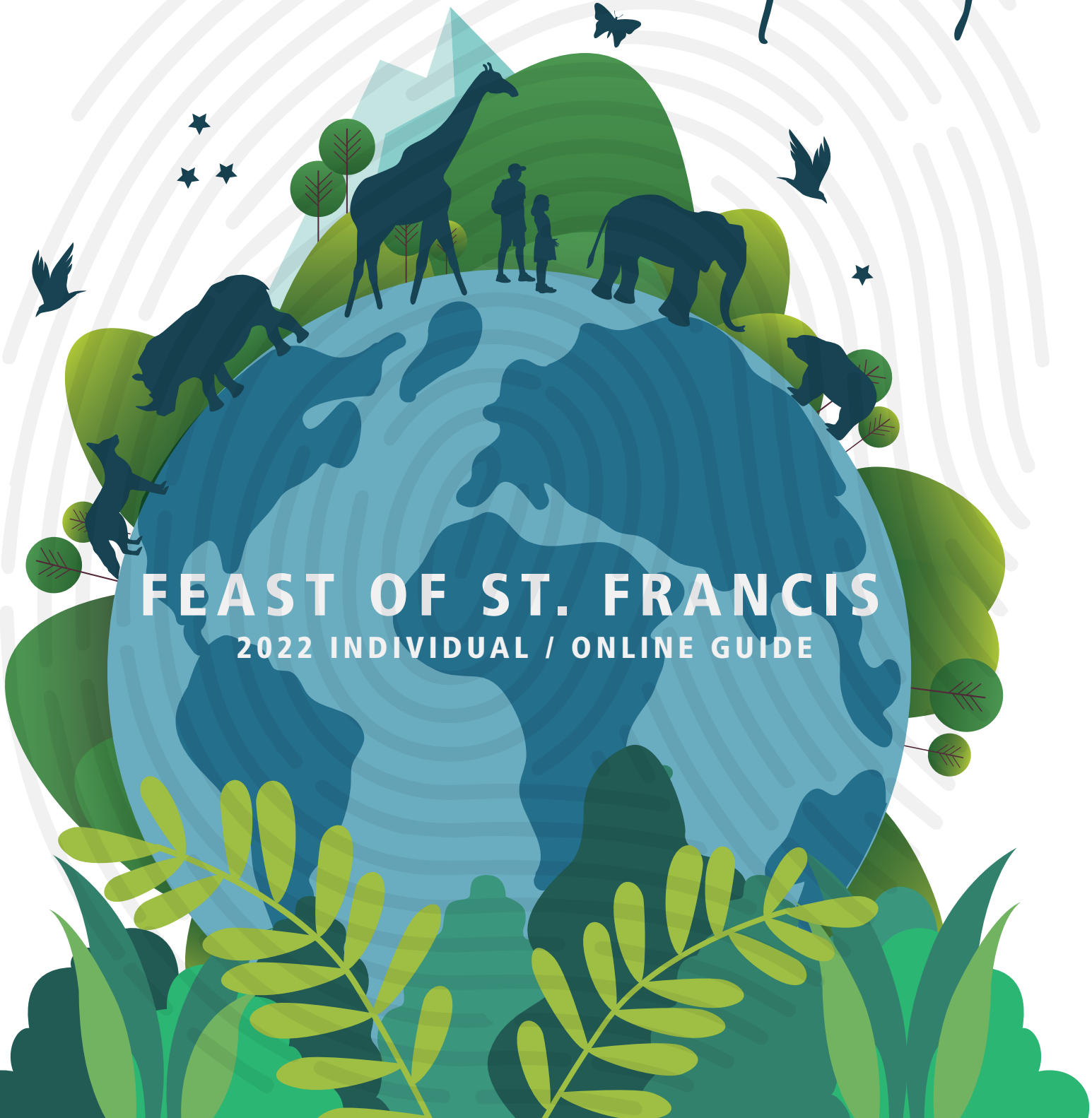




ECO-SPIRITUALITY

Behold God in Everything!



FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS

2022 INDIVIDUAL / ONLINE GUIDE

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS

2022 Online / Individual Program Guide

We are cognizant that due to the ongoing pandemic, some parishes and groups may be more comfortable meeting online. This version of the 2022 Feast of St. Francis Program is for use in online meetings (i.e. Zoom) or for individual (or family) use.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2022 Feast of St. Francis program, “Eco-spirituality: Behold God in Everything.” For the next 90 minutes, we (you) will focus on the concept of “eco-spirituality” one of the seven goals of the *Laudato Si’ Action Platform*.

Catholic Climate Covenant thanks you for joining in celebrating the Feast of St. Francis and we hope that with this program, your family, parish, school, diocese, religious community, or other Catholic institution, continues your eco-spirituality journey.

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.

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

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

In this program, Catholic Climate Covenant invites you us to focus on the concept of eco-spirituality, one of the seven goals of the Vatican’s *Laudato Si’ Action Platform*. 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

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)

(Online Group: Ask for volunteers for each reading. Individuals: read all sections.)

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 (8 MINUTES)

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)

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. <https://youtu.be/eG8Uske0L-4>



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

Online Group: You may need to use the Zoom Breakout Room feature for small group (3-5 people) discussion. If that is not possible, have people reflect individually and have them share via the chat feature. The images may also be shared via chat.

Individuals: Reflect on the questions and about where you behold God, and then plan to discuss your reflection with family, friends, others in your community.

- 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.

Individual: Think of images/places/things/people in which you behold/sense God.



A FRANCISCAN CONTEMPLATION EXERCISE (20 MINUTES)

Online Group: Follow your facilitator's instructions

Individual: This contemplation exercise is best done outdoors. If you must do it indoors, follow the indoor reading below.

THE FRANCISCAN LECTIO OF CREATION

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

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)

Online group: 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: *(More info can be found [here](#))*

1. 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).

2. 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?

Individual: Look at the two possible actions above and brainstorm who you would need to speak to so that your parish/diocese/school/community can order and display a Season of Creation Banner and/or celebrate a "Mass for Creation".



CLOSING PRAYER (2 MINUTES)

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



Catholic Climate Covenantsm
 Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

