



2021 EARTH DAY PROGRAM

*Restore Our
Common Home*

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Introduction for Facilitator

Thank You!

Your work as an event host/facilitator is critically important. You are elevating the spiritual awareness within each other and our Church of the urgent need to care for Earth and our vulnerable brother and sisters, and to take meaningful actions that reflect that care. We are grateful that you have chosen to heed this calling, for the greater glory of God.

This program guide contains everything you need to host an event.

In this hour-long program, your community will have an opportunity to pray, learn, discuss, and take concrete actions, as individuals and as a group, on behalf of God's creation.

It can be used by a parish, school, youth group, university, religious community, or other group that is interested in exploring how we as Catholics can take action to restore God's creation.

Two versions:

Given the restrictions that many communities still face due to the Covid-19 pandemic **there are two versions of the participant program available:**

- An in-person (printed) group version, and
- An online/individual version

As a facilitator, you can decide if your program will be used by an in-person group, an online (i.e. Zoom format) situation, or by individuals on their own.

What is Earth Day? Earth Day is a secular celebration that many faith communities have incorporated into their annual calendars for awareness and action. April 22, 2021 marks the 51st anniversary of Earth Day. This year, **Earth Day's theme** is "Restore Our Earth".

Catholic Climate Covenant's 2021 Earth Day program is designed to help the U.S. Catholic community lift up our work to restore our common home, as our part in this shared effort around Earth Day. The Covenant's program can also be used during *Laudato Si'* week (May 16th-24th) or anytime throughout the year and beyond that fits your community's schedule.

List Your Event: You are invited to list your Earth Day events on EarthDay.org's **events** site. We encourage you to do so, to let the world know that the U.S. Catholic community is taking action on climate.

If you have questions about this program, please contact info@catholicclimatecovenant.org.

Planning for your Event

As the event facilitator, you have a few responsibilities to make sure the event runs smoothly, but feel free to share responsibilities with others in your community! This is YOUR program. If you feel that you would like to adapt it to your particular needs, audience, or other factors, please do so. As a facilitator, it is your job to:

- **Set a date and time:**
 - Though designed to commemorate the 51st anniversary of Earth Day (April 22nd,) please feel free to schedule the program at a time that is convenient for your parish, school, or religious community. The program is designed to last one hour, but feel free to schedule extra time (i.e. 90-minutes) if you'd like to give participants more flexibility and time for discussion.
 - **NOTE:** The "restore our common home **action**" that is part of the program will most likely be something you or your community does at another time. You may wish to schedule it to immediately follow the program, or for another day. However, please make sure you (and others) submit actions [here](#).

- **Find a Location:**
 - If you are planning an in-person event, you will need to find a location: Ask your pastor, parish council, or school principal whether you can use the church building as your event location. If that space is not available, you might try your local library, recreation center, or civic center. Make sure the location is accessible to all, has internet access and enough chairs for everyone.
 - If you are planning an online meeting, you will need access to a Zoom-type system. You can also send the [individual program link](#) to people in your community so that they can use it on their own at home, helping increase actions. Perhaps you can also meet online afterwards, to discuss your community's actions to restore our common home, or to plan your community action together.
- **Invite people:** Make sure your parish or other organization knows about the event and publicize as far in advance and as often as you can. Ask your parish administrator or office staff to advertise it via newsletter or bulletin. You can also send out emails, evites, Facebook messages, post other social media, make calls ...
- **Keep the event on schedule:** Suggested lengths of time for each section of the program are included. Set an alarm on your phone or watch to ensure that the group's time is respected.
- **Prepare materials for the group activity:**
 - Copies of the [Participant Program](#).
 - If in person, you will need to have sufficient printed copies, and paper and pencils.
 - If online, make sure you send the participants a copy of the [Participant Program](#) via email.
 - **Internet service:** The event includes a [short video](#) which can be downloaded. It can also be watched directly on [YouTube](#) if you have internet access at the event location.
 - **Computer and projector:** If your event is in person, you'll need a computer and a projector to show the video. Generally, computer speakers alone are not loud enough, so you should bring a portable speaker to amplify the sound that accompanies the video.
 - If you decide to use the program just virtually, in an online platform, you will need access to a Zoom (or other platform) account. See *the [online/individual program version for more details](#)*.
- **Choose volunteers** to help with the script and various readings.
- **Discuss with others the possible future actions** as listed on "Suggested Activities" section. You may need to come prepared with a suggestion(s).
- **Submit** the community action [here](#).

2021 Earth Day Program

PROGRAM GUIDE | Let's Get Started

WITH FACILITATOR NOTES AND SCRIPT

Note: Your facilitator instructions are in **orange**, and *the Script is in italics*.

WELCOME

Script: *Welcome to the 2021 Earth Day Program. Today we will be commemorating the 51st anniversary of Earth Day (and/or) the 6th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home. Please take a moment to read silently the opening paragraph:*

Silent Reading: *"When life around the globe returns to normal, our world cannot return to business-as-usual. Our global community has been shocked by the largest global crisis in a generation. COVID-19 has shown us the necessity of thinking ahead, but the next crises are already on their way. Climate change, species loss, pandemics and massive natural disasters might define the future — unless we do something now. We have the solutions, both natural and technological... we just need the will." ([EarthDay.org](https://www.earthday.org))*

Please join me in prayer.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

One: *God of all creation, your goodness and glory shine forth through everything you have made. Through the light of faith, help us to see this world, our common home, not as a resource to dominate and exploit, but as a gift to be cherished by all generations.*

All: Open our eyes, Lord

One: *God of all, you made the earth and saw that it was good, but we have yet to properly care for it and give you thanks for the gifts you have given us through it.*

One: *Now the earth cries out and your people hunger and thirst.*

All: Open our eyes, Lord.

One: *Open our eyes to see the beauty of your creation, the pain we have inflicted upon it, and move us with compassion to help heal and restore your world.*

All: Open our eyes, Lord.

One: *Lead us to act as neighbors, who do not pass by on the other side, but rather walk side by side, as sisters and brothers in Christ.*

All: Open our eyes, Lord.

One: *So that together we may care for all that you have made and with all creation sing your praise.*

All: Open our eyes, Lord.

ALL: Prompted by your Spirit, we ask this in the name of Jesus, through whom all creation was made.

(Prayer adapted with permission from [Prayer for the Care of Creation](#), Catholic Charities and [Open Our Eyes, Lord](#). Catherine Gorman/CAFOD)

READINGS (10 MINUTES)

(Ask for volunteers to read each of the following readings.)

Reading #1 | Psalm 8:1-10

For the leader; “upon the *gittith*.”- A psalm of David.
LORD, our Lord,
how awesome is your name through all the earth!
I will sing of your majesty above the heavens
with the mouths of babes and infants.
You have established a bulwark against your foes,
to silence enemy and avenger.
When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars that you set in place—
What is man that you are mindful of him,
and a son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him little less than a god,
crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him rule over the works of your hands,
put all things at his feet:
All sheep and oxen,
even the beasts of the field,
The birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
and whatever swims the paths of the seas.
LORD, our Lord,
how awesome is your name through all the earth!

Reading #2

Ecological conversion is to return to God; it is to return to dust and ashes, as creatures in fraternal communion with the wonders and terrifying powers of creation. For some people, ecological conversion may be as simple as accepting the reality of climate change, and beginning to shift behaviors accordingly. It could mean an awakening to the reality that nature bears the touch of God, and is therefore deserving of reverence. It might lead to giving up meat, or eating far less of it, or at least being more conscious of how it is produced.

Of course, it could mean a lot more. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ecological conversion is what has the potential to create a holistic political economy, in which we no longer idolize profits or consumer ease. Imagine a new and yet ancient arrangement of economics — neither capitalist nor socialist — in which citizens become caretakers in ways that are profoundly attuned to the integrity of creation, and the well-being of all people. ~Doug DeMeo, [Discovering ecological conversion in the spirit of *Laudato Si'*](#)

Reading #3

This conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God’s loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works: “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Mt 6:3-4). It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world’s problems and in offering ourselves to God “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable” (Rom 12:1). We do not understand our superiority as a reason for personal glory or irresponsible dominion, but rather as a different capacity which, in its turn, entails a serious responsibility stemming from our faith. (*Laudato Si'* 220)

Reading #4 | A Call to Reflection and Action

Grateful for the gift of creation and contrite in the face of the deteriorating condition of the natural world, we invite Catholics and men and women of good will in every walk of life to consider with us the moral issues raised by the environmental crisis.

We ask the Catholic community: How are we called to care for God's creation? How may we apply our social teaching, with its emphasis on the life and dignity of the human person, to the challenge of protecting the earth, our common home? What can we in the Catholic community offer to the environmental movement, and what can we learn from it? How can we encourage a serious dialogue in the Catholic community—in our parishes, schools, colleges, universities, and other settings—on the significant ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis?

Renewing the Earth: *An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching, A Pastoral Statement of the United States Catholic Conference November 14, 1991*
<https://www.usccb.org/resources/renewing-earth>

VIDEO (12 MINUTES)

<https://youtu.be/HHchBfY7uNY>

Discussion (15 MINUTES)

Let participants have 1-2 minutes to silently reflect and 13-14 minutes for group discussion. Groups should be of about 4-5 people each. Give people paper and pens/pencils if needed.

Script: *The theme of our program today is "Restore our Common Home," an effort that while global, might begin within for people of faith. With that in mind, take a few minutes to silently reflect on the readings and videos and then in your small groups discuss the questions. You have paper/pens to use to jot down ideas/words.*

1. What does "restore our common home" mean to you? Are there certain words that you associate with "restore" and "restoration"? Take a couple of minutes and write the words on a piece of paper. If meeting as a group, share these words with others.
2. What message does Psalm 8 have for us at the present moment?
3. Thirty years ago, the U.S. Bishops asked the Catholic community questions about our work to care for God's creation. How do you respond in 2021 to this 1991 pastoral statement?
4. How is our work to restore our common home a part of our call for the "ecological conversion" that Pope Francis calls for in *Laudato Si'*? How is it part of our "spiritual conversion"?
5. Have you, your family, your community responded to the call for ecological conversion? List ways you have responded on a piece of paper. List ways you can respond in the future.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

Script: *As we put what we have reflected on today into action to restore our common home, our program will now end with a short discussion of what activity we will choose to complete soon -- either on our own, or together.*

Suggested Activity | Restore Our Common Home Activity

This is an action that probably needs more time than a one-hour program. If you (or your community) have already taken an action, thank you and please [submit it](#) below. If you are planning to take an action in the future, don't forget to [share it with us](#)! We provide you with [hyperlinks](#) to available resources below. For participants using the printed version, they will need to access the [Participant online version](#).

Script: In the video we saw and heard some examples of Catholic restoration activities. In the readings we learned about the call for eco-conversion. Now, we are invited to share what we, individually or collectively with our family, parish, school, or religious community have done (or pledge to do) to restore our common home. Take a minute to look at the list of actions below. Is there something we have already done that we can submit? Is there is an action we can take as a community in the near future? Are their actions you have/or will take individually or with your family? We are not limited by the actions below.



Tree planting.

Have you planted (or plan to plant) trees? Have you bought trees to be planted elsewhere? For information on tree planting:

- [Arbor Day Foundation](#) and [National Wildlife Federation](#) have free tree seedlings saplings programs
- [Check with your State Forester](#) for more information and grants or [here](#) for state by state information.
- [Liturgical resources](#) suitable for tree blessings from Catholic Rural Life.
- Donate to [TIST- the International Small Group and Tree Planting Program](#). Every \$1 donation equals 1 tree planted.
- Example: [St. Francis Xavier Parish, Hunt Valley, MD](#)



Clean up.

Have you participated in a stream, river, beach, road clean-up? Examples of community clean-ups:

- [St. Rose of Lima, Gaithersburg MD Eco-Action Annual Stream Clean-up](#)
- [Immaculate Heart of Mary High School, High Point NC, "Eco-Eagles Stream Clean-Up"](#)
- [Sacred Heart Parish, Pinellas FL Beach Clean-up](#)



Plant a Garden.

Have you planted a garden? Have you applied for the garden to be certified as a [St. Kateri Habitat](#)? Examples:

- [Audubon Gardens: St. Eugene Catholic Church, Asheville, NC](#)
- [St. Peter and Paul Parish, Milwaukee, WI, Community Garden](#)
- [St. Jude of the Lake Catholic School, Mahtomedi, MN, Butterfly Garden](#)
- [St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church, Crystal Lake, IL, meditation garden](#)



Something else?

Habitat restoration? Educational efforts to reduce plastics or carbon footprint?

LET THE WORLD KNOW!

Script: Once we choose or complete our activity, *Catholic Climate Covenant* invites us to share our actions to restore our common home. They will publish our efforts on a [U.S. Catholics Restore Our Common Home webpage](#) and your efforts will be inspiration for others to act. All efforts will be accepted and shared on the Covenant website.

Our action(s) will also become part of a public tally of Catholic efforts to restore our common home. If the action has already happened, great, [submit it!](#) If you are planning to take action soon, excellent! Once you have completed the action, submit it. You can also share your individual or family activity. If you have photos and/or videos, please add those. Together we can help the world know about the U.S. Catholic community's faithful efforts to restore creation.

Submit your action [here](#). QR code and link are in your programs.



CONCLUSION AND CLOSING PRAYER

Script: *Congratulations! You have all done a very good job. Please remember that a great place to learn more about the Catholic church's teachings on creation and the poor is Catholic Climate Covenant's website (<http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org>). I'd like to thank everyone for coming and being such wonderful participants in this Earth Day program. We will now close with a short prayer.*

Closing Prayer (1 MINUTE)

Prayer for Our World (in unison)

Creator God, who made our beautiful world,
appointed us as its guardians
and gifted us with everything we need,
forgive us
for the times we cause it harm;
for the times our way of life
affects our neighbors.
Inspire us
to care for the environment;
to help rebuild lives and communities;
to share in the griefs and anxieties,
joys and hopes of all your people,
so that all your creation may flourish.
Amen.

~Stephen Davies/CAFOD