



Passion of the Earth Wisdom of the Cross

Session One
What Is Happening
to Our Common Home

A Six-Session Program of Formation and Action
for the Passionist Family
to Engage *Laudato Si'*

Caring for God's Creation
Embracing Gospel Justice
Renewing the Passionist Charism

"Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it."

*– Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (19)*



Keeping Alive the Memory of the Passion in the 21st Century

Introduction

Pope Francis calls for religious congregations to implement a Laudato Si' action plan.



How can you and your community respond?

Passionist Family Implementing a Laudato Si' Action Platform

In May 2020, Pope Francis put forth a call for religious congregations to embark on a seven year journey toward total sustainability in the spirit of Laudato Si' and create an action platform measured by:

1. Responding to the Cry of the Earth
2. Responding to the Cry of the Poor
3. Building Ecological Economies – ethical consumption and investments
4. Adopting Simple Lifestyles – sobriety in use of Earth's resources and energy
5. Creating Ecological Education – ongoing formation
6. Recovering an Ecological Spirituality – reawaken to a religious vision of God's creation
7. Promoting Community Action and Advocacy – systemic change

[Click here](#) to access the Laudato Si' website and learn more about the moral and spiritual compass laid out by Pope Francis to create a more caring, inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable world.



Passion of the Earth, Wisdom of the Cross is a six-session program of formation and action for the Passionist family to engage Laudato Si' and create a Laudato Si' action platform. Each session includes five segments:

Part 1: Education – Embrace the Message

The six sessions of the program align with the six chapters of Laudato Si'. This segment provides information to help participants understand and gain insight into a central theme of the chapter. The focus of this session is on waking up and paying attention to what is happening to our common home.

Part 2: Motivation – Consider the Issues

Pope Francis wants us to “become painfully aware” (LS 19) of what is happening to our common home. Throughout the encyclical Pope Francis addresses some of the most urgent environmental and social issues we face as a global community. Each session of this program focuses on one of those issues, offering participants an opportunity to become familiar with and sensitized to the suffering of the Earth.

Part 3: Discussion – Engage in Dialogue

This section offers guidance for structuring a community discussion. Participants should read parts 1-4 prior to the group meeting. Ideally, schedule 90 minutes for a conversation – 60 minutes on content of the encyclical and 30 minutes on considering an action plan. Use the questions provided to guide the discussion. The facilitator should decide in advance which topics to consider. Allow each person to share their reflections for two to three minutes. Listening is an essential ingredient to dialogue. After everyone has shared, open the topic for conversation. Before moving to the next question, allow for a few moments of silence so people can recollect themselves. Ask someone to record the key aspects of the sharing. This will help your community respond to Pope Francis' call for religious orders to implement a Laudato Si' action platform leading to an integral ecology.

Part 4: Respond – Take Action

Pope Francis calls us to reflect on how our lifestyles can often be thoughtless and harmful. Listed in this section is a menu of practical and concrete options for taking action to live out the directives of Laudato Si'. Consider what changes you can make as an individual and as a community or ministry site to better protect God's creation and embrace Gospel justice. Ecological conversion requires people to let “the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (LS 217).

Part 5: Resources – Learn More

This section offers additional information to further your education, enhance community conversations, and provide links to online resources for taking responsible action in building a Laudato Si' platform.



Passion of the Earth, Wisdom of the Cross

The Worldwide Passionist Family • Engaging Laudato Si'

SESSION

1

Caring for God's Creation • Embracing Gospel Justice • Renewing the Passionist Charism

Session 1
Goal

Waking Up and Paying Attention to What is Happening to Our Common Home

PART
1

Embrace the Message

Laudato Si' – Introduction and Chapter 1 What Is Happening to Our Common Home

1. “This sister (our common home) now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she ‘groans in travail’ (Rom 8:22).” (LS 2)
2. “Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity.... All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (LS 14)
3. “A sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey, even as technological advances and consumer goods continue to abound limitlessly. We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves.” (LS 34)

[Click here](#) to access a full copy of Laudato Si' available online.



“Guided by the teaching of the Church and our own consecration to the Passion of Christ, we strive to make our lives and apostolate an authentic and credible witness on behalf of justice and human dignity.” (Constitutions 72)

The Reality of the Problem and the Necessity to Act

In the opening chapter of Laudato Si', Pope Francis makes it abundantly clear that he is no climate change denier. Indeed, he devotes the entire chapter to carefully chronicling what is happening to our planet, confronting us with enough facts and statistics that the reality of global climate change is irrefutable, something “we can no longer sweep under the carpet” (LS 19). He examines air, soil, and water pollution as well as pollution caused by waste, noting that the “earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth” (LS 21). He gives extensive attention to the diminished availability of fresh, clean water. He provides a trenchant analysis of the costly loss of biodiversity through the destruction of tropical rain forests, wetlands, and coral reefs.

Threaded throughout the entire chapter – as well as all of Laudato Si' – is Francis' persistent argument that the poor suffer disproportionately from the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation. There are the “millions of premature deaths” (LS 20). They are the multitudes who “have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters,” realities that force them “to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children.” Worst of all, their desperation is compounded by the “widespread indifference” of people who, in their comfort and security, feel scant responsibility for their suffering sisters and brothers (LS 25). “Indeed, when all is said and done, they frequently remain at the bottom of the pile” (LS 49).

Francis concludes this opening chapter with what now should be obvious: “But we need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair.” And ends with an observation of Pope John Paul II that should trouble our conscience: “If we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God's expectations” (LS 61).



Consider the Issues

Water

Sacred Water

Care for water is a critical issue of our time. In this session we consider the world's water problems presented in Laudato Si'.

Water is essential for life. If life is sacred, then whatever supports life is sacred.

The oceans, rivers, lakes and streams are part of God's wondrous creation. Looking at our blue planet from space, it might appear that we have a lot of water. But only 1% is available for human consumption. Since there are over 7 billion humans – not to mention all plants and other animals that depend on water to stay alive – we must learn to share and use water wisely.

As God's stewards, we are called to care for this sacred gift. We must learn to protect water (don't pollute) and use it carefully (conserve, don't waste). That's going to be our focus for taking action in this session.

The world water crisis is one of the largest public health issues of our time. Millions of women and children spend hours every day walking miles to collect water. Nearly 10% of the world's population lacks access to safe drinking water. Approximately 1.6 million people die annually from unavoidably consuming polluted water. Just because we have access to water doesn't mean we can be wasteful.

In Laudato Si', Pope Francis calls our attention to specific environmental issues. The community dialogue for this session invites us to consider how to use water responsibly and gratefully, keeping in mind the many who suffer for lack of this essential resource.



1 out of 10 people lack access to clean, safe drinking water. Millions of women and children spend hours every day walking miles to collect water.

“Praise to you, my Lord, through Sister Water, so useful, humble, precious, and pure.” – St. Francis of Assisi

“By its very nature water cannot be treated as just another commodity among many, and it must be used rationally and in solidarity with others.”

– Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, #484

Water – What the Church is Saying

1. Laudato Si' focuses on the disparities in access, quality, and use of water between the wealthier, industrialized parts of the world and poorer populations. It identifies five key water problems:
 - Lack of access to clean drinking water “indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems” (LS 28)
 - Challenges for food production due to droughts and disparities in water availability and “water poverty” (LS 28)
 - Prevalence of water-related diseases afflicting the poor (LS 29)
 - Contamination of groundwater (LS 29)
 - The trend toward privatization and commodification of a resource described as a “basic and universal human right” (LS 30)
2. **Access to Safe and Sufficient Water is a Basic Human Right**

“Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.” (LS 30)
3. **Wake Up and Don't Waste Water**

“Water continues to be wasted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance. This shows that the problem of water is partly an educational and cultural issue, since there is little awareness of the seriousness of such behaviour within a context of great inequality.” (LS 30)
4. **Water Quality is an Ethical Issue**

“One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by microorganisms and chemical substances.” (LS 29)



Engage in Dialogue

Community Discussion

The purpose of dialogue is to help us as individuals and as a community to respond to the Passion of the Earth by better caring for God's creation, embracing Gospel justice, and renewing our commitment to the Passionist charism in the context of *Laudato Si'*. Plan to spend approximately 30% of the meeting time on question #6 to discuss and discern action steps suggested on page 5.

Prayer

Begin with "A Prayer in Union with Creation" from *Laudato Si'* on page 7, followed by three minutes of silence, inviting the Spirit to bless the gathering. Conclude the session with the prayer for protecting water on page 4.

Questions to Guide the Conversation

1. The title of the encyclical is inspired by St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures* which "reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us" (LS 1). Pope Francis adds: "This sister now cries out to us... the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she 'groans in travail'" (LS 2). Do you agree with the Pope that the Earth, our common home, "groans in travail"? What evidence can you offer to support your opinion?
2. Pope Francis warns of obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, ranging from denial of the problem to indifference (LS 14). What is your story of waking up to the environmental crisis?
3. Pope Francis speaks of the teaching of his friend Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: "To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God" (LS 8). Do you, like the Pope, consider environmental issues to be ethical, moral, and even spiritual problems and challenges?

4. Pope Francis wants us "to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our personal suffering and thus discover what each of us can do about it" (LS 19). Have you ever experienced damage to God's creation to such a degree that it caused you personal suffering? Can you identify a connection between the Passionist charism and the message of *Laudato Si'*?

5. *Laudato Si'* calls our attention to some of the most urgent environmental issues facing the human family. Each session of this program highlights one of the critical issues. This session focuses on the worldwide water crisis and how to use water responsibly and gratefully, keeping in mind the many who suffer for lack of this essential resource. The Pope points out that we live in an interdependent world and "we need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family" (LS 52). In considering how to use water in more thoughtful and conserving ways, what is our responsibility to other members of the human family, given this interdependence?

Formation of an Action Plan

6. "Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption" in order to truly show our care for creation" (LS 23). Consider the menu of options on page 5. Discuss:
 - What personal actions can you commit to taking as an individual?
 - What community actions can we take together to better care for creation and all God's creatures, especially the poor

Go to <http://www.passiochristi.org/laudato-si/> to submit a report on the action plan of your entity. These will be compiled and posted online to form a Passionist *Laudato Si'* Action Platform.



Prayer

Creator God,
your waters refresh our bodies and give life to the Earth.
From the hardness of our hearts,
bring forth the waters of compassion and care.
Open our hearts to the water crisis of our world.
Guide us in ways to reduce waste
and over-consumption of your resources.
Teach us how to protect and use our sacred waters wisely. Amen.



Take Action

Water

Our application of Laudato Si' this session is to consider ways of conserving and protecting the sacred gift of water.

Pope Francis calls us to reflect on how our lifestyles can often be thoughtless and harmful. Listed below is a menu of options for using water in more thoughtful and conserving ways. Consider the steps you and your community can take to care for God's creation. Use these suggestions or come up with your own. Many action steps are more appropriate in some places than in others. The action steps a community commits to undertaking should be shaped by its context – high income or low income countries, urban or rural settings.

If There's Only One Thing You Can Do ...



Eliminate disposable plastic bottled water. This is an easy yet effective water-choice to live more sustainably and do less harm. The 29 billion water bottles we use annually require million of barrels of oil to make. It's a waste of energy and resources to produce the plastic containers. Only 23% of them are recycled and it can take over 450 years for plastic to decompose. Don't trash the planet. Instead, invest in reusable water containers.

Implement Inside Water Saving Measures

- Install water-saving fixtures when replacing kitchen and bathroom equipment. Low-flow showerheads can decrease water use by 25-60%.
- Avoid wasting water by letting it run thoughtlessly while brushing teeth, taking a shower, or during food preparation and cleanup. Save 7.5 litres or 2 gallons per minute.
- Fix leaky faucets and toilets. 1 drip per second = 7881 litres (2082 gallons) of wasted water per year.
- Replace old toilets with modern low-volume dual-flush models.
- Put aerators on faucets to reduce water flow by 7.5 litres or 2 gallons a minute.
- Only use washing machines with full load of clothes or dishes.



"Those who enjoy a surplus of water yet choose to conserve it for the sake of the greater human family have attained a moral stature that allows them to look beyond themselves and the group to which they belong. How marvelously human!" – Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti (117)

Conserve Water Outdoors

- Practice sustainable irrigation and responsible yard care. Choose outdoor landscaping appropriate for your climate – native plants and grasses that thrive on natural rainfall. Don't water in the heat of the day.
- Design landscapes for water conservation by reducing turf areas, installing native plants, and turning unused lawn areas into native grasses or wildflower sanctuaries.
- Use pervious pavement whenever possible. This provides a hard surface for parking, while allowing water to soak through, and not produce flooding and runoff.
- Plant a rain garden. This guides rooftop water into specially prepared gardens where the water is absorbed by deep-rooted native plants.

Protect Local Waterways

- Keep water clean and safe. Household hazardous waste and pharmaceuticals thrown into the toilet make our streams unhealthy, causing cancer and other illnesses.
- Reevaluate your use of cleaning products. Consider making your own. Many cleaning products are toxic in our waterways, killing fish and changing the pH of streams, which contributes to unhealthy conditions for aquatic life.

Advocate for Systemic Change

- Access to clean, safe drinking water is a human right. Educate yourself on water issues in your community and country, and join your voice with organizations advocating for systemic change. See page 6 for resources.

Other Strategies

- Eat less meat, especially beef. Swapping just one meat-centric meal every week for a vegetarian option can save more than 11,300 litres (3,000 gallons) of water. On global average it requires about 15,400 litres of water per kilogram of beef (1,910 gallons per pound of beef).
- Help fund the purchase of water chlorination equipment to provide safe water in needy communities. The Passionist health clinic in Itololo, Tanzania, is already benefitting from the gift of a water purification system from www.WaterStep.org.



Resources for Education and Advocacy

Additional Resources to Further Your Education and Enhance Community Conversations

This section includes additional information related to the goal of Session One to “Wake Up and Pay Attention to What is Happening to Our Common Home” and the environmental issue for this session which is Water. Click on the links in red to access online resources.

1. Click [here](#) to watch Pope Francis speak about protecting the oceans (1 minute). One out of every two people lives off of the oceans. If the world's seas and oceans die, all life on Earth dies, including us. If you want to see more videos about the Pope's intentions, you can find them at www.thepopevideo.org.
2. 1 out of 10 people live without clean drinking water. This is a water crisis because water affects everything in life – health, education, food security. Fresh water is growing scarce. Estimates are that by 2025 two-thirds of us will be in water-scarce areas. The water crisis affects all of us. Click [here](#) to watch the 4-minute story of “Charity: Water” to learn more.
3. Calculate your water footprint. Learn how much water it takes to produce the things you consume – an apple, a pound of chicken, a microchip, and more. www.waterfootprint.org
4. Access to clean water and sanitation are recognized by the United Nations as human rights. Click [here](#) to learn more about the campaign to End Water Poverty by holding governments accountable in addressing this global injustice which causes millions to live without access to this fundamental human right. www.endwaterpoverty.org
5. Click [here](#) to watch “The Story of Bottled Water.” This 8 minute film explores the bottled water industry's attacks on tap water and its use of seductive, environmental-themed advertising to cover up the mountains of plastic waste it produces.
6. The water crisis is massive. Learn how you can become an advocate for sustainable, community-owned water projects around the world that are working to end the water crisis. Go to www.charitywater.org.
7. Learn how the world's dwindling fresh water supply is being privatized and taken over by corporations. Click [here](#) to watch the documentary “Flow.” Or read “Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water,” an examination of the effects of globalization on the world's water supply by Canadians Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke.
8. World Water Day, held on 22 March every year since 1993, celebrates water and raises awareness. Click [here](#) to learn more about your water consumption and ways to take action to tackle the water crisis. www.worldwaterday.org
9. The mission of the World Water Council is to mobilize action on critical water issues at all levels. Learn more about the political dimensions of water security, adaptation, and sustainability. Go to www.worldwatercouncil.org.
10. Purification system from www.WaterStep.org



Cosmic Christ triptych by Bro. Michael Moran, CP

Water consumption is measured in three categories: residential, agricultural, and industrial. In our residences we use water daily in the kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and yard. However, much of the water we consume is hidden in what it takes to produce our food and consumer products. For example, on global average it takes approximately 1040 litres (274 gallons) of water per kg of potato chips. Water is required for most products we consume: cotton T-shirt (2500 litres, 660 gallons); 1 sheet of paper (13 litres, 2.5 gallons); pair of leather shoes (13,600 litres, 3600 gallons); and to produce steel for one car (52,000-83,000 litres, 13,737-21,926 gallons). Go to www.watercalculator.org to learn more about the water footprint of our food and manufactured goods.



Prayer

from Laudato Si'

A Prayer in Union with Creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence
and your tender love.
Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!



Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

Passionist Voices

“The natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong. To be alienated from this community is to become destitute in all that makes us human. To damage this community is to diminish our own existence.”

– Thomas Berry, CP

