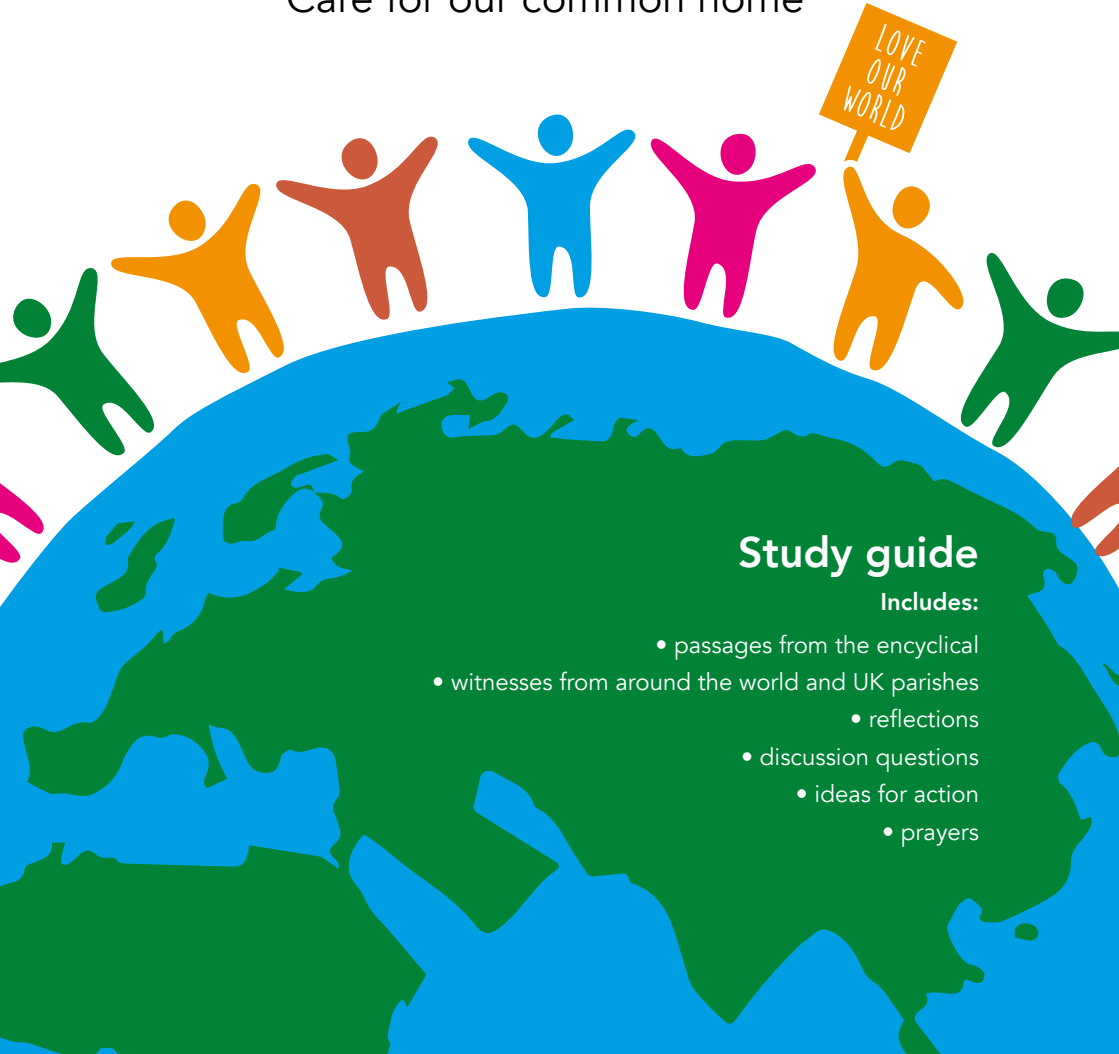




Working for a just world since 1965

Laudato Si'

Care for our common home



Study guide

Includes:

- passages from the encyclical
- witnesses from around the world and UK parishes
 - reflections
- discussion questions
 - ideas for action
 - prayers



Introduction

This study guide, brought to you by CAFOD and SCIAF, is inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*: Care for our common home.

The papal encyclical offers us an opportunity to reflect on the world around us, and to respond to the signs of the times. We are called to reject the contemporary 'throwaway' culture and to open our eyes to see how God is present throughout creation. We bear witness to the reality facing many of our sisters and brothers across the world, who are being pushed deeper into poverty due to the changing climate.

Whilst climate change is critical, it is one symptom of a much deeper problem about how we organise our common home. Pope Francis invites us to a change of heart; individually, as a community, and at an international level, so we may truly respond to *"both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor"* #49.

In what the Holy Father calls 'the Gospel of Creation', we are encouraged to bring the Good News of our faith to these situations. We are asked to adopt an attitude of profound respect and care towards ourselves, our neighbours and our beautiful sister earth, as an expression of our love for God. *Laudato Si'* is a profound invitation to everyone on the planet, and its influence will be felt for many years to come.

Inspired by
Pope Francis'
encyclical,
Laudato Si'

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How to use this study guide

This study guide invites you to reflect on some of the themes of the papal encyclical, and explore ways of taking action. It is not intended to be a complete guide, but is an initial way of engaging with Pope Francis' important message.

Follow the enclosed leader's notes for tips on how to run each session. Each session follows the same pattern. We hope you find inspiration in this short guide to read, or re-read, the beautiful and prophetic full text of *Laudato Si'*.

1 Session one

Creation is a caress of God

Passages from *Laudato Si'*

1

Saint Francis of Assisi 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.

12

What is more, Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness.

11

If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.


82

It would be mistaken to view other living beings as mere objects subjected to arbitrary human domination. Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus.

146

It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best.





*"The land
is like a mother
to us. It brings
life"*

Witness: We are the guardians of the forest

Olga and Maria are community leaders for the Emberá indigenous community in the Chocó rainforests of Colombia.

The Emberá have a deep understanding and respect for their natural surroundings. Olga and Maria explain how climate change and large-scale cattle ranching is threatening to destroy their precious forests and the Emberá way of life.

"For Emberá people, the land is like a mother to us. It brings life. It gives us food, water, building materials, everything that we need.

In recent years we've seen many changes. Little by little, our lands are shrinking. Invaders are taking our territory and they don't care about it in the way that we do. They want to use it for keeping cattle. They're cutting down the trees and their animals eat most of our crops, leaving very little for us.

Now the river has started to flood onto our crops. The more the river grows the more land it takes and the narrower our territories become. The field where we once grew bananas has been washed away. It's just stones now – nothing grows there.

The bananas we have left are not ripe which means they're bitter and not very tasty. We're eating one meal a day, and sometimes, if there's no food, we don't eat at all.

We want to pass on our land, our language and our culture to our children so they can pass it on to their own children in the future but we're worried that it will soon be lost.¹"

¹ SCIAF and the local Church are working with Emberá communities in Colombia to help them grow enough to eat and protect their lands, their culture and their way of life for future generations.

“God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good.”

Genesis 1:31

Reflection

We believe each and every human person is valued and loved by God, especially those who are living in poverty. Indeed, all of creation reflects God's goodness.

Pope Francis calls us to see people, creatures, the soil, water, mountains, *“everything... as a caress of God”* #84. The Lord's abundant love shines throughout the world, bringing all of creation into this embrace.

We are called to be open to the wonders of creation, and to lift our hearts and minds to praise the Lord, together as one family. This requires us to be still, to listen to our neighbours and our sister earth, and hear what God is saying to us.

Olga and Maria have a profound connection with the earth, and they defend it from exploitation. They understand that large-scale cattle ranching and banana plantations not only threaten the environment, but also their culture and way of life. We are all called to be guardians of God's creation.

Discuss

- Olga and Maria say, *“The land is like a mother to us. It brings life.”* How would you describe your relationship with your surroundings; with the birds and the sky?
- Saint Francis of Assisi invites us to see *“nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us”* #12. How can we listen to what God is saying to us today through the environment and our neighbours living in poverty?
- In what ways has the world become a place where harm is inflicted on the earth and people living in poverty?

Act

- Go out into a nearby park or garden, and bring back a symbol which speaks to you. Reflect on what this means with your neighbour. If you are unable to go outside during the session, set aside time to do this during the week.



I believe in God and in nature as an inheritance which humanity has in common.

I enjoy the smell of the earth and the caress of the sun, the wind and the rain.

I enjoy the song of the birds and the murmur of the breeze that rustles the trees.

I like contemplating the crops, listening to the sigh of the corn fields, seeing the surge of the rice fields and waiting for the smell of ripe fruit.

I believe in all God's creatures, large and small.

A creed for creation by Erasmo Valiente, Jesuit Development Service, El Salvador

2 Session two

The climate is a common good

Passages from *Laudato Si'*

2

This sister [the earth] 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.

21

The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.



23

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.

25

Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.

138

Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. This necessarily entails reflection and debate about the conditions required for the life and survival of society, and the honesty needed to question certain models of development, production and consumption. It cannot be emphasised enough how everything is interconnected.

158

In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.



“When I look at the sea I can’t forget my memories of Typhoon Yolanda.”

Witness: The Lord gave me the strength to swim

In November 2013, one of the most powerful cyclones ever to make landfall, hit the Philippines. During Typhoon Haiyan, known locally as Yolanda, the wind gusted up to 235km an hour, whipping up the sea and tearing over a million houses apart.²

Edzil was out at sea in a fishing boat when Typhoon Haiyan struck. *“There were big waves,” remembers the young fisherman from Leyte Island. “The boat rocked and went over. I held onto anything I could. I swam for three hours. The water felt freezing. My mind was confused. I thought I would die that day. I did not know how I could keep swimming. The Lord gave me the strength to swim.”*

Edzil didn’t know it then, but over 6,000 people lost their lives in the storm and 14 million were affected. *“There were many people on our boat,” he says, “and all the others died. I was worried about my parents because I love them.”*

Back on land, a 12-foot-high wall of fast-moving water obliterated everything in its path – including Edzil’s home. Luckily, his parents took refuge in a stronger house: *“Thank God the house had a second floor” he says. “They were safe. There were many people there - tight like sardines.”*

Following his extraordinary survival, Edzil has new plans: *“I have a mission now – to look after my parents. I want to go back to school and become an engineer. I have a good brain, like Albert Einstein!”*

He puts on a cheerful face, but his relationship with the sea has changed forever. *“I don’t want to be a fisherman,” he says. “Our sea is not clean, it is dirty. There are dead people in it. When I look at the sea I can’t forget my memories of Typhoon Yolanda.”*

² CAFOD and SCIAF continue to work with local communities in the Philippines who are recovering from the typhoon: building disaster-resistant homes and schools, providing better water and sanitation systems and helping people find new livelihoods.

**"Can we say
that there is
real progress?"**

*The Catholic
Bishops of the
Philippines,
1988*

Reflection

Edzil will never forget what happened to him in the typhoon: it has scarred him for life.

Climate change is making disasters more frequent and more intense. It is the most vulnerable communities who are hit hardest.

The Catholic Bishops of the Philippines released a document in 1988 entitled 'What is happening to our beautiful land?' In this they ask, *"We often use the word progress to describe what has taken place over the past few decades. But can we say that there is real progress? The poor are as disadvantaged as ever and the natural world has been grievously wounded."*

The hand of greed has plundered the earth's resources for profit, having forgotten that God is the Lord of all. Many of our global neighbours who are living in poverty bear witness to this injustice on a daily basis.

We recognise the times we have turned away from protecting creation. We are called to change our lives, and to lead all creatures back to reflect God's glory.

Examination of conscience

We invite you to undertake an examination of conscience, and reflect on ways you may have turned away from loving God, our neighbour and the earth.

- Do I strive to cherish and protect creation, remembering that God is the creator of all? In what ways do I do this?
- What are my dreams and ambitions? How do these reflect the Christian conviction that "less is more"? #222
- How do my actions show that I love my neighbour, especially those who are living in poverty?

Act

Watch the film 'The common good' at:
cafod.org.uk/climatereflections



*O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.*

*Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the earth and not
prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.*

Extract from 'A prayer for our earth', *Laudato Si'*

3 Session three

A universal family

Passages from *Laudato Si'*

9

As Christians, we are called *"to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale."*

47

When media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously.

52

We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalisation of indifference.

92

When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one.

92

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.

232

Around community actions, relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges. Thus, a community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism. These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences.





Witness: The journey towards a just world

Michael Martin is SCIAF Parish Contact and a member of the Justice & Peace Group at St Joseph's in Clarkston, which was awarded the 100th Eco-Congregation Scotland Award in 2013. He explains how by each making small changes to our daily lives, together, we can make a positive difference.

"Our aim is to engage the wider community on key issues they might hear about in the news. We encourage them to find out more and give them practical ways to get involved. We've focussed on lots of different issues over the years, from nuclear weapons to asylum seekers, and of course, climate change.

We hold evening sessions where everyone in the parish is invited to come along and join the discussion and we try to bring in outside speakers who are experts on the various issues. At the moment, we're concentrating on climate change because it's such a relevant issue. We'll be holding a session about the Pope's encyclical and another, giving examples of how to live more simply and adapt our lifestyles so they cause less harm to other people and the environment.

As a parish, we've done a lot to promote fair trade and we're looking at ways to save energy – that's definitely something we'd like to do more of. We've also been encouraging people to walk to Mass rather than drive. We've been calling it a virtual pilgrimage.

Our Parish Priest is very keen to promote what the Pope says and his new encyclical fits really well with what we've been trying to do as a group. These changes don't happen overnight, it takes time but you have to keep hammering away. It's good to know that by all coming together to make small changes, we could be part of something much bigger."

“By all coming together to make small changes we could be part of something much bigger”

Michael Martin

Reflection

When we look around us today, we see more and more how people are becoming indifferent to each other's needs. It is not fair that some should have everything, and others should have nothing.

Pope Francis calls us to break down the walls of indifference, and renew our understanding of the bonds that unite us. The parishioners at St Joseph's are a wonderful example of what can be achieved when communities come together to care for creation.

By making choices to live sustainably and simply, we act as responsible stewards of creation, protecting our shared home for future generations.

Discuss

- Pope Francis says, *“We are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage”* #92. What do you think this means?
- What inspires you about the parish described here? In what ways is your parish like this one, and in what ways is it different?
- What do you think it means to flourish in relationship with God, our neighbour, ourselves and the earth?

Act

- Watch the film: Who is my neighbour? at: cafod.org.uk/climatereflections
- Make a commitment to care for the world's poorest people and the earth. Visit: www.sciaf.org.uk/campaigns or cafod.org.uk/playyourpart for some tips.
- Find out more about becoming an Eco-Congregation at ecocongregationscotland.org



*Living God,
have mercy on us,
for the times we forget
that we belong to each other.*

*You call us to be still,
to hear the whisper of our Sister Wind,
to feel the radiance of our Brother Sun,
to be nourished by our Mother Earth.*

*Renew us in your healing love.
Inspire us to water the earth,
and nurture one another,
so all may flourish.*

*Together, as one family,
may we always sing your praise.
Through Christ our Lord,*

Amen

Rachel McCarthy/CAFOD

4 Session four

We were made for love

Passages from *Laudato Si'*

58

For all our limitations, gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us, since we were made for love.

160

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.

217

What [Christians] need is an *"ecological conversion"*, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.

226

We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full.

227

One expression of this attitude is when we stop and give thanks to God before and after meals. I ask all believers to return to this beautiful and meaningful custom.

231

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.

236

It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. The Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.



“I’m in no doubt that this is just the start of our journey.”



Witness: pilgrimage for creation

A group of SCIAF supporters and staff travelled to London to join a mass lobby of MPs on climate change. Grace Buckley, Volunteer SCIAF Ambassador for the Archdiocese of Glasgow reports back from her pilgrimage for creation.

“It was an eventful trip to London. To minimise our environmental impact (as well as our budget) we elected to go down on the Megabus sleeper coach. We were deposited in London at around 7.30am the following morning and made our way to CAFOD’s offices where we were warmly greeted.

Our next stop was the Emmanuel Centre for an ecumenical service. Along the way we saw activists from a wide spectrum of organisations including 38Degrees, RSPB, WWF, Friends of the Earth, Global Justice Now, Oxfam, beekeepers and surfers and so many more.

The service included a stirring rendition of “All Creatures of our God and King” and a very powerful testimony by a CAFOD overseas representative working in Niger, on the impact of climate change there, followed by challenging penitential prayers led by Bishop Dr. Joe Aldred.

As we arrived at Parliament Square, we were amused to see rickshaws on hand to offer MPs an environmentally friendly way of getting around. After working our way through security we arrived at the grand central lobby where Stop Climate Chaos Scotland staff were busy linking constituents with their MPs.

I got the chance to meet my MP, Alison Thewliss with a small group of constituents. We talked about the importance of action on climate change to people in Scotland – citing the thousands of postcards delivered to the Scottish Parliament recently as an example - and to SCIAF’s partners in the majority world. We also drew her attention to Pope Francis’ encyclical.

Her responses were encouraging and supportive and we felt the potential for a good working relationship for the future. As we headed for our train we were in no doubt that the day had not been wasted and this was just the start of our journey.”

"Love makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world"

Laudato Si' #231

Reflection

We are reminded that we were made for love, and this gives us hope. We are all called to a change of heart, *"to live wisely, think deeply and love generously"* #47.

All of us are called to a deep conversion, to see how Christ is present throughout creation. This change affects us both individually and as a community, and it moves us to treat the world and each other with tenderness and care.

As Grace explains, this requires a deep commitment to caring for our common home, by acting in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the present and in the future.

One way of expressing our commitment is to speak out for justice, and hold our leaders to account for their actions. As Pope Francis tells us, *"love makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world."* #231

May we live out our vocation with joy, giving thanks and praise to God.

Discuss

- Pope Francis asks us, *"What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?"* #160. What is your answer to this question?
- The Eucharist is "an act of cosmic love" #236. In what ways can we respond to God's love through our actions?

Act

- Speak out in solidarity with our sisters and brothers across the world who are affected by the changing climate. Find out how you can take action at www.sciaf.org.uk/campaigns
- Write to your MSPs. Explain that you're prepared to act to tackle climate change and ask them what they are going to do. Find out MSPs are at: theyworkforyou.com



Say this grace before sharing food together.

*Generous God,
you embrace all of creation,
and bless us with gifts of life.*

*As we break this bread,
we praise you for your goodness,
we give thanks to those who grew our food,
and we remember those who are hungry.*

*May we be moved by the Holy Spirit
to share these gifts as one family,
and so catch a glimpse of your Kingdom,
of justice, peace and love.*

Amen.

Rachel McCarthy/CAFOD

What next?

We hope that using this guide has been fruitful in your process of reflecting and responding to Laudato Si'. Below are some opportunities for further action, bearing in mind the words of Pope Francis: *"local individuals and groups can make a real difference."* #179

Pray:

Join us in praying for our earth and our global family. You can find a range of prayer resources at cafod.org.uk/pray and sciaf.org.uk/reflect

Reflect

Further reflect on our relationship with creation through CAFOD's One Climate, One World reflection cards: cafod.org.uk/climatereflections

Campaign with us

visit www.sciaf.org.uk/campaigns to find out more.

Live simply and sustainably

As an individual - could you switch to a green energy supplier, or make more journeys on foot? Find ideas for you and your parish: sciaf.org.uk/gogreen

As a parish – ask your church to take part in the Eco-Congregations Scotland award: a meaningful way for parishes to link their faith with environmental issues: www.ecocongregationsotland.org

Go deeper on climate change

Explore the facts on climate change and find ways to respond at sciaf.org.uk/campaigns

Children and young people

Find resources on the environment and climate change: sciafyouth.org.uk

Keep in touch

Get in touch with your local contact: call **0141 354 5555** or email supporterservices@sciaf.org.uk

Good luck!



Picture credits:
Paul Smith, Annie Bungeroth, Esther Gillingham, Ben White,
CAFOD & SCIAF.

“Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.”

Laudato Si’ #244

Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, is an open dialogue with all people on the care of our common home. As a Catholic community, we are called by our faith to stand alongside poor communities and love God’s creation. CAFOD and SCIAF bring witnesses from partners overseas and in the UK, to help shed light on this important teaching and what it means for us all today. We hope you will embrace the opportunity to reflect, act and pray on this message, and we wish you every grace and blessing.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales

Archbishop Philip Tartaglia

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland



Working for a just world since 1965

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Eco-Congregation Scotland is an ecumenical programme, supported by SCIAF, which helps churches find ways of linking their faith with environmental issues.

