



2021 EARTH DAY PROGRAM

*Restore Our
Common Home*

ONLINE & INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT PROGRAM

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Online & Individual Participant Program

WELCOME

This version of the Earth Day program is designed for online or individual use.

- If using as part of an online program, the facilitator/group leader should refer to the Facilitator Guide for more information and instructions.
- If using as an individual, please read all the parts, and plan to discuss the “discussion questions” with others in your family or community. You may submit “restore our common home activities” either as an individual or as part of your community’s efforts.

Welcome to the 2021 Earth Day Program.

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)

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)

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)

Individual use: *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. You may wish to have a paper and pen handy.*

Online: *Follow your facilitator instructions.*

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 DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

Restore Our Common Home Activity

Online: Follow your facilitator instructions.

Individual use: In the video you saw and heard some examples of Catholic restoration activities. In the readings we learned about the call for eco-conversion. Now, you are invited to share what you 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 you have already done? Is there is an action you can take in the near future? Are their actions you have/or will take individually or with your family? You are not limited by the actions below. You are invited to submit your actions [here](#).



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!

Once you choose or complete your activity, Catholic Climate Covenant invites us to share our actions to restore our common home.

Your 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](#) or use the QR code.



CONCLUSION AND CLOSING PRAYER

Congratulations! 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 (catholicclimatecovenant.org)

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