

Lent 2017

Reflections with Laudato Si'

Care for our common home...

Living simply, sustainably and in solidarity



Archdiocese of Liverpool
Justice & Peace Commission

CAFOD
Just one world

Care for our common home...

Living simply, sustainably and in solidarity

Endorsements



The Most Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP,
Archbishop of Liverpool

"I want to encourage you to get involved with this new Lenten resource which the Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission and CAFOD Liverpool have prepared to be used throughout England and Wales. It will help us in Lent on our spiritual journey to discover how we can take our place as prayerful Christians and active citizens locally and throughout the world."



The Right Reverend John Arnold,
Bishop of Salford and Chairman of CAFOD

"Pope Francis frequently repeats his urgent invitation to us to be putting our faith into action in our decisions and choices. This Justice and Peace and CAFOD Lenten resource can help us to understand the challenges that face our world and lead us towards practical everyday ways in which we may take better care of our common home. The readings, prayers and suggestions will also help us during the Season of Lent to recognise God's plan for us and His presence in our lives."



Introduction

Live simply, sustainably and in solidarity: Lent 2017

This booklet follows the format of previous resources *"Mercy and our Common Home"* (Lent 2016) and *'Reflections for Creation Time'* (October 2016). Participating groups appreciated the combination of Sunday Gospel readings, excerpts from Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, case studies from home and overseas, questions to guide discussion, and opportunities to 'See – Judge – Act'.

The introduction of a new 'Work of Mercy' in September was a fresh expression of the theology that inspired *Laudato Si'*. Pope Francis reminds us that we are called to a new way of looking at the world and our place in it: *"May the works of mercy also include care for our common home,"* he said, explaining that as a spiritual work of mercy, care for creation *"calls for a grateful contemplation of God's world which allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us."* He went on to say *"As a corporal work of mercy it requires simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness and makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world."* In these reflections, the inspiration of this new Work of Mercy is included by continually asking how we might live more simply, sustainably and in solidarity in our homes and parishes.

The booklet contains five sessions designed for group use. While we recommend that they are used as a complete course, each of these sessions can stand on its own. Each one draws upon the Gospel readings of the Sundays of Lent and looks at the Gospel in the context of today's world. The course invites people to come together and apply a critical perspective in our own situation. The questions for reflection are suggested to stimulate action.

Pope Francis reminds us: *"The Christian life involves the practice of the traditional seven corporal and seven spiritual works of mercy. We usually think of the works of mercy individually and in relation to a specific initiative: hospitals for the sick, soup kitchens for the hungry, shelters for the homeless, schools for those to be educated, the confessional and spiritual direction for those needing counsel and forgiveness ... But if we look at the works of mercy as a whole, we see that the object of mercy is human life itself and everything it embraces."*

We can offer a short training session for session/group leaders.

For further details contact:

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or Ged Edwards on 0151 228 4028 or gedwards@cafod.org.uk.

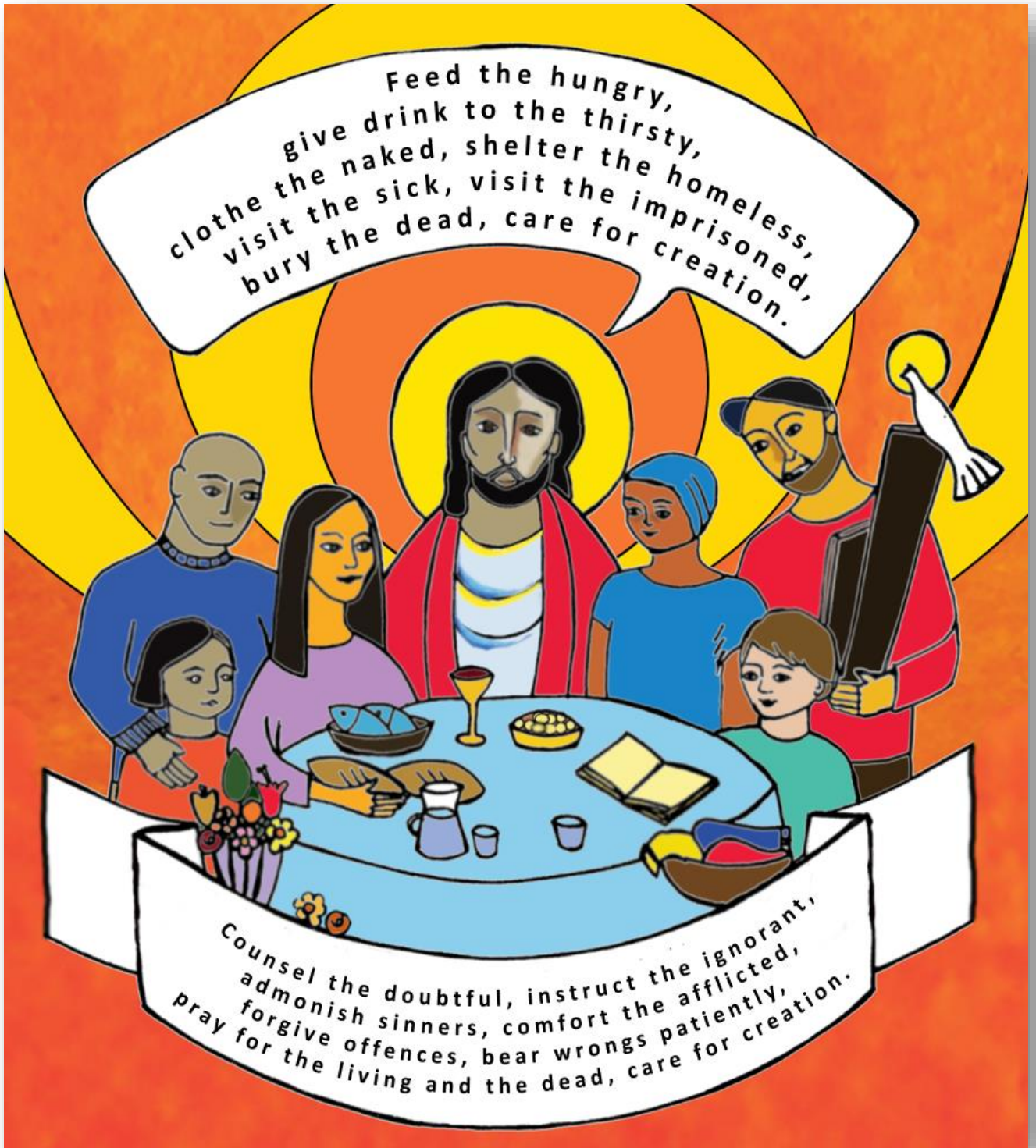
The materials are free to download from the [Liverpool Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission](#).

Hard copies are available from the J&P office at a charge that covers costs.

There will be a gathering on 6th May 2017 for participants from across the Archdiocese to reflect and celebrate together. Venue to be confirmed.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

...Care for creation



Session 1

Challenging assumptions – changing hearts



Opening Prayer (from Laudato Si’):

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!



Gospel for the 1st Sunday of Lent Year A: Matthew 4: 1-11.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.’ But he replied, “Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down; for scripture says: ‘He will put you in his angels charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, “Scripture also says You must not put the Lord your God to the test.”

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “I will give you all these,” he said, “if you fall at my feet and worship me.”

Then Jesus replied, “Be off, Satan! For scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.” Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.



Reflection: Even Jesus was tempted to take short cuts.

- What strikes you?
- What are today’s short-cuts and easy solutions?
- In what ways are you tempted to cut corners?
- How does living simply, fit with this?





Case Study: Christiana Figueres: a cause of celebration – the inside story of the Paris climate agreement.

An extract of the text from the [short film](#) of Christiana Figueres: Executive Secretary for the UN FCCC: Climate Change Coordinating Group talking about the UN Climate Agreement in Paris in December 2015 which she led.

“I have one more reason for optimism: climate change. Maybe you don't believe it, but here is the fact. On December 12, 2015, in Paris, under the United Nations, 195 governments got together and unanimously – if you've worked with governments, you know how difficult that is – unanimously decided to intentionally change the course of the global economy so as to protect the most vulnerable and improve the life of all of us. Now, that is a remarkable achievement.



Christiana Figueres

But it is even more remarkable if you consider where we had been just a few years ago at the 2009 UN Copenhagen meeting where the same governments failed miserably. At that time, I did know one thing: we have got to change the tone of this conversation. Because there is no way you can deliver victory without optimism. I use optimism as a very simple word, but it is courage, hope, trust, solidarity, the fundamental belief that we humans can come together and can help each other to better the fate of mankind. For six years, I have stubbornly, relentlessly injected optimism into the system, no matter the issue. And pretty soon, we began to see changes happening. Clean technologies, especially in renewable energy, began to drop in price and increase in capacity, so today there are solar power plants powering entire cities. And we were able to begin to see economics changing. Yes, there are huge costs and risks to climate change; but there also are economic advantages and benefits because clean technologies will bring us cleaner air, better transportation, more liveable cities, more energy available in the developing world, a better world than what we have now.

And with that understanding, the spread of ingenuity and excitement that went through governments, the private sector, insurance companies, investors, city leaders, faith communities was remarkable because they all began to understand this actually can be in their interest. So when we asked countries to identify how they could contribute to global efforts based on their own national interest, 189 countries out of 195 sent their comprehensive climate change plans.

Well, once you protect the core interests of nations, you can understand that nations were ready to begin to come onto a common path into the new decarbonised, highly resilient economy. And the national contributions that are currently on the table on behalf of national governments are insufficient to get us to a stabilized climate, but they are only the first step, and they will improve over time. Now we have all countries of the world contributing and all of them contributing to a common goal and along a path with environmental integrity and so we saw that governments were able to go to Paris and adopt the Paris Agreement.

And as I look forward to other global issues that will require our attention this century – food security, water security, home security, forced migration – I see that we certainly do not know how we are going to solve those problems yet. But we can take a page out of what we have done on climate change. We were trained to believe that there always are winners and losers, and that your loss is my gain. Well, now that we're in a world where we are increasingly dependent on each other, your loss is no longer my gain. We're either all losers or we all can be winners. We're going to have to decide between zero benefit for all or living life as the sum of all of us.

We've done it once. We can do it again.





Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- In what situations do you feel that the challenge is too great?
- What power do we have together to make a difference?



Case study: '10 grains of rice'.

In November 2000, during a visit to CAFOD partners in Bangladesh as a Millennium Awardee, I [Steve Atherton] met a most astonishing woman who has lived in my memory ever since.

She was physically unprepossessing. Well short of five foot tall, with the teeth and hair of an Asian Ken Dodd, she beamed as she was introduced to us as the owner of a scraggy brown cow.

She was the marvel of her village. Several years previously she had been the stereotypical meek Bangladeshi woman. Married, subordinate, submissive, confined to the house and not consulted on the fate of her children, she had decided to ask CAFOD's partner, Caritas Bangladesh, for a loan. To qualify for a loan she needed a deposit but she had no money and no hope of ever having any.

Her response was to save ten grains of rice every time she cooked.

When she had a kilo of rice, she took it to Caritas Bangladesh and borrowed an amount of money equal to twice the value of the rice. With this small amount she bought a few chickens which she looked after until they laid eggs. Some of the eggs she sold and some she allowed to hatch out so as to increase her flock. By the time our group met her, she had paid off her debt, made enough money to buy a cow and had become a respected person in the village. She had even been consulted by her husband on the future of her son.



One of the first things I did on returning home to England was to meticulously work out, ten grains at a time, how long it would take to reach a kilo.



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- What other examples do you know of perseverance?
- Are we hooked on the quick-fix?
- How does [*living simply, living sustainably, living in solidarity*](#) fit in with this?



Reflection from Laudato Si':

18. The continued acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet is coupled today with a more intensified pace of life and work which might be called "rapidification". Although change is part of the working of complex systems, the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution. Moreover, the goals of this rapid and constant change are not necessarily geared to the common good or to integral and sustainable human development. Change is something desirable, yet it becomes a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity.

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



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- How do Pope Francis' words challenge you?
- What signs do you see of 'rapidification'?



Action: Where do we go from here?

- What changes might we make to the way we live in response to what we have heard from the Gospel, from Laudato Si' and from the lived stories?
- What is one thing that the parish, household and individuals could do to live simply?



Closing Prayer (Romero Prayer):

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts; it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Session 2

Transformation



Opening Prayer (from Laudato Si’):

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!



Gospel for the 2nd Sunday of Lent Year A: Matthew 17: 1-9.

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. There in their presence he was transfigured; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus, “Lord,” he said “it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with a shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him!’ When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. “Stand up,” he said “do not be afraid.” And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus. As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order. “Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.”



Reflection: This Gospel reading celebrates transformation.

- When have you experienced awe and wonder?
- How do we experience Jesus?
- When have you needed to be told “Do not be afraid”?



Case Study:

Profumo – a story of redemption?

John Profumo lived a privileged life. The son of a baron, he was educated at Harrow and Oxford and was awarded the OBE for his distinguished service in the army in Italy during the Second World War. He became a Conservative MP at the age of 25 in 1940, the youngest MP at the time. He was defeated in the 1945 election but returned to Parliament in 1950. He had a good war record, was highly regarded in the Conservative Party and rose through the ranks to become, by 1960, Minister for War and a member of the Privy Council. In 1961 he had a short



affair with a young model, Christine Keeler, who was also having an affair with the senior naval attaché at the Soviet Embassy. The connection was exposed in the press in 1963, with concerns over national security at the height of the Cold War. Profumo admitted to knowing Keeler but denied any “impropriety”. Further publicity made his position untenable. Before making a public confession he told his wife, the actress Valerie Hobson, who stood by him, admitted that he had lied to the House of Commons and resigned as an MP and a Privy Councillor. Soon after his resignation he began cleaning toilets at Toynbee Hall. This is a charity in the East End of London developed by Samuel Barnett, a Church of England vicar and his wife Henrietta, who realised that poverty could not be defeated by piecemeal approaches. At Toynbee Hall future leaders could live and work among the poor and develop practical ideas for combating poverty. Clement Attlee and William Beveridge both spent time there as young men and later, in Government, developed the welfare state. Profumo was described as “vanishing into the East End for 40 years doing good works”. He spent the rest of his life working for Toynbee Hall, as did his wife. He “had to be persuaded to lay down his mop” and use his other skills, becoming chief fundraiser and Chair of the Trustees. After his death at the age of 91 it was commented that he should be remembered as much for his contribution to society after his fall from grace as for the scandal of 1963.



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- How do we recover from mistakes?



Case Study: Neti, São Paulo housing conversion, Brazil.

Neti was homeless, living under a viaduct, until she moved into the Mauá building in São Paulo. The building had been abandoned for 17 years until 2007, when 200 homeless families moved in, cleaned it up and formed a thriving community. They were threatened with eviction earlier this year, but were encouraged by the messages of support they received from CAFOD supporters. The evictions have now been suspended. Neti describes homelessness as “the most humiliating thing – sleeping on the pavement, where people spit and throw rubbish. You’re never safe, you have no privacy, no address, no door to close. My greatest hope is for other families to get a safe place too. I got angry when I first heard the news about the Mauá evictions. It was a really unpleasant surprise as we had been fighting the legal case for a long time with some very encouraging results. The families met and we decided together not to leave or to be intimidated. When we made it clear that anyone who did not want to participate in the struggle could leave, only one family chose to go. These families already support others who have been evicted by sending food parcels, joining marches and giving practical help to victims of police violence. The piece of advice I would always give is that alone you can’t do anything but together we are stronger”.

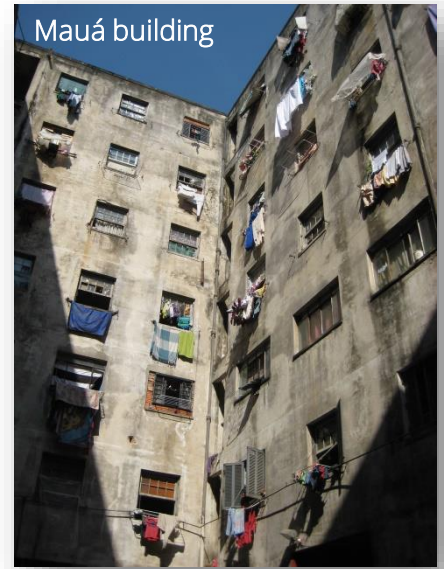


Ivaneti de Araujo
(Neti)



Reflection from Laudato Si':

44. Nowadays, for example, we are conscious of the disproportionate and unruly growth of many cities, which have become unhealthy to live in, not only because of pollution caused by toxic emissions but also as a result of urban chaos, poor transportation, and visual pollution and noise. Many cities are huge, inefficient structures, excessively wasteful of energy and water. Neighbourhoods, even those recently built, are congested, chaotic and lacking in sufficient green space. We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature.



49. Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

205. Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us.

148. An admirable creativity and generosity is shown by persons and groups who respond to environmental limitations by alleviating the adverse effects of their surroundings and learning to orient their lives amid disorder and uncertainty. For example, in some places, where the façades of buildings are derelict, people show great care for the interior of their homes, or find contentment in the kindness and friendliness of others. A wholesome social life can light up a seemingly undesirable environment. At times a commendable human ecology is practised by the poor despite numerous hardships. The feeling of asphyxiation brought on by densely populated residential areas is countered if close and warm relationships develop, if communities are created, if the limitations of the environment are compensated for in the interior of each person who feels held within a network of solidarity and belonging. In this way, any place can turn from being a hell on earth into the setting for a dignified life.



Discussion:

- How do the Pope's words challenge us?



Action:

- What is one thing that could be done to improve our environment:
 - In the parish?
 - At home?
 - In schools?
- Could you become a [CAFOD MP correspondent](#)?



Closing Prayer (from Laudato Si'):

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. Amen.



Session 3

Conversion to solidarity



Opening Prayer (from Laudato Si’):

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.



Gospel for the 3rd Sunday of Lent Year A: John 4: 5-42.

Jesus came to a Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well is there, and Jesus, tired by his journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’. His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘What! You are a Jew and you ask me a Samaritan, for a drink?’ – Jews in fact, do not associate with Samaritans.

Jesus replied, “If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink’, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.” “You have no bucket, sir,” she answered, “and the well is deep. How could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us the well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?” Jesus replied, “Whoever drinks of this water will get thirsty again, but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again. The water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside them, welling up to eternal life.”

“Sir,” said the woman, “give me some of this water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again I see that you are a prophet, sir,” said the woman. “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

Jesus said, “Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour will come – in fact it is here already – when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming: and when he comes, he will tell us everything.”

“I who am speaking to you,” said Jesus, “I am he.”

Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman’s testimony when she said, ‘He told me all that I have ever done,’ so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more came to believe; and they said to the woman, ‘Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he is really the saviour of the world.’



Reflection: This Gospel celebrates conversion.

- Have you had any conversion moments?
- Do you think 'outsiders' understand while 'insiders' don't?
- Do we ever misjudge because of stereotypes and preconceptions?



Case Study: Women at the Well.

A parishioner from the Archdiocese explained that his sister is a member of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy (IOLM) who run the project and has been very involved in it. The Sisters run a drop in centre for women who are involved in, or at risk of involvement in, prostitution, close to Kings Cross station in London. They offer support and advocacy, life skill training and health and wellbeing services to the women, who have complex problems including drug use, trafficking, rough sleeping and mental health problems. They offer practical assistance – hot showers, nutritious meals, access to food, toiletries and a laundry – luxuries the women would not otherwise have. One night our parishioner was there visiting his sister and the police brought a group of trafficked women from Eastern Europe to be safe and looked after while they arrested the people who were trafficking them – a great example of the authorities and the Sisters working together to help vulnerable people.

On the website the Sisters comment on the Gospel passage: "If we look to Christian tradition rooted in the Gospel passage John 4 (1-42) we meet the unnamed woman at the well: in most traditions she would have been seen as an outcast – five times married and living with someone else. Using the well at noon, when the sun is at its hottest, suggests that others wouldn't let her use the well at the same time as them. As a Samaritan she would have been looked down upon by all Jews. As a woman she was looked down upon by the dominant male society. She must have been poor because rich women would have had servants to draw water for them. So, like the women this project aims to support, she was multiply disadvantaged and yet she is the first active apostle indicated in any of the Gospels."



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- Who are the people who need our solidarity?
- Which are the groups that need our solidarity?



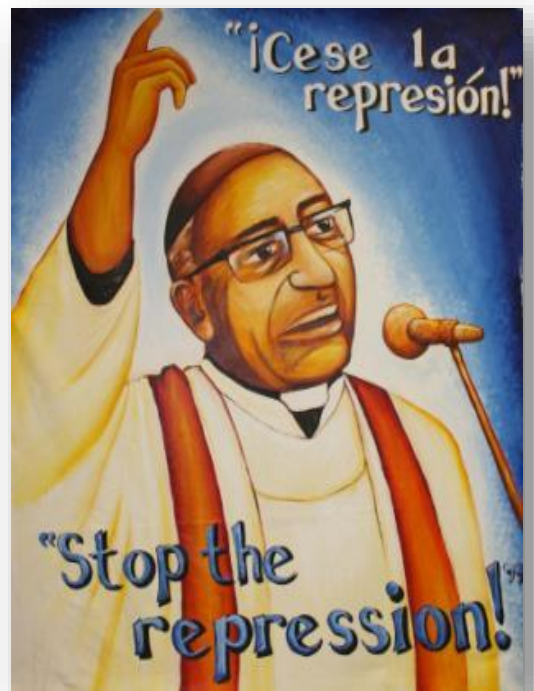
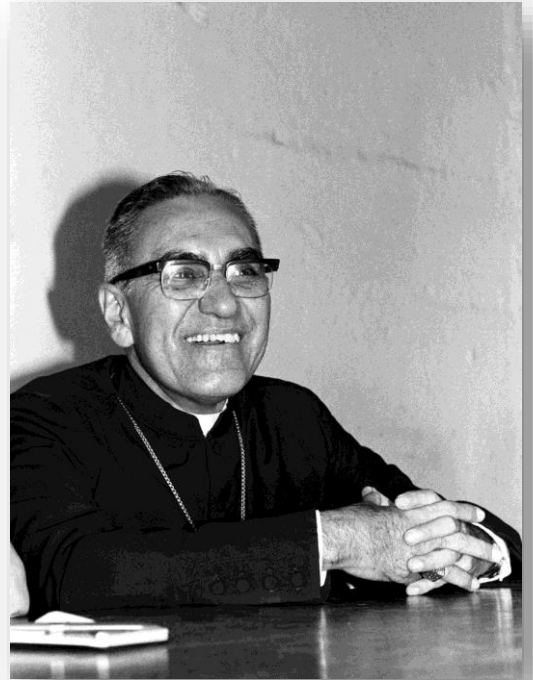
Case Study: Oscar Romero – his conversion to a new way of seeing?

Oscar Romero, who lived in El Salvador in South America from 1917 to 1980, was chosen as Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977, because he was regarded as a safe, conservative spiritual leader who would not challenge the status quo in the small Central American nation run by a few wealthy families backed by the military.

At the heart of the debate over the nature of the church that ensued during Vatican II was whether God's entry into human history in Jesus was only for eternal life beyond this world, or if salvation also included God's presence in the struggle for social justice, human development and freedom from poverty and oppression in this world.

For Romero, the Incarnation meant that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are a present reality, the engine of history, active in each generation of the church. As the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his flock, so Romero chose to die with his beloved people rather than flee to safety or compromise the Gospel to accommodate the forces attacking the church. Theology had to grapple with history.

Within weeks of Romero's installation, one of his rural pastors and a close friend, Jesuit Fr Rutilio Grande, was murdered by government soldiers for supporting the poor campesinos trying to organize for land reform and better wages. Romero emerged from the crisis as a devoted pastor and champion of the people. Six priests and scores of pastoral workers, catechists and faithful church members were killed in the months ahead. When asked by a reporter what he did as archbishop, Romero answered, "I pick up bodies." He immersed himself in the plight of the victims and their families. He became the voice of the voiceless, using his Sunday homilies, broadcast by radio throughout the country and the region, to tell their stories and to demand that the government account for the hundreds of people arrested, tortured and disappeared as tensions worsened toward civil war. Romero was accused by critics inside and outside the church of "meddling in politics" and subverting the spiritual mission of the church, which they said was to save souls.



Once Romero had decided to challenge El Salvador's wealthy minority backed by the army, his fate was joined to the poor majority. His term as archbishop (1977-1980) became a three-year martyrdom of vilification and constant death threats. Romero and the martyred church of El Salvador revealed the cost of church advocacy for the poor. The historic complicity of the church with wealth and power was one of the scandals of the pre-Vatican II church. It continues to be a challenge, as evidenced in recent efforts to cleanse the Vatican bank of secret accounts and money laundering. Pope Francis has insisted that real solidarity with the poor in their struggle to participate in shaping the future for the entire human family is essential to the church's mission of evangelization. Such a church will not happen without good leaders. Romero modelled Pope Francis' image of the pastor "who smells like the sheep," immersing himself in the lives of workers, students and families, especially children and the elderly. Wherever he went, they surrounded and embraced him. As personal attacks from the highest levels of power increased, even emanating from the Vatican, Romero found solace and strength in the people. He discovered in them what John Henry Newman had called the "third magisterium" – the experience of the laity – which forms the *sensus fidelium* on which church doctrine is ultimately grounded. Having for so long avoided the path of change, once on it Romero ran joyfully towards the expression of his faith as demanding social action: 'The world of the poor, we say, is the key to understand the Christian faith, the church's activity, and the political dimension of the faith ... The poor are the ones who tell us what the world is and what service the church must offer the world.' Romero's ministry is an expression of the power of the Spirit at work in the living church.



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- How does [*living simply, living sustainably, living in solidarity*](#) fit in with this?



Reflection from Laudato Si':

142. If everything is related, then the health of a society's institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life.

148. 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. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods, but, as I mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good.



Discussion:

- How do the Pope's words challenge us?
- What is one thing that a parish, a household or an individual could do to act in solidarity?



Action:

- Cards could be sent to Our Lady Woman of Valour church, Tel Aviv, a parish in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem that is home to over 1,000 migrant workers, mainly from the Philippines. The parish priest, Fr Davis Nauhaus, calls this "A beautiful act of solidarity". Contact him at: Our Lady Woman of Valour, Pastoral Centre, Tel Aviv, Israel.



Closing Prayer (from Laudato Si'):

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.



Session 4

Opening our eyes



Opening Prayer (from Laudato Si):

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.



Gospel for the 4th Sunday of Lent Year A: John 9: 1-41.

As Jesus went along he saw a man who had been blind from birth. He spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man and said to him, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam" (a name which means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came back with his sight restored.

His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "Yes, it is the same one." Others said, "No, he only looks like him." The man himself said, "I am the man."

They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said to them, "He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see." Then some of the Pharisees said, "This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How could a sinner produce signs like this?" And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, "What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?" "He is a prophet" replied the man "Are you trying to teach us?" they replied. "And you a sinner through and through, since the day you were born!" And they drove him away.

Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Sir," the man replied, "tell me who he is so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You are looking at him; he is speaking to you." The man said, "Lord, I believe!" and worshipped him.

Jesus said: "It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind."

Hearing this, some of the Pharisees who were present said to him, "We are not blind, surely?" Jesus replied: "Blind? If you were, you would not be guilty, but since you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."



Reflection: This Gospel is about seeing.

- How does this relate to us?
- What are we blind to?
- How do rules help and hinder?
- Do we lay burdens on people?



Case Study: Rosie's story (from Campaign for Better Transport).

Rosie is from Cumbria, where Government funding has paid for bus initiatives. She says "In 2007 I had a bad accident when I was hit by a car when out cycling. When I got out of hospital I used the bus a lot, and this opened my eyes to how sociable buses could be. I used to hobble on to the bus on my crutches and get into conversations with people easily. At some point soon after my accident I decided I was never going to drive again, and I have never once missed it.

I used buses and trains happily for two years and then, when I was able to cycle again, I started to take my bike on trains as well as the occasional bus. I find I easily get into conversations with others on public transport and have had many memorable conversations with complete strangers. I sometimes think about how cars divide us from one another, and at times make us frustrated with other drivers, whereas public transport seems to bring out the best in people – even on crowded trains, I have noticed how people's instinct is to help one another."



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- Why do so many people rely on private transport?
- Would it be a simple change to use public transport?
- When have you seen the instinct to help one another?
- How does [*living simply, living sustainably, living in solidarity*](#) fit in with this?



Case Study: Recognising the extraordinary – Neles Tebay, unlikely hero.

When Neles Tebay visited England ten years ago he was a complete eye-opener to all who met him.

He described how as the breakup of Empire reached the Pacific, instead of there being one united ethnic Papua, as the old colonial powers had planned, the British colony had become Papua New Guinea and the old Dutch colony had become West Papua and transferred to the control of Indonesia. The old colonial boundaries had been kept at the insistence of the US to protect the free world from the red peril of communism. A so-called 'Act of Free Choice' then legitimised this annexation. Neles described how a select group of West Papuans had been herded together and pressured into choosing to become part of Indonesia. This is known locally as the 'Act of No Choice'. Since then West Papua has become a blood bath as the indigenous people have been systematically cleared to make way for continuing Indonesian migration into a land rich in natural resources. They have been subjected to one of the 20th century's most repressive and unjust systems of colonial oppression during which 100,000 deaths have somehow gone almost completely unnoticed.

West Papuans have been treated as less than human. Neles told horrifying tales gently and quietly describing some of the methods used to subjugate the ethnic population.



Neles didn't just horrify his audience. He explained the economic reasons behind the continuing colonisation of West Papua – oil, mineral wealth, fertility, forests, space – and he talked positively about signs of hope. He cited increased cooperation among the tribal leaders of the 250 different linguistic groups, the increase of peaceful resistance rather than an armed struggle, and interfaith cooperation between religious leaders and tribal leaders who plan to set up a Zone of Peace, a Land of Peace.

He asked us for help. The UK invests heavily in West Papua and as such our government has some political influence. He warmed us with stories of activists released from prison because of unwelcome interest shown by foreign nationals. 'How do they know about you?' ask the military as people are hurriedly released. In fact, it's this interest in West Papua by people such as us that made Neles feel that his chances of survival would be better on his return. Neles is still active politically and is now a board member of Pax Christi International.



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- How can we find out more about West Papua?
- Where are there other unjust situations that that never make the news?
- How can we be "A little less ill-informed"?



Reflection from Laudato Si':

129. To ensure economic freedom from which all can effectively benefit, restraints occasionally have to be imposed on those possessing greater resources and financial power.

181. A healthy politics is sorely needed, capable of reforming and coordinating institutions, promoting best practices and overcoming undue pressure and bureaucratic inertia. It should be added, though, that even the best mechanisms can break down when there are no worthy goals and values, or a genuine and profound humanism to serve as the basis of a noble and generous society.



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- Should our faith lead us to political action if we want to see a better world?
- Do we get the politicians we deserve?
- How does [*living simply, living sustainably, living in solidarity*](#) fit in with this?

Session 5

Keeping faith in times of disaster?



Opening Prayer (from Laudato Si'):

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!



Gospel for the 5th Sunday of Lent Year A: John 11:1-45.

The sisters, Martha and Mary, sent this message to Jesus, "Lord, the man you love is ill." On receiving the message, Jesus said, "This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified."

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea." ...

On arriving, he found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you." "Your brother" said to her "will rise again." Martha said, "I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day."

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she said "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world."

Jesus said in great distress and with a sigh that came straight from the heart, "Where have you put him?" They said, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept; and the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But there were some who remarked, "He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?" Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, "Take the stone away." Martha said to him, "Lord, by now he will smell: this is the fourth day." Jesus replied, "Have I not told you that if you believed you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I know indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all those who stand round me so that they may believe it was you who sent me."

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, here! Come out!" The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go free.' Many of the Jews therefore, who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.



Reflection: This Gospel is about faith.

- What strikes you?
- In what do we have faith?
- How do we behave in the face of disaster?
- What makes us weep?



Case Study: Burscough Community Farm – Disaster and Recovery.

Burscough Community Farm is a Community Interest Company in Lancashire, established by a young couple who inherited a field and wanted to grow organic food and develop an environmentally sustainable site where local people could work and meet.

It featured (under its old name of Organic Vegetable Club) in last year's Lenten course. It was a great success until Boxing Day 2015, during a winter of flooding in many parts of the country, when the bank of a brook by the field broke and put the field under 6 feet of water. Bees, chickens and equipment were lost and two years of hard work washed away. However, the club did not despair. The field has been cultivated again, with an expanded vegetable box scheme this summer, a new, luxury henhouse and beautiful eggs, progress with buildings and an even stronger community spirit.

Membership has increased, the local MP and councillors have visited, asylum seekers and long term unemployed people have joined the workforce and funds have been raised to develop the site to increase accessibility for everyone. The field looks better than ever and members are looking forward to the next year.



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- Do you know of any similar community initiatives?
- Do you think that communities could take more responsibility for local affairs?
- How does [*living simply, living sustainably, living in solidarity*](#) fit in with this?





Case Study: Nancy Sannoh, a survivor of Ebola but who lost many family members and is now bringing up her own and her dead brother's children.

The Ebola outbreak has seen a new generation of women living in the village of Kenema come to the fore. Nancy Sannoh, 28, lost her husband, Kennie Sheriff Sannoh, and her elder brother – the family breadwinner – to Ebola. She too was infected but survived. “After contracting the virus, I was very sick, sad and afraid that I wouldn’t make it,” she said. “I was neglected and even asked to leave the house I was living in. I was so scared and lost confidence that I would survive as all those in the treatment room centre died one after the other.”

“Emotionally, I felt depressed and hopeless,” she added.

During the crisis, Nancy was appointed as a “youth leader” in the Combema community. She received training, delivered by the [CAFOD](#) through its partner [Caritas Kenema](#), in how basic hygiene measures could help to stop the virus in its tracks. She also helped spread the message through her community.

“After the training sessions no-one else was infected and people’s fears were relieved,” she said. “The community now knows how to protect itself from Ebola, and general hygiene has also improved.”

The aftermath of the crisis has left Nancy looking after not only her own two daughters, three-year-old Watta and seven-year-old Mariama, but her late brother’s five orphaned children as well.

But a CAFOD-funded project managed by CAFOD has supported her with counselling, as well as providing training in small-scale farming and capital to help grow the business selling her crops, which include swamp rice, groundnuts, cassava and vegetables.

Speaking of her hopes for the future, Nancy said: “I want my daughters to be educated and to improve my farming business techniques.”



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- How is CAFOD’s value of dignity made evident in this story?
- How significant is it that women have taken responsibility?
- How does [living simply, living sustainably, living in solidarity](#) fit in with this?



Reflection from Laudato Si':

61. Hope would have us recognise that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems.

66. Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself.

70. In the story of Noah, (where) God threatens to do away with humanity because of its constant failure to fulfil the requirements of justice and peace.... All it takes is one good person to restore hope!



Discussion:

- What strikes you?
- Could you be the 'one good person'?
- How do we become more hopeful?



What next?

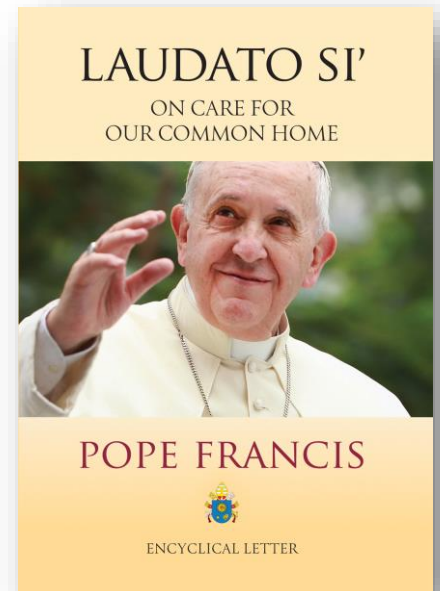
'Taking small steps' like the mustard seed that started small:

- What actions might follow from these weeks of reflection?
- What actions can we take on our own?
- What actions can we do as a community?
- How can we *Live more Simply*, mindful of our place and impact on the earth?
- Have you tried looking at the [Livesimply Award](#) for parishes?



Closing Prayer:

All-powerful God,
 you are present in the whole universe
 and in the smallest of your creatures.
 You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
 Pour out upon us the power of your love,
 that we may protect life and beauty.
 Fill us with peace, that we may live
 as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
 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 world and not prey on it,
 that we may sow beauty,
 not pollution and destruction.
 We ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.
 Amen.



Guidelines for using this resource booklet

Preparatory:

1. Speak to your parish priest.
2. Decide which day of the week you will offer the course.
3. Decide on a convenient time of day.
4. Find a comfortable space for the sessions.
5. Arrange for access.
6. Each session needs an hour and an half.
7. Advertise in the parish bulletin.
8. Decide whether to offer it across the deanery and ecumenically.
9. Arrange to have sufficient copies of the booklet for participants to use.
10. Decide whether to offer hospitality (hot drinks and refreshments).

During sessions:

1. Each session follows the same format of four sections:
 - a. Gospel for the Sunday – reflection.
 - b. Story from at home – discussion.
 - c. Story from overseas – discussion.
 - d. Quotations from the encyclical ‘Laudato Si’ – discussion and action points.
2. At the end of each reading, allow a couple of minutes for reflection and then invite comments.
3. The bullet points included might be used if the discussion is slow to develop.

After the sessions:

1. Does the group want to carry on meeting?
2. Is the group interested in meeting with other groups who have been through the course?
3. Do you need any further resources?
4. Contact the J&P office or CAFOD to find out the venue for the celebration event that will be held from 12.00 – 1.30pm on 6th May 2017.
5. Follow the links to the internet on the pages. These are shown in the text as underlined blue print.

J&P: Steve Atherton on 0151 522 1080 or s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk.

CAFOD: Ged Edwards on 0151 228 4028 or gedwards@cafod.org.uk.

“Let us protect with love all that God has given us!”

Pope Francis' homily on the day of the inauguration of his Petrine ministry
March 2013



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