

# Laudato Si': Religious Education Resource

## Introduction

The year 2015 was momentous for the Catholic Church and its position on climate change and climate justice. The recent groundbreaking Encyclical from Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* has, without doubt, challenged all of us in our care and stewardship of creation. For young people especially, this issue is of critical importance. As Pope Francis says in his Encyclical:

*Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded. (Laudato Si', 13)*

## How to Use This Resource

The following activities are designed for use by teachers of religious education in post-primary/secondary schools. Through these activities, students are encouraged to explore the compelling case for action on climate change by exploring the connections between what *Laudato Si'* teaches us about stewardship, and what the planet is telling us right now through the obvious effects of the world's changing climate. Each session can be used during one lesson, or spread over a number of lessons.

## Curriculum Links

### Republic of Ireland (ROI)

RE Junior Certificate – A1 Community; A2 Communities at Work; A3 Communities of Faith; F3 Growing in Morality; F4 Religious Morality in Action (Stewardship); F5 Law and Morality

### Northern Ireland (NI)

RE KS3 – Developing Pupils as Contributors to Society: Key Element – Ethical Awareness (Objective 2); the Economy and the Environment: Key Element – Education For Sustainable Development (Objective 3)



# Session 1

## Stewards of Creation: Are We Doing a Good Job?

*The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. (Psalm 33:5)*

### Overview

1. Knowledge Baseline Activity (10 minutes)
2. Exploration of the Causes and Effects of Climate Change (20 minutes)
3. What is Climate Justice? (25 minutes)
4. Homework (5 minutes)

#### 1. Knowledge Baseline Activity

Begin the session by exploring the students' current knowledge of the causes and consequences of climate change. Use the quiz in Appendix 1 to establish a baseline of knowledge. This quiz can then be repeated after all sessions are completed to measure improvement in the students' knowledge.

#### 2. Exploration of the Causes and Effects of Climate Change

Show the Trócaire video 'There is No Planet B' ([youtube.com/watch?v=unu0ZTyI2a8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unu0ZTyI2a8)). Then discuss it with the group:

- What stands out for you from the video?
- How does it make you feel?
- Can you remember some facts about climate change?
- Did people have different viewpoints in the video? What were they?

#### 3. What is Climate Justice?

- Use pages 8–10 of the 'Climate Change Climate Justice' resource ([trocaire.org/sites/trocaire/files/education/lent2015/post-primary-resource-trocaire.pdf](http://trocaire.org/sites/trocaire/files/education/lent2015/post-primary-resource-trocaire.pdf)), to explore what is meant by the term 'climate justice'.
- Divide the class into pairs and give each pair two copies of the Problem/Solution Tree on page 11 of the resource so they can explore the root causes, effects and solutions to climate change. Use the accompanying infographic to support them in this activity.
- Ask the students to come up with a definition of climate justice in no more than twenty words.
- Discussion question: Why do you think Trócaire decided to focus on climate justice as a top priority for their work?



#### 4. Homework

- Ask the students to research the term 'carbon footprint'.
- Students should use the online calculator by World Wise Fund for Nature (WWF) to calculate their own footprint. This is found at [footprint.wwf.org.uk](http://footprint.wwf.org.uk). Students should bring in their results for a group comparison activity.

## Session 2

# The Impact of Our Carbon Footprint

*I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2)*



### Overview

1. Welcome and Review of Previous Session (5 minutes)
2. Homework Comparison Activity (10 minutes)
3. *Laudato Si'*: An Introduction and Discussion (30 minutes)
4. Homework: Case Studies (5 Minutes)

#### Prior Preparation

If required, familiarise yourself with *Laudato Si'* prior to this session. There is lots of information online, including useful videos on iCatholic ([icatholic.ie/?s=laudato+si](http://icatholic.ie/?s=laudato+si)).

#### Background Information for Facilitators on *Laudato Si'* – ‘Praise be to You’

*Laudato Si'* – ‘Praise be to you’ is Pope Francis’ Encyclical on the environment, or more formally ‘On Care for Our Common Home’, published on 18 June 2015. The Encyclical discusses the damage being inflicted on the earth by humans, and it calls on ‘every person living on this planet’ to make urgent changes to our lifestyles and how we consume energy in order to protect the planet. *Laudato Si'* deals with many environmental issues including pollution, climate change, water availability, loss of biodiversity, and decline in the quality of human life. Pope Francis implores us to work together to create a better world for future generations, and asks us to make the necessary changes in our lives in order to take care of, respect and value our ‘common home’. It is a worldwide wake-up call to help humanity understand the destruction that humans are causing to the environment and to each other. It presents Gospel truths, and provides a challenge for believers and non-believers alike.

*I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are sharing the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. (Laudato Si', 14)*

#### 1. Welcome and Review of Previous Session

Welcome everyone back to this session and as a group discuss:

- What stayed with you from the last session?
- What did you find encouraging, inspiring or challenging?

#### 2. Homework Comparison Activity

Students arrange themselves into groups of three or four. They then answer the following questions on the results of the carbon footprint homework activity, and report back to the rest of the class:

- What were the individual carbon footprints within the group?
- Are the results similar/different? If they are different, why?
- How can these carbon footprints be reduced?

### 3. *Laudato Si'*: An Introduction and Discussion

Begin this section by showing the '*Laudato Si'* Young People' video clip: [trocaire.org/resources/parishes/climate-resources](http://trocaire.org/resources/parishes/climate-resources).

Ask the students to answer the following questions on the animation/Encyclical:

- Why do you think Pope Francis chose 2015 to send out his Encyclical?
- Why does Pope Francis think the earth is in trouble?

#### I Agree/I Disagree Moving Debate

Place signs that say 'I Agree' and 'I Disagree' on either side of the room. Invite all the students to stand in the centre of the room, explaining that you will call out a number of statements, and they are to move to the side that best represents their opinion on this statement. They may remain in the centre of the room if they are undecided. Encourage a short discussion after each decision. The statements are as follows:

- a. The choices I make do not have a large impact on the earth.
- b. It is up to older generations to care for the earth – it is not my problem.
- c. I have the power to take action on climate change.
- d. Our digital world distracts us from the real world.
- e. The earth is beginning to resemble an immense pile of filth.
- f. We must adapt to the changes in the climate, instead of trying to stop them.
- g. Climate change is a crisis.
- h. Science and religion should never mix.

#### 4. Homework: Case Studies

Each person is given the profile of a person/family impacted by climate change (see Appendix 2). For homework, the students must read the profile they have been given, draw the outline of the country on a piece of paper, including the capital city and the location of the case study. They must then answer the following questions:

- What impact of climate change were the people experiencing?
- How exactly were they affected?
- What was done to help them?
- What could have been done to lessen the impact of climate change on the people's lives?
- How does this case study link to *Laudato Si'*?

# Session 3

## Tackling Climate Injustice: Faith in Action

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

### Overview

1. Introduction and Feedback (10 minutes)
2. Activity: A–Z of Climate Justice Action (10 minutes)
3. Action for Change (15 minutes)
4. Motivational Speeches (20 minutes)
5. Final Reflection (5 minutes)

#### Prior Planning and Preparation

- Prepare two flip chart pages by writing out all of the letters of the alphabet with a space beside each letter on both pages.
- Ensure there is equipment available for showing video clips.

### 1. Introduction and Feedback

Ask the class to group themselves into the countries they were given as case studies. Ask the groups to give feedback on what they learned from their case study country and from their own research. Was anything surprising? How did their case study connect to *Laudato Si'* and climate justice?

### 2. Activity: A–Z of Climate Justice Action

A		N	
B		O	
C		P	
D		Q	
E		R	
F		S	
G		T	
H		U	
I		V	
J		W	
K		X	
L		Y	
M		Z	

Example Chart

Split the entire group into two teams. Draw up a chart for each team (see image). Explain that for every letter of the alphabet each team must come up with a word that is connected with climate change and/or action for climate justice. For example, 'C' for 'Campaign'. This activity works like a relay race; one student runs up and writes a word starting with 'A' and then passes the marker to the next student and so on until all the words are completed. They have three minutes to do this (suggestion: show a countdown video in the background during this activity e.g. [youtube.com/watch?v=UlrLyE7iz50](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlrLyE7iz50)). At the end go through all of the answers. The team that comes up with the most relevant answers wins!

### 3. Action for Change

Here participants are encouraged to take on some activity, and to consider what commitments they might make personally and in their community to work for climate justice. Ask the students to write a letter to themselves, which you can collect and redistribute at an agreed later date.

#### Example Actions

- Plant trees
- Eat less meat
- Switch to energy-saving light bulbs

### Fairtrade

Fairtrade promotes sustainable development by offering better trading conditions for, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers in the global south. The movement focuses in particular on products that are typically exported from the global south to the global north, such as coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, bananas, honey, cotton, wine, fresh fruit, chocolate, flowers and gold. Is your parish a Fairtrade parish?

- Become a Fairtrade parish. Visit [fairtradetowns.org](http://fairtradetowns.org)

### Localisation

The more local produce we buy, the less pressure we put on the environment. How far does your food travel? We can be extra vigilant when we go shopping.

- Think global and buy local

### Solidarity

We can share the stories of those suffering as a result of climate change. We all have a responsibility in this. Through sharing these stories we raise awareness and contribute to changing the way we live. Social media can be an excellent tool for this.

- Share a message of solidarity on social media. Read the Trócaire 'Take Action' PDF on how to campaign for climate justice on social media: [trocaire.org/education/lent2016/post-primary](http://trocaire.org/education/lent2016/post-primary).

## 4. Motivational Speeches

Explain to the group that the global situation surrounding environmental and climate justice issues can sometimes seem like an overwhelming problem for our world today. As individuals, however, the changes we make, both in our own daily lives and by influencing others to make changes, can be powerful. To help inspire the students to do this, split the class groups of three or four. In their groups they must plan, script and perform a short motivational speech of around two minutes that would inspire even the hardest of hearts to act on climate justice! Show the class Martin Luther King Jr's 'I Have a Dream' speech as inspiration: [youtube.com/watch?v=3vDWWy4CMhE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=3vDWWy4CMhE).

## 5. Final Reflection

Create a 'reflection tree'. Draw a tree on a large piece of paper. An idea could be to draw a 'Baobab Tree', which grows in different African countries. The Akan and Ewe people (Benin, Ghana and Togo) have a proverb that says: 'wisdom is like a Baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it.' Alternatively, bring a branch of a tree into the classroom.

Students can choose to contribute a prayer, a drawing or a piece of writing as a message of solidarity with people around the world who are suffering due the effects of climate change. Attach the reflections to the drawing, or hang from the tree branch, and display in the classroom.



**Baobab Trees**

# Appendix 1

## Climate Change Causes and Consequences Quiz

Climate is ...

- The pattern of weather over a long period of time
- The weather report for the day
- The changing of weather throughout the day
- None of the above

How certain is the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that human beings are responsible for global warming?

- 65%
- 75%
- 85%
- 95%

Which of the following are linked to climate change?

- Flooding
- Droughts
- Sea level rises
- All of the above

What percentage of the earth's fresh water is locked in ice?

- 15%
- 55%
- 70%
- 95%

As the average global temperature rises ...

- Average total precipitation increases
- Average total precipitation decreases
- There are no changes to average total precipitation

Burning fossil fuels is the leading source of carbon dioxide. But what is the second-leading source?

- Deforestation
- Volcanic activity
- Sun flares
- Cow flatulence

How many Planet Earths would we need if everyone consumed as much as we do in Ireland?

- 2
- 3
- 5
- This is a trick question!

Which of these greenhouse gases is found at highest concentrations in the atmosphere?

- Carbon dioxide
- Methane
- Nitrous oxide
- Water vapour

Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th Assessment Report 2014.

## Appendix 2

### Case Studies

#### Kenya

Muthui is six years old and lives in the village of Ngiluni in eastern Kenya. He lives on a farm with his grandmother and his two brothers (Muthui's mother died in 2012). The area of Kenya where the family lives is very dry. The rains that people need to drink, wash, grow their food and give to their animals only come twice a year. In the last few years these rains have not been as good as people hoped. This has meant that getting enough water has become really difficult. Muthui's family do not live near a river (it is a 50km round trip to the nearest river, which is so dry that they are forced to scoop dirty water from a hole in the river bed) and because the rains have been really bad and the land has been so dry, they do not have enough water to drink or grow their crops. Muthui's grandmother had to borrow water from her neighbours so that the boys could get a drink. The local parish had to give the family food. Even then, because there was no water for cooking, sometimes all Muthui and his brothers had to eat was flour mixed with a tiny bit of water to make a thick paste.



**Muthui, age 6, Kenya.**  
**Photo: Trócaire**

Trócaire has helped this family and many others like them in Kenya. After the family's goats died because of the drought in 2011, Trócaire supplied them with five new goats to start again. Then, in November 2012, Trócaire and the Diocese of Kitui drilled a water point near Muthui's home. This water point pumps water from deep in the earth up to a storage tank. People can then fill their containers from this tank. The water is clean and doesn't run out – it's always there.

#### Mozambique

Felipe Macaniji was born in the village of Beia Peia, which is located in Sofala Province in central Mozambique. He is 32 years old and lives with his 27-year-old wife. They do not have children yet. When unseasonably early and severe floods hit their village in early January this year, Felipe and his wife lost their home. They are currently living in a tent in a resettlement centre on higher ground. Felipe and his wife have a farm in nearby Mavinga village, where they grow corn, sorghum and vegetables. They grow these just for household consumption. Felipe also tries to find any casual labour he can to supplement their household income. Several years ago, Felipe went to South Africa to search for better opportunities. He found work there washing clothes but after a while he returned to Mozambique.



**Mozambique – Mavinga Well.**  
**Photo: Trócaire**

Felipe and his community have been affected by climate change. 'A long time ago, floods were not like now. It was possible to produce enough to eat. Now it's different. Floods come, and then one or two weeks later, we have floods again. The crops fail and people are left hungry and with no food to eat or buy. Before we didn't have as many cyclones as we do now.' He is not able to do much to cope with these changes. 'When we lose our crops in the floods, all we can do is replant.'

Through its local partner Ajoago, Trócaire has provided emergency relief for flood victims in the form of tents, water, latrines, seeds and tools. Felipe says, 'The support was welcome, especially the latrines. People were defecating in the open, but not anymore.' Felipe and his wife plan to stay in the resettlement centre and would like to build a house there. Trócaire and Ajoago are planning a long-term project to help families in Beia Peia and surrounding communities strengthen their livelihoods and cope with the impacts of climate change.

## Philippines

Gerardo and Jovita Amantillo were both at home when Typhoon Haiyan struck on 8 November 2013. The couple, both aged 74, had been warned that a bad storm was on its way but nothing had prepared them for the intensity of what they faced. The winds had been battering their home for several hours when suddenly the waves crashed down all around them, destroying their home and leaving Gerardo and Jovita fighting for their lives. The strength of the waves carried Gerardo and Jovita out of their home. They survived only by clinging to the neighbour's roof – almost three metres off the ground. 'We held on to the roof,' says Gerardo. 'The only reason the roof was not blown away was because there were so many of us lying on it. After around two hours the winds died down and the water receded. Our house was completely gone.' Miraculously, they received only superficial wounds to their legs and were otherwise unharmed. However, sitting on Ormoc pier waiting for a boat to take them off Leyte island, which was the worst affected region of the Philippines, the couple has just one small bag of possessions. Everything else was lost.



'We stayed with neighbours for a few nights but we plan on living with our son for the next few months,' says Gerardo. 'I do not know when we will be able to move back.' Across the Philippines, over four million people were displaced by Typhoon Haiyan. Approximately 400,000 are living in evacuation centres, with the rest sheltering with friends or family. Trócaire provided shelter and food to people who lost their homes, but has also helped to rebuild affected areas so that people like Gerardo and Jovita can look forward to the day when they can return home.

## Ethiopia

In the Tigray district of Ethiopia, the biggest problem is something that many people in the world take for granted: water. Prolonged droughts and disappearing water sources have caused great difficulty for rural communities in Tigray, who must battle the effects of climate change on their farms. Trócaire has funded a project which has brought irrigation to over 30,000 people in the region. Irrigation has enabled farmers in Tigray to harvest up to three times a year and boost crop production. Farmers have also been trained in new farming techniques, while newly constructed hygiene and sanitation facilities have greatly reduced health risks for the people. Gebre Nigusse, aged 46, from Biera village, was among the farmers to benefit from the project. Gebre is a farmer but the lack of water was making it difficult to harvest enough food to provide for his family. There was no irrigation and erratic rains could not be relied upon. The Trócaire-funded project has changed everything. 'I did not do much irrigation until I joined the project four years ago,' he explains. 'The project constructed canals and I took part in the construction. I received training, fruit and elephant grass seedlings. I dug two hand wells for irrigation and bought a water pump from the vegetable money. I have planted coffee trees and will increase my fruit trees up to 120. I know I can resist drought through irrigation.'



# A Christian 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.

*(Laudato Si', 246)*