

Gift, Gratitude and Joy

FINDING OUR SACRED ROOTS
IN GOD'S CREATION

Program Guide



ARCHDIOCESE
of MILWAUKEE

Program Summary

PROGRAM SESSIONS

Resources at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org

SESSION 1: The Gospel of Creation / Considering Water

SESSION 2: How We Know God, A Franciscan Perspective / Considering Food

SESSION 3: Sharing Gift with Gratitude / Considering Waste

SESSION 4: Finding Joy in Simplicity / Considering Consumption

SESSION 5: We Are “All in All” in God / Considering Energy

SESSION 6: Seeing with New Eyes

In each meeting we will:

- Introduce the session “Title/Theme” and the environmental “Consideration,” such as water, food, etc., that will be covered in the “Making It Real” portion of the session.
- Begin by welcoming and sharing participant “Adventures” introduced in the previous session (for sessions 2-6).
- Pray, read, and reflect on Scripture in a small group.
- Explore the theme by viewing and reflecting on a video (sessions 1-5) or an activity (session 6).
- Close with prayer.

The resources for this program are located at

www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org

Program Resources include:

- All videos
- “Making it Real” materials
- “Sending off with an Adventure” resources
- Session 1 Ice Breaker
- Participant Guide

Session 1

THE GOSPEL OF CREATION / CONSIDERING WATER

Resources at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org

Optional Background Reading: *Laudato Si'*: Introduction (1-16), Chapter 1 (17-61) and Chapter 2 (62-83)*Numbers in parenthesis indicate chapter numbers in the *Laudato Si'* document.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)



Play the Getting Out of the Bind game. The object of the game is to free the hand from the rubber band. Put a rubberband around the back of your non-dominant hand, catching the thumb and the little finger. The hand is the head of an animal entangled in plastic. Try to free yourself without using the other hand or your teeth in 30 seconds or less.

Many animals get entangled in plastic litter. What might the rubber band represent in nature? People can get stuck too. Sometimes we get stuck in situations and circumstances. Sometimes we get stuck in our thinking. We hope that this series will help us recognize how our individual and collective actions have unintentionally contributed to keeping others stuck in circumstances that compromise their human dignity. This series may also help us learn what we can do to change this.

Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

Introductions: Your name, your church and years at your church. What prompted you to participate? or Why do you care about this topic?

Opening Prayer and Reflection (15 minutes)

(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)

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!

Lord, you have called each of us here today.
Guide us in your word and in your way. Open
our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds,
and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Genesis 1:1-27 aloud. What stood out
for you in this reading?



Explore: *Laudato Si'* (35 minutes)

Choose to view one of the following videos from www.GiftGratitudejoy.org.

Why Care for the Environment | Laudato Si' Explained (9:12 minutes) An overall summary of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* from Br. Casey Cole, OFM, who is a student Franciscan Friar, on his "Breaking In The Habit" YouTube channel.

CST 101 | Care for God's Creation (3:05 minutes) This video is one part of CST 101 which is a collaborative 7-part video series presented by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services on Catholic Social Teaching. Hear from Fr. James Martin, SJ, Dr. Carolyn Woo and Peter Cardinal Turkson as they discuss Care for God's Creation.

Bishop Barron on Pope Francis' Encyclical, Laudato Si' (3:39 minutes) Bishop Barron's initial reaction to "*Laudato Si'*" focusing on how the encyclical emphasizes the Biblical cosmological framework of God's creation.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is Pope Francis concerned about creation and our connections to creation? Why should we care?
2. What does it mean to be integrally connected to each other and creation in community? Who do you consider your community?
3. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says "sister earth cries out to us because of the harm inflicted by our irresponsible use of goods with which God has endowed her." Where have you seen signs of harm inflicted? What worries you?
4. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says "The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves." Give some examples of humankind not recognizing or respecting who we are in relationship to God.

Making It Real (15 minutes)

All humans, plants, and animals must have water to survive. If there was no water on earth there would be no life on earth. Water is a shared gift given to all people by God through creation, thus it is an issue of justice that all people have access to this gift of clean water to live as God intended.

"The Water Quiz".

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at www.GiftGratitudejoy.org under Session 1.

1. Calculate water usage and thank God for the gift of clean water.
2. Fast from water (choose a water conservation suggestion from the Stewardship List) and pray for those who do not have access to clean water.
3. Read and reflect on Wisdom 13:1-9. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
4. Read the CBS news article about animal population decline and consider what you will do knowing what you now know about human effects on creation.
5. Spend time outdoors meditating on perspective: Meditation Instructions.

Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

A Prayer for Our Earth from Laudato Si' (~Pope Francis)

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.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Amen.

Session 2

HOW WE KNOW GOD, A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE / CONSIDERING FOOD

Resources at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org

Optional Background Reading: *Laudato Si'*: Chapter 2(84-100) *Numbers in parenthesis indicate chapter numbers in the *Laudato Si'* document.

Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. Share something about yourself that most people don't know about you.
2. What adventure did you choose and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)

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!

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide
us in your word and in your way. Open our eyes, our
ears, our hearts, and our minds, and teach us, Lord,
teach us of You. Amen.

Read Romans 1:18-23 aloud. What stood out for you
in this reading?

Explore: St. Francis of Assisi (50 minutes)

View the following video:

How we know God, a Franciscan perspective with Fr.
John Celechowski

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out for you about St. Francis? Did you learn something new?
2. How do you know God?
3. What has shaped your image of God?

4. In *Laudato Si'* it says, "The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us." Where do you see God in creation?
5. Pope Francis says, "Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society." What connections do you see between the environment and your fellow human beings?

Making It Real (15 minutes)

According to the United Nations an estimated 800 million people in the world suffer from malnutrition and hunger. At the same time obesity continues to rise in other populations. The problem is not that there is not enough food, but how we equitably make food accessible to all people.

"The Food Waste Quiz".

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org under Session 2.

1. Fast from meat this week and remember our brothers and sisters who don't have access to meat.
2. Collect and weigh all food wasted in your household this week.
3. Read and reflect on Philippians 2:1-13. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
4. Read the article about the America's Food Waste Problem and consider what you will do knowing what you now know about equitable access to food and food waste.
5. Write or sketch your own Canticle of Praise for Creation.

Closing Prayer (4 minutes)

Listen to the music "Brother Sun and Sister Moon".

Session 3

SHARING GIFT WITH GRATITUDE / CONSIDERING WASTE

Resources at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org

Optional Background Reading: *Laudato Si'*: Chapter 3(101-136) *Numbers in parenthesis indicate chapter numbers in the *Laudato Si'* document.

Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. What would constitute a perfect day for you?
2. What adventure did you do and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes) (Excerpt from *Christian Prayer in Union with Creation* ~Pope Francis)

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

Lord, you have called each of us here today.
Guide us in your word and in your way. Open
our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds,
and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Matthew 6:19-21 aloud. What stood out for you in this reading?

Explore: Sharing Gift with Gratitude (50 minutes)

View the following video:

Sharing Gift with Gratitude with Catherine Orr

Discussion Questions:

1. What gifts in creation are you grateful for?
2. What gifts have you shared or could you share?
3. What brings you sorrow?
4. What is your grace to go forward?
5. What does it mean to be a co-creator?

Making It Real (15 minutes)

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis said, "The earth is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." Beautiful landscapes are being covered in trash and industrial waste, and chemical toxins are accumulating in the environment, in organisms, and in humans, affecting people's health and livelihoods, especially the poor and marginalized. Pope Francis links these problems "to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish."

"Where Does it Go".

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org under Session 3.

1. Watch the story of bottled water and consider what you will do knowing what you now know about human effects on creation.
2. Inventory your pantry and consider what packaging can be eliminated by changing your purchasing habits, and what should be recycled versus landfilled.
3. Fast from single use plastics (bottled water, bags, ziplocks, straws, plasticware, and styrofoam) and thank God for all God has provided.
4. Take a garbage bag with you on walks to pick up litter.
5. Read and reflect on 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
6. Spend time in prayer looking at nature: *Visio Divina*.

Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon (~St. Francis of Assisi)

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord, All praise is Yours,
all glory, all honour and all blessings.
To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no mortal lips
are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially
Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and
fair.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods, by which You
cherish all that You have made.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night and he is beautiful and
playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth
who sustains and governs us, producing varied fruits with
colored flowers and herbs.

Praise be You, my Lord, through those who grant pardon for
love of You and bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace, By You Most High,
they will be crowned.

Praised be to You, my Lord through Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape. Woe to those who die
in mortal sin!
Blessed are they She finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.

Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve Him with great humility. Amen.



Session 4

FINDING JOY IN SIMPLICITY / CONSIDERING CONSUMPTION

Resources at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org

Optional Background Reading: Message on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, September 9, 2020, Pope Francis

Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. What do you wish you spent more time doing?
2. What adventure did you do and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)

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.

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide us in your word and in your way. Open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds, and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read aloud Luke 12:15-21. What stood out for you in this reading?

Explore: Finding Joy in Simplicity (50 minutes)

View the following video:

Finding Joy in Simplicity with Joe Meyer

Discussion Questions:

1. Joe said temperance means restraining our consumption. Just because we can buy something, should we? Have I ever over-consumed?
2. Can living simply and reducing my consumption bring me joy? Can refusing to bring things or distractions into my life bring me joy?

3. An environmental ethic is counter-cultural. Have I met resistance?
4. We are a people of hope. What brings me hope?
5. How can I make caring for creation a prayer by doing little things with great love?

Making It Real (15 minutes)

Research shows that things like good family life, meaningful work, and fulfilling social relationships are higher contributors to overall happiness than the accumulation of stuff, and yet we continue to consume at a rate that is outpacing available resources on planet earth meant for everyone to share - not just us, but for generations to come.

“Resource Use”.

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org under Session 4.

1. Watch the story of stuff and consider what you will do knowing what you now know about human effects on creation.
2. Choose a waste reduction opportunity from the Stewardship List and pray for more simplicity in your life.
3. Determine how you can fast from our 102 ton legacy.
4. Read and reflect on 1 Timothy 4:4-5. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
5. Take a prayer walk in nature: Prayer walk instructions.
6. Calculate your ecological footprint for ideas on how to reduce consumption.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Listen to the song or watch the music video “Everything is Holy Now”.

Session 5

WE ARE “ALL IN ALL” IN GOD / CONSIDERING ENERGY

Resources at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org

Optional Background Reading: *Laudato Si'*: Chapter 4(137-162) *Numbers in parenthesis indicate chapter numbers in the *Laudato Si'* document.

Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. What makes you smile?
2. What adventure did you do and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)

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.

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide us in your word and in your way. Open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds, and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Luke 16:19-31 aloud. What stood out for you in this reading?

Explore: We Are All in All in God (50 minutes)

View the following video:

We are “All in All” in God with Debra Schneider

Discussion Questions:

1. Deb mentioned the carbon cycle and the water cycle. Do our choices align with nature's cycles? If they don't align with nature, why do you think that is?
2. How can we more intentionally love our neighbors?

3. What one thing can you choose to do differently to be a loving person who is more conscious of their neighbors?
4. Do we have a focus on materialism and convenience? If so, how can we focus on reconciliation with God and neighbor?

Making It Real (15 minutes)

Much of the world's energy comes from carbon in the form of fossil fuels formed over millions of years. When burned, fossil fuels release carbon dioxide and other toxins that contribute to the decline of human health, increase global warming, and negatively affect the poor and the lives of future generations.

“Environmental Justice”.

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org under Session 5.

1. Fast from energy (consciously reduce your usage by choosing from the Stewardship List) and pray for those who are negatively affected by the burning of fossil fuels.
2. Read and reflect on Ephesians 4:1-6. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
3. Calculate your carbon footprint. Consider how you can reduce your footprint.
4. Use the EPA's mapping tool to further explore how your actions impact your neighbors.
5. Find a comfortable place outside to listen to a guided meditation.

Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

Listen to the song or watch the music video “Majestic”.

Session 6

SEEING WITH NEW EYES

Resources at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org

Optional Background Reading: *Laudato Si'*: Chapter 5(200-201), Chapter 6(202-246) *Numbers in parenthesis indicate chapter numbers in the *Laudato Si'* document.

Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. If you had the opportunity to get a message across to a large group of people, what would your message be?
2. What adventure did you do and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)

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!

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide us in your word and in your way. Open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds, and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Job 12:7-10 aloud. What stood out for you in this reading?

Explore: Seeing with New Eyes (35 minutes)

The leader will choose from one of the five options.
www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org.

Restoring Relationships, a guided discussion

This guided discussion begins with the Genesis account of creation and seeks to engage participants in a discussion of how caring for creation is a participation in Christ's ministry of restoring relationships broken by the fall of Adam.

Watch and discuss Alice's Garden Video (9:33)

This video ties together concepts of water, food, and justice from the previous sessions and can jump start a conversation about getting involved in local creation care organizations. Hear from Venice R. Williams, the Executive Director of Alice's Garden, an urban farm in Milwaukee.

Guest Speaker and Creation Care Ministry

Invite a guest speaker to talk about why he or she is passionate about caring for creation, how they live that out in daily life, and how they are active in their church or community.

Use this opportunity to promote existing care for creation ministries in your own congregation or begin organizing a new creation care ministry. Many resources helpful for beginning or continuing creation care ministries, including logos, implementation guide, one simple act cards, displays, and social media posts can be found at [Waukesha County Green Team Creation Care Network](http://WaukeshaCountyGreenTeamCreationCareNetwork.org).

Dream-casting Exercise

This exercise helps participants dream of a goal and generate a list of practical steps they can take to move toward that goal.

Further Exploring *Laudato Si'*

For a more in depth exploration of *Laudato Si'*, you may choose from quotations and questions provided in this discussion guide.

Making It Real (30 minutes)

We need to see with new eyes our common origin of creation as a gift to be shared by all our sisters and brothers both now and in the future. Quoting Pope Francis "We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it."

"Bringing it Home".

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you? What inspired you? Is there something our group would like to work on together? What one thing will you take away from this series? What one thing will you choose to do differently in your life?

Build your own Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to continue the transformation process. Directions for these adventures are found at www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org under Session 6.

1. Conduct an ecological examination of conscience.
2. Get involved in a local organization, such as the Waukesha County Green Team, the Waukesha County Creation Care Network, or your church's creation care ministry.
3. Pick one simple act from the Stewardship List, followed by another, and another.
4. Read *Laudato Si'* individually or as a group using this discussion guide.

Learn more about the Waukesha County Green Team and the Waukesha County Creation Care Network at www.WaukeshaCountyGreenTeam.org.

Thank you for participating in this program.

Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation (~Pope Francis)

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.

