



Care for Creation in Action

In 2017 the Diocese of Burlington, Vermont is celebrating a Year of Creation. The Year includes creation-themed liturgies, energy efficiency audits and projects in parishes, a Catholic schools' ecological awareness and action project, an ecological justice conference and an initiative to "Laudato Si-fy your Advent." To learn more, please visit bit.ly/YOC-VT.

"The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion."

-Pope Francis
Laudato Si', no. 219

The Season of Creation: *September 1 – October 4*

The Season of Creation spans five weeks between the **World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation** (September 1) and the **Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi** (October 4). This "time for creation" offers, in the words of Pope Francis, "individual believers and communities a fitting opportunity to reaffirm their personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which he has entrusted to our care, and to implore his help for the protection of creation as well as his pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live."¹ Below are some ways to live out these three dimensions of Pope Francis' call, both as individuals and as a community.

1. Reaffirm Our Vocation as Stewards of Creation

As individuals and families: *Counteract the "Throwaway Culture"*

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis brings attention to our "throwaway culture," which "quickly reduces things to rubbish" (no. 22). In your daily life, try to identify the ways in which you can choose reusables, rather than disposables, such as coffee mugs, reusable bags, or cloth napkins, and commit to making one change during this month.

As a community: *Educational Program*

Use the educational program "Befriend the Wolf" from the Catholic Climate Covenant to reflect on our vocation as stewards of creation. The program is designed to help your community contemplate the connections between all creatures under God our Creator. Visit bit.ly/CCC-BTF to access this resource.



2. Thank God for His Wonderful Handiwork



As individuals and families: *Meal Prayer*

Before and after meals, say a short prayer of thanksgiving for the life-giving food that sustains and nourishes us. Briefly contemplate the journey that your food has taken to reach your plate, for all nourishment ultimately comes from the earth. Give thanks for all the human hands that

helped bring this food to your table. May we recognize, as *Laudato Si'* has taught us, that this "moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence on God for life" (no. 227).

¹ Pope Francis, "Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis For the Establishment of the 'World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation,'" September 1, 2015.



Here are a few suggestions from the Diocese of Stockton, California on how to care for creation:

- Buy Fair Trade products to support local artisans and farmers and protect the environment.

- Store food in reusable containers, not plastic wrap or foil, to reduce waste.

- Avoid using Styrofoam at your parish functions. Styrofoam can rarely be recycled, and it takes 500 years to decompose in landfills!

(Excerpted from "10 Practical Ways You Can Care for Creation" on togoforth.org. To see more, please visit bit.ly/TGF-CC)

"There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions."

-Pope Francis
Laudato Si', no. 211

As a community: *Eucharistic Adoration*

One of the most meaningful ways we give thanks as Christians is through the sacrament of the Eucharist, a word which means "thanksgiving." As *Laudato Si'* proclaims, through "the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God" (no. 236). To celebrate this sacred reality during the Season of Creation, we recommend hosting a one-hour, care for creation-themed eucharistic adoration in your parish. Please visit bit.ly/PCJP-EA to access a resource created by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace for this purpose.

3. Implore God's Help and Ask His Pardon

As individuals and families: *Confession*

In calling for a deep "ecological conversion," Pope Francis has emphasized the importance of examining one's own conscience, of recognizing one's "contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 8). We invite you to bring these sins to confession and to perform a spiritual work of mercy for our common home, such as an act of "grateful contemplation of God's world" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 214).



As a community: *Prayer Service*

One final suggestion for this time is to organize a prayer service in your parish. The Catholic Climate Covenant has developed a four-part prayer service to be said after Mass each week. As we approach the beautiful autumn season, holding this service outside may allow for a rich experience. Please visit bit.ly/CCC-PS to access this resource.

*O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
who are so precious in your eyes...
God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
God of mercy, may we receive your forgiveness
and convey your mercy throughout our common home.
Praise be to you!
Amen.*

Source: Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Celebration of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on September 1, 2016

For more resources related to care for creation, please visit the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops webpage on the Environment at usccb.org/environment.

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