



Tuesday: Caring for Our Common Home

Keywords

**Dialogue Eco-actions Ecological Crisis Humanitarian Threat
Mindfulness Contemplation Spirituality Common Home
Gospel Values**

Introduction

This lesson plan provides:

- Three video-based discussions
- Two reflective exercises
- One extension exercise
- Two activities

Each of the above aims to facilitate dialogue about our common home.

Laudato Si' is a worldwide wake-up call to all, to help humanity understand the destruction that humankind is causing to the environment and our neighbours. Usually letters written by the Pope are addressed to the bishops of the Church or the lay faithful, but this letter is addressed to 'all people'. It concerns us all. Pope Francis wants to enter into dialogue with everyone concerning our common home. The following video clip explains the message of *Laudato Si'*. We will hear the advice of Pope Francis and the questions that follow will allow us to enter into dialogue about our common home. Read these questions before you watch the video.

Watch: <https://youtu.be/KOgF2Kgel6k>

Discussion

- Reflect on the ways in which our common home has been 'hurt and mistreated'?
- List some of the 'simple everyday eco-actions' that show care for our common home.
- What 'simple everyday eco-actions' has your school taken to show care for our common home?
- Can you suggest further 'simple everyday eco-actions' that are not mentioned in the video?

As Christians, we are called to be a witness to Christ in the world. We are being called upon to find a solution to the ecological crisis – to act as Jesus would act. In response to *Laudato Si'* in 2015, a group of humanitarians and artists prepared an artistic display on the wall of St Peter's Basilica in Rome, as a gift to Pope Francis. The display features images of the urgent threats facing our common home. The full display lasted for almost an hour. The video below features some of the highlights.

Watch: <https://youtu.be/jUlXyV3egLo>

Discussion

The hashtag at the end of the video changes seven times. 'Our Common' stays the same but the next word changes. Explain the significance of these seven changes.

Activity

Create your own artistic display, either through art work, or by creating a collage that you think represents the urgent threats to our common home.





In order to understand what it is we are being called to respond to as Christians, we need to first be aware that God is at home in each and every one of us. If we undertake to find God in ourselves, we will discover how we can best help one another and then the planet. Mindfulness is on many people's lips today. Christian mindfulness is about waking up and living in harmony with oneself, the world, and God. Placing the life of Christ at its centre, it has to do with examining who we are, questioning our view of the world and our place in it, and trying to appreciate not only the richness of each moment we are alive, but also the divine mystery in which our lives take place. Christian mindfulness opens our hearts and minds to the mystery of God's love, which calls us to respond to his divine gift. Christian mindfulness gives you a happy heart!

Watch: <https://youtu.be/awo8jUxlm0c>

Discussion

- What does PBS stand for?
- Do you think this simple strategy could be useful in your life?
- In the video, one of the students says: 'Mindfulness makes me a better friend and sister. Before, I didn't notice if people were feeling sad or lonely but after I learned mindfulness, I noticed and I wanted to help.' How do you think this could help us in caring for our common home?
- Identify ways in which mindfulness could be used in school to aid our caring for our common home.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls upon us to respond to God's work deep in our heart. To do this we must awaken our spiritual selves, so that we can be more reverent to the life around us. This is a very challenging task. The lives of the Irish saints are a good way of looking for examples of how to live a good Christian life by showing care for our common home. The lives of the early Irish saints have much to teach us about:

- The ecological survival of the planet. (See also *Octogesima Adveniens*, 21.)
- The need to reach out and include the marginalised in our society. (See also *Laudato Si'*, 10.)
- The role of women in Christian leadership. (See also *Amoris Laetitia*, 174.)
- The need for contemplation. (See also *Laudato Si'*, 125.)
- The need for an awareness of the presence of God in all creation. (See also *Laudato Si'*, 221.)

St Brigid, whose feast is 1 February, is a very good example of a saint that can teach us a lot. She is one of the strongest influences in Celtic Spirituality and some scholars would say a leading figure in the spread of early Irish Monasticism.

Activity

Research the life of St Brigid. Design a presentation either digitally or on paper. Include details about her concern for the survival of the planet, the need to reach out and include the marginalised, the role of women in Christian leadership, the need for prayer and contemplation, and her awareness of the presence of God in creation. Alternatively, you could do the same research on an Irish saint of your choice.





Let us ask the question: How do you see the world?

Watch: <https://youtu.be/B9l3BjfyS9Q>

Some facts from the video:

44% of people already live on less than 77 p a day.

Martin: 'Everything was crushed. It looked like all our houses and roads had never been there.'

90% of people who die in natural disasters come from the poorest countries.

Veronica: 'The river has been drying up which means uncertainty for food crops.'

If the earth heats up by 2–3° over the next 20 years, an extra 200 million people will be at risk of hunger.

The President of the World Bank: 'If we don't confront climate change, we won't end poverty.'

Reflective Exercise

Read the following quote from the video:

'It's all about love. Not a flowers and chocolates love. It's a love that puts its life on the line for its mates. It's a love that never walks by looking the other way. A love that dares to respect God, people and creation.'

- Reread the first highlighted statement. Now read John 15:11–17. Find a line from this gospel passage that is similar. Record your answer in your copy.
- Reread the second highlighted statement. Now read Luke 10:25–37. Explain the connection between the highlighted statement and the gospel story.
- In both of these statements, what gospel values are we reminded of?

Extension Exercise

Based on the facts from the video, write a letter to either a person who survives on less than 77 p a day (Martin), a poor community devastated by natural disasters (Veronica), a person that may be at risk of hunger in 2035 or the President of the World Bank. In the letter explain your understanding of the term 'our common home' and the 'simply everyday eco-actions' that your family, your school, and you as an individual are going to take to help their living reality.



When asked 'How do you see the world?' and 'Where do we see God in the world?' we might turn to the poet Patrick Kavanagh to help us respond.

*'God is not all in one place, complete ...
God is in the bits and pieces of Everyday –
A kiss here, and a laugh again,
and sometimes tears ...'*

Reflective Exercise

Having explored a little about Christian mindfulness and thought about what the world means to you, take time to notice God in the 'bits and pieces of Everyday'. Let us be mindful of God present in our lives.

Wednesday: From Generation to Generation

Keywords

**Solidarity Intergenerational Waste Compassion Mercy Family
Environment Water**

Introduction

This lesson plan provides:

- Two image-based discussions
- Two video-based discussions
- One text-based discussion
- Two reflective exercises
- Two activities

Each of the above aims to facilitate dialogue about our common home.

Look at the below photograph. What do you think is going on? What decade might it be from? Do you notice anything about the gender of the people in the photo? Do you know anyone who collected water from the well in her youth?



Photo Credit: George McCready, published in Donegal Free Press, 24 February 1999

Reflective Exercise

Consider the impact having to collect water every day would have on your life. Compose a response in your copy.

Activity

- If an average person in Ireland uses 150 litres of water a day, how many trips to the well would it take if you have a 20 litre bucket?
- Do you think your grandparents or great-grandparents used less water because they had to carry it by hand?
- Talk to an older relative, perhaps a grandparent. Ask them about how they used water and how they see water being wasted today?

Fact: A young person in Malawi uses about 24 litres of water a day and girls and women spend about four hours a day fetching water.

Watch: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZY3R0M654qc

Trócaire video 'Clean water means ...'.



Pope Francis in St Peter's Square © thinkstockphotos.com

Discussion

Pope Francis mentions the word 'water' forty-seven times in his encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*.

- Why do you think he mentions it so often?
- Read the passages from *Laudato Si'* and answer the questions that follow.

The Issue of Water

Other indicators of the present situation have to do with the depletion of natural resources. We all know that it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumption in developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, where the habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels. The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty. (*Laudato Si'*, 27)

- Can you give examples of waste when it comes to water?

We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. ... What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? (*Laudato Si'*, 159, 160)

- What does 'intergenerational solidarity' mean?
- How might intergenerational solidarity relate to water use?
- How might Pope Francis' view on intergenerational solidarity relate to the image and quote below?

How does this relate to what the Pope is saying in *Laudato Si'*?



Treat the earth well – it is not inherited from your parents: it is borrowed from your children.
Kenyan Proverb



Watch: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DiuPhcfSYM

Trócaire video on water.

Discussion

- Did you realise that the amount of water on the planet is finite?
- What can you do in a concrete way to reduce wastage of water?
- Read the information on the impact of bottled water and answer the questions that follow.

The Impact of Bottled Water

- From July 2015 to July 2016 Irish consumers spent more than €76.5 million on bottled water – that is about €15.30 per head.
- Three litres of water are needed to manufacture a one-litre bottle of water.
- It takes more than 1,000 years for a water bottle to biodegrade.
- Each year people on our planet dump more than three million tons of plastic bottles into landfill. In the US alone about 30 million water bottles end up in landfill every day.
- The production of a litre of bottled water emits hundreds of times more greenhouse gases than a litre of tap water.
- Making enough plastic to satisfy the US water market takes 17 million barrels of oil – enough fuel to keep half of Ireland's 2 million cars motoring for a year.
- According to the World Health Organisation, more than 1.6 million people in the developing world die each year from drinking contaminated water.
- The vast majority of these are children under five.
- We in the developed world spend more on bottled water every year than would be needed to eradicate the deaths of all the children infected with fatal waterborne illnesses.

Source: Conor Pope, 'The Hidden Costs of Drinking Bottled Water', Irish Times, 22 August 2016



- What is the average amount spent on bottled water annually?
- Do you think your own consumption is greater or lesser?
- Where do the additional costs come from in relation to bottled water?

Take the Water Bottle Challenge! Don't just flip the bottle, ditch it!

As a class, try to drink only tap water and to use recyclable bottles, even if only for a week. Estimate how many plastic bottles a year this will save. Perhaps donate the money you would have spent to Trócaire for their work in countries in the developing world experiencing extreme water shortages.

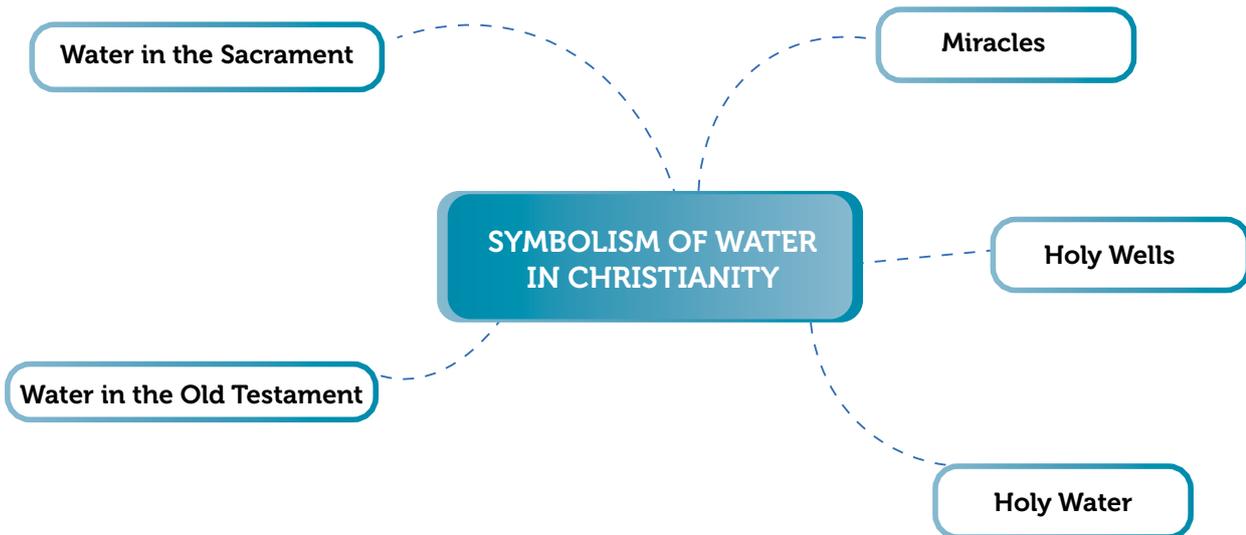
Reflective Exercise

Would you consider giving up using bottled water completely?



Activity

Water is one of the most important symbols in Christianity. Copy the following mind map into your religion journal and provide further examples from the Bible, liturgical worship or the lives of Irish saints. This exercise should be completed in pairs.





Friday: Sharing Our Common Home

Keywords

Sharing Oppression Diakonia Ecological Conversion Laudato Si'
Covenant Common Good Dialogue

Introduction

This lesson plan provides:

- Four video-based discussions
- Two reflective exercises
- One extension exercise
- Four activities
- One numeracy moment

Each of the above aims to facilitate dialogue about our common home.

What is *Laudato Si'* about?

Watch: www.icatholic.ie/wp-content/video/?ID=35784

Discussion

In groups of no more than four discuss the following:

- List concrete examples that illustrate Pope Francis' statement, 'The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.'
- Why do you think Pope Francis would state 'We are not God' in his encyclical letter?

Laudato Si' describes the world as a 'caress from God' and a 'gift from God'. Pope Francis is calling us to action. The biggest challenge for all of us is the challenge to 'examine our lifestyles'. What can we do to improve how we treat our world? How can we show those we share the world with how we care for the world and try to protect it? Let us take a minute to examine *Laudato Si'* a little further.

Watch: <https://youtu.be/lcP5E2trsX4>

Discussion

- What alternative is offered to the burning of fossil fuels?
- Explain the term 'ecological conversion'. Reflect on what makes an ecological conversion a 'true conversion'.
- Do you think that viewing the world as a 'sister with whom we share life' changes how we would treat others and the world around us?

Reflective Exercise

Having watched the short video and discussed the questions above, what do you understand by the term 'conversion'? Try to work out the difference that a 'change of mind' can have versus a 'change of heart'.



The following video is called 'The Cry of the Earth'. It consists of quotes and images. Watch the video and keep these quotes in your mind for the activity that follows. This video requires us to respond to the beauty of the earth.

Watch: <https://youtu.be/32hNg6M3Z2c>



Some quotes from the video:

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God said: "Let there be light".'
(Book of Genesis)



'I see his blood upon the rose,
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.'
(Joseph Mary Plunkett)



'I see his face in every flower;
The thunder and the singing of
the birds,
Are but the voice – and carved by
his power,
Rocks are his written words.'
(Joseph Mary Plunkett)



'God saw that all God made was indeed very good. And God said: "I now establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature on earth".'
(Book of Genesis)



'You love all that exist because your spirit is in all things.'
(Book of Wisdom)



'I draw to myself today, strength of heaven, glory of sun, brightness of moon, radiance of fire, swiftness of lightning, speed of wind, depth of sea, stability of earth, firmness of rock ...'
(St Patrick's Breastplate)



Activity

Divide into the following groups: Art, Poetry and Drama. Choose one of the quotes that appeared on the video and respond to it through the medium of either art, poetry or drama. Once the task is completed, share your work with the other groups in the class. If you have the time show your group's work to other classes within the school.

Extension Exercise

Take the quote from the Book of Wisdom. Investigate what this statement really means.



Stewardship

In the Book of Genesis, we are told that God made us stewards of his creation. This means that we have a responsibility both to the physical world and to the people in it. We need to focus on the common good – that which is of benefit to us all. How can we say that we are caring for our common home in order to share it with others and with future generations and also have the following situation?

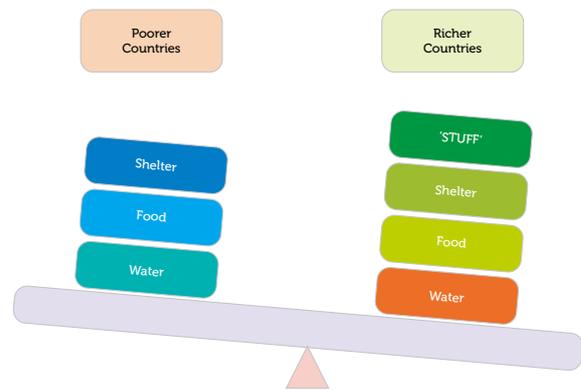


If this process continues, there will not be a common home to share!
This is called oppression!

Activity

Using the Trócaire website (www.trocaire.org), research 'climate justice'. Prepare a digital presentation on climate justice. Begin by looking at the 'Activist Toolkit' and then divide into four groups, or groups of two, covering one of the four following topics:

1. What is climate change?
2. What are the causes of climate change?
3. What are the effects of climate change?
4. What needs to change in Ireland with regard to climate change?



The toolkit is simply the starting point of your research. Please use a number of resources.

Fact: Vatican City has the most solar power installed per capita!

Discussion

Pope Francis makes some very challenging statements in this encyclical that are not always easy for us to hear and accept. One that is particularly challenging is that 'the world is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth'.

- How are environmental issues (e.g. climate change/loss of biodiversity) in our world connected to social issues (e.g. poverty/human trafficking)?

Interdependence

Pope Francis says that we are 'interdependent'; we rely on other people and we rely on the world around us. 'Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan.' This is a very strong and challenging statement. If we are dependent on others, and dependent on the world around us, then we need to view our lives as a shared reality. We must make decisions, not just for ourselves – but for others and for the world around us.

Watch: <https://youtu.be/4FdWZK6pL1M>

Discussion

- Using a mind map, in pairs identify all the connections that John made when buying his corn.
- Once you have completed this task, turn to another pair and share your findings and see if you missed any!



A big part of interdependence is that, as Christians, we have been called to serve one another. The Greek word for this service is *Diakonia*. It is the kind of service that Jesus showed us through the washing of the disciples' feet.

Activity

Read Ephesians 4:1–16.

- In order to become the Body of Christ, in what ways should we show service to others?
- Having reflected on the ways in which we show service to others, do you think this would be a good 'action plan' for working towards 'one world with a common plan'? Give reasons for your answer.
- Are there any ways of showing service that you could add to this list?

Numeracy Moment

1. If there are 100,000,000 different species on earth, and the extinction rate is 0.01% per year, how many different species become extinct each year?
2. It takes 1,000 years to grow 1 metre of peat. In some places peat can measure 12 metres. Calculate how long it would take to grow this bog?
3. National Agricultural Statistics show the honeybee population declined from 6 million hives in 1947 to 2.4 million hives in 2008. Calculate the percentage reduction of beehives during this time? (Statistics from www.greenpeace.com)
4. Of the 294 locations suitable for cultivating cacao in Ghana, only 10.5% of these will be suitable by the year 2050. Calculate the number of locations that will be suitable for cultivating cacao by 2050. (Statistics from www.climate.gov)



Activity

Which to Save?

(taken from *Creating Futures – Resources*, www.trocaire.org)

Imagine a gas had been released into the atmosphere that is deadly for seven different parts of nature. These parts of nature are: **salmon, rice plants, polar bears, bees, Irish bogs, coral reefs** and **cocoa trees**. There is an antidote for the gas which will stop the gas killing these parts of nature; however, there is not enough of the antidote. You have to decide which part of nature should be saved.

| | Reasons for Saving |
|-------------|--------------------|
| SALMON | <hr/> <hr/> |
| RICE PLANTS | <hr/> <hr/> |
| POLAR BEARS | <hr/> <hr/> |
| BEEES | <hr/> <hr/> |
| IRISH BOGS | <hr/> <hr/> |
| CORAL REEFS | <hr/> <hr/> |
| COCOA TREES | <hr/> <hr/> |

'We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone' (*Laudato Si'*, 202). If we could see a common origin, have a sense of mutual belonging and think of the future as shared with everyone, we could achieve conversion – a change of attitude – which would lead to new attitudes and new possibilities of change for the better.

Reflective Exercise

Take a photo or pick an image that you would use as the front of a postcard. Address the postcard to your future grandchildren. Do not write any message on the postcard. The photograph/image needs to show that, in your life, you did your best to care for our common home and you want to share this with your grandchildren. Some images found at: www.freeimages.co.uk