

LISTENING TO NATURE

"Soil, water, mountains,
everything is, as it were,
a caress of God."

(Laudato Si', 84)



Trocaire
TOGETHER FOR A JUST WORLD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Us	2	Session 2: Listening	7
How To Use This Resource	3	Session 3: Reflection	10
Introduction to Leonardo from the La Paz Community in Guatemala	4	Session 4: Discernment	12
Session 1: Prayer	5	Hope in Action: Some Suggestions for Next Steps	15

ABOUT TRÓCAIRE

Trócaire is an international NGO, established by the Catholic Church in Ireland in 1973.

We work with local partners in the world's most at-risk communities and with people in Ireland to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and injustice and respond to the crises they create. Together we bring about positive and lasting change for a just world. Trócaire is rooted in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching which inspires us to live out the Gospel message of inclusion, love, justice and dignity for all. This social teaching of the Church is informed by Scripture, the wisdom of Church leaders, and the lived experience of grassroots movements. In the words of Trócaire's founding document, in which the bishops of Ireland gave the organisation a strong and clear mandate, 'We know that we cannot claim to love God if we do not love our fellow men and women.'

Trócaire has worked through local partner organisations since its foundation. Partnership is at the heart of how Trócaire works. We work with local faith- and non-faith-based organisations who share our values and who are working on any or all of our core programme areas: defending human rights; climate and environmental justice; women and girl's protection, voice and influence; saving lives and protecting human dignity; mobilising the public to achieve global justice. These organisations understand the needs of their communities and are best

placed to work with communities to deliver sustainable long-term change. We call this localisation.

Our role is to support our partners through technical advice, financial support and organisational development. Trócaire and our partner organisations give courage, hope and strength to people around the world who are facing poverty and injustice, including climate injustice. Based on our experience, we believe that localisation delivers more sustainable and impactful development and humanitarian responses in the countries where we work. Moreover, we feel that systems are richer and more effective when they are shaped by the voices and influence of the communities that they are intended to help.

We listen deeply to the earth's cry as asked of us by Pope Francis and the communities with whom we work, who are most affected by climate change. 'Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.' (*Laudato Si'*, 217)

If you would like to learn more about our work, you can access our resources at: <https://www.trocaire.org/our-work/working-in-ireland/parishes/>

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

We acknowledge the need to urgently listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

This resource aims to help participants listen more deeply to God's creation. We read in *Laudato Si'* that, "This contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us, since for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice." (*Laudato Si'*, 85). The methodology used in this resource is inspired by the four stages of the Synodal Process undertaken by the global and Irish Church in recent years. These four stages are: **Prayer, Listening, Consultation and Discernment.**

In light of the environmental crises which our world currently faces, we invite you at home, in parish groups or as a family to join us as we listen to and work with nature to care more deeply for our common home. You might like to enter into the four sessions in one day or divide them out over four weeks. You could do this outdoors, in a park, in your garden, in the Church grounds, in a forest or by the sea. If it is not possible to do the sessions outdoors, you can enter into contemplation at home or in your church or parish centre by finding a quiet space where you can think about your favourite place in nature or bring elements of nature to that space.

In this resource we journey with La Paz community, located in the northern region of Guatemala, country where Trocaire. Despite being one of the countries least responsible for climate change, it has been severely affected by climate disasters in recent years. The communities and families Trócaire work with are increasingly affected by erratic weather patterns such as an increase in droughts, flooding, hurricanes and storms. Many of these communities rely on growing and selling crops to feed their families and earn an income, but with increased flooding and droughts

this is affecting their ability to grow food. Trócaire currently works in three programme areas in Guatemala: Human Rights and Access to Justice, Women's Rights, and Disaster Risk Reduction. The community in La Paz are very strong and this can be seen in how they have worked together to combat the many challenges they face from the increasingly erratic weather. The community have their own Disaster Risk Reduction community group and through training with Pastoral Social Caritas de las Verapaces (PSV), the Trócaire partner, they are more prepared for the extreme weather and know what to do if something happens. For example, the early warning systems can give the community an indication of the severity of the flooding and if there is a need to evacuate. This is done through sensors placed in the river and solar powered radio system installed in the community.

We will now listen to the voice of Leonardo from the La Paz community who shares his story with us and his faith. Leonardo reminds us of just how deeply interconnected we are with one another and with God's creation. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis also reminds us of the interconnectedness of all things: "When we speak of the "environment," what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it." (*Laudato Si'*, 139).

Disclaimer: *This resource is aimed at people over the age of eighteen. Please adapt each session to suit the members of your group, making considerations for mobility, hearing or visual supports where needed.*

LEONARDO FROM THE LA PAZ COMMUNITY IN GUATEMALA

Leonardo (44), is the spiritual leader in La Paz community.

La Paz is a mountainous region with canyons, valleys and flood plains that reach up to 10m above sea level. The community experience hurricanes with strong gusts of wind and rainfall above normal levels, often within a few hours. This causes rivers to overflow, landslides and flooding in the lowlands.

Access to the community is by foot over a wooden suspension bridge that was (re)built in part with Trócaire funds in 2020. The Icbolay river is an unusual, beautiful shade of jade green. The Maya indigenous people consider Guatemalan jade as a symbol of status and wealth. The river is this colour because of the limestone rock in the karst terrain.

La Paz (which means Peace) was named by the community. Our partner organisation, PSV, told us, "When people in a community are in harmony, they work together. There is no one over the other. There are women, men, children. They all work for the common good."

Leonardo is married and has 4 children (2 girls and 2 boys). He is a farmer and has a small ranch where he keeps some animals including chickens. He used to grow cardamom, but this crop was badly affected by drought. Leonardo said that, as a Catholic, the most important thing is to have respect among different people and that people respect nature, the mountains and the valleys. The most important thing is that they love each other. He says: "The land, the earth is the same mother of everyone since She gives us what to eat, how to breathe, how to live. She gives us life. Fire for example, from the volcanoes, is part of nature."

The community are members of the Catholic Church, and they are part of the parish of St Marcos. Leonardo integrates his Catholic faith with indigenous Mayan traditions as he sees this as a way of maintaining the unity of the community.



Leonardo, Spiritual Leader, Guatemala.
Photo credit: Mark Stedman, Trócaire

For Leonardo's community, there is no conflict between the two spiritualities. Some members of the community are also trained catechists and Eucharistic ministers who help to celebrate Catholic rituals in the absence of a priest. Leonardo does not want to lose the Mayan culture, he wants to transfer this culture to new generations, to children and the youth of his community. Also, he wishes that in all the different countries of the world, people would follow their own traditions and have respect for Nature.

We take inspiration from Leonardo for his love of Mother Earth, his family and his faith as we continue to journey with him using the four-step process of Prayer, Listening, Consultation and Discernment. We begin with prayer.

SESSION ONE: PRAYER

For this session, if possible, be outside in nature. If you are in a parish hall or in your home try and bring the sights, sounds and smells of nature into a sacred space. You can do this with plants, opening windows or playing some sounds from nature.

Prayer of The Seven Directions by Sister José Hobday

Sr José Hobday was an elder of the Native American Seneca tribe, a Franciscan Sister, teacher and author. "She used her Native American insights about love of the earth, family, community and the simple life to inspire others to live a more authentic life of prayer, simplicity, poverty, peace and wonder."¹

Leader: Stand with your feet grounded to the earth. Take a moment to feel the earth supporting you, holding you, giving you a firm ground to walk about. Consider how the earth is a symbol of the Lord, holding you in the palm of his hand. Be rooted in your place, in your connection with creation. During this prayer you will be invited to turn slowly; each turn is a quarter to your right. Take this slowly, allow at least a minute's silence in between turn, while listening to nature.

Begin by facing EAST.

This is where the sun comes up, and so the direction of new beginnings, hope, promise, and potential. Pray that you may be open to receiving these gifts this day.

Pause in silence and listen.

Turn towards the SOUTH.

This is the direction of warmth, growth, fertility, also

known as creativity and productivity. In addition, this direction represents faith, trust, and faithfulness in relationships. Pray for these things this day.

Pause in silence and listen.

Turn towards the WEST.

This is the direction where the sun goes down. Thus, it is the direction of rest, of our dream lives, and of closure and endings that need to take place in order for there to be new beginnings. Pray for these things this day.

Pause in silence and listen.

Turn towards the NORTH.

This is the direction of the cold, of winds, of strength, courage, fortitude, might, single mindedness, focus, clarity, and purpose. Pray for these things this day.

Pause in silence and listen.

Turn back to the EAST now and turn UPWARD.

For Native Americans, this is the direction of Father Sky. Pray that your heart, mind, soul, and spirit will not forget to look upward this day, to the One who is so much greater than we are.

Pause in silence and listen.

Turn DOWNWARD – and touch our mother, the earth.

Pray that everything you do this day will be in honour and reverence of our Mother Earth.

Pause in silence and listen.

Turn INWARD.

1 You can read more about Sr José Hobday here: <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/road-peace/simple-life-jose-hobday>

Place your hands on your heart and pray that all that you do this day will be true to the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit who dwells within you. Amen

Pause in silence and listen.

If in a group setting, invite participants to sit.

Reader One: *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* is the name of a letter that Pope Francis has written to each of us. In it, he invites us to consider our shared responsibility for the world in which we live and our connectedness with all living beings and all the gifts of creation. The letter begins in this way: 'In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you our Lord, through our sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs." (*Laudato Si'*, 1)

Litany of Repentance

Leader: Human beings have sinned against creation. Let us ask for forgiveness.

Human beings have helped to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation.

All sing or say: *Kyrie eleison/Lord have mercy*

Human beings have degraded the integrity of the earth by causing change in its climate.

All sing or say: *Christe eleison/Christ have mercy*

Human beings have stripped the earth of its natural forests and destroyed its wetlands.

All sing or say: *Kyrie eleison/Lord have mercy*

Human beings have contaminated the earth's waters, its land, its air and its life.

All sing: *Christe eleison/Christ have mercy*

Reader Two: *Beginners by Denise Levertov*²

But we have only begun to love the earth.
 We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life.
 How could we tire of hope?
 – so much is in bud.
 How can desire fail?
 – we have only begun
 to imagine justice and mercy,
 only begun to envision how it might be
 to live as siblings with beast and flower,
 not as oppressors.
 Surely our river, cannot already be hastening
 into the sea of non being.
 Surely it cannot drag, in the silt,
 all that is innocent?

Not yet, not yet – there is too much broken
 that must be mended,
 too much hurt we have done to each other
 that cannot yet be forgiven.
 We have only begun to know
 the power that is in us if we would join
 our solitudes in the communion of struggle.
 So much is unfolding that must complete its gesture
 so much is in bud.

Pause in silence and listen.

Leader: Gospel reading: Matthew 13: 1-3, 31-33

That same day, Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the shore, and he told them many things in parables.

He put another parable before them, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air can come and shelter in its branches.'

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Note for Leader: Leave some silence after the Gospel reading. Then invite participants to share a word or phrase based on what they have read and heard so far in this session. It may be something from the Gospel passage, Leonardo's story or another thought which has arisen. Invite the group to listen without comment. People may like to journal their thoughts and reflections and bring them to the next session.

Final Prayer: Our Prayer from the Boat (Mt 8:23-27)
 (Cork and Ross Diocesan Synod Prayer)

Loving God, at baptism you have gifted us with a call to serve you and all people in all we do.
 We ask you, Lord to bless people during this time of prayer and listening.
 May we be attentive to the prompting of your Holy Spirit.
 Open our eyes to see where you wish us to go in our faith communities and families of parishes.
 Open our ears to hear the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd, leading us.
 Open our hearts to follow you with joy and trust.
 Open our minds to new possibilities and ways of being your Church.
 Fill us with hope and humility as we build the Kingdom of God together.
 We ask this though Christ our Lord. Amen.

2 From *Candles in Babylon* by Denise Levertov, New Directions, 1982

SESSION TWO: LISTENING



Leader: Introducing a Conversation in the Spirit:

'Conversations in the Spirit' was a practice of the ancient Church. It is a type of conversation which focuses on the quality of one's capacity to listen as well as the quality of the words spoken. This means paying attention to the spiritual movements in oneself and in the other person during the conversation, which requires being attentive to more than simply the words expressed. This quality of attention is an act of respecting, welcoming, and being hospitable to others as they are. It is an approach that takes seriously what happens in the hearts of those who are conversing. There are two necessary attitudes that are fundamental to this process: active listening and speaking from the heart.³

In a moment we will share our thoughts on the environmental crisis our world is facing, and we will do this keeping 'conversations in the Spirit' in mind. Some tips which may help this conversation:

First round: Each person has a chance to speak. There is no discussion in this round, and there is a time of silence to allow for reflection.

Second round of conversation: Share what struck you most or what resonated for you in the first round and what moved you during the time of silence. Once again this is followed by a pause for reflection.

Third round of conversation: Finally in the third-round participants reflect on what moved them most deeply. What new insights arise? What are the common themes or fruits of the conversation?⁴

Before we begin, we read from **Laudate Deum** – Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on the Climate Crisis.⁵

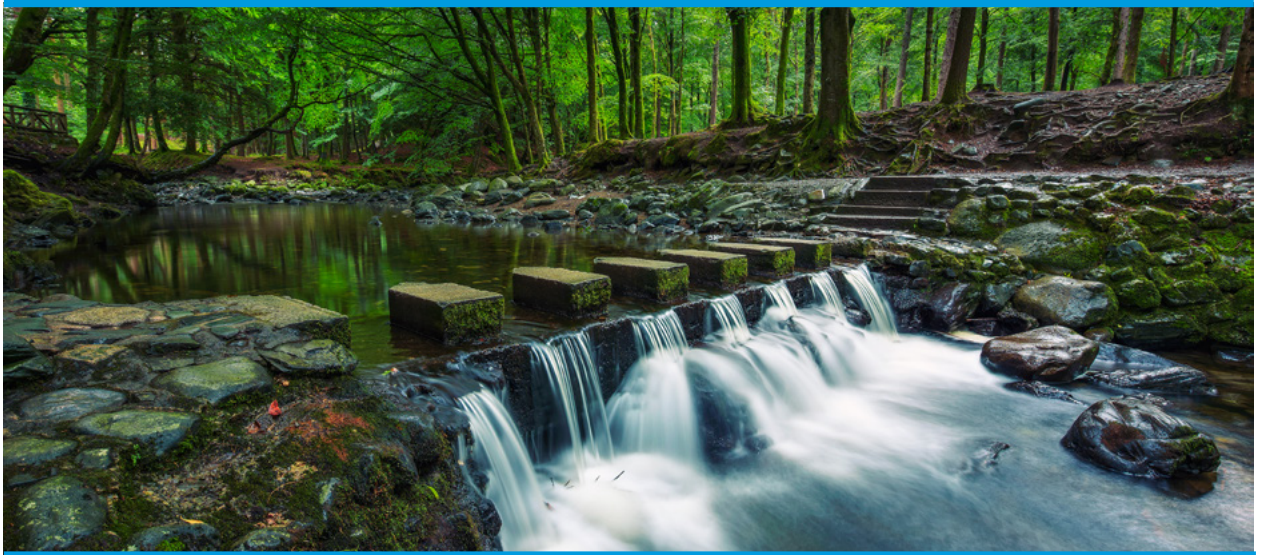
Reader One: "Praise God for all his creatures"

This was the message that Saint Francis of Assisi proclaimed by his life, his canticles and all his actions. In this way, he accepted the invitation of the biblical Psalms and reflected the sensitivity of Jesus before the creatures of his Father: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these" (Mt 6:28-29). "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?"

3 Adapted from "Spiritual Conversations" www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/phases/en/EN_Step_6_Spiritual-Conversation.pdf accessed 16/12/24

4 These 'tips' are adapted from <https://www.schoolforsynodality.org.uk/our-resources/conversations-in-the-spirit-a-how-to-guide>

5 Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum*, Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis to all People of Good Will on the Climate Crisis: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html



Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight" (Lk 12:6). How can we not admire this tenderness of Jesus for all the beings that accompany us along the way! (*Laudate Deum*, 1).

Get into groups and share on some of the following questions using the method outlined above in 'Conversations in the Spirit':

- What comes to mind when you think of the environmental crises, the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis?
- What do you notice about your local environment? Your national environment? The global environment?
- How concerned are you about the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis?
- Where do you hear creation's cry? Where do you hear creation's song?
- Do you see a relationship between your faith and the environmental crisis?
- Where do you see hope in action? Locally, nationally, globally?

Leader: We have listened to one another. Now, let us listen to nature (Rom 8:22). St. Francis of Assisi referred to the Earth as our sister and our Mother in his Canticle of Creatures. The times we live in show that we are not relating to the earth as a gift from our Creator, but rather as a resource to be used. Now more than ever, we need to listen to the cry of the Earth but also, we need to hear Creation's song. Pope Francis reminds us of this when he says, 'Contemplation is the antidote against misuse of our common home ... Those

who contemplate in this way experience wonder not only at what they see, but also because they feel they are an integral part of this beauty; and they also feel called to guard it and to protect it.'⁶

Lectio Divina with Nature

A note for the leader: We have listened to one another; now we are invited to listen to nature. We offer a process for this, called *Lectio Divina with Nature*. In a group setting, we suggest that the leader takes the group through the first steps of all and then gives time (at least 20 minutes) so that people can experience it for themselves out in nature or, if inside, with a plant or an element of creation.

Introduction to *Lectio Divina with Nature*:

Through this practice of *Lectio Divina with Nature* we create space so that we may hear God's Word as spoken to us through creation, in order to love God more deeply (Romans 1:19-20). We may find that this in turn rekindles in us a sense of awe and wonder for our world and a desire to care more deeply for our common home. We are called at this moment in history to listen to the cry of the earth, to hear what God is saying to us now through the Book of Creation.

'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' (Mark 6:31)

First stage – Lectio (Reading): When we read a story, we attend to the words, and the characters, and the place, and things unfold. When we read nature, we attend to the elements by going outside on a walk, sitting in a garden or even in our own

6 Pope Francis General Audience, September 16th 2020 <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-09/pope-francis-become-guardians-of-life-and-earth-by-contemplatio.html>

home, with a plant. Take time to 'read' creation by looking around, slowly taking in what is around you. At first, sense the overview rather than the details. Then, begin to notice the different colours, shapes, smells, textures. Evoke the senses. What do you see, hear, touch, smell? Notice if something attracts your attention, and allow yourself to linger there, taking more time to savour this particular element. What plant or leaf captivates you? What colour or scent or shape draws you in? Allow yourself to be present to what is there. Embrace wonder. What word or phrase arises? We repeat this word or phrase silently, like a mantra. When you return to your group setting, you might share this work or phrase aloud.

Second stage – Meditatio (Reflecting): Staying with the element which has attracted you. Imagine the process that led to this plant or creature's existence; again, sense the overview of the wider ecosystem. Become aware of yourself not as an observer but as a participant, deeply embedded in this web of life. A feeling, thought or idea may arise for you; take this into deeper contemplation. Listen attentively. Be open to what God is saying to you through creation.

Third stage – Oratio (Prayer): We are moved to respond to God's presence in creation – in nature, in flora, fauna or in the elements themselves, the way the air is, the way the water is, the light, the sea, the surf, the sky, a cloud. Speak to God, perhaps giving thanks for the beauty of this creation, then allow yourself to listen. After some time, words and thoughts melt away. Allow yourself to rest in God's presence.

When you are ready to close your time of prayer, find a way to give thanks: silently offer a prayer of gratitude, make a gesture of gratitude (the sign of the cross, a deep bow). You might say, 'May all beings be well; May all beings be free from harm; May all beings live in peace and harmony.'⁷

'The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains, everything is as it were, a caress of God' (*Laudato Si'*, 84).

Concluding this practice – Instructions for the Leader: Welcome everyone back from their lectio with nature; invite them to share what it was like to spend time in nature in this way. You can begin

by inviting people to share the word or phrase that came to them during this time. While one person is talking, others in the group are invited to actively listen, without commenting. Leave some space between each sharing. When everyone has shared, leave some silence. Then, leave space for people to make prayers of thanksgiving or petition, encouraging them to use the word or phrase that has arisen for them at this time.

Final Prayer: *The Canticle of Creatures* by St Francis

Most High, all-powerful Lord, yours are the praises, the glory, and the honour and all blessing.

Praised be you, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day, and through whom You give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour.

and bears a likeness of You, Most High one.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven You formed them, clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through which you give substance to your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister water, who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

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, and who produces various fruit

with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed those who endure in peace,

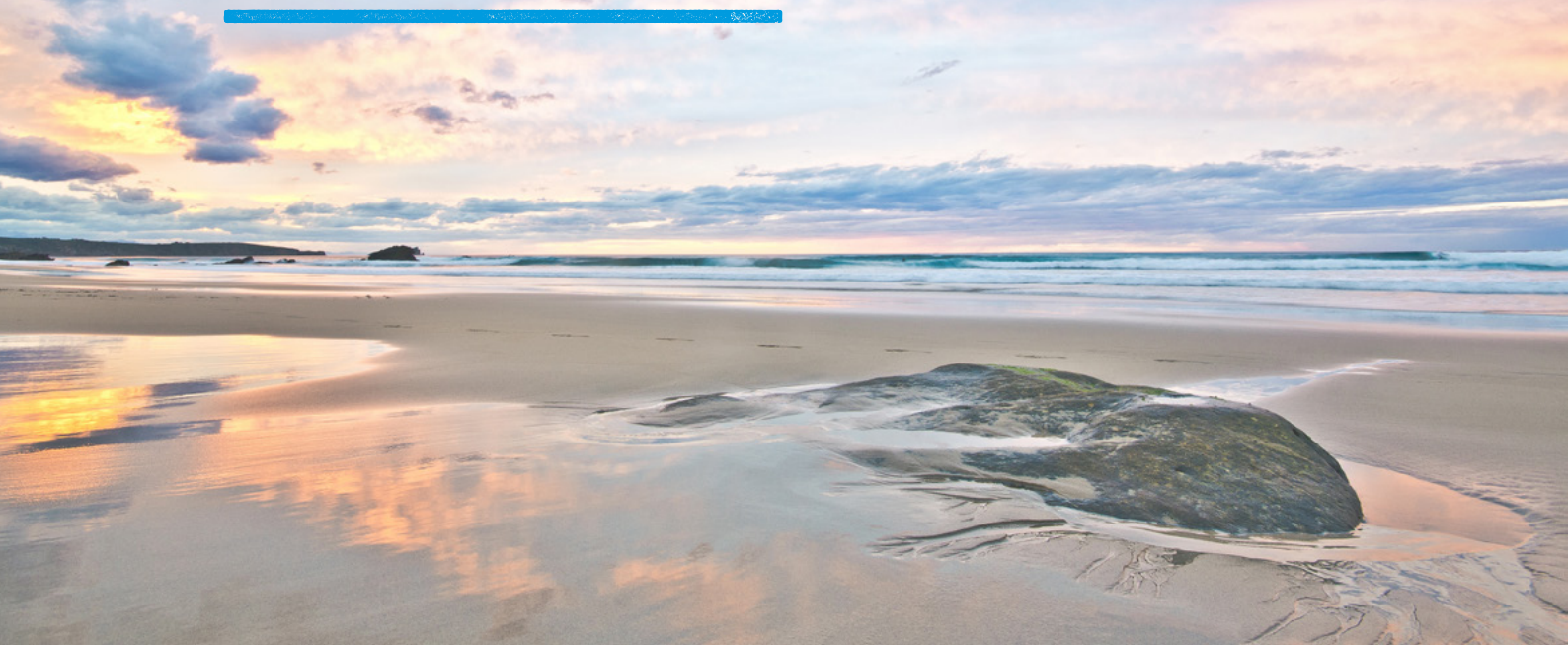
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

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

If you are doing this in one day please take a break.

⁷ 'Lectio Divina with Nature' is an extract from Doherty, T., & Mellett, J, *The Deep End– A Journey Through the Sunday Gospels in the Year of Mark*, Messenger Publications, Dublin 2023.

SESSION THREE: REFLECT



Leader: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church in relation to caring for our common home? Where are we being called to? When we think of journeying together let us not forget Leonardo and La Paz community in Guatemala; bring these people and their care for the earth into our minds and hearts. You might like to re-read Leonardo’s story from page 4.

In groups of about 5 people, we are now going to reflect on some questions. Allow space for some quiet time in the group setting. You can use the ‘Conversations in the Spirit’ method from session two.

If possible, each group would have a volunteer who can facilitate the group questions, taking some notes to share with the larger group. Or a smaller group the leader of the day can do this. Allow time for the discussion, recommend minimum 45 minutes.

- 1) How is your local Church “journeying together” to care more deeply for our common home?
- 2) Where is the Holy Spirit calling us to at this time as we journey together for our common home? Bring to mind the experiences and example of the La Paz community in Guatemala.

- 3) Recall our experiences: What experiences of our local Church do these questions evoke for you?
- 4) As you recall these experiences in greater depth: What joys did they bring? What insights have they opened up for you?
- 5) Gather the fruits to share: Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What paths are opening up?

Leader: We invite you to come back to the bigger group to share some of the experiences from this group work. As much as possible, we try and keep the method of ‘Conversations in the Spirit’ in mind. We all actively listen to each group. Not listening to respond, just listening and allowing.

Following the group sharing, leave a moment for silence.

Reader One: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (*Laudato Si’*, 160)

Reader Two: “The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, God’s boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is a caress of God.” (*Laudato Si’*, 84).

Reader Three: “Nature is a magnificent book in which God speaks to us & grants us a glimpse of



his infinite beauty and goodness. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise” (*Laudato Si'*, 12)

Final Prayer: *Prayer to the Holy Spirit* by Fr Dermot Lane⁸

Come, O Holy Breath of God, poured out ‘in the beginning’,
 be with us at this time of a climate emergency
 and an ever-increasing loss of biodiversity.
 Over the aeons, the Spirit of God empowered the
 universe to emerge,
 enabled biological evolution to take place,

and inspired the unique advent of the human,
 endowed with the gift of reflective self-
 consciousness.

The same Spirit of God authored the Incarnation
 of the eternal Word of God in Jesus of Nazareth,
 animated His disciples to go forth,
 and established a new ecclesial community on the
 day of Pentecost.

Be with us once again, as You were in the past, to
 heal our broken universe,
 so that we can see the face of the Creator God in
 the wonders of creation.
 Amen.

⁸ Fr. Dermot A. Lane, *Laudato Si'* International Scholars Tertiary Education Network' (LISTEN), Dublin, Ireland. Prayer available from *Laudato Si'* Movement Online Prayer Book: <https://laudatosimovement.org/prayer-book/>

SESSION FOUR: DISCERNMENT



Leader: Ignatian discernment is the spiritual practice of noticing the movements within your heart and soul, identifying the thoughts, desires, and emotions that motivate them, and using these insights to decide where God is leading you. One of the ways of doing this is through a daily prayer known as ‘the examen’.

The ‘Laudate Deum Examen’ is a tool for prayer, reflection, and action for individuals and communities to deepen the call to care for creation and the most vulnerable. This examen follows the five steps of the Ignatian Examen, guided by key quotes from Pope Francis in his timely exhortation on the climate crisis, *Laudate Deum*.⁹

Reader One: Give thanks for God’s wondrous creation.

“‘Praise God for all his creatures.’ This was the message that Saint Francis of Assisi proclaimed by his life, his canticles and all his actions. In this way, he accepted the invitation of the biblical Psalms and reflected the sensitivity of Jesus before the creatures of his Father: ‘Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these’ (Mt 6:28-29). ‘Are not

five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight’ (Lk 12:6). How can we not admire this tenderness of Jesus for all the beings that accompany us along the way!” (*Laudate Deum*, 1)

Let us give thanks for God’s wondrous creation, within which, “God has united us to all his creatures” (*Laudate Deum*, 66). We know that Jesus looks upon all of creation, including ourselves and our neighbours, with tenderness. Where do I feel God’s presence in creation?

“Jesus “was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attraction full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father, and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things” (*Laudate Deum*, 64).

“The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence” (*Laudate Deum*, 65). Take a few moments to root ourselves in God’s love and express thanks for the blessings of this day.

9 This has been adapted from the *Laudato Si’* Movement laudatosimovement.org/news/laudate-deum-examen

Reader Two: Ask God for light

"I cannot fail in this regard to remind the Catholic faithful of the motivations born of their faith... Authentic faith not only gives strength to the human heart, but also transforms life, transfigures our goals and sheds light on our relationship to others and with creation as a whole." (*Laudate Deum*, 61)

We reflect upon the presence of God throughout our day, as well as where we have turned away from harmonious relationship with God, the most vulnerable of our neighbours, and all of creation. Let us ask God to *illuminate* our days and actions with honesty: "We need to rethink among other things the question of human power, its meaning and its limits." (*Laudate Deum*, 28).

Reader Three: Review the day

"For 'we are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it,' and thus 'we [do] not look at the world from without but from within'" (*Laudate Deum*, 25).

From first waking in the morning until now, God, help me review my day from my place within creation. Pay attention to what moments rise to the top of your memory as you reflect upon these questions:

- How did my actions reflect a sacred, affectionate, and humble respect to our "universal family" of all of God's creation? How did they not? (*Laudate Deum*, 67)
- Did my actions build up or break down a "healthy and harmonious relationship" with creation and all God's creatures? (*Laudate Deum*, 27)
- How did I interact with "institutions" such as banks, schools, companies; who "preserve the rights of more powerful with our caring for those of all"? (*Laudate Deum*, 43)

Reader Four: Learn from our shortcomings

Pope Francis asks: "To the powerful, I can only repeat this question: 'What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?'" (*Laudate Deum*, 60).

While we may not think that we have power, each of us does impact the world through the ways we live and move throughout our days. When

have I chosen power (e.g., money, consumerism, individualism, ease, self-importance, love of my own opinions), rather than transformative listening, over the ecological choices and action needed?

What actions am I taking today—or failing to take—that might lead me to be remembered as one who did something?

Knowing that Jesus looks upon me with tenderness in my pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world, I now reflect upon the times I have acted in ways that impaired my relationship with God, others, or creation (*Laudate Deum*, 1).

Reader Five: Look toward the day to come
Pope Francis asks us to reflect upon some big questions: "In conscience, and with an eye to the children who will pay for the harm done by their actions, the question of meaning inevitably arises: 'What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my time on this earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?'" (*Laudate Deum*, 33).

These big questions are answered through the choices we make day by day. Pope Francis says, "This is the path. Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day" (*Laudate Deum*, 34).

- How is God asking me to realise love, justice, and solidarity with all creation tomorrow?
- What policies can I support which will help our culture do the same?
- How will I do so, with "the courage needed to produce substantial changes"? (*Laudate Deum*, 56). Who might be involved with me on this pilgrimage?

We praise God and ask for help to make these changes tomorrow, for we know that we do not do this work alone, and we can only do so through the grace of God (*Laudate Deum*, 73). Amen!

Leader: We now move to a place of action. What action can we take as a family/parish group/individual to work together to care for our common home? Start an active discussion on where to next for your group. Come up with one concrete idea that you are going to do to take action together. If you need ideas and helpful tips, please see on page 15.

"The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?" (*Laudate Deum*, 65)



Leader: *Prayer for the Synod from the Archdiocese of Dublin*

We bring all our ideas, hopes dreams and actions together as we go forth with a renewed sense of purpose for caring for our common home.

We finish in prayer:

The Spirit unites us. Lord, let us find in you our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

When we are rooted in the Spirit, we discover that we have more in common than what divides us.

We realise that it is only with the presence of the Spirit that we can come to a consensus – feeling together, a meeting of hearts and minds. It is in this unity that we know we can walk with each other even when we do not always agree. The journey we make together is not just for a short moment but finds its deeper meaning through the horizon of eternity. When we are rooted in this, we are also rooted in God’s way of doing things, trusting in His way and His purpose. This helps us and gives us our sense of direction. Lord, help us to walk in your love as we journey together. Amen.

Or

A Prayer for our Earth (Laudato Si’, 246)

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.

HOPE IN ACTION: SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

- Join the Laudato Si' Network in Ireland and globally:** We meet regularly with like-minded people who are inspired by their faith and *Laudato Si'* to take action for our common home. Contact the Church team info@trocaire.org for more information, to join our *Laudato Si'* newsletter and *Laudato Si'* animator meetings (online, monthly).
Would your parish like a deep dive into *Laudato Si'*? We can run a course for your local group. Check out <https://www.trocaire.org/our-work/working-in-ireland/parishes/laudato-si/>
- Organise a screening of *The Letter: A Message for the Earth*:** On October 4th 2022, a *Laudato Si'* movie, *The Letter: A Message for our Earth*, was launched in Rome. In just three weeks it had 8 million views on YouTube! *The Letter*, produced by the Laudato Si' Movement, together with the Oscar and BAFTA-winning team Off the Fence, is a film-documentary which follows 5 courageous changemakers from different parts of our world as they tell their stories and bring hope to the global conversation to care more deeply for our common home. You can organise a local community screening with our support. We also have a six-session resource, suitable for parish or post-primary schools to accompany the film. See: <https://www.trocaire.org/our-work/working-in-ireland/parishes/laudato-si/>
- Join the global Laudato Si' Movement** at www.laudatosimovement.org
- Complete the **Laudato Si' Animators course**, online: www.laudatosianimators.org
- Return 30% of Church Grounds to Nature:** In March 2023, the Irish Bishops' Conference agreed that parishes would return 30% of church grounds to nature by 2030. This is a response to the biodiversity crisis our world is facing, the call of *Laudato Si'* and the agreements made at the recent UN Conference on Biodiversity (COP15). All are called to arrest the decline of biodiversity for the sake of the next generation. For more information on how to get involved please go to <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/returning-to-nature/?>
- Join Eco Congregation Ireland and become an Eco Parish:** Eco-Congregation Ireland (ECI) encourages churches of all denominations to take an eco- approach to worship, lifestyle, property and finance management, community outreach and contact with the developing world. They offer guidance on practical steps to become an Eco-Parish. See how you can get involved: <https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/>
- Become a campaigner** with Trócaire. Join our activist community today to be the first to view our documentaries, get invitations to our events, and be part of making real changes that impact positively on people's lives. <https://www.trocaire.org/petitions/become-a-campaigner/>

“For we know that things can change ... Truly, much can be done!”

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* 13, 180)



La Paz community members crossing the bridge over the Icbolay river.
Photo credit: Mark Stedman, Trócaire

TRÓCAIRE IS THE OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

More resources, photos and videos are available at:
trocaire.org/our-work/working-in-ireland/parishes

Cover photo: The community brigade for disaster response in action.
Photo credit: Mark Stedman, Trócaire

Resource by: Anna Keegan and Jane Mellett.



Join us on:

Facebook: – facebook.com/trocaireireland
– connect with us

Twitter: – twitter.com/trocaire
– keep up with our latest tweets

YouTube: – youtube.com/trocaire
– see the people you support

Vimeo: – vimeo.com/trocaire
– watch our videos

Instagram: – instagram.com/trocaireonline
– see our photos and videos

Contact us:

Trócaire, Maynooth,
Co. Kildare, Ireland

T: +353 (0)1 654 9110

E: anna.keegan@trocaire.org

Trócaire, 50 King Street,
Belfast BT1 6AD, Northern Ireland

T: +44 (0) 28 90 808 030

E: infoni@trocaire.org

Trócaire, 9 Cook Street,
Cork, Ireland

T: +353 (0)21 427 5622

E: corkcentre@trocaire.org

www.trocaire.org

Trócaire takes seriously its obligations in respect of your personal data and is committed to adherence to national and international data protection law, namely the Data Protections Acts 1988–2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR – enacted automatically across EU Member States in May 2018). For more information about how we process and protect your data, please go to trocaire.org/privacy-security or contact us for a copy of our privacy statement.



REF: CH2