



Reflection for Board and Staff Meeting

Learning with Pope Francis to Care for Our Common Home

Introduction

Pope Francis recognises the difficulties and challenges encountered by each of us when attempting to care for our common home; however, he emphasises that it is important for us to come to see that 'there is nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions'. As Boards of Management in Catholic schools, it is immensely challenging in the shadow of the ecological crisis to care for creation, especially when there are so many other pressing issues to be dealt with. Few matters, however, are more urgent than the various effects of the ecological crisis, which directly impact, or will impact in the near future, the lives of the students, parents, guardians and staff of our schools. Stimulated by the disastrous effects of the ecological crisis and the contribution of humankind to their emergence, Pope Francis in his letter *Laudato Si'* (the third encyclical of his pontificate, given 24 May 2015) calls on us to transform our relationship with creation and to make tangible changes to our daily lifestyle.

Catholic schools have an important role to play in nurturing our recognition of the nobility in caring for our common home. For Pope Francis, Catholic schools are full of potential as 'it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle'. Every Catholic school, therefore, has a responsibility to provide an effective ecological education, but it is important that we come to see the rich spiritual tradition of the Church as a dynamic and inexhaustible resource. Pope Francis says that the spiritual heritage of the Church can transform, motivate and sustain our school communities in their provision of an effective ecological education that is capable of facilitating openness to God.

Catholic Schools Week 2017 provides us with the opportunity to learn with Pope Francis to care for our common home, to hold together both vision and action as Catholic school communities that strive to stimulate tangible lifestyle change and to 'restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God'.

Reflections

- Are there ways in which the Board of Management could do more to actively promote the importance of caring for our planet and become more eco-aware?
- Can you identify any way in which the Board of Management can be more actively involved in ensuring that the grounds of the school provide a safe and hospitable environment for wildlife and plant life?
- Is there any ways in which the Board of Management can encourage the school to participate in energy initiatives? (i.e. Green Flag) If your school has a green flag, is there any way your school could celebrate this achievement in the context of the Christian call to care for our common home?
- Can the BOM identify any ways that your board meetings could be more eco-friendly? (i.e. Paperless)





Prayer

A Christian Prayer in Union With Creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.
Praise be to you!

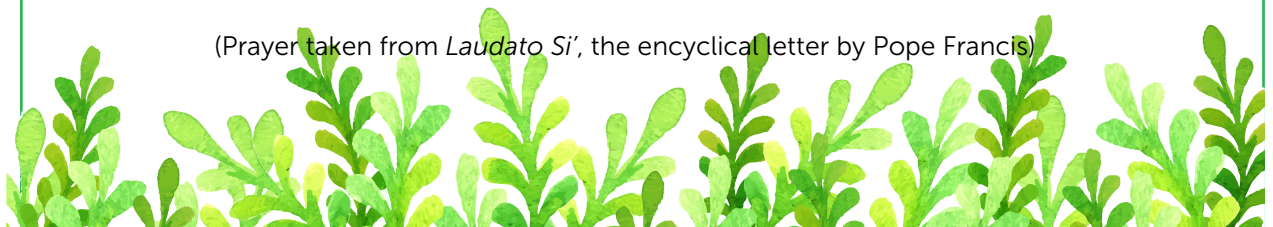
Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!

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

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

(Prayer taken from *Laudato Si'*, the encyclical letter by Pope Francis)



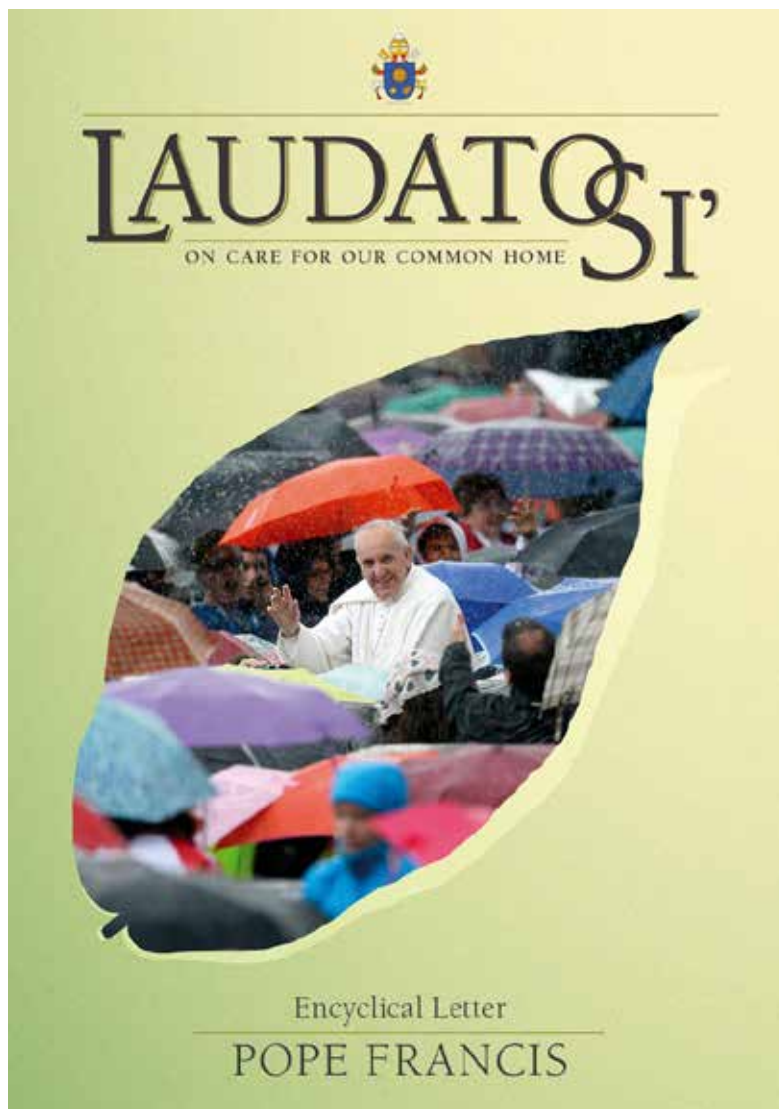


Watch

- Trócaire video on *The Cry of the Earth* (6 min 12 sec):
www.icatholic.ie/cry-of-the-earth-relaunched/

Read

- Irish Episcopal Conference, *The Cry of the Earth: A Call to Action for Climate Justice*:
www.trocaire.org/sites/trocaire/files/pdfs/parishes/cry_of_the_earth_2014.pdf
- Trócaire GLAS Resource on *The Cry of the Earth*:
www.trocaire.org/sites/trocaire/files/pdfs/parishes/glas-resource.pdf
- *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, encyclical letter by Pope Francis:
w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf





Staff to Staff

Introduction

In his letter *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis emphasises the important role that Catholic schools play in bringing about real changes in lifestyle. He states that 'good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life'. As teachers, we take on the role of the caring farmer who is faced with the difficult task of not only planting the seeds of knowledge, but also the task of nurturing these seeds so that they come to bear fruit in the lives of our students. As teachers, we have a duty of care to all of our students, and this includes the development of a healthier attitude and relationship with the environment. Exercising this responsibility is not always easy, especially considering the heavy workload that each of us face on a daily basis; however, during Catholic Schools Week 2017 we take the time to reflect on our Catholic ethos and embark upon an educational journey that has the noble task of planting and nurturing the seeds of knowledge and ecological justice, not only in the lives of students, but also in the lives of teachers in Catholic schools. By taking the time to address the challenges of the ecological crisis through the lens of our Catholic ethos, both students and teachers can come to bear the fruits of knowledge through the development of a richer relationship with one another, creation and God.

Reflection

'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.'
(Genesis 2:15)

'You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.' (Psalm 8:6)

- The above scriptural references are concerned with the concept of 'human stewardship'. Write a diary entry for one day of the week. Try to account for the various ways in which your activity that day impacted both positively and negatively on the environment. Having completed the diary entry, reflect on the concept of human stewardship and the weight of responsibility that it carries. Could your day have been more caring towards our common home?
- Watch the following video produced by iCatholic: www.icatholic.ie/wp-content/video/?ID=35784. Choose three of the eight points presented in the video to discuss with other members of staff. From your discussion discern two ways in which members of staff could do more to address each of your chosen three points.





Prayer

Prayer to Care for Our Common Home

Father of all,
Creator and ruler of the universe,
You entrusted your world to us as a gift.
Help us to care for it and all people,
that we may live in right relationship –
 with You,
 with ourselves,
 with one another,
 and with creation.

Christ our Lord,
both divine and human,
You lived among us and died for our sins.
Help us to imitate your love for the human family
by recognising that we are all connected –
 to our brothers and sisters around the world,
 to those in poverty impacted by environmental devastation,
 and to future generations.

Holy Spirit,
giver of wisdom and love,
You breathe life in us and guide us.
Help us to live according to your vision,
stirring to action the hearts of all –
 individuals and families,
 communities of faith,
 and civil and political leaders.

Triune God, help us to hear the cry of those in poverty, and the cry of the earth,
so that we may together care for our common home.

Amen.

(Prayer from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, based on the
encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis)

