

Human Ecology

Caring for Our Common Home

Grades 7-9 Lesson



Goal:

Pope Francis issued the encyclical *Laudato si*, the first written specifically on the environment. Students will receive an overview of main points of *Laudato si* and understand the connection between honoring the dignity of each person, serving the poor and vulnerable, and protecting our environment.

Lesson:

*Care for creation, while long a social issue, has only in recent years become an issue of great concern for the Church as an expression of our faith. Pope Francis, in *Laudato si*, reminds us that we are called to care for creation not only as an end in itself but because creation is at the service of persons, and the dignity of persons must be respected above everything else. In this lesson, we will explore the topic of trash and how the small decisions we make every day, when multiplied through a community, can become huge problems. The goal for the lesson is to encourage awareness of the need to reduce consumption, reuse items, and invite others to do so—not only so that we have cleaner cities, but because our small actions have a global effect and will help improve living conditions for people all around the world.*

Watch:

“Care for God’s Creation” video and the “5 Reasons Catholics Should Care for Creation” blog post offer a reflection on why Catholics are so interested in the environment and climate change. What is the underlying reason that people ought to care for creation? How is caring for creation part of our faith? Who is most adversely affected by environmental damage? Why? What role does caring for the environment play in peace?

“Where Does Our Trash Go?” and the “How Long to Decompose” infographic. This video and graphic illustrate clearly what happens to our trash. Simple daily decisions can add up fast, especially in a city like New York, or worse, Los Angeles. What are our obligations to keep our city clean? Does this have anything to do with faith? What do we learn about the jobs of people who work to keep cities clean and trash-free? Is it more complex than you had originally thought? What can you do to reduce your trash production? What can you do to reduce the trash production of your neighborhood or city?

Activity:

"Living *Laudato si*" provides a number of specific suggestions of ways to live the message of care for creation in both your school and your family. Choose 3-5 of these suggestions to do, and get started.

If you are feeling a bit more creative, check out "Picasso Soda Can Art". This innovative and interesting use of recyclables shows what can be done to beautify our communities with the very things that usually junk them up. Choose this or another art project that repurposes trash or recyclables into something beautiful or fun.

Pray:

A Prayer for our Earth

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.

