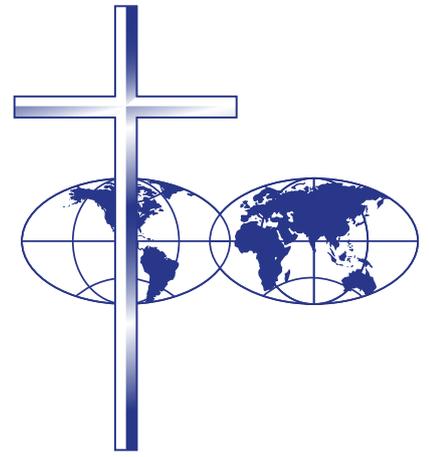
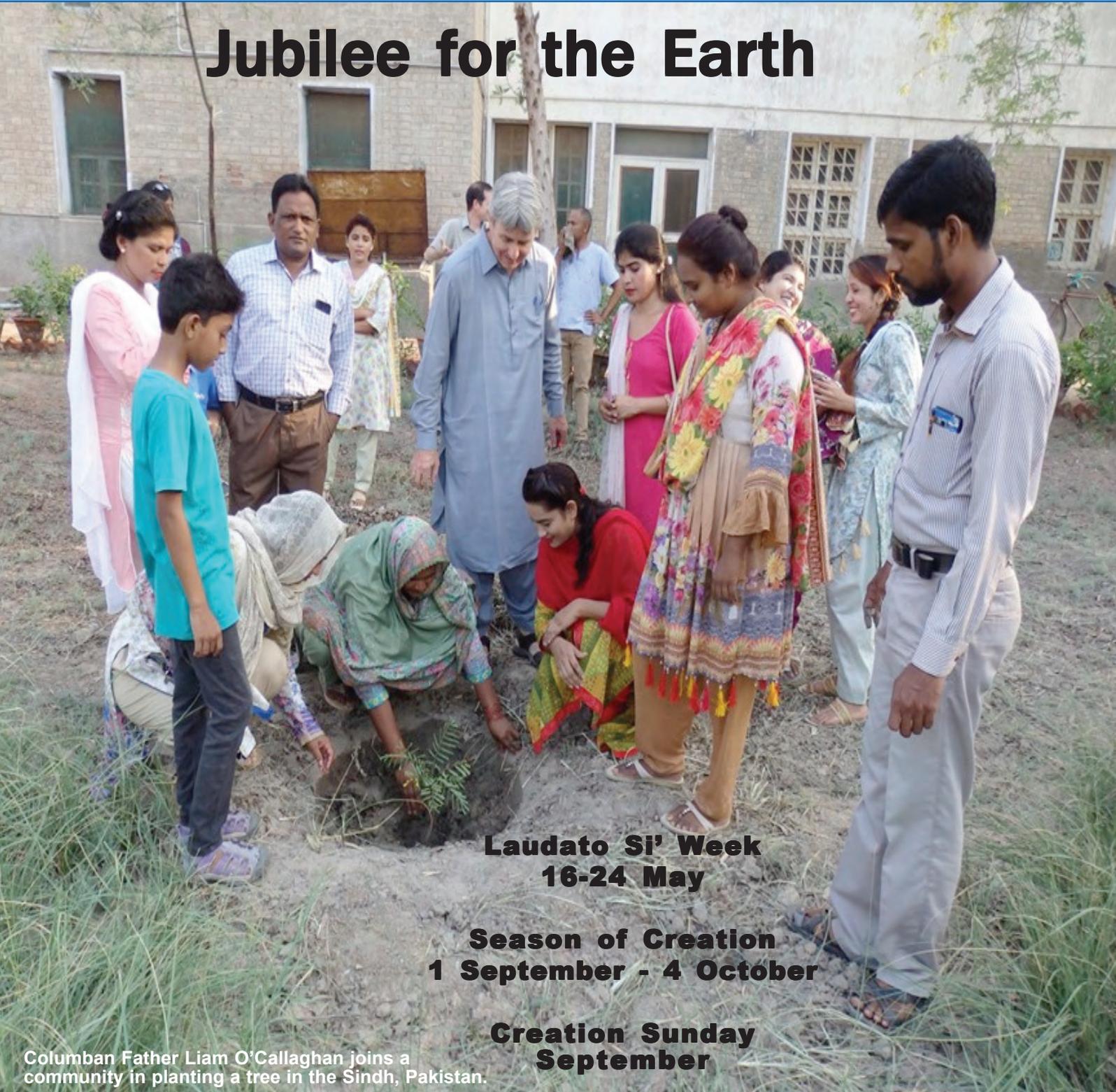


# Vocation for Justice



Summer 2020 Volume 34 No 2

## Jubilee for the Earth



**Laudato Si' Week  
16-24 May**

**Season of Creation  
1 September - 4 October**

**Creation Sunday  
September**

Columban Father Liam O'Callaghan joins a community in planting a tree in the Sindh, Pakistan.

**COLUMBAN MISSION**

Collaborating with the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales & Justice and Peace Scotland

## Jubilee for the Earth

***Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis' groundbreaking encyclical, is five years old this month.** It's a time to celebrate the beginnings of "ecological conversion" in our lives and Churches. We've seen such initiatives as a growth in Livesimply parishes and schools, the planting of trees to celebrate sacramental occasions, and advocacy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

But, how relevant is *Laudato Si'* Week 16-24 May in the context of the coronavirus pandemic? We have seen the October Biodiversity conference in China and the November climate conference in Scotland postponed. The Climate Coalition Lenten vigil for the climate at Westminster had to go virtual after lockdown. Yet, the new quietness has revealed that the birds sing beautifully, the resurgent Spring blossoms lift the human spirit, and that Earth can heal.

The 2020 coronavirus pandemic prompts greater appreciation of God's creation; and also a deeper understanding of global links that should help us address the ongoing public health threats of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. We understand better how any emergency, such as the expanding range and spread of vector-borne diseases like malaria or dengue, or the increasing frequency and strength of extreme weather events, hit the most vulnerable and poorest the hardest. But they hit us too.

Nature is sending us a message with the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing climate crisis, according to the UN's environment chief, Inger Andersen. Destructive practices - such as logging, mining, industrial farming - which drive wildlife into contact with people - must be reviewed. Live animal markets - an ideal mixing bowl for disease - must end. She highlighted other environmental impacts in 2020, such as the huge Australian bushfires and the worst ever locust invasion in West Africa. "The financial and social support packages to maintain and eventually resuscitate the global economy post-pandemic should therefore promote health, equity, and environmental protection" Anderson said; "we

must transition to a more resilient, zero-carbon, just and healthier future, and resources must be directed this way". She reflected that, "the virus reminds us, by oppressing us for a short time, of those in this world whose whole life is spent in oppression".

'Jubilee for the Earth' is the theme of Autumn's Season of Creation. And a 'Creation Sunday' in September will be introduced. Let us note that high biodiversity reduces the risk of animal-vector-borne diseases in human populations, yet three-quarters of the earth's land surface and 66% of the marine is significantly altered by human activity, habitats are destroyed and degraded, and one million species are at risk of extinction. A Jubilee will mean strangleholds of debt and poverty being lifted, and the planet being delivered from human-induced environmental disasters.



Photo: Natalie Tobert

Hopefully, the pandemic has taught us to see security in a new way. For decades, experts have warned of the risks of global threats that are simply too big for one country to handle, such as disease pandemics, climate change, and nuclear war. The response of our political leaders has fallen short. Spending priorities and modes of thinking about security have been defined in military terms.

In early April, Pope Francis and Pax Christi endorsed the United Nations' call for a global ceasefire. "The threats we face as a planet, health pandemics and climate change among them, demand a coordinated international response with no room for continuing to waste resources on armed conflict," said Pax Christi.

We have also learnt that global challenges require systemic changes by government, the corporate world, and individual behaviour. We have seen over recent weeks that governments can take radical action and that we can change our behaviour quickly. This crisis is teaching the world much about the values of compassion and fairness, and the ability of societies to care for the most vulnerable as the basis of security. We have been heartened by the strengthening of community bonds across the nation.

We have learnt that prevention is better than cure. It's cheaper and safer to prevent people from catching and spreading a virus than to treat huge numbers of cases at once. With climate change, it is better to prevent runaway temperature rises than to figure out how to deal with the consequences. Environmental issues are so important to our young people. A winning article in our recent young journalists' competition on 'Tackling our Throwaway Culture' appears on page 9. And see our centrespread, which reminds of the teaching in *Laudato Si'*.

Our amazing planet is in peril from climate change and the loss of habitats and species. And yet this moment of eclipse, where darkness is passing in front of our normally ordered lives, is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to stop, and to say that real, lasting change is possible. We have stopped for a virus. Let's use this time to think hard about what we want the world to look like when we come out the other side.

We must recognise climate instability and biodiversity loss as crises and tackle them with the same conviction as demonstrated during the pandemic. We must learn basic lessons about cooperating with each other, about listening to experts, and about the role that governments can play when they put their minds to it. 'Jubilee for the Earth' is a timely theme for the Season of Creation - 1 September to 4 October. Bishop Marc Stenger of Troyes, Co-President of Pax Christi, said last month that *Laudato Si'* "is a monumental gift which could become more and more our Charter in the post-coronavirus era". ■

**Ellen Teague**

## Sharing the Vision of Pope Francis

**Amy Woolam Echeverria**

**Amy - the Columban Coordinator for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) - is also President of the Board of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM).**



Pope Francis with Amy Echeverria

**“Be maternal, be tender, this is what the world needs”.**

These were the words Pope Francis spoke to the GCCM Board of Directors and Staff during our meeting on 27 February 2020. The private audience was an intimate gathering of about 10 people. They included Cardinal Luis Tagle, who serves on GCCM’s Episcopal Advisory Board and has been a GCCM champion since GCCM’s launch during Pope Francis’ visit to the Philippines in January 2015. We had an hour-long conversation about the state of the world, the story of the birth of the encyclical *Laudato Si’*, and Pope Francis’ own personal eco-conversion journey.

As Board President, it was my honour to open our conversation with Pope Francis, a meeting that was arranged on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of GCCM’s founding and the 5th anniversary of the release of *Laudato Si’*. I began by introducing myself as a Columban and a mother, saying that these are my life’s reference points.

I continued by sharing that I had received that morning a message from a Columban in Australia who wrote: “We have begun Lent and we see the small buds emerging from the trees and ashes of the tragic

bushfires. They are signs of new life”. I noted that this was a timely message as our audience with Pope Francis was on the second day of Lent and a good metaphor for the birth of GCCM five years earlier.

After Pope Francis invited each person in the room to share, he offered his own reflections which I found most humble and encouraging. First, he commented on the work of GCCM, all its member organisations, and the Church in bringing *Laudato Si’* to life. He affirmed that the task of creating, nurturing, connecting, listening is work we all share in the care for our common home. And in our care there is a tenderness and compassion that counters the violence and the ashes of our time.

He continued by sharing, in a beautifully interwoven way, the birth of *Laudato Si’* and his own personal conversion towards an eco-spirituality. He took us back to Aparecida in 2007, where Latin America’s bishops had been meeting, and the drafting of the final document. When reviewing the text, he acknowledged his doubts about including language that was put forward by the Brazilian bishops about hearing the cry of the Amazon, but in the end he agreed with its inclusion. He noted that it wasn’t until he arrived in Rome that the urgency became clear to him from listening to his advisors, scientists, and theologians. He said the development of *Laudato Si’* was a collaborative work of many people and the result of hearing the cries of the people and the Earth. I was deeply moved and encouraged by the way he allowed himself to be vulnerable to us. It became clear that when he calls us in *Laudato Si’* to ongoing “ecological conversion” he includes himself in that journey.

On a humorous note, he added that, “in our next meeting, the Cardinals will be in Cardinal *green* instead of Cardinal *red*”. While lighthearted in tone, I do believe it is an insight into his hope that the Church will find ways in symbol and substance to

integrate more deeply a theology, spirituality, liturgy, practices, and pastoral care that are rooted in the common good for all of creation.

After everyone spoke, we concluded by standing in a circle and praying the *Our Father* – the most unifying and rooting prayer of our faith. Finally, after an exchange of gifts, Pope Francis invited us to gather in the private passageway where he enters the reception hall. There he showed us a stunning tapestry (*below*) of God giving birth to humanity and all the universe. He said that every time he passes it on his way to enter the hall, he proclaims in his heart, *Laudato Si’!*. On that note, we said our goodbyes, offered final prayers and gratitude.



I continue to reflect on Pope Francis’ message, particularly in the context of our GCCM story. I found his words to be a good reminder of the power of tenderness. I pray that throughout this 5th anniversary year and beyond, that we will continue to live into the invitation to be maternal and tender, which is another way of expressing the call to deep transformative love for all of Creation. ■

The **Global Catholic Climate Movement** is a network of over 900 member organisations. The Columbans were founder members. The GCCM is nourished and inspired by *Laudato Si’*, and has three dimensions to its mission:

- **Accompany** hearts in their journey of ecological conversion
- **Transform lives** towards right relationship with all of Creation
- **Lift up voices - the cry of the people and the cry of the Earth.** And then create public space so that they may be heard to prompt structural change.

<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/>

## Call for a 'Debt Jubilee'

**The Columbans have been involved in campaigns for economic justice for three decades, and support the campaign for debt cancellation during the pandemic.**

G20 Finance Ministers announced in mid-April they have reached agreement on a suspension of debt payments in response to the Covid-19 crisis. This was a debt freeze for the world's poorest countries. The suspension covers debt payments by 77 countries to G20 and other governments from 1 May to the end of 2020, estimated to be \$12 billion. The payments will not be cancelled but postponed – to be paid between 2022 and 2024, along with interest accrued in the meantime. There will be a review before the end of 2020 as to whether further action will be taken. The G20 announcement also calls on private creditors to similarly suspend debt payments, and calls on multilateral creditors to explore options for doing so.

CAFOD welcomed the decision but warned that “suspending rather than cancelling debts risks merely delaying an economic crisis”.

Sarah-Jayne Clifton, Director of Jubilee Debt Campaign, agreed, saying: *“This is a first step in dealing with the magnitude of the coronavirus debt crisis, but much more needs to be done. The G20 deal keeps vital money in countries for now, but today’s suspension will soon become tomorrow’s debt crisis unless payments are cancelled in full. We urgently need a UN-led process to cancel external debt owed to all creditors, for all countries in crisis.”*

*“The suspension of debt payments to private creditors is only voluntary. The UK and New York can make sure it happens by introducing emergency legislation to prevent any lender suing a country for stopping debt payments during the current crisis. Otherwise, the real beneficiaries of today’s deal could be rich speculators who keep being paid thanks to debt suspensions by other lenders.”*

For the 77 countries covered in this deal, other governments make-up 45% of external debt principal and interest payments due in 2020, multilateral lenders 29% and private lenders 26%. Jubilee Debt Campaign has calculated that 64 countries currently spend more on debt payments than healthcare. In 2010 the UK passed the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act which prevented countries from being sued by creditors who were not participating in a previous round of debt relief. This legislation needs to be updated to protect countries in this latest round of Covid-19-related debt crises.

The call by campaigners was to cancel all external debt payments for 2020. Cancelling debt payments of the poorest countries could save \$40 billion immediately and support almost 500 million of the world's poorest to survive the pandemic. More than 750,000 citizens across

the world signed petitions calling for debt cancellation.

Nick Dearden, director of Global Justice Now said:  
*“Here in Britain, we had 4,000 Intensive Care Unit beds at the start of the coronavirus crisis, and we all know that wasn’t nearly enough. But look at Kenya, a country of 50 million people with only 130 intensive care beds. Or Mali, with 19 million people but only 20 ventilators. These countries need to unleash massive spending to deal with the health and economic crisis, just as our own governments have. But with debt payments costing the most vulnerable of these countries as much as \$40 billion this year, they simply can’t do it unless this burden is lifted.*

*.....In this crisis, we are only as safe as the poorest countries in the world. Institutions like the IMF need to massively scale up their funding for debt cancellation to defeat this outbreak. The measures so far are a drop in the ocean.”* ■

### Case Study: Pakistan

Columbans in Pakistan have been involved in the Debt Campaign since the 1990s, along with campaigning on climate change and educating on *Laudato Si’*. Pakistan originally became highly indebted in the 1970s, when the government borrowed to cope with the impact of high oil prices. Ever since, the people have suffered from a large external debt. The response to this debt crisis has been to continuously obtain bailout loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). For 32 of the last 44 years, Pakistan has received loans from the IMF, one of the most sustained periods of lending to any country. However, Pakistan today continues to have a large external debt, inequality is entrenched, and the country has failed to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals.

**Links:**  
<https://jubileedebt.org.uk>  
<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk>



A 'Kindness Station' organised by Caritas in Manila, Philippines, to assist poor families during the pandemic.

## Reviewing our Understanding of Security

**Liam O'Callaghan SSC**

**An Irish Columban missionary in Pakistan describes how *Laudato Si'* has addressed the 'signs of the times' by focusing on the environment.**

Over the last four years the greater proportion of Columban JPIC work in Pakistan has focused on environmental issues. This is attempting to respond to the effects of the environmental crisis caused by climate change, which is reaching a chronic stage here.

According to *germanwatch.org Global Climate Risk Index 2020*, Pakistan is listed as the fifth most vulnerable country in the world to climate change. In the period 1999-2018, it experienced 152 extreme weather events – floods, heatwaves, air pollution etc. - leading directly to the deaths of 9,989 people. These are the signs of the times that mission has to respond to.

Across the Diocese of Hyderabad, we have held many seminars and workshops in schools and community groups. We have put emphasis on celebrating the Season of Creation across the diocese, by producing liturgical resources and practical suggestions for parish action. Each year, we are training environmental activists in three schools and two community groups; we have named them Mahool Dost (Friends of the Earth). The idea is to work in more depth with fewer people, so that they will in turn become active in their communities and become agents of change in their families and wider community. We journey with 50 students and three teachers in each school, and both of the 25-member community groups for a year, with training sessions on the current environmental issues and creating together practical events such as community seminars, tree plantation, celebrating international environment days.

We work from an interfaith perspective; translating the Islamic statement on climate change in 2015. Many school programmes and community events are interfaith – Muslim, Hindu, Christian. While interfaith work is not easy in Pakistan, working together to protect

'our common home' can quite easily bring people together and so help break down misunderstandings.

The inspiration and bedrock for this work is the ground-breaking 2015 Encyclical from Pope Francis *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*. The Columbans were instrumental in getting *Laudato Si'* translated into Urdu in October 2015, as well as an abridged version to be used in schools and parishes in 2016. The tone, substance and intended audience of *Laudato Si'* is quite different to any encyclical before; it is not just addressed to the Church only, but "I wish to address every person living on the planet...and enter into a dialogue with all people about our common home" (LS #3).

This is the first encyclical to specifically focus on the environment, but it is even more than that, as it links environmental concerns with issues of social justice and economic equality. Pope Francis, in no uncertain terms connects abuse of the environment with abuse of the poor. His key concept is 'integral ecology' - connecting care for the natural world with justice for the poor and most vulnerable.

With *Laudato Si'*, Care for Creation is now firmly established as one of the cornerstones of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). And all the main ideas which have dominated CST up to this point appear in *Laudato Si'*: - the common good, human dignity, subsidiarity, natural law, justice etc. Pope Francis has unapologetically set the agenda for years to come.

The encyclical sets about offering a new understanding of spirituality: when we destroy or pollute the environment, that is a sin (LS #8), the first time we have been taught this. It is a deeply challenging spirituality, which demands we live up to our spiritual responsibility to future generations and to the planet: "What kind of world do we want to



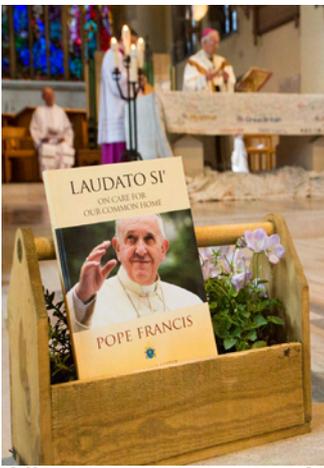
Fr Liam O'Callaghan

leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (LS #160). If we want to leave behind a better world then there is a need for profound changes to political, economic, cultural and social systems, as well as to our individual lifestyles, an "ecological conversion" (#217). Through *Laudato Si'* the language of faith enters the discussion – clearly, decisively and systematically. We are called to a new mysticism, a faith-filled, contemplative way of looking at creation with ever-deeper love. *Laudato Si'* is a clarion call to all people of good will to be part of this conversion experience.

The theme of change is central in *Laudato Si'* and the final chapter focuses on education, "a great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us" (#202). Unfortunately, in the Church, this focus on ecological education is minimal and there is much to be done. Unless we change the way we think and pray, we will not change the way we act.

The Covid-19 pandemic has paralysed life at a global level in a short period, and made us realise the interconnectedness and fragility of the world we live in. The next disaster looming on the horizon is climate change, the difference being that it is a slow burner. But the impact on the poor, like now, will be disproportionately high. Hopefully, the chaos generated by the pandemic will usher in a new global order with a paradigm shift in how we look at development and security. We need to use new and creative ways of building a greener, safer and more prosperous future for all. *Laudato Si'* offers us a model for how we might go about this task. ■

# The Teaching of *Laudato Si'*



Offertory symbol - *Laudato Si'*

## POOR ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. #25

## THREAT OF CONFLICT

It is foreseeable that, once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars, albeit under the guise of noble claims. War always does grave harm to the environment and to the cultural riches of peoples, risks which are magnified when one considers nuclear arms and biological weapons. #57



Peace vigil at London's Ministry of Defence

## TACKLING INDIFFERENCE AND SELFISHNESS

A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. #91

## GOD LOVES CREATION

The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence. #100

## ROOTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES

[Patriarch] Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. #9

## THROWAWAY CULTURE

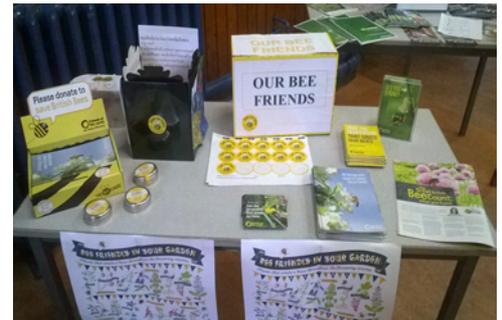
We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximising their efficient use, reusing and recycling them. A serious consideration of this issue would be one way of counteracting the throwaway culture which affects the entire planet. #22

## WATER

Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatise this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right. #30

## VALUING BIODIVERSITY

Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right. #33



'Bee' table at a J&P day in York

## GLOBAL INEQUALITY

The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet #48

## EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. #92



Creation workshop for children at St Columban's, Solihull

# Hearing “the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor”

## DIGNITY OF WORK

Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work. Yet the orientation of the economy has favoured a kind of technological progress in which the costs of production are reduced by laying off workers and replacing them with machines. This is yet another way in which we can end up working against ourselves. #128

## JUSTICE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences. #161

## GLOBAL DIALOGUE AND SOLIDARITY

What is needed, in effect, is an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of so-called “global commons”. #174



'Livesimply' school in Ealing, London

## SACRAMENTAL SIGNS

The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane. Water, oil, fire and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise. #235

## EUCHARIST

The Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love: “Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world”..... Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation. #236

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. #146



Indigenous people at Downing Street

## LIVING SIMPLY

The issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle. #206.

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING INCLUDES CREATION

All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education. It is my hope that our seminaries and houses of formation will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God’s world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment. #214

## CALL FOR ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. 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. #217



Prayers at the Vatican during the Amazonia Synod

## Our Common Home - Young People Act

**James Trewby**

*James is the Columban JPIC Education worker.*

“Change is coming, whether you like it or not”, Greta Thunberg warned the world and she helped usher in a new era of young people taking unprecedented action for our common home. What leads a young person to take decisive action? And how can we best walk alongside young people on this journey?

### Ecological Conversion

Some of the best days I’ve had working with young people have been in a community garden with missionary Sam Ewell - touching worms, planting things and chasing chickens. It’s messy, simple and joyful. I get to witness the gentle unfurling love a young person has for creation. Amongst the muddy fingers and the giggles in the fresh air, there is a humble appreciation of nature tenderly arising.

In moments like this there are tiny beginnings of ‘ecological conversion’. It is important for us to do what we can to facilitate opportunities like this, where young people can encounter nature, rather than just having a mediated experience in the virtual world. Over the past couple of years we have been running eco-retreats at St. Columbans in Solihull with school groups. Through collaboration with Ger Clarke, from the Irish Columban Region, we have developed a day for children which draws upon *Laudato Si’* and is topped and tailed by prayer and reflection. The retreat gives children a chance to explore creation in a hands-on way, through activities such as bark rubbing, a scavenger hunt, pond dipping (meeting newts!) and sketching. A highlight for the older children has been using our new electronic microscope – seeing the stings on a nettle and the grime on their own fingers provoked quite a reaction!

“Nature is filled with words of love” (*LS #225*), and as young people fall in love with creation, this love spills out into action.

A growing number of JPIC events have been led and organised by young people. Teenage Columban

Journalism competition 2019 winner Anna Marshall says, “there is a hunger in young people for doing good things”. Anna and her sister, Eleanor, have now organised two inspirational day conferences exploring Catholic Social Teaching and action on climate change.

### Insights from young people

We’ve just come to the end of our third ‘Columban Young Journalists’ Competition’ on the theme, ‘Tackling our Throwaway Culture’. We received incredibly insightful work from young people. For example, Kit Bell, the 2020 competition winner from All Saints Catholic School in Sheffield, wrote:

“When asked for his opinion on the matter, Pope Francis offered a unique take: that our careless attitude toward things we no longer need has spread past material possessions. The way we treat those on the edge of our society is all the proof we need to see that he is right - the elderly, left to fade into an undignified end; those with



Young people at a Birmingham climate march

disabilities, left to struggle until they can no longer cope; the homeless, left to scavenge for our cast-offs, as if we can offer nothing else. The invisibility of those we have no use for shows how much the consumer mindset has poisoned our humanity. We simply throw away people we think we don’t need, whilst keeping those who promote this toxic ideal.”

Kit ends her piece saying: “Indifference and selfishness are the only true drivers of this throwaway culture – so maybe it’s time for a change of heart.”

The young people asked themselves how they can make changes. Maureen Onwunali of St Paul’s in Milton Keynes submitted a powerful spoken-word poem for the competition which touched upon changing shopping habits: “Ordering next day delivery for a one day event... that fast fashion with fading fabric filling your closet with trends, that textile waste tailored to your taste”.

See our four winning articles and videos at: [www.columbans.co.uk](http://www.columbans.co.uk)

### Faith and action

“Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.” (*Laudato Si’ #13*)

Over the years I’ve attended many climate change marches and protests, but it feels like there’s something different in the air at the moment. The average age seems to be decreasing! There has been a growing interest and hunger from students to organise and make change. There is a lively optimism at the heart of it and these protests

become powerful formative experiences for other young people to come along and catch fire.

It has been my great privilege to lead retreat days for young people that include taking part in climate strikes. A day in Birmingham included joining the youth climate strike and a powerful online conversation with an activist in the Philippines. A student said afterwards:

“When we interviewed Joanna Sustento on our trip to Birmingham it made the effects of climate change seem so real and drove home that the effects of climate change are happening now and we must act. Joanna’s story, her bravery, her drive is so powerful that out of something so tragic she is able to fight for change.” – Aoife

### I feel encouraged to...

- Give young people opportunities to fall in love with creation and creator.
- Listen to them, creating space for their voices.
- Walk with them, march with them, empower them to make change. ■

## Are we really Stewards of the Earth?

**Evelyn James**

***Evelyn, a pupil of St Mark's School In Hounslow, was a winner in the 2020 Columban Journalism Competition.***

We are now living in a world where many people are exploiting the Earth through ignorance, without paying any attention to their actions. Are we really stewards of the Earth or destroyers? - one may ask.

The throwaway society we live in has been strongly influenced by consumerism. Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* urged that every living person on this planet should pay serious attention to environmental issues facing humanity. The Pope reprimanded that our home is beginning to look "more and more like an immense pile of filth" due to our consumerist mind-set, since we frequently discard items without any thought process. The Book of Genesis states that God created us to be stewards of the Earth and gave us responsibility to care for our planet and all species. Earth is a gift from God for all the world to share and it's our duty to protect it for future generations. However, we are in the process of completely destroying our 'common home' as we carelessly strip it of its resources. Even when we see the drastic effects of climate change, deforestation and many more concerns, some of us just can't seem to understand the seriousness of our actions, nor understand that it is the underprivileged communities that are suffering the most.

Pope Francis highlighted that today's 'throwaway culture' is also reflected in our continual waste of food, stating that "food that is thrown away might as well have been stolen from the table of the poor, the hungry". There are one billion people underfed, two billion overfed and, staggeringly, we still waste a third of all food produced. In the UK alone, 8.4 million people are struggling to afford to eat which is equivalent to the entire population of London. This tells us that food waste is not only affecting the world's poorest countries, but also highly developed regions like the UK. In the UK alone we throw away a staggering 460,000 tonnes of bread a year - that's the equivalent of 177

million slices a week, according to a Tearfund paper on 'Waste'. This waste could be tackled if only we could be more mindful of how much we buy, and make sure we actually use it rather than wasting it. If food waste were a country, it would be the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, behind the US and China. Surely, this puts things into context for us, especially the amount of food we are unnecessarily wasting. Donating some of that extra food to your local food bank, rather than wasting, would be a way to demonstrate stewardship, as it is our duty to feed people in need.

We humans have also developed a habit of always fitting in with the latest trends and, seemingly, we enjoy buying new items on a daily basis. Items of clothing can go out of fashion within a matter of weeks, leaving garments hibernating in our wardrobes for years until we just throw them out. The amount of energy put into creating these items is wasted, as well as the fossil fuels used to create that energy. All that is left is an unreasonable amount of greenhouse gases and the calamity of climate change.

Climate change negatively affects us all, but the poorest communities are the most vulnerable. By 2030 an estimated 120 million could be pushed into poverty and an estimated 600 million more people in Africa could face malnutrition as agricultural systems break down due to climate change impacts, say statistics from Actionaid. But even after modern day activists like Greta Thunberg, David Attenborough and Chief Raoni Metuktire speak out like modern day prophets, we continue with our lavish lifestyles. We have become indifferent to the many who suffer in our world, caught up in our own lifestyles. By buying fewer new things we could reduce this scandal. We should be helping the poor out as we are all gifted with human dignity. This makes us all equal, as we are all made in the image and likeness of God (*Imago Dei*). As climate change attacks their



*Evelyn James*

dignity, due to our careless decisions, we are obliged to help our brothers and sisters living in poverty.

We take things for granted when actually there are many in the world that are less fortunate than us. It is about time we start being more thoughtful of them. But there is still hope for us! We can still be in control of our future and the future of our brothers and sisters.

As a practical step, we can all do something in our households to reduce our consumption of Earth's resources. We need to understand that even the smallest things can make a change. Donating some of your clothes to a local charity rather than sending them to a landfill, or turning the tap off when you brush your teeth will make a difference. We will be judged by God on our behaviour as stewards, so it is essential that we start making wiser decisions before time is up. It is important that we value and care for the environment because we only have one planet and we must conserve it. No matter who we are, each and every one of us can make change happen. We can all do our bit to help our planet as we take our steps on the path to true stewardship. We have to start making changes right now as these things affect not only us but also future generations. Many small changes can lead to a big change, with regard to our food, clothing and many more things. All of us need to work together and faster to end our throwaway culture. ■

## **Columban focus on the Amazon Synod and Biodiversity**

In October 2019, the bishops of the Amazon gathered in Rome to discern how people of faith can stand in solidarity with the exploited Earth and marginalised communities. While the Synod was about the Amazon, it was also a model for the entire world. On this webpage of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach in Washington you will find a series of Columban articles about the Synod and the Amazon: <https://columbancenter.org/Synod-on-Amazon-Model-for-World>  
A similar series is currently being produced by the Columbans internationally on **Biodiversity**.

## **Global Divestment Announcement**

A global divestment announcement will be made on 18 May 2020 by religious groups, organised by the Global Catholic Climate Movement, World Council of Churches, Green Anglicans, Operation Noah and GreenFaith. A commitment is made to divest from fossil fuel companies within a five-year timeframe. Religious groups are a key part of the divestment movement, representing 29% of institutions making divestment commitments. In January, the first two Catholic dioceses in England divested. 2020 must become the peak year of global greenhouse gas emissions, with a rapid decline in emissions through to 2030, if we are to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 °C. See: <https://brightnow.org.uk/>

## **Laudato Si' Centre**

The new *Laudato Si'* Centre at Wardley Hall, home of Bishop John Arnold of Salford, responds to the challenges of *Laudato Si'* by creating a space for practical action to build a sustainable world. Plans include a walled garden for vegetables, an outdoor classroom, chickens, use of recycled plastic, a forest school and a wildflower meadow. It is an ambitious multi-phase project that will take at least 3-5 years to fully realise. Salford Diocese, whose head is the lead bishop on environmental issues, hopes to be a flagship for effective action on climate change.

## **Columban Eco-centre popular**

A Columban eco-centre near Manila in the Philippines received 50,000

visitors last year. The Centre for Ecozoic Living and Learning (CELL) has a facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/centerforecozoic/>. See their preparations for an online *Laudato Si'* Week 16-24 May.

## **"Offering their lives in love"**

Lima Archdiocese in Peru issued a Holy Week video during the pandemic, reflecting on the heroism of health workers and others "offering their lives in love". It said that in the context of the virus "perhaps there will be no processions with carved images, but now you see Christ meeting you amid life". See Fr Ed O'Connell's projects with vulnerable communities in Lima at: <https://columbans.co.uk/no-work-no-money-peru-during-lockdown>

## **Positive attitude to migrants**

Columban Bob Mosher, of the Columban Mission Centre at the US/Mexico border, has been part of a Church lobby critical of the US government's deportation flights to Central America of migrants during the pandemic. "Can this be the United States, acting like a heartless 'rogue state'?" he said last month. "Let us never get used to such practices and policies, but work to eliminate them constantly. Let us address the root causes of forced migration, while reforming our byzantine immigration system and promoting a positive attitude towards migrating people in our country as of great benefit to our national life". Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso and 20 human-rights organisations also called for the release of migrants in detention who did not pose any threat to society, to prevent virus-spread in custodial facilities.

## **Call for a "contagion of charity"**

The president of Caritas Internationalis has thanked the Caritas network, the global confederation of 165 national Catholic relief and development agencies, for its work during the virus crisis. Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle said, "a pandemic spread of a virus must produce a pandemic contagion of charity". He added that, "we should wash our hands, but not the way Pilate did; we cannot wash our hands of our responsibility towards the poor, the elderly, the unemployed, the refugees, the homeless, the health

providers, indeed all people, creation and future generations". Cardinal Tagle praised parishes in his native Manila supporting poor communities through Community Caritas Kindness Stations. He also urged rich countries to write off the debt of poor countries struggling with the pandemic. "Could the coronavirus-19 crisis lead to a jubilee?" he asked. He lamented arms expenditure, and called for money to be released "for real security, education, housing and food".

## **Rio Tinto resistance online**

Rio Tinto's annual general meeting (AGM) on 8 April was held behind closed doors due to the pandemic. However, the London Mining Network held an online week of action in advance. Then on the day, when the company hosted a 90-minute investor engagement conference call, the Network livetweeted from the call and factchecked some of the answers that Rio Tinto gave. What the company says is often markedly different from the experience of communities on the ground. The British-Australian mining giant Rio Tinto has a reputation for not cleaning up its toxic mining mess – in places such as West Papua and Madagascar. <https://londonminingnetwork.org/2020/04/really-rio-tinto-resistance-goes-online/>

## **Catholic Peoples Weeks – 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

CPW's 75th Anniversary Icon looks to five saints for inspiration – strength from St Hilda of Whitby, courage from St Oscar Romero, faith from St Clare, compassion from St Francis and hope from Mother Julian of Norwich, who lived through the Black Death. Her most famous words are: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." The icon was commissioned from Hynning Monastery as a symbol of the Spirit of CPW at its gatherings. One of these was in February at Hinsley Hall in Leeds, on the theme of 'Prophetic Imagination', led by Ellen Teague and Fr Jim Fleming of the Columbans, with speaker David McLoughlin. CPW's 75th anniversary Day of Celebration will be on Saturday 15 August at St Cassian's, Kintbury. Full CPW programme at <https://catholicpeoplesweeks.org/>



# Climate Sunday

An ecumenical Climate Sunday programme is planned for September. Climate Sunday materials will be available for people to start making pledges and taking action from Sunday 6 September - at the beginning of the Season of Creation. The Climate Sunday website will be up soon and, in the meantime you can email interest to Climate Sunday Coordinator at [climatesunday@ctbi.org.uk](mailto:climatesunday@ctbi.org.uk)

## SEASON OF CREATION 'JUBILEE FOR THE EARTH'

From September 1 to October 4, Christians around the world celebrate the Season of Creation. During this season, we are encouraged to pray and engage in community events in order to deepen our relationship with our God, our neighbour and the Earth we share.

The Season of Creation begins on 1 September, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends on 4 October, the feast day of St Francis. Some of us pray, some of us do hands-on projects, some of us advocate.

The momentum continues long after the season ends through ongoing prayer, changes in lifestyle, and advocacy.

**During the Season of Creation, we live out our faith to care for creation.**  
<https://seasonofcreation.org/>

### Global healing

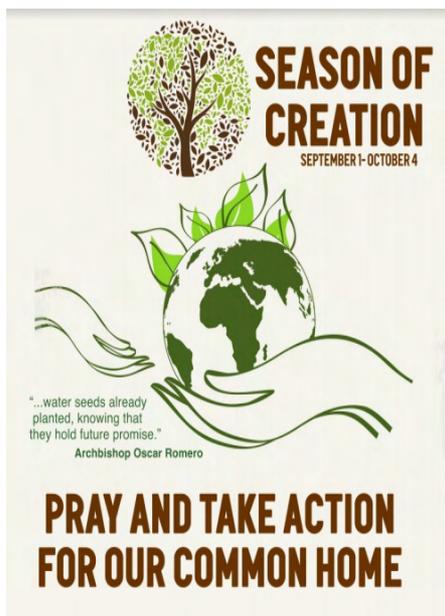
Global Healing is a film-based resource produced by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, to help us to respond to the damage being done to our planet – our common home. It's for parishes, groups and individuals and aims to inform, challenge and equip people to engage with Pope Francis' vital call to care for our common home.  
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/global-healing/>

### Season of Creation Sunday Liturgies

Columban Charles Rue has produced "A Catholic Season of Creation" resource, exploring the Sunday scripture readings to help us find the voice of the Earth as a voice of the Holy Spirit. <https://www.columban.org.au/our-work/peace-ecology-and-justice/eucharist-and-laudato-si/>

### Theology Resources

A comprehensive list of theology resources are available at:  
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/environment-theology-resources/>



## Laudato Si' Week

The week will be marked online: **16-23 May: Online trainings and workshops** will provide an opportunity for prayer and reflection together as we prepare to take action later in the year.

**24 May: A global Day of Prayer** to mark the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*.

<https://laudatosiweek.org/>

### NJPN Conference - '2020 Vision: Action for Life on Earth'

The 42<sup>nd</sup> annual conference of the National Justice and Peace Network is due to take place 17-19 July 2020 in Derbyshire. It celebrates the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*. Update at: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

### Education Workshops from the London Mining Network

The **PhoneCycle Game** is suitable for young people aged 14 and up. The workshop takes the form of a board game which encourages shared reading and informed discussion about the impacts of mobile phone production and disposal, and also what we can do to solve the ethical problems raised.

The **Life above the Coal** activity is suitable for children aged 10 upwards. It is based on the experiences of two communities in Colombia which have been resisting a mine that has supplied the UK with coal for over 30 years.

Both workshops are also suitable for adults of all ages. The Network can provide a speaker and/ or a filmshow or a combination of all three - ie speaker, workshop activity and film. Contact Kerima Mohideen at [www.londonminingnetwork.org](http://www.londonminingnetwork.org)

**See our Columban video -  
filmed in Dover on World  
Refugee Day 20 June 2019**  
[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=Fy95JZ68AKk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy95JZ68AKk)

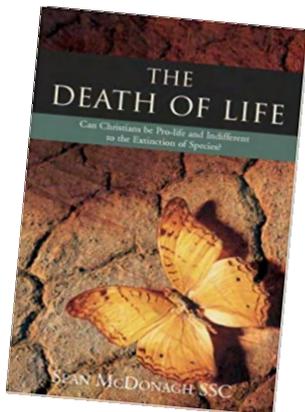
# Resources

## **On Care for Our Common Home, *Laudato Si'*: The Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Environment with Commentary by Sean McDonagh SSC**

A Columban proponent of ecological awareness provides an overview of the development of Catholic teaching on the environment, and offers a commentary on the Encyclical '*Laudato Si'*' by Pope Francis, the full text of which is given.  
ISBN-10: 1626981736

## **The Death of Life Sean McDonagh SSC**

This is a plea for action to save the tens of thousands of species under threat of extinction. The author considers the many habitats currently under threat of destruction, such as coral reefs and mangrove forests, as well as species threatened. He then looks at the position of the Church on these issues and especially the work of Fr Thomas Berry.  
ISBN-10: 1856074641



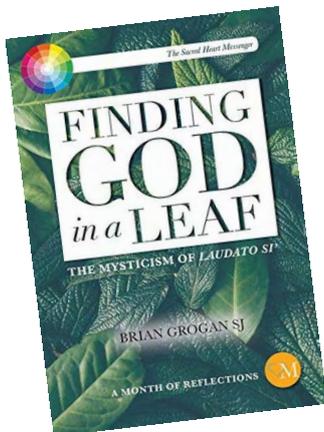
## **Climate Generation: Awakening to Our Children's Future Lorna Gold**

Dr Gold addresses the harsh reality of climate change but wraps the message in humanity and practical ways forward. She highlights stories of people who are doing amazing things to tackle the climate crisis.  
ISBN-13: 978-1847308412

## **Creation Walk: The Amazing Story of a Small Blue Planet Brian Grogan SJ**

Offers a unique presentation of the unfolding of our universe. It

interweaves the insights of contemporary science with Christian faith, and reveals the divine orchestration of the Creation Story in a dramatic, fresh and appealing way.  
ISBN-13: 9781788121200



## **Finding God in a Leaf: The Mysticism of *Laudato Si'* Brian Grogan SJ**

God, Pope Francis affirms, is present in nature, and will support us if we dedicate ourselves to the demanding task of caring for what he calls 'our common home.' Such commitment is needed today if our small and fragile planet is to be brought back to health. Brian Grogan brings the background of Ignatian spirituality and a lived appreciation of God's creation to this book. Read slowly each morning - it could give a focus for living the day in recognising God in all things, and the call of God to be a co-creator of his beautiful world each day.  
ISBN-10: 1788120043  
ISBN-13: 978-1788120043

## **Time to Act - Christians in Extinction Rebellion Jeremy Williams**

Christian Climate Action involves Christians committed to prayerful direct action and public witness in response to climate instability. There are short essays on the biblical and theological basis for Christian action and stories of people engaged in protests.  
ISBN-13: 9780281084463  
<https://christianclimateaction.org/>  
Jeremy Williams blog at: <https://earthbound.report/about/>

## **ON FIRE: The Burning Case for a Green New Deal Naomi Klein**

Naomi Klein's books have defined our era, chronicling the exploitation of people and the planet and demanding justice. 'On Fire' gathers her impassioned writing from the frontline of climate action, and pairs it with new material on the high stakes of what we choose to do next. ISBN-10: 1982129913

## **Climate Crisis: The Challenge to the Church David Rhodes**

Climate change is rapidly destroying God's creation. The Church could play a pivotal role in averting this catastrophe. This book points a way forward that could bring life and hope to the planet and the Church.  
ISBN- 9781838580810

## **Cut and run: How Britain's top two mining companies have wrecked ecosystems without being held to account London Mining Network**

The report considers the legacies of conflict and environmental destruction left by BHP and Rio Tinto in places such as Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. The toxic legacy remains as the governments do not have the means to clean up the mess. Download from <https://londonminingnetwork.org>

## **GREEN CHRISTIAN MONTHLY PRAYER GUIDE**

Subscribe: <https://greenchristian.org.uk/resources/prayer-guide/>  
Email Monthly - Have an email sent to you announcing when the monthly guide is online or  
Email Daily - Arrange to have emails sent for daily prayers/meditations

## **European Christian Environmental Network**

ECEN has an excellent resource section on its website [www.ecen.org](http://www.ecen.org). The Biodiversity section, for example, aims to promote nature conservation in churches and properties, and lobby for the protection of biodiversity.

## **VOCATION FOR JUSTICE**

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