

The Olive Branch comes out each year, around the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology. This edition will continue to draw out the implications of Pope Francis' famous encyclical, 'Laudato Si': on care for our common home', published in 2015.

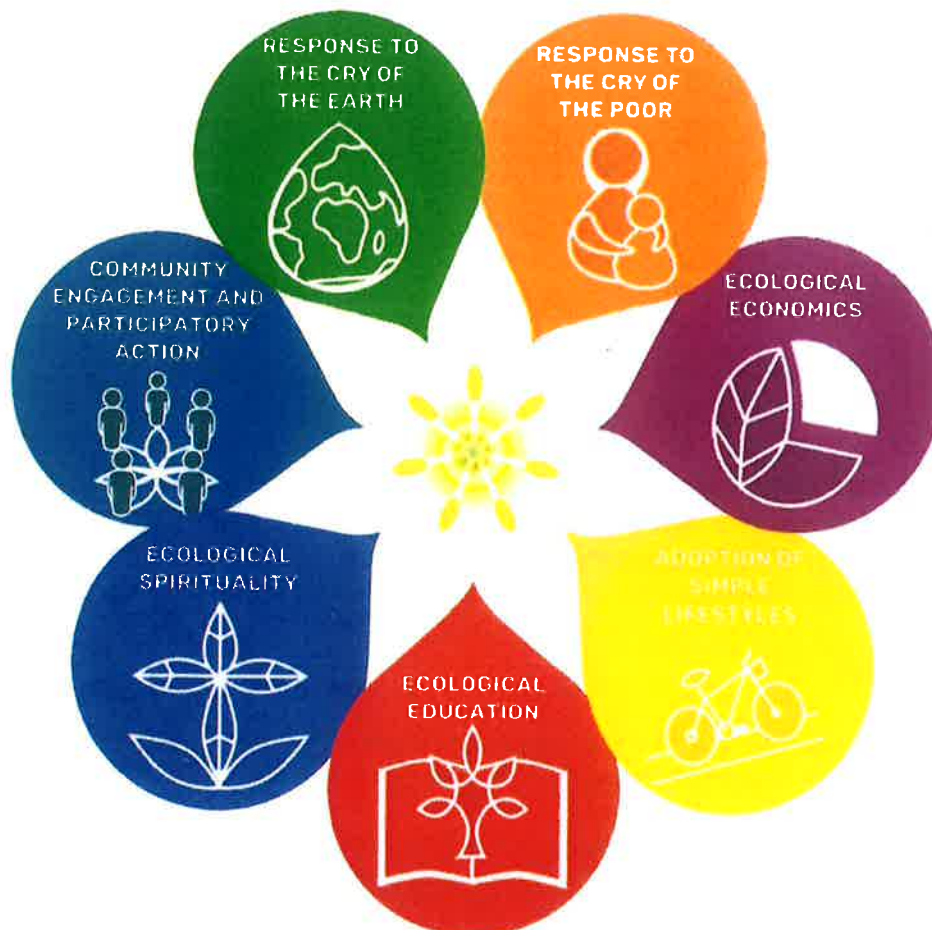
Introducing the Laudato Si' Action Platform

The encyclical has inspired an exciting global initiative called the 'Laudato Si' Action Platform'. It was commissioned by Pope Francis to engage Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools, universities, hospitals, religious orders – and families - in drafting practical plans for lifestyles of ecological integrity for a sustainable future.

It was launched on 14 November, 2021, and will run for seven years. The first year is a year of preparation, followed by five years of action, followed by a final sabbatical year of praise and thanksgiving to God.

And action is urgently needed. Climate scientists are becoming ever more unequivocal that climate change is a major driver of the unprecedented floods, droughts, forest fires and super-storms being experienced in recent times. Plastic pollution and overfishing are destroying life in our oceans. Excess and often illegal logging is destroying habitats for our unique wildlife.

Our Creator called the human family to be the steward of creation, but we have neglected that call. Our hotter, increasingly polluted planet is disrupting the world's natural balance, particularly the climate, and creating more and more suffering. The most vulnerable suffer above all.



Seven Goals of the Laudato Si' Action Platform

At this kairos moment, are we responding to the call for healing in our relationships with God, our neighbours, and the Earth itself? Through the 'Laudato Si' Action Platform, Catholics are being challenged to walk the 'path to renewal' together (LS 202).

There are seven goals (areas of focus):

1. Response to the Cry of the Earth
2. Response to the Cry of the Poor
3. Ecological economics
4. Adoption of simple lifestyles
5. Ecological education
6. Ecological spirituality
7. Emphasis on community involvement and participatory action.

Challenge for families

Families are challenged to consider questions such as:

- Could we use our car less and avoid plane travel?
- Could we walk or use public transport more?
- Are we using clean energy?
- Are people making the products we buy receiving a fair wage?
- Is the money in our bank or super fund being invested sustainably?
- Are we finding alternatives to single-use plastic products?



Vincci Lee & Sr Elizabeth Young

Challenge for the parish

Over the years, OLF has taken significant steps towards energy efficiency and there are solar panels on the presbytery roof. However, there's room for improvement, if we were willing.

It would be great to see ecological concerns as themes in our worship. How much of the energy used by the parish is clean energy and how much comes from burning fossil fuels? Could the parish reduce waste, or use more energy efficient appliances and vehicles? Could the parish join faith-based advocacy efforts for more robust climate action at a government level, and an end to deforestation?

Developing action plans

There are lots of resources being offered to approach these challenges systematically and as communities, but the most important thing is to make a start.

See the resources recommended on the Bishops' statement 'Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor' website: <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2021/09/24/social-justice-statement-2021-22/>

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