



# Laudato si'

## *On Care for Our Common Home*

### Activities with Children for a Better World

In his encyclical letter, *Laudato si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis urges us to be aware of the environment and some of the problems faced by humans on our common home, the Earth. Numerous challenges are raised in the encyclical, and finding workable solutions can seem difficult to achieve. Yet there are many practical things that can be done to raise awareness of the problems and begin to work on solutions. Here are a few ideas that can be used in a classroom setting or with children in the home.

## Water

Pope Francis talks about the lack of quality water available to the poor (paragraphs 29-31). Although most people in the United States have ready access to clean water, some regions of the country have experienced the problem of drought in recent years. The study of water is a project that could include many disciplines or cross-curricular opportunities.

- **Science:** study the process for purification of water and the modern technology that can make clean drinking water available to all. Research the new technology of tablets that can be mixed with any water, and the water will become pure to drink.
- **Social Studies:** learn about the nations and countries that struggle to have pure, fresh, drinking water for their people. Discover the root causes of these problems.
- **History:** learn about the company that provides water in your city or area. Often this is a municipal water company that was started because there was no safe water available for its citizens.
- **Field trip:** visit a local water purification system plant.
- **Religion:** based on Pope Francis' challenge to us, brainstorm actions that might be taken to address shortages of water and open access to clean and safe water. Look into ways that your class might be able to help provide safe drinking water for a village that does not have clean water now. For example, there are organizations where a group may donate funds to provide a simple water purification system.



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## Endangered Animals

In paragraphs 32-42 of *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis talks about the loss of biodiversity, saying, "Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence ...." (33). The study of endangered animals is another project that can incorporate many disciplines.

- **Science:** research and report on various animal species that are becoming extinct. Focus on the impact this will have on the environment. Formulate responses to the question of what will happen if these animals are no longer on the planet.
  - ❖ **Create a zoo** of stuffed animals that would represent these endangered species. A visual can have a great impact when we see the large number of animal species that may soon be extinct.
  - ❖ **Invite a local zoo educational team** or veterinarian to provide a presentation on endangered species, and the impact this is having on the Earth.
- **Religion:** brainstorm practical actions that can be taken to address the problem of endangered animals. The Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club, the Heifer Project, and the World Wildlife Fund are a few of the national organizations that provide practical ways to help save endangered species.





## Recycle

Many of the problems that we face are “closely linked to a throwaway culture” (22). This is one area that people are already aware of, and many families regularly recycle. But there is still more that can be done.

- **Language Arts:** remind your class about the slogan, “reduce, reuse, recycle.” Invite them to find ways to remind your local community about the slogan and practical ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Many people recycle paper and other plastic products. Some municipal areas even have curbside collection, recycling of household items. Develop a list of ideas that could be distributed to the other children in your school or religious education classes, families, and parishioners.
  - ❖ **Encourage** people to recycle larger items, computers and electronic devices, metal appliances, and so on. Find and list places in your area where people can recycle. Be sure to add this to your list of ideas to share with others in the local community.
- **Science:** recycle clothes by sending them to a re-sale store or giving them to a clothing drive. Remember that “unwearable” clothing can also be recycled — the cloth and material can be turned into other items.
  - ❖ **Research and report** on what happens to products that are recycled. What are some of the “second lives” of recycled paper, plastic, metal, and cloth?
- **Field trip:** visit a recycling center or have a presentation on recycling.
- **Religion:** divide the class into small groups and have them discuss why reducing, reusing, and recycling help to address the concern about being a throwaway culture. Ask each group to report on their discussion.