



Passion of the Earth Wisdom of the Cross

Program Introduction and Overview

A Six-Session Program of Formation and Action
for the Passionist Family
to Engage *Laudato Si'*

Caring for God's Creation
Embracing Gospel Justice
Renewing the Passionist Charism

*"The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change." – Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (13)*



Keeping Alive the Memory of the Passion in the 21st Century



The Worldwide Passionist Family • Engaging Laudato Si'

“Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the Earth itself.” – Pope Francis, Laudato Si’ (66)

“In the light of the concern for the environmental crisis of our time and inspired by the Encyclical “Laudato Si’” by Pope Francis, the General Chapter recommends that all the entities of the Congregation evaluate how best to respond to this concern, and commit themselves to assuming concrete action steps in this respect.”



MESSAGE OF SUPERIOR GENERAL

In response to the call from our 47th General Chapter, with hopeful trust in your collaboration and cooperation, I am pleased to introduce you to the program: **Passion of the Earth, Wisdom of the Cross**, which is addressed to the entire Passionist family.

The goal of the program is *ecological and evangelical conversion* inspired by our shared contemplative engagement with **Laudato Si’** in the light of our Passionist charism. We desire to listen and hear the *cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor*, and to find concrete ways to act in favor of justice, solidarity and peace.

I acknowledge with appreciation the Passionist Solidarity Network in Louisville, Kentucky (USA) who was commissioned to design and prepare this program.

It is my sincere hope that you will engage with this program within this Jubilee Year with the theme: **Renewing our Mission – Gratitude, Prophecy, Hope.**

Fraternally,

Joachim Rego, C.P.



The Earth is our common home. It is holy ground.

From the beginning, God declared it very good.

Today there is a growing awareness that God’s creation is being damaged and its resources are not fairly shared.

“God destined the earth and all it contains for all people and all nations so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity.”

– Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*

Passion of the Earth, Wisdom of the Cross is a six-session program of formation and action for the Passionist family to engage Laudato Si’. It provides information, resources, and practical tools for responding to Pope Francis’ urgent appeal “to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care” (LS 210) for our common home.

Caring for God’s Creation • Embracing Gospel Justice Renewing the Passionist Charism in the Spirituality of Laudato Si’

This program is designed to be a transformational process for the worldwide Passionist family to respond with collaboration, creativity, and conviction to Pope Francis’ call to heed “the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.” It is a call to conversion so that we might find new and relevant ways of keeping alive the memory of the Passion in the 21st century by applying the message and values expressed in Laudato Si’ at all levels of the congregation – individuals, local communities, ministry sites, provinces, and generalate.

The six sessions align with the six chapters of Laudato Si’. Each session includes information to help participants: (1) understand and embrace the central themes of each chapter, (2) become familiar with the significant environmental and social issues addressed in the encyclical, (3) create and structure lively community dialogue, and (4) consider practical and concrete options for taking action to live out the directives of Laudato Si’.



Responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor is an essential part of faith for those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus today.

“I urgently appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.”

– **Pope Francis, May 2015, upon the promulgation of Laudato Si’**





Passionists Implementing a LS Action Platform

In May 2020, Pope Francis put forth a call for religious orders to embark on a seven year journey toward implementing a Laudato Si' integral ecology action plan measured by seven goals. [Click here](#) to learn more.

1. Responding to the Cry of the Earth
2. Responding to the Cry of the Poor
3. Building Ecological Economies – ethical consumption and investments
4. Adopting Simple Lifestyles – sobriety in use of Earth's resources and energy
5. Creating Ecological Education – ongoing formation
6. Recovering Ecological Spirituality – recover a religious vision of God's creation
7. Promoting Community Action and Advocacy



Passion of the Earth

Our Sister Earth is Suffering

Laudato Si', Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical "On Care for Our Common Home," is a heartfelt, passionate, and stirring eloquent

plea to wake up before it is too late. If Pope Leo XIII inaugurated Catholic social teaching in 1891 with *Rerum Novarum* to address the crisis facing workers in the face of industrialization and the cruelties of laissez-faire capitalism; and if Pope John XXIII made an especially urgent contribution in 1963 with *Pacem in Terris*, truly a gift of hope to a world pushed to the brink of nuclear war; with *Laudato Si'* Francis adds a vitally important chapter to this tradition because in the twenty-first century the world faces an unparalleled crisis, one we can no longer afford to deny or ignore.

The crisis is this: God's good creation, a stunningly beautiful gift that was meant to be revered, respected, and enjoyed by the human beings to whom God entrusted it, is instead being destroyed by us. Earth is suffering because we exploit and abuse what we ought to love and protect. Francis, like an Old Testament prophet, proclaims: "This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her" (LS 2). Since *Laudato Si'* was issued, wildfires of apocalyptic proportions in the Amazon and western United States, glaciers melting at alarming rates, yearly record-breaking temperatures, and increasing loss of biodiversity attest that this suffering has only grown worse.

The problem is that we see ourselves as "lords and masters" of our "sister" Earth, "entitled to plunder her at will" (LS 2), rather than people called by God to cherish and care for a gift. Thus, *Laudato Si'* constitutes a resounding call to conversion that demands nothing less than a fundamental reorientation of our lives through ongoing transformation of our attitudes, values, desires, and behavior. That conversion will be complete only when we are able to see the world not as "a problem to be solved" but as "a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise" (LS 12).



Wisdom of the Cross

The Passionist Charism

In addressing *Laudato Si'* to "every person living on this planet" (LS 3), Pope Francis invites men and women from every corner of the globe to join him in responding to "the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face" (LS 15). It is the challenge of relentless environmental degradation, a pervasive disregard for the natural world that imperils the existence of all creatures and the future possibility of life at all.

We Passionists should be especially equipped – and genuinely eager – to respond to Francis' invitation because the Passionist charism resonates deeply with the vision, principles, and fundamental concerns of *Laudato Si'*. Like Francis, who sees the searing reality of suffering – both human and environmental – as a summons to embrace a more authentic and truly human way of life marked by justice, particularly to the poor, St. Paul of the Cross, "who saw "the name of Jesus written on the foreheads of the poor"" (Const. 72), calls his followers "to make our lives and our apostolate an authentic and credible witness on behalf of justice and human dignity." Indeed, our Constitutions state: "Accordingly, our life-style must stand out as a prophetic condemnation of the injustices among which we live; it should be a continual witness against the abuses of a consumer society" (72).

If Passionists are "to preach the Word of the Cross in season and out of season" (Const. 1), we must discern what this requires in light of the environmental crisis that Francis examines in *Laudato Si'*. Every Passionist promises "to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Christ" (Const. 6). What does this ask of us when we realize that Christ's passion continues not only in the sufferings of human beings, but in the sufferings of the whole of creation? *Laudato Si'* is an opportunity – and a calling – to contemplate what it means to "preach Christ crucified" in today's world. If we "want our journey through life to proclaim that hope to all" (Const. 8), we must answer that call.



Program Structure – Six Sessions

The six sessions of this program align with the six chapters of Laudato Si'. Each of the six sessions includes five segments to help Passionists engage the encyclical and respond to Pope Francis' call to implement a Laudato Si' action platform (see page 2).

Part 1: Education – EMBRACE THE MESSAGE

Understand and gain insight into a central theme of each chapter of Laudato Si'.

Part 2: Motivation – CONSIDER THE ISSUES

Become familiar with and sensitized to the significant environmental and social issues addressed in the encyclical.

Part 3: Discussion – ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE

Create and structure lively community conversations to engage in ecological conversion and systemic change.

Part 4: Respond – TAKE ACTION

Consider practical and concrete choices for taking action to live out the directives of Laudato Si'.

Part 5: Resources – LEARN MORE

Access additional information on the theme and action steps of each session.



SESSION 1

Waking Up and Paying Attention

Embrace the Message: Understand What is Happening to Our Common Home

Consider the Issues: Worldwide Water Resources – toxicity and shortage

Take Action: Water Usage – consider ways we can conserve and protect the gift of water

SESSION 4

Recovering a Sense of Human Kinship with the Natural World and All Creatures

Embrace the Message: Awaken to the Universe Story and the Narrative of Interconnectedness

Consider the Issues: Pollution, Waste, Throwaway Culture

Take Action: Energy Transition – consider ways to use more clean energy and to consume energy more efficiently

SESSION 2

Honoring God's Revelation in the Natural World

Embrace the Message: Recover an Ecological Spirituality and Recognize the Universe as a Sacred Endowment

Consider the Issues: Loss of Biodiversity and Consumerism

Take Action: Habits of Consumption – consider choices made when purchasing, disposing of waste, and sustainable use of our lands and properties

SESSION 5

Responding to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor

Embrace the Message: Become a Community of Compassion and Engender an Integral Ecology

Consider the Issues: Climate Change

Take Action: Transportation Choices – consider transportation choices and ways to reduce carbon emissions

SESSION 3

Reconsidering the Human Relationship to the Natural World

Embrace the Message: Consider a Holistic Alternative to the Technocratic Paradigm

Consider the Issues: Hunger and Food Insecurity

Take Action: Food Choices – consider buying and eating food as a moral choice and act

SESSION 6

Engaging in the Great Work

Embrace the Message: Commit to a Path of Renewal with Institutional, Systemic, and Lifestyle Changes

Consider the Issues: Poverty and Global Inequity

Take Action: Generosity and Solidarity – explore new ways of opening our hearts and sharing our resources with others