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)
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)
Laudato Si’, Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical “On Care for Our Common Home,” is a heartfelt, passionate, and stirringly 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).

If Passionists are “to preach the Word of the Cross in season and out of season” (Constit. 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” (Constit. 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” (Constit. 8), we must answer that call.

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

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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’” (Constit. 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).

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Passion of the Earth, Wisdom of the Cross

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 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 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 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 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 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