

World Environment Day 2019 Video Message

Pope Francis, in the spirit of the great St. Francis of Assisi, opened his thought-provoking encyclical letter on the care of our environment with the Italian words, “LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”. These words resonate something of the wonder of creation and the beauty of what God has given us, as we live on the earth that has been gifted to us.

Last April the Australian bishops joined the bishops of Oceania to discuss the pressing realities of climate change. Our neighbouring bishops from the Pacific islands spoke of the grave problems they face through rising sea levels. Families will lose home and income through this growing environmental issue.

Added to this we are seeing the evidence of serious damage to ecosystems here in Australia and around the world: coral bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef, fish dying in the Murray Darling, and the serious issues that are arising from tracts of rainforests being cleared in our country.

A recent scientific report drawing on 15,000 references warned that one million plant and animal species are threatened with extinction within decades and that it will take a “transformative change” to halt lifeforms from going extinct.

In the light of these many situations, Pope Francis responded to these worrying developments with his encyclical, *Laudato Si’ - On Care for Our Common Home*. It’s a challenging and insightful reflection on our responsibility to look after God’s Creation, a task which is an integral part of being human.

Archbishop Coleridge responded to the Pope’s challenge by agreeing to the formation of a Living Laudato Si’ Steering Group. The steering group has representatives from every segment of the Archdiocese. Its task, in short, is to engage the whole of the Archdiocese so that we all deepen our commitment to care for our common home as an essential part of our mission.

The Steering Group discerned to do three things:

- First, to collect and develop a range of resources to help parishes, schools and agencies that will go on the Archdiocesan website;
- Second, to develop a formal Archdiocesan Laudato Si’ Plan so that each school and agency can live Laudato Si’;
- Third, to celebrate the Season of Creation beginning on the 1st of September with the World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation, and concluding on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, October 4th.

You'll hear more about the first two later, but I want to focus now on the last task in particular.

We invite every parish, school and agency within the Archdiocese of Brisbane to join with us in marking the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on the first day of September and the Season of Creation throughout that month.

Archbishop Coleridge invites you to a special Mass for Creation in the Cathedral at noon on Sunday the first of September and afterwards to enjoy a range of activities that will be happening in the Cathedral Precinct. You are all invited to join with us for these celebrations.

But this is not meant to be just something for a select group of Catholics in the centre of Brisbane. We hope that all Catholics in schools from Maryborough to Boonah, parishes from Gatton to Beaudesert and Centacare offices from Burleigh Heads to Kingaroy will be involved. We hope you can include prayers for Care of Creation in your parish Masses on Sunday September 1 and that local events and activities can be organised throughout the Season of Creation.

We'd love to hear from your parish and school about what you are already doing to care for our common home, the earth. If you have the capacity, we'd love you to send us a short video of what you are doing.

We will be sending you information and resources soon to help you to participate in this new phase of our commitment to caring for creation and living out our mission.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis speaks about the urgent need for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of the planet.

For Creation to be, it takes YOU and ME as we live *Laudato Si'*.