

*Laudato Si'*  
**CHAMPIONS**

**Teaching Guidance**

Issued by the Guardians of  
Creation Project  
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St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London



Laudato Si' Centre

DIOCESE OF  SALFORD

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# Welcome!

Welcome to the Laudato Si' Champions teaching guide. Laudato Si' Champions aims to empower student leaders to care for our common home.

Whether you need a quick lesson plan on Pope Francis' Laudato Si' or want to transform your school's approach to sustainability, this toolkit is here to help.

## What is Laudato Si' Champions?

Laudato Si' Champions is a toolkit designed to support Catholic teachers. It offers adaptable resources for engaging young people in climate change and its related topics.

These lesson plans support students in taking ecological action in their school community. Rooted in faith and student leadership, the toolkit supports your school's sustainability journey.

## Objectives:

In using this toolkit, young people will:

- **Understand** the key ideas explored in Pope Francis' encyclical letter on the environment, Laudato Si', including stewardship and integral ecology
- **Discern** their individual and collective responsibility to care for our common home
- **Respond** to Laudato Si' by actioning projects that answer the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor in their school's community
- **Celebrate** the class's success together in peer-to-peer presentations

## Target Group

**Age group:** Key Stage 3 (Ages 11-14)

**Location:** Classroom, after-school club, or community group

**Maximum time:** Six 1-hour sessions



# Why use Laudato Si' Champions?

In Laudato Si', Pope Francis says that we face a 'great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge'. Young people care deeply about the Earth, and educators have an important role in nurturing that passion.

Yet, research from the Guardians of Creation project found that 67% of Key Stage 3 students had not heard of Laudato Si'. Most young people reported no (35%) or some (39%) understanding of the Catholic Church's teaching on climate change.

How can our young people help grow a sustainable future if they have never heard the cry of the Earth?

The present challenge of an ecological education is new in the Catholic Church's history. Luckily, the Church has a long tradition of teachings and thinking to help answer these arising questions. That's where the Champions toolkit comes in.

After engaging with the toolkit, survey data showed that 94% of students had heard of Laudato Si'. Plus, most felt they had a good (55%) understanding of Catholic teachings on the topic. Their confidence in understanding climate change also increased from 44% to 80%.

“

"It's very exciting, very practical. It looks as though the students have come up with some very good ideas, and the toolkit helps put those ideas into action, which is excellent. And that it should be Key Stage 3 is particularly important."

- Bishop John Arnold, Diocese of Salford

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The Champions toolkit gives students autonomy to take action inspired by the teachings collected in Laudato Si'. In doing so, it encourages young people to care for creation beyond their time in the classroom.

*Working with primary students?* ✨

Check out [Clare Campbell's Be the Change](#).

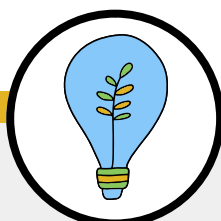
*Working with sixth-form students?*

Check out the [ECG's Sixth Form syllabus](#).



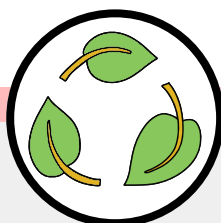
# Teaching Strategy

The toolkit combines several approaches to engage your students in promoting student leadership. It has flexibility in mind, allowing it to fit into your existing curriculum. But the ecological crisis needs some out-of-the-box thinking. So try something new in your classroom with the Champions toolkit!



## Asking questions

Every session of the Champions toolkit is framed by a big-picture question, encouraging students to engage in critical thinking and find answers for themselves. The toolkit is not only about meeting learning outcomes. It encourages students to discern how they can become agents of change.



## Making projects

Group work and projects are a great way to encourage student autonomy and agency. Using the toolkit's structure, young people identify a problem in school and find a solution in creative ways. Developing these inventive skill sets is part of what makes a sustainability champion.



## Working together

Every single subject in school has something to offer in addressing climate change. Pope Francis reminds us that everyone from scientists to artists is needed to help the Earth. While the Champions toolkit is designed to be hosted in RE, teachers could work with other subjects, chaplaincy groups or eco clubs. Why not involve the site staff and include every part of school life?

# Session Overview

While designed as six individual sessions, work with the time available. Try three longer sessions in a double lesson or twelve shorter ones at lunchtime. Swap sessions around. Spend longer on some activities than others. Do whatever works for you and your students. Let's take a closer look at the session plans within the toolkit...

Understand

## Session 1: How do we see our relationship with the Earth?

- Understand what humans are doing to the Earth
- Discern the differences between dominion and stewardship
- Respond to our relationship with the Earth

## Session 2: How do we impact the Earth and its people?

- Understand integral ecology
- Discern the links between the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor
- Respond with our mission to build a sustainable future

Discern

## Session 3: How can we act with love towards our common home?

- Understand the seven Catholic virtues
- Discern how we can develop ecological virtues
- Respond with what actions we can take in our school's community

Respond

## Session 4: How can we make a difference?

- Understand the Catholic church's teaching on sustainability as we recap Laudato Si'
- Discern what Laudato Si' means to me
- Respond with the progress of our projects as we live Laudato Si'

## Session 5: How can we keep making a difference?

- Understand the role of faith in addressing climate change
- Discern what an ecological school could look like
- Respond with the progress of our projects as we live Laudato Si'

Celebrate

## Session 6: How do we live as Laudato Si' Champions?

- Celebrate our success in short presentations as we bring our projects to a close
- Respond with where our ecological journey as Laudato Si' Champions will go next

# Session 1

## How do we see our relationship with the Earth?

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis starts by exploring the problems faced by the ecological crisis. This session does the same thing! It begins by exploring what's happening to the Earth. Students can reflect on their relationship with the Earth with the key terms stewardship and dominion.

20  
min

### *Activity: What happened when we all stopped*

Watch a short animated poem about the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on nature and respond to the discussion questions.

10  
min

### *Latest climate science*

Explore what scientists have to say about the environmental impact of the pandemic and the Earth's "tipping points".

10  
min

### *Introducing Laudato Si'*

Learn about the message of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and the difference between dominion and stewardship.

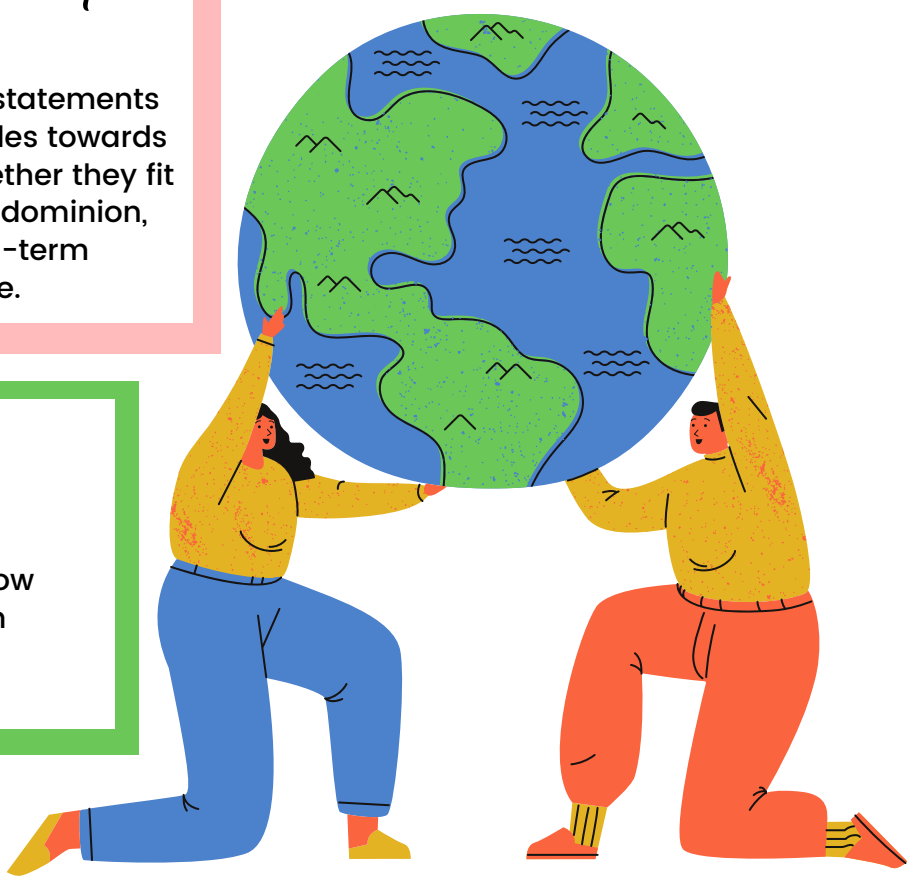
20  
min

### *Activity: Stewardship or Dominion?*

Ask students to read statements about different attitudes towards the Earth. Identify whether they fit under stewardship or dominion, and consider the long-term impact of that attitude.

### *Homework: Your last encounter with nature*

At home, students can reflect on how they acted when they spent time in nature. Would they change their actions next time?



# Session 2

## How do we impact the Earth and its people?

Now that students know what Laudato Si' is, it's time to dive deeper into its message. This session focuses on integral ecology and the collective impact of our choices. It connects social justice and ecology, considering our personal commitments to care for our common home.

Teachers may wish to issue a content warning for discussing social justice issues. Topics such as racism and sexism within climate change are often challenging. How students interact with these topics will be different for every group.



### *Activity: Eco-choices*

Ask students to think about the environmental impact of their daily activities. How can they reduce their environmental impact?



### *Think Global, Act Local*

Explore the collective impact of those daily actions using the example of a daily shower.



### *Integral Ecology*

Learn the key term "integral ecology" from Laudato Si' to understand the connections between humans and nature.



### *Go further: Which choices?* [Optional exercise]

Students can revisit their eco-choices and ask whether those choices are accessible to everyone.



### *The cry of the poor* [Optional exercise]

Discuss how climate change does not impact everyone equally using climate justice statistics.

### *Homework: Mission possible*

Develop personal mission statements about each student's commitment to caring for our common home. This reflective exercise is a chance to get creative and for students to express the issues that matter to them.



# Session 3

## How can we act with love towards our common home?

In understanding climate change in the context of Catholic teachings, it's time to start putting our ideas into action. Students can consider what habits (or virtues) are helpful to them in their mission statements. In groups of 2-5, the students begin planning their projects, inspired by Laudato Si'.



### *What is a virtue?*

Explore how some habits can help our sustainable living, which we call virtues. Some habits make caring for our common home challenging, and we call these vices.



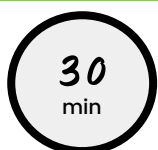
### *Activity: Virtues and Vices*

Choose which habits and qualities will help us live more sustainably and which make it difficult.



### *Go further: Ecological virtues* [Optional exercise]

Understand that the Catholic Church has seven key virtues. Pope Francis encourages us to practise these virtues to care for our common home.

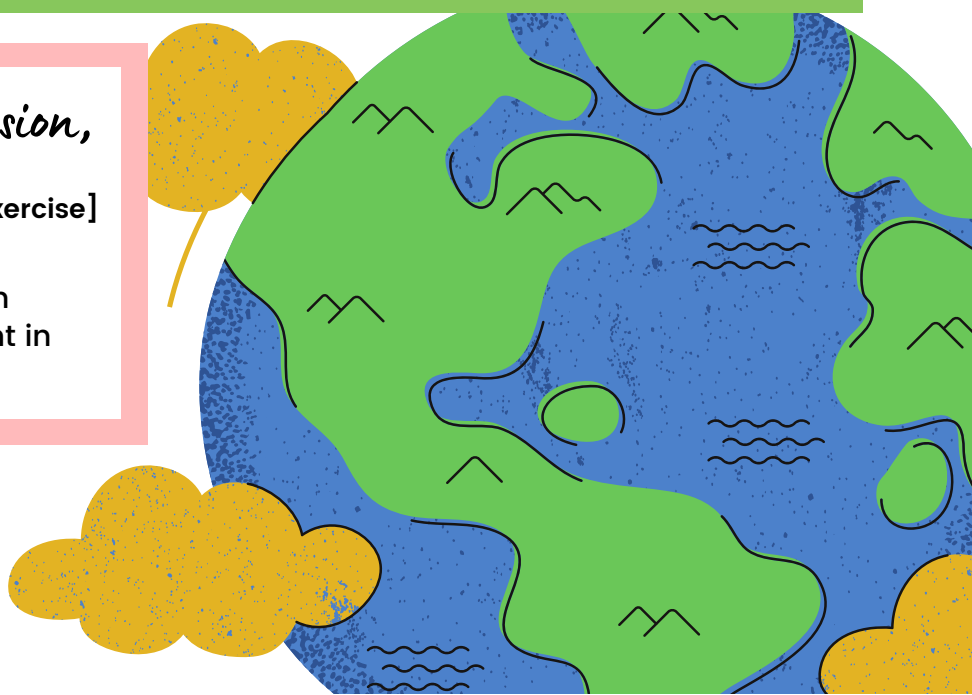


### *Activity: Planning your project*

Inspired by their mission statements and Laudato Si', students brainstorm and plan projects that care for our common home.

### *Homework: Your Mission, your virtues* [Optional exercise]

Students can reflect on which Catholic virtues are important in their mission statements.



# Session 4

*Top tip!*

Check out the teacher's notes in each session's PowerPoint slides.

## How can we make a difference?

By this session, students will start to take off with ideas. The toolkit's materials are here to help structure this group planning process. Allow the students to lead the direction of this session, offering support for their ideas where needed.

15  
min

### *Activity: Recapping Laudato Si'*

Watch the CAFOD Laudato Si' animation to recap the key ideas students learnt in the earlier sessions. Ask students to respond using the discussion questions.

45  
min

### *Activity: Project progress*

Check-in with students about their project's progress since the last session. Ask them what they still need to achieve as they plan their next steps.

Here's a suggested structure for the 45 minutes planning time:

- 10 minutes to report back on each group's progress since the last session
- 25 minutes to discuss what needs to happen next. Students may refer to their C.A.R.E. planning framework from session 3
- 10 minutes to set clear goals in each group for the next session



### *Homework: Giving gratitude*

[Optional exercise]

Encourage students to reflect on their project so far and how it reflects Laudato Si'.

Ask students to express what they feel grateful for in a poem or prayer.

# Session 5

## How can we keep making a difference?

With student projects underway, it's time to start thinking about their presentations. This stage allows students to reflect on how they can keep making a difference in their school and beyond.

15  
min

### *Activity: Imagining an eco-school*

Imagine what your ideal sustainable school would look like with the class. Allow students to get creative and draw their Laudato Si'-inspired school.

45  
min

### *Activity: Planning your presentation*

Ask students for feedback on their progress as they begin planning their presentations. This activity uses the same framework seen in the project planning phase. Students may wish to present their project as a slide show, a spoken report, or a creative alternative.

### *Homework: Faith and the climate* [Optional exercise]

Explore connections between climate change and religion in reading an extract from Laudato Si'. Students can reflect on their personal beliefs on this topic.

# Session 6

## How do we live as Laudato Si' Champions?

This session offers a chance to celebrate the success of the student's projects and think about what comes next. Students should articulate how actions to what they've learnt about Laudato Si'.

45  
min

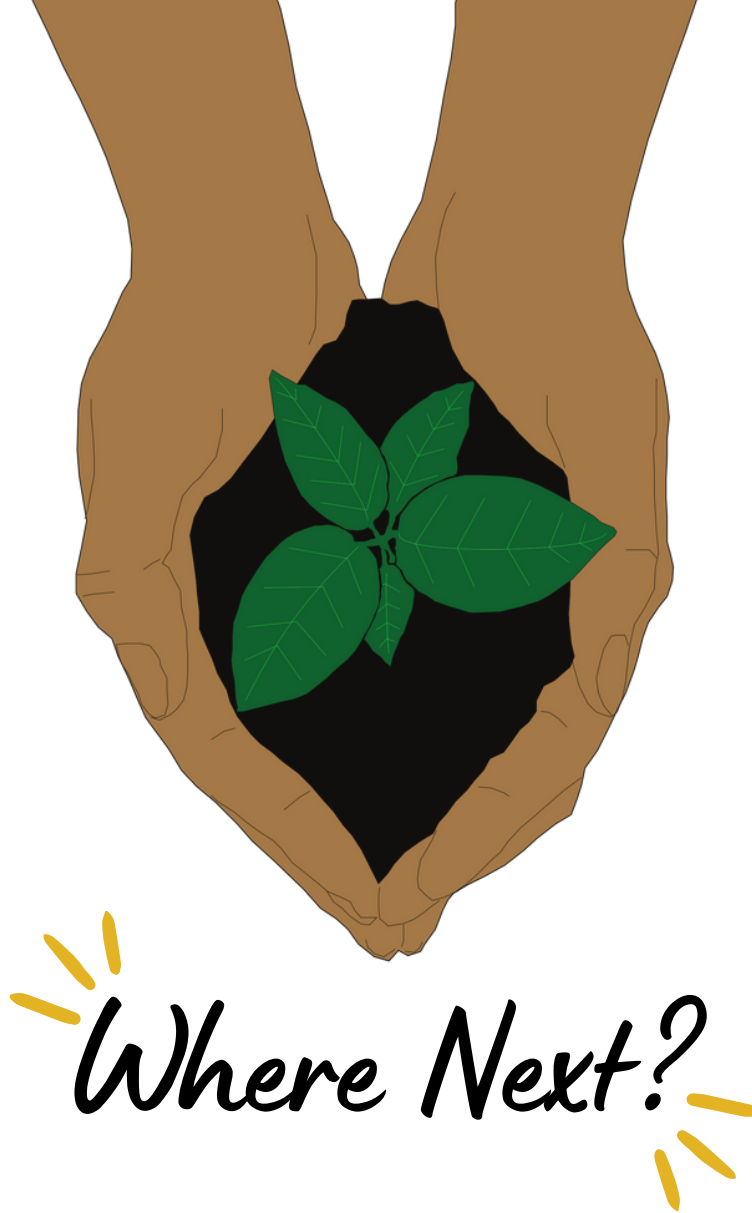
### *Student presentations + giving feedback*

Listen to student presentations detailing what they did, why and how they did it, and what they plan to do next. Encourage students to give feedback to their peers, creating a community of sustainable change.

15  
min

### *Activity: Laudato Si' and Me*

Invite students to reflect on what Laudato Si' means to them and how they will live ecologically in future.



## Where Next?

The Laudato Si' Champions toolkit is all about investing in student leaders. But now that you've trained up your students, what comes next?

In this toolkit's pilot, every school used these resources in flexible, unique ways. Some teachers used it with their eco-club to build student-led voices in the school's climate action plan. For another school, their Champions represented the environment in different extra-curricular groups.

One school integrated the toolkit into an existing award scheme their students were working towards. It could become part of your RE curriculum so that every student has the opportunity to care for our common home. Or maybe you could use the toolkit to try something new in your school and work with other subject areas.

**There are endless possibilities for the empowered student leaders this toolkit helps develop.**

Finding ways to enable ecological education can be challenging in Catholic schools. Yet, Pope Francis reminds us that 'young people demand change'. They have an immense capacity to care for the Earth, our common home.

This toolkit offers one pathway for Catholic teachers to support young people's ecological journey. And in the process, they might help grow the whole school's approach to sustainability.

Need some extra inspiration? Check out this resource list for further reading and in-class resources.

## Books:

- Catholics and Our Common Home by Sr. Margaret Atkins is a thoughtful pamphlet, connecting ecology through the Church's history
- Let Us Dream by Pope Francis is an uplifting book which expands on Laudato Si' and Fratelli Tutti



## Videos:

- Climate justice, explained (The Grist) looks at the unequal impact of pollution in cities
- Earth's giant game of Tetris (TEDed) is a short video explaining the delicate balance of the Earth's ecosystems
- Green schools around the world (Going Green) showcases some inspirational eco-friendly schools

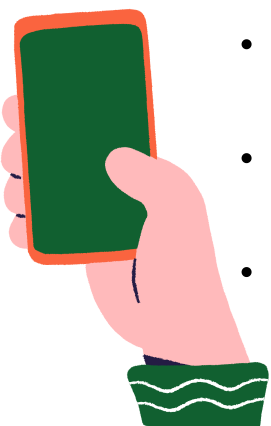
## Podcasts:

- Outrage + Optimism (Global Optimism) comes from former UN leaders and offers inspiration through the latest climate news
- No Place Like Home (Critical Frequency) is great for learning more about climate justice. Season 3 focuses on faith and spirituality around the climate crisis
- The Big Melt (Gen-Z Media) is a climate podcast aimed at teenagers and young people, turning complex ideas into bite size episodes



## Online resources:

- The faith, education, and the ecological crisis symposium includes presentations from teachers, academics
- CAFOD's teaching resources on Laudato Si' include study guides and ways to take action
- The Laudato Si' Movement collates free resources for individuals and communities.
- WWF's resource bank collates reports and teaching materials for different age groups



# *Recognitions*

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