

The Laudato Si Action Platform.



“Working together is the way we will be able to create the future we want” (Pope Francis)

In our last newsletter we focused on Laudato Si in relation to preparing for COP26. For this edition we would like to explore the *Laudato Si Action Platform* launching this year.

“With the encyclical Laudato Si in 2015, I invited all people of good will to take care of the earth, which is our common home. We therefore need a new ecological approach which transforms our way of living in the world. We have a great responsibility especially to future generations. We have the opportunity to prepare a better tomorrow for all.” (Pope Francis, May 2021)

In response to the encyclical the Laudato Si Action Platform is the concrete project that has been created by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development: a seven

year journey that will involve all our communities in promoting a more sustainable lifestyle.

It is a unique collaboration between the Vatican, an international coalition of Catholic organisations, and “all men and women of good will” (LS 3). It is rooted in the strengths and realities of communities around the world, encouraging all to take decisive action here and now as we journey towards a better future together.

Nearly 200 partner organisations have worked together to create the platform and are encouraging groups to register to create their own Laudato Si’ Plan with the planning guides and resources that are on offer. (www.laudatosiactionplatform.org)

The website is up and running and is attractively presented with the different sections to inspire and encourage. It recognises that countries and individuals are different to each other and it offers guidance to all. It encourages registration by November 14th.

Each section has amazing resources. For example there is an online course on ‘Greening Your Church’ taught by Norman Levesque an ecologist and theologian who founded the Green Churches Network in Canada. It aims to help people to:

- Inspire their community to act for Creation care.
- Make a plan to begin an ecological transition of the parish.
- Mobilise other parishioners to form a green committee

The platform will be launched in stages throughout 2021 and 2022. In its entirety it will contain three elements: Guides to map the journey; practical guidance on ways to take action and resources to develop communities of practice.

14th November (The world day of prayer for the poor) the process begins.

During 2022 – A full library of resources are launched including a calendar of webinars and community-building tools.

What is particularly encouraging at present is the significant focus on Laudato Si and the practical response to it throughout the church in Britain. So many dioceses now have an identified environmental lead and creative projects are being shared throughout the network. A recent document providing a template on decarbonisation of diocesan building stock is an example of this and the Guardians of Creation Team in the Salford Diocese in partnership with the Laudato Si Institute and the University of Manchester are researching further carbon accounting strategies.

Our own Diocese is appointing a Buildings and Environmental Surveyor to implement an effective strategy for decarbonising the parish and curia building stock across the diocese.

The church is truly at the centre of this important work to care for our common home.

“Society is enriched by a countless array of organisations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment, whether natural or urban. Around these community actions, relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges.” (Laudato Si para:232)

Rainbow Centre in Scarborough- *If a foreigner lives among you ... you shall not molest them. You shall ... love them as yourself - for you yourselves were once foreigners in Egypt (Lev. 19:33-34)*

When 94 Afghan refugees arrived in Scarborough, the town responded with incredible generosity. Following an appeal, two halls at The Rainbow Centre were quickly filled with donations of clothes, toys and toiletries. After a few days we had to send out messages on social media and local radio to say we couldn't take any more!



A team of volunteers worked for hours every day, sorting and filling bags with specific clothes and items for individual families. When one of the rooms had to be cleared quickly, 30 volunteers turned up on a Sunday afternoon to form a chain and move hundreds of bags into the crypt of the nearby St Peter's Catholic church.

This is not The Rainbow's day-to-day work, but as a Christian organisation serving the poor and the struggling in the community (Scarborough is an area of high social deprivation) we were first on the scene to support the 'foreigners' among us. One of the principle motivations for Christian service is the sense that we are all exiles from our true land, and must love those in need as ourselves.

The Rainbow Centre was established by the then vicar of St Mary's, the Anglican parish, over 20 years ago. It remains deeply conscious of its Christian roots though does not proselytise. There is a beautiful chapel open to clients if they wish to sit quietly there, and a prayer service is held once a week by the staff, who are a friendly community of Anglicans, Evangelicals, Catholics and the non-affiliated.

During the pandemic, the centre was kept busy making up and distributing food parcels, but its daily work is to support the homeless, with a shower, clothes, food and accommodation where possible, the alcohol or drug dependent, those in food poverty or unable to keep up with utility bills, or struggling with the hostilities of the benefit system. No day is the same as another though we have our regulars, who bring out a mixture of affection, frustration and tough love!

Children in poverty are an important focus of The Rainbow's work. Thanks to the generosity of the public and local businesses, we wrap and distribute hundreds of presents at Christmas time for children of all ages, as well as special food parcels. The preparations for that mammoth task is about to begin, and even after the exhausting work during the pandemic and the advent of the refugees, everyone is excited about getting underway!

As a Catholic, I am conscious that what The Rainbow does locally is exactly what Pope Francis is calling us to do in *Fratelli Tutti*, that we remember to welcome Christ himself in the stranger, the homeless, the sick and the hungry, convinced of 'the inalienable dignity of each person and our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters' (84-86).

Andrew Carter

CAUSE Christmas Hamper Campaign- now granted Charitable Status

As we approach our 34th year of The CAUSE Christmas Hamper Campaign it's time to reflect on the past and look ahead to the future. The first campaign of 25 hampers from Newlands School FCJ was seen as a gesture of kindness and goodwill at a time when employment was low and levels of poverty were high. It's a sad reflection of society today to realise that little has changed and as we plan our 2021 campaign we anticipate requests for 1500 families in our area.



supported many families in dire need of furniture, bedding, food and vouchers in crisis situations.

We are aware of the increasing levels of poverty in our area as the North East has the 2nd highest levels of child poverty in the UK but to hear of children sleeping on the floor, women fleeing domestic violence with nothing and teenagers living independently is real cause for concern.

In the words of Pope Francis
'Immediate assistance in responding to the needs of the poor must not prevent us from showing foresight in implementing new signs of Christian love and charity as a response to the new forms of poverty today.'

We need to continue to reach out to them, to understand how they feel and what they experience. Our response will always be to provide essential items, thanks to the wonderful generosity of our supporters and to reach out with kindness and love.

We are about so much more than Christmas hampers now and we are overjoyed to announce that we have been granted charitable status which reflects our work all year round to relieve poverty in our area.

Pat McBride
CAUSE Foundation

Emerging from the pandemic of the last 18 months requests for help from CAUSE have increased dramatically. We have

Promoting dementia friendly Churches

In 2017 Dot Fellowes and Chris Tinkler were approached by Middlesbrough Diocese to promote Dementia Friendly Churches. Initially we trained to become Dementia Champions, deemed competent to deliver Dementia awareness sessions. Prior to the pandemic we had delivered several sessions. The sessions give you some insight into what it is like for the person living with dementia and those caring for them. Hopefully these sessions give people greater understanding and how they can help someone living with Dementia.

One person who attended a dementia awareness session said that it had given him that opportunity to speak to the priest who attended, to realise it was ok to come in late if his mother had been difficult and the need to be able to park close to the church which would be actioned.

Prior to the pandemic an inter denominational service was held at St Marys Cathedral led by Mgr. Gerard Robinson for people living with Dementia, their family carers and friends. The service was delivered to engage with people with Dementia, short readings and lots of singing followed of course by tea and cake! We hope we may be able to have similar services soon.

We acknowledged the benefit of music to someone living with Dementia and started Music for the Mind similar in format to Singing for the Brain supported by the Alzheimer's society. (The Alzheimer's society were unable to fund our session). We have had fundraising events prior to the pandemic and generous donations from individuals and the Co-op.

In 2021 we restarted the Music for the Mind sessions for people living with Dementia and their carers and friends

led by our amazing musician Trish McLean streamed via YouTube with technology provided by Alex Corser on the second Monday of each month. From today Monday October 11th our MFTM sessions are back in person. From 2pm tea/coffee and cake is served as covid safe as possible, followed by music and fun from 2-30pm in the cathedral now, to ensure social distancing. All welcome with or without Dementia

For those who do not feel comfortable coming in person the sessions will continue to be streamed by Phil Gardiner

Mgr. Gerard has welcomed a Carol Service to be held on Monday December 13th at 2pm at St Marys Cathedral. Details to follow. We are hoping that children from both St Gerard's and St Augustine's will be able to join us to help with the singing.

We would gladly arrange a dementia friends awareness session lasting about 45 minutes, for any group or individuals.

Please contact:
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World Day of the Poor -Sunday 14 November *“For the poor you have always with you”*

In his message for the 5th World Day of the Poor Pope Francis reminds us, *“If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor.”* and calls us to *“inspire in our local churches a movement of evangelization that meets the poor personally wherever they may be. We cannot wait for the poor to knock on our door; we need urgently to reach them in their homes, in hospitals and nursing homes, on the streets and in the dark corners where they sometimes hide, in shelters and reception centres. It is important to understand how they feel, what they are experiencing and what their hearts desire.”*

He explains how encounter with the poor is more than just charity and acts of compassion, important though these are, it should be a genuine sharing, an establishment of community, a desire to get to know those who may have been invisible to us. We are called to follow the example of Jesus in loving God and neighbour, especially the most vulnerable. The face of God revealed by Jesus is that of a Father concerned for and close to the poor.

The global pandemic has worsened the plight of those in poverty with an increase in mental ill-health, domestic violence and food poverty. In Middlesbrough where half the wards are in the top 10 most deprived in England and 41% of children are living below the poverty line, Middlesbrough foodbank fed 12,500 people in 2020. The risk of being food



insecure last year was higher among young people, those living alone or homeless, single parents and people with poor health.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, we are also called upon to challenge the structural causes of poverty. In our society there is widespread injustice, many people who do not have what is their due, what they need to live a dignified and fulfilled life, and many people who have far more than they need. We also have people who experience the poverty of isolation and loneliness, homelessness, modern day slavery, trafficking, relational poverty, the experience of being abused or the victim of violence. These circumstances are often drivers of material poverty, or the result of material poverty. Policies, which cause or aggravate poverty must be changed in our society.

Jesus teaches us to serve the poor and marginalised and calls us to a conversion of heart: to open our eyes and hearts and recognize the many different forms of poverty, to see, judge and act. The world is looking for hope.

Extract from Raymond Friel's introduction to the resources for World Day of the Poor, available on the CSAN website.

These include: *A Novena for World Day of the Poor and See-Judge-Act-a practical activity for school or parish groups-* [CSAN-World-Day-of-the-Poor-Resource-2021.pdf](#)

Pope Francis' message [Fifth World Day of the Poor, 2021: “The poor you will always have with you” \(Mk 14:7\) | Francis \(vatican.va\)](#)

God reveals himself to us in nature -

The world is a gift from God and its future is intimately bound up with our own lives and choices.

Laudato Si' Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical subtitled "On Care for our Common Home" has been called a love letter to the earth. *Laudato Si'* complements what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, which is that our responsibility is to care for our world and not 'steal' resources from future generations. It speaks of the intrinsic value of all creatures, not just humans, and of protecting the climate and biodiversity as part of the common good.

Proposing lines of action at personal, political and economic levels, it demands a redefinition of progress that responds to both the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. Pope Francis calls us to a radical ecological conversion and invites us to a spirituality that is full of gratitude for the gifts of creation with a special place for contemplation and Sabbath rest.

***"Both global catastrophes, COVID and climate change, prove that we do not have time to wait. Time urges us and as COVID-19 demonstrated, we do have the tools to face the loss. We have the instruments. This is the moment to act. We are at the edge."*** (Pope Francis, in his video for Earth Day Live, 2021)

On 9 August 2021, the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) released its sixth comprehensive report of climate science. The report estimates that within the next two decades, temperatures are likely to rise by more than 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, breaching the ambition of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and bringing widespread devastation and extreme weather.

When the IPCC report was published, Boris Johnson said the *"report makes for sobering reading, and it is clear that the next decade is going to be pivotal to securing the future of our planet ... I hope (it) ... will be a wake-up call for the world to take action now, before we meet in Glasgow in November for the critical*

Prayer during COP26 (Columban Missionaries)

God, you uphold us always.

Free us from ignorance about your gifts of Creation so we can relate to earth's rhythms with humility.

Inspire us to welcome the truth when scientists speak of climate change and death of species, rejecting false pathways designed to confuse.

Strengthen our resolve to respect life in all its forms, choosing 'to eat, travel, spend, invest and live differently' as wrote

Pope Francis and faith leaders on pilgrimage to COP26, listening to the cries of the earth, the poor, and future generations.

COP26 summit."

The United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres said the report was a **"Code Red for Humanity**. Global warming is affecting every region on earth, with many of the changes becoming irreversible."

The IPCC estimates are indeed sobering but they also tell us that if we get to net zero emissions by 2050, we have a chance at stopping further global warming. **We still have time to act.**

We are already seeing the very serious impact of climate change. We've all heard about rising sea levels and we are seeing their impact on the communities we work with. Extreme weather events like Cyclone Idai in Mozambique are becoming more frequent. Coral reefs are dying, signalling the troubling loss of biodiversity.

From wildfires in Greece, Turkey, California and most worryingly Siberia, to floods in Japan, Germany, China, Turkey and Belgium the impact of the climate crisis has been very obvious during this summer. July 2021 has been proven to be the hottest month ever in human history! This has also been a year in which we have seen very dramatic evidence of climate change in rich countries.

"All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvement and talents."
(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* 14)

Our lives and homes may not be under threat but we do need to be aware of what is happening in the world and raise our concerns with our local and national politicians ahead of the coming climate talks at COP26 in November.

MP's act when they hear from large numbers of their constituents and we have in our diocese the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, who remains to be convinced of the need to provide the funds ratified at the Paris summit of 2015 to mitigate the effects of climate change affecting poorer countries.

So I urge you to raise your voices on behalf of those who will not be heard and to raise your prayers to God for a comprehensive set of plans that will bring about much needed solutions, backed by the finances to address the urgent issue before us.

Carol Cross
CAFOD in Middlesbrough

Help us urge our politicians to take urgent action in negotiating sustainable living.
Ground all our thoughts in your revealing Scriptures and the wisdom of holy women and men who have gone before us to help grow a new creation promised in your Cosmic Son.

Give us a discerning spirit to work with the ecological and the human, the political and the economic realities of this world, and instil in us a spirit of respect, compassion and friendship able to imagine pathways of harmony.

Amen.

Please pass on your ideas for future Newsletters and share what is happening in your community.

We also welcome letters, requests for more information and comments.

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