



# TREE OF LIFE



A LAUDATO SI' RESOURCE FROM  
CATHOLIC EARTHCARE AUSTRALIA

[www.catholicearthcare.org.au](http://www.catholicearthcare.org.au)



## An Invitation to Dialogue on Laudato Si'

**On June 18th 2015, Pope Francis released his historic encyclical Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home. To celebrate the first anniversary of the release of the encyclical and to reaffirm our commitment to World Environment Day, Catholic Earthcare Australia has released our 2016 Resource, Laudato Si' Tree of Life.**

In his encyclical Laudato Si', Pope Francis invites all people of goodwill to consider an important question,

*"What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (160)*

The Tree of Life resource invites us to come together and explore in dialogue what we can do to care for our common home. We invite you to use the reflections and activities as a catalyst to connect with your community and engage in meaningful dialogue and action around this important question and your role in caring for creation. We encourage you to deeply engage with the messages uncovered both in the Tree of Life resource and the rich dialogue Laudato Si' stimulates. For as Pope Francis says,

*"We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."*

The Tree of Life activity also calls us to each 'make a pledge', naming actions we as individuals and communities can take forward this year to bring Laudato Si' to life. Please remember that, no pledge or action is too small for,

*"There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle."*

# The Significance of Now

Each year Catholic Earthcare releases a resource to celebrate World Environment Day, but what is World Environment Day?



Celebrated on June 5 each year, World Environment Day (WED) is the United Nations' principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. Over the years it has grown to be a broad, global platform that is widely celebrated in over 100 countries.

World Environment Day is a day we celebrate the achievements we've made towards protecting the environment. It is the 'people's day' for doing something positive for the environment, galvanizing individual actions into a collective power that generates an exponential positive impact on the planet.

Each year the United Nations focuses on a different ecological theme, in 2016 World Environment Day has the theme "Go Wild for Life - Zero Tolerance for the Illegal Wildlife Trade". To find out more visit - <http://wed2016.com/>. To learn more about the significance of the breadth and depth of this year's WED theme, listen to Simon Habel, Catholic Earthcare's Program Manager, speaking on Ecofaith on Air Radio *2BBB Mountains to Sea* via sound cloud - [here](#).



One year ago, on June 18th 2015, Pope Francis released *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*.

**Laudato Si' Week** is a major international celebration being led

by the Global Catholic Climate Movement and supported by Catholic Earthcare Australia to **bring Laudato Si' to life**.

During Laudato Si Week, parishes and communities around the globe will celebrate the encyclical's first anniversary through local events, an online conference and resources that offer opportunity for reflection, inspiration, and transformative action.

**To find out more about Laudato Si' Week and to register your event go to**

<http://laudatosiweek.org/>



The Laudato Si' Tree of Life resource invites you to explore caring for our common home through reflection, dialogue and action.

We invite you to access the different elements of this resource to connect through prayer, to reflect on the Gospel, to explore new theological insights from Laudato Si' and to take action making a Tree of Life in your school, parish or broader community, contributing your pledge of action to care for our common home.

### **Summary of Contents:**

There are five elements in our Tree of Life resource. Please consider all of these components as we move from reflection and contemplation to dialogue and action:

#### **Laudato Si' Prayer Card**

We invite you to download and pray our Laudato Si' Prayer, written by Freya Zemek, as part of your reflection and contemplation on caring for our common home.

#### **Gospel Reflections**

We are blessed to share Sister Veronica Lawson's Sunday Gospel Reflections for World Environment Day (June 5<sup>th</sup>) and Laudato Si' week (June 19<sup>th</sup>) as part of the Tree of Life resource. To access ecological Gospel Reflections for every Sunday of the year visit our website - <http://catholicearthcare.org.au/resources/>

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## Theological Reflection

World-leading ecological theologian, Monsignor Denis Edwards has written a reflection exploring three new theological insights from Laudato Si’

1. The intrinsic value of all things.
2. That every created thing is a revelation of God, that is that God reveals God’s self to us in every moment, in every thing.
3. That we are invited to be in sublime communion with God, the human family and all creation.

Before you read Monsignor Denis’ reflection, we suggest you watch [Laudato Si’: An urgent Appeal for Action](#) as it offers a wonderful introduction to Laudato Si’.



## Tree of Life Activity

We invite all schools, parishes and agencies to participate in the Tree of Life Activity as a community action that enables a new dialogue on the care of our common home.

It offers a creative, interactive means of bringing people together to dialogue on how to care for our common home and celebrate important milestones or events such as Laudato Si’s anniversary on June 18th, World Environment Day on June 5th, St Francis’ Feast Day on October 4th or at any time during the year.



## Take Action: Bring Laudato Si’ to life

A practical, yet inspirational list of the actions each of us can take (no matter how small) to care for our common home and bring Laudato Si’ to life in the community.

# Laudato Si' Group Prayer

By Freya Zemek

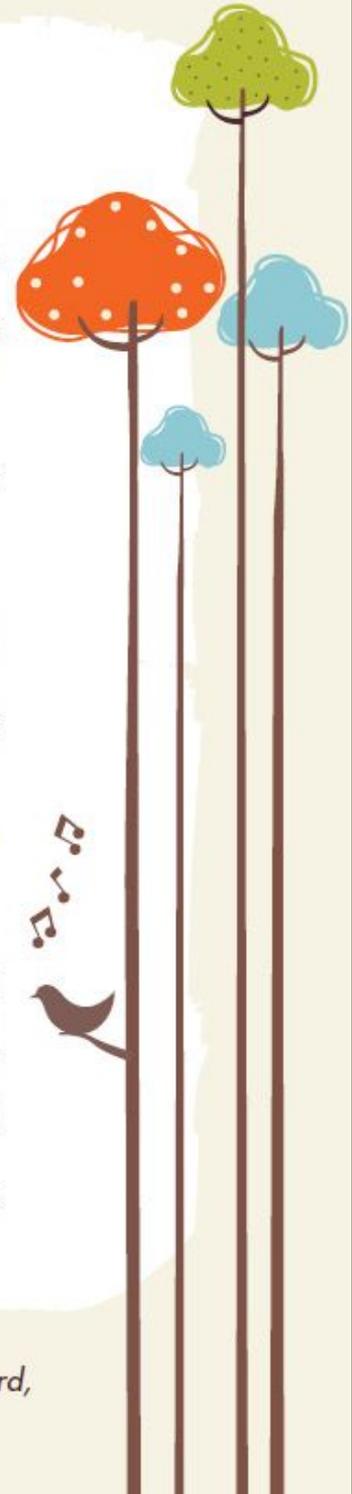
God, source of all life,  
we thank you for the great gift of our Earth.

Praised be to you, O Lord, for in your infinite goodness, **you blessed us with an abundant and life-giving natural world**, and gave us the capacity to nurture it for generations to come. Thank you for enlivening us with your Spirit and light, for **through this gift we are strengthened and renewed in our mission here on Earth.**

Inspired by the example of Pope Francis, **grant us the humility** to remember that we are but one part of a vast ecosystem, an integral ecology, all of which is precious in your eyes. Enriched as we are by **faith**, nourished as we are through the Eucharist, grant us the **strength** we need to be steadfast advocates for the voiceless, mindful of the **intrinsic importance of every living thing on Earth.**

Endowed with a renewed understanding and appreciation of our Earth, we now have a **responsibility to act**. For just as we were baptised with living water and became ambassadors for Christ, through our ecological conversion we now become **ambassadors for our Earth**. May the rivers of knowledge flow on from within us as we continue to work towards an integral ecology. **Empower us**, O Lord, that we may recognise social and ecological injustice in our community, and **act decisively to create meaningful change.**

*We make this prayer through Christ our Lord,  
Amen.*





## Ordinary Time 10C, Luke 7:11-17

- Sr Veronica Lawson RSM

Liberation or release for the most marginalised is at the heart of the mission of the Lukan Jesus. At the beginning of his ministry, we find him in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth, reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and appropriating to himself and to his mission the words of the prophet. He knows that the Spirit of God is upon him and that God has anointed him to bring good news to the destitute and release to the shattered (Luke 4:16-20). As the gospel narrative unfolds, we hear story after story of Jesus bringing good news for the destitute and release for the shattered.

In today's gospel passage, he encounters a funeral cortege at the gates of Nain. He is said to be moved with compassion (*esplanchnisthē*) for the plight of a widow who is shattered and under threat of a life of destitution. Women who lacked the protection of a husband or adult son were among the most destitute in first century Palestine. The unnamed woman of our story has already suffered the loss of her husband. She now grieves for the loss of her adult son. For a widow to lose her only son was nothing short of shattering. She would be entirely dependent on the goodwill of neighbours and friends and whatever extended family she may have had. Jesus knows that the death of her son has made this woman even more dependent and vulnerable than she had been made by her husband's death.

Nain was a tiny village in the Valley of Jezreel in the southern part of Galilee. As in every town, the gate would have been the place where legal cases were determined and justice was delivered. Now, at the gate of this town, Jesus of Nazareth brings both mercy and justice. He feels the pain of the widow in his own being and responds by restoring life, not only to the young man, but to his mother, to the extended family and to the grieving village community. Like this young man, Jesus is the only son of a woman who had possibly been widowed by the time he began his public ministry. His mother is to know the same pain of loss as her unnamed "sister" in Nain.

The sight of the funeral procession and the tears of the woman elicit the compassion of Jesus. The verb "to have compassion" (*splanchnizein*) denotes a deeply felt response in the depths of a person's being. It implies not just an emotional response, but action for mercy and justice. Tears will function in next week's gospel reading as an instrument of hospitality. In this story, tears and touch bring life to a son who was lost and restore life to a community and to a family within that community.

To access each Sunday's Gospel Reflection from Sister Veronica Lawson - [click here](#)



## Ordinary Time 12C, Luke 9:18-24

- Sr Veronica Lawson RSM

The mention of prayer in Luke is always a signal that something momentous is about to happen. Today's gospel opens with the puzzling assertion that Jesus is praying "alone" although his disciples are with him. It is as if his conversation with them is part of Jesus' solitary prayer. This gives us an insight into the prayer of Jesus: his prayer and his life mission are intimately connected. It is important for him and for his mission that his disciples come to recognise who he is. He puts two questions to them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" and "Who do you say that I am?" The crowds see him as John the Baptist or Elijah or one of the prophets "arisen". We can hear the disciples all joining in this part of the conversation, sharing what they have heard. Their answers echo an earlier passage in this same chapter of Luke where Herod Antipas is said to be puzzled by such descriptions of Jesus and asks "Who is this about whom I hear such things?" (Luke 9:7-9).

Since Herod put this question, Jesus has pursued his ministry of teaching and healing and responding to the hunger of the crowds. Jesus himself now raises the question of his identity. We can sense the silence of the disciples when they are faced with the second question, "Who do you say that I am?" It is Peter alone who answers this time. For him and for the other disciples, Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed of God. Jesus instructs them to keep this to themselves. The disciples have much to learn before they can truly understand what they profess.

Within first-century Judaism, many expected a royal militaristic figure who would drive out the occupiers and restore Israel's status as an independent nation. Even as Peter identifies Jesus as the "Messiah of God", it is unlikely that his notion of messiah or Christ leaves room for a suffering Messiah. Has Jesus in his prayer been pondering the way of suffering he is to endure if his work as the Messiah of God is to be completed? He is to undergo "great suffering", he will be rejected by the religious authorities, he will be put to death and God will raise him up. This description meets none of the popular expectations of God's Messiah.

In case the disciples miss the implications of this, Jesus makes it clear that suffering is also the lot of those who want to "follow" him. Discipleship, now as then, has nothing to do with protecting one's own interests, with "saving one's life". It has everything to do with hearing and responding to the distress of the human poor and the distress of the earth itself.

To access each Sunday's Gospel Reflection from Sister Veronica Lawson - [click here](#)



# Hope for our Common Home

By Monsignor Denis Edwards

Every time I read *Laudato Si'* I discover fresh insights into the relationship between God and the planetary community of life on Earth, our common home. Each time I find myself renewed in hope, taken by joy at the beauty of Francis's vision, sobered by the challenges we face, and summoned again to see my life as an ecological vocation, radically committed to Earth and all its creatures.

This encyclical represents a new moment in Catholic social teaching. Since the 1980's Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have made important contributions that call the church and the world to an ecological conversion. But with this far more developed work of Pope Francis, the protection of God's creation is now formally, and permanently, brought to the centre of Catholic social teaching, along with the church's long-standing commitment to inter-human justice and peace. In what follows, I will highlight some of what I see as key theological positions taken by Pope Francis in this document.

## **A Theology Grounded in what is Happening to our Common Home**

*Laudato Si'* begins with a clear-eyed discussion of what is happening to our planet. Pope Francis sees Earth as our common home, a home to be shared by humans and other creatures, a home for future generations. It is a home that we are meant to care for and protect, but one we have treated it with violence. In particular Pope Francis offers a careful analysis of major issues we face, particularly pollution and global warming, the looming crisis of fresh water, and the loss of biodiversity, along with decline in the quality of human life, breakdown of society, and global inequality.

## **The Way of Dialogue**

A striking feature of *Laudato Si'* is that it consistently puts into practice the way of dialogue advocated by the Second Vatican Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. The encyclical is fully dialogical in both in its structure and its content.

Pope Francis writes: “Now, faced as we are with global deterioration, I wish to address every living person on this planet...In this encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (par. 3).

## **The Universal Communion of Creation**

In his second chapter, Pope Francis turns to the Bible to articulate a theology of the whole of creation as one interrelated community before God. I think he offers us something new here – a new theology of the natural world. It can be seen as involving three aspects:

**First:** He insists that other creatures have meaning and value not simply because of their use to human beings, but in themselves. They have intrinsic value. Why? Because God is present to each of them, because God loves each of them, and because each of them have a future in God.

**Second:** Each creature is a word of God to human beings. Creation is a kind of revelation, a manifestation of God, a book of God alongside the book of the Scriptures. Nature speaks a word of love to us – “Nature is filled with words of love”

**Third:** Human beings are part of nature, and together with other creatures we form a sublime communion in God. As St Francis has shown us other creatures are our brothers and sisters – our kin. “Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth” (par. 92). Francis tells us that the risen Christ is already present to the whole creation bringing it to its final fulfilment.

## **Integral Ecology**

Integral ecology is at the centre of Pope Francis’s encyclical. Ecological commitment and commitment to our human brothers and sisters, above all the poor, are held together in one vision. These two commitments are united as aspect of the one ecological vocation. Our response to the crisis we face will need to be holistic, based on a broad vision of reality that involves not only plants, animals, habitats, the atmosphere, rivers and seas, but also human beings and their culture. We find inspiration for this kind of integration in St Francis of Assisi, in his love for the poor and his love for the other creatures of the natural world.

From his very first homily as pope, Pope Francis has made this same link clearly and strongly, calling us to protect creation, and to protect our human brothers and sisters, above those who are poor and excluded. In his new encyclical he writes: “Everything is interconnected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society” (par. 91).

An integral ecology involves love and respect for animals and plants, but also for human history, art and architecture. Integral ecology involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity. In a very particular way it involves respect for the cultures of indigenous peoples: “They are not merely one minority among others, but should be

the principle dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values (par. 146).

### **Political and Personal Action**

Pope Francis prophetically engages political leaders in dialogue, asking them to accept responsibility for protecting the environment and calling them to support international agreements aimed at lifting people out of poverty, limiting carbon emissions, and protecting biodiversity.

But he also points to the fundamental importance of “civic and political love” at other levels, including the indispensable role of ecological education in our families and schools. He insists on the importance of embracing ways of acting, “such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumptions, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights” (par. 211).

Like Pope John Paul II before him, he calls us all to an ongoing *ecological conversion*, to a spirituality of love and respect for other animals, and their habitats, for the land, the seas, the rivers, in the one community of life on Earth. All of this culminates in our Sunday day of rest and in the Eucharist that embraces all creation and is a source of light and motivation for our commitment to God’s creation.



## Tree of Life Activity

### *A step by step guide:*

His Holiness, Pope Francis, is urging us to act: “I urgently appeal, then, 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.” (14)

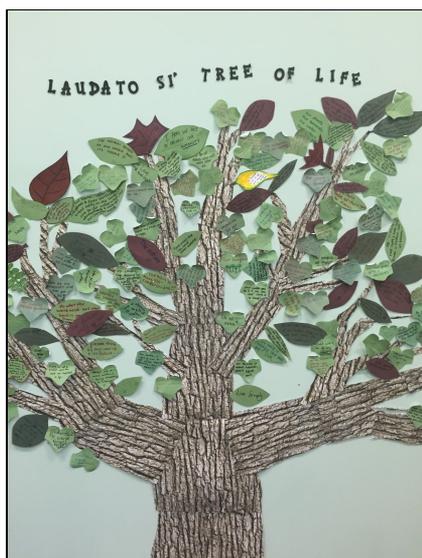
The Tree of Life is an activity designed to enable dialogue and invites everyone in your community to participate. It has been successful in Schools, Parishes and Catholic Agencies. The Tree of Life offers a fantastic opportunity for our church to celebrate the gift of Creation, to get creative and make a personal commitment, a communal pledge to action, to care for our common home. Why not plan a celebration in June for World Environment Day and the 1st Anniversary of Pope Francis’ encyclical or at any other time during the year to actively respond to Laudato Si’ and care for our Common Home?

### *Materials:*

- Paper or cardboard in multiple shades of green
- Paper printed with a bark pattern (template available here)
- Scissors
- Blue tack
- Felt tip pens

- Butchers paper (optional)
- A wall in your school, church or office.

## Method:



### Find a large blank wall.

This is where you will create the tree. If you're concerned about sticking materials directly onto the wall, or you intend to move the tree at a later date, attach a large piece of paper to the wall first.

### Create the trunk.

Print copies of the bark patterned paper provided (don't forget to use recycled paper!), trim the white edges and stick it to the wall using blu-tack to create the tree trunk and branches. Be creative, it doesn't need to be perfect. Better yet, why not try painting the trunk and branches onto brown paper

### Make the leaves.

Invite each person to cut out their own leaves from different coloured paper. Alternatively, you can purchase leaf shaped post-its online ([check out eBay](#)).

### Lead a dialogue

Encourage dialogue about what we can each do to protect and care for our common home. Share some of the recent Church teachings from Laudato Si' - these can be found on our website <http://catholicearthcare.org.au/ecological-encyclical/>. To get the dialogue going you might like to start with these statements on your leaves: "I pray we act to protect..." "Laudato Si' calls us to..." "I pledge to take action by..." "Our community will respond to Laudato Si' by..."

### Make a commitment.

Invite each person to write a personal commitment, a personal pledge, on their leaf that is an action and if appropriate add community actions for your school, parish or agency.

### Watch the tree grow!

Invite the community to add to the tree. Revisit the commitments on the tree later in the year and discover how the journey is progressing. Contact Catholic Earthcare Australia if you require assistance, support or a dialogue partner for further action.

### Take a photo of your tree as it develops.

Take photos as your tree comes to life and of the various leaves that people have put on the tree. Send a selection to Catholic Earthcare Australia at: [admin@catholicearthcare.org.au](mailto:admin@catholicearthcare.org.au)



## Take Action: Bring Laudato Si' to Life

### *Every Action Counts*

Pope Francis says: *“There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle.”* (211)

On this the first anniversary of Laudato Si' and on World Environment Day it is the opportunity for everyone to realize the responsibility to care for the Earth and to become agents of change.

Through decades of World Environment Day celebrations, hundreds of thousands of people from countries all over the world and from all sectors of society have participated in individual and organized environmental action.

#### **Below are a number of practical actions you can take to help our planet!**

1. Act Now. Today is the day you make the decision to care for the environment.
2. [Sign up to receive the Catholic Earthcare newsletter](#) via our website
3. Bring your own eco-bag or basket when going to the market or grocery store and avoid using plastic bags.
4. Create a Tree of Life for your community using this resource - grow it on a

wall in your church, agency, school or hall!

5. Watch our video on making a food garden [“Connect, Care and Share”](#)
6. Vote based on the values promoted in the [Australian Catholic Bishop’s Election Statement](#)
7. [Donate to Catholic Earthcare](#) and support the development of future resources and initiatives for the community
8. Consume smartly. The less waste we throw into landfills, the less harmful greenhouse gases are released into the planet’s warming atmosphere.
9. Contact Catholic Earthcare to develop a Laudato Si’ plan for your diocese.
10. Contact us about our [Permaculture program](#)
11. Participate in a [Laudato Si’ Animator program](#)
12. Open your next Parish meeting with the Laudato Si’ Prayer
13. Keep your recyclable bottles, bottle caps and upcycle them into badges, games and more.
14. Contact Catholic Earthcare to facilitate a [Clergy Formation Program on Laudato Si’](#)
15. Avoid increasing your daily carbon (CO2) footprint -- the main greenhouse gas contributing to the warming atmosphere. Simple things, like carpooling, biking or walking instead of driving all add up!
16. Discover an alternative to using traditional wrapping paper for birthday gifts – like scarves, old newspapers, paintings by your children or discarded maps or magazines.
17. Friend us on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/CatholicEarthcare/>
18. Improve the insulation of your home – it will really help reduce your energy consumption ... and greenhouse gas emissions.
19. Optimize the use of your washing machine – use the cold-wash option and significantly save energy and reduce your daily carbon emissions.
20. Offset your travel whenever possible – most airlines provide an option to do this when you book your tickets.
21. Plant a tree or, even better, organise a tree-planting drive on *World Environment Day* or to celebrate the first anniversary of Laudato Si’.
22. Quantify how much money you could save each winter if you lowered the temperature inside your home by 2 degrees Celsius. It could reduce your energy consumption by 14 percent!
23. Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. The less waste we throw into landfills, the less

harmful greenhouse gases are released into the planet's atmosphere.

24. Switch your light bulbs to LEDs. Save energy and money!
25. Vanquish energy vampires— appliances that suck energy even when not being used – by unplugging them or using power strips and timers.
26. Watch your water use! Check your home for leaky faucets, take shorter showers and turn off the tap when brushing your teeth.
27. Go for Zero waste. Use natural resources wisely, choosing options with the least use of air, soil, water and the least emission of harmful greenhouse gases. Refuse unnecessary packaging.
28. Re-think. Re-design. Re-create. We are invited to change the way we operate on earth to be more in tune with the earth's systems. How might we adjust our human systems, activities and everyday practices to make sure that that nothing is wasted?

**Find out more about Laudato Si' Week at <http://laudatosiweek.org/>  
and World Environment Day at [www.wed2016.com](http://www.wed2016.com)**



## About Us

Catholic Earthcare Australia is the ecological agency for the Catholic Church in Australia. Our purpose is to develop an integral ecology through enabling a loving and sustainable relationship with our common home. Our mandate includes environmental education, research, national network development, advocacy and transformation. All of which are affirmed and encouraged in Laudato Si', which we see as central and core business for Catholic organisations and all people of good will.

Catholic Earthcare Australia's core business is to enable a life-long journey of ecological conversion – being attentive and responsive to God and Creation at every moment. We bring together faith and science to offer initiatives, programs and practices to care for and protect our common home.

## The Invitation

We invite all people of goodwill to journey with us in the most critical and urgent of tasks – safeguarding the integrity of Creation, acting on climate change, protecting Earth's fragile ecosystems and providing a voice for the victims of environmental degradation, injustice and pollution.

**DONATE NOW**

Help us to bring Laudato Si' to life by donating to Catholic Earthcare Australia. Your donation helps us to unite and support an Australian community committed to caring for God's creation and achieving dignity for all.



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