



Laudato Si' Retreats Facilitators Guide

1. <u>Introduction</u>	1
2. <u>Overview of the Laudato Si' Retreat</u>	2
3. <u>Suggested Exercises</u>	3
4. <u>Retreat Templates</u>	7
5. <u>Retreat Organizers Checklist</u>	7
6. <u>Resources</u>	8
7. <u>BE IN TOUCH!</u>	9

1. Introduction

In this time of ecological crisis, LSM is launching a Laudato Si' (LS) Retreat program to facilitate a deep ecological conversion among individuals and communities in response to the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

Laudato Si' is a spiritual document that calls us into deeper relationship with Christ through the gift and the cries of creation. Jesus is our model *par excellence* who prayed with creation, and expressed the kind of tenderness to all life we are all called to. "*Jesus lived in full harmony with creation...*" (LS 98).

The purpose of the LS Retreat is to lead us deeper into relationship with Christ, who then invites us to love Him through loving creation and all our brothers and sisters. For an ecological conversion is one that recognizes that the "*effects of [our] encounter with Jesus Christ [must] become evident in [our] relationship with the world....*" (LS, 217)

This program is grounded in Sacred Scripture, Catholic Social Teaching, Ecological Theology and the best available science. This program is in its initial stages of development so we invite feedback and collaboration. We are very aware that many of you have been leading retreats with creation long before Laudato Si' was released. If you are interested in

collaborating further to develop this retreat program, please reach out to christina@laudatosimovement.org

Please also visit our Laudato Si' webpage for more information about upcoming retreats and resources at <https://laudatosimovement.org/act/laudato-si-retreat/>

2. Overview of the Laudato Si' Retreat

Laudato Si' is the source and foundation for the LS Retreat. We have structured the LS Retreat around 3 key moments inspired by the teachings of the encyclical:

MOMENT 1: HEARING CREATION'S SONG

We begin our exploration of Laudato Si' by first hearing Creation's song and contemplating the glorious mystery of the cosmos in the "book of Creation." This helps us to develop an attitude of praise and gratitude towards the Creator and a sense of universal fraternity with all creation.

MOMENT 2: HEARING CREATION'S CRY

Next, we hear Creation's cry. We reflect on the ecological crisis and the resulting suffering on the poor and future generations. We take time to grieve and repent our personal and collective ecological sin.

MOMENT 3: HEARING CREATION'S CALL

We then listen to how Creation is calling forth a change of mind, heart and action to care for all members of our common home. We discern what habits, actions, and relationships are needed to respond to this invitation. We explore ways to stay grounded in hope and compassion as we commit to transformative action.

Each moment leads the participant to experience different realities with God and creation: praise and thanksgiving, heartbreak and sorrow, hope and commitment. Laudato Si' quotes are woven into all parts of the retreat. An addendum of relevant quotes for each section is included below.

In addition, LSM Laudato Si' Retreats have several other critical components: **praying with creation, contemplative exercises, and an integral approach.**

1. Praying with creation

One of the essential aspects of the LS retreat is praying with, in, and through creation. Ideally, a large part of the LS Retreat would take place outside. To pray with creation entails not merely seeing creation as a backdrop for our activities, but seeing creation as teacher,

friend, and mediator of God's love. We also remember that we are expressions of creation.

If praying outside is not possible, some examples are offered below for praying with creation indoors through meditation and other reflective processes.

2. Contemplative exercises

Laudato Si' asks us to step out of our usual busyness and develop an attitude of the heart *"which approaches life with serene attentiveness... which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full."* (226) There is a deep need to stop and listen to God's voice in creation, in the poor, and in our own hearts.

LS Retreats should begin with some silence and incorporate contemplative exercises throughout the retreat experience to foster a deeper way of listening and being with God in creation and with each other. Contemplative reflection is also integrated throughout the retreat to help facilitate insight and discernment.

3. Integral approach

Laudato Si' provides humanity with a clear objective - to develop an integral ecology. *"Everything is connected."* (LS 91). As such, one of the goals of the LS Retreat is to see the interconnectedness of the ecological and social within creation, "to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

In addition, the LS Retreat invites participants to participate in dialogue processes and group reflection. At different moments participants may be invited into systems thinking and strategic action recognizing that one's personal conversion is not enough. *"The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion."* (LS 219)

While keeping all of these elements in mind, we invite retreat facilitators to exercise creativity and draw upon their own unique gifts in weaving these ideas into their retreats by utilizing the suggested exercises below, as well as their own. We also encourage LS Retreat facilitators to spend time acknowledging the place where the retreat is being held and the place/s where the participants live. This enables local and regional stories about unique ecosystems to become touchstones of each LS Retreat. Surfacing stories of place enables anthropological, biogeographic and cultural realities to emerge that often hold significance for how people respond to Laudato Si'.

3. Suggested Exercises

Below are different processes and experiences for guiding the LS Retreat. Those with an asterisk (*) are highly recommended .

Opening Ritual	
Guiding LS Quote: <i>"Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. (LS Prayer, Prayer for our Earth)</i>	
<p>The LS Retreat begins with prayer and silence. Invite participants to connect with our intention for gathering and ask for the grace of ecological conversion. This sets a contemplative tone, and reminds us of our communion with Christ.</p>	
Opening Prayer from Laudato Si' *	<p>Begin the retreat reading one of the prayers from Laudato Si'.</p>
Centering/Silence*	<p>Facilitate a time of silence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centering prayer • Christian meditation (try reciting Laudato Si' instead of Maranatha) • Meditation on the four elements
Moment 1: Hearing Creation's Song	
Guiding quote: "For the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice." (LS 85)	
Creation prayer service (10 - 30 minutes)	<p>Praying outside is a wonderful opportunity to deepen our communion with creation. Here are 2 options of prayer services you can lead outside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laudato Si Prayer Service • Lauds <p>You might also want to just pray together Psalm 148 or the Canticum of Creatures on this sheet.</p>
Scripture reflection (15 - 60 minutes)	<p>Spend time reading and reflecting on Scripture passages with creation themes.</p>
Laudato Si Quotes * (10 - 30 minutes)	<p>Spend time reading and reflecting on the LS quotes related to hearing Creation's song. Print out a handout with select quotes for participants to reflect on personally or in a small group.</p>

Five senses: Opening to Creation * (5 - 15 minutes)	Participants are invited to open to the presence of creation through the five senses of the body. This is a good grounding exercise to invite participants to move from the head into the whole body.
Lectio Divina in creation (10 - 30 minutes)	Participants are invited to use the traditional practice of <i>lectio divina</i> or meditating on Scripture to read the "book of creation."
Communing with creation * (10 - 45 minutes)	Participants are invited to cultivate their fraternity with creation, by entering into a dialogue with creation. Give out this handout to assist in this activity.
Laudato Si' Chaplet * (10-20 minutes)	The Laudato Si' Chaplet is a simple technique to pray with creation, inspired by the Canticum of the Creatures of St Francis of Assisi. The Chaplet is meant to nourish and foster 'ecological conversion'.
Indoor nature meditation (10 - 20 minutes)	This is an alternative exercise to cultivate fraternity with creation, and takes place indoors.
Reflecting on Gratitude (5 - 20 minutes)	Spend time reading and reflecting on the LS quotes related to gratitude and then show this Gratefulness video from Br. David Stendl-Rast.
Open Sentences (10-20 minutes)	Participants share spontaneously in pairs things they are grateful for. This exercise builds community and helps participants get in touch with the gift of life and creation.
Prayerful Eating (10-20 minutes)	This is a great exercise to facilitate before lunch, to invite people to experience the joy of creation in our food. This also fosters a way to bring more mindfulness into everyday activities. Reflect on praying before meals with Laudato Si' # 227.
Moment 2: Hearing Creation's Cry (Inside)	
<i>"Our goal is to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it" (LS 19).</i>	
"Hearing Creation's Cry" powerpoint (15 - 45 minutes)	Show the parts of the powerpoint (found in this folder) to focus on hearing the cries of the earth and the poor. Note that the videos require internet connection. Feel free to adapt the powerpoint to fit your context.
Laudato Si' Quotes (10 - 30 minutes)	Spend time reading and reflecting on LS quotes related to hearing Creation's cry. Print out a handout with selected LS quotes for participants to reflect on personally or in a small group.

In the Last 60 Minutes... (10 - 45 minutes)	Prayerfully listen and reflect on these facts "In the last hour, 700,000 trees were cut". Then invite participants to share about the realities that they might be witnessing in their own ecosystem and community. This is a good alternative if you are unable to show the powerpoint.
Write a Lament * (15-30 minutes)	Write a Lament to bring to God any sadness, grief, or anger about ongoing ecological and social realities.
Eco-Martyrs (10 -20 minutes)	Reflect on environmental defenders who have been killed protecting their communities' lands or natural resources. Read the names and descriptions of the eco-martyrs and then invite participants to reflect on people they know that have made sacrifices to protect creation.
Ecological Examen	Lead parts of this ecological examen developed by the Office of Justice and Ecology of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States and the Ignatian Solidarity Network. The parts under "Conversion" and "Reconciliation" can be used well to create space for participants to reflect, acknowledge shortfalls, repent and reimagine how to heal their relationship with creation . More information on this examen can be found here .
Bowl of Tears * (15 - 30 minutes)	Invite time for grief and repentance through this powerful exercise from the Work that Reconnects.
Moment 3: Discerning Action Grounded in Hope	
<i>"Truly, much can be done!" (LS 180) "Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope." (LS 244)</i>	
Laudato Si Quotes * (10 - 30 minutes)	Spend time reading and reflecting on the LS quotes related to responding with hope and action. Print out a handout with select quotes for participants to reflect on personally or in a small group.
Discerning with creation*	Invite participants to go outside and use the same process as " Communing in nature ", inviting them to dialogue with creation about how they might be called to respond to the ecological crisis. You can give this handout to prompt reflection.
Letter from the Future * (15-40 minutes)	Invite participants to listen to the voices from the future through this resource. Often participants find direction from future voices about next steps for ecological conversion.
The Seventh Generation (30-45 minutes)	Invite participants to be in dialogue with voices from the future and get in touch with their own sense of agency and

	creativity. This exercise often leaves participants energized and inspired to create change.
Ecological Examen (10-30 minutes)	Lead this examen to help participants discern next steps. You may like to print out the section "Understanding." More information on this examen can be found here .
Laudato Si Pledge	Invite participants to reflect on LSM Laudato Si' Pledge. You can also find other ways to reduce your carbon footprint from these ideas . Invite participants to reflect on one lifestyle change they can commit to.
Integrative Art Project	Invite participants to create something that reflects insights (using creative materials, writing a poem, finding an object in nature that is incorporated into art). You might also invite participants to journal throughout the LS Retreat as a way to capture any insights they may have received during this time.
Closing Prayer/Ritual	
We close by reflecting on the fruits of the retreat and lifting our prayers and commitments to God our Creator. As part of this process provide participants with evaluation sheet and provide a few minutes for people to complete	
Planting a seed of commitment	Invite participants to plant a seed in a small pot to express a commitment or insight from their retreat. If you do not have materials to plant a seed, you can invite participants to write a word or phrase of commitment on an index card that is later shared in the group.
Ecological Rosary	Pray a rosary with the group using ecological rosary meditations.
Laudato Si Beatitudes	Pray together this adapted version of the Laudato Si' Beatitudes.
Prayer from Laudato Si*	Close the retreat by reading one of the prayers from Laudato Si' or showing a video meditation of the prayers.

4. Retreat Templates

Here are some templates of possible retreat days for a morning or for a whole day. Feel free to adapt.

- [3 hour retreat outline](#)
- [1 day retreat template](#)

5. Retreat Organizers Checklist

2-12 months before:

- ☐ **Develop your retreat team.** Ideally this would be at least 3 people. One person to handle logistics and two people to facilitate.
- ☐ **Identify your audience and length of retreat.** Whom do you hope will attend? Will it be 2 hours, half-day, full-day?
- ☐ **Identify a location for your retreat.** This can be a local parish, retreat center, or even someone's home. Look for someplace that has a nice area outside, and if possible the capacity to show a powerpoint point and videos using wi-fi connection. However if this isn't possible, there are other options suggested in the program.
- ☐ **Develop an outreach plan** for your retreat. There are some templates for email announcements, social media posts, and flyers in [this folder](#). Consider reaching out to local religious groups, environment groups, Catholic parishes, ecumenical partners and others. You can also sign-up for free and use a [bit.ly](#) website link as a user-friendly URL that links to, for example, the registration form.
- ☐ **Register your retreat at** <https://laudatosimovement.org/act/laudato-si-retreat/> (forthcoming)

2 months before:

- ☐ **Begin praying and preparing.** As a small retreat team, identify which experiences you want to facilitate and go through them yourself to get comfortable facilitating and to identify what is the best fit for your audience.
- ☐ **Send registration confirmations** to anyone who has registered for the LS Retreat giving them any necessary information. Sample email text can be found [here](#).

1 month before:

- ☐ **Visit the retreat site** location to work out the logistics. This is a good time to also scope out the local natural areas for different activities and rituals.

1 week before:

- ☐ **Print out** any handouts. Gather materials.
- ☐ **Check the weather** to determine if it will affect your activities
- ☐ **Send out a reminder** email to all retreat registrants.

1 week after:

- ☐ **Celebrate** with your retreat team!
- ☐ **Review** evaluations
- ☐ **Send pictures** and feedback to hello@laudatosimovement.org

Other things to consider in organizing your retreat:

- Keep the ecological footprint light in organizing, planning, and implementing the retreat.
- Incorporate the current liturgical season (Lent, Easter, Advent, Christmas etc.) as well as what is happening in Creation (seasons, cycles etc.)
- Consider the location of the space and bring in natural elements, as well as have important prayer elements (Bible, copy of Laudato Si', etc).
- When showing videos from YouTube, turn on the Closed Captions for those that might be hard of hearing.
- Facilitate dialogue in different ways: in dyads, triads, large group. See below for more ideas.
- If this is your first time facilitating a retreat, or you'd like some ideas on how to lead different parts, be sure to join upcoming trainings. Information and recordings of previous training sessions can be found at:
<https://laudatosimovement.org/act/laudato-si-retreat/>

Creating a contemplative environment

- Creating a contemplative environment is very important. During some breaks, invite participants to stay in silence to allow ongoing integration of the material.
- During moments of reflection and journaling, play meditative/calming background music .
- You might want to invite people to share their experience after certain exercises (Writing a Lament, Communing with Nature, etc). Keep sharing contemplative by the following:
 - 1) Divide the groups into small groups (of 3 or 4).
 - 2) Share that each person will have a certain amount of time to respond to the reflection questions (e.g. 2 minutes). While the designated person shares, the other people are only invited to actively listen, without being concerned of how they will respond or what they will say. If a person chooses not to share, it is OK to just be in silence.
 - 3) You will ring the bell when the time is up.
 - 4) Let the group identify who will go first (can be the person with the shortest hair, etc).
 - 5) Before beginning, invite people to connect with their breathing, or the earth beneath them. Then after a moment, ring the bell for the first person to share
 - 6) After the designated period of time, ring the bell to indicate the end of the first sharing. Invite the listeners to thank the speaker. Then before inviting the 2nd person to share, invite participants to again take a breath and reconnect with their body.

7) Continue this process until everyone in the group has shared. If there are uneven groups (there are some groups that are 4 people and some are 3), then do as many rounds as needed, letting people in the smaller groups use the extra time to freely dialogue.

8) After all have shared in the small groups, invite people to share in the larger group any key insights, keeping their sharing brief.

6. Resources

- See [this folder](#) for key resources
- [Key Laudato Si quotes](#)
- [Sample invitation email and registration confirmation](#)
- [Registration form](#) (in order to use this form, please make a copy first)
- [Evaluation](#)
- Flyers (forthcoming)
- Social media post (forthcoming)

7. BE IN TOUCH!

We'd love to hear your thoughts on this LS Retreat Facilitators Guide, or to know how your LS Retreat went. Please contact us at hello@laudatosimovement.org