



Catholic Climate Covenant
Together for our Common Home



EARTH DAY '25

PARTICIPANT GUIDE



WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

WELCOME, PRAYER, AND INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR: Welcome to this program, where we are invited to pray, listen/read, reflect, and discuss issues relating to creation care, the common good, and renewable energy. As we proceed through the program, we should keep in mind how we are called to respond to Jesus' calling us "the light of the world."

OPENING PRAYER (READ IN UNISON)

In the beginning, there was a place without form or shape.
It was in darkness over an abyss.
It was devoid of life and warmth.
And God said: Let there be light, and there was light.
The light was good, and creation began to grow.

God of creation and life,
we seek the light of hope and love, which shapes all of creation on our planet.
In light, we seek strength to resist the darkness of fear and despair,
desiring instead to be illuminators of truth, clarity, and the good of all life.
In becoming witnesses to life,
we yearn to share with all the gift that is creation,
resplendent in light and beauty.

May we never succumb to the original darkness, without form or shape,
but be filled with light, hope, and vision.
May we possess the courage to reach out to all people
on our common journey to care for our common home, Earth.

~Fr. John Grace, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Hampton, VA

FACILITATOR: Let us center ourselves in the realities summarized by the organizers of the global Earth Day commemoration:

- In 2025, as Earth Day turns 55, we celebrate a transformative reality: we already possess the solutions we need to create clean, inexpensive, and unlimited energy for the entire planet through renewable solar, wind and other technologies.
- This Earth Day 2025, we are called to respond to the climate crisis by committing to harness renewable energy to build a healthy, sustainable, equitable and prosperous future for us all.
- By 2035 energy needs in countries such as the U.S. can be met by renewable sources, 365 days a year, which is why EarthDay.org is calling for renewable energy generation, globally, to be tripled by 2030.
- Renewable energy is a powerful unifying force, bringing together diverse countries, regions, states, and communities that are often polar opposites, politically and economically. Clean energy transcends ideological boundaries, showcasing the universal appeal of affordable energy.

~ adapted from [Earth Day Theme 2025 Snapshot Briefing](#), EarthDay.org

READINGS AND SILENT REFLECTION (8 MINUTES)

READING #1

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

~Matthew 5:14-16 (NRSVCE)

Silent Reflection (1 minute)

Write down some responses to the questions in the paper your facilitator provided.

Jesus calls us to “be the light of the world” and “let your light shine before others so they may see your good works.” How do you shine your light before others?

READING #2:

There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy. Worldwide there is minimal access to clean and renewable energy.

~*Laudato Si'* #26

READING #3

Yet, the necessary transition towards clean energy sources such as wind and solar energy, and the abandonment of fossil fuels, is not progressing at the necessary speed (#55) ...

If we consider that emissions per individual in the United States are about two times greater than those of individuals living in China, and about seven times greater than the average of the poorest countries, we can state that a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact. As a result, along with indispensable political decisions, we would be making progress along the way to genuine care for one another (#72). “Praise God” is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God’s place, they become their own worst enemies. (#73)

~*Laudate Deum* #55, #72, and #73

READING #4

Despite the tremendous growth of renewable energy worldwide, the global economic system remains largely powered by fossil fuels. Decarbonization of the economy—through the replacement of fossil fuels with secure, reliable, affordable, and clean energy—is the preeminent environmental challenge faced by all nations. While we are encouraged by recent decarbonization efforts in the United States, supported by the USCCB, to direct historic investment towards climate infrastructure and technological development, this tremendous challenge cannot be achieved alone through the efforts of individual persons or even nations and will require long-term cooperation by all.

~USCCB Statement in advance of COP 28, Nov. 29, 2023

Silent Reflection (2 minute)

Write down some responses to the questions in the paper your facilitator provided.

In these passages, both Pope Francis and the U.S. Bishops are quite blunt about the need for an urgent transition to renewable energy.

How are we as individuals and as a community of Catholics living in the United States called to embody being “the light of the world” and the need to make “progress along the way to genuine care for one another” when we consider the current climate crisis?

VIDEO (11 MINUTES)

You can watch directly on [YouTube](#).

For more information see [Catholic Energy Ethics Resources for Further Review](#)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. What resonated with you the most from the readings and Dr. Lothes' video?
2. Dr. Lothes states that "creative Christian sacrifice" means making holy, or setting aside as an expression of our love. Given that we all have only 24 hours in a day, what activity can you stop doing and use that time instead in a sanctified way? Can you set aside that time to build an advocacy habit that works for a healthy energy superstructure for all?
3. Share ideas of how you and your community are called to "shine your light through your good works" as it relates to creation care and the climate crisis.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1) EARTH DAY ADVOCACY ACTION (8 MINUTES)

Consider having some extra laptops open to the advocacy action page. We've also provided a QR code (below) for participants to access the advocacy action with their smartphones.

FACILITATOR: Yes, we are the light of the world! The 2025 Earth Day program will help us spread our light by taking action and advocating for the common good and for a rapid renewable energy transition in our communities and state!

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis stated, "There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy." (LS #26)

As Catholics, we are called to speak out and advocate for investments in renewable energy like wind and solar because:

- Renewable energy is often **more cost-effective** than traditional fossil fuels. Shifting to renewable energy helps reduce electricity costs and fosters economic growth by creating hundreds of thousands of new, well-paying local jobs.
- Adopting more diversified and stable energy sources in renewables will decrease our need to import fossil fuels, thereby **enhancing national security**.
- Transitioning to clean and renewable energy also brings significant **public health benefits**. Reducing pollution from fossil fuel energy leads to fewer health issues such as respiratory diseases and lower overall healthcare costs. Cleaner air contributes to better mental health and a higher quality of life.
- Transitioning to renewable energy will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which benefits the **environment** and helps to tackle climate change.

The U.S. Catholic community can help make the transition to renewable energy a reality.

Let us take action by contacting our state legislators today and urge them to prioritize renewable energy investments. Our collective voices can help secure a healthier, more affordable, and sustainable energy future for all.

To take action go [here](#) or use this QR code (for use by those with smartphones)



2) SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION OF COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY ACTION (12 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR: *We will gather in small groups to discuss whether our community might be interested in one or both of these more powerful collective actions. Your small groups will be set up to discuss either a) organizing an Earth Action Day or b) making a community commitment to install solar panels.*

a. Organize an Earth Action Day Forum

You are invited to organize an Earth Action Day Forum to help your community members and local elected officials understand how to best incorporate renewable energy into your community. **EarthDay.org staff are available to assist you in planning the forum!** They have also created resources such as a [Forum Planning Checklist](#) and [Toolkit](#). For more information on Earth Action Day Forums, see [this flyer](#). (Your facilitator will provide printed (or digital if online) copies of these documents.)

Discuss:

- Is organizing an Earth Action Day Forum a viable action for our community?
- If this isn't a viable action, what type of activity could be planned to engage elected leaders and the community in discussions on renewable energy?
- Are there volunteers that can begin the planning process? Who might wish to lead this effort?
- If your small group decides to proceed with a future action and there are volunteers to guide the process, let your facilitator know your decision and the names and contact information of the volunteers.

b. Make a parish, school, diocese, and community commitment to expand renewable energy this year.

Catholic Energies may be able to assist your community in going solar. [Catholic Energies](#) is a project of Catholic Climate Covenant, and it provides expertise to design, implement, and finance solar projects that reduce energy costs, enabling your organization to use those savings in support of your critical ministries. (Your facilitator provided you with printed (or digital if online) copies of [this Catholic Energies flyer](#).)

Often, the most financially viable solar projects are where electricity demand is high (like a school or office building), the cost of utility power is high, and are larger in scale. If it isn't viable for your community to go solar, could your community advocate within the diocese/religious order to encourage larger projects in high-use facilities like schools, administrative offices, or health care facilities, for example?

Discuss:

- Is exploring solar installation a viable action for our community? If solar is not a viable option for your community, is reaching out to other Catholic facilities (schools, retreat centers, diocesan-owned buildings, etc.) and introducing them to [Catholic Energies](#) a possible action you could undertake?
- Are there volunteers that can begin the process? Who might wish to lead this effort?
- If your small group decides this is a viable action and there are volunteers, tell your facilitator about your decision and the names and contact information of the volunteers.

CLOSING PRAYER (2 MINUTES)

WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (READ IN UNISON)

Jesus, you told us,

“I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”¹

Your light, the light of the Holy Spirit, dwells within us.

You also told us, “**You** are the light of the world.”

You set our purpose to shine, through our actions, your light forward,
to light the world in a way that neither harms God’s creation nor any of God’s children.

Now, as the world faces so much darkness and strife,
as it faces climate change and ecological disasters,
we will let your strong and loving light shine through us,
so that through our good works, we may
be the light and create the light
so needed by our hurting world.

Help us illuminate our shared paths in our common home
and “cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation,
each according to our own culture, experience, involvements, and talents.”²

Together, we commit to raise our light in the darkness
as we give glory to our Father in heaven.

Amen

¹ John 8:12

² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* 14



You can access this Participant Program [online here](#).
For more information: info@Catholicclimatecovenant.org