**A FRANCISCAN RESPONSE TO THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS**

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This article attempts to highlight care of the earth as a value in our Franciscan charism and our call to participate in the healing process in the midst of the ecological crisis. Francis said that he had done what was his to do and admonished us to do what we need to do. In **LAUDATO SI**, Pope Francis sees the ecological crisis as one of the principal challenges facing us in our world today. Both Francis and Clare mirror a posture of kinship with all of creation and not domination. The Canticle of Creation can be seen as a summary of the meaning of Franciscan life. It highlights God’s intent to make creation available as a place where all can experience this reflection of God’s beauty and lavish love. In 1979, Pope John Paul II designated St. Francis as the patron of Ecology which recognized the kinship Francis had with all of creation. St Bonaventure visions creation as the footprint of God which reflects the Divine imprint and Angela de Foligno shared her mystical insight that all of creation is pregnant with God.

 In **LAUDATO SI**, Pope Francis characterized St. Francis as “as a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and a wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He approached nature with awe and wonder and found beauty everywhere. Francis invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of Divine beauty and goodness” (p14).

In 1990, Pope John Paul II called for a global ecological conversion in the pastoral letter, [THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: A COMMON RESPONSIBILITY](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/renewing-the-earth.cfm). In **LAUDATO SI**, Pope Francis also challenges us to a spirituality that motivates us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world (p105). Such a conversion can be the stimulus which moves us to greater creativity and enthusiasm for participation in healing the ecological crisis. [THE EARTH CHARTER](https://earthcharter.org/discover/) approved at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 2000, notes that when we live in reverence and gratitude for the gift and mystery of all of life, the spirit of human solidarity and kinship is strengthened.

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of participation in the renewal and healing of our world. The motto of the Christopher movement comes to mind as an antidote to our discouragement, “**IT IS BETTER TO LIGHT ONE LITTLE CANDLE, THAN TO CURSE THE** **DARKNESS**”. What follows are some concrete possibilities for our participation and ecological conversion. 1) Pray for a personal ecological conversion, 2) Read [Laudato Sí](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) and other materials related to the ecological crisis, 3) Align with at least one organization involved with education and action related to ecological issues, 4) Use Social Media to advocate for Mother Earth and through voting on ecological issues, 5) Take the [St. Francis Pledge](https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/program/st-francis-pledge) on the website of the Catholic Climate Covenant, 6) [Calculate your personal Carbon Footprint](https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint/)  on the website of Global Footprint Network and make personal changes by reducing waste, reusing materials, recycling and conserving resources.