

# *Gift, Gratitude and Joy*

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FINDING OUR SACRED ROOTS  
IN GOD'S CREATION

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*Program Guide*



ARCHDIOCESE  
of MILWAUKEE

*Updated September, 2021*

# Program Summary

## PROGRAM SESSIONS

Resources at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org)

**SESSION 1:** The Gospel of Creation / Considering Water

**SESSION 2:** How We Know God, A Franciscan Perspective / Considering Food

**SESSION 3:** Sharing Gift with Gratitude / Considering Waste

**SESSION 4:** Finding Joy in Simplicity / Considering Consumption

**SESSION 5:** We Are “All in All” in God / Considering Energy

**SESSION 6:** Seeing with New Eyes

### **In each meeting we will:**

- Introduce the session “Title/Theme” and the environmental “Consideration,” such as water, food, etc., that will be covered in the “Making It Real” portion of the session.
- Begin by welcoming and sharing participant “Adventures” introduced in the previous session (for sessions 2-6).
- Pray, read, and reflect on Scripture in a small group.
- Explore the theme by viewing and reflecting on a video or using the provided leader script.  
(session 6).
- Close with prayer.

**The resources for this program are located at**  
[www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org)

### **Program Resources include:**

- All videos
- “Making it Real” materials
- “Sending off with an Adventure” resources
- Session 1 Ice Breaker
- Participant Guide

# Session 1

## THE GOSPEL OF CREATION / CONSIDERING WATER

Resources at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org)

### Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Play the Getting Out of the Bind game. The object of the game is to free the hand from the rubber band. Put a rubberband around the back of your non-dominant hand, catching the thumb and the little finger. The hand is the head of an animal entangled in plastic. Try to free yourself without using the other hand or your teeth in 30 seconds or less.



Many animals get entangled in plastic litter. What might the rubber band represent in nature? People can get stuck too. Sometimes we get stuck in situations and circumstances. Sometimes we get stuck in our thinking. We hope that this series will help us recognize how our individual and collective actions have unintentionally contributed to keeping others stuck in circumstances that compromise their human dignity. This series may also help us learn what we can do to change this.

### Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

Introductions: Your name, your church and years at your church. What prompted you to participate? or Why do you care about this topic?

### Opening Prayer and Reflection (15 minutes)

*(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)*

Father, we praise you with all your creatures. They came forth from your all-powerful hand; they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love. Praise be to you!

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide us in your word and in your way. Open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds, and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Genesis 1:1-27 aloud. What stood out for you in this reading?



### Explore: *Laudato Si'* (25 minutes)

View the following videos from [www.GiftGratitudejoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudejoy.org).

*CST 101 | Care for God's Creation* (3:05 minutes) This video is one part of CST 101 which is a collaborative 7-part video series presented by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services on Catholic Social Teaching. Hear from Fr. James Martin, SJ, Dr. Carolyn Woo and Peter Cardinal Turkson as they discuss Care for God's Creation.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Why is Pope Francis concerned about creation and our connections to creation? Why should we care?
2. What does it mean to be integrally connected to each other and creation in community? Who do you consider your community?
3. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says "sister earth cries out to us because of the harm inflicted by our irresponsible use of goods with which God has endowed her." Where have you seen signs of harm inflicted? What worries you?
4. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says "The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves." Give some examples of humankind not recognizing or respecting who we are in relationship to God.

### Making It Real (20 minutes)

All humans, plants, and animals must have water to survive. If there was no water on earth there would be no life on earth. Water is a shared gift given to all people by God through creation, thus it is an issue of justice that all people have access to this gift of clean water to live as God intended.

Presentation: "God's Gift of Water"

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

### Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at [www.GiftGratitudejoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudejoy.org) under Session 1.

1. Calculate water usage and thank God for the gift of clean water.
2. Fast from water (choose a water conservation suggestion from the Stewardship List) and pray for those who do not have access to clean water.

3. Read and reflect on Wisdom 13:1-9. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
4. Read the CBS news article about animal population decline and consider what you will do knowing what you now know about human effects on creation.
5. Spend time outdoors meditating on perspective: Meditation Instructions.
6. Read *Laudato Si'*: Introduction paragraphs 1-16, Chapter 1 paragraphs 17-61, and Chapter 2 paragraphs 62-83.

### Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

*A Prayer for Our Earth from Laudato Si'* (~Pope Francis)

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

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.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Amen.

# Session 2

## HOW WE KNOW GOD, A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE / CONSIDERING FOOD

Resources at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org)

### Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. Share something about yourself that most people don't know about you.
2. What adventure did you choose and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

### Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

*(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)*

Son of God, Jesus,  
through you all things were made.  
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,  
you became part of this earth,  
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.  
Today you are alive in every creature in your risen  
glory.  
Praise be to you!

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide us in your word and in your way. Open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds, and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Romans 1:18-23 aloud. What stood out for you in this reading?

### Explore: St. Francis of Assisi (40 minutes)

View the following video:

*How we know God, a Franciscan perspective* with Fr. John Celechowski

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out for you about St. Francis? Did you learn something new?
2. How do you know God?
3. What has shaped your image of God?
4. In *Laudato Si'* it says, "The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us." Where do you see God in creation?

5. Pope Francis says, "Everything is connected. 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." What connections do you see between the environment and your fellow human beings?

### Making It Real (20 minutes)

According to the United Nations an estimated 800 million people in the world suffer from malnutrition and hunger. At the same time obesity continues to rise in other populations. The problem is not that there is not enough food, but how we equitably make food accessible to all people.

Presentation: "The Food Waste Quiz".

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

### Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org) under Session 2.

1. Fast from meat this week and remember our brothers and sisters who don't have access to meat.
2. Collect and weigh all food wasted in your household this week.
3. Read and reflect on Philippians 2:1-13. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
4. Read the article about the America's Food Waste Problem and consider what you will do knowing what you now know about equitable access to food and food waste.
5. Write or sketch your own Canticle of Praise for Creation.
6. Read *Laudato Si'*: Chapter 2 paragraphs 84-100.

### Closing Prayer (4 minutes)

Listen to the music "Brother Sun and Sister Moon".

# Session 3

## SHARING GIFT WITH GRATITUDE / CONSIDERING WASTE

Resources at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org)

### Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. What would constitute a perfect day for you?
2. What adventure did you do and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

### Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

*(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)*

Holy Spirit, by your light  
guide this world towards the Father's love  
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.  
Dwell in our hearts  
and inspire us to do what is good. Praise be to  
you!

Lord, you have called each of us here today.  
Guide us in your word and in your way. Open  
our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds,  
and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Matthew 6:19-21 aloud. What stood out  
for you in this reading?

### Explore: Sharing Gift with Gratitude (40 minutes)

View the following video:

*Sharing Gift with Gratitude* with Catherine Orr

Discussion Questions:

1. What gifts in creation are you grateful for?
2. What gifts have you shared or could you share?
3. What brings you sorrow?
4. What is your grace to go forward?

### Making It Real (20 minutes)

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis said, "The earth is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." Beautiful landscapes are being covered

in trash and industrial waste, and chemical toxins are accumulating in the environment, in organisms, and in humans, affecting people's health and livelihoods, especially the poor and marginalized. Pope Francis links these problems "to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish."

Presentation: "Where Does it Go".

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

### Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org) under Session 3.

1. Watch the story of bottled water and consider what you will do knowing what you now know about human effects on creation.
2. Inventory your pantry and consider what packaging can be eliminated by changing your purchasing habits, and what should be recycled versus landfilled.
3. Fast from single use plastics (bottled water, bags, ziplocks, straws, plasticware, and styrofoam) and thank God for all God has provided.
4. Take a garbage bag with you on walks to pick up litter.
5. Read and reflect on 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
6. Spend time in prayer looking at nature: *Visio Divina*.
7. Read *Laudato Si'*: Chapter 3 paragraphs 101-136.

### Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

Watch the music video "Majestic."

# Session 4

## FINDING JOY IN SIMPLICITY / CONSIDERING CONSUMPTION

Resources at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org)

### Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. What do you wish you spent more time doing?
2. What adventure did you do and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

### Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

(Excerpt from *Christian Prayer in Union with Creation*  
~Pope Francis)

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,  
teach us to contemplate you  
in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of  
you.

Awaken our praise and thankfulness  
for every being that you have made.

Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to  
everything that is.

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide  
us in your word and in your way. Open our eyes, our  
ears, our hearts, and our minds, and teach us, Lord,  
teach us of You. Amen.

Read aloud Luke 12:15-21. What stood out for you in  
this reading?

### Explore: Finding Joy in Simplicity (40 minutes)

View the following video:

*Finding Joy in Simplicity* with Joe Meyer

Discussion Questions:

1. Joe said temperance means restraining our consumption. Just because we can buy something, should we? Have I ever over-consumed?
2. Can living simply and reducing my consumption bring me joy? Can refusing to bring things or distractions into my life bring me joy?
3. An environmental ethic is counter-cultural. Have I met resistance?
4. We are a people of hope. What brings me hope?
5. How can I make caring for creation a prayer by doing little things with great love?

### Making It Real (15 minutes)

Research shows that things like good family life, meaningful work, and fulfilling social relationships are higher contributors to overall happiness than the accumulation of stuff, and yet we continue to consume at a rate that is outpacing available resources on planet earth meant for everyone to share - not just us, but for generations to come.

Presentation: "Resource Use".

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

### Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org) under Session 4.

1. Watch the story of stuff and consider what you will do knowing what you now know about human effects on creation.
2. Choose a waste reduction opportunity from the Stewardship List and pray for more simplicity in your life.
3. Determine how you can fast from our 102 ton legacy.
4. Read and reflect on 1 Timothy 4:4-5. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
5. Take a prayer walk in nature: Prayer walk instructions.
6. Calculate your ecological footprint for ideas on how to reduce consumption.
7. Read Message on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, September 9, 2020, Pope Francis
8. Read *Laudato Si'*: Chapter 4 paragraphs 137-162.

### Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Listen to the song or watch the music video  
"Everything is Holy Now".

# Session 5

## WE ARE “ALL IN ALL” IN GOD / CONSIDERING ENERGY

Resources at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org)

### Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. What makes you smile?
2. What adventure did you do and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?
3. What does love your neighbor as yourself mean to you? How can we intentionally live that way to honor God?
4. How does the “honorable harvest” relate to loving God and caring for our neighbor?

### Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

*(Excerpt from Christian Prayer in Union with Creation ~Pope Francis)*

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak,  
and care for this world in which we live.

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide us in your word and in your way. Open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds, and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Luke 16:19-31 aloud. What stood out for you in this reading?

### Explore: We Are All in All in God (40 minutes)

View the following video:

*We are “All in All” in God* with Debra Schneider

Discussion Questions:

1. Knowing that God is the Creator of all; that our human dignity comes from being created in the image God; and that God loves each of us, how does that relate to caring for creation?
2. At the time of Isaiah and Jesus, among the marginalized in society were widows, orphans, and strangers/migrants. Who in society today has little power over their circumstances or are held down in some way?

### Making It Real (15 minutes)

Much of the world’s energy comes from carbon in the form of fossil fuels formed over millions of years. When burned, fossil fuels release carbon dioxide and other toxins that contribute to the decline of human health, increase global warming, and negatively affect the poor and the lives of future generations.

Presentation: “Environmental Justice”.

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you?

### Sending Off with an Adventure (2 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to share at the opening of the next session. Directions for these adventures are found at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org) under Session 5.

1. Fast from energy (consciously reduce your usage by choosing from the Stewardship List) and pray for those who are negatively affected by the burning of fossil fuels.
2. Read and reflect on Ephesians 4:1-6. Choose an activity of your own that stems from this text.
3. Calculate your carbon footprint. Consider how you can reduce your footprint.
4. Use the EPA’s mapping tool to further explore how your actions impact your neighbors.
5. Find a comfortable place outside to listen to a guided meditation.
6. Read *Laudato Si’*: Chapter 5 paragraphs 200-201 and Chapter 6 paragraphs 202-246.

### Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Watch the video “Earthrise.”



# Session 6

## SEEING WITH NEW EYES

Resources at [www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org)

### Welcome Back and Sharing Adventures (10 minutes)

1. If you had the opportunity to get a message across to a large group of people, what would your message be?
2. What adventure did you do and how did it go? Did you learn anything new? Did anything surprise you?

### Opening Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

(Excerpt from *Christian Prayer in Union with Creation* ~Pope Francis)

The poor and the earth are crying out.  
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,  
help us to protect all life, to prepare for a better future,  
for the coming of your Kingdom of justice, peace, love and  
beauty. Praise be to you!

Lord, you have called each of us here today. Guide us in your  
word and in your way. Open our eyes, our ears, our hearts,  
and our minds, and teach us, Lord, teach us of You. Amen.

Read Job 12:7-10 aloud. What stood out for you in this  
reading?

### Explore: Seeing with New Eyes (30 minutes)

The leader will choose from one of the five options.  
[www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudeJoy.org).

#### Restoring Relationships, a guided discussion

This guided discussion begins with the Genesis account of  
creation and seeks to engage participants in a discussion of  
how caring for creation is a participation in Christ's ministry of  
restoring relationships broken by the fall of Adam.

#### Watch and discuss Alice's Garden Video (9:33)

This video ties together concepts of water, food, and justice from  
the previous sessions and can jump start a conversation about  
getting involved in local creation care organizations. Hear from  
Venice R. Williams, the Executive Director of Alice's Garden, an  
urban farm in Milwaukee.

#### Guest Speaker and Creation Care Ministry

Invite a guest speaker to talk about why he or she is passionate  
about caring for creation, how they live that out in daily life,  
and how they are active in their church or community. Use this  
opportunity to promote existing care for creation ministries in  
your own congregation or begin organizing a new creation care  
ministry. Many resources helpful for beginning or continuing  
creation care ministries, including logos, implementation guide,  
one simple act cards, displays, and social media posts can be

found at [Waukesha County Green Team Creation Care  
Network](http://WaukeshaCountyGreenTeamCreationCareNetwork).

#### Dream-casting Exercise

This exercise helps participants dream of a goal and generate  
a list of practical steps they can take to move toward that  
goal.

#### Further Exploring *Laudato Si'*

For a more in depth exploration of *Laudato Si'*, you may  
choose from quotations and questions provided in this  
discussion guide.

### Making It Real (30 minutes)

We need to see with new eyes our common origin of creation as a  
gift to be shared by all our sisters and brothers both now and in the  
future. Quoting Pope Francis "We must regain the conviction that  
we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others  
and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it."

Presentation: "Bringing it Home".

Discuss: What did you learn? What surprised you? What inspired  
you? Is there something our group would like to work on together?  
What one thing will you take away from this series? What one  
thing will you choose to do differently in your life?

#### Build your own Adventure (5 minutes)

Choose one or more adventures to continue the transformation  
process. Directions for these adventures are found at  
[www.GiftGratitudejoy.org](http://www.GiftGratitudejoy.org) under Session 6.

1. Conduct an ecological examination of conscience.
2. Get involved in a local organization, such as the  
Waukesha County Green Team, the Waukesha County  
Creation Care Network, or your church's creation care  
ministry.
3. Pick one simple act from the Stewardship List, followed  
by another, and another.
4. Read *Laudato Si'* individually or as a group using this  
discussion guide.

Learn more about the Waukesha County Green Team and the  
Waukesha County Creation Care Network at  
[www.WaukeshaCountyGreenTeam.org](http://www.WaukeshaCountyGreenTeam.org).

Thank you for participating in this program!

**Closing Prayer (3 minutes)**

*A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation (~Pope Francis)*

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.  
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;  
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.  
Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus,  
through you all things were made.  
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,  
you became part of this earth,  
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.  
Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.  
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light  
you guide this world towards the Father's love  
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.  
You also dwell in our hearts  
and you inspire us to do what is good.  
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,  
teach us to contemplate you

in the beauty of the universe,  
for all things speak of you.  
Awaken our praise and thankfulness  
for every being that you have made.  
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined  
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love  
for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.  
Enlighten those who possess power and money  
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,  
that they may love the common good,  
advance the weak, and  
care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.  
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,  
help us to protect all life,  
to prepare for a better future,  
for the coming of your Kingdom  
of justice, peace, love and beauty.  
Praise be to you! Amen.

