**Lesson Plan 5: Catholic Teaching Explored Further**

**Lesson aims**

* To examine the development of Catholic approaches towards the environmental crisis
* To show how this involves an understanding of stewardship
* To show how Catholic teaching integrates social care with creation care, especially in the recent encyclical *Laudato Si’*

**Resources**

* PowerPoint presentation
* Beyond Stewardship website (<http://ex.ac.uk/beyondstewardship>)
* Handout: Extracts from *Gaudium et Spes*, *Communion and Stewardship*, and *Laudato Si’*

**Starter Activity**

Show the introductory video from the ‘Catholic Teaching Explored Further’ section of the Beyond Stewardship website (find a link on Slide 2 of the PowerPoint or see **[http://ex.ac.uk/beyondstewardship](http://ex.ac.uk/beyondstewardship" \t "_blank)**). Invite the students to respond to the key question posed at the end of the video.

**Whole class work**

As a class, work through the PowerPoint presentation, using it to help explain to the students the influence of the *Imago Dei* idea (Topic A). Students could take notes on the handout as you go through the extracts. Use the extracts to investigate with the students both where the idea comes from and how it has influenced Catholic theology about environmental care. At the end of the presentation, ask the students to spend a few minutes summarising for themselves in writing (question on handout): ‘What is the significance of the *Imago Dei* idea for Catholic teaching about care for the environment?’

**Group work (Phase 1 & 2)**

Allocate half the class Topic B and the other Topic C. Explain that they will be teaching their topic to the other half of the class at the end of the session. They will work as a pair (Phase 1) and then join up with another pair (Phase 2). [In a small class, Phase 1 could be undertaken by individuals and Phase 2 by pairs.] The handout gives the topic, the instructions for the task, and the text extracts required. Each student will need the whole handout but they will focus in Phase 1 & 2 on either Section B or C of the handout.

Topic B: God and Creation

Question: What does Laudato Si’ teach Catholics about the value of non-human animals, other life forms, ecosystems, and the earth itself?

Topic C: Ecological Justice and Social Justice

Question: What does Laudato Si’ teach Catholics about the connection between caring for the environment and caring for the poor?

Phase 1: Students should work on their topic in a pair (15 minutes). They can use the extracts on the handout to source information and, if technology is available, the Beyond Stewardship website. If you are able to allow extra time, students could do wider research on the web (**for example, see websites below**). They must establish the key points they wish to include in their ‘micro-teach’, which will last 2-3 minutes. It must answer the question given under the topic heading. The focus of Phase 1 should be the **content** to be communicated to the class.

Phase 2: Each pair then joins up with another pair (on the same topic) to pool their ideas and prepare their 3-5 minute response to the class (15 minutes). The focus of Phase 2 should be **cross-referencing content** (not finding new content) and establishing how best to **communicate** it to the class.

**Plenary (Group work, Phase 3)**

Phase 3: Phase 2 groups (Topic B then Topic C) should present their findings to the class. The audience should be encouraged to note down the key ideas on the relevant section of the handout. They should follow up by reading the relevant sections of the Beyond Stewardship website to reinforce understanding of the Topic that they did not themselves work on in class time.

**Possible Follow-up Task**

Ask the students to visit the CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) website at <https://cafod.org.uk> and answer the following question: ‘How does CAFOD’s work reflect the Catholic theology you have explored?’

**Websites for Research**

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/june/documents/hf\_jp-ii\_spe\_20020610\_venice-declaration.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20020610_venice-declaration.html" \t "_blank)

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco\_20130605\_udienza-generale.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130605_udienza-generale.pdf" \t "_blank)

[https://cafod.org.uk/About-us/Policy-and-research/Climate-change-and-energy](https://cafod.org.uk/About-us/Policy-and-research/Climate-change-and-energy" \t "_blank)

**Handout**

**(One per student)**

**Handout: Catholic Teaching Explored Further**

**Lesson aims**

* To examine the development of Catholic approaches towards the environmental crisis
* To show how this involves an understanding of stewardship
* To show how Catholic teaching integrates social care with creation care, especially in the recent encyclical *Laudato Si’*

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| **Topic A: *Imago Dei*** |

**Dominion**

Encyclical: *Gaudium et spes* (1965) [NB: term steward/stewardship does not appear in this document]

‘For Sacred Scripture teaches that man was created "to the image of God," is capable of knowing and loving his Creator, and was appointed by Him as master of all earthly creatures that he might subdue them and use them to God's glory.’ (§12)

‘For man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness; a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to Him Who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all. Thus, by the subjection of all things to man, the name of God would be wonderful in all the earth.’ (§34)

**Stewardship**

Encyclical: *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God* (2002)

‘In continuity with the deepening recovery of the theme of the *imago Dei* since Vatican Council II, the International Theological Commission seeks in the following pages to reaffirm the truth that human persons are created in the image of God in order to enjoy personal communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and with one another in them, and in order to exercise, in God's name, responsible stewardship of the created world.’ (§4)

‘Human stewardship of the created world is precisely a stewardship exercised by way of participation in the divine rule and is always subject to it. Human beings exercise this stewardship by gaining scientific understanding of the universe, by caring responsibly for the natural world (including animals and the environment), and by guarding their own biological integrity.’ (§61)

**A relational approach**

Encyclical: *Laudato Si’* (2015)

‘The creation accounts in the book of Genesis … suggest that **human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself**. … The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf. *Gen*1:28), to “till it and keep it” (*Gen*2:15). As a result, **the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual** (cf. *Gen*3:17-19).’ (§66)

‘… **nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures**. The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. *Gen*2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while “keeping” means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies **a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations**. “The earth is the Lord’s” (*Ps* 24:1); to him belongs “the earth with all that is within it” (*Dt*10:14). Thus God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me” (*Lev* 25:23).’ (§67)

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| What is the significance of the *Imago Dei* idea for Catholic teaching about care for the environment? How has its influence changed over time? |

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| **Topic B: God and Creation**  Key Question: What does *Laudato Si’* teach Catholics about the value of non-human animals, other life forms, ecosystems, and the earth itself?  **Phase 1: 15 minutes – FIND YOUR CONTENT**   * Pair work on extracts below * Answer the Key Question * Visit the Beyond Stewardship website for help (<http://ex.ac.uk/beyondstewardship>) * Focus on the **content** of your micro-lesson. You need to work out the key points that you will teach the class. * Your micro-lesson will last 2-3 minutes. It must answer the question given under the topic heading.   **Phase 2: 15 minutes – AGREE YOUR DELIVERY**   * Group work: Join up with another pair (on the same topic). * Pool your ideas and prepare their 2-3 minute micro-lesson to the class * Agree the content of your micro-lesson as a group. * Focus on **how you will deliver the content** to the rest of the class.   **Phase 3: 2-3 minutes – PRESENT TO THE CLASS**  When the teacher brings the class back together, each of the groups will present their findings to the class. Take notes on the handout when other groups present. |

**TOPIC B EXTRACTS**

‘*“LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”.* In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”’. (§1)

‘This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (*Rom*8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen*2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.’ (§2)

‘It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.’ (§33)

‘Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.’ (§84)

‘The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with him.’ (§88)

‘The universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God. Saint Thomas Aquinas wisely noted that multiplicity and variety “come from the intention of the first agent” who willed that “what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another”, inasmuch as God’s goodness “could not be represented fittingly by any one creature”. Hence we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships. We understand better the importance and meaning of each creature if we contemplate it within the entirety of God’s plan. As the Catechism teaches: “God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other”.’ (§86)

‘This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails. Nor does it imply a divinization of the earth which would prevent us from working on it and protecting it in its fragility. Such notions would end up creating new imbalances which would deflect us from the reality which challenges us. At times we see an obsession with denying any pre-eminence to the human person; more zeal is shown in protecting other species than in defending the dignity which all human beings share in equal measure. Certainly, we should be concerned lest other living beings be treated irresponsibly. But we should be particularly indignant at the enormous inequalities in our midst, whereby we continue to tolerate some considering themselves more worthy than others. We fail to see that some are mired in desperate and degrading poverty, with no way out, while others have not the faintest idea of what to do with their possessions, vainly showing off their supposed superiority and leaving behind them so much waste which, if it were the case everywhere, would destroy the planet. In practice, we continue to tolerate that some consider themselves more human than others, as if they had been born with greater rights.’ (§90)

‘Ongoing research should also give us a better understanding of how different creatures relate to one another in making up the larger units which today we term “ecosystems”. We take these systems into account not only to determine how best to use them, but also because they have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system.’ (§140)

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| **KEY POINTS: TOPIC B GOD AND CREATION**  Key Question: What does *Laudato Si’* teach Catholics about the value of non-human animals, other life forms, ecosystems, and the earth itself? |

**Follow-up Task**

Visit the CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) website at <https://cafod.org.uk> and answer the following question: ‘How does CAFOD’s work reflect the Catholic theology you have explored?’

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| **Topic C: Ecological Justice and Social Justice**  Key Question: What does *Laudato Si’* teach Catholics about the connection between caring for the environment and caring for the poor?  **Phase 1: 15 minutes – FIND YOUR CONTENT**   * Pair work on extracts below * Answer the Key Question * Visit the Beyond Stewardship website for help (<http://ex.ac.uk/beyondstewardship>) * Focus on the **content** of your micro-lesson. You need to work out the key points that you will teach the class. * Your micro-lesson will last 2-3 minutes. It must answer the question given under the topic heading.   **Phase 2: 15 minutes – AGREE YOUR DELIVERY**   * Group work: Join up with another pair (on the same topic). * Pool your ideas and prepare their 2-3 minute micro-lesson to the class * Agree the content of your micro-lesson as a group. * Focus on **how you will deliver the content** to the rest of the class.   **Phase 3: 2-3 minutes – PRESENT TO THE CLASS**  When the teacher brings the class back together, each of the groups will present their findings to the class. Take notes on the handout when other groups present. |

**TOPIC C EXTRACTS**

‘My predecessor Benedict XVI likewise proposed “eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment”. He observed that the world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects, since “the book of nature is one and indivisible”, and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth. It follows that “the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence”. Pope Benedict asked us to recognize that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour. The social environment has also suffered damage. Both are ultimately due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless. We have forgotten that “man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature”. With paternal concern, Benedict urged us to realize that creation is harmed “where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves”’ (§6)

‘I do not want to write this Encyclical without turning to that attractive and compelling figure, whose name I took as my guide and inspiration when I was elected Bishop of Rome. I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.’ (§10)

‘Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world’s poorest. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.’ (§13)

‘Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades. Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. For example, changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children.’ (§25)

‘The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: “Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest”. For example, the depletion of fishing reserves especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources; water pollution particularly affects the poor who cannot buy bottled water; and rises in the sea level mainly affect impoverished coastal populations who have nowhere else to go. The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor, in conflicts sparked by the shortage of resources, and in any number of other problems which are insufficiently represented on global agendas.’ (§48)

‘…many professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centres of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. They live and reason from the comfortable position of a high level of development and a quality of life well beyond the reach of the majority of the world’s population. This lack of physical contact and encounter, encouraged at times by the disintegration of our cities, can lead to a numbing of conscience and to tendentious analyses which neglect parts of reality. At times this attitude exists side by side with a “green” rhetoric. Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach*always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*.’ (§49)

‘Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. … Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged.’ (§93).

‘The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others.’ (§95)

‘When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality. … We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.’ (§139)

See over …

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| **KEY POINTS TOPIC C ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**  Key Question: What does *Laudato Si’* teach Catholics about the connection between caring for the environment and caring for the poor? |

**Follow-up Task**

Visit the CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) website at <https://cafod.org.uk> and answer the following question: ‘How does CAFOD’s work reflect the Catholic theology you have explored?’