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The University of Manchester

Salvation and Creation Care: Leader's Handbook

About the course

Welcome to this leader's handbook for the formation course, *Salvation and Creation Care*.

This handbook gives you all the information you need to run the course in your own setting. The course takes place over three sessions, and information on how to deliver these three sessions is all contained in this handbook.

The course is designed to help Catholics connect their faith with God's creation. The main focus is on the Catholic theology around caring for God's creation, and aims to help Catholics see how creation is integrated within their faith. It serves as an entry point, from which Catholics can go on and see what actions they can take for themselves.

Structure of the course

The course has three sessions, each based around a Christian theme of salvation: (1) Communion; (2) Reconciliation; and (3) Redemption. Each session runs for 90 minutes with a 10-minute break.

On the following pages, you will see an explanation for the content of these sessions, and the activities you can run to explore the content in your groups.

Hosting a course

A good model for delivering this course would be to run **one session per week over three weeks**. You might run this in the evenings in your community context. However, you could also run the three sessions over a short day instead. Just follow whatever structure works best for you and your group.

Whilst the course focuses on Catholic theology and some scientific findings relating to the environment, **there is no need to be a theologian or a scientist to run this course!** All the material is provided for you.

The only thing you need to be able to do is to facilitate the course with your own group, which involves hosting people in a friendly space, playing some videos, running through a few PowerPoint slides (optional), and helping your group to discuss questions together.

What do I need to run the course?

Along with this handbook, you will need:

- The online booklet for use by the group – this can be printed or viewed online by the participants
- The three videos that were developed for this course
- The PowerPoint slides (optional)
- A link to the course survey
- A means to show the videos and slides to people – so either a TV or a computer.
- Pens and paper for your discussion groups
- Prayers for the sessions

You can access the **booklet, slides, videos and survey** here:

<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/projects/formation-and-training-resources-salvation-and-creation-care/>

A good resource for **prayers** is the CAFOD website:

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/care-of-creation-prayers>

Simply select the prayers that best suit you and your group.

Where to begin?

Read through this handbook so you can get an idea of how the course is organised and what the course contains. Follow the steps in the handbook, and you should be able to deliver it!

Course surveys

We would love to know more about who takes this course and whether they find it helpful. Please do ask participants to fill in the online survey for the course once they have completed it so we can understand whether people have found the course helpful.

After the course?

Whilst the third session discusses ways of taking action, some participants may want guidance on how to do this for themselves. The online booklet contains a range of resources on pp.16-17. You could also signpost people to the resources pages here:

Laudato Si' Centre Resources page:

<https://laudatosicentre.org.uk/parish/parish-resources/>

Parish Environment Guide:

<https://laudatosicentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Parish-Guide.pdf>

Environmental Stewardship in Place of Worship:

<https://laudatosicentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Parish-Guide.pdf>

CAFOD Live Simply:

<https://cafod.org.uk/campaign/livesimply-award>

Who designed this course?

This course was developed by Dr Finlay Malcolm during a secondment to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford from the University of Manchester in 2025-26. The course is based on research carried out at the University of Manchester as part of the *Religion, Theology and Climate Change* project.

For more details about the project and its findings, see its website here:

<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/projects/religion-theology-and-climate-change/>

This course is freely available for use across all areas of the Christian community globally. We hope it inspires people to connect more deeply with God's creation.

Part 1: Communion

Session 1: Communion

Session 1 introduces participants to creation as God’s abundant and loving gift. Drawing on Genesis and Catholic tradition, it explores how the beauty and diversity of the natural world reveal God’s generosity. Creation is something humans receive with gratitude, but also share in as creatures among creatures. Participants reflect on encounters with nature that disclose God’s care, helping them see creation not simply as a resource but as a divine gift calling for reverence.

The session also examines communion—humanity’s shared relationship with God and all created beings. Creation is presented as the “house” where this communion unfolds and where all life praises God together. Scripture and teaching highlight that other creatures bear God’s imprint and can teach us about the Creator. Finally, the session reflects on grace through creation, showing how encounters with nature can become contemplative, healing moments that nurture spiritual awareness. Together, these themes show that creation is central to experiencing God’s love, communion and grace.

Session Activities and Resources

Session 1: Communion
Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)
- Course participants arrive. Welcome everyone – offer refreshments and make sure everyone is comfortable and can see you and the screen. Explain what will be covered this week. - Group prayer – you could use the CAFOD prayers suggested above. <i>Purpose:</i> The aim is to build community and readiness for reflection – try to set a warm tone.
Creation Discussion (15 minutes)
- Ask the participants to reflect on this question: When you think of God’s creation, what experiences, ideas or images come to mind? - They could write down their thoughts. Ask the group to share one or two reflections. <i>Purpose:</i> The aim is for the participants to think broadly about creation and their place within it. They might talk about the vastness of the universe, the smallness of an insect, the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2, how they find God in nature, or our responsibilities to look after the earth. There are no right or wrong answers!
Video: Session 1 – Communion (15 minutes)
- Play the short video “Communion” for Session 1 to the group. - Whilst the participants watch the video, ask them to think about what theme or idea stands out to them the most.

- Ask each participant to share this theme with the group, and allow space for others to reflect on each others' themes. <i>Purpose:</i> The aim here is to give people a chance to bring up what stood out to them the most, and to invite group reflection.
Break (10 minutes) Give the group a short break to stretch their legs and take some refreshments
Two Group Discussions (40 minutes)
- The group will now reflect more deeply on two areas covered in the videos and the booklet. - Select two topics from the three below, and spend 20 minutes on each topic. - You could choose the topics based on what was already discussed during the conversation following the Communion video – if one topic was covered, consider choosing a different topic.
Topic 1: Gift
- Ask the participants to read some of the quotations from pages 4-5 of the booklet. For instance, the quotes from Genesis, Pope Francis, Gregory Nazianzus, and the Patriarch Bartholomew. - Ask the group for their reflections. You could ask: How does creation show to you God's love? How does creation reveal God to you? How do you receive creation as a gift? How do you experience creation as a <i>healing gift, a gift of wonder and beauty</i>? How do you experience it as <i>very good</i>? <i>Purpose:</i> This discussion is aiming to connect the idea of the world as created to themes like gift and love, and to the ways that creation reflects God's nature. Encourage people to view creation as a gift to <i>all life</i>, not just to humans; to relate creation's beauty, or their personal experiences of awe and wonder, to a deeper understanding of God; and to see God's love in the world through the diversity of the world and our place as created beings within it.
Topic 2: Communion
- From p.6 of the booklet, ask the participants to read the scriptures from Daniel 3 and Psalm 96, and the section from Pope Francis. - Ask the group for their reflections. You could ask: How is creation a "home" for all life? How can we see other creatures as our "Kin"? How do other creatures tell us about God? In what ways does all life rejoice before God? How is the earth a place of meeting between God and all creatures? <i>Purpose:</i> The aim of this discussion is to deepen an appreciation of all life being created alongside humans, making other lifeforms creaturely kin who share in praise of God. You might encourage people to think of humans as integrated within the whole web of life; to see other lifeforms reflecting God in some way; or to imagine how we "commune" with God in this world.
Topic 3: Grace
- From p.6 of the booklet, ask the participants to read the sections from Pope John Paul II and the Society of Jesus. - Invite the participants to reflect on something in creation, such as their favourite place in nature. From this, ask the group how they experience grace through creation. <i>Purpose:</i> Here the purpose is to help the group reflect on how their positive experiences in nature have provided them with grace – moment of healing, connection and intimacy with God.
Final Thoughts and Close (10 minutes)
- Ask the group to share any final thoughts, and pray in closing. - Tell the group what will be covered in the session next week.

Part 2: Reconciliation

Session 2: Reconciliation

Session 2 focuses on how human actions have damaged God’s creation and how this harm reflects a broken relationship with God. Framed in terms of sin and alienation, the session highlights how environmental destruction—pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change—is a spiritual problem. Human greed and consumerism distort the divine image in creation and disrupt the communion for which the world was made. Participants are invited to acknowledge the emotional weight of this reality, including grief, anger, guilt and hope, as they recognise the scale of harm done to the earth.

The session then turns to the Christian call to reconciliation, exploring how broken relationships can be restored through God’s healing work. Scripture and Catholic teaching present Christ as the one who reconciles “all things” to God. Reconciliation with creation flows from reconciliation with God, calling Christians to rebuild harmony with the natural world and take responsibility for repairing what has been damaged. By the end of the session, participants will see reconciliation as both a spiritual return to God and an active commitment to healing creation.

Session Activities and Resources

Session 2: Reconciliation
Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)
- Course participants arrive. Welcome everyone – offer refreshments and make sure everyone is comfortable and can see you and the screen. Explain what will be covered this week. - Group prayer – you could use the CAFOD prayers suggested above. <i>Purpose:</i> The aim is to build community and readiness for reflection – try to set a warm tone.
Looking Back (5 minutes)
- Ask the participants to recall what stood out to them from last week. - Since this week is about environmental problems – harms to God’s creation – it is helpful to keep in mind last session’s themes, including gift, communion and grace.
Video: Session 2 – Reconciliation (15 minutes)
- Play the short video “Reconciliation” for Session 2 to the group. - Whilst the participants watch the video, ask them to think about what theme or idea stands out the most to them. - Ask each participant to share this theme with the group, and allow space for others to reflect on each others’ themes. <i>Purpose:</i> The aim here is to give people a chance to bring up what stood out to them the most, and to invite group reflection.

Harms to Creation (20 minutes) - This discussion will take a deeper dive into human-caused damage to the environment. <i>Purpose:</i> The aim is to provide context for the theology – some scientific facts help to understand what damage humans are doing to the world, and to make this relevant to us in the UK. - There are two ways you can run this discussion. Option 1: - Show the PowerPoint slides for the course that explain some of the scientific findings about harms to the planet. - Work through these gradually, and give people time to process the material. Some of the findings will be unpleasant to hear, so make sure everyone is ok as you proceed. Option 2: - Remind people of the environmental facts featured in the video: Globally, wildlife has declined 73% in the last 50 years; 20 million tonnes of plastic enter the oceans each year; Climate change is leading to extreme droughts and floods; in Britain, air pollution contributes to the early deaths of 30,000 people per year; and Britain is now one of the most nature-depleted countries on earth. - Ask the group for examples of where their own lived environments have changed negatively – there might be less green space, fewer clean rivers, less wildlife, or more rubbish and pollution.
Break (10 minutes) Give the group a short break to stretch their legs and take some refreshments
Environmental Emotions Reflection (15 minutes) - Ask the participants to read the short quote from The Patriarch Bartholomew on p.10 of the booklet where he expresses sorrow. - Ask the participants to share their own feelings following the discussion of environmental harms. - Participants might express strong negative emotions like anger, sadness or despair, as well as positive feelings like hope and optimism. Allow them freedom to express these. <i>Purpose:</i> Our feelings around God's creation are crucial for understanding deeply the problems that it faces, and for motivating people to take action to address these problems. Help the group to explore these feelings, and make sure they are all acknowledged as equally valid.
Alienation and Reconciliation (15 minutes) - Ask someone in the group to read the quote from CAFOD interview 4002 on p.11 of the booklet. - Ask the group how the harms humans have committed towards the world might be sinful, and how they show a broken relationship between humans as creatures, and God as creator. - Now ask someone to read the quote from Colossians 1, also on p.11. - Ask the group how they might see the work of Christ as reconciling humans back to God. How does this look in the case of creation? <i>Purpose:</i> You are looking to help your group make the connection between human sin and harms to the world, and then Christ's saving work, and humans being reconciled to God. The aim is to leave people with a sense of <i>hope</i> – Christ has reconciled humans to God, and that work has already been achieved. It extends to creation, and this will be explored further in the next session.
Final Thoughts and Close (10 minutes) - Ask the group to share any final thoughts, and pray in closing. - Tell the group what will be covered in the session next week.

Part 3: Redemption

Session 3: Redemption

Session 3 turns from recognition of harms to the hope of transformation. It begins by inviting participants to consider Christian conversion—an inner turning marked by sacrifice and generosity identified by Pope Francis. Through reflection on these ideas, participants explore how the healing of creation requires the transformation of the human heart: moving from consumerism toward simplicity and from self-centredness toward communion. This conversion, empowered by the Holy Spirit, aligns believers more closely with God’s redeeming presence in creation.

The session then shifts to practical action, to show how people can redeem creation through stewardship and prophetic witness. Participants consider how they might take part in this work—whether through living more simply, parish environmental work or through advocacy and public witness. The final section turns to hope, grounding ecological action in God’s promise of renewal. Through Scripture and tradition, the session affirms that creation’s restoration is part of God’s saving plan, already inaugurated in Christ.

Session Activities and Resources

Session 3: Redemption
Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)
- Course participants arrive. Welcome everyone – offer refreshments and make sure everyone is comfortable and can see you and the screen. Explain what will be covered this week. - Group prayer – you could use the CAFOD prayers suggested above. <i>Purpose:</i> The aim is to build community and readiness for reflection – try to set a warm tone.
Looking Back (5 minutes)
- Ask the participants to recall what stood out to them from last week. - Since this week is about healing environmental problems – the ways humans have harmed God’s creation – it is helpful to recall what these are.
Video: Session 3 – Redemption (15 minutes)
- Play the short video “Redemption” for Session 3 to the group. - Whilst the participants watch the video, ask them to think about what theme or idea stands out the most to them. - Ask each participant to share this theme with the group, and allow space for others to reflect on each others’ themes. <i>Purpose:</i> The aim here is to give people a chance to bring up what stood out to them the most, and to invite group reflection.

Conversion Discussion (15 minutes)
- Ask the participants to read the section from Pope Francis on p.12 of the booklet. - Ask the group for their reflections. You could ask: How can we learn to be more sacrificial, generous and willing to share? How might adopting these character traits help to heal or redeem the earth? How are these virtues exemplified in Jesus? <i>Purpose:</i> The aim is for the participants to connect the development of these “ecological virtues” into both their care for creation and their own spiritual development. If people are more sacrificial and generous with what they have, this will help us to use less, which is good for the planet. We are also drawn closer to Jesus who shows this way of living by leading a simple life lived in community amongst others, and instructs us to live this way in the Sermon on the Mount.
Break (10 minutes)
Give the group a short break to stretch their legs and take some refreshments
Taking Action: Stewardship & Prophecy (20 minutes)
- Hand out some paper and pens to the group. Ask each person to write down one or two actions that they can undertake for themselves to redeem God’s creation. - You can give your group some ideas. There are broadly two types of actions people might take: • “Stewardly” actions: e.g living more simply, reducing meat consumption, buying fewer clothing items, driving less, helping the local parish to use less carbon, or supporting biodiversity in your garden or on parish grounds. • “Prophetic” actions: e.g. signing petitions, writing to your MP, giving sermons or homilies about our environmental crises, attending a protest or demonstration, providing environmental education. - Once the group have written down their ideas, ask each person to share one or two of their ideas, and discuss how you might support each other to achieve them. Perhaps as a group you can help to encourage each other, or you can take action together in your parishes.
Hope (15 minutes)
- The final reflection will be on hope. From p.15 of the booklet, ask the group to read the sections from Revelation, Psalms, and Interview 2002. - Invite the participants to reflect on having hope for a renewed creation. What difference does it make to know God is with us, and has promised creation’s renewal? <i>Purpose:</i> You are looking to help your group to finish the formation course with a sense of hope and motivation to partner with God in redeeming creation. You could help them to see this work as being part of their “calling”; to see God’s miraculous work in what they do; and to feel like even small changes they make can make a difference when God is involved.
Final Thoughts and Close (10 minutes)
- Ask the group to share any final thoughts, and pray in closing. - With the course complete, please ask the participants to fill in the online survey.



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