# An Augustinian Guide t o

# Living the Laudato Sí Journey

**The ecological crisis is “a summons to profound interior conversion,” a reexamining of our relationships with the Creator, with creation, and with our sisters and brothers. (LS 217) This conversion process is one that unfolds over months and even years, as the Holy Spirit calls us to an ever-deeper richness of spirit.**

**The Order of St Augustine and the Province of St Thomas of Villanova have enrolled in the Vatican’s** [**Laudato Si’ Action Platform**](https://bit.ly/MercyLSAP1)  **embarking on a seven-year journey in response to Pope Francis’ call to care for our common home more fully.**

**United to the concern of the Church as expressed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’*, the Order of St Augustine commits itself to PROMOTE EDUCATION, REFLECTION AND ACTION to care for our common home…**

***Augustinian General Chapter 2019 Decree #31***

We resolve, over the next seven years, to:

1. Pray fervently and reflect assiduously on our responsibility to

care for God's creation.

1. Elaborate an action plan to integrate and confidently advance each of the seven Laudato Sf goals in our personal, communal and institutional life.
2. Educate and encourage awareness among the members of our Province, encouraging us to examine our consumption patterns and lifestyle, to adopt behaviors more consistent with our environmental concern.
3. Introduce in our community discussion and pastoral encounters the topics of sustainability, environmental justice and integral ecology as expounded on in Laudato Sí in an effort to encourage as well as live an ecological conversion.
4. Promote in our pastoral activities (homilies, conferences, workshops and classrooms) awareness, advocacy and actions to reduce our carbon footprint and embrace a culture of encounter and solidarity with those at the margins and most vulnerable and most impacted by environmental maltreatment.

**We entrust our efforts to the intercession of St Augustine, aware that the Augustinian community is called to be a prophetic sign in the world to the extent that fraternal life becomes a source of sharing and a cause for hope.**

**PLEDGE OF THE PROVINCE OF ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA**

**November 2021**

## Join us on the Journey!

**This guide is meant to help us reflect on and take action around the Laudato Sí goals:**

**Augustine placed great stress on community life. He was convinced that individualism formed the greatest obstacle to the realization of the gospel. For Augustine the first community of Jerusalem becomes an ideal for the present and the future.**

**We could characterize the Rule of Augustine as a call to the evangelical equality of all people. It voices the Christian demand to bring all women and men into full community. At the same time, it sounds an implicit protest against the inequality in a society which is so clearly marked by possessiveness, pride and power.**

**According to Augustine, a monastic community should offer an alternative to contemporary society by striving to build up a community that is not motivated by possessiveness, pride, and power, but by love for one another. In this sense, the Rule is socially critical.**

Tarcisio van Bavel, Commentary on the Rule of Augustine

1. **response to the cry of earth;**
2. **response to the cry of the poor;**
3. **ecological economics;**
4. **adoption of sustainable lifestyles;**
5. **ecological education;**
6. **ecological spirituality;**
7. **community involvement and participatory action.**

**The core teaching of the gospel and the first principle of social justice is that every person is a child of God, worthy of respect and dignity. An Augustinian community encourages each person to develop their God-given gifts in service to the community, each one contributing to build up the community through their uniqueness and diverse gifts.**

**Charity grows when the person or the community freely choose to place the greater good ahead of their own. Cooperation, collaboration and the recognition of each others’ gifts enhances the growth of the whole community. The measure of our growth in charity is found in our placing the interest of others before our own.**

### **Please tell us what you are doing around the seven goals, and send us photos, to** [www.augustinians.org](http://www.augustinians.org)

**If you are looking for more ideas for personal or community activities to promote the Laudato Sí Goals, check out what other friars and communities are doing at this same link.**

# A picture containing graphical user interface Description automatically generatedGoal One Response to the Cry of Earth

We are called to protect our common home for the well-being of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability while also promoting sustainable agriculture and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.

**This is what I love when I love my God. And what is this? I put my question to the earth, and it replied: ‘I am not God. God made us.’ My questioning was my attentive spirit, and their reply, their beauty.**

*Confessions X 9*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

Each of us has different resources that we can bring to bear when acting. Here’s the thing: small changes alone won’t save our planet. To keep the earth from warming above the critical limit, climate action needs to happen at an institutional level. But that doesn’t mean we should feel helpless, or that our actions aren’t worthwhile. Taking steps to lower our own carbon footprint may help ease our [climate anxiety](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/climate-change-anxiety-dread-cope/2021/07/14/471eb264-e4d4-11eb-b722-89ea0dde7771_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_3) by giving us back some power — and even the smallest of actions will contribute to keeping our planet habitable.

* At your dinner table or in a small group setting discuss how Laudato Si’ has or has not brought you to ecological conversion.
* How has Laudato Si’ brought you to a closer understanding of others, human and nonhuman, and God? Has it helped you to act on caring for earth?
* How am I already responding to the cry of earth?
* How can I/my community promote the adoption of renewable energy or better promote energy conservation?

**Possible Actions to Respond to the Cry of the Earth:**

a) Decrease paper towel use

b) Choose one day of the week to not eat meat.

c) Reduce the use of plastic bottles

d) Use cloth napkins

e) Plan a [litter pilgrimage](https://ignatiansolidarity.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8e141d38e4bb12b990251e274&id=568ef25887&e=2b430ccfb8) in your community or do a personal litter pilgrimage.

f) Investigate installing solar energy at your home, school, or parish.

These suggestions are just a few of many possibilities. Follow where the Spirit leads!

Share your thoughts with your friends and family and help them take steps to make their lives a little more climate-friendly.

# Goal Two A picture containing application Description automatically generated Response to the Cry of the Poor

*We are called to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on earth.*

**Do you think it’s a small matter that you are eating someone else’s food? We brought nothing into this world, you have found a full table spread for you. God bestows the world on the poor, he bestows it on the rich.**

*Sermon 29, 2*

**EXCERPTS FROM AUGUSTINE’S WAY OF LIFE (RULE) THAT ADDRESS THIS GOAL:**

**Do not look down on others.**

**Glory in the companionship of the less privileged.**

**No one should work at anything for themselves alone.**

**Love puts the common good before its own.**

**Pride lies in ambush even for good deeds.**

**Honor God in one another whose temples you have become. (**Chapter 1)

**The possession of goodness is by no means diminished by being shared; on the contrary, it is increased in proportion to the concord and charity of each of those who share it.**

*City of God XV, 5*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

* How are we already responding to the Cry of the Poor? What additional ideas do you have to promote a response to the Cry of the Poor in our community?
* As we reflect on where we live, what communities and people are most directly affected by pollution and climate change?
* What are local environmental issues unique to our community that impact the health of our neighbors and our local ecosystem?

**Augustinian Texts on the Preferential Option for the Poor**

“God does not demand much of you. He asks back what he gave you, and from him you take what is enough for you. The superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. When you possess superfluities, you possess what belongs to others.” (Exposition on Psalm 147, 12).

“Christ who is rich in heaven *chose* to be hungry in the poor. Yet in your humanity you hesitate to give to your fellow human being. Don’t you realize that what you give, you give to Christ, from whom you received whatever you have to give in the first place.” *Commentary on Psalm 75,9*

“*Whenever you did it for one of the least of mine, you did it for me*. Christ has received what you have given; it has been received by the one who gave you the means to give it; it has been received by the one who at the end will give you himself.” (Sermon 389,4)

“Go on making use of your special, expensive foods, because you have got into the bait of them, because if you change your habits you get sick. Go on making use of your superfluities, but give the poor their necessities. He looks to you, you look to God. He looks to a hand that was made as he was, you look to a hand that made you. But it didn’t only make you, it also made the poor man with you. He gave you both this life as a single road to travel along. You have found yourselves companions, walking along the same road; he’s carrying nothing, you have an excessive load. He’s carrying nothing with him, you are carrying more than you need. You are overloaded; give him some of what you’ve got. At a stroke, you feed him and lessen your load. So give to the poor; I’m begging you, I’m warning you, I’m commanding you, I’m ordering you. Give to the poor whatever you like.” (Sermon 389,5-6)

“You give bread to a hungry person; but it would be better were no one hungry, and you could give it to no one. You clothe the naked person. Would that all were clothed and this necessity did not exist.” (Tractate 1 John 8,8).

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

* + Get involved with a local organization that is addressing environmental injustice or the needs of people who are poor.
  + Build into your budget donations to organizations that are addressing environmental injustice or the needs of people who are poor.
  + Advocate for socially and environmentally just policies.

# A picture containing icon Description automatically generatedGoal Three Ecological Economics

*We acknowledge that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere—our common home. We care faced with the challenge of putting the economy at the service of the people and not the people at the service of the economy.*

**EXCERPTS FROM AUGUSTINE’S WAY OF LIFE (RULE) THAT ADDRESS THIS GOAL**

**You should not try to please by your clothes but by your behavior. Clothing should be a matter of indifference to you. (Chapter 3)**

**Love, which abides forever, will reign in all matters of passing necessity. (Chapter 5)**

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

**God of all, may we be moved to tap into the countless ways that human ingenuity, animated by your Spirit, has allowed us to collectively live more sustainably on the earth, protecting the dignity of people and planet. We pray that we always prioritize the dignity and rights of workers as we make purchasing decisions in our families and communities, and that we consider how our financial investments impact the health of the planet.**

* + How do we mindfully purchase items that are produced in ways that provide a living wage to the people who make them and that are environmentally sustainable? How might we improve in this?
  + How do the ways that we invest and spend money demonstrate our concern for the environment, a commitment to workers, and to people most vulnerable to the harms of climate change and environmental degradation?
  + How can we support circular economies, which minimize waste by reusing and refurbishing materials and goods rather than throwing them away and buying brand-new?

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

* + Purchase fair trade goods—such as coffee, tea and chocolate— that prioritize workers’ rights, safe working conditions and just pay.
  + Support our local economy by buying from local stores and farmers.
  + Look into the gift economy and sharing of goods and services.

# Goal Four Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

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Description automatically generatedThis is grounded in the idea of sufficiency and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy.*

As we attempt to live more simply, Laudato Si’ reminds us to follow the “little way of love” of St. Therese of Lisieux and that “An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms.”  
  
**EXCERPTS FROM AUGUSTINE’S WAY OF LIFE (RULE) THAT ADDRESS THIS GOAL**

**It is better to need less than to have more. The less you need the more fitting it is. (Chapter 3)**

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

* How are we already promoting the adoption of sustainable lifestyles? What additional ideas do we have to promote adoption of sustainable lifestyles in our community or family?
* What does it mean to live simply, and to promote sobriety in the use of resources and energy?
* What next step might we take to reduce waste, eat more plant-based or locally sourced meals, reduce our car and airplane travel, or minimize the use of plastics?
* In what ways could we reduce waste at community events? Have we considered the following options: opting for reusable items, providing composting, and more clearly labeling and educating on recycling?
* Are there opportunities to become more sustainable in our dietary habits by opting for more plant-based and/or locally-sourced meals at some of our events or family meals?

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

* Find one reusable alternative for a disposable product you use often in your daily life or in your community.
* Commit to walking, biking, or public transit for one trip you would have taken by car this week.
* Improving sustainability in our home and buildings by installing cleaner or more eﬃcient lighting, reducing use of heating and air conditioning, and installing low-ﬂow taps
* Improving sustainability in diets by reducing food waste before and after market, composting, buying food from local producers when possible, and transitioning from meat-based to plant-based meals
* Improving sustainability in consumer purchases by eliminating the use of disposable plastic and styrofoam, correctly recycling as much as possible, and reducing purchases of new consumer goods

# A picture containing icon Description automatically generatedGoal Five Ecological Education

*This is about rethinking and redesigning curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action.*

"Ecological Education is about re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Actions could include ensuring equitable access to education for all and promoting human rights, fostering Laudato Si’ themes within the community, encouraging ecological leadership (students, teachers), and ecological restoration activities."

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

* How are we already promoting ecological education? What additional ideas do you have to promote ecological education in our community?
* How are you educating yourself and others about environmental issues?
* How can we better provide educational opportunities about environmental issues for members of our community?
* How might we integrate ecological education into our classes, homilies, or other areas of our community life?

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

* Develop Laudato Si’ learning opportunities.
* Weaving Laudato Si’ themes into the community's communications by regularly highlighting them in newsletters/bulletins and on social media and by encouraging community members to develop Laudato Si’ Plans
* Delivering equitable access to education by ensuring under-represented groups are educated, shaping education programs with a wide variety of people, oﬀering culturally appropriate and/or alternative forms of education, and ensuring that education promotes human rights and dignity
* Create a Laudato Si’ Corner in your bulletin or newsletter with opportunities for members of your community to learn more about ecological issues and how they can act.
* Address care for creation in their homily using Catholic Climate Covenant's [homily helpers](https://ignatiansolidarity.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8e141d38e4bb12b990251e274&id=28a8687ab1&e=2b430ccfb8).

# Goal Six Ecological Spirituality

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*This springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to “discover God in all things,” both in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of*

*the sick and the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities.*

**EXCERPTS FROM AUGUSTINE’S WAY OF LIFE (RULE) THAT ADDRESS THIS GOAL**

**Persevere faithfully in prayer. When you pray to God meditate in the heart on what is expressed by your lips. (Chapter 2)**

**Ears should hunger for the Word of God. (Chapter 3)**

**God who dwells within you will protect you from within yourselves (Chapter 4)**

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

* How can we better integrate ecological spirituality into our prayer life?
* Do we promote creation-based liturgical celebrations or provide time for members of our community to pray outdoors or to intentionally reflect on creation?
* How do we already practice ecological spirituality? What additional ideas do you have to promote ecological spirituality in our community?

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS Possible Actions Related to Ecological Spirituality:**

* As Pope Francis suggests in Laudato Si’, consider saying a prayer of thanksgiving before and after meals.
* Celebrating the Season of Creation by publicly praying for our social and ecological redemption during the season, developing an annual Season of Creation practice
* Encouraging community reﬂection on Laudato Si’ themes by having the leader of the community speak about them, including them in the celebration of liturgical moments, and making study and prayer guides available.
* Praying in nature by blessing a natural space as a reﬂection/meditation area and regularly praying there, hosting an outdoor prayer service, and creating a prayer journal, bulletin board, or other way of recording and sharing prayers made in nature.

# Goal Seven Community Involvement and Participatory Action

**A picture containing graphical user interface

Description automatically generated***Community resilience and empowerment envisage a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels.*  
**God of resurrection,** we ask for the grace to collaborate with members of our community and all people who are working towards ecological justice and restoration. We pray for the spirit of discernment as we consider how our unique talents and vocations can support our community in this endeavor. Through our own discernment and engagement, we pray that we can empower others to see their own gifts and to act for ecological justice.

**EXCERPTS FROM AUGUSTINE’S WAY OF LIFE (RULE) THAT ADDRESS THIS GOAL**

**Do not have quarrels or at least bring them to an end as quickly as possible. Apologize as soon as possible. (Chapter 6)**

**Correct one another with love of the person and hatred of the offense. (Chapter 4)**

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

* How am I or my local religious community, family or ministry joining with others to respond to social and ecological crises?
* How is our parish/religious community currently engaged in advocacy at the local and national level? How does this advocacy speak to the realities of our community/neighborhood?
* How can we better encourage a sense of rootedness and belonging in our local community?
* How do we already promote empowerment and advocacy? What additional ideas do you have to promote community resilience and empowerment in our faith community, and beyond to the wider community?

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

* Developing a social response to shared challenges by collaborating with leaders to identify ways the Church can support your social/ecological programs and developing a community coalition to prepare for and respond to emergent social crises
* Engaging the wider public by organizing social/ecological events, regularly exploring the local ecosystem as a group, and writing for local newspapers or commenting on local news stories related to Laudato Si’ themes
* Developing resilience by analyzing the physical, social, and spiritual ways your community is likely to be aﬀected by climate change and biodiversity loss and making a plan to resiliently prepare for those changes, ensuring buildings are prepared for changes in heat, storm intensity, and sea-level rise, and ensuring members of the community are able to travel to other locations in the event of a weather emergency
* Partner with other local religious communities, families, parishes or ministries to organize educational events around social and ecological issues.
* Join with others to prepare for meeting emerging crises related to forced migration, the impacts of climate change, spread of illness, increased hunger and homelessness, and other issues.

**So to be an Augustinian means to follow Christ in an Augustinian fashion: in a personal, ongoing relationship and process of conversion. Always “on the way”, never fully arrived, walking in the footsteps of Augustine, informed, and enhanced by his personal (and communal) experience. That ongoing relationship and conversion process is what can speak to us across the centuries to help us better understand how a follower of Christ can interpret the world in which we live. We follow Christ, along with Augustine, and to the extent that Augustine’s experience enlightens us on that path, we are Augustinians, following Christ in an Augustinian fashion.**

### Please tell us what you are doing around the seven goals, and send us photos, to [www.augustinians.org](http://www.augustinians.org)