**For immediate release**

**New digital storytelling resource helps Catholics to explore ecology and their faith during coronavirus lockdown.**

A new initiative to help connect Catholics to the ecological teachings of the Church has been launched as part of the Catholic Church’s celebration of *Laudato Si’* week on the 16-24 May. Eco-Catholic.com is a new online storytelling resource made up of animations, prayer reflections and talks to help Catholics explore and engage with the ecological dimension of their faith.

Pope Francis, who has marked Laudato Si’ week as a time of reflection and action on the ecological crisis, is urging Catholics worldwide to work together to protect our common home. With much of the planned events and celebrations disrupted due to the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns, Catholics are being encouraged to celebrate this week online. Eco-Catholic, alongside other Catholic partners, are providing a suite of digital resources throughout the week to help Catholics respond to Pope Francis’ urgent call during the ongoing lockdown.

This new initiative, launched by the Jesuits in Britain and CAFOD, offers Catholics a simple and engaging way to connect with the teachings of the Church through digital storytelling. With much of the Church’s teaching on ecology often overlooked or even misunderstood, the ambition of Eco-Catholic is to bridge this knowledge gap through a series of explainer animations that guide viewers through a range of ecological themes and topics taken from Laudato Si’ and the recent Amazon Synod that took place in October last year.

The animations take on a range of ecological based themes and topics explored in Church teaching including an introduction to integral ecology, exploring what the Church means by an ecological conversion, unpacking the technocratic paradigm and discovering what living simply means from a Christian perspective. These resources are ideally suited for individual reflection at home, or can be shared online with others to spread the messages found in Church teaching.

The animations, reflections and website, created by the storytelling agency Ministory, are specifically designed to start a new conversation on ecology and the Catholic faith, as director of Ministory Kieran O’Brien, explains:

“I think what we are trying to do with Eco-Catholic is the essential work of connecting and integrating the ecological messages, found within Church teaching, with a wider audience. There still remains, even on the 5th anniversary of the encyclical Laudato Si’, much confusion and misunderstandings with the Church’s ecological teachings.

For ecology is not to be confused with environmentalism, as ecology is about understanding the relationship of all living things and their environment. From a Catholic perspective ecology takes on an integrated approach, where all the global problems we see today, both social and environmental, are seen as deeply interconnected.

This is why the teachings of the Catholic Church on ecological matters is a wonderful gift, not only to Catholics who wish to deepen their faith, but also to the world. For these teachings are not about offering technical solutions to the ecological crisis, but rather a deeper and profound reflection on who we are, where we belong and how are connected to each other, as well as with God’s creation.

This conversation and shift in how we view and relate to our natural world is essential for the future of humanity, especially in the face of the very real and serious threats from climate change, pollution, increasing social inequality, rising poverty and the potential for ecological breakdown. The urgency to reflect on our relationship with the natural world, as well as with our global neighbours, is needed now more than ever. And perhaps our current state of lockdown offers us this opportunity to reflect.”

Julian Filochowski, the chair for the Jesuit Fund for Social Justice, says:

“Eco-Catholic provides a wonderful treasure trove of clear, concise, and easily accessible resources to view and study - at home or in the classroom. They will surely encourage us, young and old alike, to take up the challenge Pope Francis has put before us all. That is to hear and to respond, with all our hearts, to ‘the cry of the earth’ and ‘the cry of the poor’ as we move with cautious hope into a new post-Covid19 world.”

Linda Jones, CAFOD’s Head of Theology, said:

“I can still remember how excited I was five years ago when I first read *Laudato Si’*. It was full of ideas and written in a style that was easy to understand. Pope Francis challenges us, then and now, to think differently about progress, and to renew our commitment to bring about positive change for our neighbours and for the earth – our common home.

“He reminds us of how interconnected we all are – and how important it is to become more attentive to our relationships with God, each other and the earth. What kind of world do we want to leave behind for our children, and for all future generations?

“This call to care for our common home was a great challenge: to change not only our minds but also our hearts – a true ecological conversion.’’

As the Catholic Church has undergone a huge transformation in its approach to ecological matters since the release of *Laudato Si’* in 2015, there still is a long way to go to help Catholics understand and explore this new integrated approach to tackling both the social and environmental issues we face today. This new approach, referred to as *integral ecology,* has been the guiding principle at the recent Synod of the Pan-Amazonian region which took place last year. Pope Francis suggests that this is the only pathway forward for the Church in the world today if we are to tackle both the social and ecological crises we face today.

For more information go to eco-catholic.com or follow Eco-Catholic on [Youtube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEoMuR9b2yQ61FDjQ9hMeVQ?view_as=subscriber), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/eco_catholic), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/catholicecology) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/eco_catholic/) @eco\_catholic.

Notes to editors:

* Eco-Catholic is a new initiative funded by Jesuits in Britain and CAFOD, with the exclusive aim of raising the profile of the Catholic Church’s teaching on ecology, with special reference to the Amazon Synod.
* Ministory is the storytelling agency that developed the resources, including the animations, reflections, website and some of the talks.
* Eco-Catholic resources can be found on most social media channels, including YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram with the following handle @eco\_catholic
* Laudato Si’ week is an initiative form the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and supported by Pope Francis.
* Contact [hello@eco-catholic.com](mailto:hello@eco-catholic.com) or Kieran O’Brien on 079 193 10832 for further information.
* Throughout Laudato Si’ week Eco-Catholic will be delivering a week-long promotion of ecological ideas and concepts found in Church teaching through animations and video reflections. The following themes are:
  + Sat 16th May – Launch. ‘What has ecology got to do with Catholicism?’
  + Sun 17th May – Prayer. ‘Prayer for the Earth’ by Pope Francis.
  + Mon 18th May – Coronavirus and ecology, ‘Liminal space’
  + Tues 19 May – Integral ecology, ‘What is integral ecology?’
  + Wed 20 May – Living simply, ‘What do we mean by living simply?’
  + Thurs 21 May – Technocratic paradigm, ‘Why is the Amazon burning?’
  + Fri 22 May – Ecological conversion, ‘What is an ecological conversion?’
  + Sat 23 May – Go deeper, ‘How to take action with Eco-Catholic’

Visual assets to accompany this press release can be found at <https://eco-catholic.com/media/>

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Available for speaking, further comment, interview.