

'Laudato Si' week Celebrations 2021

"Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs." (St. Francis of Assisi)

Dalhousie

At a time when the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are becoming increasingly intense, 'Laudato Si' week offered us the perfect opportunity to take care of our common Home. Every celebration and event brings joy and happiness and leaves an indelible mark on the lives of all. The 'Laudato Si' week (16-24th May, 2021) was the crowning event of the 6th anniversary of the release of Pope Francis' Encyclical. The theme of the year: **"for we know that things can change"** gave us hope in the seemingly hopeless situation of the world today. The celebration of the 'Laudato Si' week was a clarion call to each one of us to effect an ecological conversion, it meant to say a change of hearts and minds that lead us to recognize every part of Creation as our kin was essential, and to develop a spirituality of communion with the whole of Creation. It also meant that we need to change our life style and take action for the preservation and flourishing of God's Creation individually and as societies and faith communities.

Dalhousie community had weeklong activities to celebrate the 'Laudato Si' week. The Sisters were divided into groups of 2 and each group was given a theme. Based on the theme, each group used their initiative and creativity and involved the whole community in the prayer and reflection of every day. Hymns and power point presentations gave clarity to the themes. Every day the prayer was concluded with prayer for the earth and "Laudato Si" song.



The theme of the first day was "A New Dialogue". The prayer began by gathering at the entrance of the chapel where everyone received articles like images of globe, animals, birds, sun, moon, maps etc. All his brothers and sisters including us were present to celebrate God's wonderful world. Birds, butterflies and insects sensed that there was something strange happening and so they too joined us.

Indeed "Creation appeared as a magnificent book in which God has written glimpses of the infinite beauty and goodness of His creation. The world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated. Thanksgiving prayers and songs made the prayer alive and active.

On the third day the theme "Plight of the poor" was presented well and we were made to reflect and answer certain questions. The cry of the earth is inseparable from the cry of the poor. The chapel was decorated to fit in the theme. "A world befitting human dignity" was highlighted through a power point presentation, video clips and songs along with explanations on the theme on the fourth day. Sisters were involved in sharing reflections and prayers.



The chapel was decorated well to depict the theme "Cultivating the common good." One of the phrases Pope Francis uses to discuss his vision of true progress is "Integral ecology". Integral ecology refers to the way we are interconnected with each other, with all other creatures, and with the rest of creation itself and we are entrusted with the task of developing a harmonious whole. Integral ecology is inseparable from common good. A few psalms from the Bible were made use of in explaining the theme.

To share the fifth day's theme "Instruments of peace, beauty and fullness", we were transported to the work room. An introduction on the theme was presented by the group. The room was beautifully decorated. Our Founders, Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Francis of Assisi, Tagore, Mother Teresa, Abdul Kalam and Indira Gandhi found a place among flowers and plants with lighted diyas in front of them. They were made alive with their speeches on peace at various international forums through video clips. It was breath taking as they spoke to our hearts. It was an awe inspiring experience. And on the sixth day the theme "Against consumption" was shared through a vivid power point presentation, readings, songs and video clips. After consuming fast food and other things, how we litter the place with disposable items disregarding our mother earth, rivers and seas, endangering our own lives and that of others.

In order to explain the theme of the seventh day "Towards a new life style", three segments of life styles were created. The first one depicting the Garden of Eden, the second the current situation and the 3rd the new life style that we envisage. From a place of happiness we moved towards the present situation where there is war and violence, poverty, drugs, deforestation and the Covid 19 which was highlighted through mono-acting. This was followed by penitential prayers. From here we moved to a new life style that was represented by all the values we need to attain it. God raises up a Prophet at this juncture to conscientize people of all walks of life about the present situation and motivates them to join hands to build a new world order, a new way of life by holding on to a globe, representing a world where everyone is equal and lives in love and peace. During this time, the SCJM response to the new life style was read out. Songs and

The theme for the last day was “Both joyful and troubling”. We started the procession from the chapel, holding lighted lamps and reached the grotto where we placed the lamps in front of our Blessed Mother. The grotto and surrounding areas were decorated according to the theme. The leader made the meaning of the theme clear by sharing extracts from Laudato Si and other reflections of Pope Francis along with songs. The prayer was concluded with a dance by everyone to the tune of Laudato Si.

Since we had been reflecting on “Laudato Si” time and again, it has taken deep roots in us. We have grown in awareness and our responsibility to create a new heaven and earth for ourselves and for the coming generations. We cherish the richness of the book as we read it and reflect on it. We thank God for the gift of our Holy Father whose daring spirit gives expression to his thoughts. We are conscious of the deep problems we are faced with and are determined to do our little.

Sr. Gemma, Dalhousie

Sangrur

The celebration of Laudato Si week started with meditation on nature: listening to the chirpings of a variety of birds early in the morning and reveling in the pleasant cool breeze. Seated in our chapel we could view the enthralling beauty and bounty of nature, and experience the ineffable peace and serenity. In the clean, cool, peaceful and fresh atmosphere, recitation of the Rosary and evening prayer led us to experience the presence of the Divine in His magnificent creation. During the evening prayer we also had meditation on environment, global warming and effects of Covid-19, in India and the world.

Besides meditating upon and praying with the nature, we also spent quality time in taking care of and nurturing the nature by engaging in gardening. Along with a variety of plants and trees, we are fortunate to have some lovely pet animals in our campus. All these beautiful creatures directly keep us in touch with the creation of God and fill our hearts with love for the environment. In our education apostolate too, even in the present scenario of online classes, we don't fail to encourage and inspire our students and their families to preserve and conserve our environment. This is actualized by meaningful and contextual online celebration of Earth Day and Environment Day through class assemblies. A number of our students and their families have started taking keen interest in gardening and they have begun to appreciate the beauty of nature and take care of it.

The celebration of Laudato Si week helped us to be deeply in touch with the environment. It calls us forth to understand the difference between using and abusing the gifts and bounties of nature. We are intrigued to be its care takers in our own context and in our own little ways rather than plundering it of its richness and beauty.

Sr. Saroj Toppo, Sangrur

Edappally

On the occasion of Laudato Si Week 2021, the Sisters at Edappally, together with the inmates of Caritas Home and helpers had a prayer meeting on 24th May. We had a meal too, together with the inmates and the helpers. The gathering area was decorated with plants and quotations taken from 'Laudato Si'. Due to the spread of pandemic we had only one day of coming together. On the other days we followed the talks and discussions on the suggested web site. The prayer began with a bhajan praising the Creator of the Universe for his marvelous creation that we enjoy today. Sr. Mary George gave an introduction and invited everyone to be united with the nature and protect it always.

Sr. Annie Davis conducted the prayer in a creative way. A video clip on 'The Last War', a drama written in the 1935 by Neil Grant was screened. The drama depicts how human beings destroy their own brothers and sisters. Its message is very relevant even today, as we go through the pandemic which believed to be caused by human greed and enmity.



The Universe does not belong to the humans only but to all the created beings. Humanity was never given unlimited authority over creation. Human beings endowed with intelligence and supposed to be filled with Christ are called upon to lead all the creatures back to their Creator. Psalm 8 was part of the prayer, where it speaks about human as the crown of creation. The prayer also included reconciliation with the whole creation, asking forgiveness from God, all the created beings and nature for the destruction we have caused towards them. We also had intercessory prayers and songs on Laudato Si, songs of encouragement and motivation to see a better tomorrow. All of these gave the message that 'this time will also pass away, and a better tomorrow will dawn'. The Prayer meeting concluded with a Jubilee song composed by Sr. Sajitha.

Sr. Annie Davis, Edappally

Kauli

The community spent the week (16 – 24 May) specially focusing on the different aspects of the nature, the creation of the Almighty and the various ways we are connected to it. During the week we read a few chapters from the encyclical of Pope Francis, 'Laudato Si'. Four days during the evening prayer we focused on the creation. Two days were spent in thanking the Creator for the rich resources that we receive from the mother earth, relating it to the scripture and reflecting specially on Genesis

Ch.1: the creation story and Psalm 104. One day was spent in praying for those affected by the natural calamities and the pandemic Covid -19 based on Mk. 4: 37-41: (Jesus calming the storm). On the last day of the week we had the creation Rosary and reflected on the various aspects of the Encyclical 'Laudato Si'.



Sr. Ligi Joseph, Kauli

Mathur

The Mathur community decided to choose two important topics: **Sowing hope for the planet/ Destruction and Restoration and Pentecost and Pandemic** for the 'Laudato Si' week celebration.

May 22nd is observed as International Bio- Diversity Day across the Globe to raise awareness about the endangered species, flora and fauna and the depleting bio-diversity. Accordingly, we chose the theme Destruction and Restoration for our evening prayer. The mother earth cries out to us now because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use of the resources with which God has endowed us. As first part of the prayer Service every sister offered a symbol representing the resources of the earth, which she has not taken care of such as, water, fruits, vegetables, electricity, plastic, time and so on. Every one begged forgiveness from God for the misuse of these things and took the following resolutions.

- ◆ Avoiding single use plastic; reducing food waste and use of pesticides
- ◆ Minimizing the use of water and electricity.
- ◆ Using time constructively
- ◆ Keeping the surroundings green and clean
- ◆ Being respectful towards the environment and every person.
- ◆ Helping the less privileged with the finance collected, as a result of the sacrifices made by the community (Meals for the inmates of the Institute of the Blind).
- ◆ Making the best use of the wastes such as used tea leaves, banana peels, egg shells, flowers, leaves and neem seeds as manure for plants.

This occasion gave us the opportunity to enhance our knowledge about the bio- diversity and endangered species and take vital steps to save them.



The second theme 'Pentecost and Pandemic' was chosen on 23rd May~ the day the church celebrated the feast of Pentecost. The altar was decorated in a befitting and inspiring manner. The globe on the altar represented the world and it was an appeal to the Holy Spirit to have mercy on His children by eradicating corona Virus from the face of the earth and healing all those who are affected by it. Relevant thought provoking and inspiring extracts were read out and hymns to the Holy Spirit were sung to make us all to uplift our hearts and minds to God.

An experience of Pentecost that helps us to live a spiritual life free from sin and selfishness is the need of the time. Covid 19 pandemic is a wakeup call from above to stop our ego and pride and rise above the path of injustice, inequality, immorality, greed, hatred etc that are ungodly in us. "If you cannot journey outside get inside". True, it's the time God has given us to kick start an inward journey and discover 'who' we are and 'where' we belong to, 'where' lies our identity' and change our behaviour and direction.

This celebration strengthened us to take seriously the Covid 19 protocols, to safeguard ourselves and others from the pandemic. We also decided to pray earnestly and more often for all those affected by Covid and for the departed souls of all who have died recently due to Covid.

Sr. Marietta, Mathur

St. Mary's, Jammu

St. Mary's community, Jammu came together for the celebration of its journey to ecological conversion which began already at the launch of the encyclical 'Laudato Si'. The community had the prayers based on the theme "*for we know that things can change*" (*Laudato Si' 13*).

In solidarity with the Global Catholic community, we had the prayer for the whole world throughout the year as the Covid-19 is still devastating the peace of humanity. This pandemic has taught us or has shown us the real meaning of 'Cor Unum Anima Una'. We thank God for making us stewards of his creation, our Common Home. We became aware more than ever before that we are connected to the earth, i.e. creatures depend on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other. We need everyone around because God is reflected in all that exists. We also realized that every act of cruelty towards any creature is contrary to human dignity. Jesus lived his life on earth in full harmony with the creation. So being His followers, we are invited to do the same. The Eucharist is a source of

light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of the whole creation. Hence we felt that celebrating the Eucharist meaningfully is one way of joining with the entire creation. It is God who called us to a generous commitment to care for our common home and his love impels us to find new ways forward.

It was very inspiring and challenging to go through the material found in the suggested webpages. The topic for each day was made available to the sisters and each one was asked to go through it and get herself updated with what is happening around. We were inspired by the enthusiasm and interest of the people around the world who really work towards preserving and caring for the Mother Earth. A genuine interest is created and there is an eagerness to educate ourselves more on this topic and do whatever we can to protect our planet. So, we have taken a few concrete steps to live by like, read the encyclical 'Laudato Si' once again in the course of this year, say a serious no to plastic or any other non-degradable material, reduce water and electricity consumption, proper waste management, cooking only what can be consumed so that there is no waste of food, etc.

Sr. Preethy Varghese, St. Mary's, Jammu

Thenery

The Thenery community celebrated the Laudato Si Week by prayer, certain activities and decisions at community and personal levels. Sisters took turns to conduct the evening prayer creatively on different themes connected to ecology. It was a journey through creation. We thanked God every day for creating this Universe especially for our mother earth which provides us everything that sustains our life. We asked pardon from God for not taking proper care of it as good and faithful stewards instead, disfiguring & destroying it for our selfish ends.

Wayanad is the Green Paradise famous for its natural beauty and exotic greenery and we are blessed to have a variety of natural resources for our daily use. So, with a sense of gratitude, on the first day we inaugurated the Laudato Si week by offering some of the things from the garden: fruits, plants, spices, flowers, herbs etc, and thanked God for the vital role they play in our lives and the inspiration we draw from it. A few days we prayed with psalms on creation and felt the strength, power, might, care, concern, love, beauty etc. of the Creator manifested in them. Some days our prayer was on the elements of the nature: air, water and fire which are essential commodities for our existence.



Goalpara

“Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.” (St. Francis of Assisi)

With sentiments of gratitude the Goalpara community began the celebration of the “Laudato Si Week” (May 16-24, 2021). The weeklong celebration of this event provided us with many opportunities to make conscious efforts to renew our relationship with our Creator and all the creatures through prayer and concrete actions. Each of us took turns to conduct the Liturgy of this special week on different elements of Nature without which life is not possible for us and without the Creator these elements cannot exist at all. The Word of God, creation psalms and hymns in the beautifully decorated chapel lifted our hearts to God in praise & worship for the wonderful nature which provides us with fresh air, variety of food grains, fruits, vegetables, medicines and refreshing waters. Besides, beautification of both the vegetable and flower gardens by Sisters Anita and Ajita, thorough cleaning of the compound with the help of the parishioners and having a community reconciliation session were very beneficial activities which marked the Laudato Si week celebration.



Both at the personal as well as community level, we made conscious efforts to read and inform ourselves on the topic of ECO crisis and motivated one another in our community to take care of our planet Earth. It was also a time to remind ourselves to continue making consistent efforts to practice asceticism, to say no to our greed in any form which causes alienation our Creator and our fellow human beings.

We concluded this special week with a well-prepared prayer service. As a result of the above mentioned spiritual exercises, we have certainly gained some awareness which will make us more responsible towards our Mother Earth.

Sr. Sherly Paul, Goalpara

Pathankot

“God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31)

The creator God is present in the universe in every tiny particle. And we need His eyes to see, His ears to hear and a heart that beats along with the rhythm of the nature.

During the Laudato Si' week 2021, the Pathankot community tried to understand deeply our with

connectedness with God and Nature and the responsibility God has entrusted to us when He blessed us with His command, " Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen.1:28). But we have lost our connectedness with the Nature and have forgotten our responsibility to care for and preserve the earth for the future generation.

To be closer to the nature we had nature meditation and prayer on nature in our garden during the 'Laudato Si' week. We set apart time to admire the beauty of the trees, plants, fruit trees, vegetables and the variety of birds which we have in abundant in our compound, and appreciated the people who are taking care of the garden, farm and maintaining the plantation daily.

In our daily evening prayer we reflected upon different articles from 'Laudato Si' . We concluded our daily prayers with Prayer for our earth (Pope Francis, Laudato Si)

Sr. Anita, Pathankot

Pattikalyana

"Love is not the creation of life. Life is the creation of love." Dipsikha D.

Pattikalyana community celebrated the 6th anniversary of 'Laudato Si' week (16th - 24th of May) in a meaningful way. Each day we were one with the whole world and listened to the talks on different themes which enriched and inspired us to have more love and care for our common home, the mother earth. Different video clips enabled us to admire and appreciate the beauty of nature. It also awakened in us the ways to restore harmony in the nature.



On 24th May, in the evening, we had the concluding prayer service. We reflected on the marvels and wonders of creation, which enabled us to renew our commitment to be good stewards of our common home. We also meditated and contemplated upon the cradle of nature. The Word of God and the hymns awakened in us and made us realize the way we are united with every creature in our planet Earth. We reflected upon Pope Francis' encyclical and the five elements of nature - earth, air, fire, sun and water which helped us to become aware of how selfish and self-centered we had been.

We concluded our prayer service in a symbolic way by expressing our love and care for the nature and to this cosmos by sowing seeds in the soil which would signify new life, growth and hope for the future.

Sr. Rose Ekka, Pattikalyana

Jaipur

The community at Jaipur spent quality time to dwell on the teachings of Pope Francis on care for our common home – the Earth. God is present in everything in nature and hence we decided to have our prayer in the lap of the nature, in our beautiful garden. The Covid -19 pandemic has in some ways given us the chance to develop a new way of living.

The theme of the prayer service was “Listen to the voice of the nature and take care of the whole creation”. We started the prayer with a Hymn of creation. That was followed by reflections based on ‘Laudato Si’. This helped us to get into the mood of prayer, to experience Gods’ creation very closely, listen to the voice of God in creation and to remember that we are part of this interconnected web of life, not its masters. As a symbol of taking care of the nature, we all took care of the trees and plants in the garden.



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It was an occasion to be sorry for our negligence and ask God pardon and forgiveness for misusing the beauty of the creation and destroying the nature for human need and greed. We concluded our prayer with a thanksgiving hymn for the beautiful creation.

Juliet Lakra, Jaipur

Laudato Si urges us to acknowledge “our contribution smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and the destruction of creation, to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God’s world needs...” (Laudato Si.8, 9)

(to be continued...)