



FRANCISCAN FRIARS
Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Canticle of the Creatures and Integral Ecology: A Reflection Guide





Introduction

In 2025, the Franciscan family celebrates the 800th anniversary of St. Francis’s Cantic of the Creatures. This sung poem praising God through a naming of elements in creation reminds us of the centrality of relationships received from God in our Franciscan spiritual and moral approach to this world.

St. Francis’s recognition of the integral relatedness of all created reality was a building block for Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’*, published 10 years ago this year. The pope writes: “(St.) Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology and take us to the heart of what it is to be human.” (*Laudato Si*, 11)

As followers of Jesus, in the manner of St. Francis, we are compelled mark these two anniversaries. However, we also recognize that our Franciscan Spiritual Heritage is not an artifact of the past to be merely admired – rather it is a living tradition that helps us to discern how to live authentically today. We look to the past, in order to discern how to live in the present and for tomorrow.

This video and the accompanying reflection guide are provided to help groups and individuals celebrate and be moved by the Cantic and *Laudato Si’* and determine what is ours to do.

(Note: The video is approximately 46 minutes long. If this is too long for one setting, there is a logical break at 22:25.)

Before watching the video, proclaim the Cantic aloud. After this proclamation, enjoy the video; then following the video, recite the Cantic again.

CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES

Most High, all-powerful,
good Lord,
yours is the praise,
the glory and the honor and every blessing.

To you alone, Most High,
do they belong,
and no one is worthy
to speak your name.

Praised be you, my Lord
with all your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
who is the day through whom
you bring us light.

And he is lovely, shining
with great splendor,
for he heralds you, Most High.
Praised be you, my Lord,
through Sister Moon and Stars.
In heaven you have formed them,
lightsome and precious and fair.

And praised be you, my Lord,
through Brother Wind, through
air and cloud, through calm
and every weather by which
you sustain your creatures.

Praised be you, my Lord,
through Sister Water,
so very useful and humble,
precious and chaste.

Praised be you, my Lord
through Brother Fire,
by whom you light up
the night, and he is
handsome and merry,
robust and strong.

Praised be you, my Lord,
through our Sister, Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us
bringing forth all kinds of fruits
and colored flowers and herbs.

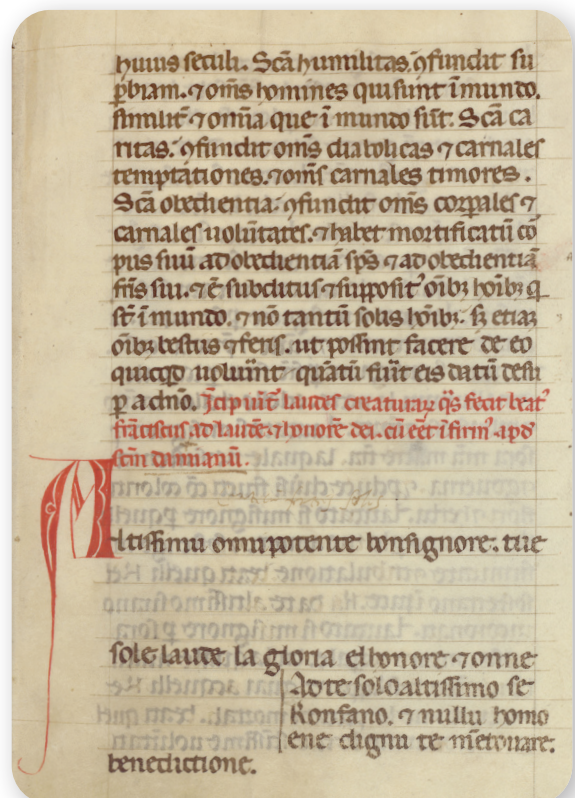
Praised be you, my Lord
through those who forgive
for your love
and who bear sickness and trial.

Blessed are those
who endure in peace,
for by you, Most High,
they will be crowned.

Praised be you, my Lord,
through our Sister Bodily Death
from whom no living being
can escape.

How dreadful for those
who die in mortal sin!
How blessed are those she
finds in your most holy will
for the second death
can do them no harm.

O praise and bless my Lord,
thank him and serve him
humbly but grandly!



Reflection Questions

Here are some guiding questions to begin your conversation:

- What surprised you in the video?
- What was new and moving for you?
- What made you uneasy in the video?

Here are some other reflection questions to choose from that may inspire next steps or other actions to carry forward the messages of the Canticum and Laudato Si':

1. Do you have a favorite stanza in the Canticum? Why does it speak to you this day?
2. The Franciscan view, emphasized by the Canticum and expanded in Laudato Si', highlights the interconnectedness between all parts of creation, especially humans. Currently, humans and nature are not in harmony as described by St. Francis.

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis begins the encyclical noting “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.” (L.S. 2) Further he writes, “Today, however, we have come 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.*” (L.S. 48)

Reflect on your relationship with Sister Mother Earth and the poor—where should you focus to mend this relationship? What actions do you need to take for change?

3. In the light of the Canticum and Laudato Si', the term “ecological conversion” (L.S. 216) is used to describe where we are called as individuals and as a society. Conversion is not a one-time event, rather it is an ongoing, life-long process; perhaps the term “ongoing ecological conversion” would be better. After reciting the Canticum and after watching the video, where do you assess your ongoing ecological conversion journey – individually, as a group, local Church community, and/or as a society – recognizing that conversion is a process in all these intersections of our lives? What next steps do you feel called to?
4. Francis of Assisi wrote the Canticum in part as a tool that the early Franciscans (*and we as the inheritors of the tradition*) could use for social evangelization. Pope Francis added to this tradition when he wrote Laudato Si' in 2015 in part to bring this message of social evangelization for our common home prior to the climate change talks in Paris as a critique of the lack of positive action at the level of international governance. (L.S. 167). As you reflect on this legacy, what evangelizing efforts do you feel called to in your friary/household/ministry/workplace?



5. Francis of Assisi approached the Canticle as a living document that he added to as he went along. In the presentation Br. Willam Short, OFM, shared how the stanza on peacemakers was added to be read by the friars following a dispute between the mayor and bishop of Assisi.

*Blessed are those
who endure in peace,
for by you, Most High,
they will be crowned.*

If you were to add a stanza to the Canticle that would speak to the realities we face, what would you proclaim and to whom would you proclaim it to?



6. The Canticle was originally a song for evangelization. Art is a powerful tool to share the Gospel. Reflecting on the Canticle and Laudato Si', what creative ways would you suggest to share this message to move others in the ongoing ecological conversion process?
7. What further questions do the Canticle and Laudato Si prompt?

Join the Movement

In 2025, many groups in the U.S. Catholic Church are uniting to celebrate the anniversaries of the Canticle and Laudato Si' through Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation. Please consider preparing or joining one as part of your evangelizing efforts. For more information, visit CatholicPilgrimsOfHope.org.

If you would like additional resources on how to use the Canticle of the Creatures and/or Laudato Si' in your efforts, please reach out to Russ Testa, director of the Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation for the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe, at rtesta@friars.us

About the Franciscan Friars of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Franciscan Friars of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a coast-to-coast Catholic brotherhood devoted to living the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi and in imitation to Jesus Christ. They serve the poor, the forgotten and the marginalized alongside people of goodwill located across the United States, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and Alaska. Founded in October 2023, the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe was formed from friars coming together from six legacy provinces. Combining their gifts has allowed them to renew their Franciscan witness to American society and begin an exciting new chapter of their history in the United States. They go forth under the guidance of Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose compassion and advocacy for the oppressed and suffering calls them to live in solidarity with the marginalized. To learn more, visit friars.us and connect with [@friarsguadalupe](https://www.facebook.com/friarsguadalupe) on Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter).