

March 2023 **Franciscan Voice Canada** blog
by Andrew Conradi, ofs; JPIC & [Laudato si' Animator](#)



I acknowledge and thank the Lkwungen People for allowing me to live, pray, work, and play on their lands. I am deeply sorry for the injustices inflicted upon the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Turtle Island by the complicity of Governments & settlers, including the Catholic Church, in the colonialism inherent in the Indian Act and Residential Schools including racism, neglect, many forms of abuse & cultural genocide. I commit to work for truth, healing and reconciliation.

1. LENT

Fasting

Isaiah 58:6-7 “Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke? Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh?”

Rom 14:17 “The Kingdom of God is Justice, Peace and Joy in the Spirit.”

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 590 “What does the Church ask for when she prays “Thy Kingdom come”? The Church prays also that the Kingdom of God increase from now on through people’s sanctification in the Spirit and through their commitment to the service of justice and peace in keeping with the Beatitudes. This petition is the cry of the Spirit and the Bride: “Come, Lord Jesus”” (Revelation 22:20). (emphasis added)

St. Óscar Romero, Servant of God: “... the hope that inspires Christians. We know that every effort to better society, especially when injustice and sin are so ingrained, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us.”

Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development: “That means changing the basic things which are leading to our hopelessness, and those are the selfishness and the self-centeredness that are built into our economic, social and political systems.”

Two suggestions on how to live Lent day by day.

Both are very worthwhile:

1. See the Caritas Canada/Development & Peace Share Lent Calendar:

https://www.devp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023_Calendar_Lent_EN2.pdf

2. See the Laudato Si’ Movement Lent 2023 Calendar:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16TxTW9oCnykqgdjP0kB6ogRxmpW0sljU/view>

28 February and 3 March both suggest action to divest from fossil fuels.

So, here is an action to take: a Letter to your Bishop to divest from fossil fuels!

See <https://laudatosimovement.org/divestment/> and scroll down to ‘Send a letter to your leadership’

Two suggestions follow. The first was drafted to my Bishop, before I found the Laudato si’ Movement letter and which my OFS Fraternity will consider at our March meeting.

First letter

Your Grace,

We the ... call on the Diocese of ... to issue a statement to support and promote Pope Francis’s urgings to disinvest from the fossil fuel industries.

See <https://laudatosimovement.org/divestment/>

Divestment should be a public decision: by openly saying that we divest from fossil fuels, we add our voice to the many prophetic voices of the hundreds of dioceses and Catholic institutions that have already committed to do so.

Pope Francis, 2015, *Laudato Si’*, 13, 15 wrote: “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change... It is my hope that this Encyclical Letter... can help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face”. On the global level, *Laudato Si’*, 165 insists on the need to replace, “progressively and without delay”, technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels.

The Holy Father, during the prayer service held in Saint Peter’s Square on 27 March 2020 urged us “to seize this time of trial as *a time of choosing*.” Your Grace, we ask you to choose!

On 18 June 2020, on the fifth anniversary of the landmark encyclical *Laudato Si’* on the need to protect nature, life and defenceless people, the document ["Journeying towards care for our Common Home"](#) prepared by the Interdicasterial Table of the Holy See on Integral Ecology, was presented by the following people: H.E. Msgr. Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State; H.E. Msgr, Angelo Vincenzo Zani, Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education (of the Institutes of Studies); Rev. Bruno Marie Duffé, Secretary of the Dicastery for the Service of Integral Human Development; Aloysius John, Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis; and Tomás Insúa, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (since re-named the Laudato Si’ Movement).

Journeying was published to guide us on the path to the implementation of the teachings of the encyclical. The document urges Catholics to defend the rights of local populations to have a say in whether their lands can be used for oil or mineral extraction and the right to take strong stands against companies that cause environmental disasters or over-exploit natural resources such as forests.

More than 40 faith organizations from around the world, over half of them Catholic, have pledged to divest from fossil fuel companies. The Vatican bank has said it does not invest

in fossil fuels and many Catholic dioceses and educational institutions around the world have taken similar positions. See also this link:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2022-07/multimillion-divestment-from-fossil-fuels-catholic-organizations.html>

In Canada, the University of British Columbia has committed to divesting its endowment from fossil fuels by 2030. The Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Quebec's equivalent of British Columbia Investment Management Corporation, has committed to divesting by the end of 2022 and cutting the carbon footprint of their investments in half by 2030.

Disinvestment like this is happening all over the world. In 2018, New York City committed to divesting all municipal public pensions from fossil fuels. They followed through in January 2021 with an initial sell-off of \$4 billion worth of fossil fuel investments.

Municipal governments are taking similar measures in Belfast, Copenhagen, Melbourne, Minneapolis, Paris, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, Stockholm, Sydney, Cape Town, and Denver, to name a few. A huge number of religious, professional, and financial institutions are also following suit.

Your Grace, you have said you would like each parish to have a Laudato Si' Movement Animator and so we quote here from the Laudato Si' Prayer Book, Stations of the Cross: Ecological Way of the Cross 10th Station by Br Ben Ayodi, OFM (Cap): "Just as Jesus was stripped of his clothes and dignity, so too the earth is stripped of its minerals and nutrient rich topsoil. Help us to seek and develop a just transition to renewable forms of energy and restrain our consumption so that the earth may be restored to its glorious bounty."

We also ask that the Diocese of ... unequivocally insist on high environmental standards in new church buildings to protect future generations and play our part in combating the effects of climate change and so be stewards of creation.

How, and to what extent, does the Diocese "Ensure the construction of well insulated buildings with low or zero-carbon emissions in all housing [and building] plans" as asked in *Journeying*? The church must be seen to lead and not just rely on governments, otherwise how relevant are we in the face of our greatest existential threat (next to nuclear war)?

We also ask that you direct your (and our) pastors to promote more obviously and strongly Catholic Social Teaching (the church's best kept secret!) about which we hear so little as such from the pulpit. In a 1960 radio address at the conclusion of a Eucharistic Congress in Bavaria, St John XXIII prayed that Christians might "offer to fellow citizens examples of all virtues, in the first place social justice and charity."

And finally let us remember this: Christians need to: '...realize that their duty towards nature and creation is an essential part of their faith' (St John Paul II, 1990, Peace Day Message, no. 15) and "As far as the Church is concerned, the social message of the

Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action.” (St John Paul II, 1991, *Centesimus Annus*, n. 57)

Thank you for considering this request. We are available to support your decision as best we can, and remain at your service to follow up with a meeting in person.

Respectfully yours, etc

Second letter from LSM <https://laudatosimovement.org/divestment/>
scroll down to “send a letter to your leadership”

Your Grace,

As a parishioner of ..., I would like to bring your attention to the investment policy of our diocese and its alignment with Catholic social teachings.

I have carefully read the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. His Holiness the Pope makes a very clear call to Catholics worldwide to align their investment policy with the moral imperative to care for Creation. Caring for Creation means that the “use of highly polluting fossil fuels—especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas—needs to be progressively replaced without delay” (*Laudato Si'* 165). Consequently, this entails “spreading the use of ethical, responsible and integral criteria for investments, avoiding the support to companies that harm...environmental ecology (for example fossil fuels)”. That is why I believe our diocese should divest from fossil fuels. Divesting means getting rid of any form of financial assets related to companies that extract fossil fuels, or that participate in developing new projects. On the other hand, divesting also means investing in meaningful, sustainable, and less risky projects. Divestment should be a public decision: by openly saying that we divest from fossil fuels, we bring our voice to the many prophetic voices of the hundreds of dioceses and Catholic institutions that have already committed to do so. Publicly divesting would be our contribution in advance to a broader movement for a fair and rapid transition.

Another good reason to divest is that owning fossil fuel industry assets is risky. Their valuation is based on the ability of companies to extract existing reserves and making new projects. Hopefully, this polluting extraction will not happen because society is collectively switching to a fossil-free future. So the value and returns of these assets will be low, if not negative.

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Disinvestment like this is happening all over the world. In 2018, New York City committed to divesting all municipal public pensions from fossil fuels. They followed through in January 2021 with an initial sell-off of \$4 billion worth of fossil fuel investments.

Municipal governments are taking similar measures in Belfast, Copenhagen, Melbourne, Minneapolis, Paris, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, Stockholm, Sydney, Cape Town, and Denver, to name a few. A huge number of religious, professional, and financial institutions are also following suit.

More and more investment managers recognize the increasing risks of fossil fuel investment. On the other hand, we know that some activities need investments and will offer steady returns: renewable energies, real estate insulation, as part of a diversified portfolio.

I think our diocese should take this decision urgently: the effects of climate change are already extreme. I especially think of last summer's heat waves, but climate change affects all people and creatures living on this planet, with a greater impact on the poor and vulnerable.

We could start this journey with the help of a fellow diocese or Catholic institution already committed. The Laudato Si' Movement also provides excellent resources and advice to Catholics on why and how to divest.

It may be that ... Diocese does not hold any assets related to the fossil fuel industry. Then, for us, divestment would mean publicly pledging to avoid any investment in the future - an act with great significance also.

We are invited to sign a commitment to divest within five years on Laudato Si' Movement's [website](#). Doing so will give us the opportunity to participate in the next global divestment announcement of faith-based institutions. It will take place on the first months of 2023.

Thank you for considering this request. We are available to support your decision in any way, and remains at your service to follow up with a meeting in person.

Respectfully yours, etc

TWO WAYS OF THE CROSS FOR LENT 2023

1. Caritas Canada/ Development & Peace

https://www.devp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023_Way_of_the_Cross_EN.pdf

Each station has Scripture passage, a Meditation, a Quote and a prayer.

E.g. 5th Station Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross: **Quote:** *"People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do."*— Dorothy Day, Servant of God and founder of the Catholic Worker Movement

2. Laudato si' Movement

<https://laudatosilent.org> scroll down to Way of the Cross

This one is much shorter. Each station just has a prayer, each one is right on!

E.g. 2nd Station Jesus carries his cross: Prayer: Lord Jesus, just as You embraced the burden of our sins, we pray for those who will be forced to carry the burden of environmental disasters caused by our rampant development. We also pray for those who risk their lives to embrace the call of social and climate justice. Amen

2. A GREAT RESOURCE: LAUDATO SI' MOVEMENT PRAYER BOOK

<https://mail.laudatosimovement.org/landing/prayerbook>



3. TOMÁS INSUA to step down as executive director of Laudato si' Movement

Feb 18, 2023 <https://laudatosimovement.org/news/transitions-letter-from-executive-director-tomas-insua/>

“I’ll end my service as Executive Director in mid-2023 to then keep working towards LSM’s mission from a new place.

It’s been a beautiful dance of contemplation and action – or “Contempl-Action”. Laudato Si’ Week events, Season of Creation liturgies, divestment drives, Circle prayer gatherings, climate marches, petition campaigns, “The Letter” film screenings, sustainability projects, and more. So many generous hearts coming together to co-create this movement. Despite our fragile “clay jars” – with so many limitations – and thanks to God’s grace, LSM gradually grew to become a vital global network. From Angola to Austria, from Panama to Pakistan, and way beyond. Dozens of national chapters, hundreds of member organizations, and thousands of LS Animators active in local Circles and communities. An explosion of life.”



Above: Pope Francis greets 16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, with Tomás Insua by her side, during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican April 17, 2019. (CNS/Reuters/Yara Nardi)

“Once my transition is completed, I’ll work on the longstanding idea of a **new LSM project in Assisi**. While details are still being discerned, we hope to set up a Laudato Si’ Center to share and live out this message, integrated into a larger Laudato Si’ Circuit connecting iconic Assisi sites to serve as a “come and see” experience. Very providential developments with the Franciscans, the diocese and other local partners, building on many years of collaboration, have affirmed the intention for this to be ready for the “Laudato Si’ Double Anniversary” of 2025 – 10 years of the encyclical and 800 years of the Canticle of the Creatures. In parallel, I’ll also keep contributing to the **Season of Creation**, a key LSM priority to uplift creation care – this project will have a more international outlook, but I’ll pursue it as an ecclesial affiliate of the Laudato Si Research Institute at Campion Hall at the University of Oxford.”

Tomás Insua, executive director of Laudato Si’ Movement, poses below with his family, wife Vicky and daughter Isabella, during the premiere of the documentary film "The Letter" Oct. 4, 2022, at the Vatican. (Laudato Si’ Movement)



The Argentine-born Insua said he plans to exit as executive director in mid-2023, and will remain in the movement but in new ways. That includes work on establishing its new Laudato Si’ Center in Assisi — the birthplace of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology and namesake of Pope Francis — as well as continued work around the ecumenical Season of Creation (Sept. 1–Oct. 4) through a position at the [Laudato Si’ Research Institute](#) at the University of Oxford’s Campion Hall.

4. UKRAINE

слава Україні! (sláva Ukrajiní!) Glory to Ukraine!

Below: Pope Francis greets a group of Ukrainian children at the end of his weekly general audience Feb. 22, 2023, in the Vatican audience hall. During the audience, the pope noted that the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is Feb. 24 and prayed for an end to the war. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



“At the end of his weekly general audience Feb. 22 and with a group of Ukrainian parliamentarians seated in the front row, the pope noted that Feb. 24 would mark "one year since the invasion of Ukraine, a year since this absurd and cruel war -- a sad anniversary." (emphasis added)

"The record of deaths, injuries, refugees and displaced people, destruction and economic and social damage speaks for itself," he said.

At every general audience and public recitation of the Angelus prayer for the past year, Francis has asked people to join him in praying for peace and in offering concrete assistance to the millions of Ukrainians who have sought safety abroad and for the millions of others displaced within Ukraine or struggling to survive because of the fighting.” (Cindy Wooden, https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/vatican-news/pope-marks-anniversary-russias-absurd-cruel-war-ukraine?utm_

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An Appeal by the Ukrainian Catholic Bishops in Canada

“... This war is not limited to the context of armed battles, but also occurs in the struggle for consciences, spiritual values and ideals with all the evils that war entails. Most importantly, it requires from everyone a clear choice for good or evil. The war challenges us to demonstrate our love for Ukraine, for its God-given freedom, political and human rights. War challenges the very sincerity of our love for our neighbour and the Lord God. Every Ukrainian in and outside of Ukraine is called to discover a deeper awareness of his or her national, political and ethnic identity. The enemy are those who want to stop this process and plant other values which contradict the truths of the Christian faith, the foundations of our spirituality and our Ukrainian identity. And they are looking for all kinds of insidious ways to achieve their goals. ... The outcome of this war is crucial and will have global significance and consequences. We pray for victory, which will be realized only when we put all our efforts together. Let us unite, pray, and work for the common good! Let this Lenten season be an opportunity to reach new spiritual heights and to better ourselves so that we can carry out our part in bringing to an end the tragedy of war.

May God bless the Ukrainian people both in their homeland and throughout the world. May He grant them the strength of a strong Christian faith, of enduring good health and the support of a multitude of people of good will. May He grant victory over evil and peace to Ukraine!”



See video

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/prayers-for-ukraine>

Laura Ieraci, Catholic Register Special, March 3, 2023:

Metropolitan Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia ... noted that Ukraine relinquished its nuclear arms in 1994 in exchange for a guarantee of “territorial integrity, sovereignty and defensive assistance from any incursion from ... Russia.” (emphasis added)

“And so we have a lamb of God: a country that gave up its nuclear arsenal, a country that reduced its soldiers from 900,000 in 1991 to 150,000, of which only 15,000 were battle-ready, a country that not only wanted peace; it made itself completely vulnerable for peace,” he said.

“This is the wounded victim over whom we stand today,” he continued. “And the question is: Do we walk by? Do we have theoretical discussions? Or do we touch the wounds, raise or lift the beaten, bound person, give this person comfort and assure justice?”

5. SYNOD

<https://bccatholic.ca/news/catholic-van/vancouver-synod-delegate-helping-to-paint-the-church-in-all-its-colours>

Barb Dowding, the special assistant to Archbishop Miller was part of an 18-person synod writing team of individuals appointed by the Canadian and U.S. bishops conferences to work on a “continental synthesis” of the Church in North America, capturing the “resonances, tensions, and themes” taking place among Canadian and American Catholics.

The delegates for North America spent five days in Orlando, Fla., until Feb. 17 and will continue to refine the final Document for North America before submitting it to the Synod Secretariat by March 31. The final documents from all of the continents will then be used to draft the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod of Bishops for their first session in October and their second in October 2024.

The synod writing team pored over the national syntheses they received from the Canadian and American bishops conferences. Reflecting the views of Catholics of every belief, contentious issues such as women’s ordination were not excluded. The role of the synod writing team was to faithfully capture everything they heard, no matter how contentious.

The potentially contentious issues they received didn’t come as a surprise. “They were all things we’ve heard before,” said Dowding. They also weren’t a large priority. “What we heard mostly was the desire for the Church to find ways to include everyone. ... But I did not see an overwhelming desire for drastic doctrinal changes.”

The goal of the writing team was “to ensure the picture we painted of the Church in North America was clear.”

For logistical reasons, the North American meetings of the Continental Stage unfolded online in 12 assemblies from December 2022 to January 2023; two in French, three in Spanish, and seven in English. Each bishop in Canada and the United States was invited to attend, as well as to nominate up to five delegates from his diocese/eparchy.

(The Catholics and bishops of Latin America, including Mexico, held a separate [Latin American and Caribbean Continental Assembly](#).)

The bishops of each of the 192 dioceses in the U.S. and the 72 dioceses in Canada each appointed three to five delegates to represent them at the virtual assemblies. The meetings featured discussions on three reflection questions contained in the synod's [working document](#), which is filled with direct quotations from the reports sent by bishops' conferences around the world. The [44-page document](#), which the Vatican released in late October 2022, summarizes the reports shared with the Vatican by bishops' conferences, religious congregations, departments of the Roman Curia, lay movements, and other groups and individuals.

The final, universal phase of the Synod on Synodality will begin with the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican in October, which will be followed by an additional session in October 2024. The feedback from the seven Continental Assemblies on the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) will be used as the basis for another "instrumentum laboris," or working document, that will be completed in June to guide the Synod of Bishops' discussion.

Canadian members of the North American Writing Team:

Bishop Raymond Poisson, CCCB President

Archbishop Richard Gagnon, CCCB Past President

Father Jean Vezina, CCCB General Secretary

Dr. Patrick Fletcher, Ph.D., CCCB Senior Adviser for Theology and Social Doctrine

Father Gilles Routhier, Ph.D. (University of Laval)

Sister Chantal Desmarais, SCSM

Barbara Dowding, Archdiocese of Vancouver (former Chancellor)

Pax et bonum, Andrew Conradi, ofs