



Welcome

“Returning to nature”

Return 30% of church grounds to nature
by 2030



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLICEACH ÉIREANN

Trocaire
TOGETHER FOR A JUST WORLD



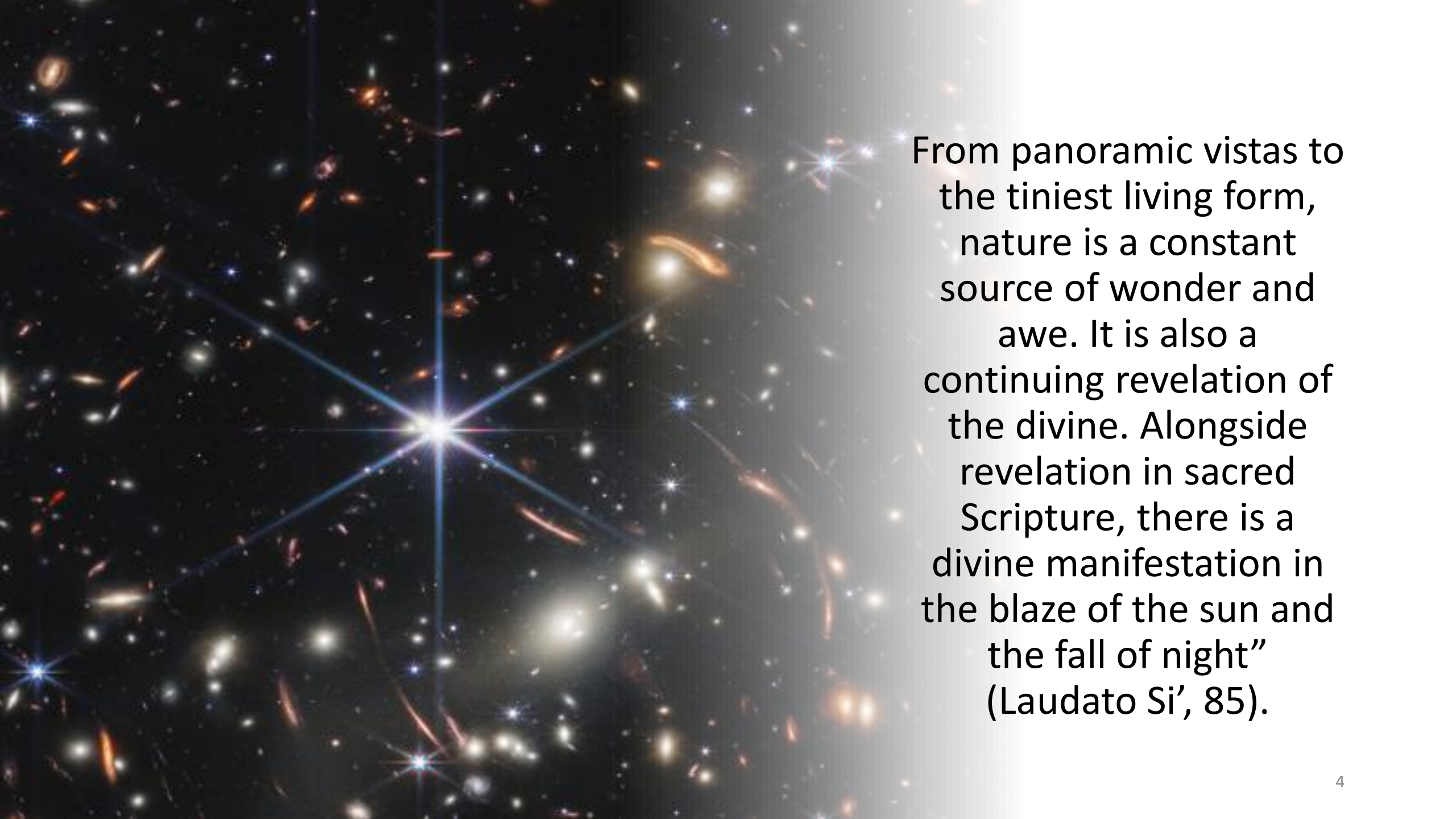
“Nature is a magnificent book in which God speaks to us & grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness & praise” (Laudato Si’, 9, 12).





“The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, God’s boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is a caress of God... God has written a precious book, whose letters are the multitude of created things.

(Laudato Si’, 84)



From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine. Alongside revelation in sacred Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night” (Laudato Si’, 85).

“The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. Standing awestruck before a mountain, we cannot separate this experience from God” (LS, 233-4).



The Canticle of Creation (St. Francis of Assisi)

Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.



Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and
fair.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.



Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.

Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night and he is beautiful and playful and
robust and strong.

Praised be You my Lord through our Sister, Mother Earth
who sustains and governs us, producing varied fruits with coloured
flowers and herbs.

Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon for love of You
and bear sickness and trial.

Blessed are those who endure in peace,
By You Most High, they will be crowned.





LAUDATO SI'

ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME



Encyclical Letter
POPE FRANCIS

Overview of Laudato Si

- Chapter 1: “What is happening to our common home?”
- Chapter 2: “The Gospel of Creation”
- Chapter 3: “The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis”
- Chapter 4: “Integral Ecology”
- Chapter 5: “Lines of Approach & Action”
- Chapter 6: “Ecological Education & Spirituality”

“Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life, and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us....

I wish to address every person living on this planet ... I urgently appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (Laudato Si’, 1, 14)





- Laudato Si' urges us to listen to the signs of the times in light of the Gospel. This means listening to:

- The cry of the earth
- The cry of those made poor
- The science
- The call of our faith
- Young people

“This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her.” (LS, 2)

What does Laudato Si' say about biodiversity?



In Laudato Si', Pope Francis reflects on the immense loss of biodiversity which is taking place around our world:

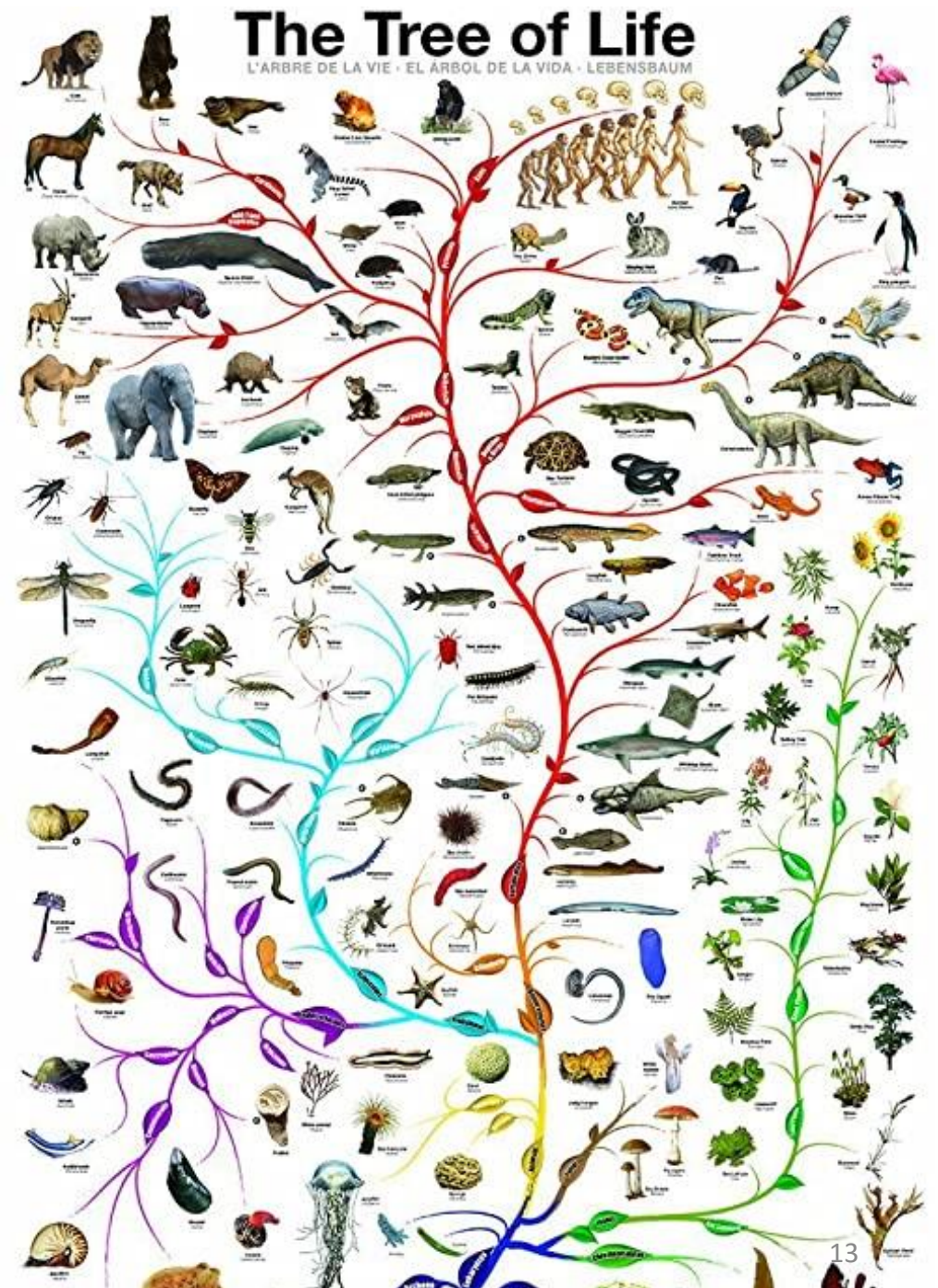
“The earth’s resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to economy, commerce, and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and many other uses. Different species contain genes which could be key resources in years ahead for meeting human needs and regulating environmental problems” (Laudato Si', 32).



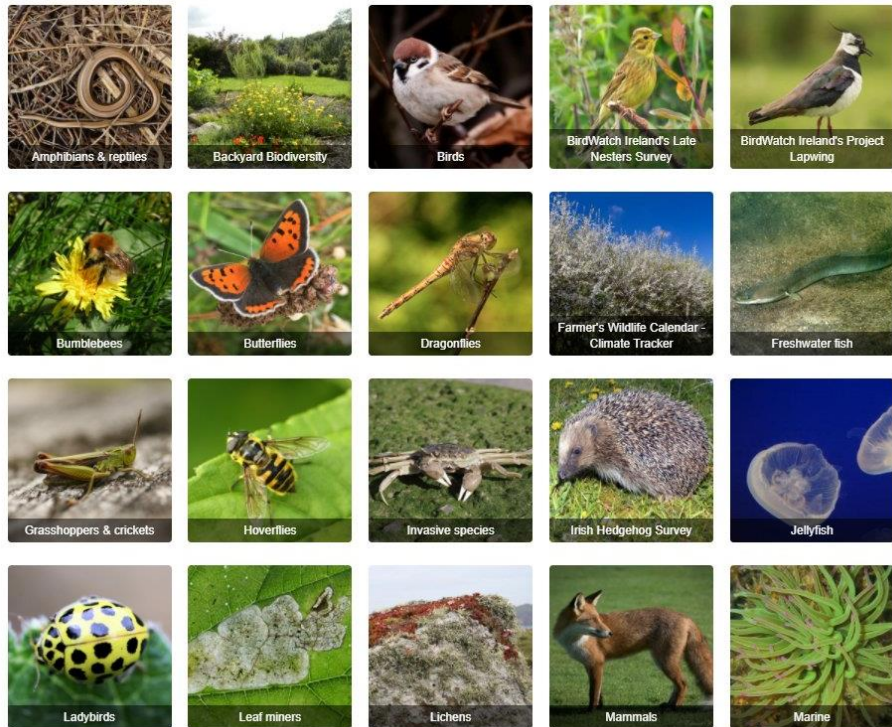
Pope Francis says, “it may well disturb us to learn of the extinction of mammals or birds, since they are more visible. But the good functioning of ecosystems also requires fungi, algae, worms, insects, reptiles and an innumerable variety of micro-organisms. Some species, although unseen, nevertheless play a critical role in maintaining the equilibrium of a particular place” (Laudato Si’, 34).

“It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves.

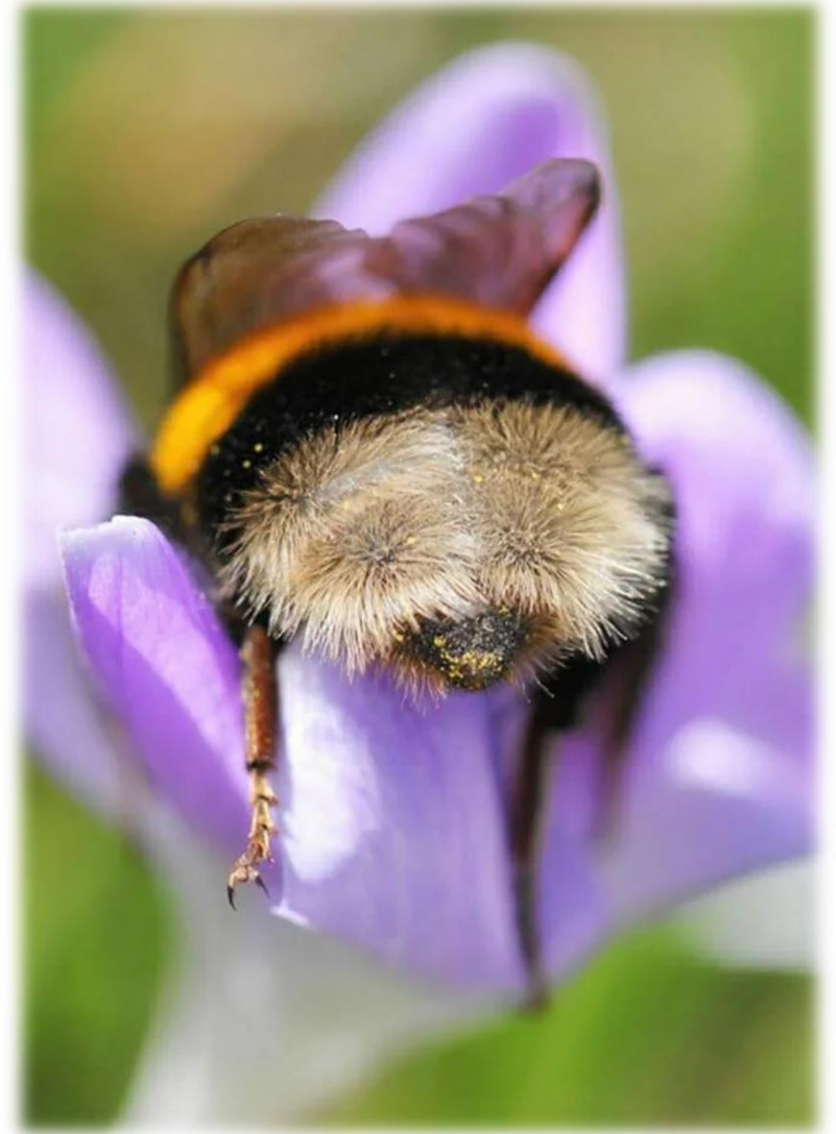
Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.” (Laudato Si’ 32-33)



What is biodiversity?



Biodiversity is all the different kinds of life you'll find in one area—the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria that make up our natural world. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web, to maintain balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive: food, clean water, medicine, and shelter. (World Wildlife Fund).



What is happening to biodiversity?

- As humans put increasing pressure on the planet, using and consuming more resources than ever before, we risk upsetting the balance of ecosystems and losing biodiversity.
- WWF's *Living Planet Report 2022* found an average 69% decline in global populations of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians since 1970 due to human activity.
- The 2019 landmark *Global Assessment Report* (by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) reported 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction—the highest number in human history.



To put it another way:

- We are now living in the **6th largest extinction of life** on this planet since life began 3.8 billion years ago.
- 41% of amphibians, 25% of mammals, 34% of conifers, 13% of birds, 27% of reptiles, 31% of sharks and rays and 27% of crustaceans are threatened with extinction.
- The last time such a catastrophe struck planet Earth was 66 million years ago when an asteroid 10 to 15 kilometres wide crashed in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico causing the extinction of 75 percent of animal and plant life, including the dinosaurs.



An example: The Destruction of Insects

- Today, when we talk of extinction we think of giant pandas, cheetahs, lions, or elephants, but the destruction of insect species has become enormous.
- A study by German scientists in 2017, found that flying insect species, including pollinators have reduced by 75% since 1989. About one third of the world's food depends on pollinators such as bees.
- If they become extinct, agricultural yields would plummet causing widespread famine.

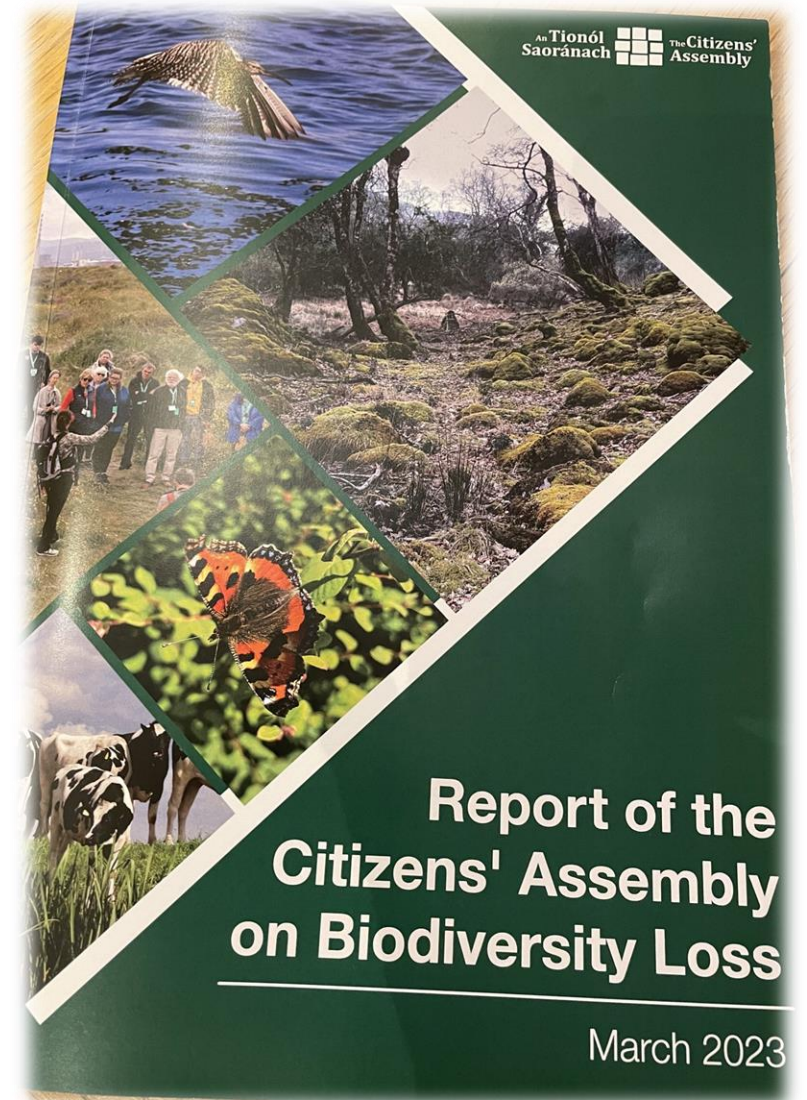




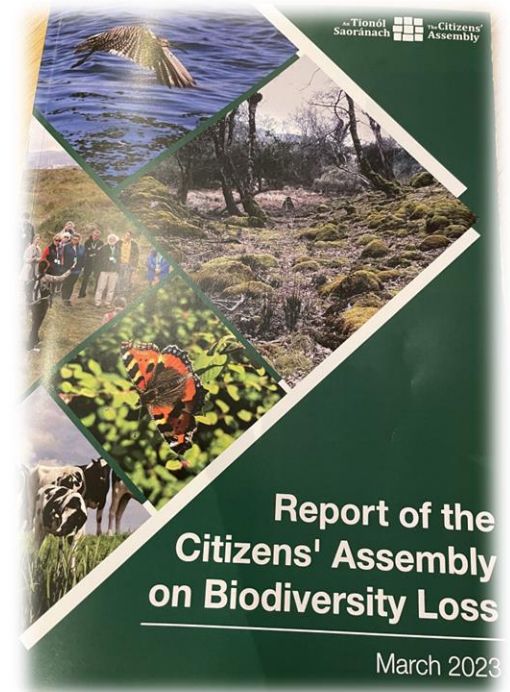
Each species has an
“intrinsic value
independent of their
usefulness. Each
organism, as a creature
of God, is good and
admirable in itself.”
(Laudato Si’, 140)

Irish Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity

- In September 2022, in Ireland, the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity met in Malahide, Dublin. Liam Lysaght from the National Biodiversity Centre told the Assembly that there are now 3,000 species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List in Ireland. This includes plants, fish, insects, and birds. In the next number of years, Ireland will lose one third of its 99 species of bees if we do not take action to reverse this trend.
- *Birdwatch Ireland* surveys have shown that 54 species of birds are facing extinction. Among these are quail, grey partridge, swift, corncrake, barn owl, golden eagle, kestrel, and curlew.



- The recommendation of the **Irish Citizens Assembly** is that the rights of nature be enshrined in our constitution.
- **At the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15)**, in December 2022, 200 hundred countries acknowledged that the rights of nature are an integral part of the implementation of its programmes.
- The Rights of Nature grant fundamental legal entitlements to trees, rivers and ecosystems that are enjoyed today by human beings.



- **At COP15, the UN Conference on Biodiversity 2022**, the delegates adopted the Kunming-Montreal Agreement. It suggests that we set aside 30% of our land and 30% of our oceans for nature by 2030.
- So, **COP 15 urges us to protect significant areas of biodiversity on land and in the oceans to heal it.**
- As Christian stewards of the earth, we also have a responsibility to safeguard biodiversity for the good of all creatures and for future generations.



This is why, In March 2023, the Irish Bishops asked that parishes in Ireland return 30% of church grounds to nature by 2030.

- They said, "In embracing this initiative, we encourage parishes to expand their circles of solidarity, to protect and care for biodiversity and recommend that, by 2030, 30% of church grounds be returned to nature.
- In Laudato Si', we read that this diversity of species has an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself'. (LS, 140). "Humanity is called to care for the Earth and all of its creatures, in other words to 'live out our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork'."

 **Irish Examiner**

Irish bishops ask parishes to put aside 30% of parish grounds 'as a haven for biodiversity'



The conference said that resources will be provided to parishes to help them identify areas for biodiversity to thrive. File picture

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Where to begin?

- Watch this introduction to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan from the National Biodiversity Data Centre:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HD7dTR25vFE&t=32s>
- What has stayed with you from this video?



All-Ireland
Pollinator Plan



Step 1: Host your Meeting

Step 2: Map your parish grounds for biodiversity

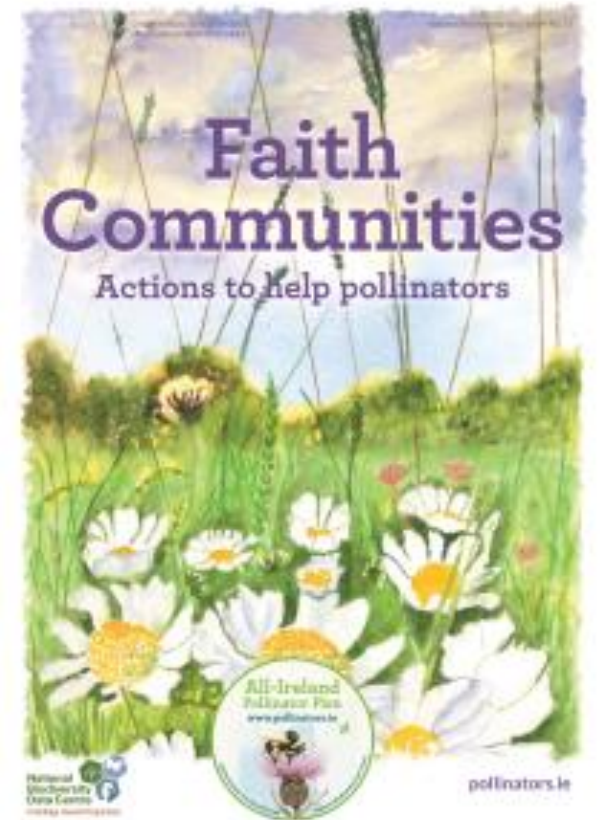
- Identify what is already there (a great task for young people, engage schools and local experts).
- Use the resource “**Church Grounds Mapping**” on Irish Bishop’s Website – Care for Our Common Home Webpage – Biodiversity – Step 2.
- Check out this handy **video** from Heritage in Schools - <https://www.heritageinschools.ie/online-tutorials/how-to-make-a-biodiversity-map-of-your-garden>
- Then, **start identifying what you want to look after and how**. What part of the grounds are you considering? What 30% do you want to focus on? Begin small.
- **Engage with local experts** such as horticulturists, Tidy Towns group or other ecology groups and schools who have expertise.



Step 3: Once you have mapped your parish grounds, we then invite you to turn to two resources to continue this journey.

They are:

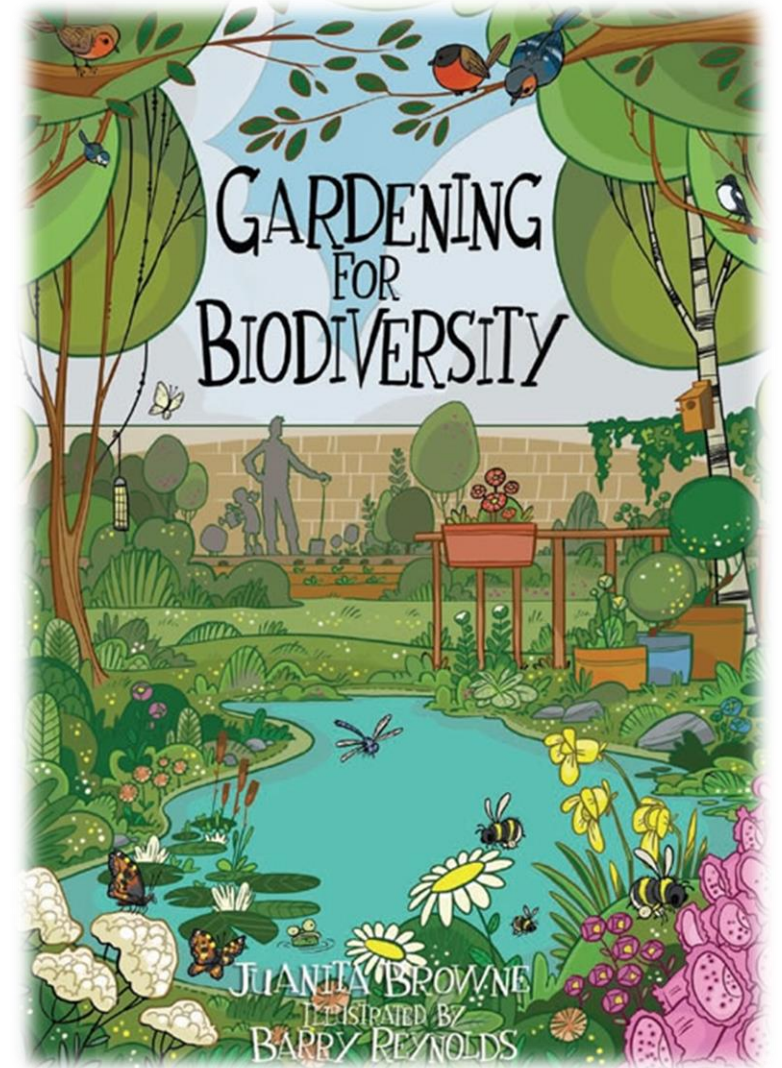
- **The Faith Community Pollinator Plan:** This multi-denominational guide suggests 24 practical actions that any Faith Community can take. They are based on scientific research and are the measures that are most likely to benefit Irish pollinators.
- Download for free from: <https://pollinators.ie/faith-communities/>



The second useful resource is called “Gardening for Biodiversity”: The aim of this colourful booklet is to introduce some of the ways you can help biodiversity in your own garden and on parish grounds - no matter how big or small the space - and no matter where you live.

Download for free from:

<https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2020-04/gardening-for-biodiversity-booklet.pdf>



You can also look at Case Studies

- The biodiversity section of the GAA Green Clubs toolkit includes video case studies: <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub/biodiversity>
- As parish case studies become available, we will upload relevant videos to the Irish Bishop's webpage.
- Perhaps you might consider recording your journey in your parish and send it in as a case study.



Please Sign up your actions straight away on the “Actions for Pollinators mapping system”.



- *'Actions for Pollinators'* is an online mapping system that allows communities to register the actions they have taken for pollinators and put their pollinator-friendly locations on the map. <https://pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie/>
- The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is managed by the National Biodiversity Data Centre and helps them to track where actions for pollinators are taking place.
- In the drop-down list under 'site type' you can select '**faith communities**' and see where these have been added and what actions have been taken as well as add your own.



Flower-Insect-Timed counts



- This is a simple survey which the National Biodiversity Centre are asking communities to do.
- Watch a patch of flowers for 10 minutes and count the insects that visit. A useful way of tracking impact of biodiversity work **before you begin your project and then on an annual basis** to see your progress.
- For more information and to watch a short video click here: <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/>
- Why not use this as a **meditation** for groups and include some Laudato Si' quotes for reflection.



- You can **also track birds** which are in your area. ***BirdTrack*** is a very useful tool which maps migration, arrivals and departures, timings and monitors scarce birds.

- Maybe the parish choir could take this on and record the data on Bird Watch Ireland's website:


<https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/surveys-research/research-surveys/birdtrack/>



Before you finish your meeting:

- What has stayed with you from what you have heard during this session?
- What are the next steps for your parish?
- When can you organise your site mapping? Who will you invite to do this?
- When is your next meeting?



A small, vibrant green seedling with several leaves is growing out of a crack in a dark, textured asphalt surface. The background is a bright, overexposed white area with a faint, stylized map of the United States in the upper right corner.

“Hope would have us recognise that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems. . . The present world system is certainly unsustainable.” (LS, 61)

Laudato Si' calls us towards sustainability in the spirit of integral ecology.

In taking on this project in your parish you are also responding to the Laudato Si' Goals as set out by the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

This is a **response** to the call for healing in our relationships with God, our neighbours, and the Earth itself as we build a better future. Through the Laudato Si' Action Platform, we are walking the “path to renewal” together” (LS, 202).



LAUDATO SI'

Action Platform

www.laudatosiactionplatform.org



LAUDATO SI' GOALS



RESPONSE
TO THE CRY
OF THE EARTH



RESPONSE
TO THE CRY
OF THE POOR



ECOLOGICAL
ECONOMICS



ADOPTION OF
SIMPLE
LIFESTYLES



ECOLOGICAL
EDUCATION



ECOLOGICAL
SPIRITUALITY



COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
& PARTICIPATORY
ACTION



HOPE FOR THE EARTH AND THE POOR



LAUDATO SI'
Action Platform

www.laudatosiactionplatform.org

A Prayer for our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.



O God of the poor, help us to rescue
the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature,
as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.
Amen.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si, 246.



Closing Reflection (music):

“Look at the World” by
John Rutter

Video available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxr8QBPq1z](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxr8QBPq1z0)

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