

Integral Ecology Self-Assessment

"An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence 'must not be contrived but found, uncovered'." (Laudato Si' 225)

Laudato Si' Spirit: Collaboration for Action in the West has developed four self-assessments with versions designed for the unique context of either a Friary, a Franciscan Ministry, a Secular Franciscan fraternity or a Franciscan home. **This version is for Franciscan Ministries.** We hope this assessment tool will be a resource for your community in light of the 7 Laudato Si' goals. May it offer a chance for celebration for what you're already doing and provide insights and encouragement as you begin to discern additional actions.

As part of your Franciscan Ministry's "journey towards full sustainability in the holistic spirit of integral ecology" with the Laudato Si' Action Platform, this assessment is organized by the 7 Laudato Si' Action Platform Goals. You are invited to provide both quantitative and qualitative responses. The quantitative questions, including the online calculator tools, can help understand specific metrics like energy use, financial costs, food costs, distance of travel, and frequency of ecological prayer. The qualitative questions help reflect on the way we think about integral ecology, what's been meaningful to our community so far, and how we understand each of the goals within a local and global context.

This Franciscan Ministry Self-Assessment is offered as a way to clearly see your current context—progress already made and opportunities for more action and impact. By knowing your current practices you can understand your starting point, and then discern feasible actions that can help you progress toward living out Laudato Si'.

Goal 1: Response to the cry of the earth

"Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another." (42)

1. What's your "Carbon Footprint"? Use this online calculator to estimate your greenhouse gas emissions as a business. <https://carbonfund.org/take-action/businesses/business-calculators/>
2. In the last 12 months, how has your ministry site taken action to decrease energy use, water use, and fuel use for travel?

3. In the last 12 months, how has your ministry site been involved in actions to protect biodiversity? Examples include expanding areas of native plants, removing invasive plant species, protecting pollinators and protecting waterways.

Goal 2: Response to the cry of the poor

"Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged." (93)

1. What does your ministry site understand as the challenges facing your local community?
2. How is your understanding of local challenges informed by the perspectives of indigenous communities, vulnerable populations and the marginalized?
3. In the last 12 months, how has your ministry site taken action to respond to the "cry of the poor" in your area?

Goal 3: Ecological economics

"It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems." (139)

1. In addition to the financial cost of a purchase, the "total cost of ownership" includes energy/fuel needed to obtain and use the item, product and packaging materials, impacts of the purchase on the local economy, and options for disposal or re-use. How does your ministry site consider the "total cost of ownership" when making purchases (such as operational supplies, electronics, Amazon or other online shopping)?
2. When purchasing goods or services, do you consider companies with clear ethical standards and sustainable business practices?
3. In what ways does your ministry protect the dignity of workers? Are employees receiving just wages, health benefits, etc.?

Goal 4: Adoption of sustainable lifestyles

"replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing" (9)

1. How does your ministry site handle waste removal, recycling and composting, if available?

2. Does your ministry use sustainable energy sources (such as solar or wind) or participate in renewable energy credits?
3. How energy efficient are your appliances, electronics, and heating and cooling systems? What steps are taken to be environmentally conscious when using them?

Goal 5: Ecological education

"Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us..." (211)

1. In the last 12 months, what actions have been taken to incorporate ecological education within your ministry site? Examples of ecological education include familiarization with the local ecosystem, knowledge of the scientific and social dimensions of the ecological crisis, and understanding ecological virtues.
2. In the last 12 months, how has your ministry site incorporated integral ecology into decision making?
3. How are Laudato Si' learning opportunities offered and supported by your ministry site?

Goal 6: Ecological spirituality

"...an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living." (216)

1. In what ways are themes of "cry of the earth, cry of the poor" incorporated into ministry site operations and communications?
2. In the last 12 months, how has your ministry site celebrated ecological observances? Opportunities include Season of Creation, Feast of St. Francis, Earth Day, World Day of the Poor, etc.
3. What opportunities are available at your ministry site for outdoor group gatherings or individual reflection? Or incorporating nature into indoor offerings?

Goal 7: Community resilience and empowerment

"Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds." (219)

1. In the last 12 months, how has your ministry site advocated for social and ecological causes? What are current opportunities to take action for the needs of the community and the environment?
2. In what ways does your ministry site work together with other community groups on common causes?
3. If not captured elsewhere, what are other actions your ministry site has taken towards integral ecology?

Conclusion

"We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature."
(Laudato Si' 139)

We hope this self-assessment provides learning opportunities, moments for reflection, and cause for celebration as your Franciscan Ministry continues to journey with the Laudato Si' Action Platform. We invite you to use your responses as a resource for creating your Action Plan.