

# **Mercy Governance Approaches to Caring for Our Common Home: A Reflective and Practical Guide for Mercy Boards Responding to the Call of *Laudato Si'*.**

Charlotte Cummings  
Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship, Cohort Four.



# Contents

A note from the author .....	3
<b>SECTION ONE:</b> <i>Laudato Si'</i> and the call to care for our Common Home .....	5
<b>SECTION TWO:</b> Mercy Governance and <i>Laudato Si'</i> .....	10
<b>SECTION THREE:</b> Practical Tools for Mercy Governance Boards Responding to <i>Laudato Si'</i> .....	18
Key Performance Indicators for Mercy Governance Boards Responding to <i>Laudato Si'</i> .....	19
Framework for Decision Making .....	24
<b>SECTION FOUR:</b> <i>Laudato Si'</i> Themed Formation Reflection Activities for Mercy Governance Boards .....	26

Cover Image: Auckland Botanic Gardens

## A note from the author

Mercy governance boards across the globe are carrying a sacred responsibility: to lead ministries with integrity, vision, and a heart attuned to the needs of our time. Among the most urgent of these needs is the call to care for our Common Home – a call that resounds through Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and echoes deeply within the charism of Mercy.

This guide, *Mercy Governance Approaches to Caring for Our Common Home*, has been developed as part of my participation in the Mercy Global Action Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship (MELF) – a year-long formation programme designed to advance women's leadership in the Mercy tradition through immersion experiences, mentoring and collective discernment around justice issues.

Throughout this journey, I have had the privilege of engaging with Mercy leaders from across the world. Together we have explored Mercy's response to ecological and social injustice, advocated at the United Nations, participated in global immersion experiences and reflected on the theological foundations that ground our call to justice. These experiences have deepened my understanding that governance – often seen as primarily structural or administrative – can in fact be a profound expression of Mercy in action.

I was fortunate to be educated at Villa Maria College, a school founded by the Sisters of Mercy in Aotearoa New Zealand. I currently serve as a Trustee of Whānau Mercy Ministries Trust – a Ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP) established under civil and Canon law to oversee ministries created by the Sisters of Mercy in Aotearoa New Zealand. I hold a particular interest in how Mercy governance boards are responding to the impacts of climate change on people and planet, in ways that are faithful to *Laudato Si'* and express our distinctive Mercy approach to leadership and care.



This resource is intended to be both reflective and practical. It offers theological grounding, draws inspiration from Laudato Si' and is animated by the Mercy tradition. It includes tools, frameworks and activities to assist governance boards in reflecting, discerning, and taking action in ways that uphold the dignity of creation. My hope is that this resource will support boards to better respond to the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor.

If you would like to be in contact about this resource, or to share your board's own experience in this space, I would be very glad to hear from you. You are welcome to contact me at [hello@charlottecummings.nz](mailto:hello@charlottecummings.nz)

Together, may we respond with Mercy to the cry of our Common Home.

Charlotte Cummings  
Author and Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellow (MELF)



Charlotte Cummings



**SECTION ONE:**  
*Laudato Si'* and the call to care  
for our Common Home

# SECTION ONE: *Laudato Si'* and the call to care for our Common Home

***The purpose of this section is to provide a summary of the key points of *Laudato Si'*.***

## **1.1 Background to *Laudato Si'***

In 2015, Pope Francis released *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, a groundbreaking encyclical that has since become a cornerstone for ecological conversion in the Catholic Church and beyond. The phrase “*Laudato Si'*” is Italian, and can be translated to “Praise Be to You”. The phrase is taken from Saint Francis’ of Assisi’s prayer, ‘Canticle to All Creatures’, which highlights the interconnectedness of all living things and reflects how all creation expresses praise to God.

Drawing on the depth of Catholic Social Teaching and the urgency of the ecological crisis, *Laudato Si'* invites all people to hear “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (Francis, 2015, para. 49).

The encyclical outlines seven goals, urging action to address the ecological crisis and its impact on the poor.



Depiction of the seven goals of *Laudato Si'*  
Image: Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary



The seven goals of *Laudato Si'* are:

**1. Response to the Cry of Earth**

Protecting our planet by addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

**2. Response to the Cry of the Poor**

Defending the rights and dignity of vulnerable and marginalised communities most affected by ecological harm.

**3. Ecological Economics**

Promoting economic systems that prioritise sustainability, social justice and care for creation over profit.

**4. Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles**

Embracing simplicity and conscious consumption to reduce ecological impact.

**5. Ecological Education**

Fostering awareness, understanding and action for integral ecology through learning and formation.

**6. Ecological Spirituality**

Cultivating a spiritual connection with creation through prayer, reflection and faith-inspired ecological action.

**7. Community Resilience and Empowerment**

Strengthening local communities to participate in ecological justice and build a more sustainable and just future together.



## **1.2 Integral Ecology - the central call of *Laudato Si'***

*Laudato Si'* draws our attention to the reality that the ecological crisis is not separate from the social challenges faced by vulnerable communities; in fact, it is deeply interconnected. Climate change, pollution, loss of biodiversity and the degradation of natural resources disproportionately affect the poorest and most marginalised. So, too, the perspective of integral ecology challenges us to see how our beliefs and our loss of connection with Earth and one another contributes to the outcomes we see in the world around us.

Pope Francis calls for an "integral ecology" – one that recognises the interdependence of all creation and the moral imperative to care for both people and the planet (*Laudato Si'* #137).

Integral ecology challenges us to see the world not through fragmented lenses – economic, environmental, social, spiritual – but as a whole. It is a vision of radical interconnectedness, where every decision impacts the web of life, and every act of care contributes to the healing of our Common Home.

For Mercy governance boards, integral ecology offers a framework for discerning how policies, priorities and practices align with both the Gospel and the Earth's needs.

Integral ecology is a way of understanding the world that emphasises the interconnectedness of:

- People and planet
- Social justice and environmental sustainability
- Spiritual life and material choices
- Global systems and local realities



Pope Francis writes: “Everything is interconnected, and... genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others” (*Laudato Si’ #70*).

This means ecological degradation cannot be separated from issues like poverty, migration, indigenous rights, or global inequality. To engage with one is to engage with all – and this is where Mercy governance plays a pivotal role.



**SECTION TWO:**  
**Mercy Governance and**  
***Laudato Si'***

## SECTION TWO: Mercy Governance and *Laudato Si'*

***The purpose of this section is to frame how *Laudato Si'* links with the Mercy charism, and to suggest the key principles of the 'Mercy Way' that might shape how boards and ministries respond to *Laudato Si'*.***

### **2.1 A Mercy Response**

For Mercy ministries, *Laudato Si'* is not simply a call to action – it is a summons to live our charism more fully in a time of global urgency.

The Mercy charism, rooted in the life and vision of Catherine McAuley, holds care, compassion and courageous action at its heart. Catherine herself responded to the pressing needs of her time with clarity of purpose and deep reliance on God. Today, that same charism calls us to respond to the ecological and social crises of our era.

The vision of integral ecology set out in *Laudato Si'* echoes the work of the Sisters of Mercy, who have long responded to injustice by linking spiritual reflection with practical, compassionate service.

So, too, as the early Sisters of Mercy donned boots and walked towards the need of their time, we, too, are called to walk towards the urgent global issues outlined in *Laudato Si*.

***"Let charity be our badge of honour... so that it may truly be said, there is in us but one heart and one soul in God" (McAuley, 1841).***



Image: Catherine McAuley  
Source: Mercy International Association



## **2.2 The Place of Mercy Governance Boards in Responding to *Laudato Si'***

Alongside grassroots action based in local communities, governance boards are uniquely placed to be part of leading the Mercy response — by setting direction, shaping culture and allocating resources in a way that reflects Mercy values and the Church's ecological teaching.

### Global Dimensions, Local Leadership

While the ecological crisis is global in scale, it demands localised, context-specific responses. Mercy boards across the world — whether in healthcare, education, social services, or other ministries — are each situated in unique cultural, environmental and political landscapes.

### The Spirit of Discernment and Mercy Governance

Governing for the Common Home requires more than strategy — it requires discernment. This is the ongoing practice of listening to the signs of the times, seeking wisdom through prayer and dialogue and committing to decisions that honour the dignity of all life. As Pope Francis reminds us, *“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential... it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience”* (*Laudato Si’ #217*).

In the Mercy tradition, discernment is never passive. It leads to bold, hopeful action — grounded in faith, inspired by compassion and shaped by justice.

Mercy governance is a distinct expression of leadership within the Catholic tradition. It is grounded in the Gospel, animated by the charism of Mercy, and shaped by a commitment to justice, compassion, and care. As Mercy ministries grow and evolve in increasingly complex contexts, it is essential that governance boards understand both their structural responsibilities and their spiritual call to lead with integrity and faith.



In a Mercy context, governance is more than oversight – it is ministry. Governance boards are entrusted with the sacred task of stewarding the mission and ensuring that the values and founding purpose of the ministry are lived out in every decision. This means asking not only, “Is this sustainable?” but also, “Is this faithful?” and “Who does this serve?”

### *Laudato Si' and the Mercy Charism*

At the heart of *Laudato Si'* is a call to conversion – a deep, personal and communal turning toward the interconnectedness of all creation and the urgent need for ecological and social justice. Pope Francis invites every person to embrace an “integral ecology”, one that recognises the relationships between people, communities, economies, institutions and the Earth itself (*Laudato Si'* 137). For the Mercy community, this message is not new, but it resonates profoundly with the tradition and spirit of Catherine McAuley.

### *The Spiritual Vision of Laudato Si'*

*Laudato Si'* draws on centuries of Catholic teaching while offering a fresh and urgent vision of ecological care. Pope Francis names the exploitation of creation and the exclusion of the poor as part of the same moral crisis. He writes: “*Today... we have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach... so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*” (*Laudato Si'* #49).

This is a profoundly Mercy message. The Sisters of Mercy have always stood where the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor meet – in ministries of education, healthcare, housing, advocacy, and accompaniment. *Laudato Si'* gives theological clarity and global urgency to what the Mercy tradition has long embodied.

### *Mercy and Ecological Conversion*

Ecological conversion is not just about changing behaviour – it is about reorienting the heart. It invites us to see creation as sacred, to acknowledge our complicity in systems that harm, and to commit ourselves to new ways of living that honour life in all its forms.



This resonates with the Mercy charism, which calls for a posture of humility, compassion and active concern. Catherine McAuley's legacy is one of courageous response to suffering, grounded in deep trust in God and a tireless commitment to those in need. In our time, this legacy calls us to respond to the suffering of the planet and its peoples – and to do so with both love and leadership.

As Mercy governance boards, integrating *Laudato Si'* into leadership is not about adding one more initiative – it is about reimagining the entire mission through a deeper theological lens.

### A Shared Call to Action

Through *Laudato Si'*, Mercy governance boards have received a shared call to action. And, the call to care for our Common Home is deeply spiritual and deeply practical. It urges us to ask:

- What is the impact of our governance decisions on the environment and those rendered poor?
- How are we integrating creation care into our mission, strategy, and culture?
- Where is ecological justice being considered in our budgets, partnerships, and policies?

To lead in the spirit of *Laudato Si'* is to lead with courage, hope and Mercy – for the flourishing of all creation.

### Integral Ecology Is Not Optional

*Laudato Si'* insists that ecological concern is not a niche issue or a special project – it is central to the Church's mission. For Mercy ministries, it is likewise not an add-on, but a lens through which everything must be viewed: hiring decisions, capital projects, investments, strategic direction and partnerships.



As Pope Francis writes:

“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” (*Laudato Si’ #139*).

Integral ecology helps Mercy boards respond to this crisis in a way that is whole-hearted, whole-system, and wholly Mercy.

### **2.3 The ‘Mercy Way’**

Benefitting from a large inheritance from an Irish couple she had served, Catherine McAuley opened the House of Mercy in Dublin in 1827. Nearly 200 years on from when Catherine’s ministry began, there have been many societal challenges which have remained, and indeed new challenges have emerged.

We can learn a lot from the types of responses Catherine made to the issues she observed around her. However, a key learning is not simply the issues responded to, but the manner of the response.

The ‘Mercy Way’ is a distinctive approach to action, leadership, and service that flows from the life, values and spirituality of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy. It is less about what is done and more about how it is done – with deep attentiveness to the person, the presence of God in the everyday and a commitment to dignity, justice and compassion.

Mercy governance boards who wish to respond to the challenges issued in *Laudato Si’* have a special call to do so in a manner which is consistent with the Mercy charism and the ‘Mercy Way’.

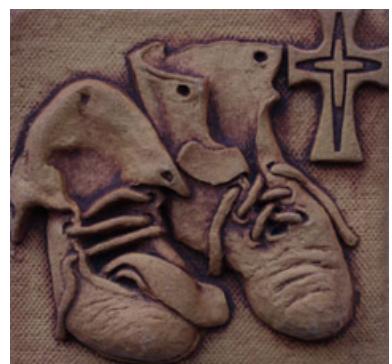


Image: Ngā Whaea Atawhai - The Sisters of Mercy New Zealand



### **2.3.1 The Principles of the Mercy Way: How We Do Things**

In reflecting on the leadership of Catherine McAuley and the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy, we can see the following aspects of the ‘Mercy Way’ of responding to issues.

#### **1. Rooted in Compassion and Relationship**

At the heart of the Mercy way is a radical attentiveness to the needs of others, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalised. Inspired by Catherine McAuley’s conviction that “the poor need help today, not next week,” the Mercy approach prioritises presence – listening, accompanying and responding with immediacy and care.

#### **2. Hospitality and Inclusion**

Mercy is expressed through welcome – of difference, of struggle, of the other. The Mercy tradition embraces people where they are, creating spaces of safety and belonging. This inclusive spirit reflects the Gospel call to love without condition and is woven through every relationship and practice.

#### **3. Practical Love in Action**

Catherine McAuley was not abstract in her compassion; she rolled up her sleeves and got to work. The Mercy way is hands-on, practical, and solutions-oriented – meeting real needs with real help. It values effectiveness, service, and common-sense compassion.

#### **4. Quiet Strength and Courage**

The Sisters of Mercy and their global partners have historically acted with quiet but resolute strength – whether in education, healthcare, or advocacy. Mercy leadership often works behind the scenes, led by moral clarity, a willingness to challenge injustice, and a deep trust in God’s providence.

#### **5. Collaborative and Consultative**

Mercy leadership doesn’t dominate or dictate. It listens deeply, draws on collective wisdom, and empowers others. Decisions are made with dialogue, discernment, and care, not haste or ego. This reflects Catherine’s gentle, humble, and wise manner of leadership.



## 6. Integrated Spirituality

Prayer and reflection are not separate from action in the Mercy way – they ground and guide it. Decisions and service are rooted in a contemplative stance, discerning God’s presence and movement in daily life. Mercy integrates faith and justice.

## 7. Responding with Dignity and Justice

Mercy insists that every human being is treated with respect. In systems, institutions and governance, this means advocating for equity, making room for diverse voices and attending to the deeper causes of suffering – not just the symptoms.

Ultimately, the Mercy Way is a way of being in the world: relational, reflective, just and responsive. It honours both the person in front of us and the systems that shape their lives. It is deeply human and deeply spiritual – marked by kindness, courage and a hope that refuses to give up.

Catherine McAuley modelled leadership that was both courageous and contemplative. She made difficult decisions in uncertain times, always guided by the needs of the poor and a deep trust in God’s providence. Her approach was relational, responsive and rooted in prayer. Mercy governance today is called to that same rhythm: pausing to reflect, listening deeply, and acting boldly in the service of mission.

### 2.3.2 Challenges from The Mercy Way

So, too, when we consider the story of Catherine McAuley and her way of working with the early Sisters of Mercy, we can see some key elements:

- She trusted the young with leadership.
- She commissioned and ‘sent’ others into action.
- She made her mission known to others.
- She invited partnership.
- She worked in with church structures.

So, too, these factors can challenge Mercy governance boards, as they consider how they mobilise themselves and their ministries to action in response to *Laudato Si’*.



**SECTION THREE:**  
**Practical Tools for Mercy**  
**Governance Boards Responding**  
**to *Laudato Si'***

## **SECTION THREE: Practical Tools for Mercy Governance Boards Responding to *Laudato Si'***

***The purpose of this section is to provide practical tools for Mercy governance boards, to assist them in applying *Laudato Si'* in their context.***

### **1.1 Key Performance Indicators for Mercy Governance Boards Responding to *Laudato Si'***

The following has been suggested as a list of Key Performance Indicators for Mercy Boards who wish to evaluate their progress against the central principles of *Laudato Si'*:

<b>A. Policies and Planning</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The board and its ministries have signed up to the <i>Laudato Si'</i> Action Platform and created an Action Plan.</li></ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. The board has a policy around climate impact reduction, covering:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. the board's own activities</li><li>b. the activities of its ministries.</li></ol></li></ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. There is annual reporting against climate impact reduction goals.</li></ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. There is a structured mechanism for ensuring integral ecology is considered in strategic planning.</li></ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. The board has an ethical investment policy, for any investments.</li></ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Procurement policy requires preference for local, sustainable, and fair-trade suppliers.</li></ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>7. Climate resilience and disaster preparedness plans are in place across ministries.</li></ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>8. Carbon neutrality or net-zero targets are set with clear timelines.</li></ol>

<b>B. Decision Making</b>	<p>1. There are robust mechanisms for evaluating decisions including considering who benefits, and who is harmed or disadvantaged.</p> <p>2. Decision making processes consider how decisions could have a lower impact on Earth.</p> <p>3. Board papers include an “ecological footprint” statement when decisions have material impacts.</p> <p>4. Decision-making frameworks consider options for regenerative, not only less harmful, approaches.</p>
<b>C. Collaboration</b>	<p>1. There are active collaborations with local ecological groups, with a particular focus on indigenous led sustainability initiatives.</p> <p>2. There are collaborations with other Mercy groups or ministries, around shared priorities.</p> <p>3. Partnerships exist with local government or civic groups on sustainability or resilience projects.</p> <p>4. Relationships are maintained with other faith-based groups working on ecology and justice.</p> <p>5. Ministries co-develop shared ecological goals and report collectively.</p> <p>6. The board engages with international Mercy Global Action ecological networks.</p>



<b>D. Membership</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The board considers ecological justice in its skills matrix.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. New director formation includes a focus on integral ecology.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Board recruitment includes expertise in ecology, sustainability, or indigenous knowledge.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The board undertakes annual self-assessment of competency in ecological justice.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Mentoring and support are provided for younger Mercy leaders in governance roles with ecological focus.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Succession planning explicitly considers ecological justice expertise.</li> </ol>
<b>E. Input and Engagement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The board is clear who in their community is most impacted by climate change and engages around understanding these impacts.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Assessment of community needs include both social and ecological data from the local community (e.g. housing, climate vulnerability, food access, biodiversity loss).</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Board meetings include ecological prayer or reflection periodically, and this is planned for in a recurring manner.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Ministries conduct regular staff, student, or community surveys on ecological issues.</li> </ol>



<b>F. Education</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Climate education initiatives are led or sponsored.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Annual ecological training is mandatory for directors and senior staff.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Ministries provide education programmes linking Catholic tradition, Mercy charism, and ecology.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Mercy schools develop ecological curriculum aligned to Laudato Si'.</li> </ol>
<b>G. Advocacy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The board has made public commitments in line with the key goals of Laudato Si'.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Ministries engage in regular advocacy action, where appropriate to their areas of work.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The board or its ministries participate or engage in Mercy or church-wide environmental initiatives, campaigns, or networks.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Public reporting on progress toward Laudato Si' goals is included in annual reports.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. The board is represented at government or civic hearings on ecological justice issues.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. The board joins or endorses ecumenical statements and submissions on climate and justice.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Ministries are encouraged and supported to integrate advocacy into their mission areas.</li> </ol>



<b>H. Action</b>	1. There is evidence of initiatives that meet both human and environmental needs.
	2. Clear ecological targets and outcomes are set and monitored (e.g., waste reduction, renewable energy adoption).
	3. Ministries demonstrate integration of ecological practices into everyday operations (e.g., transport, food systems, energy).



## **1.2 Framework for Decision Making**

The following key questions have been developed to assist boards in considering decisions they are making against the key principles of *Laudato Si'*:

1. Who does this decision advantage?
2. What are the negative impacts of the decision, and who bears these impacts?
3. How are we prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable?
4. Whose voices are loudest, and whose voices are quietest in the input we have had on this decision?
5. What is the most faithful, compassionate, and just response at this time?
6. How are we reducing harm through this decision?
7. How are we promoting dignity and wellbeing through this decision?
8. How are we honouring indigenous knowledge and local wisdom?
9. Who are we partnering with in this decision?

Some additional questions that could be asked are:

- How does this decision care for our common home – Earth – in both immediate and long-term ways?
- Does this decision integrate economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, rather than treating them in isolation?
- How are we ensuring that future generations are not disadvantaged by this choice?
- How might this decision help to restore ecological balance or regenerate ecosystems?
- How are we practicing simplicity and avoiding unnecessary consumption or waste?
- Are we making space for prayer, discernment, and spiritual reflection in this decision?
- How does this decision reflect Mercy values – hospitality, compassion, justice, service, and solidarity?
- How are we strengthening community and relationships (not just achieving outcomes)?



- In what ways are we challenging systems of exploitation, inequality, or indifference?
- How might this decision inspire hope and encourage others to take courageous steps for justice and care of creation?



**SECTION FOUR**

***Laudato Si'* Themed Formation**

**Reflection Activities for Mercy**

**Governance Boards**

# Formation Reflection Activity One

## Theme: What does integral ecology mean?

**Objective:** The objective of this formation reflection activity is to develop board member's understanding of the concept of integral ecology.

### Introduction

In 2015, Pope Francis issued an encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. A key concept of this work is the notion of 'integral ecology', that all things are interconnected. Importantly, this concept encourages us to see that an issue such as climate change is not just an issue facing our planet, but it is an issue that impacts people - and a change that is reflective of harmful attitudes and systems, which are of equal concern.

### Discussion

#### ***Discussion Point One: What is your understanding of integral ecology?***

Notes to support discussion:

What does integral ecology mean? Recognising that everything is interconnected—people, the planet, social systems, spiritual life and economics.

In practical terms, this means:

##### **1. Human and environmental wellbeing are inseparable**

- Caring for Earth cannot be separated from caring for people—especially the poor and vulnerable.
- Environmental degradation and social injustice are often caused by the same systems.

##### **2. Everything is connected**

- Our decisions (as individuals or governance bodies) have ripple effects—on ecosystems, communities, future generations, and even our inner lives.



### **3. Ecology includes our relationships—with nature, with each other and with God**

- Integral ecology sees the Earth as our common home—not a resource to exploit, but a sacred gift to care for, in relationship with others and with the Creator.
- “Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God.” (*Laudato Si’ #119*)

### **4. It calls for cultural, economic and spiritual change**

- It’s not just about policies or recycling—it’s about transforming our mindsets, economies, habits and values toward justice, simplicity and sustainability.

***Discussion Point Two: How do you see integral ecology fitting with Mercy governance?***

Notes to support discussion:

- Integral ecology is deeply aligned with the Mercy tradition. It:
  - Honours the dignity of all life
  - Calls for compassionate, systems-aware leadership
  - Requires courageous responses to unjust structures
  - Inspires long-term, communal thinking—not short-term gain

***Discussion Point Three: How will more awareness around integral ecology impact our board?***

- Our practices
- Our decision making
- Our services

### **Action**

**What are the practical actions we will take as a result of this discussion?**



## A Prayer for Integral Ecology

**God of all creation, we thank you for the gift of Earth, our Common Home, and for the interconnectedness of all life. We recognise that we are part of nature, not separate from it, and that our actions have consequences for all living beings.**

**We pray for the wisdom to understand the complex relationships within your creation and to see the beauty and value in every creature. Help us to recognise the harm we have inflicted on Earth through our unsustainable practices and to turn away from destructive patterns.**

**Grant us the strength to embrace ecological conversion, to live more simply and sustainably, and to make choices that honour the dignity of all people and the health of the planet. Inspire us to care for the poor and vulnerable, who are often the most affected by environmental degradation.**

**Guide us to be responsible stewards of your creation, working for justice and peace, and striving to create a world where all can flourish. May our actions be a testament to your love and a source of hope for future generations. Amen.**

“A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice.” (Laudato Si’ #49)

## Formation Reflection Activity Two

### Theme: Integral Ecology in our Context

**Objective:** *The objective of this formation reflection activity is to encourage board members to explore how the concept of integral ecology can shape their thinking about challenges in the context of the community they serve.*

#### Introduction

A key principle of *Laudato Si'* is the notion of integral ecology - that everything is interconnected. This reflection is designed to encourage your board to take an integral ecology perspective, in viewing the challenges that are present in the context of the community you serve.

#### Discussion

Choose one or two questions from the list below to discuss together. Or, each person might like to choose a question that stands out to them and share their response. Note: it may be useful to choose a question or two prior to the meeting, giving participants time to reflect on their response.

Discussion prompts:

- In the community we serve, how do we see climate change impacting the needs of people?
- What are the attitudes that we most want to see change in our community? How do our ministries contribute to the change we want to see?



- What are the most pressing needs we see in our local community—and how might they be connected to wider social or environmental challenges?
- Who is being left out or unheard in our community? What might they help us to see or understand?
- How are issues like housing, food insecurity, mental health, or access to education connected to the wellbeing of the environment?
- What signs of resilience or hope do we see in our community that we might build upon?
- What are we being invited to notice more deeply—not just at the surface, but systemically?
- In what ways do our ministries already respond to interconnected needs? Where might we be called to respond more boldly or compassionately?
- Are there "invisible" needs in our context that we have not yet discerned? What would it take to see or hear them?

“Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures.”  
(*Laudato Si’ #16*)

“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.” (*Laudato Si’ #70*)

“Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God.” (*Laudato Si’ #117*)



## Discerning with Eyes of Mercy

**Leader:**

Lord, Creator of all,  
You have made Earth our Common Home—  
woven with life, shaped by Your hand, and entrusted to our care.  
You remind us in *Laudato Si'* that everything is connected:  
people and planet, justice and mercy, faith and action.

**All:**

Help us to see with clear eyes, and feel with open hearts.

**Leader:**

In our communities, we see both beauty and burden—  
resilience and struggle, hope and harm.  
Give us the grace to notice what is often unseen:  
the silent suffering, the hidden hunger,  
the fragile ecosystems, and the quiet strength of those on the margins.

**All:**

Teach us to listen deeply—to people, to the land, and to Your Spirit.

**Leader:**

As boards of governance and service,  
may we discern wisely and act justly.  
Root our decisions in compassion.  
Anchor our planning in love.  
Guide us to respond not with fear, but with courage and care.

**All:**

Let us be instruments of peace for your creation,  
where healing, justice, and sustainability meet.

**Leader:**

Catherine McAuley, woman of vision and mercy,  
walk with us as we seek to govern with wisdom  
and serve with a heart wide as the world.

**All:**

Amen.

## Formation Reflection Activity Three

### Theme: What does it look like to respond to *Laudato Si'* in the Mercy tradition?

**Objective:** *This reflection activity invites board members to consider not just what actions they might take in response to Laudato Si', but how they can respond in a way that reflects the Mercy tradition. It encourages reflection on what makes a Mercy response distinctive in the face of ecological and social challenges.*

#### Introduction:

Catherine McAuley's way of responding to need was grounded in deep listening, practical compassion, and courageous action. In the spirit of *Laudato Si'*, we are called to hear both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor—and to respond in ways that are just, sustainable, and deeply human.

This reflection encourages boards to explore how Mercy values—such as compassion, hospitality, courage, service and justice—can shape not just our goals, but our way of working.

#### Discussion:

Choose one or more of the following questions for group discussion, or invite each person to reflect on the question that speaks most clearly to them.

- When we talk about responding to *Laudato Si'*, do we focus more on action or attitude? How might the Mercy tradition encourage us to hold both?
- What distinguishes a Mercy approach to ecological and social justice from other good and necessary efforts?



- How does compassion shape the way we lead, govern, and plan for change?
- Catherine McAuley often acted with both urgency and tenderness. How might that influence our board's response to today's environmental and social crises?
- How do we ensure that our responses to *Laudato Si'* are rooted in relationship—with people, with place, and with God?
- What might it look like for our board to embody the values of integrity, simplicity, and mercy in our ecological commitments?
- In the decisions we make, how can we better hold in view both the needs of the present and the rights of future generations?
- How does the 'Mercy Way' shape our response to *Laudato Si'*?

Closing Reflection Prompt:

What does it mean for our board to be a sign of Mercy in our care for creation and our response to injustice?



## Formation Reflection Activity Four

### Theme: Personal Conversion

**Objective:** *This reflection activity encourages individuals to consider their own response to the challenge of Laudato Si'.*

#### Introduction:

A clear message in *Laudato Si'* is that we all must examine our own personal response to the crises of our time.

“We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.” (*Laudato Si'* #147)

“Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.” (*Laudato Si'* #202)

#### Discussion:

Choose one or two of the questions below for personal reflection and group sharing:

- What does *Laudato Si'* call people towards, on an individual level?
- Personally, what is your next challenge, when it comes to embracing the principles of *Laudato Si'* in your own life?
- When you reflect on your daily habits, which ones contribute positively to the care of our common home?
- How do you experience the ‘mutual belonging’ Pope Francis speaks of – with people, with creation, with God?



- Where do you notice resistance within yourself to change or conversion in this area?
- What helps you stay hopeful when faced with the scale of the ecological and social crises described in Laudato Si'?
- How does your spiritual life (prayer, reflection, faith practice) shape your response to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor?
- What values or attitudes from your upbringing or culture encourage you to care for creation? Which ones might need to be challenged?
- In what ways could your choices – big or small – serve as an example or witness to others around you?
- Who are the people or communities that inspire you in living out the principles of Laudato Si'?



## **SECTION FIVE:**

### **Conclusion**

## Conclusion and Useful Links

Thank you for taking the time to engage with this resource.

Please note that you can access *Laudato Si'* through the Vatican website, following this link: [\*\*Laudato Si'\*\*](#). The full title of the publication is: Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home. 2015.

Additionally, you can read more about the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform following this link: [\*\*Laudato Si' Action Platform\*\*](#)



## Closing Prayer

God of Mercy and Creator of All,  
You have called us into relationship with an Earth filled with  
beauty,  
a common home where all life is interconnected,  
where all life depends on justice and compassion.  
We thank you for the gift of leadership,  
for the wisdom of Catherine McAuley,  
and for the challenge of Laudato Si',  
which calls us to see with clearer eyes  
and to act with courageous hearts.  
As we carry this work forward,  
may we be leaders who listen—  
to the cry of the Earth,  
to the cry of the poor,  
to the quiet voice of the Spirit in our midst.  
Help us govern with tenderness and conviction.  
Let our decisions sow healing, not harm.  
Let our structures reflect your justice,  
and our strategies bear fruit for future generations.  
In every policy and plan,  
may we honour the sacredness of life,  
the dignity of every person,  
and the integrity of creation.  
Catherine, woman of mercy and vision,  
walk with us as we lead in love.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord,  
who walked gently on this Earth.  
Amen.

