St Francis of Assis, living in peace, love and care.

Objectives:
Explore the meaning of peace, love, and care for creation through the life and example of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Understand what it means to live simply, love deeply, and act as stewards of the Earth as young Catholics.

Reflect on how bringing peace to others and caring for the environment is a way of living the Gospel in today's world.

Please note:

Each FIA session must cover at least one key element from 'The Good News' and two from 'The Church Story'. It should also allow participants time to consider their own experience, so that each FIA session models this structure of reflection and prayer. Each FIA session must also conclude with a prayer service. You may wish to have the FIA Session resources available to participants at the beginning of their FIA journey for those who wish to use them as they go along.

Before you begin:

Create a comfortable, quiet space for the group with enough seating for everyone. Ensure materials are ready: Print out scripture passages and the story of a holy man or women, along with any necessary activity instructions. Prepare the space for the closing liturgy (candles, ribbons, pens, etc.).

Each reflection point should include:

- Reading a passage from the New Testament
- Exploration of the Church's Story (teachings from the Catechism and/or the Pope, research into the life of a Saint)
- The opportunity for the participant to reflect on their personal experience
- An activity
- A Liturgy

You will Need:

- Print-outs of the chosen scripture passage/church's story for participants.
- Instructions and equipment for your chosen activity.
- For the Liturgy

Welcome, Introduction & Opening Prayer

Gather the group together. Briefly introduce the theme for this reflection:

Our faith calls us not only to believe in God, but to live in a way that reflects His love in the world. This means how we treat other people, how we respond to conflict, and even how we care for the environment around us. As young Catholics, we are invited to be people of peace, to show love in our daily actions, and to take responsibility for the world God has given us.

Living this way is not always easy. It can be difficult to choose kindness when we feel angry, or to care for the environment when it feels like a small action won't make a difference. But our faith reminds us that even the smallest acts of love and care matter. Each time we choose peace over conflict, generosity over selfishness, and care over carelessness, we are living out the Gospel.

Saint Francis of Assisi understood this deeply. He chose a life of simplicity, peace, and love for all of God's creation. He saw every person, every animal, and even nature itself as a reflection of God's goodness. Instead of seeking wealth or power, Francis chose humility and joy. He worked to bring peace where there was conflict and cared for the environment long before it became a global concern. His life reminds us that being a follower of Christ means living gently, loving generously, and protecting the world we share. When we choose peace, show love, and care for creation, we are living the Gospel in real and meaningful ways.

Say the Faith in Action Prayer together:

God our Father,
We thank you for the gift of your love which you give to every person in the world. We thank you that because of your love we are never alone and should never feel afraid. We thank you for the gift of faith which allows us to know you, one God three persons. We thank you that because of that faith the whole of our lives are directed to living for other people. Through your son, Jesus Christ, our friend and brother, you show us how to love. Give us the strength we need to live lives of love and faith, so that the world might come to know your son more and more through our actions and words as we seek to live lives which help to build your Kingdom here on earth.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
AMEN

The Good News

Choose a passage from scripture that will help the group to reflect on the theme. Below are some suggestions followed by discussion points:

Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Luke 12:15

“Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

Matthew 6:26

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap… and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.”

John 13:34

“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

Genesis 2:15

'The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.’

Psalm 24:1

‘The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.’

Discussion Points

- What does Jesus teach us about peace and love in these passages?
- How can we be peacemakers in our daily lives?
- What does Jesus’ teaching about possessions say about how we live?
- Why is caring for creation part of loving God?
- What stops us from choosing peace, anger, pride, or selfishness?
- How can small actions help protect the environment and show love for others?

The Church's Story

To help reflect and explore the Good News further, share some of the church's teachings from the Catechism, the Pope's writings or the lives of holy people with the group: You may wish to choose one or two that would be best for your group, or you may wish to present a selection to the group and ask them to comment on the one that stands out to them.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

CCC 2304

"Respect for and development of human life require peace."

CCC 2446

"It is love of the poor, rooted in the love of Christ, which motivates Christians to work for justice."

YOUCAT 436

"The environment is God's creation and we are called to protect it responsibly."

YOUCAT 440

"Peace is the result of justice and the sign of love at work."

Pope Francis

"Care for our common home is a responsibility for all."

- Laudato Si', 14

""Don't forget the poor- And those words came to me: the poor, the poor, then, right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars. … Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation. These days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we? He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace. … How I would like a church which is poor and for the poor!"

- An Interview with Vatican Media

"The Earth is our common home and we must protect it together."

- Laudato Si'

Pope Leo

Dear brothers and sisters, may the example and spiritual legacy of this Saint, strong in faith, steadfast in hope and ardent in active charity towards his neighbour, inspire in everyone the importance of trusting in the Lord, of living a life faithful to the Gospel, and of accepting and illuminating every circumstance and action of life with faith and prayer."

- Letter of the Holy Father Leo XIV to the Ministers General of the Conference of the Franciscan Family

Lives of Holy Men and Women

Saint Francis of Assisi: Living Peace, Love, and Care for Creation

Saint Francis of Assisi was born in Italy in 1181 into a wealthy family. As a young man, he dreamed of success and adventure, but over time, he began to feel that something was missing. After a powerful encounter with God, Francis chose a completely different path. As a young man, Francis was afraid of lepers and would normally avoid them. One day, he chose to do the opposite. He approached a leper, gave him money, and even embraced him. Afterwards, Francis said what once filled him with fear became a moment of joy and peace. He realised Christ was present in the poor and suffering. This was a turning point where he began to see others with love instead of fear. He gave up his wealth and possessions to live a simple life focused on prayer, peace, and love.

Francis believed that everything in creation was a gift from God. He called the sun, moon, animals, and even the earth his brothers and sisters. This showed his deep respect for the environment and his understanding that all life is connected. He treated nature with care and encouraged others to do the same, reminding people that caring for the Earth is a way of honouring God.

He was also known as a peacemaker. At a time when there was conflict and division, Francis worked to bring people together. He chose kindness instead of anger and forgiveness instead of revenge. His famous prayer reflects this: “Make me an instrument of your peace.” Francis showed that real strength comes from love, humility, and compassion.

What makes Francis so inspiring is how he lived the Gospel in a simple but powerful way. He did not just speak about love, he lived it. He cared for the poor, respected all living things, and brought peace wherever he went. His life reminds us that we do not need to be rich or powerful to make a difference. Small acts of love, peace, and care can change the world.

This connects closely with Faith in Action. FIA is not just about completing tasks, but about how we live each day. Like Francis, we are called to live simply, treat others with kindness, and care for creation. Whether it is reducing waste, helping others, or choosing peace in difficult situations, these actions show God’s love in the world.

Living like Saint Francis today might mean choosing kindness over conflict, simplicity over excess, and care over carelessness. These choices help us become more like Christ and build a better world.

Saint Francis of Assisi teaches us that peace begins with us, love is shown in our actions, and caring for the Earth is part of our faith. As part of their FIA journey, young people are invited to follow his example, living lives that reflect peace, love, and respect for all creation.

Personal Story

During this time, the young people should be encouraged to think about their FIA journey so far, and share with the group how the acts of service they have participated in have been examples of showing others God's love. You can, at this point, review the acts of service young people have participated in thus far, and give them the opportunity to reflect in their journal the acts of service they have done, if they have not done so already.

- When have I helped bring peace to a situation?
- How do my actions show love for others and the world around me?
- What acts of service have I already taken part in during my FIA journey?
- How did those actions reflect the love of Christ?

Activity Suggestions

Exploration Activity

Materials: Paper (or printed "contract" sheets), pens, optional coloured pens or pencils
Instructions:

1. Explain that Saint Francis of Assisi chose to be a peacemaker and made a personal commitment to live differently.
2. Give each participant a sheet titled: *"My Peace, Love, and Creation Contract"*.
3. Ask them to write 3–5 promises they will try to keep. For example:
    - One way they will bring peace (e.g. avoiding arguments, forgiving someone)
    - One way they will show love (e.g. helping at home, supporting a friend)
    - One way they will care for creation (e.g. reducing waste, picking up litter)
4. Encourage them to make their promises realistic and personal.
5. At the bottom, they sign and date their contract.

Understanding Activity

Hold a brief discussion or liturgy about how Saint Francis lived a life of peace, simplicity, and care for creation. Connect his example to our lives today, showing that caring for the Earth and choosing peace are part of our faith.
Activity Ideas:

- Make a poster or slideshow showing how Francis lived out Jesus' teachings through peace and care for creation.
- Include quotes from Saint Francis, such as: "Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

Reflection Activity

Invite participants to take a few minutes each evening to reflect quietly or write in their journal:

"Think back over the day. Did I choose peace in my words and actions? Did I show care for others and the world around me? If not, what will I do tomorrow to live more like Saint Francis?"

Encourage them to notice small actions and grow in awareness

Liturgy: Living Peace, Love, and Care for Creation

Begin with the Sign of the Cross

Scripture Reading:
Matthew 5:9
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Reflection Activity:

- Play quiet, reflective music.
- Invite each young person to take a post-it note or small piece of paper. Ask them to write or draw one way they plan to bring peace, show love, or care for the environment in the coming week.
- Encourage them to write multiple ideas on separate notes.
- Place a board or large sheet of paper in the room labelled: "Living Peace and Love". Ask the young people to stick their post-its there.
- Over the week, as they complete these actions, they can move the notes to "Completed" section, reflecting how small actions can grow into meaningful change.

Litany of Peace and Care
Response: Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
For the courage to choose peace in our words and actions, we pray.
Response: Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

For the strength to love others and care for creation, we pray.
Response: Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

For Saint Francis of Assisi, who showed us how to live simply and love all creation, we pray.
Response: Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Concluding Prayer:
Lord Jesus,
You call us to live in peace, to love one another, and to care for the world You have given us. Help us to follow Your example by choosing kindness, forgiveness, and respect for all creation. May we, like Saint Francis, live simply and bring peace wherever we go.
Guide our hearts and actions so that we may protect the Earth, care for others, and reflect Your love in everything we do.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen