

Diocese of Kerry Earth Week - 17-23 April 2016

1. Introduction

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee (JPIC) are inviting Parish Pastoral Councils to take up the urgent challenge put before us by Pope Francis. In his encyclical *Laudato Si*, he calls on all of us to care for 'our common home' and to protect our environment from any further harm. He calls Earth our sister, and says that '*This sister cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her*' (LS#1).

One of the themes of *Laudato Si* is the loss of biodiversity (LS#32-42) and the JPIC have chosen this as our theme for the Diocese of Kerry Earth Week in April 2016. Biodiversity or biological diversity is the term given to describe the variety of all life on earth. Biodiversity provides humans with food, fresh water and fuel, building materials and even the resources used to develop most modern prescription drugs. For this reason biodiversity can be considered as the very raw material that sustains life on earth.

2. What we are asking Parish Pastoral Councils to do?

We are asking Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs) to respond to Pope Francis' challenge by surveying their parish grounds, to see what biodiversity exists and then to consider ways to encourage this. The JPIC will be providing PPCs with a simple, practical method to undertake this survey, as well as a list of suggested actions for parishes to take to enhance biodiversity and to prevent further loss including bee decline.

3. What are we asking people to do?

We will be asking people to carry out a similar survey at home in their own gardens. A sample one-page flyer - with an introduction to *Laudato Si* and a checklist on loss of biodiversity - will be supplied to all parishes. We would hope parishes would encourage parishioners to use this checklist at home, by printing them off and leaving them in the church, or inserting them in the parish newsletter.

4. What resources will be available?

- JPIC will be providing resources for parishes that wish to erect a *Laudato Si Tree* in the church. The purpose of the *Laudato Si Tree* is to highlight what the parish community is doing in response to Pope Francis' challenge to prevent further loss of biodiversity.
- Liturgical resources will be provided as to how to make best use of the *Laudato Si Tree*
- Other resources will be available under the 'Justice' section the diocesan website
- Information/Training sessions are planned for January 2016 for parish/community groups who want additional help to create a biodiversity space in their parish/community.