

Hello!

Welcome to Catholic Education Week 2019 and to the Autumn issue of SCES Parent News.

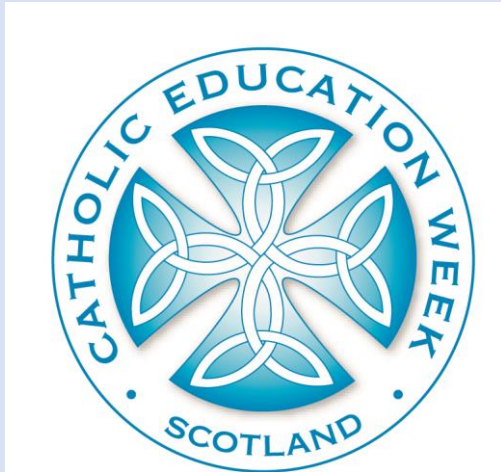
This year, Catholic Education Week focuses on the theme of "Promoting Gospel Values" and in this issue you can read about ways that you, as a parent member of your school's community, can support Gospel Values in your school. We also review the National Parent Gathering which took place in Falkirk on 21<sup>st</sup> September to reflect on the theme, "Caretakers of God's Creation: Laudato Si' in School and at Home."

Arising from the workshops at the Parent Gathering we invite you to consider the impact of your Christmas preparations on the created world and so we offer some suggestions for changes your family can make during Advent, Christmas and beyond to protect our common home.

Our mission at SCES Parents is to support parents to promote the mission and ethos of their children's school and so we are delighted, in Catholic Education Week, to share with you plans to improve that support and enhance communication between individual schools, dioceses and the national parent group.

We hope you enjoy reading the latest issue of SCES Parent News. If you have any comments please get in touch with us by emailing [parents@sces.uk.com](mailto:parents@sces.uk.com).

God bless,  
Jo Soares  
Chair SCES Parents



## Catholic Education Week 2019 Promoting Gospel Values

Catholic Education Week is a great opportunity for you, as a parent, to be involved in your children's school and to show support for its mission and ethos. This year Catholic Education Week takes as its theme 'Promoting Gospel Values' and gets to the very heart of what makes our schools Catholic.

We are invited to reflect on **The Beatitudes** of Matthew's Gospel and make these a reality in our school communities.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.* We think of the values of faithfulness and integrity. Talk to your children about their learning and take opportunities to reinforce gospel values and the teaching of the Church. Parent Council representatives are particular public role models. If you are a member of a parent council ask yourself, "Do I faithfully support the mission and ethos of the school?"

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* We think of the values of dignity and compassion. There are many opportunities for parents to become involved in projects showing compassion for neighbours near and far away. Your children's school may support SCIAF, Mary's Meals, SPUC, a local hospice or care home. They may have collections for foodbanks or uniform banks. If you are not already involved, why not ask if you can volunteer to help? As adult members of the school community we must also model respectful interactions. Ask yourself, "Do I always treat others with the dignity and respect including at meetings and on social media?"

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* We think of the values of humility and gentleness. Parents and parent councils are often asked to provide everyday service to our school communities. From making teas and coffees after a concert, to ironing second-hand uniform and of course, washing up! Give your time willingly to these valuable roles.

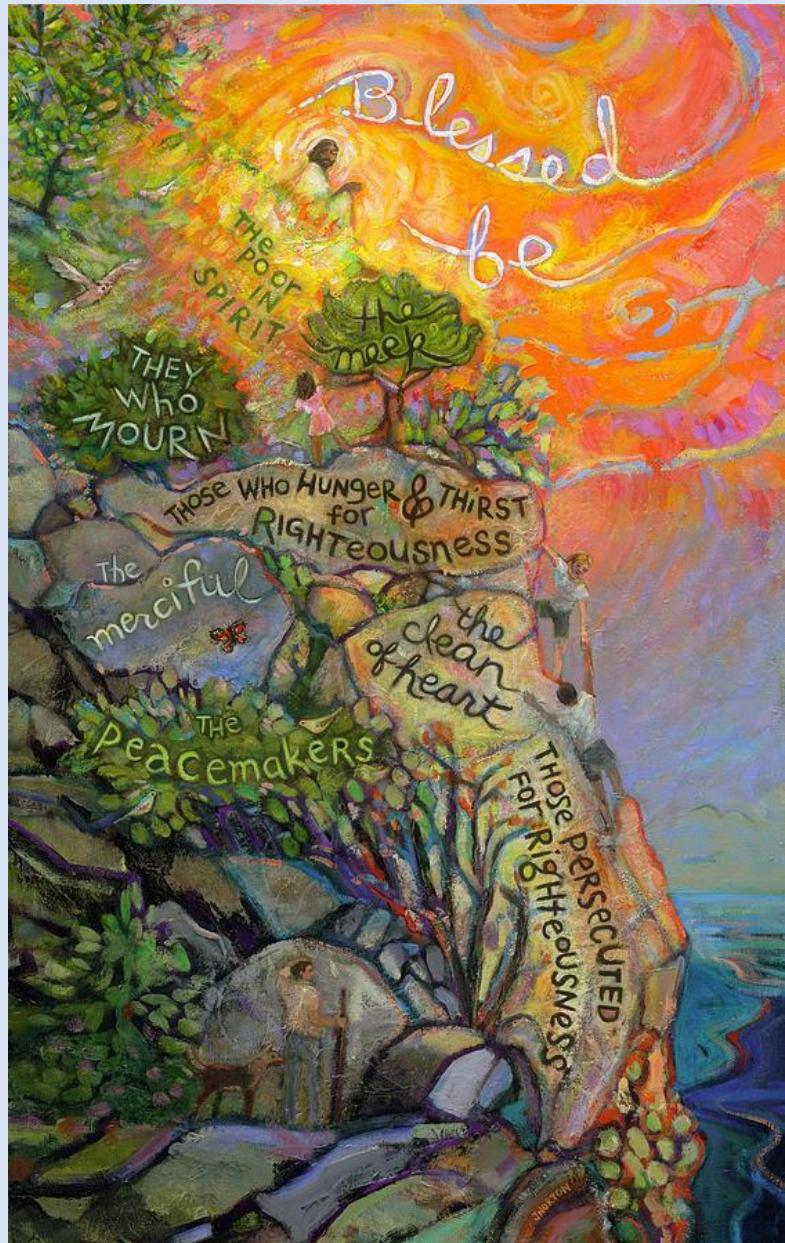
*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* We think of the values of truth and justice. Become informed about Justice and Peace issues and Pope Francis' message in *Laudato Si'*. What changes could your family make to help bring about a more just world? If you are a member of a parent council ask for *Laudato Si'* to be included on the agenda for your next meeting and review your working practices.

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* We think of the values of forgiveness and mercy. Find out about your school's behaviour management policy and how they use restorative practices within the school community. Guide your children in examining their consciences and make it your family's habit to receive the sacrament of reconciliation regularly.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* We think about the values of purity and holiness and the Eucharist as the source and submit of these values. Your children's school will have many liturgical celebrations and parents will often be invited. Try to attend if you can, you are a valued member of this community of faith. Parents play a particularly important role in sacramental preparation work and in supporting the relationships education programmes, God's Loving Plan and Called to Love. If you don't feel particularly confident, ask your school for information leaflets which provide starting points for parents.

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.* We think of the values of tolerance and peace. Make a point of welcoming new families to the school. If your children are young, you could arrange a playdate to encourage friendships to develop. If you are a member of a parent council ask yourself, "Do we encourage parents of other faiths to join the parent council and value their contribution?" You could think about organising a multicultural parent forum event<sup>1</sup>, it can be great for community cohesion not to mention great fun!

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice for your reward is great in heaven.* We think of the values of service and sacrifice. Find out about the Pope Francis Faith Award (primary) or Caritas Award (secondary). Are there ways that you could support the students working towards these awards? Could you be a role model showing a life-long commitment to love as an extraordinary force for good.



<sup>1</sup> We can put you in touch with a parent council who have run successful events - email [parents@sces.uk.com](mailto:parents@sces.uk.com)



## Improving Communication and Representation among Parents with Children at Catholic Schools

The mission of the SCES National Parent Group is to support parents with children in Catholic schools to uphold and promote the mission and ethos of their schools, as illustrated in the Charter for Catholic Schools in Scotland.

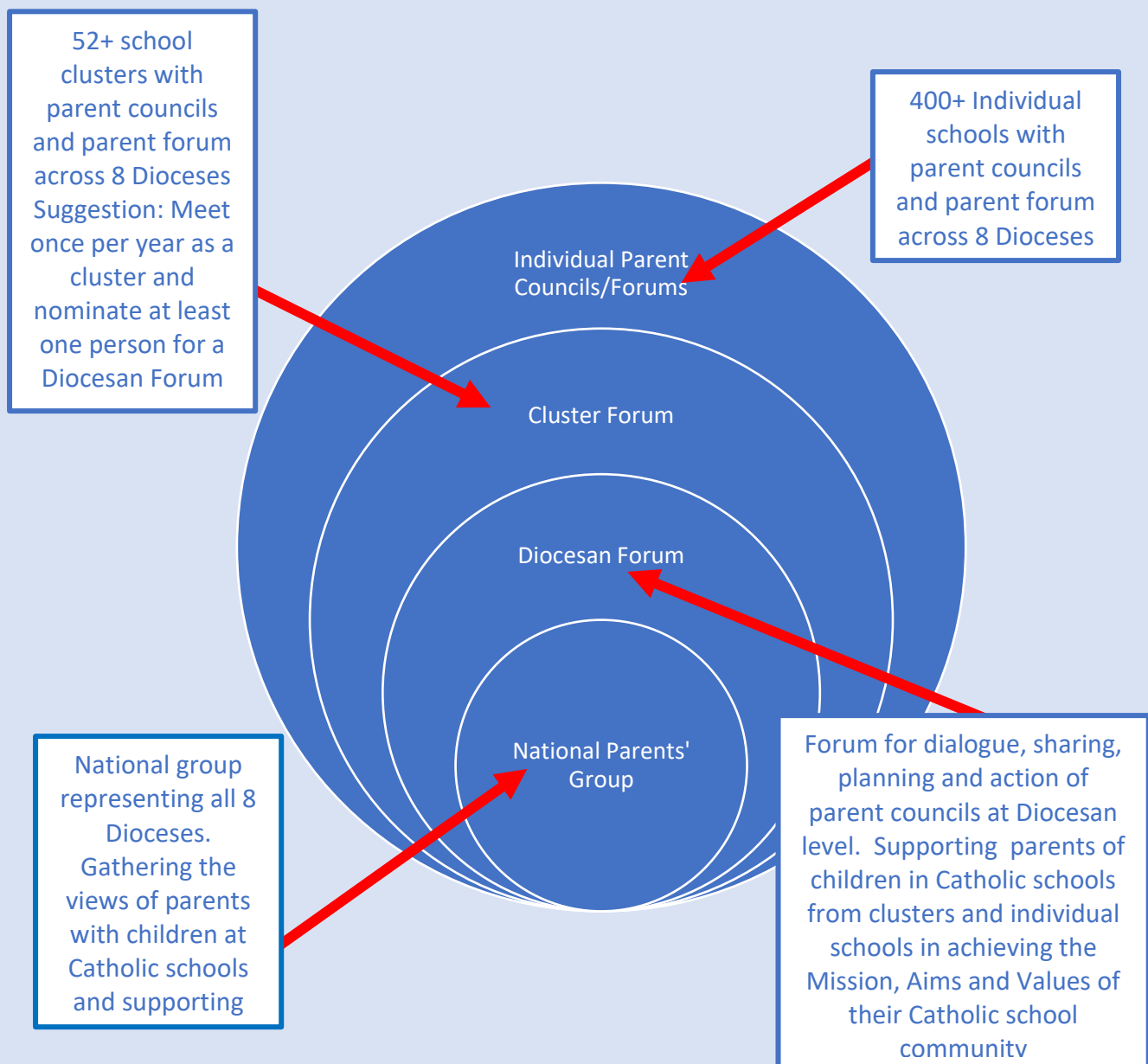
Parents are an integral part of a school's community and have the primary role in their children's education as 'first educators.' The choice parents make in sending their children to a Catholic school is what has led to their very existence and so it is vital that parents have a role in bringing the mission and ethos of the school to life by their continuing involvement in their children's education.

For those who wish to be more formally involved in running of their children's school, the mechanism for this is the school's Parent Council. Parent Councils are statutory bodies which have been in existence since 2006 and have a specific role in the governance of a school which includes its mission and ethos. Headteachers should discuss the school's values and Catholicity and use the parent council to involve parents in developing the school's ethos. We recognise that this is quite a responsibility for parents in a voluntary role and so we want to facilitate parents being able to share good practice as well as any difficulties as widely as possible.

For the last few years we have been supporting parent councils who want to hold a cluster event for their high school and associated primary schools and we have been invited to attend a few successful events up and down the country. Different formats are possible. For example, a cluster of schools could choose to convene a parent council meeting on the same date once or twice per year. The venue can rotate around the cluster and discussion should include any items that are of relevance to all schools in the cluster. It's good to allow time for informal networking over tea and coffee as parents repeatedly tell us that this is what they most appreciate. A formal meeting of cluster parent councils also affords an opportunity to nominate a cluster representative to attend diocesan events and bring to the diocese issues that are important to the local area. Additionally, we would also encourage a wider event in the cluster, perhaps annually, to bring in parents who are not part of the parent council but are interested in supporting the Catholic ethos of the cluster. Wide ranging suggestions include a conference-style day with speakers and workshops, a retreat experience or a purely social event. Up to now these events have generally been parent led but, with the recognition that parents want more support, similar events should begin to be organised at diocesan level to which parent council member will be invited.



Members of SCES Parents together with Church representatives on local authority education committees and diocesan RE advisors have been working together to develop support for parent council members in understanding their role in promoting the mission and ethos of their Catholic school. We are looking to organise an annual event in each diocese for nominated cluster contacts. The intention is to strengthen two-way communication between clusters and their diocese and between dioceses and the national parent group, SCES Parents. When up and running successfully, we would see parents in individual schools feel they have a better level of support and SCES Parents truly representative of parents with children at Catholic schools with a mechanism for gathering views from parents in every Catholic school.



## Update from the National Parent Gathering 2019

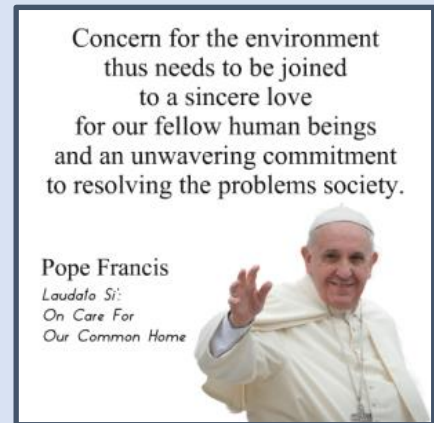
On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September families from across Scotland came together in St Mungo's High School in Falkirk to reflect on the theme "Caretakers of God's Creation: Laudato Si' in school and at home." We were very fortunate to welcome Dr Lorna Gold, Laudato Si' Project Coordinator with Trócaire, the Irish Catholic Agency for International Development, as our Keynote speaker.

Lorna's recently published book, "Climate Generation"<sup>2</sup> comes from her deep-rooted sense of justice, her determination as a mother that we "can do something" and her commitment to her Catholic faith. Lorna's treatise humanises the issue in both its impact on poor communities around the globe and in that the changes made by individual families could help. Despite her wealth of experience speaking at the highest level internationally, Lorna spoke to us as a fellow Christian parent, sharing climate crisis facts which impact on a global scale but also how she and her family have reacted to this information. She spoke powerfully about inspiring her boys to a love for God's created world and leading them in "little daily actions" to care for that creation. Through Lorna's words we felt empowered to effect change individually, locally and perhaps even internationally. In response we moved into smaller groups to consider practical ways that Pope Francis' call to take responsibility for our common home could be put into action in our homes, schools and communities.

Whilst their parents were listening to Lorna, the children attending the gathering were led by Jo Hughes, Sharon O'Connor and a team of S6 Caritas pupils from St Mungo's in some eco crafts. The children had great fun and all parents present were pleased to be able to hear Lorna's message and discuss its implications.

After lunch, a buffet of sandwiches and cakes enjoyed by families together, everyone gathered together to hear Mark and Siobhan from SCIAF talk about learning activities they can lead in schools or, if requested, in parishes. The children enjoyed themselves as the playing pieces in a life-sized board game as they learned about education in countries in which SCIAF works. Mark and Siobhan also shared the essential message of Laudato Si' through an animated video aimed at primary aged children. The resources were excellent and it would be well worth contacting SCIAF if your school or parish wanted to work on these themes.

The day concluded with discussion of plans for improving communication and representation among parents with children at Catholic schools across Scotland. These are outlined below; we look forward to welcoming you to one of our events!



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<sup>2</sup> Climate Generation: Awakening to Our Children's Future by Lorna Gold is published by Veritas

## Laudato Si – A parent’s reflection

In this letter, Pope Francis highlights for us the urgent need to protect our common home. He raises such questions as – What kind of world do we want to leave for our children? What is the purpose of our life in this world?

The world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. It is up to us to leave an inhabitable planet for future generations.

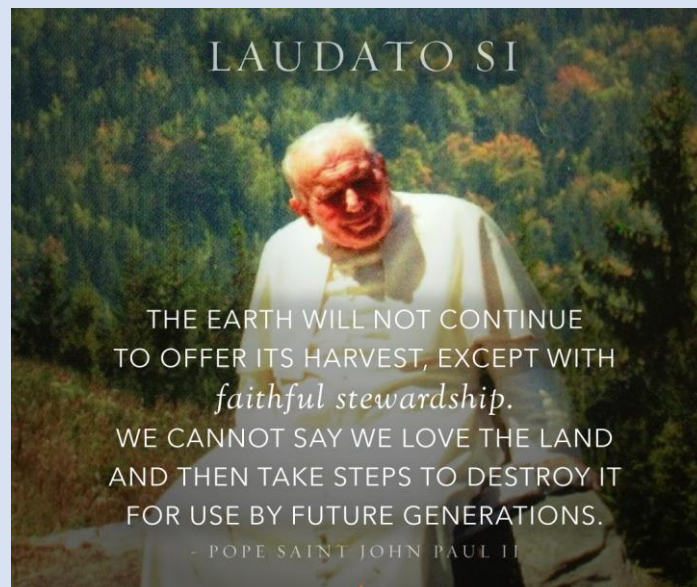
The letter is written in easy to read sections explaining the human causes of environmental degradation.

We know that St Francis of Assisi realised that a healthy relationship with creation lead to personal conversion recognising our sins and faults leading to a desire to change. We are leaving desolation and filth, our pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has stretched the planet's capacity causing disasters all over the world.

This book summarises the immensity of the issues that are causing such harm to our world and to our poorer fellow brothers and sisters. Many things have to change course but we humans have to change above all. Pope Francis appeals to us all throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours.

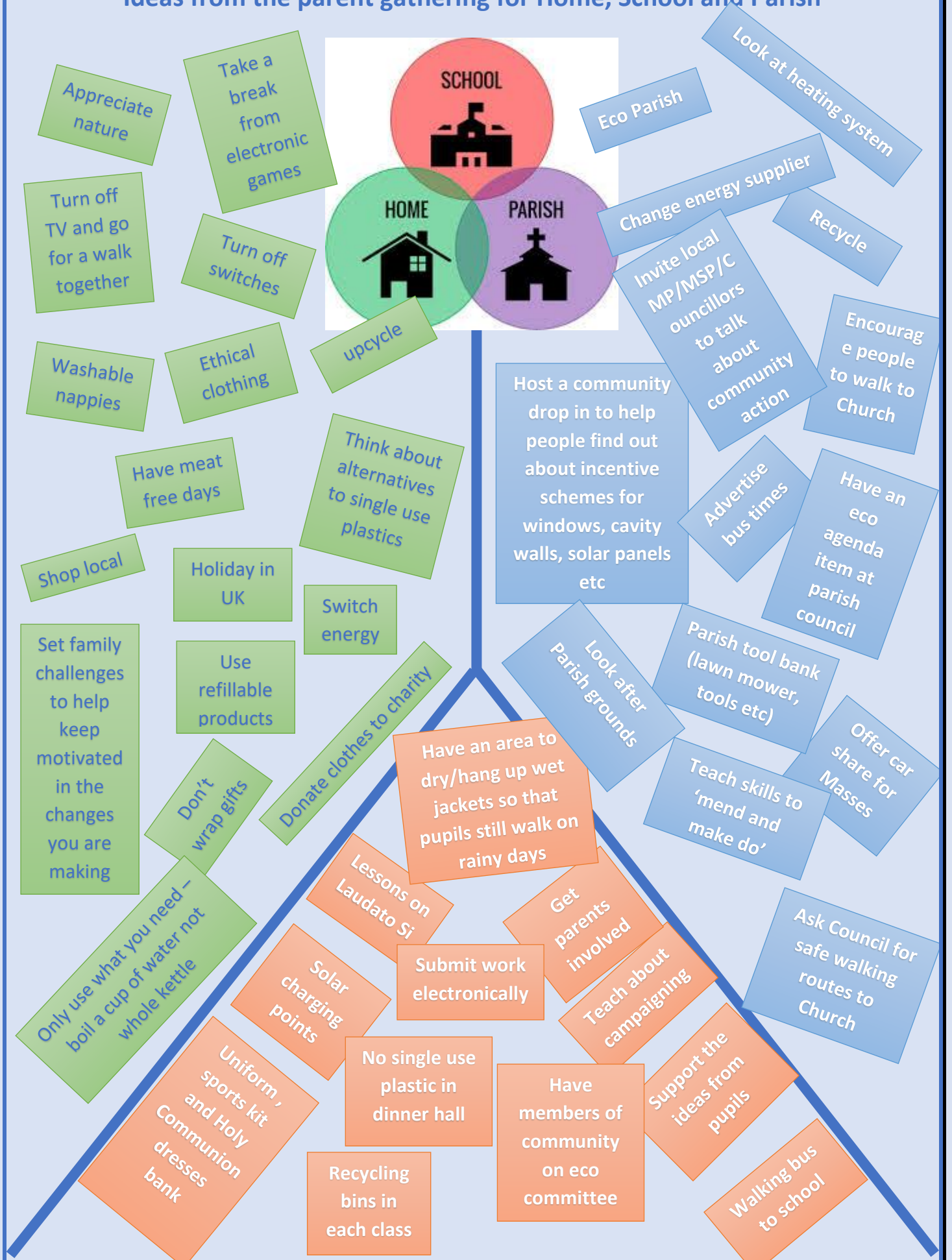
The issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle. Care for creation, through little daily actions, is our responsibility. We are the stewards of God's creation.

Good education is needed to plant seeds and in our families we learn how to show love and respect. Let’s return to simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things in life.





# Ideas from the parent gathering for Home, School and Parish





# Action for Families

Ideas to take better care of our common home for Advent, Christmas and Beyond...



**Number One Rule** – don't feel overwhelmed, just start somewhere. Once you are happy doing that, add something else, then something else.

The most impactful things you can do is to let your voice be heard to decision-makers and companies – they are the ones with the power to make significant changes that will benefit everyone.



## ENERGY

Turn heating down or use thermostats to make sure you don't use more than you need.

Switch to a green energy tariff or provider.

("If you make one change this is the one to make" – Dr Lorna Gold, Laudato Sí Project Coordinator with Trócaire, at the National Gathering of Parents 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2019)

Insulate your home as much as you can.



## TRANSPORT

Fly and drive less. When you have to take the car, car share and drive efficiently – cutting your fuel use by up to 20% for the same journey

(see tips at <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/travel/cheaper-fuel/>)

Cycle or walk short distances, use bus or train for longer journeys.

Explore Scotland rather than jet off for your next holiday



## FOOD

Reduce the amount of red meat and dairy you eat.

Try having "Meat-free Mondays" throughout Advent. You never know, once your family has tried tasty veg-based recipes they may want to continue into the New Year as well!

Cut food waste by planning a menu, freezing extras and googling recipes for leftovers.

If you roast turkey for Christmas Day, use leftovers to make a curry and soup later in the week.

Grow something yourself next spring – herbs and salad veg are easy to start with. Avoid air freighted produce. The traditional Christmas veg is seasonal Scottish produce – a good place to start. Reduce energy (and effort) used to cook by making double quantities and reheating later in the week.



## STUFF

Buy less. This one is a challenge, especially at this time of year. Try buying Gift experiences like cinema tickets, a meal or babysitting vouchers, especially if you don't know what the person would use/want! Consider buying one quality gift for each person.

Decorations can be homemade. Try using lots of fresh greenery and berries which can be composted afterwards. Buy crackers which are filled at home and add a small gift that will be taken home and used by the recipient.

Avoid foil and plasticised wrapping. Plan coloured paper can look great with re-usable ribbons or children could print designs.

Send recycled cards and recycle those you receive. Try to reduce the number to those people you won't see over the Christmas period. Wish those you will see a "Happy Christmas" in person.

Shop-bought advent calendars tend to be full of plastic packing. Try a fabric version which can be used year after year.

And when you do buy, consider what you really need, vintage, second-hand or ethical options. Always buy quality and pass it on when you don't need it anymore.

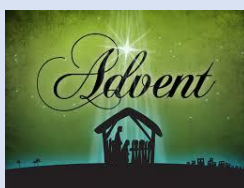
Maintain and repair the stuff you have to keep it working for longer.

Use Freegle to pass on unwanted items to others in your community who need them (and to get things you need) <https://www.ilovefreegle.org/>

Join a tool library or library of things to get hold of things you only use occasionally without needing to own and store them, such as <http://toollibrarycumbernauld.org/>

Cut down on single use items – anything used only once and thrown away is probably not them most eco friendly option. And buy items with less packaging and packaging that can't be recycled.

Reuse or rehome as much as you can and then recycle as much as possible of what's left – check out <https://www.recyclenow.com/> for more obscure items that can be recycled.



## Reflection: Pope Francis and the Prayer of St Francis



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace

Where there is hatred, let me sow love

Where there is injury, pardon . . .

Where there is doubt, faith . . .

Where there is despair, hope . . .

Where there is darkness, light . . .

**Tweet 1:** Pope Francis (@Pontifex) - 11:16 am · 16 Jan 2014 · TweetDeck  
Let us pray for peace, and let us bring it about, starting in our own homes!  
1.1K Retweets 5.7K Likes

**Tweet 2:** Pope Francis (@Pontifex) - 11:30 am · 30 Sep 2013 · TweetDeck  
Where we find hate and darkness, may we bring love and hope, in order to give a more human face to society.  
6.6K Retweets 3.5K Likes

**Tweet 3:** Pope Francis (@Pontifex) - 10:17 am · 17 Jul 2013 · TweetDeck  
God is so merciful toward us. We too should learn to be merciful, especially with those who suffer.  
4.8K Retweets 2.7K Likes

**Tweet 4:** Pope Francis (@Pontifex) - 2:31 pm · 31 Oct 2013 · TweetDeck  
Christians know how to face difficulties, trials and defeat with serenity and hope in the Lord.  
3.7K Retweets 3K Likes

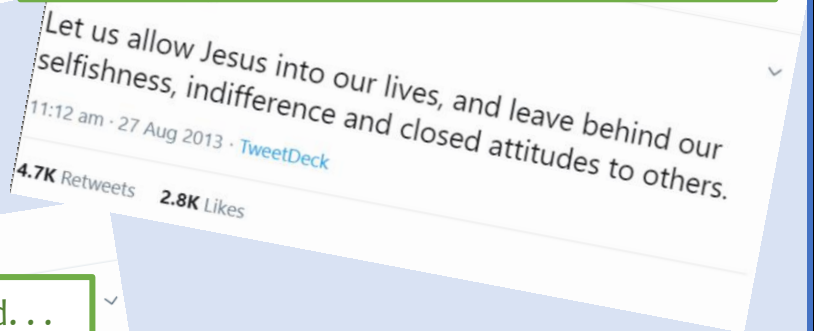
**Tweet 5:** Pope Francis (@Pontifex) - 10:12 am · 9 Sep 2013 · TweetDeck  
We ought never to lose hope. God overwhelms us with his grace, if we keep asking.  
5.2K Retweets 3.2K Likes

**Tweet 6:** Pope Francis (@Pontifex) - 11:05 am · 5 Aug 2013 · TweetDeck  
The light of faith illumines all our relationships and helps us to live them in union with the love of Christ, to live them like Christ.  
3.3K Retweets 2.1K Likes

And where there is sadness, joy.



Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console . . .



To be understood, as to understand. . .



To be loved, as to love.



For it is in giving that we receive . . .



It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

