OBJECTIVES //
1. Understand how we are connected, individually and collectively, to the fires in the Amazon and the degradation of our Common Home,
2. Consider new, more eco-friendly habits we can take on as responsible citizens and faithful members of the global Church,
3. Create messages or make other actions in solidarity with the traditional and indigenous peoples of the Amazon, the planet and all of Creation)

TIME // 60-90 minutes

GROUP SIZE // 10-50 participants

MATERIALS //
• A Development and Peace poster, especially from the For Our Common Home campaign (order online or ask your local Animator for a copy: devp.org/en/contactus/address)
• Laptop, projector, internet access

PREPARATION //
• Read the following D&P resources to familiarize yourself with human rights violations in the Amazon:
• For younger children: Print out several copies of the fireball and leaf templates for students to cut out. Alternatively, create several ‘tracers’ out of cardboard for students to trace onto their own paper and then cut out themselves.
• If your time with participants is limited: Make a large, floor-to-ceiling, tree shape out of brown paper. Affix tree onto wall using tape or sticky tac.

  NB: This can also be done by participants (see Part I below)
ACTIVITY GUIDE

PART I

(20-30 minutes)

Note: Skip Part I if you’ve already cut out and stuck a large tree to the wall in your preparation.

STEP 1 // Instruct participants that they are to make a large, floor-to-ceiling, tree shape out of brown paper.

STEP 2 // Have participants affix the tree onto wall using tape or sticky tac.

PART II

(20 minutes)

STEP 1 // Assemble the group and ask a few discussion questions (use prompts if necessary):

For Youth:
How does the planet take care of us? When you think about the future of the Earth, what are you worried about / what are some ways we aren’t treating her well? (eg. reliance on fossil fuels, consumerism and throwaway culture, reliance on single-use plastics instead of reusable alternatives, paving over prime agricultural land for low-density housing)
Why do these issues concern you? (eg. rising levels of CO2 in the atmosphere and global warming, dirtying of oceans, depletion of fish and extinction of endangered species, loss of biodiversity) How do you feel about our present society’s impact on the planet?

Younger children:
How does Mother Earth take care of us? What do you like about being outside in nature? Is it bad to throw out garbage on the ground? When you think about the future of the Earth, is there anything you’re worried about? (eg. pollution, making the earth dirty)

STEP 2 // Confirm or explain that we often do not treat the planet with the respect we ought to. Tell the group you’ll watch a few videos to see what’s happening around the world. Then show one to three of the following videos:

- For our Common Home (2m49) https://youtu.be/kxcRkBdnX0I
- Yesica and Hector (3m33) https://youtu.be/MCA--wwW-uo
- Intergenerational video (2m49) https://youtu.be/uzgQyEuq82k
STEP 3 //

Ask participants, "Who is creating pollution? Who is destroying our Common Home?" and invite several responses. If needed, help them understand that we all have an individual and collective responsibility for what’s happening.

Provide a few personal examples from your own life to illuminate this. For example, you might say: “Sometimes I use a car instead of taking my bike or public transit, or walking from A to B. Sometimes I order take-out and it comes in Styrofoam containers that I throw out almost right away.”

STEP 4 //

Ask whether anyone in the group is familiar with the forest fires that swept across the Amazon rainforest in Brazil in summer 2019. Explain that hundreds of these forest fires were deliberately set, and are a symptom of a larger problem of environmental destruction and illegal logging in the Amazon. Share more details from your preparatory reading.

STEP 5 //

Explain: “The purpose of the following activity is to help us all understand how we are all connected to the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. We’re gonna make a big tree to represent Mother Earth and what we’re we doing, and how we can change as human beings in relationship with Creation.”

STEP 6 //

Distribute orange, red or yellow paper to participants. Ask them to draw several fireballs on their piece of paper and to then cut them out.

Optional: You may also distribute your pre-made fireball stencils for participants to trace, or print out the stencils on white paper for students to colour in.

Explain that these balls of fire are represent each person’s personal and collective contribution to the destruction of God’s Creation, Our Common Home.

Optional: Invite students to draw or write down (on their fireballs) examples of how they contribute to polluting the planet (eg. reliance on cars for everyday transportation; the number of granola bar wrappers, plastic wrap, Ziploc bags in their lunch box; usage of lots of takeout containers or disposable cups).
STEP 7 //

Invite participants to affix their fireballs on the brown tree on the wall in silence, then sit down and observe until everyone has taped up their contributions.

STEP 8 //

Once all fireballs are on the tree, ask participants to share:

- **Optional:** What did you draw or write on your fireball?
- What were you thinking when you were cutting it out and taping it onto the tree?

STEP 9 //

**Optional:** Use the EcoBingo or Garbage Inventory activities to encourage participants to further reflect on how they are part of the problem and the solution.

STEP 10 //

Invite participants to join you in praying for the earth. Use the prayer below, or one from our Activities Database:

**PRAYER FOR OUR WORLD**

Creator God, who made our beautiful world, appointed us as its guardians and gifted us with everything we need, forgive us for the times we cause it harm; for the times our way of life affects our neighbours.

Inspire us to care for the environment;
to help rebuild lives and communities; to share in the griefs and anxieties, joys and hopes of all your people, so that all your creation may flourish.

Amen.

(By Stephen Davies/CAFOD)

PART III

(30 minutes)

STEP 1 //

Play this bilingual (French-English) video for your group, which shows how some Catholics rediscover their faith through the earth or are drawn to the earth through their spirituality: officedecatechese.qc.ca/videos/foi/10-environnement.html

STEP 2 //

Explain that there are lots of people who care deeply about the planet and want to work together to improve our relationship with Creation. (Use Development and Peace as an example of an organization that brings people together in solidarity with the most vulnerable people around the world:)

One of those organizations is the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace – the official international solidarity branch of the Catholic Church in Canada. Every year, they work to raise awareness among Canadians about issues of ecological and social justice, and also support our brothers and sisters in the Global South.

STEP 3 // Optional (if you have a Development and Peace poster):

Affix eco-poster to the centre of the tree to represent the power of working together for issues that matter to you. You can cover up some of the participants’ fireballs in the process, or move the fireballs to show how social movements, like D&P, can create positive change.
STEP 4 //

Tell the group about Development and Peace’s Intergenerational Pledge for Our Common Home, which invites Catholics, and all people of good faith, to join a movement of ecological conversion, allowing current and future generations to live in harmony with nature, using only what is necessary.

If you have a projector screen and laptop, project the pledge onto the wall: 
devp.org/en/campaign/forourcommonhome/pledge

STEP 5 //

Ask participants to raise their hand to environmental actions that they can commit to as part of their pledge for our common home. Inform them that they can raise their hand for more than one answer.

Will they:

• a. Choose more plant-based meals?
• b. Choose eco-friendly transport and reduce their emissions?
• c. Consume wisely (buy less, buy local, organic or fair trade, reduce waste)?
• d. Reconnect with nature (gardening, hiking, walking or playing outdoors, etc))? or
• e. Choose their own idea?

Note: Will you invite everyone in your group to sign the pledge before your time block is over? If so, decide in advance whether you’d like them to use a common device or to use their own devices. You may wish to inform participants that you’ll keep your computer (or device) open for several hours (or for the duration of a THINKfast) to give time for each person to come up to make the pledge, one at a time.

STEP 6 //

Now that participants have an idea of what they can pledge, tell them that they’ll now be creating a leaf to represent a new planet-friendly habit or action they can adopt. Distribute green-coloured paper to participants. Ask them to draw at least 1 medium-sized leaf shape on the paper: each should be large enough for them to write down something they will pledge to do.
Optional: Alternatively, distribute your pre-made leaf stencils for participants to trace, or print out the stencils on white paper for students to colour in.

Encourage participants to write down something that they are NOT doing yet, and that they can pledge to do. Inform participants that, if they wish, they can attach a specific time frame to their pledge (e.g. could be something they pledge for Lent or pledge until the end of the school year).

If participants are struggling, provide some examples of habits they might commit to:

- stop the use of single-use plastics
- compost more
- eat meat twice a week, and plant-based the rest of the week
- watch what I’m buying/consuming; shop locally
- take the bus and walk more, use less gas
- participate in climate gatherings / use my voice to stand up for the environment
- educate my family and friends about the Amazon and how we can help
- purchase fair trade wherever possible (e.g. bananas, chocolate, sugar)

STEP 7 //

As participants finish the task, invite them to cut out their leaf pledges. Then ask participants to replace a fireball (it doesn’t have to be their own) with their leaf (or one of their leaves). Invite them to do this until all the fireballs are gone and turn the burning tree into a flourishing, leafy-green one.

STEP 8 //

Invite participants to share their ideas for caring better for Creation with the group.

STEP 9 //

Optional: Take a group photo to celebrate your individual pledges for our common home!
PART IV  

(10 minutes)

Remind students that both individual and collective actions are important. Now that they have pledged something in their personal life, it's important to think about what they can do as a group.

Option 1:

Explain the situation of the seringueiros and the Mura indigenous people of Brazil. Invite participants to write a message or draw a picture in solidarity with the traditional and indigenous peoples of the Amazon who are fighting for their rights and dignity in the face of grave threats to their traditional way of life and physical and spiritual wellbeing.

Use our letter template here:

Participants can also bring a copy home for family and community members to sign. As facilitator, don’t forget to deliver the signed letters to your local animator or send them to our main office at:
1425 René-Lévesque Blvd West, 3rd Floor Montréal, Québec Canada, H3G 1T7

Option 2:

Invite participants to brainstorm collective actions they could plan as a group (eg. zero waste challenge with home room; second-hand fashion show fundraiser for D&P; clothing swap with $5 admission fee benefitting D&P; starting or reviving a composting program at school; starting or a bottled-water free zone; twonie collection for D&P at their school).

Decide as a group, how you’ll select what are you going to do now in your school or parish (eg. vote on all the options, vote on a short list of options, random draw). Select one (according to the process the group has chosen) and begin to plan when and how you’ll make it happen!

Note: Is there a special place where you can keep your leafy, green, Eco Commitment tree for the rest of the year? If needed, carefully remove the tree and move it to a location where it can remind the community about your commitment to Creation.
FROM FIRE TO ACTION

FIREBALL TEMPLATE

devp.org/activities