

## LAUDATO SI' JENGA

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Adapted from a game written by Angela Rozyki, teacher for the Edmonton Catholic School Board

### OBJECTIVES //

1. Understand the key ideas in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*
2. Identify and analyze structural causes of environmentally harmful activities
3. Catalyze actions to promote a healthier planet

TIME // 45-60 minutes

### MATERIALS //

- One Jenga game (or similar alternative) per 6-12 students
- Dice (one die per Jenga station)
- Small stickers (20 green, 20 red and 20 blue *per group*) to stick on each end of the Jenga blocks, as well as the dice
- Optional: Container or box to hold the Jenga blocks, while students draw them one-by-one
- Computer with internet access (Or you can download the necessary video.)
- Projector and screen/ TV screen
- Blackboard, whiteboard or chart paper and markers

### PREPARATION //

- Prepare a slideshow or posters with the quotes from *Laudato Si'* (below), to display throughout the activity.
- Prepare to share the following videos with the group. You can watch or download the videos on the site below.
  - The Story of Stuff*: <http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-stuff/>
  - The Story of Change*: <http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-change/>
- Prepare stations for each group to play the game:
  - » Divide each Jenga game (of 54 blocks) into two, so each group will use half of a Jenga set (or 27 blocks).
  - » Affix two stickers of each colour on opposing sides of the die.
  - » Affix the coloured stickers on both ends of each block at all stations. (So you will have 9 blocks of each colour at each station.)
  - » Mix-up the blocks on the floor (or in a box)

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## ACTIVITY GUIDE

### STEP 1 //

Divide participants into groups of 3-6, and share the opening paragraph of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment (below). Preface this by explaining that you are going to share a quote from an important letter Pope Francis wrote, called an encyclical. Encyclicals help to clarify the teachings of our faith, challenge us to dig deeper into a particular issue and reexamine the way we live. Ask if anyone knows why Pope Francis chose to devote an entire encyclical to the environment. The planet is in crisis, and *Laudato Si'* can be understood as a call to action – not only for Catholics but for all of us.

*"LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore" – "Praise be to you, my Lord".* In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs. (*para.1*)

### STEP 2 //

Explain that each block is marked with a certain colour to represent 3 categories of consumption that rely heavily on resources from our 'Mother Earth' and provide for our daily needs: food and water, energy, and transportation.

Taking turns, participants draw a block from the pile/container with their eyes closed, then look to see the colour they drew. Have participants share ideas with their group of how our Earth provides for us in the corresponding category. For example:

BLOCK COLOUR	CATEGORY OF CONSUMPTION	EXAMPLE
Green	Food & Water	"The Earth provides grain, with which we can make bread."
Red	Energy (solar, oil, gas, etc.)	"The Earth provides oil, with which we can make fuel."
Blue	Transportation	"The Earth provides us with the resources to make pavement and vehicles."

After they share their ideas, have participants add their block to build a tower in standard Jenga formation: 3 blocks side-by-side placed perpendicular to the layer below.

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**NOTE:** There will naturally be overlap between these categories, and some examples will fit into more than one. Circulate through the groups as they work through this step, helping students understand the many interconnections humans have with the natural world and how dependent we are on the planet.

When each group has used all of their blocks, tell them that their sturdy tower represents a healthy Earth, and that each block represents gifts granted for all living creatures to use. If we care for creation and use natural resources in a responsible manner, the Earth can provide enough to sustain and support all living creatures.

### STEP 3 //

Share the second paragraph of *Laudato Si'* with participants:

This sister now 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. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (*Rom 8:22*). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (*cf. Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (*para. 2*)

Explain to participants that we put stress on the environment – often too much – through our many activities and consumption patterns. In fact, we as Canadians, are taking more than our fair share which has consequences for our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world – and all of creation.

Explain further, that there are socio-economic structures that promote this kind of reckless consumption of natural resources. Screen about the first 5 minutes of *The Story of Stuff*, which helps to illustrate some of these structural forces.

**NOTE:** During the course of the video, Annie Leonard explains the 'materials economy,' the process by which things are produced: from Extraction, to Production, to Distribution, to Consumption and finally to Disposal. While she speaks from an American context in both videos, the 'materials economy' applies to Canada.

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Leave the screen frozen with the steps of the 'materials economy' displayed. Making use of this diagram, you can make the following points:

- Most of our stuff makes a long journey to reach us and involves a multitude of different resources, often from different countries in the world. This even includes food – especially processed food. (To demonstrate this, you can have the students check the labels on their shirts to see where they were made, and screen the *Story of Stuff* from about 8:50 to 9:33 minutes.)
- Everything we buy uses an enormous amount of energy in each step of its production.

### STEP 4 //

In each group, have participants take turns rolling the die, removing a block from the tower with the corresponding colour, and placing it on top in the standard Jenga formation. As they do so, have them share examples of over-consumption in the respective category. (See examples below.) Encourage participants to think about what they learned in the video and discussions.

BLOCK COLOUR	CATEGORY OF CONSUMPTION	EXAMPLE
Green	Food & Water	"Grocery stores throwing out food before its expiration date"
Red	Energy (solar, oil, gas, etc.)	"Leaving the TV on when we are not watching it"
Blue	Transportation	"Our clothes are often transported from factories around the world."

Have participants take turns drawing blocks and sharing until their tower collapses.

### STEP 5 //

Lead a discussion with participants to reflect on the consequences for their once-solid towers. Use the following questions as prompts to help your discussion:

- What happened to your tower (the Earth) as you took more and more blocks (natural resources) from it?
- Do you engage in some of the activities that you or the members of your group mentioned?
- What are some things that you have bought (or were bought for you) in the past year, that you did not really need?
- Do you feel pressure to always have the newest cell phone or fashionable clothes? In what ways does this pressure affect your consumption?

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### STEP 6 //

Tell participants that it is not too late to properly care for the Earth, and that each and every one of us has a role to play in preventing further environmental problems. Environmentalists around the world and Pope Francis warn that we do not have much time left. It is high time to "create a climate of change!" Share the following quote:

**The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. . . . I urgently appeal, then for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. (*Laudato Si'*: para. 13-14)**

Have participants take turns drawing blocks from the tumbled tower to rebuild a new solid tower. In the corresponding category of consumption, have them share with the group a way that we can change our lifestyles to consume less and promote a more environmentally friendly society – starting today. Encourage participants to consider individual, family and community actions as they share. (See examples below.)

BLOCK COLOUR	CATEGORY OF CONSUMPTION	EXAMPLE
Green	Food & Water	"Growing our own vegetables and herbs in a (community or individual) garden"
Red	Energy (solar, oil, gas, etc.)	"Putting on a sweater instead of turning up the heat" or "Learning about the climate justice movement"
Blue	Transportation	"Carpooling" or "Taking public transport"

### STEP 7 //

Explain to students that, protecting the planet and its people will require both individual and social changes. Screen *The Story of Change* from 1:55 until the end, starting with the phrase: "Real Change happens when . . ."

Write the 'change-makers' listed in the video for all to see: Investigators, Communicators, Builders, Resisters, Networkers.

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Ask the participants if they think she missed any types of 'change-makers' and write out their responses. You may need to help participants see how some of their examples fit into the categories given, or add new categories.

Finally, ask them to share with their group how they see themselves contributing to a sustainable future. What kind of "change-makers" are they?

### POST-ACTIVITY DISCUSSION //

The following questions can help participants reflect on the activity:

- In what ways do you see the earth weakening today?
- How did you feel after you rebuilt the tower through sharing environmentally-friendly actions?
- In real life, a dangerous effect of climate change is an increase in natural disasters, such as typhoons and flash floods. If your tower had to withstand a natural disaster, do you think that it would survive after you had taken blocks from it? How do we balance our need for natural resources (and our desires for many things) with care for our planet and its people?
- In what ways can we commit, as a group and as individuals to create lasting change that protects all of creation?

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES //

- *The Story of Stuff* General Webpage: <http://storyofstuff.org/>
- *The Story of Solutions*: <http://storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-solutions/>