



When the Rain Speaks —

This book feels like sitting down under a big oak tree with a friend who notices everything—every leaf, every bird call, every drop of rain—and helps you see the sacred in the simple. Melannie Svoboda writes a collection of essays/short meditations that pay attention to nature in a way that draws you into wonder. The subtitle says it: “Celebrating God’s Presence in Nature.” And that’s exactly what she does: she helps us see God in the rustling of leaves, in the chirping of birds, in trees, soil, water, even insects.

Each chapter is short, often focused on one part of creation—an ash tree, a spider, snowflakes, giraffes, water, etc. Svoboda starts with what she’s seeing or experiencing, then reflects, often weaving in scripture, poetry or quotations, and ends

with questions or prayers. It’s not theological heavy, so much as spiritual and observational. Think: *Why does this matter? How does this creature, this water, this moment of rain, reflect or speak of the Divine?*

Laudato Si’

Laudato Si’, Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment, is really a heartfelt letter to all of us about our common home—the Earth. He begins with the words of St. Francis of Assisi, who called creation “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon,” reminding us that we are part of a larger family of creation, not above it or separate from it.

The main idea is simple: the Earth is in trouble, and it’s our responsibility to care for it. Pollution, climate change, waste, and the exploitation of the poor are not just scientific or political issues; they are moral and spiritual ones. Pope Francis says we can’t pretend the environment is someone else’s problem. How we treat the world reflects how we treat each other, especially the most vulnerable.

He connects care for creation with care for people. The poor suffer most from environmental damage—whether it’s lack of clean water, food insecurity, or natural

disasters. So, protecting the Earth isn't just about saving trees and animals (though that's important too); it's about justice, solidarity, and love.

Pope Francis challenges us to look at our lifestyles. Are we consuming too much? Do we throw things away too easily? He calls this a "throwaway culture" and asks us to imagine another way of living—simpler, more mindful, more grateful. He also stresses that science and faith aren't enemies. Science helps us understand what's happening, and faith reminds us why it matters: because creation is a gift from God.

In the end, *Laudato Si'* isn't doom and gloom. It's hopeful. Pope Francis believes change is possible—if we work together, act locally and globally, and remember that small actions matter. Caring for our common home is really about rediscovering joy, gratitude, and connection—with God, with each other, and with the world around us.

Week 1 --Introduction

- Check in—Since last we met
- A nature story

Week 2 --Chapters 1 -8

Week 3 --Chapters 9-16

Week 4 --Chapters 17 -24

Week 5 --Chapters 25 -32

Week 6 --Chapters 33 -40

Week 7 --Earth party...