



# CATHOLIC EARTHCARE **GUIDE TO EVENT ORGANISATION**

Living *Laudato Si'* by adopting sustainable lifestyles.



# EVENT ORGANISATION

## INTRODUCTION

As a Church we love to celebrate! Easter, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Advent, Pentecost, Season of Creation, Multicultural Mass, birthdays, baptisms, weddings... the list goes on.

Each celebration is important in marking milestones, remembering the past and celebrating significant events within the liturgical year.

When we celebrate, there is often the exchange of gifts, a feast, and our homes and sacred places adorned with ornamentation. In order to uphold the dignity of each person, it is essential to consider what we buy and what we consume and the impact that these choices have on people and the planet.

This guide will help you in asking the right questions when organising an event. We hope that these suggestions will help you to live *Laudato Si'* by adopting sustainable lifestyles.



**Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.**

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n231



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**ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE  
LIFESTYLES**

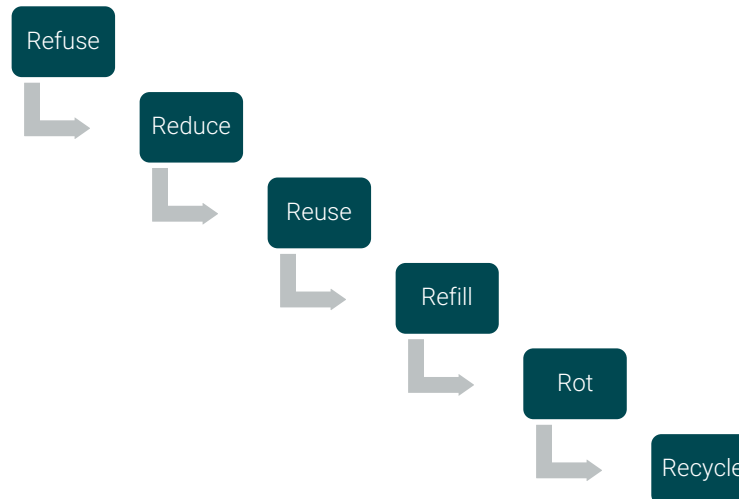
# EVENT ORGANISATION

## THINKING FRAMEWORKS

The following pages will provide more detailed tools for managing different aspects of events. But there are 3 frameworks that underpin the advice given. The first is an extension of the zero-waste thinking framework of 'reduce, reuse, recycle.' When purchasing items for events e.g. food, decorations or gifts, it can be helpful to consider:

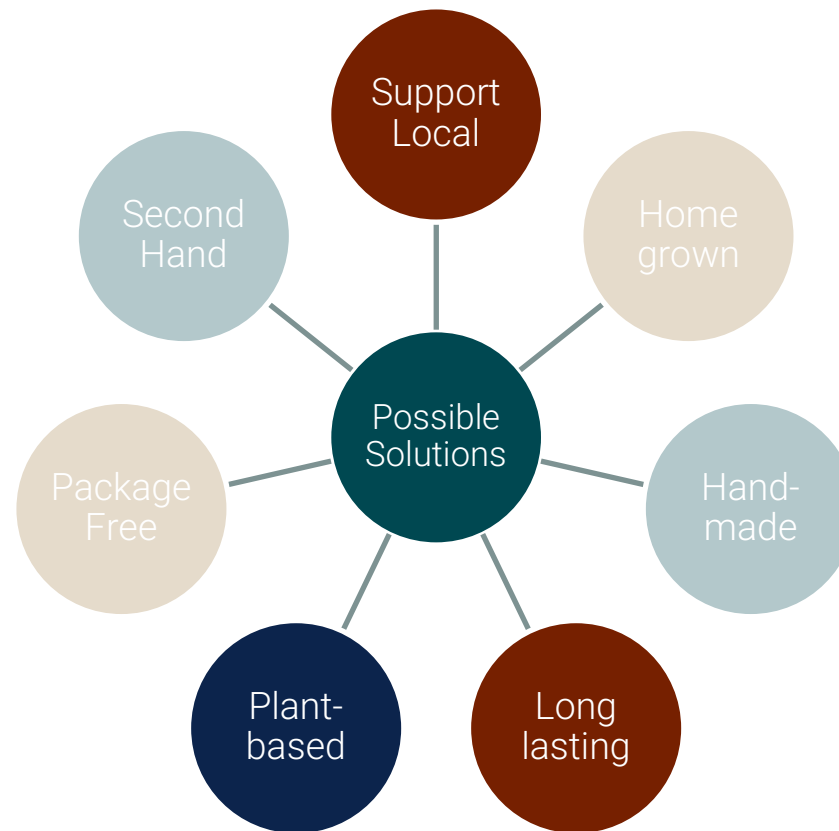
- Do I need this item? (refuse)
- Can I buy less of this? (reduce)
- Can I use this item more than once? (reuse)
- Can I purchase this consumable in a refillable container? (refill)
- Can this item be composted? (rot)
- Can this item be recycled? (recycle)

Note that this hierarchy considers recycling last – that is, there are many other things to consider before purchasing an item that can be recycled!



# EVENT ORGANISATION THINKING FRAMEWORKS

The second framework provides a range of possible alternatives or solutions to purchasing or consuming an item/s. Some help to combat the throwaway culture, others help to support a circular economy or just supporting the local economy.



# EVENT ORGANISATION

## THINKING FRAMEWORKS

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And the last framework to consider is the following:

### Where has an item come from?

(What is it made of? Who made it? How old is the item? Has it come in packaging?)

### What is it being used for?

(Do you need it? Will it be used once, or for a long time? How will it be cared for? Does it have multiple uses?)

### Where is its life going to end?

(Will it end up in landfill? Will it end up in compost? Will it be recycled?)

All three frameworks can be considered concurrently or separately when reflecting on what needs to be purchased and consumed for an event.

# EVENT ORGANISATION

## FOUNDATIONS IN *LAUDATO SI'*

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“[Jesus would] often [stop] to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father, and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things.”

LS 97

“... the development of techniques of sustainable agriculture. New forms of cooperation and community organization can be encouraged in order to defend the interests of small producers and preserve local ecosystems from destruction. Truly, much can be done!” LS 180.

“When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative.” LS 122.

***Laudato Si' (LS), Laudate Deum (LD) and several other sources from Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI inform us on the importance of adopting sustainable lifestyles and what this may look like.***

“Purchasing is always a moral - and not simply economic – act.... The issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle”

Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas In Veritate 699

“Nonetheless, every little bit helps”  
LD 70.

“Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as.... using public transport or car-pooling... There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions... such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper.” LS

211.

# EVENT ORGANISATION

## FOUNDATIONS IN *LAUDATO SI'*

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“We all know that it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumptions in developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, where the habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels.” LS 27.

“In order to continue providing employment, it is imperative to promote an economy which favours productive diversity and business creativity. For example, there is a great variety of small-scale food production systems which feed the greater part of the world’s peoples, ...Economies of scale, especially in the agricultural sector, end up forcing smallholders to sell their land or to abandon their traditional crops.... Business is a noble vocation, ... especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.” LS129.

### ***Laudato Si'* (LS), *Laudate Deum* (LD) and several other sources from Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI inform us on the importance of adopting sustainable lifestyles and what this may look like.**

“These problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as quickly as it quickly reduces things to rubbish. To cite one example, most of the paper we produce is thrown away and not recycled... We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations...[by] moderating ... consumption, maximising... use, reusing and recycling....this... would be one way of counteracting the throwaway culture which affects the entire planet.” LS 22

“the mere amassing of things and pleasures are not enough to give meaning and joy to the human heart...in those countries which should be making the greatest changes in consumer habits, young people have new ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit, and some of them are making admirable efforts to protect the environment.” LS 209

“More than 42% of total net emissions since 1850 were produced after 1990. At the same time, we have confirmed that in the last fifty years the temperature has risen at an unprecedented speed.” LD 11-12.

# EVENT ORGANISATION

## CHALLENGING CULTURE

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Organising events that live *Laudato Si'* and exemplify the adoption of sustainable lifestyles are countercultural – in that they strive to combat the throwaway culture.

Big custom balloon displays, colour coded single use plastic cutlery and party favours that get tossed out with the rubbish after a week typify the extravagant events that social media influencers share with the whole world as being the height of celebratory custom. These consumerist behaviours also perpetuate a throwaway culture.

For example, it is counter cultural to:

- refuse buying helium balloons. Helium is a rare element that can only be mined from the earth. It is a finite resource that is essential to the function of medical technologies such as MRI machines.
- bring a zero-waste kit that includes reusable cutlery and plates that can be taken home and washed.
- leave a Christmas cracker uncracked and be the only one not wearing a silly paper hat and telling a less than average joke.
- give a donation instead of handing out party favours.

These behaviours are the type of cultural change that *Laudato Si'* is calling for. And sometimes it takes courage to be counter cultural.

The following pages will detail what to consider when preparing food, gifts and decorations for an event.

Before considering these aspects of an event, it might also be worth choosing an appropriate location.

Consider a location that:

- is central and cuts down travel time
- has energy saving mechanisms or runs primarily on solar power
- allows participants to carpool to and provides suitable accommodation if required
- takes participants outside to enjoy the gift of creation
- is accessible for all participants.



# EVENT ORGANISATION

## FOOD

When planning catering or a meal for a group of people, consider the following questions.

Food	Questions
Source	<p>Is the food grown locally and seasonal to reduce food miles?</p> <p>Is the food hand-made/ethically made, supporting local income and fair wages?</p> <p>Is the food grown organically, reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides which can harm ecosystems?</p>
Carbon	<p>Are the majority of menu items vegetarian or vegan to reduce carbon emissions?</p>
Waste	<p>How will the waste be composted in order to reduce methane emissions?</p> <p>How will leftovers be shared to reduce methane emissions?</p>
Cutlery	<p>Can metal or bamboo cutlery be used instead of single use plastic cutlery to reduce plastic pollution?</p> <p>Can porcelain, china, pottery, metal or wood bowls and plates be used and washed to reduce plastic pollution?</p> <p>Can bamboo or cloth napkins be used to reduce pollution?</p> <p>If required, can participants bring their own cutlery and plates to reduce waste?</p>
Quantity	<p>How much food is actually required? Reduce food waste from over buying and consumption.</p>
Packaging	<p>Can ingredients be purchased in refillable jars or containers from bulk food shops, butchers, bakeries, fruit and vegetable shops or markets to reduce waste from packaging?</p> <p>Can food be made by hand instead of purchased in plastic wrapping to reduce waste?</p> <p>Can food be purchased in recyclable packaging e.g. cardboard, tin or glass to reduce waste?</p> <p>If tea, coffee or other beverages are available, can they be served in non single-use plastic to reduce waste?</p>
Drinks	<p>Can drink containers be sent to a 'containers for change' scheme to reduce waste?</p> <p>Can a drink station be set up with jugs/dispensers with washable cups?</p>

# EVENT ORGANISATION

## GIFTS

When planning gifts for a person or a group of people, consider the following questions.

Gifts	Questions
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the item produced locally from local materials?</li> <li>Is the item ethically made?</li> <li>Does the item support the income of a local business owner?</li> <li>Can the item be hand-made by you?</li> <li>Can the item be purchased second-hand?</li> <li>Is there an item that you could regift for this person?</li> </ul>
Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is a gift required for every single person? E.g. could a Secret Santa draw be set up to reduce the overall number of gifts purchased.</li> <li>Is the gift something that this person needs?</li> <li>Can the gift take the form of an experience or time gifted?</li> </ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can the item be made from an organic material such as wood rather than plastic or metal?</li> <li>Is the item made to last a long time with materials that will last?</li> </ul>
Packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can the item be purchased without packaging or with recyclable packaging?</li> <li>Can the item be placed in an old gift bag or box?</li> <li>Can the item be wrapped in cloth or clothes or put in a stocking?</li> </ul>
Donation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can a donation to a cause be a suitable gift option?</li> </ul>

# EVENT ORGANISATION

## DECORATIONS

When decorating a location, consider keeping the décor simple and asking the following for each item.


Gifts	Questions
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Is the item produced locally from local materials?</li><li>Is the item ethically made?</li><li>Does the item support the income of a local business owner?</li><li>Can the item be hand-made by you?</li><li>Could the item be purchased second-hand or hired?</li><li>Is there an item that you could reuse for another event?</li><li>If flowers are being used, are they seasonal? Compostable? Dried?</li></ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Can the item be made from an organic material such as wood or recyclable paper rather than plastic?</li><li>If signage is required, is laminating or producing plastic signs necessary? Could paper be used instead?</li><li>How will the materials be disposed of? Will they be composted, recycled or reused?</li><li>Does the item have glitter?</li></ul>
Packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Can the items be purchased without packaging or with recyclable packaging?</li></ul>
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>If using decorative lights, are they powered by solar energy?</li></ul>



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International Aid and Development**

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