

□ Reading time: 6 min.

From 1 September to 4 October, from the Day of Prayer for Creation to the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Christian communities worldwide celebrate the Season of Creation. The 2026 theme, “Living Water”, stems from Ezekiel’s vision: a river flowing from God’s sanctuary and healing the earth. An image of hope that clashes with today’s reality, where one in four people lacks access to safe drinking water and entire aquatic ecosystems are collapsing. For the Salesian Family, it is a precious opportunity: to educate young people – those most affected by eco-anxiety, yet least responsible for the crisis – to become guardians of creation, through prayer, lifestyle conversion, and concrete actions.

Environmental issues are clearly at the centre of attention today. Worldwide, we are witnessing the devastating effects of climate change, air pollution, water contamination, plastic pollution, ocean acidification, and biodiversity loss. Although these problems affect all nations and peoples, it is the poorest communities that suffer more and more due to the environmental crisis. Similarly, while environmental problems worry people of all ages, it is often young people who suffer from severe eco-anxiety. Unfortunately, the young and the poor are disproportionately affected by the ever-escalating environmental crisis – a crisis for which they are not responsible.

In this worrying situation, the “Season of Creation” is a powerful annual reminder that God has called us to be stewards and guardians of the natural world, not selfish and reckless consumers of nature. This annual ecumenical celebration, which takes place from 1 September to 4 October, brings together all Christian communities to pray and act in favour of environmental protection and sustainability. The Season of Creation begins with the “Day of Prayer for Creation” and concludes with the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology. This is a special time during which we are invited to renew our relationship with the Creator and with all creation through celebration, conversion, and shared commitment.

Season of Creation 2026

Every year, the Steering Committee proposes a theme for the celebration of the Season of Creation. The entire celebration develops according to the three pillars we have already seen: prayer, reflection, and action. The theme is based on a biblical passage that guides the moments of prayer, reflection on one's life, and possible courses of action.

The theme of the Season of Creation 2026 is "Living Water" and draws inspiration from Ezekiel 47:9-12, a biblical vision of hope and healing. In a context of exile and loss, the image of living water flowing from God's sanctuary reveals a divine healing that renews the earth, water, biodiversity, and human responsibility towards all creation.

Unfortunately, today's reality is in stark contrast to Ezekiel's vision of water flowing in abundance. According to statistics presented by the United Nations on the current water crisis, 1.7 billion people lack basic sanitation facilities in their homes, and 2.1 billion people still do not have access to safe drinking water – that is 1 in 4 people in the world! With the intensification of climate change and the increase in groundwater extraction, several Countries are now reaching the so-called "water bankruptcy point", a condition characterised by irreversible losses of natural water capital.

The water crisis in many parts of the world is driving people to migrate, causing the loss of their homes and culture. The impact on ecosystems and biodiversity is also devastating. According to the "World Wide Fund for Nature" (WWF), we are witnessing a catastrophic decline in aquatic wildlife, with freshwater populations having plummeted by an incredible 85 per cent and marine populations by 56 per cent over the last 50 years.

However, returning to Ezekiel's vision, it is important to remember that it is, ultimately, a vision of hope. Despite the worrying situations we witness, as co-

workers with the Creator, we are called to play our part in making water accessible to all communities. In many parts of the world, we see how Christian groups and organisations have promoted the safeguarding, responsible management, and equitable distribution of water for all. Wells are being dug and water is being provided to parishes, villages, and health centres, starting from the awareness that water is a gift from God and that access to safe drinking water is a fundamental human right. Ezekiel's vision is becoming a reality. We see rivers flowing again, water sources protected from pollution, and arid lands turning green once more. This is what we celebrate during the Season of Creation! And as we rejoice in the good that is already being done, we commit ourselves to ensuring that God's gift, living water, continues to flow!

Call to Action

As we noted earlier, the Season of Creation is celebrated through prayer, reflection on our lifestyle, and prophetic action. This year too, with the theme of Living Water, we are called to undertake some significant actions, which are greatly needed in our time. These are actions that could be undertaken in our oratories, youth centres, parishes, schools, and other communities.

Some of the "prophetic actions" that this year's *Season of Creation Guide* proposes to us are: committing to ensuring that all people have access to nutritious and safe food; refraining from harmful water pollution and reporting it, while urging governments, local authorities, industry, and agriculture to act responsibly and protect water sources; acting to ensure that families, schools, healthcare facilities, and places of worship have access to clean water and adequate sanitation; promoting environmental education to foster a holistic care for creation; committing to planting trees, as these absorb carbon pollution, prevent erosion, reduce flooding, provide food and medicine, and cool urban environments; finding ways to care for our oceans, which are facing growing threats from waste dumping, overfishing, pollution, and deep-sea mining; and restoring and protecting ecosystems and biodiversity in our churches, homes, and communities.

Living today in the digital age, the Guide also proposes that we – and young people in particular – could engage in a digital awareness campaign, posting on social media using the hashtag #SeasonofCreation. Through this digital campaign, we could highlight polluted or endangered rivers, lakes, or wetlands; share stories of communities affected by water scarcity; publicly call for urgent intervention regarding local water issues; and celebrate the positive steps taken by governments and communities. Social media is a powerful platform today for supporting social causes and can amplify the voices of faith communities beyond the church walls.

Celebrating the Season as a Salesian Family

As Pope Leo XIV reminded us on the occasion of the inauguration of the Borgo Laudato Si' in Castel Gandolfo in September 2025: "Caring for creation is truly a vocation for every human being. We are creatures among creatures, entrusted with the responsibility to care for all that the Creator has made." It is important to emphasise that our determination to care for creation must not remain merely at the level of words, but must translate into actions. This is what Pope Leo XIV stressed in his message to COP30 in Belém in November 2025: "We must transform words and reflections into choices and actions based on responsibility, justice, and equity."

The Season of Creation is an excellent opportunity for us Salesians to educate young people about their responsibility to care for God's creation and to actively involve them in meaningful environmental programmes. Although there are many ways that we could involve young people in caring for the environment based on local needs, here are two opportunities we could seize as a global Salesian Family.

One of the activities in preparation for World Youth Day 2027 is a tree-planting project called the "Breath of Life Campaign". The official WYD website explains that "this is more than just an environmental initiative. It is an act of faith aimed at preserving the order of creation and a concrete step towards carbon neutrality, rooted in our faith in God." The Salesian Youth Ministry Department has invited

members of the Salesian Youth Movement worldwide to participate in the “Breath of Life” Campaign, which will take place from 27 September 2026 to 4 October 2026, that is, in the final week of the Season of Creation. This is a truly significant initiative through which the Salesian Youth Movement can celebrate the Season of Creation and simultaneously prepare for World Youth Day.

Secondly, on the occasion of Earth Day (22 April) this year, the Youth Ministry Department launched the “Laudato Si’ Parish Guide”, a practical tool to help Salesian parishes become “Laudato Si’ Parishes”. This guide offers concrete suggestions for achieving each of the Seven Goals proposed by the Laudato Si’ Action Platform. Presenting this parish guide, Fr. Rafael Bejarano, General Councillor for Youth Ministry, stated: “Through these guidelines for our parishes, we offer a Salesian pathway to involve young people and all members of the parish community so that they play an active and concrete role in caring for our common home.”

Conclusion

In the Six-Year Project for the Salesian Congregation (2025-2031), the Rector Major, Fr. Fabio Attard, states: “The Church’s commitment to integral ecology has been embraced by the Congregation and must be strengthened with a vision of charismatic inspiration. May the commitment of young people to the common good and to our common home be increasingly rooted at the local level, with young people playing a leading role, sharing choices, and participating actively and concretely” (AGC 446).

The Season of Creation is an opportunity for us to put into practice our determination to be part of the “Church’s commitment to integral ecology”. Through the various activities we carry out during this time, young people have the chance to play a leading role in the concrete care of our common home and in the promotion of the common good. Moments of prayer, a sincere reflection on our lifestyle, and concrete actions can certainly allow us to rediscover our unique place in God’s creation and lead us to renew our commitment to fulfilling our

responsibility as guardians of the natural world that God has given us.

As we celebrate this period with our young people, let us be guided by the words that Pope Leo XIV addressed to young people in July 2025. “You are young, full of ideas and enthusiasm. You want to conquer the world not to subjugate it, but to serve the life that comes from God. Humility, a spirit of service, and a profound relationship with Christ allow you to root Christian values within yourselves. Only interior conversion makes it possible to change habits and mentalities, translating into a new way of living in communion with the environment.”

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