

PLARN MAT SERVICE PROJECT FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

Answer both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor!

Plarn mat crocheting is a great service project that joins care for our earth with service of people experiencing homelessness. The care for our earth comes from the fact that it uses recycled plastic grocery bags gathered from your community as the material to create “plarn” (plastic yarn). Service of those experience homelessness comes from the fact that the completed plastic mats can be donated to a local ministry or nonprofit that does outreach to our neighbors who are in homelessness.



It is a great way to practice the message of Pope Francis’s encyclical “[Laudato Si](#)” (Laudato Si = Praise Be to You, in Latin), which speaks of care for the earth, our common home, and how that is linked with care for the marginalized and most vulnerable in our communities.

What you need:

- 1) **TONS of recycled plastic grocery bags.** Each mat takes 500-800 plastic bags to create. At least 1 month ahead of time, depending on how many youth you are involving, reach out to your parish, school and/or neighborhood community asking for donations of USED, clean plastic grocery bags (not the thicker plastic bags, not the thinner produce-type bags, and not newspaper bags). The point is to reuse plastic that would otherwise go to the landfill.
- 2) **Size Q or 16 crochet hooks or larger.** These large hooks allow to make a stitch large enough to work with the plarn and also create larger stitches that makes the mat cushier.
- 3) **Scissors.** You will be folding the bags and cutting off the bottoms and the handles.
- 4) **Large containers.** As you can create an assembly line that involves more youth at a time, large plastic storage bins are helpful to keep each step of the process separate, and it makes it easier if you need to start/stop the assembly line for a break or across multiple days.
- 5) **A few large trash bags/leaf size bags.** These help to condense bag donations in fewer large bags that are easier to store and transport than having many small bags full of bags.
- 6) **One or more people who know how to crochet.** Some teens will only want to help prepare the plarn by sorting bags, cutting them into strips and assembling plastic loops into balls of plarn, but others are willing to learn how to crochet to weave the mats themselves. It is a great opportunity to bring together different generations from your community, especially if your church already has a stitcher ministry or something similar.



VIDEO INSTRUCTIONS: including how to make plarn and how to crochet:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr_WHW_tGSE

WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS: <https://innisfailseniorcentre.com/pdfs/plarning.pdf>



LEARN MORE ABOUT LAUDATO SI: The website for the national Laudato Si creation care awareness and engagement campaign for U.S. Catholics and find out how to participate in the Vatican’s Laudato Si Action Platform here: <https://godsplanet.us/>