



A Chapter Summary of Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home by Pope Francis

Written by Fr. Thomas Reese, SJ

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One of the many marvelous things about Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home," is that it is written in a very accessible style. It does not read like an academic tome as have many encyclicals of the past. Anyone who can read a newspaper can read this encyclical and get something out of it. True, it is 190 pages and about 40,000 words, but the six chapters flow nicely. It is not a hard read. You can download your own copy of the encyclical at:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Below is a brief description of each chapter.

The introduction

The pope begins the encyclical by summarizing his presentation and citing earlier popes and other religious leaders who have spoken about the environment. He says Sister Earth "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."

Chapter 1: What is happening to our common home?

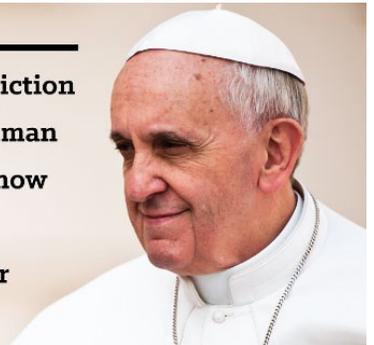
Pope Francis is a firm believer in the need to gather the facts in order to understand a problem. Chapter 1 presents the scientific consensus on climate change along with a description of other threats to the environment, including threats to water supplies and biodiversity. He also looks at how environmental degradation has affected human life and society. Finally, he writes about the global inequality of the environmental crisis.

Chapter 2: The Gospel of creation

The pope argues that faith convictions can motivate Christians to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters. He begins with the biblical account of creation and then meditates on the mystery of the universe, which he sees as a continuing revelation of the divine. "Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by

the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth." He concludes, "The earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone."

"It is our profound conviction that the future of the human family depends also on how we safeguard the gift of creation that our Creator has entrusted to us."



Chapter 3: The human roots of the ecological crisis

Although science and technology "can produce important means of improving the quality of human life," they have also "given those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world." Francis says we are enthralled with a technocratic paradigm, which promises unlimited growth. But this paradigm "is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit."

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Those supporting this paradigm show “no interest in more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations. Their behavior shows that for them maximizing profits is enough.”

Chapter 4: Integral ecology

Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behavior, and the ways it grasps reality. We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis that is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

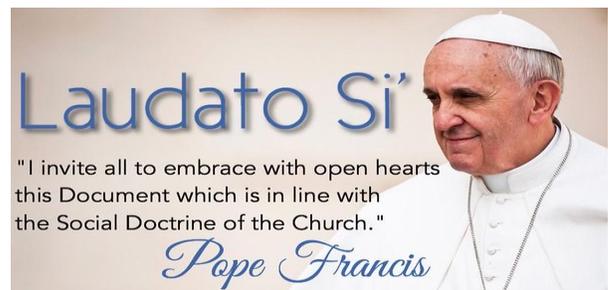
Chapter 5: Lines of approach and action

What is to be done? Francis calls for dialogue on environmental policy in the international, national and local communities. This dialogue must include transparent decision-making so that the politics serve human fulfillment and not just economic interests. It also involves dialogue between religions and science working together for the common good.

Chapter 6: Ecological education and spirituality

We need to change and develop new convictions, attitudes and forms of life, including a new lifestyle. This requires not only individual conversion, but also community networks to solve the complex situation facing our world today. Essential to this is a spirituality that can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. Christian spirituality proposes a growth and fulfillment marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. 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.

Learn more about Pope Francis' encyclical at our Adult Formation program, “Caring for Creation” on Wednesday, April 27th at 7:00—9:00 pm in the COR Center. In addition to the talk there will be information tables from SCARCE with ideas on how we can live more environmentally responsible lives.



The world's water crisis is one of the largest public health issues of our times; not only in poor countries around the world but even in poor communities here in the United States. Nearly 11% of the world's population lacks access to safe drinking water and just because we have access to water doesn't mean we can be wasteful. Here are some things you can do:

- ♦ **Run your dishwasher only when it is fully loaded; skip the pre-rinse cycle.**
- ♦ **Fix leaky faucets and toilets. One drip per second equals 3,000 gallons of wasted water per year.**
- ♦ **Eat less meat, especially beef. A typical hamburger can take up to 400 gallons to produce.**
- ♦ **Turning off water while brushing teeth can save up to 2 gallons per minute.**