

SUGGESTIONS FOR INTEGRATING LAUDATO SI': ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME WITH CLIMATE CHANGE: OUR CALL TO CONVERSION

This supplement to *Climate Change: Our Call to Conversion* contains:

- ☉ Quotes from *Laudato Si'* to accompany each of the four sessions in our booklet with suggested additional or alternative reflection questions for the discussion sections in each session.
- ☉ A summary of each chapter of *Laudato Si'* with quotes and reflection questions.

CLIMATE CHANGE: OUR CALL TO CONVERSION

SESSION ONE: OUR EARTH COMMUNITY

Large Group Discussion #1: Mourning for the Earth, p.4

“St. Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. This sister now 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... We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.” (1, 2)

“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.” (91) “We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves.” (34)

Reflection: What is Pope Francis asking me/us to open my/our heart(s) to in caring for our common home?

Large Group Discussion #2: Global Snapshot—Rising Seas, p.5

“Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political, and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.” (25)

“There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation.” (25)

“Fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance, since it is indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.” (28)

Reflection: What would happen in my community if people were displaced by floods or there was no fresh drinking water?

SESSION TWO: THE SCIENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Large Group Discussion #1: Climate Change Certainty & Uncertainty, p.8

“...Science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both.” (62)

“Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.” (48)

“...we need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair.” (61)

“Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most.” (169)

Reflection: What is my reaction to the certainty with which Francis describes the effects of climate change?

Small/Large Group Discussion #2: Climate Change—Carbon Footprint, p.10-11

“Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable, highly toxic and radioactive, from homes and businesses, from construction and demolition sites, from clinical, electronic and industrial sources.” (21)

“Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity.” (33)

“We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference.” (52)

Reflection: As people of faith how might we create communities that counteract indifference?

SESSION THREE: ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

Large Group Discussion #1: Environment & Consumerism, p.12

"The protection of the environment is in fact 'an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.' We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision." (141)

"Today, in a word, 'the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle.'" (206)

"Compulsive consumerism is one example of how the techno-economic paradigm affects individuals." (203)

Reflection: How do I experience the intersection of technology, consumerism, and environmental degradation?



Small/Large Group Discussion #2: Conversion, p.12-13

"We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and one social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." (139)

"Benedict XVI has said that 'technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving its efficiency.'" (193)

"Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it." (23)

"So what they [believers] all need is an 'ecological conversion,' whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them." (217)

Reflection: How do I understand an "encounter with Jesus" in relationship to "ecological conversion"?

SESSION FOUR: ECO-IMAGINING OUR EMERGING FUTURE

Large Group Discussion #1: Designing from Nature, p.15

"Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise." (12)

"We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources..." (22)

"From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine." (85)

Reflection: What examples of "circular models of production" am I aware of that counteract the "throwaway culture" of which Pope Francis speaks?

Small/Large Group Discussion #2: Imagining our Eco-Future, p.16-17

"Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress." (194)

In some places, cooperatives are being developed to exploit renewable sources of energy which ensure local self-sufficiency and even the sale of surplus energy. This simple example shows that...local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land." (179)

"It is a matter of openness to different possibilities which do not involve stifling human creativity and its ideals of progress, but rather directing that energy along new channels." (191)

"In those countries which should be making the greatest changes in consumer habits, young people have a new ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit... At the same time, they have grown up in a milieu of extreme consumerism and affluence which makes it difficult to develop other habits." (209)

Reflection: How does Pope Francis and his words in *Laudato Si'* inspire me and urge me to toward a new ecological vision?



LAUDATO SI SUMMARY & REFLECTION

Introduction

The Introduction to *Laudato Si'* draws on what the Pope's predecessors have said about the environment and sets a moral and ethical tone for the document. Francis states that he is writing to all people of good will, since the earth is the common heritage of all, and that all have something to contribute.

"In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home." (3)

"It is my hope that this Encyclical Letter, which is now added to the body of the Church's social teaching, can help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face." (15)

As Christians, we are also called "to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbors on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet." (9) Patriarch Bartholomew, "Global Responsibility and Ecological Sustainability," Closing Remarks at Halki Summit I, Istanbul (20 June 2012).

Chapter 1. What is Happening to Our Common Home?

Summary

Pope Francis addresses concern for the environment as the common concern of all, "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day" (25). Speaking to an ecological debt created between the global north and south, he presents the scientific consensus on climate change and connects it with human activity by means of what he calls a "throwaway culture," which he sees as a principal cause of the crisis. Water—accessibility to and quality of—he says is a human right. The Loss of biodiversity calls for a deeper awareness of our human interventions. Francis invites every person into dialogue about lifestyle changes.

"Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. So we cannot fail to consider the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and the throwaway culture." (43)

"There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference." (52)

"Caring for ecosystems demands far-sightedness... Where certain species are destroyed or seriously harmed, the values involved are incalculable." (36)

"...we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach... so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*" (49)

Reflection: Where might globalized indifference be planted in my life? What action can I take to uproot it?

Chapter 2. Gospel of Creation

Summary

This chapter gives the biblical and theological foundations for the encyclical and emphasizes right relationships with God, neighbor and creation and the need to restore those relationships when they are broken. All this is seen in light of the compelling voice of Earth's poor who, in spite of their intended share in the bounty of creation, are disproportionately threatened by environmental degradation.

"...science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both." (62)

"[The creation accounts in Genesis] suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin." (66)

"In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word 'creation' has a broader meaning than 'nature', for it has to do with God's loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance." (76)

"As the Catechism teaches: 'God wills the interdependence of creatures.'" (86)

Reflection: What people or places in my life bring me closer to God?

Chapter 3. The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis

Summary

The dangers of unbounded technological growth and the human exploitation of natural resources beyond reasonable limits lie at the heart of what Francis calls the "techno-economic paradigm." He also discusses fair labor practices and the distribution of goods, reminding us of the social dimensions of the ecological crisis and our resulting responsibility toward those who are poor.

"...our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience." (105)

"Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Since everything is related, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with justification of abortion." (119, 120)

"We were created with a vocation to work. The goal should not be that technological progress increasingly replace human work..." (128)

Reflection: How can I play a part in shifting the culture of technology to one that is based less on individualism/consumerism, and more on building community?

Chapter 4. Integral Ecology

Summary

This chapter is a call for a cross-disciplinary approach to ecology. The Pope suggests that we can and should imagine our common future from an economic, social, and cultural viewpoint as well as from an environmental one, and think through what it might look like to create such a future with justice for the coming generations in mind.

“Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an *integral ecology*, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.” (137)

“When we speak of the ‘environment,’ what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it.” (139)

“When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results.” (160)

Reflection: How does my current work or role support the “common good” as Pope Francis defines it?

Chapter 5. Lines of Approach and Action

Summary

Francis calls the people of the world into dialogue and action to address the climate crisis on numerous levels. While discussing international politics and other large-scale efforts, he also mentions local actions that are more accessible to individuals; for example, the awareness, support and use of environmentally and socially responsible business practices close to home.

“The principal of the maximization of profits...reflects a misunderstanding...only when the economic and social costs of using up shared environmental resources are recognized with transparency and fully borne by those who incur them, not by other peoples or future generations, can those actions be considered ethical.” (195)

“We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay.” (165)

“This notwithstanding, recent World Summits on the environment have not lived up to expectations because, due to lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment.” (166)

“Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life.” (189)

Reflection: What can I do to support businesses that are socially and environmentally responsible?

Chapter 6. Ecological Education & Spirituality

Summary

In the final chapter Francis calls us to an “ecological conversion” with simplicity at its heart. This conversion deals first with our own attitudes toward consumption of material goods and the use of Earth’s bounty, and then with making changes in the way we deal collectively toward educating our young people: changes within our families, schools and societal institutions. He calls us to educate future generations toward a new way of life which is more appreciative of the gifts of creation.

“I am interested in how such a [Christian] spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world.” (216)

“Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life.” (225)

“...along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society.” (231)

“The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face.” (233)



Reflection: How can I encourage a “culture of care” in my community?



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