

Laudato Si'

EARTH BEATS

September 2015

Earth and Environment Commission Newsletter
US Region



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In *Laudato Si' On the Care of Our Common Home*, Pope Francis offers us an encyclical that is challenging, ecumenical, connected to global realities, modern science, and readable. Grounded in faith and our religious tradition, it offers us opportunities for reflection and leads us to hope and action. It challenges us to live a more integrated faith.

The members of the US Justice and Environment Mission Group have made a commitment to prepare material for reflection and discussion. We invite readers of *Earth Beats* to form small groups of community members or friends to share in the discussions. It would be wonderful if you sent us one or two sentences sharing your experience. These would be included in subsequent issues of *Earth Beats*.

INTRODUCTION to LAUDATO SI'

The Encyclical takes its name from the invocation of Saint Francis of Assisi, "Praise be to you, my Lord" which in the Canticle of the Creatures reminds us that Earth, our common home

*"is like a sister with whom we share our life
and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us". (1)*

We are dust of Earth, stardust united to the origin of the universe and connected to all life.

"We breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters" (2)

(1) & (2) refers to the paragraph of the encyclical

This issue of
Earthbeats comes to
us as we honor the
first
**World Day of Prayer
for the
Care of Creation.
September 1, 2015**
recently established by
Pope Francis.

The pope begins the encyclical by citing earlier popes and other religious leaders who have spoken about the environment: Popes John XXIII, Paul VI, Paul II, Benedict XVI. “Taking the words of the ‘beloved’ Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the Pope reminds us:

*“For human beings...to destroy the biological diversity
by causing changes in its climate;
to contaminate the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life...these are sins.”* (15)

Address in Santa Barbara, California (8 November 1997);

cf. John Chryssavgis, *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*,
Bronx, New York, 2012.

16 *Ibid.* (8)



Pope Francis speaks about his namesake, who is guide and inspiration for him.

“I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.”(10)

“Saint Francis invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of infinite beauty and goodness Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.”(12)

Questions for Your Reflection

What, of this introduction to the Encyclical,



excites you?

challenges you?

inspires you?

What connection do you see between our 2011 Chapter Orientation and the introduction to the encyclical?



For More Reading: Paragraphs 1 – 16 of the Laudato Si'

What follows are the chapters which will appear in Earth Beats on a monthly basis:

- Chapter 1** Our Common Home
- Chapter 2** The Gospel of Creation
- Chapter 3** The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis
- Chapter 4** Integral Ecology
- Chapter 6** Ecological Education and Spirituality

Suggested Action

September 23, 2015

Unite with people
of various religious beliefs
for a

Vigil of Prayer

***before
Pope Francis addresses the
US Congress***

Below are the concepts that Pope Francis weaves throughout the encyclical:

- the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet;
- the conviction that everything in the world is connected;
- the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology;
- the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress;
- the value proper to each creature;
- the human meaning of ecology;
- the need for forthright and honest debate;
- the serious responsibility of international and local policy;
- the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle (16).

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