



This document highlights elements of *Laudato Si*, or Praised Be, Pope Francis's encyclical letter on ecology. Following are excerpts from the encyclical, arranged by topic. Citations are included for your reference.

Please feel free to use this document to inform your own communications.

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## **The Problem**

This sister [our common home] 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 come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. (2)

The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor (2)

The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. (21)

Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. (53)

Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. (161)

## **Policy and Political Leadership**

There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy. (26)

The establishment of a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems has become indispensable, before the new power structures based on the techno-economic paradigm overwhelm not only our politics but freedom and justice as well. (53)

A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries. Such a consensus could lead, for example, to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and



ensuring universal access to drinking water. (164)

International negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility. (169)

Enforceable international agreements are urgently needed, since local authorities are not always capable of effective intervention. (173)

True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. (178)

What is needed is a politics which is farsighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis. (197)

## **Reality of the Problem and Necessity to Act**

Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. (14)

Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. (217)

It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. (217)

## **Calls to Action**

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

Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. (13)

Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded. (13)



Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening in the world into our own personal suffering and thus discover what each of us can do about it. (19)

Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society. (91)

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 and replaced without delay. (165)

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)

Truly, much can be done! (180)

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. (202)

A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. (202)

## **Climate Change**

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. (23)

A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. 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)

If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us. (24)

Climate change is a global problem with serious implications, environmental, social,



economic, political, and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. (25)

Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. (25)

The warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, especially Africa, where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming. (51)

We must maintain with clarity an awareness that, regarding climate change, there are differentiated responsibilities. As the United States Bishops have said, greater attention must be given to “the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests” (52)

## **Individual Actions**

This simple example [of cooperative action] shows that, while the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, 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)

Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power, national, regional and municipal, it will not be possible to control damage to the environment. (179)

Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. (211)

If the laws are to bring about significant, long-lasting effects, the majority of the



members of society must be adequately motivated to accept them, and personally transformed to respond. (211)

There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions (211)

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 Faith Perspective**

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. (2)

Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. (66)

This responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world. (68)

Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures. (68)

Everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice, and faithfulness to others. (70)

Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by a love which calls us together into universal communion. (76)

Creation is of the order of love. (77)

A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing, and limiting our power. (78)

When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious



consequences for society. This vision of “might is right” has engendered immense inequalities, injustices and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all. Completely at odds with this model is the ideal of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus. (82)

The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains – everything is, as it were, a caress of God. (84)

All of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect. (89)

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. (92)

[This conversion] entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. (220)

We do not understand our superiority as a reason for personal glory or irresponsible dominion, but rather as a different capacity which, in its turn, entails a serious responsibility stemming from our faith. (220)

Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature. (235)

## **Integral Ecology**

We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (49)

Every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged. (93)

If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships. (119)



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

Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. (139)

## **Consumerism**

The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. (204)

Obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction. (205)

Many people know that our current progress and the mere amassing of things and pleasures are not enough to give meaning and joy to the human heart, yet they feel unable to give up what the market sets before them. (209)

Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. (222)

A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. (222)

Such sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating. It is not a lesser life or one lived with less intensity. On the contrary, it is a way of living life to the full. (223)

We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it. (229)

## **Digital Distraction**

When media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. (47)

True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually





leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution. Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature. (47)

It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same. (108)

## **Sustainable Business**

The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration. (109)

By itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion. (109)

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)

The principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very nature of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is shown about whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment; as long as the clearing of a forest increases production, no one calculates the losses entailed in the desertification of the land, the harm done to biodiversity or the increased pollution. In a word, businesses profit by calculating and paying only a fraction of the costs involved. (195)

## **Future Generations**

Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. (67)

Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. (159)