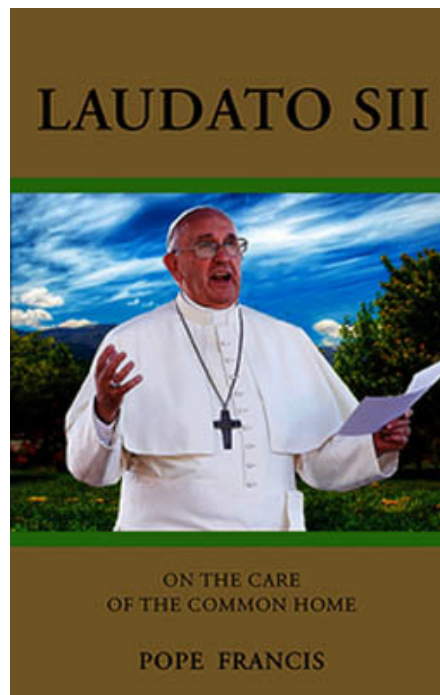




Laudato Si': On the Care of Our Common Home

Pope Francis

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Laudato Si': On the Care of Our Common Home Pope Francis

On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si') is the new appeal from Pope Francis addressed to "every person living on this planet" for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Pope Francis calls the Church and the world to acknowledge the urgency of our environmental challenges and to join him in embarking on a new path. This encyclical is written with both hope and resolve, looking to our common future with candor and humility.

Laudato Si': On the Care of Our Common Home Details

Date : Published June 18th 2015 (first published 2015)

ISBN :

Author : Pope Francis

Format : 200 pages

Genre : Religion, Nonfiction, Christianity, Catholic, Philosophy, Spirituality, Science, Environment

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From Reader Review Laudato Si': On the Care of Our Common Home for online ebook

Didymus Bibliophilus says

Funny how stirred up so many people got over this encyclical. The Pope is teaching an ecology in radical departure from standard western Liberal orthodoxy. It is a theological ecology; it is a social ecology. It is not anthropocentric, it is not "Green" ideology. The weird thing is that it is not anything truly new, that is to say, anything in departure from Catholic tradition.

I wonder how much of an effect it will have. I doubt liberals who love paying lipservice to "green" ideology will step up to the challenge to actually *live* more responsibly. And I doubt conservatives who pay lipservice to religious authority and God's supremacy will step up either.

Time will tell.

I do agree with one reviewer who criticized the work as being "literally mundane" The Holy Father takes time to give practical advice on how to save energy and so forth, addressing small issues previously unsuited to the Encyclical format and more appropriately treated by the local Episcopal conferences he frequently cites.

I don't know what I think about the causes or extent of global climate change. But neither the encyclical nor Papal authority hinge upon the claims it makes about the subject.

Karin Gastreich says

Despite media claims to the contrary, Laudato si' is not really about global climate change. Pope Francis does mention climate change along with many other maladies affecting our planet, but his true message runs deeper than a single environmental challenge or the politics that plague it.

Pope Francis's encyclical addresses the moral dimensions of human activity in the context of a living Earth. He urges us to remember our compassion for each other and for the planet on which we depend. He invites us to a dialogue across multiple boundaries: political, economic, religious, environmental, social, and technological, among others.

Throughout the encyclical, the Pope demonstrates how our moral obligation to the preservation of life is firmly grounded in the faith and theological traditions of the Church. For those familiar with Catholic tradition, there is nothing new here. Pope Francis simply brings together a rich body of teaching, and invites us to reflect and act upon the consequences of our fundamental responsibilities as stewards of Creation.

There may be some points of argument that certain readers would take issue with, but anyone who holds the basic tenets of Christianity and Catholicism dear cannot turn his or her back on the central message so eloquently delivered in Laudato si'. I believe this may be the most important religious document of this century. It deserves everyone's attention.

Laudato si' can be read on line or downloaded for free from the Vatican web site. The encyclical is very well written; the language accessible to the layperson. It inspires us in a way that only the best sermons can, by calling everyone to a higher standard for living as a community of compassion on this beautiful and unique

planet we come home.

Camille McCarthy says

An amazing book, well-written and with beautiful but direct language. Pope Francis approaches the environmental issues of today from the perspective of a wise leader who sees that these problems do not stem from lack of science and technology but from a problem with the way we view ourselves and nature, and an emptiness that many of us feel because we are not properly connected to community and each other. He criticizes the technocratic ideology as being narrow-minded and as seeing nature and human beings as commodities and raw materials rather than as having an inherent beauty and purpose. He points out that technology cannot be the sole answer to our problems because technology is what has gotten us into these problems in the first place, and because technology does not see the connections between everything, it sees only a few small details it can take advantage of.

Pope Francis also points out the need to have unbiased decisions and to get corporations out of politics and environmental decisions. He refutes the idea that man is put on the earth to subjugate its creatures, stating that the Church's stance is that man is put here to steward over the earth, which implies treating living things with respect. He points out that an increase in economic activity usually creates a decrease in quality of life, because of pollution, chemicals, water contamination, and compromised food quality.

Pope Francis approaches these issues with a sense of hope as well as urgency. He points out that it is not too late and that everything we do in order to make a difference does have an impact, even though it may not seem to be enough. The book is lovingly written but he does not mince words and firmly points out that treating nature as something to be used up to create products is wrong.

I would suggest this to every person, regardless of their faith or stance on the Church. It is addressed to everyone, not just Catholics, and I feel that everyone who reads it will feel that he is speaking directly to them. Highly, highly recommended.

Juliette says

(Note on the text: all encyclicals are available on the Vatican website for free. I downloaded the PDF and transferred it to my kindle.)

This letter is addressed to all people, regardless of their political persuasions and spiritual beliefs, but it's sad that most of the people who will read this encyclical are already members of the Catholic, "liberal" choir.

The crux of Francis' argument is the care for the other creatures of the world, especially (but not solely) *people*. His argument is based on the command in the Book of Genesis that man and woman are to be the stewards of creation. Creation is the sea and the sky, Sister Water and Mother Earth. Creation is also our fellow human beings.

It's hard to refute the idea that is ethically reprehensible that people live in poverty, digging in dangerous, toxic mines for the minerals that comprise the iPhones that people in the First World buy and discard. (That may be my own example. I can't really remember: it's an idea that's been tormenting me.) Care for our fellow people and the earth need to overcome our worship of the "deified market." (I love that phrase from paragraph 56.)

He says that we all need to take personal responsibility for the norms that we accept. Should we wait for politicians to act, or can we change our lives in small ways that will better serve our world?

When the encyclical was first released, some Catholic communities were talking about how *Laudato Sii* has

caused people to make small changes. I was skeptical. It's just a short book; it's not going to change anything. Then I started to pay more attention to the little things around me. When I saw birds outside, pecking sadly at the pavement, I left out some air-popped popcorn and leftover bread for them, and soon I had a flock on my walkway. Instead of having every light blazing in the house (already a peeve of mine), I make a point of switching off every light when I leave the room, even if my hands are full. I'm slowly raising the temperature at which the A/C switches on (the others in the house haven't noticed yet). I try to use every scrap of food that I buy and cook instead of throwing away leftovers.

They are such common sense, small acts, but I make it a point to *pay attention* and ensure that I follow them. I'm still working on the emotional aspects of his encyclical.

But, hey, it's a short book, and I just finished it. I live in hope.

Some lines that I particularly enjoyed:

We are not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass, and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature. (paragraph 44)

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. (paragraph 47)

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. (paragraph 52)

Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures. (paragraph 66)

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

MG Maudlin says

This was my first Encyclical and I found it a strange genre. This read as a professor's masterful summary of a Christian view of our current ecological crisis, with mature and interesting insights from the department heads from theology, spirituality, sociology, economics, and science. The result is a committee-written position paper for no discernible audience. Quoting other popes and other church luminaries, the author at times seems to be instructing Catholics but at other times, world leaders in government and business. And all of it in the form of earnest plans, injunctions, advice, and counsel of what we must do. But who is listening? If they wanted this to influence the wider world, why spend so much time lauding other Catholics or scolding the larger world? If it is for Christians or Catholics, where are the concrete reflections on how to put any of this into practice? The whole piece assumes that the world looks to the church for guidance and moral authority and is not at all persuasive if that is not granted. Compare this approach to that of the Dalai Lama's, who never assumes just Buddhists are reading his books.

Chris says

Public theology, in this work of Pope Francis, is overtly collaborative. His footnotes are as likely to refer not only to Catholic tradition (especially Francis and Bonaventure) and to previous popes' writings, but to the public statements of regional and national bishops' conferences. I've heard it shrewdly suggested that Francis is giving himself political cover by letting his brother bishops make many of his more controversial points for him, but the effect is less the scholar or politician covering his bases than the leader determined to speak on behalf of his whole constituency.

Official church documents, throughout the Christian ecumene, tend to make unexceptionable doctrinal claims in bland language. Francis' writing in *Laudato Si'* mostly lacks the flair of Naomi Klein in *This Changes Everything* or Tink Tinker in *American Indian Liberation* writing on related themes. Nevertheless, his positions on the urgency of climate change and the priority of indigenous land rights arguably meet the stiff political tests those two would pose. Indeed, Klein has apparently met with Francis at the Vatican—a moment I would never have expected in her late-90s heyday, or even now.

The toughest test for Francis, to my eye, comes from those strains of eco-feminism that claim catholic Christianity is too patriarchal in practice and/or metaphysics ever to develop a planetary consciousness or treat the earth with justice and care. (I have in mind here Catherine Keller, who is perhaps not a perfect example, but others could be multiplied.) But Francis, too, poses a challenge to that mode of theology in the comprehensiveness of his ecological program. I would love to see a more overt dialogue between those points of view, if only so I can teach it, and sooner rather than later.

E. says

I've read a few papal encyclicals through the years, but none were as inspiring to me as this one. Francis is an easy and engaging writer. Benedict to craft intricate theological statements. And John Paul paradoxically combined the writing talents of a poet and playwright with the sometimes obscure philosophical speculations of a phenomenologist. Francis' writing is both clearer and more engaging to a wider readership.

And what he writes is challenging and inspiring. In many ways, there is nothing new here. The Roman Catholic Church has long criticized Western capitalism for its greed, consumption, and exploitation and/or neglect of the poor. But what Francis has accomplished is a beautiful, cheerful, and hopeful connection of the deep problems of our current society--ecology, economy, and quality of life. He has sought common ground with other faith groups and nonbelievers while also articulating specifically how a catholic, Trinitarian theology promotes engagement with the poor and radical changes in our lifestyles in order to live as better stewards of the earth.

I intend to look back through the letter (I've been reading it here and there over the last month during free time at work) in order to organize my thoughts more. I very likely will preach on topics from the encyclical this autumn.

David Schwan says

An interesting book. Most of the attention on this book right now is about climate change and the Pope declaring it is real, caused by humans and needs to be dealt with. The discussion about climate change is

only a small part of this book. Treating the earth with dignity and treating the poor with dignity are really the main themes. Selfish greed is bad. while not calling out particular companies I can't help but think that both Monsanto with its stranglehold over seeds and Nestle with it's water business are two companies in the Pope's cross-hairs.

Even architecture is talked about with one memorable passage:

"If architecture reflects the spirit of an age, our megastructures and drab apartment blocks express the spirit of globalized technology, where a constant flood of new products coexists with a tedious monotony."

Aparna says

You don't have to be Catholic to appreciate this well-written moral argument for why society cannot be in a state of existence distinct from and above the natural environment.

Alexis says

Laudato Si's Chapter 2 "The Gospel of Creation" is really a short treatise considering the basis of sacred scripture and God-inspired words from the Bible to help us better understand our role in our world.

One of the things I love about Pope Francis is his immediate and forthright approach that there is no reason why "religion" cannot be a part of this conversation about preserving the environment, and not just on the basis of taking care of our fellow man, though that is there as well. There is no doubt that faith and reason go together, in fact he lays out quite clearly that wisdom and knowledge should be called upon to address our plight. In fact, through my own studies, I don't know that the Bible isn't the first work of environmental activism in existence.

He tells us that "science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both." (P62)

Pope Francis, by addressing this encyclical to the entire world, calls us all to step forward and do something to change the dangerous direction we are heading and he points out that scripture "can offer Christians ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters... Christians in their turn realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the creator, is the central part of their faith."(P64). We are reminded that creation is a good, we are intentionally here and that the earth is a creation that is to bring good for everyone... "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."(Genesis 1:31)

Pope Francis calls on our creation as God's clear intent. "Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary." (P65)

Just as the Prophets of old have warned, if we rupture our relationship with God, in this case by turning our back on his creation, we have broken faith with him, one of the first and key covenants. When we do this through violence, abuse, neglect, disregard, not caring for, etc. we commit a sin against God, against our neighbor and against ourselves. We can lay the blame in many sophisticated ways, but no matter where we try to cast the blame, it is laid back at the doorsteps of humanity. (Paraphrased from P66) "The work of the church is not only to remind everyone of the duty to care for nature, but at the same time she must above all

protect mankind from self-destruction." (P79)

Semantics can make all the difference. In the story of creation, God calls us to till and keep the earth and He gives us dominion over the earth. With it we are to provide for ourselves, but also the poor, the foreigner, orphan, the widow and the forgotten. But these meanings are not always as easy as we would like them to be... Paragraph 67 speaks to this point clearly and in language that is understandable and acceptable. I think one of the hardest obstacles we must overcome is in getting others to read, comprehend and apply these wise words of Pope Francis:

We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. This allows us to respond to the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man "dominion" over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church. Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures. The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to "till and keep" the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). "Tilling" refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while "keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. 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. "The earth is the Lord's" (Ps 24:1); to him belongs "the earth with all that is within it" (Dt 10:14). Thus God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev 25:23).

Reflecting on scripture in this way can bring us to new heights of understanding our role and our gift of leadership on this earth. Abraham's contemplation of the stars and heavens, Job's awe and wonder at the creatures of the earth and David's Psalms all recognize the majesty of God's creation and in many ways help us to address the questions and curiosities as to how humanity fits in.

If we acknowledge the value and the fragility of nature and, at the same time, our God-given abilities, we can finally leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress. A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power. (P78)

I loved that this chapter also delivered several points and acknowledgements from bishops around the world:

The bishops of Brazil pointed out that nature as a whole not only manifest God but is also a locus of his presence. The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with him. Discovering this presence leads us to cultivate ecological virtues.

The bishops of Paraguay stated that every [man] you know has a natural right to possess a reasonable allotment of land where he can establish is home, work for subsistence of his family and a secure life. The New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment "thou shall not kill" means when "20% of the worlds population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive".

The Canadian bishops rightly pointed out that no creature is excluded from the manifestation of God quote 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.

The bishops of Japan, for their part, made a thought-provoking observation: "to see each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in the in God's love and hope".

Francis addresses the concept of human dominion over the earth in further and most exceptional ways, he reinforces the concept that each individual has unique and valuable capacities. That the individual person "can never be reduced to the status of an object." (P81)

Yet it would also be mistaken to view other living beings as mere objects subjected to arbitrary human domination. When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. (P82)

This teaching or recognition is not a new idea brought by Francis. Another one of the wonderful qualities the Holy Father provides. He brings long lost teachings from scripture to light, highlights teachings from the early Church Fathers, great theologians like Thomas Aquinas and even draws in the Catechism of the Catholic Church's basic teachings, like this one: "Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment." (CCC339)

I also appreciated the points made in Francis response to the overzealous environmentalists that would put all before humanity. That is the beauty of a true faith, you do not get to pigeon-hole it in one political camp or another. We are all called to care for our common home, but not at the expense of any creature, and certainly not at the expense of our brothers and sisters, particularly those in the greatest need or suffering the greatest poverty, hunger, neglect, etc. Respect for God's creation should begin at home, with one another, and the beauty in that kind of caring for the lives of others we care for the world, all its beings and environs. The domino effect would improve our world politics, our ethical behavior, we would build relationships and appreciate diversity, and in the long run, the natural environment of the world would be improved as well.

The Holy Father reminds us that a "spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable. That is how we end up worshipping earthly powers, or ourselves usurping the place of God, even to the point of claiming an unlimited right to trample his creation underfoot. The best way to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world. Otherwise, human beings will always try to impose their own laws and interests on reality." (P75)

Over and over, Francis finds new ways to draw his reader to the same core conclusions, that everything is connected and how we behave in all areas of our life affects everything else. Deep connectedness to all of God's creation cannot be substituted with shallow commentary, superficial donations and ineffective rhetoric.

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. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. Everything is connected. 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. (P91)

Moreover, when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people. Every act of cruelty towards any creature is contrary to human dignity. (P92)

We can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality...

Because everything is interconnected.

James says

Encyclical; On Climate Change & Inequality: On Care for Our Common Home by Pope Francis

His Holiness gives priority to "our interconnectedness and mutual responsibility toward one another, as well as toward our common Earthly home" (viii). "He is asking us to reject the creed of market fundamentalism and to recognize that the system has levers. Individual, institutions, and governments are all making choices, as we have the capacity to make different ones" (xxiv).

In this Encyclical is the heritage of St. Francis of Assisi (1181 - 1226) who abandoned a life of luxury for a life devoted to Christianity. He is the patron saint for ecologists.

"A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack kindness, compassion, and concern for our fellow human beings" (56). For an "integral ecology," we have the capacity to make different choices for employment, science, and technology, cities, families, education, ethics, laws, and regulations.

He concludes with this prayer, "All-powerful God you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest creatures.

. . . Bring healing in our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth" (149). Amen

Irene says

This papal document was courageous, challenging and quite current. I really appreciated its accessibility. Addressed to all people about an issue concerning all people, it did not get bogged down in ecclesial language or rely solely on Scripture and moral theology. Rather it drew on the biological, social, political and earth sciences.

Pedro says

Pienso que como ha sido con Rerum Novarum esto es uno de los documentos en que la Iglesia pone su posicion acerca de como abordar un problema del mundo moderno con una visión cristã.

No se puede sostener que las ciencias empíricas explican completamente la vida, el entramado de todas las criaturas y el conjunto de la realidad. Eso sería sobrepasar indebidamente sus confines metodológicos limitados. Si se reflexiona con ese marco cerrado, desaparecen la sensibilidad estética, la poesía, y aun la capacidad de la razón para percibir el sentido y la finalidad de las cosas[141]. Quiero recordar que «los textos religiosos clásicos pueden ofrecer un significado para todas las épocas, tienen una fuerza motivadora que abre siempre nuevos horizontes [...] ¿Es razonable y culto relegarlos a la oscuridad, sólo por haber surgido en el contexto de una creencia religiosa?»[142]. En realidad, es ingenuo pensar que los principios

éticos puedan presentarse de un modo puramente abstracto, desligados de todo contexto, y el hecho de que aparezcan con un lenguaje religioso no les quita valor alguno en el debate público. Los principios éticos que la razón es capaz de percibir pueden reaparecer siempre bajo distintos ropajes y expresados con lenguajes diversos, incluso religiosos.

Si puedes leerla en Castellano lo recomiendo pues es el original.

Catherine says

Lots to think (and smile) about.

Susan Eberhardt says

Makes one think about relationship with our planet and our use and abuse of it. Interesting view on economy, especially thinking about a different take on economy, not just growth and gain at the expense of the planet and of people. Of course there is a linking between Christianity and responsibility to care for the gifts God has given us, but non-Christians would benefit from hearing the message of this pope as well.

Bob says

Summary: Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, advocating an "integral ecology" that links care for the creation with care for the poor, the quality of life in our cities, and a way of life emphasizing spiritual rather than material priorities.

Encyclicals are circular letters from the Pope to the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church addressing important matters of church teaching. The title of the encyclical is taken from the first two words of the encyclical in Latin. This encyclical, "on care for our common home" begins with the words Laudato si' or "Praise to you" and are the first words of a song of Saint Francis. The remarkable thing about this particular encyclical is that it has been addressed not only to the Catholic faithful, but "to the whole human family."

The encyclical begins with a review of prior church teaching on the environment and particularly that of Saint Francis of Assisi, from whom the Pope draws his inspiration for what he terms "integral ecology." For Saint Francis, the love of God and his creation transcended the separate categories in which we often place science and faith, care for the environment and care for the poor, the pursuit of stewardship of the earth and social justice. One commentator has noted that the most significant word in the encyclical may be the word *and* because Pope Francis associates things we often separate.

Six chapters follow this introduction. Chapter 1 explores "what is happening to our common home?" and considers pollution and climate change, water supplies, biodiversity, *and* the decline of the quality of human life and the breakdown of society, and global inequalities. Chapter 2 is titled "the gospel of creation" and explores a Catholic theology of creation, emphasizing that our dominion of creation was not domination but tilling and caring for it. It movingly states:

"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." (paragraph 92)

Chapter 3 turns from God's intent to the "human roots of our ecological crisis". The encyclical sources this in an inordinate reliance on technology--technocracy, in the globalization of the technocratic paradigm, and an excessive anthropocentrism that paradoxically compromises human dignity as we exploit not only the environment but other human beings as well. This chapter ranges widely considering everything from genetically modified food (and the usurping of smaller landholders by big agribusiness) to the dignity of human work and the need for gainful employment. Chapter 4 then turns to the remedy of these woes in "integral ecology" that concerns environmental, economic, social, cultural and everyday ecology, the common good and justice between generations.

Chapter 5 considers "lines of approach" and has to do with various public spheres in which environmental advocacy and action must occur. I was struck how often the word "should" was used here in ideas for international, national, and local policy. Perhaps the most trenchant remarks in this section are in the Pope's call for transparency in dialogue and decision-making and in his call for a rapprochement between religion and science around environmental concerns.

The final chapter concerns "ecological education and spirituality" and turns to the impact a Catholic eco-theology might have at the parish level. In a section on "Joy and Peace" the Francis writes:

"To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack." (paragraph 222).

He also calls for a kind of ecological conversion and considers the relation of the Trinity, and of Mary to the creation. He concludes the encyclical with two prayers, the first "a prayer for our earth" and the second a "Christian prayer in union with creation."

I found much to commend here. Here is an ecology that is pro-human life from the uterus to the grave, and at the same time fully recognizes that dignity of all creatures. Francis recognizes that it is often those who have contributed least to our ecological problems who suffer the most and sees the issue of justice and not simply ecological concerns in this suffering. He also recognizes that most profoundly, we need a conversion from the materialism and consumerism that is neither ecologically sustainable nor spiritually satisfying. With his namesake, he eloquently argues for how our lives are inextricably bound up with the life of the whole creation.

He speaks prophetically to those in political and economic power. And I found myself wondering here whether in fact it will be the weak of this world, the powerless, who will, under the grace of God, confound the mighty and whether change, if it comes, will not come from the politicians or big business interests but from a grassroots movement. My own hope is that such a movement might be nurtured by Christian communities whose faithful presence and witness in these matters captures the imagination of others, as did the church in eastern Europe during the fall of Communism.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, "The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children." I'm troubled that we have not lived in such a way to leave a healthy, verdant world to our children. The kind of world their children find may well hinge on whether both the church and the wider human community heed this passionate plea for our common home.

David Withun says

Given that this encyclical is now fairly old news, as far as news goes these days, I will keep my comments on it brief. As most are already aware, this is Pope Francis's encyclical letter on the environment which generated some controversy when it was first released. Having now finally read it in full, I have to express my surprise at the controversy. Far from being anything altogether innovative as I was expecting Francis instead recapitulates 2000 years of Christian thought on the relationship between wealth, cosmos, and man. The conclusion that he reaches is, essentially, that it is best for each of us to choose to live a simpler life and that rich nations should help poor nations and rich individuals help poor individuals. Throughout, the text is sprinkled with citations from some of the great Fathers of the Church as well as various medieval and modern Christian thinkers. The result is a sound synthesis of Christian thought on what it means to be simultaneously a spiritual/rational being in a material/animal existence. It is, in short, Christianity. Anyone who was shocked and/or appalled by this had best keep away from such controversial writings as those of Ss. Francis or Basil. In fact, anyone offended by this encyclical might want to stay away from one of the most shocking and subversive thinkers of all time: Jesus.

Sarah (Gutierrez) Myers says

"Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us."

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/fran...>

J.T. Therrien says

I understand that the Church (and especially Pope Francis, taking his name from St. Francis) has to make a formal statement about the Church's social doctrine and this is the optimum time to say something about the pastoral care of our planet and its varied cultures and denizens, but I question the efficacy of disseminating this message in an encyclical.

First of all, Laudato Si' could use an edit. It is at least twice as long as it needs to be. I found it repetitive and tedious.

Also, the Pope's message is intended for everyone, yes, but he mostly addresses the issues of two social groups: the disenfranchised poor and the consumer/capitalist-oriented rich; the haves and the have-nots; first-world and third-world peoples. The main problem is that these two groups have different lived experiences and so speak different languages. For example: what do people in North America know about digging through mountains of garbage to find the day's food? What do third world people know about shopping at Wal-Mart and being faced with the "choice" of thirty different chewing gums?

I fear that each group will only be able to relate to their own situation and, as the Pope warns, the poor (who have no political clout) will continue to suffer for the rich's selfish consumerism.

The text had barely been released and critics (American media) were already criticizing the encyclical's communist-leaning themes. So much for the worldwide collaborative effort to eliminate the problem at the geo-political level.

The Church does not need yet another document outlining its social doctrine, or bemoaning the destructiveness of miss-used technology. The track record speaks for itself, especially in Gaudium et Spes - the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World.

Sadly, as far as the issue of the Earth's care is concerned, no dire words of warning issued from the Vatican (a moral voice that even many misinformed Catholics are ignoring more and more these days) will create the necessary economic or social revolution.

Consumers will simply not delay instant gratification for a 'possible' environmental change to be enjoyed by a 'possible' future generation.

Pope Francis, and all idealists, welcome to the future: it is now.

Giulia says

"Quanti subiranno le conseguenze che noi tentiamo di dissimulare, ricorderanno questa mancanza di coscienza e di responsabilità".

Papa Francesco, che non cessa mai di stupire, riesce con questa Enciclica a rivolgersi con forza non solo ai credenti, ma a tutti "gli uomini di buona volontà" che condividono questa nostra "casa comune". L'autore fornisce infatti un'analisi attenta, precisa e illuminata della situazione attuale, delle sue cause - quelle profonde - e delle possibili vie per le quali incamminarsi per cambiare direzione, o almeno minimizzare gli effetti.

Degna di nota è la chiarezza con cui il Papa indica l'origine dell'indifferenza per la sofferenza altrui, con la quale lega sapientemente ecologia, economia, antropologia ed etica. Ineguagliabile è poi l'umiltà con cui trova la forza di dire la verità, senza aggrapparsi a facili menzogne o ancor più facili omissioni. Già, pare proprio che, piuttosto che compiacere, preferisca dire le cose come stanno, e non sorprende infatti come questo libro abbia infastidito molti.

La bibliografia è tanto ampia quanto la visione d'insieme che viene proposta.

Un libro che consiglierei a tutti, perché smuove dai propri egoismi e ricorda la responsabilità che ognuno di noi ha. Credo sia anche un libro da rileggere di tanto in tanto - o almeno questo è quello che cercherò di fare io, per non dimenticare di fare scelte che non siano egoiste, ma lungimiranti.

Per concludere, dopo aver letto l'opera di un uomo solo, vien da chiedersi come stiano passando il tempo i cosiddetti "addetti ai lavori".
