

LAUDATO SI SUMMARY

There have been 298 encyclicals or circular letters from the pope to bishops and people since 1740 when Benedict the 14th wrote about usury and dishonest profit.

Normally encyclicals offer important guiding principles on important topics for the faithful to reflect on.

There has probably not been another encyclical as eagerly awaited by Catholics and the world, as Laudato Si was in 2015.

Laudato si - it starts - quoting St Francis - "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs".¹

The document describes how mother earth cries out at the abuse she receives and how the appropriate response is a "global ecological conversion which embraces the idea of the bond between nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace". We are called on to undertake an ethical and spiritual journey.

The encyclical, which draws from Catholic and other teachings, gives a set of guidelines for people, governments and business.

Each chapter addresses a topic, but some principal concepts recur. These are:

- the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet,
- the conviction that everything in the world is connected,

Thanks to Patrick Dowling for permission to share this summary.

- the critique of new patterns and forms of power derived from technology,
- the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress,
- the value of 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

These principals should help us answer such questions as:

- What world do we want to leave to those who come after us?
- What is the purpose of our life in this world?
- What need does the earth have of us?

This reflection needs to confront such issues as:

Pollution , energy choices and Climate Change , waste and the throwaway culture, water, loss of biodiversity, the breakdown of society, inequality, poor leadership and laws and an extreme variety of opinions about the truth.

The theme of justice comes up repeatedly. Here is a quote:

“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”

Referring to the light of faith, biblical wisdom and the mystery of the universe Pope Francis talks of our “tremendous responsibility” for

creation, the intimate connection among all creatures and the fact that the natural environment is a collective good whose fruits should benefit everyone.

He sees as important not only recognising the symptoms of the problems but identifying the causes such as: too deep a trust in technology and biotech which are mainly profit driven and often lead to job shedding, and arrogantly seeing the power of humans as supreme without the necessary commitment to stewardship.

He is quite blunt when he says:

“environmental protection cannot be assured solely with financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces”.

At the heart of the Encyclical’s proposals is an approach to ecology which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings and what we do. Our human creativity and generosity make this possible despite disorder and uncertainty. What we must do is:

- Keep environmental dialogue going
- Promote better environmental law
- Demand transparency in decision-making
- Ensure that politics and economy serve human fulfilment
- Support environmental education and training “in school, in families, in the media, in catechesis” directed towards a covenant between humanity and the environment.

All is not lost says the encyclical. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a fresh start, despite their mental and social conditioning. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful,

He ends with two prayers that contain the final lines:

The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

So that is a little background as to why it would be good for our parish to join in the huge effort needed to turn things around. The Global Catholic Climate Movement based in Rome invites us to join the Season of Creation which officially runs from September the 1st to October 4th each year. I have a parish guide on this which we can discuss. The parish council supports the idea of world café type workshops on our meet and greet days to look at small practical projects and discuss useful, relevant information and how to apply it to our lives. Next Sunday will be the first.

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We are also asked to take a pledge inspired by Pope Francis's call in his speech in Santa Cruz in 2015. "Our common home is being pillaged, laid waste and harmed with impunity. Cowardice in defending it is a grave sin. People and their movements are called to cry out, to mobilize and to demand--peacefully, but firmly--that appropriate and urgently-needed measures be taken. I ask you, in the name of God, to defend Mother Earth."



THE LAUDATO SI' PLEDGE

Answering Pope Francis' urgent call in Laudato Si', We pledge to:

- **Pray** for and with creation
- **Live** more simply
- **Advocate** to protect our common home.

PARISH

DIOCESE

COUNTRY

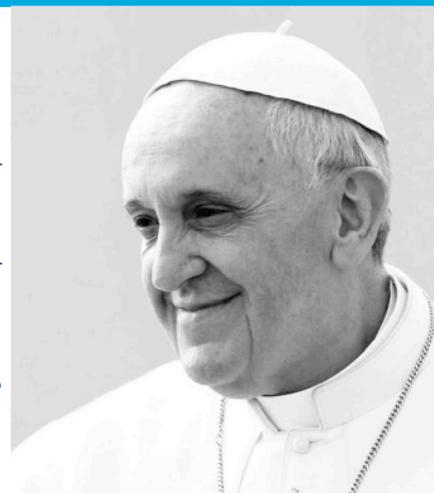
FIRST NAME

LAST NAME

EMAIL

Do you represent Parish?

Please send this form to pledge@livelaudatosi.org. You will receive important updates about Laudato Si' action.





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More next week.
