



Summary of *Laudato Si'*¹: On Care for Our Common Home

Laudato Si' Outline:

- » Chapter One: What is happening to Our Common Home (pg. 2)
- » Chapter Two: The Gospel of Creation (pg. 3)
- » Chapter Three: The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis (pg. 3)
- » Chapter Four: Integral Ecology (pg. 4)
- » Chapter Five: Lines of Approach and Action (pg. 4)
- » Chapter Six: Ecological Education and Spirituality (pg. 5)

For further study:

To read the full encyclical: *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*:
w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

For more resources on *Laudato Si'*:
www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/resources/laudato-si

Introduction:

Pope Francis addresses *Laudato Si'* to "every person living on this planet" (§3) and outlines the encyclical. Pope Francis:

- » Places his vision in continuity with his papal predecessors (§§3-6) and in harmony with non-Catholic religions and secular thinkers (§§7-9).
- » Shows how *Laudato Si'* is animated by the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of those who promote ecology, and emphasizes the importance of these spiritual roots: "*If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously*" (§11).
- » Urgently appeals to all persons "*for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet*" (§14).

¹ Adapted from: DiLeo, Daniel R. "Peace: An Unexpected Reaction to *Laudato Si'*." National Catholic Reporter. June 18, 2016. April 18, 2016. <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/peace-unexpected-reaction-laudato-si>.



Chapter One: What is happening to Our Common Home

Pope Francis identifies pressing modern ecological challenges: Pollution and Climate Change (§§20-26); The Issue of Water (§§27-31); The Loss of Biodiversity (§§32-42); Decline in the Quality of Human Life and the Breakdown of Society (§§43-47); and Global Inequality (§§48-52). Regarding climate change, Pope Francis:

» Emphasizes that *"the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all"* and recognizes that *"a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity"* (§23).

» Stresses that *"climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods"* and laments that the poor (who are least responsible for causing the problem) are disproportionately vulnerable to its harmful effects (§25).

» Recognizes *"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).

» Challenges those, that in the face of ecological degradation, would *"blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism"* (§50).

» Recognizes that an *"ecological debt"* exists between countries of the Global North and South *"connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time"* (§51).

» Criticizes the *"weak international responses"* to climate change that have been repeatedly undermined by *"economic interests [that] easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected"* (§54).

Chapter Two: The Gospel of Creation

Pope Francis recounts the Christian beliefs that:

- » God created everything with intrinsic goodness (§65, 69).
- » Humans are uniquely created and called to exercise responsible stewardship over creation on behalf of the loving Creator (§67-68).
- » All creation is a mystery the diversity and unity of which both reflect and mediate the Creator (§76-92).
- » The right to private property is not “absolute or inviolable” but “subordinate[ed] ... to the universal destination of goods” (§93).
- » “[T]he destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ” (§99).

Perhaps most fundamentally, the pope emphasizes that environmental harm is caused by sin understood as broken relationships “with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself” (§66). These relationships are broken in part because humans “presum[e] to take the place of God and refus[e] to acknowledge our creaturely limitations” – a dynamic that causes us to mistake God’s command for humans to “have dominion” over creation (Genesis 1:28) as exploitative license rather than a vocation to “cultivate and care for” God’s good gift of creation (Genesis 2:15; Ibid.).

Chapter Three: The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis

Inspired by Christian faith, Pope Francis addresses “the human roots of the ecological crisis”. Specifically, he:

- » Criticizes “anthropocentrism,” i.e., the belief that humans are radically separate from and above the non-human natural world (§§115-118)
- » Points out that anthropocentrism devalues creation and leads to “practical relativism”, which values creation only to the extent that it is useful to humans (§§118, 122).
- » Criticizes the “technocratic paradigm” which “accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impact on human beings” and wherein “finance overwhelms the real economy” of human flourishing (§109).
- » Affirms traditional Catholic teaching that “by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion” and must be regulated when it fails to protect and promote the common good (Ibid.).
- » Reiterates the interconnectedness of all creation and, as such, connects care for creation to the protection of human life and dignity -- especially regarding abortion, the poor, those with disabilities and testing on “living human embryos” (§117, 120, 137).



Chapter Four: Internal Ecology

Pope Francis presents and considers the concept of **integral ecology** which:

- » Asserts (and this appears throughout) that *"it cannot be emphasized enough how everything [in creation] is interconnected"* (§138). This, he says, is true of all creation of which humanity is a part, as well as the various aspects of human life: academics, economics, health, governance, culture and every part of *"daily life"* (§139-155).
- » Reiterates that care for creation is intimately connected to the promotion of a preferential option for the poor since those with the least are most harmed by ecological degradation (§158).
- » Affirms that in light of ecological degradation and climate change, justice and solidarity, i.e., commitment to the common good must be understood as *"intergenerational"* (§159).

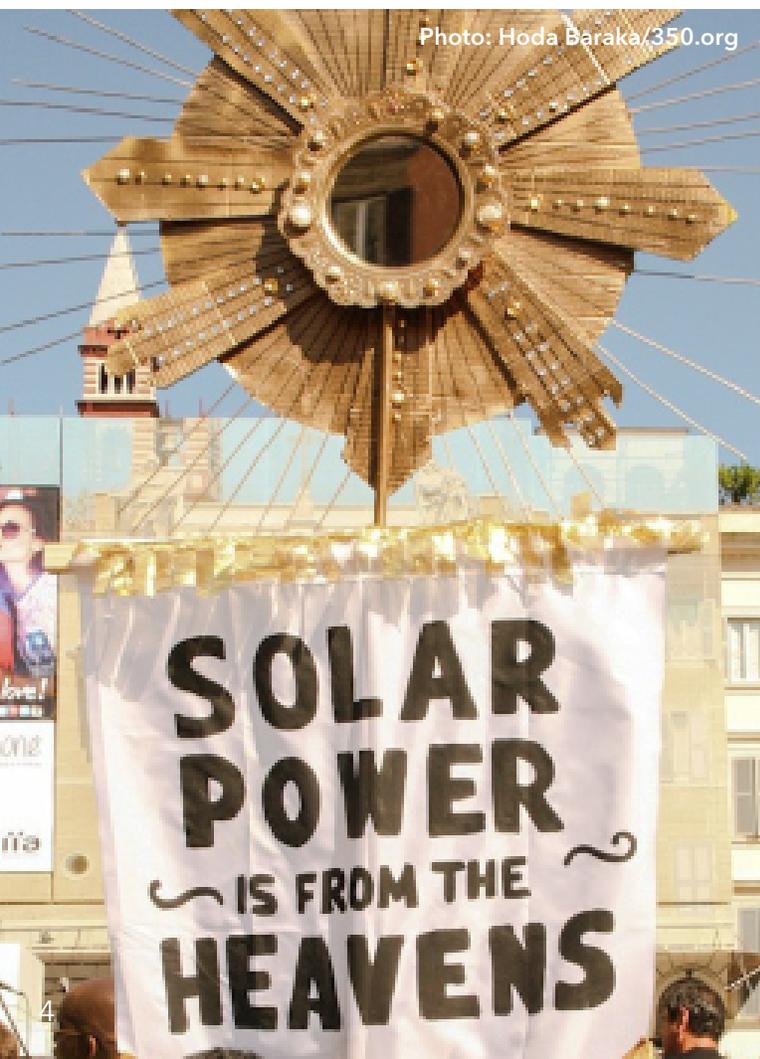
Chapter Five: Lines of Approach and Action

A guiding principle of Chapter Five is the Catholic Social Teaching principle of **subsidiarity**, which teaches that challenges should be addressed at the lowest possible - but highest necessary - level of society needed to protect and promote the common good. Pope Francis asserts 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).
- » *"Until greater progress is made in developing widely accessible sources of renewable energy, it is legitimate to choose the lesser of two evils or find short-term solutions"* (Ibid).
- » The move to affordable renewable energy should be expedited with, *"subsidies which allow developing countries access to technology transfer, technical assistance and financial resources,"* and asserts that *"the costs of this would be comparatively low, given the risks of climate change"* (§171).
- » *"Even if stringent [greenhouse gas reduction] measures are taken now, some countries with scarce resources will require assistance in adapting to the effects already produced"* (§170).

Pope Francis notes the *"need for common and differentiated responsibilities"* among nations and quotes the bishops of Bolivia who said: *"the countries which have benefited from a high degree of industrialization, at the cost of enormous emissions of greenhouse gases, have a greater responsibility of providing a solution to the problems they have caused"* (§170).

Pope Francis calls for dialogue in which the marginalized are especially enabled to participate (§183) and emphasizes the *"precautionary principle"* such that *"if objective information suggests that serious and irreversible damage may result, a project should be halted or modified, even in the absence of indisputable proof"* (§186).



Chapter Six: Ecological Education and Spirituality

Pope Francis:

» Calls for *“personal and communal”* conversion away from consumerism and *“collective selfishness,”* and invites persons toward lifestyles animated by sound ecological virtues, i.e., *“good habits,”* that must be developed in persons by both secular and faith communities (§202-215).

» Points out *“consumer movements”* like boycotts *“prove successful in changing the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production”* (§206).

» Argues that *“ecological education”* - which should provide information and seek to form habits - must occur everywhere in society: *“at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis ... political institutions and various other social groups ... [and all] Christian communities”* (§§213-214).

» Reminds Christians that Sacraments and the Sabbath are essential to right relationship with creation (§233-237).

» Reflects on the relationships of the Trinity, Mary and Joseph to creation, and concludes with *“a prayer for our earth”* and *“a Christian prayer in union with creation”* (§238-246).



Photo: Catholic Church England and Wales CC BY-NC 2.0



415 Michigan Avenue N.E. Suite 260
Washington, D.C. 20017
202-756-5545
CatholicClimateCovenant.org



Laudato Si' in Action

Here are some ideas on how your parish, school, or religious community can put Pope Francis's encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, into action.

1. Take the [St. Francis Pledge](#)

Pledge to pray, act, and advocate to solve climate change. Taking the St. Francis Pledge helps you care for our planet and our vulnerable sisters and brothers.

Pray

- Set a time to [pray](#) for climate action
- Pray as a family or as a church group (e.g., Mass petitions)
- Keep a prayer journal
- Publish prayers via a blog or newsletter

Act

- Learn how climate affects [the vulnerable](#)
- [Calculate](#) your carbon footprint
- Investigate solar and renewable [options](#)
- Take [steps](#) to reduce your footprint

Advocate

- [Connect](#) with policy makers
- Connect with your municipal or city council
- Explore sustainable policies at work
- Ask your pastor to preach on *Laudato Si'* and creation care

2. Create a (or join an existing) [Creation Care Team](#).

Creation Care teams enable Catholics to lead the charge to solve climate change—together. Whether it's a group from your parish, workplace, or school, your Creation Care Team will work to make a difference, create more sustainable facilities, and advocate for faith-informed climate policies.

3. Integrate creation care into all aspects of parish, school or community life. For ideas on how to integrate creation care into parish ministries go [here](#) and for youth ministries go [here](#). For more ideas go [here](#).

4. Host a [Feast of St. Francis](#) (FOSF)

This year's FOSF theme is "Dial Down the Heat: Cultivate the Common Good for our Common Home." The 2016/2017 program will help answer Pope Francis' call for constructive dialogue about our place in God's creation and the environmental impacts on poor persons and communities.



Catholic Climate CovenantSM
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.