

## Pope Francis and a Sustainable Social Order

*Here I (Francis) want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Laudato Si (LS #13)*

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church wishes to initiate a discussion on what many hold to be a permanent economy and others see as a failure to involve all including the poor of our region. Is the current System outdated? Unsustainable? Intolerable?

1. **Primary information** (August 2015)  
To become familiar with and know the thrust of *Laudato Si*.
2. **First Applications** (September 2015)  
To relate what each can do to simplify lifestyle.
3. **Expanded Applications** (October 2015)  
To delve into the current economic System for changes.

*The financial crisis of 2007-8 provided an opportunity to develop a new economy, more attentive to ethical principles....*  
(LS #189)

*The principle of maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy.* (LS #195)

*A strategy for real change calls for rethinking processes in their entirety, for it is not enough to include a few superficial ecological considerations while failing to question the logic which underlies present-day culture. A healthy politics needs to be able to take up this challenge.* (LS #197)

- a) Three strategies --
  - \* Keep what we got for it is good
  - \* Keep but modify to meet current changes
  - \* Insist on a new system worthy of our calling
- b) Benefits and Defects of Free Market --
  - \* List competitive advantages
  - \* Growing inequality (Kentucky and elsewhere)
- c) Elements of a New System --
  - \* Non-competitive and non-profit motivations
  - \* Locally based investments, businesses and small farms along with community markets and crafts
  - \* Commitment to a renewable energy economy to be installed to replace existing fossil fuel one
  - \* Fair taxes for all at historic rates during times of crises (FDR in Second World War)
  - \* Focus on national infrastructure improvement  
(an original 19th century Republican Party plank)
  - \* Extension of global outreach to health and food

security of all people

- d) Expectations based on change that is --
- \* Not hindered by climate change deniers
  - \* Non-violent in modes of application
  - \* Collaborative and decentralized in local strategies
  - \* Adhering to the Principle of Subsidiarity

## Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si*

This environmental encyclical issued on June 18, 2015 is a clear call to address the issue of environmental deterioration showing itself in pollution of air, water and land, and in the effects of human-caused climate change. The title is taken from St. Francis of Assisi "Praise be to you" prayer to the Creator. In the Introduction Pope Francis quotes from the acting Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on environmental matters as well as other people from a variety of traditions as well as Church Bishops' Conferences from two dozen countries.

**Chapter One**, "What Is Happening to Our Common Home," lists the practices that has led to pollution and pinpoints a waste and throwaway culture that has led to water pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity; in turn these have resulted in a declining quality of life for all. Pope Francis shows how much he is hurt by the weak response on the part of people to these emerging calamities. While noting instances of improvement to rivers and woodlands and in non-polluting energy sources and public transportation, these successes are not sufficient to solve global problems.

**Chapter Two**, "The Gospel of Creation," states that in order to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, all of us must include the wisdom of religion, especially the comprehensive view that comes from our Judeo-Christian tradition. "The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone." To have dominion as mentioned in Genesis does not mean exploitation but a harmonious relationship between human beings and nature: a caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. "All of us are linked by unseen bond and together form a kind of universal family."

**Chapter Three**, "The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis" involves a probing into the human causes of the current situation. Pope Francis says that amid the growth of technological power we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint." We need a deeper look at the correct understanding of labor and a dignified life through work. Science and technology are to be used for the service and benefit of all and not the profit of a few.

**Chapter Four**, "Integral Ecology," speaks about how everything is interrelated. "Nature cannot be regarded as something separated

from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. ... We are faced ...with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental." He adds that human ecology is inseparable from the common good and that we must make choices in solidarity based on a preferential option for the poorest of brothers and sisters. He raises the truly religious question: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us?"

**Chapter Five**, "Line of Approach and Action," speaks of our need to take action. Dialogue is to occur at the international, national and local levels -- a frank discussion and debate among all parties and a critique of the market forces. He calls for considering a new economy, more attentive to ethical principles, and new ways of regulating speculative financial practices and virtual wealth. "But the response to the crisis did not include rethinking the outdated criteria which continue to rule the world."

He adds that the environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces. Herein lies the challenge for our action as a people, "accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth."

**Chapter Six**, "Ecological Education and Spirituality," invites us all to consider a new lifestyle, acquaint ourselves with the covenant between humanity and environment, become converted to a new way of acting, experience joy and peace, promote civic and political love, understand sacramental signs and celebration of rest, and champion Mary as Mother and Queen of all creation. Finally we are call to come together and take charge of this home which is entrusted to us all.

## Laudato Si and Related Issues

*Here I (Francis) want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of home which we share. (LS #13)*

1. The **papal encyclical**, the longest in history, is addressed to all people and not just to the Catholic bishops or people.

2. The **urgency** of the times demand that we give this pastoral message serious consideration, not just knowing what it says but bearing a moral duty to bring a message to all people of good will.

3. The environmental crisis, and especially the phenomenon of climate change, is of **human origin** and is due to overuse and misuse of fossil fuels and other resources.

4. It is our **moral duty** to be concerned about these present conditions. Future generations will be affected in adverse ways by our current actions. The environment is fragile and *"is defenseless before the interests of a deified market (LS # 56).*

5. The poor will be most affected by climate change (low-lying urban areas, island nations, droughts in Africa). It is our responsibility to look out for our poorer brothers and sisters both in this country and throughout the world.

6. We must initiate a **dialogue and debate** among those who hold other views, especially those who deny that climate change is occurring at this time. The virtue of **prudence** demands such a discussion, for if mounting scientific evidence is correct the planet's vitality is at stake.

7. Those **merchants of doubt** would desire that the discussion to be open ended and that the status quo should continue since there is no clear consensus. However, the ploy of continuing as usual is their opportunity for profits from an unsustainable fossil fuel economy. The tools for engagements are multiple.

8. Unequal wealth and the power of concentrated wealth bother many patriotic Americans. Super wealth must not be permitted to purchase elections, unduly influence legislators and control the media. True conservatives must address the challenges before us.

9. *The present world system is certainly unsustainable from a number of points of view (LS #61). The response after the financial crisis of 2007-08 did not include rethinking the*

*outdated criteria which continue to rule the world* (LS #189).  
It is our duty to take up this matter as responsible citizens.

10. We need to consider individual and community **conversion**  
from wasteful ways of acting. This touches us all.

## Ten American Applications of Laudato Si

1. Read the Encyclical carefully and save a copy. This 100-page essay can be downloaded from Vatican Publications or CRUX or other media sites free of charge.

2. Check on need for personal and domestic conversion in some fashion. Ask questions about energy conservation, use of electronic devices, auto and travel practices, water conservation, and use of land for growing produce. Also about our attitudes with respect to economics and the System we have inherited.

3. Organize and attend meeting in Church gatherings or small community meetings that use the contents of *Laudato Si* as subject matter for discussion.

4. Engage in conversation those who regard themselves as climate change deniers. Remind them that "97%" consensus by climate scientists is closer to 99.9%, since only 5 of 24,000 peer reviewed 2013-14 papers on the subject rejected the reality of rising global temperatures or that human emissions are the cause.

5. Demand that institutions with which you are affiliated remove any investments from fossil fuel industries. This could set a stampede to have others follow; we hope this leads to a decline in market value of fossil fuels -- but that may ask for too much.

6. Sign petitions that each 2016 presidential candidate refuse to accept donations from fossil fuel producers. As of this date only two have done so. This should not be regarded as a partisan issue. If the opportunity arrives, directly address climate change with any accessible candidate.

7. Pressure legislators at the national level to transfer benefits from fossil fuel producers to those affiliated with renewable energy promotion and production. Save the EPA for it is in deep trouble with elements of Congress.

8. Obtain support from leaders in the community or those at high levels; they need to publicly support climate change awareness activities.

9. Write Letters-to-the Editor for local newspapers and periodicals to the degree capable; enlist the talents of those who have good turn of phrase and encourage them to do the same.

10. Defend the pope against neighbors who regard climate change denial as a political issue. This is a moral issue and prudence calls us to speak and act. Pray that Francis is successful in reception of the encyclical, and cooperate with him in working for the continued vitality of Mother Earth.