Integral Ecology in *Laudato Si’*

A Holistic Approach to the Crisis of Our Common Home

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«Ecology and Creation» Sector

VATICAN DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
LAUDATO SI'
... the most important environmental text of the 21st century

(Dale Jamieson)
Global country-by-country response of public interest in the environment to the papal encyclical, *Laudato Si'*

Malcolm L. McCallum

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.04.010
The encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato si’* significantly carries the sub-title: “on care for our common home”.

In talking about Earth as our common home, Pope Francis ushers in a major paradigm shift.

It is the crisis of our very common home!
“Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is falling into ruin.!

(1205 – Assisi)
Francis, go and repair our home!
In *Laudato si’*

Pope Francis offers a **HOLISTIC Understanding** of the Crisis of Our Common Home

... the **PHYSICAL**, **ETHICAL** and **SPIRITUAL** dimensions of the Crisis of Our Common Home
In *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis offers a masterly synthesis of the manifold manifestations of the contemporary ecological crisis, the crisis of our very home: pollution and waste, climate change, depletion of natural resources, especially water, and biodiversity loss.
How many Earths does it take to support humanity?

- Business as usual: Earth Overshoot Day: June 28, 2030
- Carbon emissions reduced 30%: Earth Overshoot Day: September 16, 2030

**Ecological Footprint**

- **Number of planet Earths**: 0.0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
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<td>France</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts 2016
Variations of the Earth’s surface temperature: year 1000 to year 2100

Source: IPCC
For 650,000 years, atmospheric carbon dioxide had never been above this line.
“surely no creature other than man has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order”

(Lynn White, 1967)
We also need to remember that the early and disproportionate VICTIMS of the ecological crisis are the POOR . . . who have contributed least to causing the crisis in the first place!
The concern for the poor - and as the Pope mentions “the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor” (2) - is at the heart of the encyclical.

*Laudato Si’* is, in fact, a social encyclical than one on climate change. “Climate” is mentioned just 14 times in the text, while “the poor,” 59 times.
“Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest”.

(Laudato Si’, 48)
WE ARE NOT DROWNING WE ARE FIGHTING!!
«The Ecological Crisis is a Moral Crisis»

Pope John Paul II (1990)
According to Partha Dasgupta and Veerabhadran Ramanathan, the top “1 billion people are responsible for 50% of greenhouse gas emissions; a further 3 billion people for 45%; while the bottom 3 billion, who do not have access to affordable fossil fuels, are responsible for a mere 5%”.
According to Pope Francis:

“Today, however, 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”.

(Laudato Si’, 49 – italics as in the original)
We need to remember that at the deepest level the ecological crisis is a profoundly spiritual and religious crisis . . .

“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”

(Laudato Si’, 2)
“the external deserts are expanding because the internal deserts have become so vast …

(Pope Benedict XVI, 2005)

… Quoted by Pope Francis in Laudato Si’, 217
Creation is God’s first and primordial revelation.

According to Pope Francis, “God has written a precious book, ‘whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe’.” (85)

Creation is, indeed, the very first epiphany of God.
The very title of the second chapter of *Laudato Si’*, wherein Pope Francis offers the theological vision of the natural world is highly significant.

The chapter carries the title: “The Gospel of Creation”.

The encyclical affirms that creation is truly gospel, *evangelion*, i.e., “good news”.
“Every creature is thus the object of the Father’s tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection. Saint Basil the Great described the Creator as “goodness without measure”, while Dante Alighieri spoke of “the love which moves” ... (*Laudato si’,* 77)
Caring for our common home is our original vocation.

The stewardship of the earthly garden is the first and primary task entrusted to Adam - the first human being, as we read in the creation narratives in Genesis.

It is the very first commandment given to humanity.
In caring for our common home and for the weaker members of our common household, we are indeed imitating God’s own loving, tender care towards all creatures.

Like in the parables of the Gospels, we will be called into account by the Creator for what has been entrusted to our care.
For Christians, creation’s final destiny is to be recapitulated in the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

From the perspective of Christian faith, the entire creation has an essentially ‘christological’ dimension, as all things have been created in Him and in Him all things hold together.

Christ is the Omega, the final end of creation.
In Laudato Si’, Pope Francis invites us to develop an INTEGRAL ECOLOGY (we are all interrelated and interconnected!)
... a metaphysics of interrelatedness!

«... human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself.»

(Laudato Si’, 66)
We exist in a web of interrelatedness and interdependence!

«Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.»

(Laudato Si’, 137)
We need to learn a NEW WAY OF DWELLING in Our Common Home
In the context of the ecological crisis, ensuring the habitability of our common planetary home becomes the most important of all common goods, as it is a necessary precondition for the fulfilment of the rest. Here POLITICS whose primary vocation is to serve the common good has an important and indispensable role to play.
True oikonomia reflects the ‘eucharistic’ vocation of human communities, namely to ‘share’ the gifts of creation with all the members of our common household in a spirit of communion (koinonia), like the one bread broken and shared at the table of the Lord.

The earth is indeed humankind’s common table laid by God for all. Around that table we gather, in a spirit of conviviality, not in competitive scramble but in joyful fellowship, nurturing and sheltering one another.
We also need to EDUCATE toward Ecological Citizenship
«Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. ... A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.

(Laudato Si’, 202)
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.  

(Laudato Si’, 211)
Laudato Si’ Invites us to embrace an ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY
… Christians have not always appropriated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us”.

(LS, 216)
ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION ...

In *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis talks about the root causes of the crisis and calls for a change of heart as their cure. The ecological crisis thus becomes “a summons to profound interior conversion”.

(LS, 217)
I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. (LS, 216)
THE GREAT URGENCY TO ACT
Carbon Countdown

How many years of current emissions would use up the IPCC’s carbon budgets for different levels of warming?
“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?”

(Laudato si’, 160)
“... future generations stand to inherit a greatly spoiled world. Our children and grandchildren should not have to pay the cost of our generation’s irresponsibility. I beg your pardon, but I would like to emphasize this: they, our children and grandchildren should not have to pay — it is not right that they should pay — the price of our irresponsibility.

(Pope Francis’ Address to the CEOs of Oil Companies at the Vatican on 14 June 2019)
“All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start.” (LS, 207)

As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning . . . Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

(Earth Charter – LS, 207)
... the Promise and Hope of YOUNG PEOPLE
If you listen to what your heart tells you, you will feel part of a new and courageous culture, you will not be afraid to face risks and work to build a new society. The risen Jesus is our strength! As I told you in Panama and I wrote in my Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christus Vivit: “Please, do not leave it to others to be protagonists of change. You are the ones who hold the future! Through you, the future enters into the world. I ask you also to be protagonists of this transformation … I ask you to build the future, to work for a better world”.

Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to Young Economists and Entrepreneurs Worldwide
(1 May 2019)
Learning from the Wisdom of INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
“For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values” (Laudato Si’, 146).

How much we can learn from them! The lives of indigenous peoples “are a living memory of the mission that God has entrusted to us all: the protection of our common home” (Address, Puerto Maldonado, Peru, 19 January 2018).

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants at the International Conference marking the 3rd Anniversary of the Encyclical Laudato Si’ (6 July 2018)
The important role of FAITH COMMUNITIES
“Religions play a very important role in this task of promoting care and respect for the environment, especially in this integral ecology. Faith in God leads us to know Him in his Creation, which is the fruit of his Love for us, and it calls us to look after and protect nature. Thus it is necessary that religions promote a true education, at all levels, which will help to spread a responsible and receptive attitude to the need to care for our world . . .”

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Symposium Sponsored by the Organization of American States and by the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue of Buenos Aires (8 September 2016)
LAUDATO SI’ 2020

(5th Anniversary of the Encyclical & 50th Anniversary of the Earth Day)

[Proposals from the Sector on “Ecology and Creation”, DPIHD, Vatican]
XII: Announcement of the Catholic Church’s Commitment to Become Totally Sustainable, beginning with the Vatican and with the involvement of local communities (in 7 years!)

the D-50 (fifty or more Dioceses embarking the road to sustainability),
the S-50 (fifty or more Schools),
the U-50 (fifty or more Universities or Colleges),
the H-50 (fifty or more Hospitals / health centres),
the B-50 (fifty or more Businesses),
the C-50 (fifty or more Cities or Villages),
the F-50 (fifty or more Farms)
VII: Institution of the Laudato Si’ Awards

Best Laudato si’ Individual
Best Laudato si’ Family
Best Laudato si’ Educational Institution
(school, college, university, etc.)
Best Laudato si’ Faith Community
(parish, diocese, church, religious order, etc.)
Best Laudato si’ Action Initiative
(participatory people’s movement, etc.)
Best Laudato si’ Economy/ Business/Labour Initiative
(in the area of circular and shared economy)
Best Laudato si’ Communication Initiative
(academic publication, artistic production, etc.)
4th Anniversary (2019): to be held in Africa
(Nairobi, Kenya – UNEP headquarters)

5th Anniversary (2020): at the Vatican

6th Anniversary (2021): to be held in one of the pacific Islands (Oceania)

7th Anniversary (2022): at the Vatican and later at the World Youth Day (Lisbon)

8th Anniversary (2023): to be held somewhere in the Americas

9th Anniversary (2024): to be held somewhere in Asia

10th Anniversary (2025): at the Vatican
THANK YOU
POPE FRANCIS
for 'LAUDATO SI'
The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si’