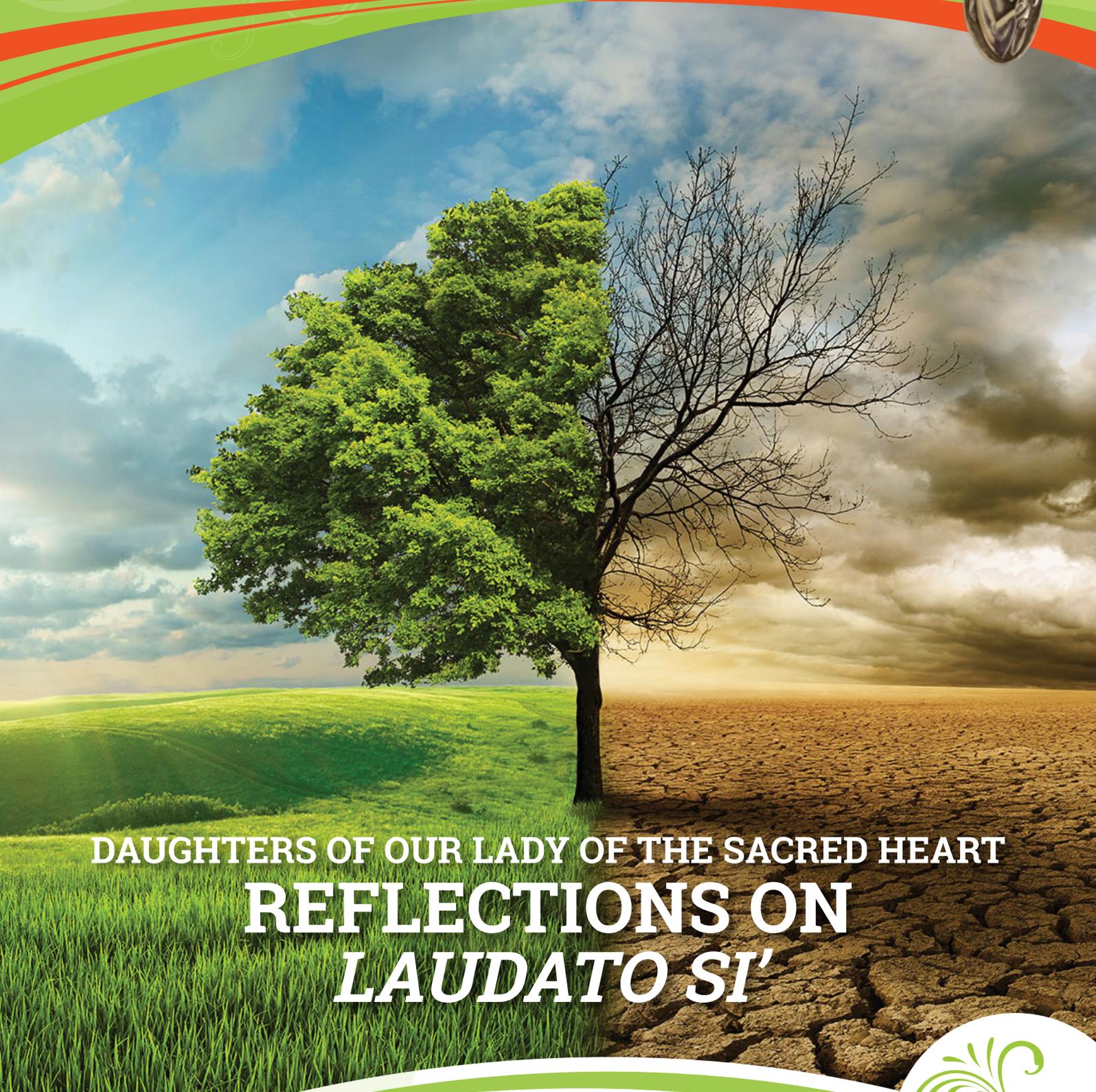




**OLSH**  
Hearts for Others 



DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART  
**REFLECTIONS ON  
*LAUDATO SI'***

[www.olshaustralia.org.au](http://www.olshaustralia.org.au)



## INTRODUCTION

The 2015 Encyclical Letter *LAUDATO SI'* of Pope Francis on 'Care for our Common Home' is the focus of the Australian Province's steering committee on climate justice, a group that was created in response to the Province Assembly held in April, 2022 to help facilitate 'OLSH ecological conversion' through exploration of and reflection on this extraordinary encyclical, and a commitment to action for our struggling mother earth. The committee, comprising OLSH Sisters from Australia and the Philippines, with representatives of their partners in mission, initially worked with Jacqui Remond, an ex-OLSH student, who is Co-Founder of the *Laudato Si'* movement and the *Laudato Si'* Consultant for the Australian Catholic University. This edition of *OLSH Hearts for Others* looks at the Introduction to *Laudato Si'* as a way of responding to the committee's suggestion regarding 'exploring the message and sharing the story.' It provides material for individual and community reading, reflection and discussion which relates to the OLSH charism and Spirituality of the Heart.

In his introduction to *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis outlines the encyclical and urgently appeals to all

people "for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet." (14) We are reminded that solutions to global environmental deterioration begin with a **change of attitude, a profound interior conversion** within each of us, through a process of letting ourselves be *touched deeply, recognising, seeing, learning and loving*—all of which "take us to the heart of what it means to be human" and move us "gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs" (11). We are urged to allow scientific and technological solutions to "provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows" (15).

Care of creation is not a new idea of Pope Francis'. In the introduction he refers to St Francis of Assisi, whose words inspire the title of the encyclical and who "felt called to care for all that exists," with bonds of affection for the earth as a mother who opens her arms to embrace us (11); to his predecessors Paul VI, Benedict XVI and John Paul II, all of whom taught that respect for human dignity includes "care for the world around us," (5); and acknowledges that his own statements "echo the reflections of scientists, philosophers, theologians and civic groups" (7) who can enrich the Church's thinking on questions of environmental damage and rejuvenation.



The introduction to *Laudato Si'* strongly puts forward a challenge to all of us to no longer be in denial, indifferent or blindly confident in technical solutions alone. What we need, Pope Francis explains, is a new **universal solidarity** so that every person living on this planet might come together and consider how we are shaping the future of our common home (14). We are **called to care** with an attitude of awe and wonder and a **contemplative gaze** when we view God's creation.

## Links with our charism and Heart Spirituality

Promoting justice, peace and care for the integrity of creation is at the heart of our charism and spirituality. In order to sincerely love our sisters and brothers we must revere and care for creation, since love must start with our neighbour in need, and it is the most vulnerable who are the most affected by changes in our climate.

*Pope Francis calls for a change (conversion) of heart—both individually and communally in response to the love story of creation...God is a God of infinite care and we are to be part of a civilisation of care.*

Claude Mostowik MSC

*It is our task to sing a hymn of thanksgiving in the name of all created things. With us, everything in nature turns to heaven, bows down, prays, adores. We must lend them our voice, our heart, our faculties, in order to give glory to God.*  
Jules Chevalier

## Reflection, discussion and sharing:

1. Read (or re-read) the Introduction to *Laudato Si'*. Are there any words, phrases, sentences or ideas that resonate with your heart, challenge or inspire you, and have links to our charism?
2. Think of (or visit) a place in nature that rejuvenates and connects you to creation and brings you peace (e.g. the ocean, the bush, a garden, a waterway, sunrise/sunset, etc.) What is it about this place that brings comfort and a sense of calm and connection?
3. At the heart of injustice is the belief that those we ignore or condemn are 'not like us.' Is there a particular group in society whose common humanity can be forgotten by me?
4. How can I open my heart and rediscover kindness to and care for these sisters and brothers, so that 'no one is a stranger, no one is a foreigner?' (J. Chevalier)



## CHAPTER ONE

### What is happening to our common home

This first chapter of the encyclical takes a frank look at the facts of our world so that the reader might “become painfully aware” of the ways we have not been protecting and caring for the place we call ‘home.’

#### I Pollution and Climate Change

##### *Our throwaway culture vs the common good*

Pollution (atmospheric fumes and smoke, acidification of soil and water, millions of tons of waste) is a global health hazard. *The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like and immense pile of filth* (20), often with little being done until the effects are irreversible.

*Let us “turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering...to discover what each of us can do about it”*

(19)

*The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all* (22). The grave environmental, social, economic and political implications of climate change, however, affect the poor more than anyone else. *Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded* (25).

#### II The Issue of Water

##### *The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits*

The supply, quality and wastage of water is an issue of primary importance (28), particularly for the poor of the world who experience suffering and high rates of infant mortality due to this problem. While access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right (30), privatization of this resource turns water into a commodity subject to the laws of the market (30), and this could even become a source of global conflict in the near future. *Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water* (30).

*What is needed is CARE - which we develop through gazing on creation with a contemplative spirit*



### III Loss of Biodiversity

*No one looking for quick and easy profit is truly interested in preserving ecosystems*

Pope Francis attributes this terrible injustice which is making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey (34) to short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production (32) which see species merely as potential 'resources' to be exploited (33), missing their essential value. He acknowledges that while some countries have made significant progress...in the protection of biodiversity (37), degradation of the world's rainforests and oceans highlights the reality that all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect (42).

### IV Decline in the Quality of Human Life and the Breakdown of Society

*In the digital world, relationships can be chosen or eliminated at whim*

In this section, Pope Francis examines more closely how environmental deterioration affects people's lives. Many cities, he says, are huge, inefficient structures, excessively wasteful of energy and water where citizens are inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature (44). Our access to places of beauty where an appreciation of nature can change our hearts in relation to our understanding of creation can be restricted, particularly in areas where the disposable of society live (45). He lists many of the detrimental social effects of global change: unemployment, social exclusion, an inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services, social breakdown, increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, and the loss of identity (46). In addition, the ever-present media and digital world can stop people from learning to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously (47). Living in this digital age can shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and

the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences (47), which gives rise to many of the social effects listed above and increases a harmful sense of isolation (47).

*We must hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*

### V Global Inequality

*The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together*

Here we are again reminded that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest (48) - billions of people who are the majority of the world's population, but who can become collateral damage (49) in the political and economic agendas of groups at the centre of power who are often far removed from the poor (49).

This inequity can affect entire countries and results in a true ecological debt (51) which rich countries owe to poor countries for the environmental imbalances and devastation, and the disproportionate use of resources...over long periods of time (51). In facing what are global



challenges due to climate change, Pope Francis implores us all 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* (52).

*For all our limitations, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us, since we were made for LOVE* (58)

## VI Weak Responses

*Sister earth cries out, pleading that we take another course*

The mistreatment of our planet in the last two hundred years in particular clashes with God's plan for *peace, beauty and fullness* (53), and still leadership which is *capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations* (53) is lacking. Such failures, seen in recent global summits, clearly demonstrate that *our politics are subject to too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good* (54). While some progress is being made and the ecological sensitivities of many people are



growing, this has not succeeded in changing their harmful habits of consumption (55). As various world resources are depleted, Pope Francis warns of new wars (57) which may induce those with a misguided and selfish interest in preserving the status quo to *hold onto power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so* (57). Men and women are capable of intervening positively, and many are doing this; environmental improvements are evident in some countries where rivers and woodlands have been restored and non-polluting energy is produced and used, but our global problems are far from being solved.

## VII A Variety of Opinions

*Nothing will be solved without the need for ethical considerations and deep change*

Honest, expert debate is to be encouraged, and diverse views respected, but *things are now reaching a breaking point...humanity has disappointed God's expectations* (61).

*Reflection, discussion and sharing:*

1. Read (or re-read) chapter 1 of *Laudato Si'*. What words or phrases link with our charism and Heart Spirituality?
2. All creation is connected. Are there aspects of our lives that ignore this reality and call us to conversion? How can I find time to appreciate God's wonders more, beginning with my neighbour in need?

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Gospel of Creation:

After the first chapter, which examines what exactly is happening to our “common home,” Pope Francis argues in the second chapter of *Laudato Si’* that the conviction of our Christian faith can and should motivate Christians to take up their responsibility as caretakers of creation. He seeks to dispel the idea some have that environmental stewardship is somehow secondary to living out their faith.

### I The Light Offered By Faith *No form of wisdom can be left out*

The solutions needed for global climate issues will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality (63). Both science AND Christian faith have a role to play in the conversation about the future of our planet.

*Science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both (62)*

### II The Wisdom of the Biblical Accounts *Everything God makes is ‘very good’*

Pope Francis reminds us that the great biblical narratives speak about the relationship of human beings with the world (65): God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good (Gen 1:31); each person has an immense dignity. He says, *We were conceived in the heart of God...Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary (65)*. Claims to the absolute ownership (67) of land, with no regard for caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving (67) it for future generations is rejected by God in the biblical texts. We must be respectful of the laws of nature and the delicate equilibrium (68) that require us to use the earth’s resources appropriately and to recognise that other living beings have a value of their own in God’s eyes (69), as they give him glory and cause him to rejoice. This respect and recognition is a requirement of living a life of justice and peace, as everything is interconnected...genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others (70).



### III The Mystery of the Universe

*Creation is more than 'nature: it is God's loving plan*

God's illuminating love calls everything into communion and gives every creature *its own significance* (76). Our world has not emerged from chaos; *God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things* (77). It is the tenderness of the Father that gives every creature its place in the world, enfolding all with his affection. *At the same time, Judeo-Christian thought demythologised nature* (78), emphasizing human beings' responsibility for its care. Acknowledgement of both nature's fragility and our own God-given abilities frees us from *the modern myth of unlimited material progress* (78) and challenges us to devise creative ways to care for our fragile world. The beauty of what unfolds can then be interpreted by faith and either allows *freedom, growth, salvation and love to blossom, or leads towards decadence and mutual destruction* (79). *By creating a world in need of development, God...draws us into an act of cooperation with the Creator* (80). We should take solace in our belief that *God's Spirit has filled the universe with possibilities* (80) so that, *from the very heart of things something new can always emerge* (80). If we cease viewing living beings as objects, as a source of profit and gain (82), we can reverse the *immense inequality, injustice and acts*

*of violence* (82) which are the result of a '*might is right*'...winner takes all mentality (82).

### IV The Message of Each Creature in the Harmony of Creation

*The entire universe speaks of God's love, and of Jesus' tangible and loving relationship with the world*

The Pope reminds us that *everything is, as it were, a caress of God* (84), and that our own relationship with God can often be linked to specific places in nature that assume a very personal meaning in our lives due to the memories and associations with which they are linked. He quotes the Canadian and Japanese Conferences of Catholic Bishops: *nature is a constant source of wonder and awe...To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God's love and hope* (85). We are all connected: *creatures exist only in dependence on each other to complete each other in the service of each other* (86). In this chapter, Pope Francis includes the magnificent hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi, which praises 'Brother Sun' and 'Sister Moon,' 'Brother Wind' and 'Sister Water,' as a reminder that *when we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures* (87). This discovery leads us to *cultivate the 'ecological virtues'* (88).



## V A Universal Communion

### *Together we form a universal family*

We are united by close and holy unseen bonds which join us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of species as a painful disfigurement (89). However, we must not deny the pre-eminence of the human person, and cannot fail to see and act when some are mired in desperate and degrading poverty...while others have not the faintest idea of what to do with their possessions (90). If this sense of deep communion with the whole of nature is to be real, our hearts cannot lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings (91).

## VI The Common Destination of Goods

### *In fidelity to the Creator, the fruits of the earth are meant to benefit everyone*

We are reminded in this section that in caring for our common home, every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and underprivileged (93). Any form of development or mitigation which does not respect and promote human rights—personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples—would not be really worthy of man (93). If something becomes our own private property, it should be for the good of all. The Pope quotes the bishops of New Zealand, who asked what the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” means when “twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generation of what they need to survive (95).

## VII The Gaze Of Jesus

### *Jesus invited others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world*

Jesus asked his disciples to recognise the paternal relationship God has with all his creatures—God is Father (96) and even a sparrow is important in God’s eyes. Jesus lived in harmony with creation, and often invited others to be attentive to the beauty around them (97, 98):

See how the fields are ripe for the harvest  
(Jn 4:35)

The kingdom of God is like  
a grain of mustard seed  
(Matt 13:31)

What sort of man is this,  
that even the winds and sea obey him?  
(Matt 8:27)

The Son of Man came eating and drinking  
and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard!’”  
(Matt 11:19)

He was far removed from philosophies which despised the body, matter and the things of the world (98). In fact, for most of his life Jesus led a simple life as “the carpenter, the son of Mary” (Mk 6:3), in this way sanctifying human labour.



In the Christian understanding of the world, the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ, present from the beginning: "All things have been created through him and for him" (Col 1"16) (99). We can direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father (100) and yet, even now, everything we can contemplate and admire in nature is imbued with his radiant presence (100).

*One person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross (99).*

*Jesus, risen and glorious, also had a tangible and loving relationship with the world (100).*

## Reflection, discussion and sharing:

1. Read, or re-read, Chapter 2 of *Laudato Si'*. Share with others two words which describe how this chapter touched your heart.
2. Are there any ways in which I can show more genuine care for my own life and the lives of those closest to me?
3. Spend some time, individually and as a community/family, devising some creative ways to take better care of our fragile world (e.g. our consumption choices, use of plastic, prayer, giving, etc.)
4. Heart spirituality requires that no one is excluded from our sincere love, and that this conviction should colour our way of living. Are there any individuals or groups for whom I lack tenderness, compassion or concern? Why? Spend some time in prayer, with an open heart, to listen and be open to what God is saying to you.
5. Like Jesus, who had a loving relationship with the world while on earth. spend some time in nature, being attentive to the beauty around you. Share this experience with another person.

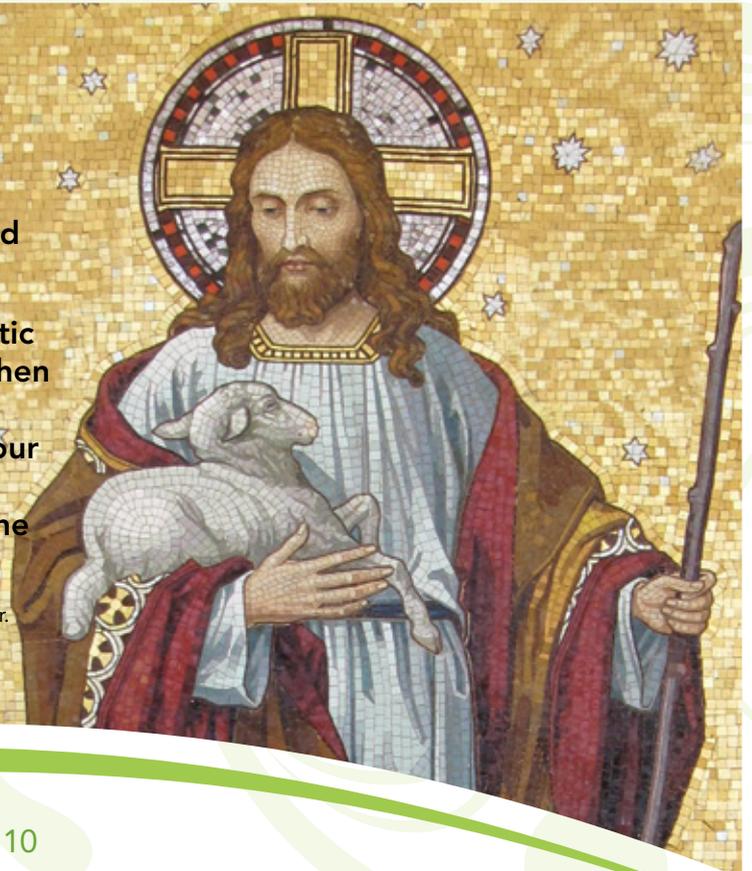
A prayer to pray individually or with others

### *Tears of creation*

Lord Jesus, through Your incarnation You shared the tears of creation that "groans and suffers the pains of childbirth" (Romans 8:22)

You made human fragility your own in climatic injustice, in our fears, and in our worries. When anguish tries to prevail over the oppressed peoples and over us, we ask You to bring Your loving presence to our hearts, in order to rediscover the purpose of our presence in the world. Amen

Originally written in Italian by Miriam Resta Corrado, *Laudato Si'* Animator. Supersano, Puglia, Italy. Source: *Laudato Si'* Movement Prayer Book



## CHAPTER THREE

### The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis:

In this chapter, Pope Francis examines our modern world at the crossroads, with its reliance on technology (the **technocratic paradigm**) in all global economic and political affairs, and the **anthropocentrism** that exists today, by which technical thought and development are placed above the global realities and **sensible stewardship of creation** has sadly become a **dominion** which sees humans acting against themselves.

#### **I Technology: Creativity and Power** *Our technical prowess has brought us to the crossroads*

Pope Francis begins by reminding us that we are the beneficiaries of two centuries of enormous waves of change: steam engines, railways, the telegraph, electricity, automobiles, aeroplanes, chemical industries, modern medicine, information technology, the digital revolution, robotics, biotechnologies and nanotechnologies (102). These advances are a reason for rejoicing in such *God-given creativity* (102) which brings immense benefits, both in terms of sustainable developments and the appreciation of beauty,

and this must be acknowledged along with the power that comes to *those with the knowledge, the economic resources and an impressive dominance over humanity* (104) who create and use them. *It is extremely risky* (104) for such a small part of humanity to have access to this power, especially when we think of the *increasingly deadly arsenal of weapons available for modern warfare* (104). Goodness does not necessarily flow from such developments and the power they bestow, and the lack of a corresponding development in *human responsibility, values and conscience* (105) has meant that we *do not grasp the gravity of the challenges now before us* (105).

#### **II The Globalization of the Technocratic Paradigm** *The idea of unlimited growth is based on a lie*

An *undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm* (106) shows us that the problem goes deeper still: as men and women gain more complete control over science and the world around them, trying to extract as much as possible from them, they ignore and forget more and more the reality in front of them. *This has made it easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth (which) is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods,*



and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit (106). The imposition of this model of reality on humans and societies has resulted in the deterioration of our global environment. In addition, technological products

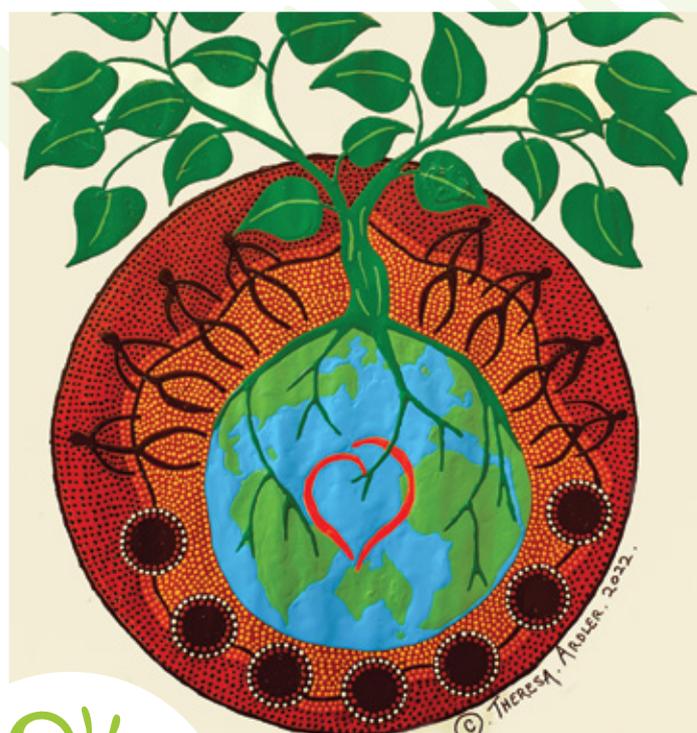
*Decisions which may seem purely instrumental are in reality decisions about the kind of society we want to build. (107) It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same. (108)*

are not neutral; they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups (107).

Economic and political life are also dominated by this paradigm: all technological advances are evaluated with a view to profit, without consideration of their possible negative consequences for human beings. The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been

assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration (109). It is as if, Pope Francis argues, the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth (109). Wasteful and consumerist cultures exist alongside situations where people are dehumanised and deprived; we have, in many ways, lost our way, failing to see the roots of our failures: the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth (109). An appreciation for relationships and the broader horizon (110) often seems irrelevant, and the principal key to the meaning of existence - the purpose of life and of community living (110) - is lost. Pope Francis challenges us to broaden our vision (112) by putting technology at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral (112).

*Let us refuse to resign ourselves to this, and continue to wonder about the purpose and meaning of life...to look at reality in a different way...to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur (113-114)*



### **III The Crisis and Effects of Modern Anthropocentrism**

*There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself (118)*

Modern anthropocentrism prizes technical thought over reality: it views the cosmos as a mere 'space' into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference (115).

Our 'dominion' over creatures and the world, itself an inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology...should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship (116). Pope Francis challenges us to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person

*with disabilities, to offer just a few examples (117), in order that we can hear the cry of creation, because everything is connected (117). Healing of both human relationships and our relationship with the world depends*

*When human beings fail to find their true place in this world, they misunderstand themselves and end up acting against themselves (115)*

on the social dimension of our openness to others and the transcendent dimension of our openness to God. Pope Francis urges us not to see *everything as irrelevant unless it serves one's own interests (122)*; not to engage in the culture of relativism *which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects (123)*. This, he explains, is *the kind of thinking (that) leads to the sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests (123)*. There is also the need for a correct understanding of not only human work and endeavour, but *the meaning and purpose of all human activity (124)*. We can look to St Francis of Assisi and the great tradition of monasticism to provide examples of both *the awe-filled contemplation of creation... and a balanced understanding of the meaning of work (125)*, which can help us to be both *respectful and protective of the environment (126)*. Unfortunately, the technological progress in place in the world favours the lowering of production costs and the replacement of workers by machines. The Pope warns us: *to stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society (128)*.

*When technology disregards the great ethical principles, it ends up considering any practice whatsoever as licit.*

*A technology severed from ethics will not easily be able to limit its own power (136)*

## Reflection, discussion and sharing:

1. Reflect on the ways in which you demonstrate 'stewardship' of creation and of the environment around you. Share the positive and negative ways in which you use the earth's resources and the kind of footprint you create (for e.g. water and power consumption, shopping habits, recycling, transport, gardening and the use of pesticides, use of technology, engagement with environmental issues or groups, etc.)
2. In what ways does the world's reliance on technology to solve problems contribute to local and global issues of injustice?
3. How can my life of encounter with and closeness to the loving Heart of Jesus become more evident in my relationship with the world around me?
4. Are there regular opportunities in my/our family or community to identify ways I/we can live more sustainably and/or to monitor my/our progress? If not, how will I/we create these opportunities?



## CHAPTER FOUR INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

In this chapter Pope Francis reflects on how the climate crisis is also a social and cultural crisis which connects the 'cry of the earth' and the 'cry of the poor' and negatively affects the principle of the common good for those living now and for future generations.

### I Environmental, Economic and Social Ecology

*It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected*

Pope Francis calls for a broader vision of reality (138) where nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live (139). We must see the reasons behind pollution and environmental destruction as *the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality* (139). Therefore, comprehensive solutions are needed, as we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis, which is both social and environmental (139). Whole ecosystems must be taken into

account, not only to determine how they should be used, but because *they have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness* (140). Ecosystems allow us to exist on earth as they *interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways* (140). When we speak of sustainable living, this must all be taken into account. The protection of the environment, therefore, cannot be isolated from forms of economic growth; *the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment* (141). We depend on the effectiveness of the institutions in our societies which have developed to help regulate human relationships by combating *injustice, violence and loss of freedom* (142) as far as they are able, however, *lack of respect for legislation and regulation dealing with the environment* (142) is common, even when such laws are clear.



*The whole is greater than the part. Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment (142)*

## **II Cultural Ecology**

*Ecology also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense*

Together with the patrimony of nature, there is also an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony which is likewise under threat (143). When solutions are formulated for environmental problems, we must take into account local culture: a living, dynamic and participatory present reality (143). Cultural heritage, which belongs to all humanity, can be overlooked when a consumerist vision of human beings (is) encouraged by the mechanisms of today's globalised economy (144). When the rights of peoples and cultures are not respected, merely technical solutions run the risk of addressing symptoms and not the more serious underlying problems (144). When the environment is exploited, local communities can be deprived of their livelihood and their sense of the meaning of life and community (145) can be lost.

Regarding this, it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions (146), since their lands are a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values (146). Large agricultural and mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture (146) create pressure on indigenous people to abandon their homelands which are best cared for by them.

## **III Ecology Of Daily Life**

*The interrelationship between living space and human behaviour*

*In our rooms, our homes, our workplaces and neighbourhoods, we use our environment as a way of expressing our identity (147). The negative effects of limitations to our environment are often mitigated through strong social connections, kindness and friendliness; despite the hardships of those rendered poor, the beautiful human ecology of solidarity and belonging (148) can be found even in undesirable environments. In this way, any place can turn from being a hell on earth into the setting for a dignified life (148) people can experience community, despite the fact that overcrowding and the problems associated*



with it can create anti-social behaviour. Pope Francis says: *I wish to insist that love always proves more powerful* (149). Those who design the spaces and areas in which we live must be consultative, taking into account the preferences of the people who will inhabit these spaces and *people's quality of life, their adaptation to the environment, encounter and mutual assistance* (150). Good urban and rural planning interventions will *increase our sense of belonging* (151) and some spaces should always remain untouched and *protected from constant changes brought by human intervention* (151). Adequate housing, too, is a major issue for human ecology (152), as is transportation; more and more cars increase congestion and pollution, and the infrastructure needed to cope with this spoils the landscape. Public transportation systems should be prioritised as people in many cities are forced to *put up with undignified conditions due to crowding, inconvenience, infrequent service and lack of safety* (153). The *chaotic realities that people have to endure in city life* (154) and the *conditions of servitude* (154) which can exist in rural areas are often at odds with human rights and dignity. Another reality of human ecology is the *relationship between human life and the moral law* (155) by which we accept and care for

our bodies and *the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment* (155).

#### **IV The Principle of the Common Good** *Each person has basic and inalienable rights*

Quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pope reminds us that *the common good is the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment* (156). Firstly, this principle calls for the welfare of society as a whole—*social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice* (157).

Following this, it supports the flourishing of distinct groups within it (such as the family), as well as respect for each person. In today's world, where *growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable* (158), our convictions as believers should demonstrate that the principle of the common good becomes a *summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters* (158).



## V Justice Between Generations

*When we think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently*

Our global economic and climate crises reveal the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny (159) and the urgent need for intergenerational solidarity (159). Pope Francis includes here the 2003 call of the Portuguese Bishops' Conference: *The environment...is on loan to each generation* (159) as a reminder of the broader vision of an integral ecology. It is only in struggling with the deeper issues of the meaning and value of the world, of our goals and of our social realities that our ecological efforts will bear fruit. *The issue of leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is...up to us (and) is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn* (160). Our planet's capacity has been stretched to the limit; *our contemporary lifestyle is unsustainable* (161). Many of the problems we face are *connected with today's self-centred culture of instant gratification* (162). Our wasteful and impulsive consumption today affects the ability of the next generation to build dignified lives of their own and prevents us from considering those who are excluded from development.

*Reflection, discussion and sharing:*

1. Solutions to our global crisis require dialogue between different groups of differing opinions. How do I model respectful dialogue when speaking with people whose opinions differ from mine?
2. In what ways do I affirm and dignify the identity of others? How does this reflect my approach to the environment?
3. In what ways has the love shown to me by others been powerful and transforming for me? How can I practise such a love in my family/community?
4. Identify some practical ways you can live a more integral life with those in your family/community—ways which make us less self-centred and more connected with others so that we are not just individuals living under one roof.
5. Reflect on your own option for the poor—a special concern that models the love of the Heart of Jesus for those rendered poor and those who suffer. In what ways is this concern revealed in your daily life, prayer and actions?



## CHAPTER FIVE LINES OF APPROACH AND ACTION

In this chapter Pope Francis outlines the major paths of dialogue which can help us escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us (163).

### I Dialogue on the Environment in the International Community

*The common good must be placed over all other interests when dialogue occurs*

While the conviction that our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home (164) is slowly growing, solutions to our environmental and social problems still elude us. A global consensus is essential for confronting deeper problems

*There is reason to hope that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities (165)*

(164). For example, until greater progress is made in developing widely accessible sources of renewable energy (165), a global transition is unlikely to take place. While some governments and businesses have been slow to respond to global challenges, there have been a variety of committed and generous civic responses (165), however, effective global agreements on the environment (166) are yet to be established, despite World Summits that are intended to do this. Pope Francis cites several of these gatherings, reminding us that while such meetings are a real step forward (167), the praiseworthy principles they proclaim still await an efficient and flexible means of practical implementation (167). He states that reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most (169), and that neglecting to confront our current crisis is a failure of conscience and responsibility (169). We are reminded again in this section of the encyclical that it is the poor who will end up paying the price (170). It is radical change that is called for, not strategies such as buying and selling "carbon credits" which simply permit the continuing scandal of maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors (171). It is sadly



*The same mindset which stands in the way of making radical decisions to reverse the trend of global warming also stands in the way of achieving the goal of eliminating poverty (175)*

ironic that the costs of allowing *developing countries access to technology transfer, technical assistance and financial resources* (172) is low in comparison to the *risks of climate change* (172).

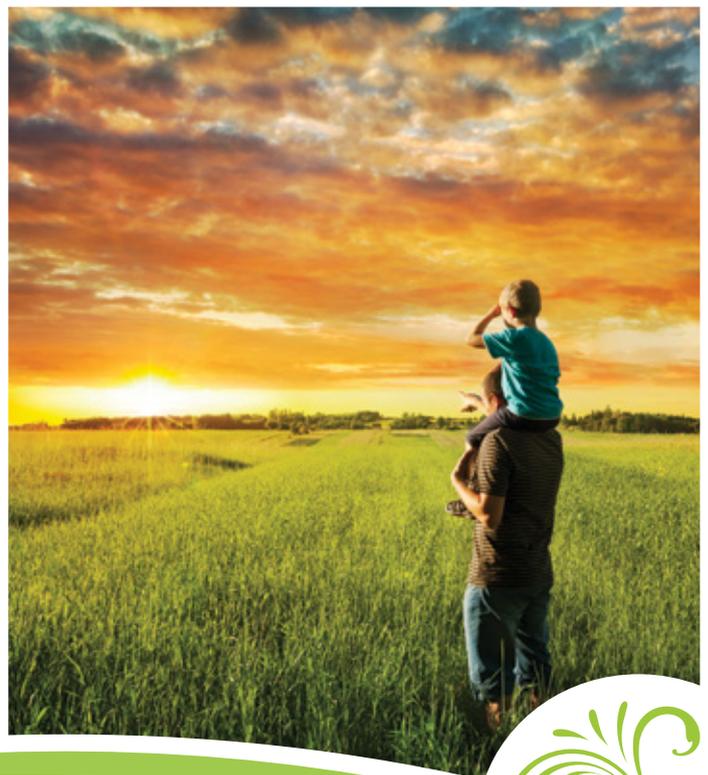
The Pope calls for *enforceable international agreements* (173) which respect the sovereignty of all states, rather than the fragmented and powerless regulatory mechanisms which exist at present, for instance in the area of *marine waste and the protection of the open seas* (174). This section ends with a plea for *stronger and more efficiently organised international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments, and empowered to impose sanctions* (175), recalling the social teaching of the Church as affirmed by Benedict XVI and, before him, Blessed John XXIII in their respective arguments for *a true world political authority* (175) and a growth in the importance of *diplomacy...which can anticipate serious problems affecting us all* (175).

## **II Dialogue for New National and Local Policies**

*What is needed is a greater sense of responsibility, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land*

Questions regarding environmental and economic issues *call for greater attention to policies on the national and local levels* (176). It is not good enough for governments and institutions *simply to avoid bad practice* (177); new solutions, initiatives and creativity must be actively promoted. Unfortunately, *the myopia of power politics delays the inclusion of a far-sighted environmental agenda* (178) because anything that affects levels of consumption could lead to risks regarding foreign investment, and governments are reluctant to *upset the public* (178). Holding onto positions of power, however, is ineffective and counterproductive in terms of upholding *high principles and the long-term common good* (178). In many places it is local individuals and groups which are

making a difference, instilling a greater sense of *responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land* (179). More and more people are becoming concerned about what they are leaving behind for their children and grandchildren, and *these values are deeply rooted in indigenous peoples* (179). The Pope reminds us that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for countries and regions but, *at the same time, on the national and local levels, much still needs to be done, such as promoting ways of conserving energy* (180) where production, raw materials, transport, building, maintenance, energy consumption, recycling, the protection of species and agriculture are concerned. In defending and preserving local producers and ecosystems, he urgently pleads, *"Truly, much can be done!"* (180) Working against this are constant changes to governments, because in the case for lasting change, *continuity is essential* (181). For this reason he urges us to maintain pressure on our political representatives *to take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail...and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility* (181).



### III Dialogue and Transparency in Decision-Making

*Local populations should have a special place at the table*

When business projects and ventures are being assessed, a free exchange of views (182) must occur and must be free of all economic or political pressure (183) so that the effects on people's lives and health are taken into account from the planning stages; these concerns must transcend immediate economic interest (183). In this way we will stop thinking in terms of "interventions" to save the environment in favour of policies developed and debated by all interested parties...because honesty and truth (183) will be at the heart of discussion and debate.

Questions that promote genuine integral development (185) should be asked: What will it accomplish?...For whom? What are the risks? What are the costs? Who will pay for these costs and how? (185) It must not be profit alone that determines innovation. Pope Francis recalls The Rio Declaration of 1992 which highlighted the precautionary principle (186) that should protect the environment from damage where projects cannot be proved safe. Of course, this does not mean that all development and innovation should be rejected, but it does mean

*Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? (190)*

that profit cannot be the sole criterion to be taken into account (187). Achieving a broad consensus about environmental issues between interested parties is not easy, and the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics (188), however, the Pope is concerned to encourage an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good (188).

### IV Politics and Economy in Dialogue for Human Fulfilment

*There is an urgent need for politics and economics to serve human life*

When our world financial systems have absolute power, we see that this gives rise to new crises after a slow, costly and only apparent recovery (189). We have missed the opportunity provided by the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 to reassess the outdated criteria which continue to rule the world (189), and develop new ways



of doing things. Products continue to have value that does not reflect their real worth, *with unnecessary impact on the environment and with negative results on regional economies* (189). We cannot leave the health of the environment to the whims and greed of market forces; these issues will not be solved *simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals* (190). Natural cycles, biodiversity and complex ecosystems, the meaning and value of things for people, for cultures and for those in need pale into insignificance *when profits alone count* (190). Far from hindering progress, reflecting critically on our present levels of production and consumption *can at times give rise to another form of progress and development* (191), with no detrimental effects on the environment and with economic benefits as well. *Productive diversification offers the fullest possibilities to human ingenuity to create and innovate, while at the same time protecting the environment and creating more sources of employment* (192). Changing the ways we produce and develop must be done before it is too late; *we know how unsustainable is the behaviour of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity* (193). Pope Francis joins Benedict XVI in asking that *technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy*

*consumption and improving its efficiency* (193). Half-hearted and stop-gap measures to do this will not prevent disaster: *it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress* (194), because any development that leaves the world worse off cannot really be considered progress. *If people's quality of life actually diminishes by the deterioration of the environment, the low quality of food or the depletion of resources* (194), we are misunderstanding the whole concept of the economy. What about politics? Sadly, *it is the case that some economic sectors exercise more power than states themselves* (196). There is no justification for economics without politics because we must not leave behind those who are not powerful and who also deserve life's opportunities for inclusion and participation. *What is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis* (197) we face. Corruption can allow business groups to come forward *in the guise of benefactors* (197) who believe that they are above the law and this can lead to major problems for communities.

Pope Francis calls for real political change, not *superficial ecological considerations* (197) by which politicians try to avoid taking up this challenge. The desire for financial gain or an increase of power often cause politics and the



economy to blame each other when it comes to poverty and environmental degradation (198). Developments and efforts undertaken for the common good can be forgotten, and the last thing either party is concerned about is caring for the environment and protecting those who are most vulnerable (198).

### **V Religions in Dialogue with Science** *Empirical science cannot provide a complete explanation of life, the interplay of all creatures and the whole of reality*

Keeping our sights set on living together harmoniously will prevent humanity from losing its compass, and this is what should underpin any technical solution which science claims to offer (200). Our faith and our actions must not contradict each other. Believers need to be encouraged to be ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace (200). In the past we have not always cared for creation due to our lack of protection and preservation and our cultural limitations down through the centuries, yet by constantly returning to their sources, religions will be better equipped to respond to today's needs (200). Dialogue between religions is desperately needed for the

sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity (201). In the same way, dialogue between areas of the sciences is important too, because the gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good (201).

### *Reflection, discussion and sharing:*

1. Reflect on the ways you share in our common humanity. How does this challenge individual selfishness?
2. Are there ways in which my 'deep love for the land' can be nourished? What could I do as an individual and/or as part of a community/family to help develop and grow such a love?
3. Reflect on and share about what Pope Francis means when he says that the problem requires change and not just solutions.
4. How do my convictions about love, justice and peace and the heart spirituality I profess affect my choices about caring for creation?



## CHAPTER SIX

### Ecological Education and Spirituality

In this chapter Pope Francis highlights the great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge for all people to change their perceptions of our common origins and mutual belonging.

#### I Towards A New Lifestyle

##### *We live in a world of needless buying and spending*

The world is awash with consumerism, and people can come to believe *they are free as long as they have the supposed freedom to consume* (203). It is, however, those who *wield economic and financial power* (203) who have freedom. This *obsession with a consumerist lifestyle* (204) sows the seeds of unrest arising from a terrible selfishness. *The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. It becomes almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality* (204) and in this environment, concern for the common good can disappear, leading to *dangerous violence and mutual destruction* (204). We must, however, still have hope that people can rise above this conditioning and *embark on new paths to freedom* (205). Our human dignity comes from responding to God's grace in our hearts; this is stronger than any human-made system. We have the power to pressure governments and businesses and all who wield social power into changing the ways they operate and finding new ways of engaging. For example, *purchasing is always a moral—and not simply economic—act* (206). The current state of the world's environment means we must reflect on the ways we live and our financial engagement with the world around us. We are all capable of care; *disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centredness...are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment* (208).

## II Educating for the Covenant Between Humanity and the Environment

### *A passionate concern for the protection of our world comes about through education*

We know that simply buying more and having more possessions does not lead to deep happiness and meaning, yet consumerist habits are hard to break. We are faced with an *educational challenge* (209), and environmental education is the answer. What is needed more than ever are *educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care* (210) in order to pierce through the myth of consumerism. In this way we can all discover ways of acting that will positively 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* (211). When done for the right reasons, these are *acts of love* (211).

*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* (207).



Pope Francis reminds us that it is wrong to think that efforts like these, seemingly simple acts, will not change the world because what they do is *call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread* (212), and society benefits when lives are lived more fully. He stresses that ecological education takes place in a variety of settings: *at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere* (213), citing the family in particular as the place where we are taught to *create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings* (213). It is not only in social and political groups that ecological awareness can be raised; *the Church and all Christian communities have an important part to play in ecological education* (214), for it is there that *simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world* (214) can be deeply nurtured so that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor is more readily heard. Education is truly at the heart of maintaining a healthy environment because it raises awareness of the consequences of our actions, and our failure to act, and can be a catalyst for changes in mindset that can change behaviour; when we learn to see beauty, we learn to reject what exploits and destroys it.

### III ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

#### *Our encounter with Jesus Christ must lead us to protect creation*

In this section Pope Francis offers *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* (216). Unfortunately, there are Christian people who ridicule environmental concerns, and others who remain passive, choosing not to alter their behaviour in any meaningful way. In reality, the Christian way is *to be protectors of God's handiwork (which is) essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience* (217). We must remember, however, that changing the world cannot be achieved by individual means alone; *the ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion* (219). Changes in attitudes are called for *which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness* (220). We are linked to creation and to all beings through the bonds created by God: *each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us* (221), as Saint Francis taught in his example of *sublime fraternity* (221).



*An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence must be found, uncovered* (225)

## IV Joy and Peace

### We are speaking of an attitude of the heart

In living a true Christian spirituality, a contemplative lifestyle free from the bonds of consumerism, will teach us that living in moderation makes us happy: that *less is more* (222), and that *a constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment* (222). In this way we can live more simply and sustainably, and this can be liberating as it allows us to live life to the full, without worrying about what we do not have. The environmental imbalances which are overtaking the earth do not just concern *the integrity of ecosystems*. We have to dare to speak of *the integrity of human life* (224). Peace within ourselves is necessary for this integrity, as it is *closely related to care for ecology and for the common good* (225) because it is reflected in a *balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder* (225). In looking at the rich young man with love, Jesus shows us he was *completely present to everyone and everything* (226). This is how we can overcome whatever makes us anxious, *superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumers* (226). A simple expression of this

attitude is when we stop and give thanks to God before and after meals (227).

## V Civic and Political Love

### We are all sisters and brothers, bound by a universal fraternity

We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it (229). Like Saint Therese of Lisieux, we are invited to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any gesture which sows peace and friendship (230). This is part of integral ecology, since over-consumption is the same as mistreating all forms of life. The key to authentic development is social love—a civilisation of love (231), which is a world which is more worthy of the human person (231) because it operates with a culture of care (231) and includes, as part of our spirituality, the realisation that God is calling us to become involved in the social dynamics which make the world a better place. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity (232).



## VI Sacramental Signs and the Celebration of Rest

*The ideal is to discover God in all things*

Pope Francis quotes the spiritual writer, Ali al-Khawas, who reminds us that *there is a mystical meaning to found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face* (233). When we take time for contemplation we are more able to feel the grace of God, both within and in the world around us. We are also reminded in this section of the teaching of St John of the Cross about the way in which *the mystic experiences the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that all things are God* (234). As birdsong provides delight, and rivers refresh, so is God, the Beloved, to us. In the same way, the sacramental materials of *water, oil, fire and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated into our act of praise* (235). As Christians we are not to reject the material world, because it is *united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation* (235). For us, the Eucharist is a profound expression of the closeness of God and God's unity with humans and all of nature. God is intimately present here in a universal

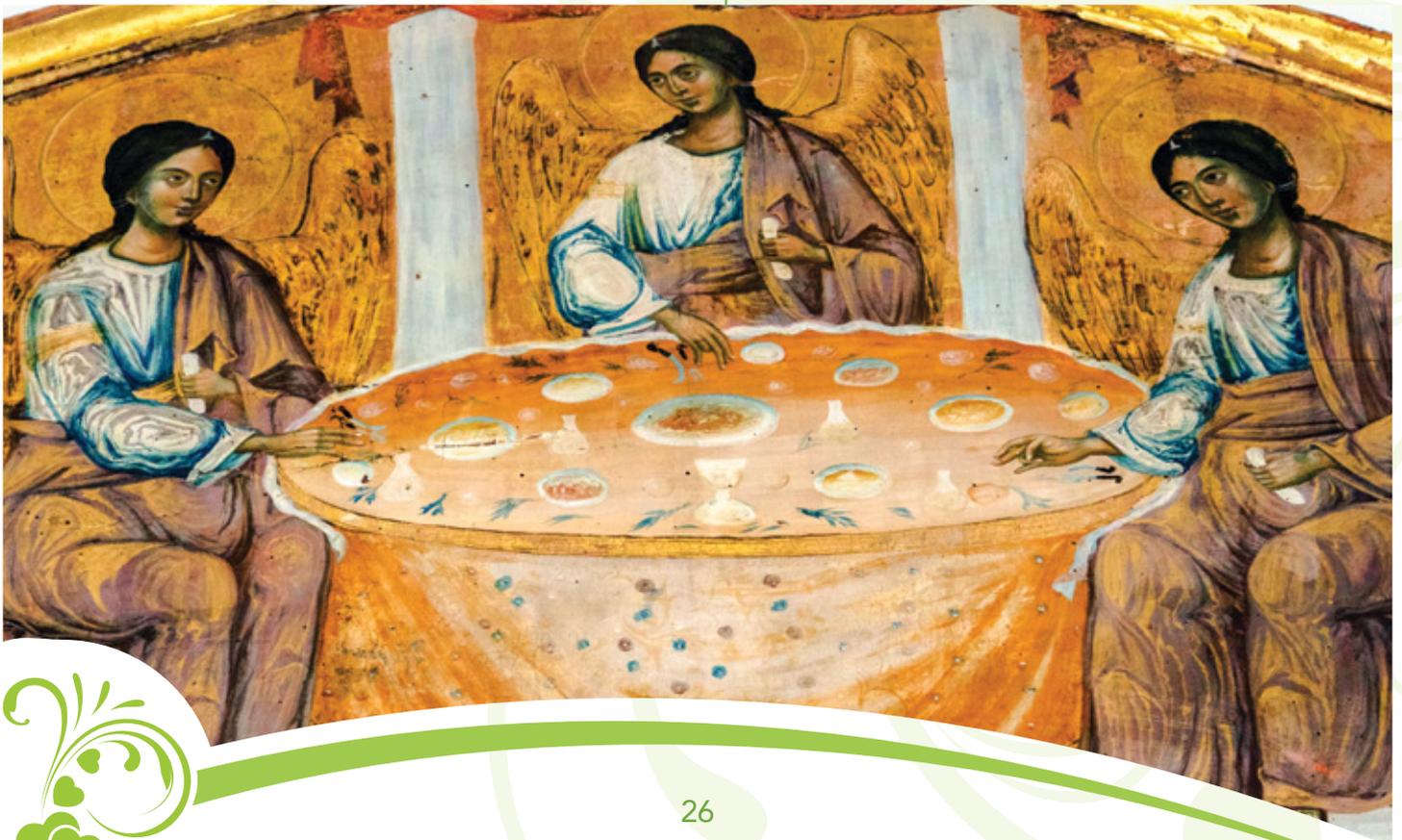
or cosmic way. Heaven and earth are joined in this act, providing a powerful motivation for our work to save the environment of the earth. When we rest on a Sunday, *our participation in the Eucharist has special importance* (237): rest can help us to be renewed and more sensitive to others and their rights and needs, which *motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor* (237).

## VII The Trinity and the Relationship Between Creatures

*Everything is interconnected*

The Trinity is the community of love from which creation flows. *When we contemplate the beauty of nature, we also praise the Trinity* (238), and when we practise self-giving love in our daily lives, we live within the Trinity and bear within ourselves the same love shared there. The world is, therefore, *a web of relationships* (240) in which we humans are all moving towards God. The more we enter into relationships, the more we live in communion with God.

*God calls us to generous commitment...his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward* (245)



## VIII Queen of All Creation

*Just as her heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of this world laid waste by human power*

Now with the Risen Jesus, Mary treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart, and understands the meaning of all things (241). We ask her, therefore, to help us see the world with the eyes of wisdom (241). At Mary's side in the Holy Family of Nazareth is Saint Joseph—carer and defender of Mary and Jesus, just, strong and hard-working, and also a man of great tenderness (242) who served with love and humility. Joseph too can teach us how to show care; he can inspire us to work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us (242).

## IX Beyond The Sun

*Praise be to him!*

We are all journeying toward our final rest in eternity where, face to face with God's infinite beauty, we will be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe (243) and each, transfigured, will take their rightful place. In the meantime, we come together

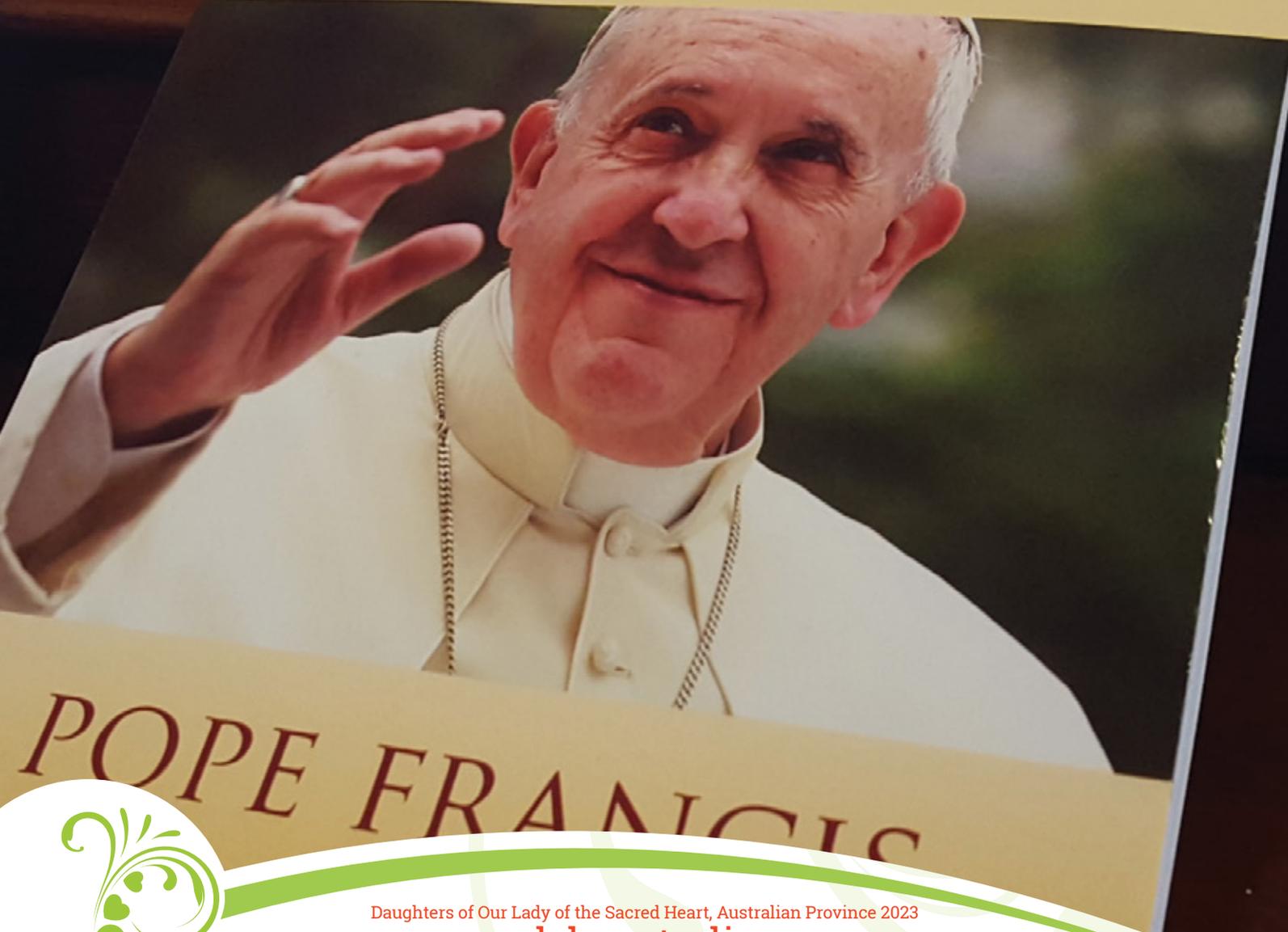
to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us (244). Our journey is one in union with all creatures: let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope (244).

### *Reflection, discussion and sharing:*

1. How can I turn away from a throwaway culture and instead stand in solidarity with creation and the poor through individual and family or communal acts of love?
2. What kind of conversations about lasting change are possible for my family or community, and how can I bring them about?
3. How can I build into my daily life the practice of 'looking at people with love' in order to be more present and less impulsive?
4. Reflect on the ways a 'culture of care' may be both present and absent in your family or community. Are there things I can do to better promote a 'culture of care' within and beyond my immediate circle?



*LAUDATO SI'*  
ON CARE FOR  
OUR COMMON HOME



Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Australian Province 2023

[www.olshaustralia.org.au](http://www.olshaustralia.org.au)