

Our apostolic work in the light of the teaching of the Church,

LAUDATO SI. (Rome 24 May 2015)

Laudato Si: “On Care for our Common Home”

On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si') is the new appeal from Pope Francis addressed to "every person living on this planet" for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Pope Francis calls the Church and the world to acknowledge the urgency of our environmental challenges and to join him in embarking on a new path. This encyclical is written with both hope and resolve, looking to our common future with candor and humility.

The goal of Laudato Si: “Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (Laudato Si no. 19)

Note: “What is happening in the world is a continuous acceleration of changing that affect humanity and planet. Change is something desirable, yet it becomes a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity” (Laudato Si. No. 18)

Additional note from Laborem Exercens on work and its disadvantages: Work as perennial (constantly occurring) and fundamental, is always relevant and constantly demands renewal attention, and decisive witness. Because fresh questions and problems are always arising, there are always fresh hopes, but also fresh fears and threats in the sense that sometimes work contains the unceasing measure of human toil and suffering and also the harm and injustice which penetrate deeply into social life within individual nations and on the international level. (Laborem Exercens no 1, par. 2)



“Sometimes, work contains the unceasing measure of human toil and suffering.....” (LE no 1, paragraph 2).

Some important points of the Laudato Si.

1. “It is a revision of the teaching of the Catholic Church. Now with this new papacy in the twenty-first century we are witnessing a break with the **theology of dominion** in favour of a **theology of caring and harmony**”. (Tablet 20 June 2015, p. 4)

2. Theology of dominion (Gen 1: 28) causes destruction of environments.

"The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. This allows us to respond to the charge that, Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man dominion" over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church.

"(Laudato Si no 67.):



"Unbridled exploitation of nature" by the big foreign company in Papua, Indonesia.

"Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth, justifies absolute domination over other creatures. The biblical texts are to be read in their context. With appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to "till and keep" the garden of the world (Cf Gen 2:15, Oxford annotated Bible).

"Tilling" refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while "keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human being and nature. Each community can, take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has a duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. "The earth is the Lord's" (Ps 24: 1), to him belongs "the earth with that is within it" (Dt 10:14). Thus God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: "The land shall be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev. 25:23). (Laudato Si no. 67)

3. Towards a theology of cultivating and caring. (Gen 2:15).

- "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden *to work it and take care of it*" (Gen 2: 15, Holy Bible, New International Version.)
- "Yahwe God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden *to cultivate and take care of it*" (Gen 2:15, The New Jerusalem Bible).
- "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden *to till it and keep it.*" (Gen 2:15, Oxford annotated Bible)

"As a verb, the word "care" means to be concerned, have a preference, show an inclination, exhibit affection; as a noun, it means concern, maintenance and supervision. Care is an essential human capacity, a virtue requiring action; it is essential to the Beatitudes', but it is easily forgotten or abandoned in favour of expediency.

Rooted in deep Christian humanism, the sort of caring that fed Francis of Assisi is also inspiring pope Francis. Laudato Si: *“On the care of our common home is an expression of love for humanity”* and he urges every Catholic to expand his or her understanding of what it means to love our neighbours.

However, Laudato Si is more important for what it says about caring for creation as Christian virtue than on emphasis on the need to simply protect”. (the Tablet June 10, 2015 p. 4). Note, virtue: behavior that shows high moral standard; goodness. (Oxford Dict.)

Theology of cultivating/tilling: “Each community can take the bounty of the whatever it needs for subsistence.....but it also has a duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations “. (Laudato Si no. 67, p. 30)

Towards a theology of caring. The response of St. Francis to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation, for to him each and every creature was a sister or brother united to him by bond of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exist. Such a conviction cannot be written off as naïve romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behaviour.....

“If we feel intimately united with all that exist, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of ascetism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn a reality into an object simply to be used and controlled”. (Laudato Si no. 11).

4. “Pope Francis, places emphasis on the poor as those who suffer most, in this case from the inequality of natural resource exploitation of natural disasters brought on by climate change”. (the TABLET, June 10, 2015, p.4) See: (Laudato Si Chapter V: Global inequality.)

“The deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet. Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on environment are suffered by the poorest”. (Laudato Si no 48).



The warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries, has a repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, especially Africa where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming. (Laudato Si no. 51)

5. Spirituality of work: Work as a sharing in the Activity of the Creator. (Laborem Excercern no. 24-25)

This description of creation, which we find in the very first chapter of the Book of Genesis, is also in a sense the first "gospel of work". For it shows what the dignity of work consists of: it teaches that man ought to imitate God, his Creator, in working, because man alone has the unique characteristic of likeness to God.

Awareness that man's work is a participation in God's activity ought to permeate, as the Council teaches, even "the most ordinary everyday activities. For, while providing the substance of life for themselves and their families, men and women are performing their activities in a way which appropriately benefits society.

3.1. Together with our obligation to use the earth's goods responsibly, we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes; by their mere existence, they bless him and give him glory" (Catechism of the Catholic Church /CCC no. 2416), and indeed "The Lord rejoice in all his works" (Laudato Si no. 69, quote from Ps 104:31). See additional reference: Creatures are "SPARKS of the DIVINE", By Drew Leder, Sorin Book 2004, 253 pages).



"Each creature, willed in its own being, reflect in its own way, a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness.....
....." (Laudato Si no. 69, Catechism of the Cath. Church/CCC no. 339)

"Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection..... Each of the creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature". (Laudato Si no. 69), (CCC no. 339).



"Each community can take the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence..... "(L. Si no.67, p. 30)

We are called to recognise that other living beings have a of their own in God's eyes: by their mere existence they bless him, and give him glory and indeed "the Lord rejoice in all his works" (Ps 104: 31).(Laudato Si : 69)

By virtue of our unique dignity and our gift of intelligence, we are called to respect creation and its inherent laws, for “the Lord by wisdom founded the earth” (Prov. 3:19), Laudato Si no 69)



“ Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection.....”(Laudato Si no. 69, CCC 339)

6. Daily implementation of caring creatures as an expression of human virtue

Taking responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the law of nature and the delicate *equilibria*, (equilibria: the force that makes balance/harmony) between the creature of this world. The laws found in the Bible dwell on relationships, not only among individuals but also with other living beings. (Laudato Si no. 68).

6.1. “If you come across a bird’s nest beside the road either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young”. (Laudato Si no. 68, quote from Dt. 22: 6.)

On another occasion, while riding the circuit in Illinois, Lincoln was missed by his fellow-lawyers. Joining them a few minutes later, he explained that he had caught two young birds which the wind had blown from their nest. " I could not have slept " he said, "unless I had restored those creatures to their mother." (John Wesley Hill, Abraham Lincoln, Man of God, G.P. Putnam’s Sons New York,1924, p. 372)

6.2. If your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him get it to its feet (Laudato Si no 68, quote from Dt. 22:4).

“One day, when, as a country lawyer accompanied by his friends he was going over the circuit, he got down from his horse in a heavy storm and soiled his boots and clothing in the deep mud, released a pig that had become painfully entangled in a fence. When his companions laughed at him for his kindly interest in the animal, Lincoln answered: "I could not stand the look in that pig’s eyes as we rode past; it seemed to say to me: There goes my last chance." (Abraham Lincoln, Man of God p. 372)

6.3. “Once, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty.” (Laudato Si no. 12)

6.4. One day Bro. Thomas Chikoti entered the gate of Bethel community. When he saw a flower-plant pot fading and the soil was dry, he stopped, got off from the car, looking for small container, took water from the

tap to water the plant pot. He said: “Brother your flower plant is crying..... (Said Thomas Chikoti to me, Bro. Martin Dariyo)

6.5. “These small acts cannot be written off as naïve romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behavior”. (Laudato Si no. 11).

“If these small gestures sound insignificant, consider an anecdote from the first meeting in the early 1960s between the Catholic monk Thomas Merton and the Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh. A middle-aged Merton asked Nhat Hanh what he had learned in his first year in the monastery. Expecting some profound insight, Merton was shocked by the simplicity and practicality of the younger man: “To open and close doors quietly,’ he was told. This is a gentleness that carries through into other aspects of his life”. (The TABLET, June 10, 2015, pp. 4-5.

“A man who opens and closes doors is on his way to mastering the arts of caring, loving, humility and kindness; he will feel kinship with what is around him, rather than seeking to dominate it. A Christian education does not usually teach us to walk gingerly, plant flowers or think about the life of the tree that you are cutting for firewood-or at least, not yet. Pope Francis is about change that. Just watch: years from now LAUDATO SI will mark the turning point.”. (The TABLET, June 10, 2015, pp. 4-5)

7. Foundation of expecting a new lifestyle .

“Human beings while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves. Choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us”. (Laudato Si no. 205) see also no. 208

8. Education for the Covenant between humanity and the environment.

“An awareness of the gravity of today’s cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits; The aim of awareness is to be able to give meaning and joy to the human heart. Young have new ecological sensitivity and generous spirit but are living in an environment of extreme consumerism. This is the challenge in education.” (Laudato Si, no. 209)

Broader goals in environmental education.

- Critic of the “myths” of modernity grounded in utilitarian mindset: individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism etc.
- Establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures and with God. (Laudato Si no 210)
- “So far this education, aimed at creating an “ecological citizenship” is at times limited to providing information, and fails to instill good habits. It need to cultivate sound virtue to make a selfless ecological commitment. It gives some small sample of good deed e.g. (Laudato Si no. 211).

1. “A person who could afford to spend and consume more.... but regularly uses less heating and wears

warmer cloths, show the kind of convictions and attitudes which help to protect the environment.
2. There is nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyles.

3. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting directly and significantly affect the world around us such as:

3.1. Avoiding the use of plastic and paper, 3.2. reducing water consumption, 3.4. separating refuse, 3.5. cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, 3.6. showing care for other living beings, 3.7. using public transport or car-pooling, 3.8. planting trees, 3.9. turning off unnecessary lights or any number of other practices. All of these, reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for right reasons, can bring an act of love which express our own dignity. " (Laudato Si, no. 211).



"Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect our world around us such as turn of unnecessary lights, planting trees..." (Laudato Si. No. 211)

10. "The importance of these small efforts:

- they are going to change the world,
- they will benefit society, often unknown to us,
- they call forth goodness which, although unseen, inevitably to spread,
- such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem,
- they can enable us to live more fully,
- help us to feel that life on earth is worthwhile" . (Laudato Si no. 212)

11. "Place to implement ecological education:

At school, in the family, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere". (Laudato Si no. 213)

"All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education. It is my hope that our seminaries and houses of formation will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment." (Laudato Si no. 214)

12. "Emphasis is on ecological education in the family, because in the family:

- is the heart of culture of life,
- in the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life,
- we are taught the proper use of things, order, cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem, care for all creatures,
- in the family we receive an integral education that help us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity, we learn asking without demanding,
- to say thank you as an expression of gratitude,
- to control our aggressively and greed." (Laudato Si no. 214)

13. "Ecological education and Arts:

- improvement of a good aesthetic education and maintenance of a healthy environment,
- to see and appreciate beauty and learn to reject self-interest pragmatism,
- the importance to develop sense of beauty to avoid treating everything as an object to be used and to be abused,
- to change to change the mindset to influence our behavior. Education will be inadequate and ineffective without promoting a new way of thinking about human being, life, society and relationship with nature." (Laudato Si, no 215).

Implementation of Laudato Si in the FIC Congregation.

Implementation Plan of General Chapter of Brothers FIC, 2018 – 2024. It is stated in the proposal no.28 B as follows:

CARE OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

The Brothers FIC General Chapter 2018 requests the new General Council to foster awareness of and the care for our environment both by incentives regards our own brothers and by stimulating the production and use of educational materials in our apostolate – in the spirit of the encyclical Laudato Si of Pope Francis.

Elucidation: 1. It is encouraging that in many places and in numerous groups of people there is growing awareness of the need to care for our "common home", as Pope Francis calls the world in which we live – and that this care translates in a variety of ways of practical acting and regulations. (See Laudato Si. No. 210).

2. The Laudato Si like many other sources, makes clear that there is strong connection between lack of care of environment and poverty, both material and psychological/spiritual relational. Spoiling precious resources

(energy, water, air, natural products like trees, minerals, etc.) cause a serious dis-balance in our societies, economically and socially.

3. We, brothers FIC, want to have a preferential love for the poor. This is once again stressed by the Apostolic Congress 2018. Taking care of our own environment and helping others to do the same is a real and structural contribution to the well being of the underprivileged. It is a “modern way” of “opting for the poor”.

4. Care for our environment must begin by a deep awareness of both the preciousness and the limitation of all that is given to us by our Creator. In chapter 6 of Laudato Si, Pope Francis pleads for the development of an ecological spirituality. We as educators and formators are called to contribute to the growth of this spirituality, both in our lives and in the lives of those with whom and for whom we give the best of ourselves.

5. Support by the General Council to all effort made in our provinces is a concrete and up to date contribution to our time and circumstances. It shows that we understand the signs of the time.

Laudato Si and Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC).

It is closely related to CCC, especially on the topic of The Visible World, CCC nos. 337-354, Respect for the integrity of creation, nos: 2415-2418.

God wills the interdependence of creatures. “The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.” (CCC, no. 340). There is solidarity among the Creatures, arising from the fact that all have the same Creator and are all ordered to his glory.

Prayer of St. Francis Assisi on environment

May you be praised, O Lord, in all your creatures, especially brother sun, by whom you give light for the day.

He is beautiful, radiating great splendor, and offering us a symbol of you, the Most High.....

May you be praised my Lord for sister water, who is very useful and humble, precious and chaste....

May you be praised, my Lord, for sister earth, our mother,

Who bears and feeds us, and produces the variety of fruits and dappled flowers and grasses.....

Praise and bless my Lord,

Give thanks and serve him in all humility. (Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, CCC no.344.)

A Christian prayer in union with creation.

Father we praise you with all your creatures. They came forth from your all powerful hand, they are yours, fill with your presence and your tender love. Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus, through you all things were made. You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother, you became part of this earth, and you gazed upon this world with human eyes. Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory. Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light you guide this world towards the Father’s love and accompany creation as it groans in travail. You also dwell in our hearts and you inspire us to do what is good. Praise be to you!

Triune God, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of you. Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being that you have made. Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live. The poor and the earth are crying out. O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to [protect all life, to prepare for a better future, for the coming of your Kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty. Praise be to you !, Amen. (Pope Francis, Laudato Si no 246)

Note: the underlined sentences are by me, Martin Dariyo.

My experience: I am a son of a peasant farmer in my village. We live from the fruits of the earth. Our survival depended on farming activities. I used to keep goats and cows, plucking grass everyday, done after schooling. There was no grazing place at all. Gardening and planting trees (including cutting trees for firewood) were our main activities. When I was in Mansa Zambia, (1985-1989) I joined the activities of planting trees, organized by Rev. Bro. John Brunott FIC. It was enjoyable activities as there was enough land to cultivate. Our plot in Java island was simply too small!. At Montfort TTC in Malawi (1990-2005) I and Mr. Mwazulama, a lecturer of Montfort TTC, initiated activities of planting trees. We managed to set up a nursery that once produced 23 thousands of seedlings, planted around Montfort TTC. From 2009 we built up a new Secondary, and together with the headmaster and some teachers, beautifying school compound by planting flowers and trees. When in 2015 we were introduced the "LAUDATO SI", it is a moral support for what I have been doing and living since my childhood. Of course, now we see this point from a different angle: we "spiritualize" and "digest" these activities by using the words such as: "Theology of caring!", "Modern way of opting for the poor"!, "Ecological education and spirituality", "integral ecology", "the Gospel of creation" etc..etc.

Mzedi, May 2019

On behalf of formators FIC Malawi.

Bro. Martinus Dariyo.

