



Reflection Paper: November 2016

“On the Care of our Common Home”

Preparation for the AIC Assembly of Delegates (March 2017)

**400 years with Saint Vincent
towards the future in our Common Home**



**Some reflections of Pope Francis based on his encyclical letter,
LAUDATO SI (Part One)**

N.B. This paper invites us to engage in a process of internalization.

We propose using the method of *Lectio Divina*

1. Read this presentation.
2. Meditate (what is this reflection saying to me; repeat the phrase that you find most significant).
3. Prayer (what is this reflection inviting me to say to God; what have I heard God saying to me: to thank God, to ask some favor from God, to praise God).
4. Commitment (following the example of Vincent de Paul, what specific commitment will I make).

❖ **Prayer: A Prayer for our earth**

*All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.*

Pope Francis (at the end of his encyclical letter)

❖ **Reflections of Pope Francis based on his encyclical letter, Laudato Si**

On June 18th, 2015, the encyclical **Laudato Si** was published. In that document **Pope Francis** makes an urgent plea to humankind to create ecological awareness and to care for the planet as our common home. The document contains 247 paragraphs (six chapters) and concludes with two prayers (one of those prayers is referenced at the beginning of this reflection).

We will highlight some points from the first three chapters of the encyclical:

““Laudato Si, mi Signore” --- Praise be to You, my Lord.” *In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to You, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs”* (Laudato Si, #1).

“This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. 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. This is why the

earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Romans 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Genesis 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air, and we receive life and refreshment from her waters” (Laudato Si, #2).

In **paragraph #14** the Pope refers to the words of the bishops of South Africa who stated: **“Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation”**.

In the **first chapter**, which is entitled, ***What is happening to our common home***, the Pope speaks about pollution and climate change and states that **“the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all”**. He then goes on to say that *“humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption”* (Laudato Si, #23).

The Pope also speaks about the problem of water which is indispensable for human life. In **paragraph #29** he writes: *“One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water related diseases, including those caused by microorganism and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are a significant cause of suffering and of infant mortality”*.

The **second chapter**, entitled, ***The Gospel of Creation***, is divided into the following sections: the light offered by faith, the wisdom of the biblical accounts, the mystery of the universe, the message of each creature in the harmony of creation, a universal communion, the common destination of goods and the gaze of Jesus. When talking about the common destination of goods the Pope states: *“Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since **God created the world for everyone**. Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged”* (Laudato Si, #93).

In chapter three, entitled, ***The human roots of the ecological crisis***, we read in **paragraph #102**: *“Humanity has entered a new era in which our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads. We are the beneficiaries of two centuries of enormous waves of change: steam engines, railways, the telegraph, electricity, automobiles, airplanes, chemical industries, modern medicine, information technology and, more recently, the digital revolution, robotics, biotechnologies and nanotechnologies. It is right to rejoice in these advances and to be excited by the immense possibilities which they continue to open up before us...”*.

This same thought is continued in the following **paragraph (#103)**: *“Technoscience, when well-directed, can produce important means of improving the quality of human life, from useful domestic appliances to great transportation systems, bridges, buildings and public spaces”*.

Then, in **paragraph #104**, the Pope tells us that we should not ignore these technological advances, including knowledge of DNA and nuclear power, which have given humankind a great power over itself and yet there is no assurance that this power will be used wisely: *“We need but think of the nuclear bombs dropped in the middle of the twentieth century or the array of technology which Nazism, Communism and other totalitarian regimes have employed to kill millions of people”*.

❖ **Commitment:**

It is important to give special attention to this aspect of *Lectio Divina* and make a concrete commitment with regard to **CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME!**

Guide for making commitments:

What specific commitments are you willing to make as an individual?

- *What activities can you undertake in your home, in your daily life?*
- *What activities can you promote that might be carried out by people who are your neighbor (for example, recycling, sharing information for more efficient use of electricity, etc.).*

What specific commitments can you make as a local or national group?

- *Within the framework of existing activities and projects, what ideas, in accord with your reflections, will move these projects forward?*
- *Could you start a new project as a result of these reflections?*

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