

## OVERVIEW OF LAUDATO SI'



“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (160). This question is at the heart of *Laudato si'* (May You be praised), the anticipated Encyclical on the care of the common home by Pope Francis. “This question does not have to do with the environment alone and in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal”. This leads us to ask ourselves about the meaning of existence and its values at the basis of social life: “What is the purpose of our life in this world? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?” “Unless we struggle with these deeper issues – says the Pope – I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results”-.

The Encyclical takes its name from the invocation of St. Francis, “Praise be to you, my Lord”, in his *Canticle of the Creatures*. It reminds us that the earth, our common home “is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us”. We have forgotten that “we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.”

Now, this earth, mistreated and abused, is lamenting, and its groans join those of all the forsaken of the world. Pope Francis invites us to listen to them, urging each and every one – individuals, families, local communities, nations and the international community – to an “ecological conversion”, according to the expression of St. John Paul II. We are invited to “change direction” by taking on the beauty and responsibility of the task of “caring for our common home”. At the same time, Pope Francis recognises that “there is a growing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet”. A ray of hope flows through the entire Encyclical, which gives a clear message of hope. “Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home”. “Men and women are still capable of intervening positively”. “All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start”.

Pope Francis certainly addresses the Catholic faithful, quoting St. John Paul II: “Christians in their turn “realise that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith”“. Pope Francis proposes specially “to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home”. The dialogue runs throughout the text and in chapter 5 it becomes the instrument for addressing and solving problems. From the beginning, Pope Francis recalls that “other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions as well – have also expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections” on the theme of ecology. Indeed, such contributions expressly come in, starting with that of “the beloved Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew”, extensively cited in numbers 8-9. On several occasions, then, the Pope thanks the protagonists of this effort – individuals as well as associations and institutions. He acknowledges that “the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians and civic groups, all [...] have enriched the Church’s thinking on these questions”. He invites everyone to recognize “the rich contribution which the religions can make towards an integral ecology and the full development of humanity”.

The itinerary of the Encyclical is mapped out in n. 15 and divided into six chapters. It starts by presenting the current situation based on the best scientific findings available today, next, there is a review of the Bible and Judeo-Christian tradition. The root of the problems in technocracy and in an excessive self-centredness of the human being are analysed. The Encyclical proposes an “integral ecology, which clearly respects its human and social dimensions”, inextricably linked to the environmental question. In this perspective, Pope Francis proposes to initiate an honest dialogue at every level of social, economic and political life, that builds transparent decision-making processes, and recalls that no project can be effective if it is not animated by a formed and responsible

conscience. Ideas are put forth to aid growth in this direction at the educational, spiritual, ecclesial, political and theological levels. The text ends with two prayers; one offered for sharing with everyone who believes in “God who is the all-powerful Creator”, and the other to those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, punctuated by the refrain “Praise be to you!” which opens and closes the Encyclical.

Several main themes run through the text that are addressed from a variety of different perspectives, traversing and unifying the text: the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policies, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.

Chapter 1 – **WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME** (Pollution and climate change; Pollution, refuse and the culture of waste; Climate as a common good; The issue of water; Loss of biodiversity; Decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society; Global inequality; Weak responses; A variety of opinions).

The chapter presents the most recent scientific findings on the environment as a way to listen to the cry of creation, “to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it”. It thus deals with “several aspects of the present ecological crisis”.

Aware of the profound differences over these issues, Pope Francis shows himself to be deeply affected by the “weak responses” in the face of the drama of many peoples and populations. Even though there is no lack of positive examples, there is “a complacency and a cheerful recklessness”. An adequate culture is lacking as well as a willingness to change life style, production and consumption, while there are efforts being made “to establish a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems”.

Chapter Two – **THE GOSPEL OF CREATION** (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; The gaze of Jesus).

To face the problems illustrated in the previous chapter, Pope Francis selects Biblical accounts, offering a comprehensive view that comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition. With this he articulates the “tremendous responsibility” of humankind for creation, the intimate connection among all creatures and the fact that “the natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone”.

The chapter concludes with the heart of Christian revelation: “The earthly Jesus” with “his tangible and loving relationship with the world” is “risen and glorious, and is present throughout creation by his universal Lordship”.

Chapter three – **THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS** (Technology: creativity and power; The globalisation of the technocratic paradigm; The crisis and effects of modern anthropocentrism; Practical relativism; The need to protect employment; New biological technologies).

This chapter gives an analysis of the current situation, “so as to consider not only its symptoms but also its deepest causes”, in a dialogue with philosophy and the human sciences.

Chapter four – INTEGRAL ECOLOGY (Environmental, economic and social ecology; Cultural ecology; Ecology of daily life; The principle of the common good; Justice between the generations).

The heart of what the Encyclical proposes is integral ecology as a new paradigm of justice; an ecology “which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings”. In fact, “nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live”. This is true as we are involved in various fields: in economy and politics, in different cultures particularly in those most threatened, and even in every moment of our daily lives.

With many concrete examples, Pope Francis confirm his thinking that “the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, and of how individuals relate to themselves”. “We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental”.

Chapter five – **LINES OF APPROACH AND ACTION** (Dialogue on the environment; In the international community; Dialogue for new national and local policies; Dialogue and transparency in decision-making; Politics and economy in dialogue for human fulfilment; Religions in dialogue with science).

This chapter addresses the question of what we can and must do. Analyses are not enough: we need proposals “for dialogue and action which would involve each of us individually no less than international policy”. They will “help us to escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us”. For Pope Francis it is imperative that the developing real approaches is not done in an ideological, superficial or reductionist way. For this, dialogue is essential, a term present in the title of every section of this chapter. “There are certain environmental issues where it is not easy to achieve a broad consensus. [...] the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But I want to encourage an honest and open debate, so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good”.

The most significant appeal is addressed to those who hold political office, so that they avoid “a mentality of “efficiency” and “immediacy” that is so prevalent today: “but if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility”.

Chapter six – **ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY** (Towards a new lifestyle; Educating for the covenant between humanity and the environment; Ecological conversion; Joy and peace; Civic and political love; Sacramental signs and the celebration of rest; The trinity and relationships between creatures; Queen of all creation; Beyond the sun).

The final chapter invites everyone to the heart of ecological conversion. The roots of the cultural crisis are deep, and it is not easy to reshape habits and behaviour. Education and training are the key challenges: “change is impossible without motivation and a process of education” (15). All educational sectors are involved, primarily “at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere”.

The starting point is “to aim for a new lifestyle”, which also opens the possibility of “bringing healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power”. This is what happens when consumer choices are able to “change the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production”.

The saints accompany us on this journey. St. Francis, cited several times, is “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically”. He is the model of “the inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace”. The Encyclical also mentions St. Benedict, St. Teresa di Lisieux and Blessed Charles de Foucauld.

After *Laudato si'*, the regular practice of an examination of conscience, the means that the Church has always recommended to orient one's life in light of the relationship with the Lord, should include a new dimension, considering not only how one has lived communion with God, with others and with oneself, but also with all creatures and with nature.

The full text of the encyclical in English can be consulted at:

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)



Source: <http://www.news.va/en/news/overview-of-the-encyclical-laudato-si>

## REMARKS BY CARDINAL WUERL

Accompanying the embargoed copy of his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si* (Praised Be You), was Pope Francis' handwritten note to the bishops. Typical of his pastoral style, the message was a short but warm reference to our bond of unity, charity and peace and a request for prayers for himself. Here he notes that the focus of the letter is *On Care of Our Common Home*. For me, this sums up the substance of the encyclical.

As I read *Laudato Si* which was released today, what first comes to mind is the magnificence of God's creation and how it is destined to be shared by all people in every generation. It is also clear that we have to care for it in order that it is not exploited and debased so that future generations may also enjoy the blessings of our common home.

It is in this light that the Pope sees that "the urgent challenge to protect our common home includes concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change" (13).

Clearly as a pastor and teacher the Pope underlines that he is speaking out of a longstanding tradition of applying Catholic faith to current conditions and the circumstances of our day. He is, in effect, reading "the signs of the times." The encyclical is also an invitation. He offers "an urgent appeal then for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing and its human roots, concern and affect us all" (14).

As has been the case with every one of the social encyclicals going back to *Rerum novarum*, *On the Condition of Human Labor*, in 1891 our Holy Father describes the current issues. Here we find what he calls the starting point for a "fresh analysis of our present situation" (17).

I find that the Pope's decision to start with empirical data and the conclusions based on scientific research to be most helpful. The document cannot be dismissed as simply "abstract." The encyclical reflects on pollution and climate change, access to fresh water and the global problems arising from "greater scarcity of water" (31). It speaks as well of a loss of biodiversity, manifest in the desertification of significant portions of the earth. In this opening chapter, our Holy Father points out the decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society, for example, that is associated with what he recognizes as "the disproportion and unruly growth of many cities which have become unhealthy to live in not only because of pollution caused by toxic emissions but also as a result of urban chaos, poor transportation and visual pollution and noise" (44).

While one may prioritize differently the range of problems that plague our world today, what our Holy Father is lifting up is a series of facts that beg for some coherent moral analysis and direction for the good of all of us on this planet and the planet itself.

Thus our Holy Father finds his starting point in the dignity of the human person as part of God's plan in creation. Pope Francis highlights that "human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself" (66). We are called to cooperate with God's design in our relationship with one another and with the natural world.

An "authentic human ecology" brings a Catholic worldview to the environmental discussion which helps us see more clearly the moral lesson woven into the story of creation. Men and women are called to live in peace with God and in

the natural world. There should be an increasingly clear harmony between efforts on behalf of the environment and those who promote integral, including economic, human development. This is the human ecology that is part of the focus of this encyclical (cf. 5).

None of us can claim absolute ownership over the goods of the earth – God gave us his creation to share. We are grateful to Pope Francis for giving us this encyclical to further explore our responsibilities toward the common good of our local communities, our country and our global neighbors.

Our Holy Father speaks to us as a pastor offering moral guidance, not a set of policy proposals. Touching on the themes of human ecology, care for creation, climate change, the throwaway culture and the call to build a culture of solidarity and encounter, he voices a concern that we are losing the attitude of wonder, contemplation and listening to creation (cf. 225). The encyclical also provides us the opportunity to examine our lifestyle to see what we can do to live in right relationship with God and with the natural world.

The Pope returns again in Chapter 6 to one of his recurring themes, our “throwaway culture.” Here he calls on all of us to resist this mentality in action by taking small steps towards simpler fuller lives. His hope is that we would arrive at a new “awareness of our common origin, our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone.”

Three principles stand out as deserving special attention as the letter examines the Church’s role in economic, scientific, cultural and political arenas. The first principle is the dignity of the human person whose inherent worth and immortal destiny is the very rationale for environmental action. The second is an emphasis on the moral imperative to protect the natural order. And the third is the recognition that protecting the environment need not compromise legitimate economic progress.

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis is gently calling us to consider these moral teachings prayerfully, thoughtfully and humbly. He is challenging us to rethink how we treat the resources God has entrusted to us. For example, he has spoken often about the food we waste as food stolen from the table of the poor.

Rather than feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of some of our biggest ecological challenges, Pope Francis tells us that we can take some small steps that will help our children and grandchildren enjoy clean air and water. In little ways, we can leave the world a better place than we found it. Our Holy Father is asking that we orient our hearts to others, and renew our commitment to the practice of solidarity and interdependence.

In seeking to apply the lessons of this teaching to our own lives, it is Christ himself who is our teacher. Jesus taught us that we should not selfishly seek earthly treasures (Matt. 6:19). When we share property generously, show special solicitude for the poor and afflicted, and seek to structure our human life in harmony with God’s gift and design of creation, we see the kingdom of God beginning to appear in our midst. Thus we can also claim that as we respect and care for creation as well as for one another we actually do carry out our religious imperative to help manifest God at work in all of us – realizing his kingdom in our world.

National Press Club  
June 18, 2015

## 10 WAYS TO GO GREEN AS A PARISH

### 1. Get a green audit

Several options for auditing parish resource use exist. Audits can reveal simple solutions, such as installing motion sensor lights, tankless water heaters, rain sensors for sprinkler systems, that can save money and natural resources. Solar panels, well insulated windows, and other changes also reduce a parish's carbon footprint. Utah Interfaith Power and Light conducts free energy audits for congregations.

### 2. Adjust the thermostat

Keep the parish buildings cool in summer, but not freezing. Even a few degrees on the thermostat make a huge difference in costs and energy use. Large rooms that aren't used on a daily basis should have controls to allow the room to be heated and cooled at intervals that minimize energy waste.

### 3. Limit toxic chemicals

Preserve the health and well-being of the environment around the parish by reducing the use of toxic pesticides and cleaning products at the parish.

### 4. Don't forget recycling

Place recycling bins next to trash receptacles. People will not look for recycling bins, so visibility and access are key. Pictures of what is recyclable help to ensure bins are used responsibly.

### 5. Get rid of Styrofoam

Styrofoam doesn't biodegrade. Once in a landfill, it remains forever. Use coated paper cups, or even better regular washable mugs.

### 6. Reduce food waste.

Everyone creates wasted food, but it is just as simple to not create it. Both businesses and individuals can learn to effectively prevent the flow of wasted food by taking simple steps such as making grocery lists, inventorying supplies, and buying less. For more information, see the Food Waste Recovery page in this toolkit.

### 7. Try composting

Plants love coffee grounds and other organic materials. Consider onsite composting bins for better use of coffee hour remains, parish picnic leftovers, and other food items that could be put to good use.

### 8. Replace fluorescent lights with LEDs, inside and out.

LED lights use less energy, are more reliable, and only need to be replaced every 10 years, saving time, money, and labor. They also emit less heat.

### 9. Serve Fair Trade coffee.

Fair trade products must be produced using environmentally sustainable methods, as well as guarantee a living wage to workers. Churches can purchase fair trade coffee through companies highlighted at [ethicaltrade.crs.org](http://ethicaltrade.crs.org), providing a donation to Catholic Relief Services in the process.

### 10. Educate the parish

Churches are big consumers of power. As *Laudato Si'* reminds us, we are all part of the solution for climate change, so talk about Catholic teaching on care of creation regularly and make sure parishioners understand why the parish is making the above changes.

## REDUCE FOOD WASTE IN YOUR PARISH

The United States wastes more than 36 million tons of food every year. Since 2011, food waste is the single largest component of municipal solid waste reaching landfills and incinerators.

Generating food waste has significant economic, social, and environmental consequences. In his weekly address on June 5, 2013, Pope Francis urged people of good will throughout the world to reduce food waste. He said: "This culture of waste has made us insensitive even to the waste and disposal of food, which is even more despicable when all over the world, unfortunately, many individuals and families are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.... Throwing away food is like stealing from the table of the poor and the hungry."

Often, simple changes in food purchasing, storage, preparation, and service practices can yield significant reductions in food waste generation. Not only will this reduce waste, but it will make food dollars go further. And much of this food "waste" is not waste at all but actually safe, wholesome food that could potentially feed millions of Americans in need. Food donations redirect these valuable resources to "feed people – not landfills."

Additionally, not only does this wasted valuable resource have huge economic and social impacts, it also has huge and immediate environmental impacts. When food is disposed in a landfill it quickly rots and becomes a significant source of methane. Reducing, recovering, and recycling wasted food diverts organic materials from landfills and incinerators, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from landfills and waste combustion. The use of recycled food scraps (compost) has many environmental benefits. An additional benefit of food waste reduction, donation, and composting is improved sanitation, public safety and health for both your facility and congregation.

## THE FOOD RECOVERY HIERARCHY

Both EPA and the USDA recommend following the "food recovery hierarchy" as the preferred options to make the most of excess food. The food waste recovery hierarchy comprises the following activities, with disposal as the last, and least preferred, option:

- Source Reduction – Reduce the amount of food waste being generated;
- Feed People – Donate excess food to food banks, soup kitchens, and shelters;
- Feed Animals – Provide food scraps to farmers;
- Industrial Uses – Provide fats for rendering; oil for fuel; food discards for animal feed production; or anaerobic digestion combined with soil amendment production or composting of the residuals;
- Composting – Recycle food scraps into a nutrient rich soil amendment.

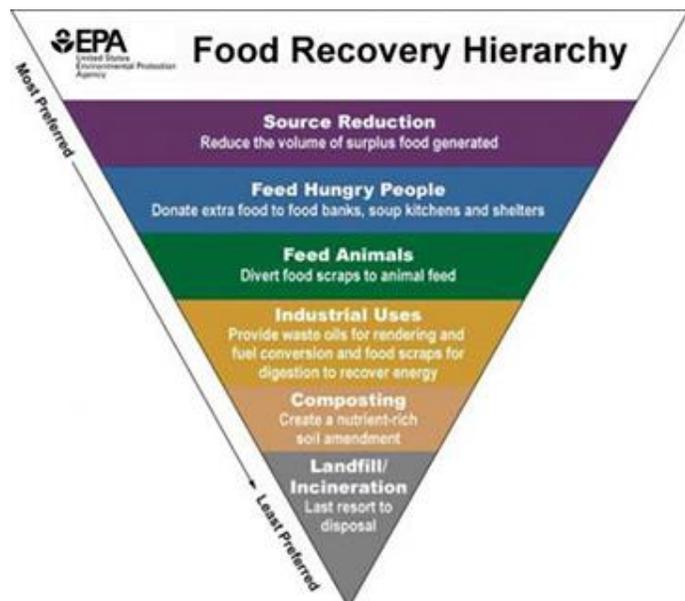
### Benefits

Prevent pollution related to food production, such as fertilizers and pesticides, and save energy associated with growing, preparing, and transporting food.

Reduce methane emissions from landfills.

Save money by buying only what is needed and by avoiding disposal costs.

Save labor costs through more efficient handling, preparation, and storage of food that will actually be used.



## JOIN EPA'S FOOD RECOVERY CHALLENGE

Parishes can respond to Pope Francis's teaching, reduce their environmental footprint, and save money by joining EPA's Food Recovery Challenge.

It just takes 5 easy steps:

### 1. Sign Up

- ✓ Go to EPA's Sustainable Materials Management web site (<https://connect.retrac.com/register/epafrc>) to register to participate in the Challenge.) Once your account has been activated, choose the "Food Recovery Challenge" and sign the participation agreement. You can find an example of the participation agreement form at [http://www.epa.gov/smm/pdf/prticipatn\\_agrmnt\\_2.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/smm/pdf/prticipatn_agrmnt_2.pdf).

### 2. Set a Baseline

- ✓ Assess It! Conduct an inventory of your food waste. Baseline data provides a starting point for setting goals and tracking progress. We recommend that your baseline data be representative of 12 prior months of food data. If you need assistance in developing your baseline, please contact the WasteWise Help Line at 800.EPA.WISE (800.372.9473) or send an email to the program at [wastewisehelp@epa.gov](mailto:wastewisehelp@epa.gov).
- ✓ Submit It: Baseline data must be entered and submitted through the Sustainable Materials Management web site within 90 days of registering for the Challenge. You can choose from three food diversion categories: food waste prevention (e.g. source reduction), donation, and/or recycling (e.g. composting and anaerobic digestion). Don't forget to click the "Submit" button in the database.

### 3. Set a Goal

- ✓ Choose Your Actions! Choose the activities your organization plans to undertake. Examples are modifying food purchasing, changing food production and handling practices, reducing excessive portion size, donating to those in need, and recycling. Tools such as the Food Waste Logbook (<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserves/pubs/food-waste-log.pdf>) and other food waste assessment tools (<http://epa.gov/epawaste/conserves/foodwaste/tools/index.htm>) can help here as well.
- ✓ Submit It: Goals must be entered and submitted through the Sustainable Materials Management web site within 90 days of registering for the Challenge. Identify a quantitative goal, expressed in tons for the current calendar year. Don't forget to click the "Submit" button in the database.

### 4. Take Action

- ✓ Undertake the identified activities to reduce your food waste.

### 5. Track It

- ✓ Track your progress, report your food diversion results, and establish new goals annually using the Sustainable Materials Management web site by March 31 each year. Don't forget to click the "submit" button in the database.

To join the Challenge, go to: [http://www.epa.gov/smm/foodrecovery/join\\_info.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smm/foodrecovery/join_info.htm)

## SAINT QUOTES ON CREATION

**St. Basil (329-379):** “I want creation to penetrate you with so much admiration that wherever you go, the least plant will bring you clear remembrance of the Creator. A single plant, a blade of grass, or one speck of dust is sufficient to occupy all your intelligence in beholding the art with which it has been made.”

**St. John Chrysostum (347-470):** “From the creation, learn to admire the Lord! Indeed the magnitude and beauty of creation display a God who is the artificer of the universe. He has made the mode of creation to be our best teacher.”

**St. Augustine (354-430):** “Some people, to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it. Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, he set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?”

**St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662):** “Creation is a bible whose letters and syllables are the particular aspects of all creatures and whose words are the most universal aspects of creation.”

**St. John of Damascus (675-749):** “The whole earth is a living icon of the face of God.”

**St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153):** “Believe one who knows: You will find something greater in woods than in the books. Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from masters.”

**St. Bonaventure (1217-1274):** “He who is not illuminated by such great splendor of created things is blind; he who is not awakened by such great clamor is deaf; he who does not praise God because of all these effects is dumb; he who does not note the first principle from such great signs is foolish. Open your eyes, therefore, prick your spiritual ears, open your lips and apply your heart, that you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honor your God.”

**St. Theresa of Avila (1515-1582):** “It helped me to look at fields, or water, or flowers. In these things, I found a remembrance of the Creator. I mean that they awakened and recollected me and served as a book.”

**St. John of the Cross (1542-1591):** “God passes through the thicket of the world, and wherever his glance falls, He turns all things to beauty.”

**St. John Paul II (1920-2005):** “The aesthetic value of creation cannot be overlooked. Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. The Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God.”

*Source: Archdiocese of Washington*

## PRAYERS FOR CREATION

You are the giver of all good things.

All good things are sent from heaven above,  
rain and sun,  
day and night,  
justice and righteousness,  
bread to the eater and  
seed to the sower,  
peace to the old,  
energy to the young,  
joy to the babes.

We are takers, who take from you,  
day by day, daily bread,  
taking all we need as you supply,  
taking in gratitude and wonder and joy.

And then taking more,  
taking more than we need,  
taking more than you give us,  
taking from our sisters and brothers,  
taking from the poor and the weak,  
taking because we are frightened, and so greedy,  
taking because we are anxious, and so fearful,  
taking because we are driven, and so uncaring.

Give us peace beyond our fear, and so end our greed.  
Give us well-being beyond our anxiety, and so end our fear.  
Give us abundance beyond our drivenness,  
and so end our uncaring.

Turn our taking into giving ... since we are in your giving image:

Make us giving like you,  
giving gladly and not taking,  
giving in abundance, not taking,  
giving in joy, not taking,  
giving as he gave himself up for us all,  
giving, never taking. Amen.

*Walter Brueggemann*

A Prayer for Global Restoration—

Good and Gracious God,  
Source of all life,  
all creation is charged with your Divine Energy.  
Ignite your Spark within us,  
that we may know ourselves as truly human and holy,  
irrevocably part of the Web of life.

All creation

- each star and every flower,
- each drop of water and every person,
- each and every atom, down to its very electrons,

explodes with the revelation of your sacred mystery.

Our minds alone cannot fathom such splendor.

Our hearts can only respond in awe, praise and gratitude.

Forgive us, we pray, our ignorance and insecurities which

- blind us to your Thumbprint writ large,
- deafen us to the sacred space between two heartbeats,
- prompt us in arrogance to demand and dominate,
- numb us to the destruction we've caused,
- hold us hostage to "either-or" thinking and living.

May we always walk gently upon this earth, in right relationship,

- nurtured by your love,
- taking only what we need,
- giving back to the earth in gratitude,

-sharing what we have,  
-honoring all with reverence,  
-reconciling and healing,  
-mindful of those who will come after,  
-recognizing our proper place as part of, not apart from, your creation,

Grant us the strength and courage, we pray,  
for such transformation into your Kin-dom.

Then we, too, with the very stones will shout,  
"HOSANNA"

*Michelle Balak, O.S.F.*

### Prayer of Thanksgiving

O God, we thank you for this earth, our home;

For the wide sky and the blessed sun,

For the salt sea and the running water,

For the everlasting hills

And the never-resting winds,

For trees and the common grass underfoot.

We thank you for our senses

By which we hear the songs of birds,

And see the splendor of the summer fields,

And taste of the autumn fruits,

And rejoice in the feel of the snow,

And smell the breath of the spring.

Grant us a heart wide open to all this beauty;

And save our souls from being so blind

That we pass unseeing

When even the common thornbush

Is aflame with your glory,

O God our creator,  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

*Walter Rauschenbusch*

## **TWO PRAYERS FROM LAUDATO SI'**

### ***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.

*Amen.*

***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, filled 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 Lord, 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.*