

Time to Remember and Implement Laudato Si' – on its 5th anniversary

The earth our common home is suffering. Misuse, often through lack of reverence and thought, has impelled us to seek profit rather than to care for God's earth - our most precious gift. We have taken our beautiful home for granted which in the words of Pope Francis is 'looking more and more like an immense pile of filth' (Paragraph 20). May 24th this year marks the 5th anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si'*. This encyclical has contributed considerably to the Church's social teaching 'on care for our common home.' Jeffery Sachs called it a 'great and timely gift to humanity'¹ and Pope Francis called for a prompt and global response. Unfortunately, our response over the five years has been neither prompt nor globalised. Surely, now is our opportunity when coping with the Covid-19 imposed restrictions and the frequent reminders that we can expect a very different world, to 'seek a new beginning' and encourage a culture of care for the earth. This will involve above all responding to the cries of people struggling with poverty because of global economics.

Laudato Si' is a long but rewarding read. The first part outlines how and why our earth and the majority of its population are suffering. The content is underpinned by modern science- lending credibility to the discussion. Having outlined the suffering of 'our common home' the Pope encourages us to own up to and take responsibility for our part in causing the suffering. In conclusion the encyclical introduces 'integral ecology' (225) as a way of highlighting the unique place of humans within creation. Being in that unique place Pope Francis challenges us to renew our lifestyles in harmony with God, our fellow humans and nature.

This time of 'social distancing' gives us ample opportunity to celebrate the anniversary of the document and 'to seek a new beginning' by embracing some habits suggested by Pope Francis. These suggestions range from a way of achieving inner peace (227) and to reviving the practice of praying 'the grace before meals' (227) as a way of being more aware of food as a gift from God. We are reminded, in paragraph 206, that 'purchasing is always a moral - and not simply economic -act' and that 'less is more', a value cherished in many religious traditions.(222) Paragraphs 228 and 231 provide an excellent discussion of fraternal and social love. The themes mentioned here are intended merely to whet the appetite and give a flavour of the many aspects explored in *Laudato Si'*. It is, perhaps, one of the most accessible and practical documents to come from the Vatican. The encyclical and study guides, available on the web, support the reading of what is a most encouraging and enlightening read. Enjoy!

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¹ Sachs, Jeffery D, in America Magazine 06.07.2015

