News
EarthBeat



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Vatican City — June 18, 2020
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The Vatican's various departments June 18 reaffirmed their commitment to the ecological path outlined in Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, releasing an unusual inter-office document outlining some of the environmental measures taken by the city-state in the last five years.

The 226-page text, titled "On the journey for care of the common home" and released only in Italian, largely restates the major points of the pontiff's encyclical. It also proposes general actions that local dioceses and parishes can take to protect the environment.

The final pages of the document refer to actions the Vatican itself has taken, many of which have already been made public. Among those: installing systems to reuse the water in the city-state's numerous fountains, shifting to more ecological fertilizers in its gardens, and changing the lighting systems for the Sistine Chapel and the outside of St. Peter's Basilica.

On the last point, the Vatican officials say they are now saving up to 80 percent of the previous costs on lighting.

Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's foreign minister, said at a briefing presenting the document that the city-state's departments wanted to "reintroduce the richness" of the teachings presented in the papal encyclical.

Gallagher, whose formal title is the Secretary for Relations with States at the Secretariat of State, said the coronavirus pandemic had made clear that the world must make "concrete and urgent decisions" to address issues of climate change and environmental destruction.

The briefing presenting the new text was the Vatican's first in-person press conference since before Italy went into lockdown to prevent the transmission of the coronavirus on March 9. About 40 journalists were allowed into the Vatican briefing room, which normally seats hundreds, and social distancing rules were firmly enforced.

Journalists had to wear masks, have their temperature checked upon entry, and maintain at least three feet of distance between one another. Vatican officials also made note of who entered the press office, in case contact tracing should become necessary at a future point.

Gallagher was asked during the briefing about President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement, the landmark 2016 global treaty to mitigate global warming.

The archbishop called the push to protect the environment "an irresistible world movement -- -- a social movement, a movement of faith, a movement of human commitment."

"I think humanity will not be blown off course," said the prelate.

Among the Vatican offices contributing to the new document were the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life; the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development; and the Pontifical Councils for the Promotion of Christian Unity, for Culture, and for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

Also contributing were Caritas Internationalis and the Global Catholic Climate Movement. The latter organization highlighted the new text's suggestion that Catholic institutions might divest from the fossil fuel industry, saying in a press

release that it was the first such call from the Vatican.

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