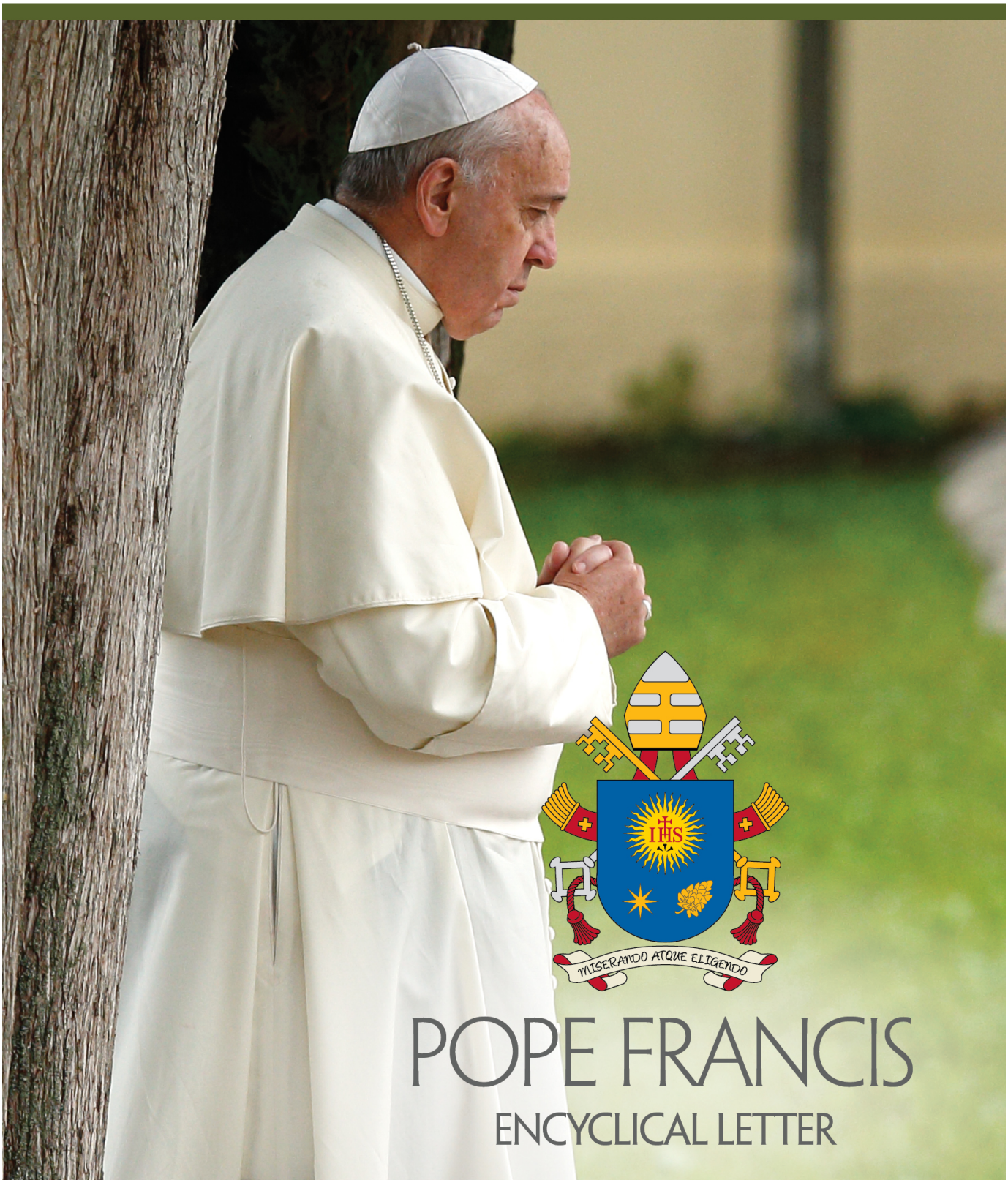
ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

LAUDATO SI'



POPE FRANCIS

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

Cover of the English edition of "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home." (CNS/courtesy U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)



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July 3, 2020

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READ

In the last post of this series on *Laudato Si*', let's go back to the introduction where Pope Francis describes his urgent appeal for 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... Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity… All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents" (14).

Francis then offers an overview of the themes that reappear throughout Laudato Si' as they get re-examined through various lenses, such as "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 policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle" (16).

REFLECT

Laudato Si' is basically an analysis of how humanity can use spirituality to improve our relationships with each other and with the natural world, all in service of caring for our common home. Consider the themes laid out above – which lessons resonated immediately and which ones do you need to meditate on more? Notice what this observation means for your current station on your spiritual journey.

ACT

Throughout this series, I translated passages from the encyclical and linked action ideas to make them relevant to our everyday lives. Below is a recap of all the actions. I hope you will share this series with loved ones and reference this list in the future when you need some motivation.

Source material:
Document

LS My Appeal.pdf

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Post 1: Following in the footsteps of St. Francis

Consider donating to environmental justice organizations such as the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Native American Rights Fund, and Sachamama.

Post 2: The urgent challenge before us

If you're a student, think about your larger purpose then take small steps in that direction. If you're older, perhaps raising a family or are more advanced in your career, consider the differences between personally taking action versus empowering others. Maybe you can make a change right now that will make the world a bit better, or maybe you can invest in the ability of future generations to make a difference.

Post 3: Rejecting the throwaway culture

The U.S. EPA estimates that textile waste occupies nearly 5% of all landfill space. This month, shop for clothing at a consignment store instead of buying new. This might feel like an obstacle while we're social distancing, but you can find great online sites for browsing secondhand clothes, including ThredUp and Poshmark.

Post 4: The power of soil

Some fashion brands are starting to champion regenerative agriculture, or land use practices that reverse climate change by revitalizing soil health. For those who can afford to "vote" with their wallets, do your research and support brands that materially benefit the environment. Consumer power is real, so wield it responsibly.

Post 5: Oceans are our planet's true lungs

Perhaps the most simple thing we can do comes down to Francis's ask for humanity to cherish all creatures with love and respect. To learn about more tangible ways to protect biodiversity, get educated! Consider watching Mission Blue (currently on Netflix), a documentary about the threats facing our oceans and Dr. Sylvia Earle's mission to protect more marine areas. Nature shows such as Our Planet (Netflix) or the classic narrative nature documentary popularized by Disney (available in the Earth Month collection on Disney+) are also a safe bet.

Post 6: A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach

Lean into the "think global, act local" mindset. One simple action Americans can take to overcome inequality at home is fill out the census. The census is a way for tallying up how many Americans live where, which comes with many benefits, including ensuring your community gets appropriate representation within federal and state legislatures, as well as funding for social programs and services.

Post 7: The mutual responsibility between humans and nature

God designed a world in which nature takes care of us, and God intended for us to care for it in return. Individual actions that can strengthen your connection with nature include caring for house plants and growing your own food. To have a bigger impact, consider the politicians you vote for and the companies you support with your wallet: What are their values? What do their actions say about their commitment to caring for our common home?

Post 8: Free will and the power of our choices

Practice the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace that Jesus lived by. For me, this includes seeking out the truth and standing in solidarity with those facing injustice. For example, the pandemic has produced many headlines about declining air and water pollution around cities since transportation has slowed down, however, today's economic depression is not good for nature. Poverty creates direct pressures

on nature as people resort to more hunting, fishing, and logging to support their livelihoods. At the same time, environmental crime (such as illegal mining and wildlife poaching) may be on the rise. Please help dispel the myth that "nature is healing" because of this pandemic.

Post 9: Balancing private property and the common good

Consider: Are there areas in your life where you can resist short-term self-interest for the benefit of the long-term common good?

Post 10: The gaze of Jesus

If Jesus is in all living things, and we fail to treat other people, other creatures, and the environment with care, then what does that say about our relationship with Jesus? Think of caring for the poor and protecting the planet as a way to honor Jesus and God's creations.

Post 11: Wizards and prophets

Do your ideas for a sustainable future align more with the wizard or the prophet? Francis describes "the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution." This doesn't mean we have to revert back to a time before modern technology, but rather that we "need to slow down and look at reality in a different way" and "recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur" (114). What do you think "a bold cultural revolution" should look like? How can we support humanity and technological progress at the same time? What can you do to shape this kind of future?

Post 12: Practical relativism and racial justice

Be vigilant when practical relativism comes up in your life and your mind, and choose the path of compassion instead. If you're white, consider recent events and the assumptions of white privilege that allowed them to occur. Supporting the Black

Lives Matter movement requires actively being anti-racist. Educate yourself on ally behaviors and consider the resources in this "Justice in June" Google doc, put together by Bryanna Wallace and Autumn Gupta, which offers a month-long education on racial justice in bite-sized pieces.

Post 13: Great societies need strong institutions

Active participation at the community-level can build faith in institutions. Voting is also a tangible way individuals can strengthen their institutions, particularly at the local level. Find out about upcoming local elections in your state here.

Post 14: Intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity

Aim to align your lifestyle and actions with concern for the common good and in solidarity with today's poor and future generations. Environmental organizations that empower youth include the Alliance for Climate Education, Extinction Rebellion, Roots & Shoots, Sunrise, and Zero Hour. If you're older, consider donating to such organizations to match your empathy with material support. Instead of simply telling young people, "It's up to you to fix this mess," give them the tools to do so.

Post 15: The power of "think global, act local"

Become familiar with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that make up the global agenda for addressing climate change and 16 other issue areas related to sustainability and poverty reduction. Then, take local action. Join a community group (such as Citizens Climate Lobby) or start one yourself to keep people motivated and accountable. For more inspiration, check out "The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World," a list of actions compiled by the UN ranging from things you can do from your couch to your workplace.

Post 16: Better safe than sorry

To have more honest and open debates, consider the technique Malcolm Gladwell popularized – summarize the other person's argument and ask them to summarize yours. This exercise can help people empathize with each other, soften their opinions, and maybe even change them.

Post 17: Sustainable living in a greedy world

Be alert to signs of greenwashing – or when a brand's sustainability marketing doesn't align with their business practices – when shopping. Next time you need a product or service, consider doing business with a Certified B Corporation. B Corps are companies that meet rigorous environmental and social standards, and over 3,000 have this designation to date. Or, when in doubt, know that buying secondhand is always the most sustainable option, and you might find more transparency from smaller or locally-owned businesses.

Post 18: Collective action can save the world

Something you can do right now is embrace the "less is more" mantra that comes with a minimalist mindset. This short video describes ten easy habits that can help you achieve this – along with the refreshing mental clarity that comes along!

Post 19: The Christian's role in social and environmental justice

A 2018 blog post by Annelise Hardegree, a Christian stay-at-home mom, suggests the following: "It's time to stop putting our focus on fighting against science, but instead, seeing science as a revelation of the mysteries and glories of God's creation. Find those beautiful and interesting things around you that glorify God and start trying to find ways to protect them."

Post 20: How to live life to the fullest

As a simple habit of mindfulness, consider giving thanks for the resources and labor that goes into each of your meals. Learn more about mindfulness through this in-

depth guide. It describes specific habits for improving focus at work, combating anxiety, alleviating depression, improving parent-child relationships, and helping teachers in the classroom.

Post 21: The power of love and the need to rest

If you don't already take one day a week to completely rest (without any serious work commitments), consider adopting one. You can still be productive on "rest" days if you're undergoing spiritual contemplation. Every week, use this time to consider the parts of your life that need more love. Maybe you need to be kinder to yourself, or maybe it's a family member or a friendship that needs tending to. Maybe it's your politics or the businesses you support with your money. Take time to reflect, and then adjust the rest of your week accordingly.

Post 22: The mystery of the Trinity and global solidarity

It's a beautiful thing to humbly pray to God and ask for wisdom. Consider Francis's "prayer for our earth." Affter praying, listen for what you are called to do, find God in new things, and do what you can to make a difference. Even if you feel like you can't do much, remember nothing is too small in the eyes of the Lord.

Post 23: The joy of our hope

The message of hope in unifying towards a common goal – to build a more just and sustainable world, where all people live with dignity – is just as important as building awareness. Meditate over Francis's "Christian prayer in union with creation" whenever you need some inspiration.

This story appears in the **Digging Into Laudato Si'** feature series. View the full series.