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John Mundell poses for a photo against the backdrop of the Puget Sound in the state of Washi

John Mundell poses for a photo against the backdrop of the Puget Sound in the state of Washington. In July, the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced Mundell as director of the Laudato Si' Action Platform. (CNS photo/courtesy John Mundell via The Criterion)

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John Mundell considers it "an incredible honor" that he was recently chosen as the director of the worldwide effort to put Pope Francis' encyclical "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home" into action.

At the same time, the member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis feels a great responsibility to help people from around the globe understand the urgent need to care for the world that God has created — the central theme of the papal encyclical issued seven years ago.

"The world and the Catholic Church as a whole have not responded adequately to Pope Francis' core message, which calls for an 'ecological conversion' to change our

lifestyles and our economy," Mundell said.

"During this same period, we have witnessed firsthand the increasing effects of climate change and biodiversity loss — more intense storm events and flooding, wildfires and record temperatures," he continued.

"While there are positive signs of progress in some areas and increased engagement with the faithful, much more is needed if we are going to make any positive impact," he said.

Mundell is hoping to help create that positive impact as the director of the Laudato Si' Action Platform, or LSAP, which offers concrete plans for a "seven-year journey toward healing in our relationships with God, our neighbors and the earth itself."

Mundell views that journey as essentially Catholic. It's also a journey that has marked more than 50 years of his life.

He said his goals now "are to do as much as possible to put into action Pope Francis' vision of how we should all be responding to our environmental crisis."

"The challenges we face are immense, but it doesn't mean we should give up on our individual and collective abilities to make a positive impact," he told The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

"Although we still need to continue to talk, think, pray and discuss during our seven-year LSAP journey, we can no longer be satisfied with mere words. Now is the time for our global Catholic community to respond with a sense of urgency," he said.

John Mundell, right, meets with Pope Francis at the Vatican in 2017. Also in the photo are Luig

John Mundell, right, meets with Pope Francis at the Vatican in 2017. Also in the photo are Luigino Bruni, an Italian economist and Eva Gullo, an entrepreneur. (CNS photo/courtesy John Mundell via The Criterion)

Care for creation has become "an ever-growing concern for humanity and an integral part of Catholic social teaching" over the last 50 years, Mundell said, pointing to the writings and speeches of St. Pope Paul VI to Pope Benedict XVI on the issue.

"Only in the last few years has it become politicized as some kind of 'right or left' issue," he said. "Our faith calls us to respond differently. Care for our common home is a moral issue for all of us.

"I believe that we are truly more authentically Catholic when we realize and practice our universal calling to the common good and to caring for all of creation."

He explained that the Laudato Si Action Platform is an online digital space — https://laudatosiactionplatform.org — "developed by the Vatican in collaboration with hundreds of Catholic organizations to inspire and empower everyone to take decisive actions to support care for our world."

"It offers planning guides and resources, a planning process and a place for connecting with others taking action," Mundell said.

Everyone is invited "to embark on a seven-year journey toward healing in our relationships with God, our neighbors and the earth itself," he said: individuals and families, parishes and dioceses, educational institutions, health care and healing facilities, businesses, religious congregations and communities.

"The development of local Laudato Si' plans that contain concrete actions is the primary focus," he added.

Mundell said he hopes individuals, families and parishes will sign up on the site and "put a simple Laudato Si' Plan together to begin following."

"We have to start with ourselves and do a little daily 'examination of conscience' with how we are living our lives and our Catholic faith," he said. "It's sometimes easy to ignore those things our faith is calling us to live that are more difficult that others -- simpler lives, less consumerism, less wastefulness."

He recommended people start "with something easy and doable -- perhaps focusing on only one thing each month that you could consider changing for the better. And if you fail? Just remember you can start over again the next day."

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Growing up, Mundell "always felt a strong connection with the land and the earth," he said. "My family helped settle the state of Indiana and were farmers for several

generations."

He participated in his first Earth Day in 1970. That, along with his Purdue University education in civil engineering and geology, led to his becoming one of the first environmental consultants in Indiana. Mundell has spent the past 43 years investigating and cleaning up thousands of contaminated sites across Indiana, the United States and the world.

He worked with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the late 1990s on several environmental justice projects.

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Mundell has been working with the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Laudato Si' Movement to develop the idea of the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

Pope Francis has designated Sept. 1 as World Day of Prayer for the Season of Creation, which extends to Oct. 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. "Listen to the Voice of Creation" is the theme of the season.

"The Season of Creation gives us a chance to stop, listen and feel our interconnection to everyone and everything, and to experience a deep sense of responsibility toward our global community and our common home," Mundell said. "This can only lead to positive action."

He said in his message, Pope Francis "asks us to not only listen to the 'sweet song' in praise of our beloved Creator, but also to hear the 'cries of anguish' from our sister, Mother Earth, from the poor, from Native peoples and from our children, and respond with action and with deeds 'so that we and future generations can continue to rejoice in creation's sweet song of life and hope.'"

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