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Pope Francis greets Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg during his general audience in S

Pope Francis greets Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican in this file photo from April 17, 2019. In a new book, Pope Francis writes that people must learn from young people to care for the poor and for the environment. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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While older people love to complain about "young people today," they must admit that the younger generations are leading the way in opposing "an economic system that is unfair to the poor and an enemy of the environment," Pope Francis wrote.

"They are not only asking us; they are doing it," he said, pointing to a trend in choosing to consume less, to buy products "produced following strict rules of environmental and social respect" and to lower their carbon footprints with the means of transportation they use.

This is cover of the Italian book, "The Taste for Change: Ecological Transition as the Path to H

This is cover of the Italian book, "The Taste for Change: Ecological Transition as the Path to Happiness," which was released May 17, 2023. The book by Jesuit Fr. Gaël Giraud and Carlo Petrini features a preface written by Pope Francis. (CNS photo/Courtesy LEV)

Pope Francis wrote about the connections between the dominate global economic system and climate change in a preface to the Italian book, "The Taste for Change: Ecological Transition as the Path to Happiness," by the Jesuit economist Fr. Gaël Giraud and Carlo Petrini, the Italian founder of the International Slow Food Movement.

Vatican News published the text of the preface May 17, the day the book was released by the Vatican publishing house.

Pope Francis wrote that the authors find hope in the younger generation, countering the tired narrative of claiming the past was better and that "those who come after us are squandering our achievements."

"Instead, we must admit with sincerity that it is the young people who embody the change we all objectively need," the pope wrote.

The young, Pope Francis said, are asking older people "to change. Change our lifestyle, so predatory toward the environment. Change our relationship with the Earth's resources, which are not infinite. Change our attitude toward them, the new generations, from whom we are stealing the future."

The book, he said, focuses on "the truly critical environmental situation in which we find ourselves, the child of that 'economy that kills' and which has caused the suffering cry of the Earth and the distressing and anguished cry of the world's poor."

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Christians cannot remain indifferent when they see people suffering because of drought and other environmental disasters and or who are forced to migrate because of climate change," he wrote.

Those who stand by and watch or turn the other way, he said, are "accomplices in the destruction of the beauty that God wanted to give us in the creation that surrounds us."

It is not just about the land, the pope said. With the destruction of the earth, "that 'very good' gift that the Creator forged from water and dust — man and woman — will perish."

"Let's face it," he said, people have given in to a "reckless economic development," which is "causing climatic imbalances that are weighing on the shoulders of the poorest, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. How can we close the doors to those who are fleeing, and will flee, unsustainable environmental situations, the direct consequences of our immoderate consumerism?"