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Pope Francis speaks to a delegation of European lawyers in the library of the Apostolic Palace

Pope Francis speaks to a delegation of European lawyers in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Aug. 21, 2023. Thanking the lawyers for their advocacy of environmental protection laws, the pope announced he was writing another document on the environment. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Thanking a group of European lawyers for their attention to environmental protection laws, Pope Francis said he was preparing another document on the subject.

"I am writing a second part to *Laudato Si*' to update it on current problems," the pope told the lawyers Aug. 21 during a meeting in the library of the Apostolic Palace. He provided no further information.

"*Laudato Si*', On Care for Our Common Home" was the title of Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical letter on the need for an "integral ecology" that respects the dignity and value of the human person, helps the poor and safeguards the planet.

The pope made his remark in the context of thanking the lawyers for their "willingness to work for the development of a normative framework aimed at protecting the environment."

"It must never be forgotten," he said, "that future generations are entitled to receive from our hands a beautiful and habitable world, and that this entails grave responsibilities toward the natural world that we have received from the benevolent hands of God."

Members of the group Pope Francis met with represented presidents of European bars and legal associations who signed a declaration in 2022 calling on members of the European Union and Council of Europe to uphold and respect the rule of law, especially in times of crisis like that created by Russia's war on Ukraine.

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"These times of social and economic crisis, as well as a crisis of identity and security, challenge the democracies of the West to provide an effective response, while remaining faithful to their principles," particularly the promotion of democracy and respect for freedom and human dignity, he said.

"Fear of civil unrest and acts of violence, the prospect of destabilizing change and the need to act effectively in confronting emergency situations, can result in the temptation to make exceptions or to restrict — at least provisionally — the rule of law in the effort to find easy and immediate solutions," the pope said.

"For this reason," he told them, "I appreciate your insistence, in one of your proposals, that 'the rule of law should no longer be subject to the slightest exceptions, including in times of crisis.' For the rule of law stands at the service of the human person and aims to protect the dignity of each, which admits of no exception."

The pope cautioned, however, that laws promoting the dignity of the human person must be based on the truth about human beings, their divine origin and their ultimate destination. "Without the constant effort to pursue the truth about the human person, in accordance with God’s plan, individuals become the measure of themselves and their actions."

"Today, in effect, we are witnessing a tendency to claim more and more individual rights, without taking into account the fact that every human being is part of a social context in which his or her rights and duties are bound up with those of others and with the common good of society itself," the pope said.