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## Religion and Ecology News Articles

May – June 2015

### May 2015

Despair is Optional

By Bill McKibben  
*Sojourners Magazine*

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*We're like the bad babysitter who takes the 2-year-old out for a tattoo and some piercings.*

AS POPE FRANCIS prepares to release his encyclical on climate change, it's worth remembering exactly how far the conversation on religion and the environment has come in the past quarter-century.

When I wrote *The End of Nature* back in the late 1980s, there was very little religious environmentalism. Liberal churches believed that ecology was a subject to be addressed once you'd finished with war and poverty; conservative churches viewed it as a way station on the road to paganism. And Christians in general still reeled under the idea, propounded by Lynn White in an influential essay in *Science* magazine, that the Genesis call for dominion had led directly to the destruction we saw around us.

In those early days, there were a few wayfarers on this path. Thomas Berry, for instance, and even more important a pair of academics—Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim—who picked up his clues and sweated blood to assemble theologians from around the world and search every tradition for the roots of ecological thinking. Episcopal Power and Light—now Interfaith Power and Light—was an early and successful effort at congregational action; Shomrei Adamah (Guardians of the Earth) was an early effort in the Jewish community that has blossomed into many flowers.

More senior figures began to join. Patriarch Bartholomew, leader of 400 million Eastern Christians, became known as the “green patriarch” for his straightforward reckoning that environmental desecration was just that, a sin. Desmond Tutu has called climate change the “human rights challenge of our time.” Now the pope. “It is [humanity] who has slapped nature in the face,” Francis said. “We have in a sense taken over nature.”

There's pushback still, of course. When the pope made his remarks, a blogger at the conservative journal *First Things* announced, “Francis serves an environmentalist mindset that, unlike the traditional ethos of conservation, views [humanity] as a parasite.” Oof; them's fighting words.

And from the corporatist, compromised center, there's the usual dismay at having to take sides. The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, for instance, has done its best to blunt the growing movement for fossil-fuel divestment, arguing that "companies aren't the enemy."

Happily, though, the momentum is clear. Denominations such as the United Church of Christ and the Unitarians have called for divestment; Methodist colleges and Catholic research universities are joining in. Religious people do understand that there are enemies in this fight—that the companies who melted the Arctic and then moved to drill for yet more oil in its open waters meet any theological test you could devise for radical irresponsibility.

This movement unites young—who will have to live for decades with a changed planet—and old, who will have to go to their graves knowing that we've left a damaged planet behind. It reaches across ideology—the question of how and whether we evolved is less pressing than the fact that we're now running Genesis in reverse.

There's a streak of sadness that runs through this movement: Clearly we've failed to responsibly exercise dominion (we're the bad babysitter, who takes the 2-year-old out for a tattoo and some piercings). But there's also a streak of joy. Unlike secular environmentalists, we're entitled—if we work as hard as we know how to work—to imagine that some force will meet us halfway. Despair is optional, thank heaven.

**Bill McKibben** is the Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College in Vermont and founder of [350.org](http://350.org).

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<http://fore.yale.edu/news/item/despair-is-optional/>

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**May 1, 2015**

Blessed Are the Climate Advocates

The Vatican and United Nations present the beatitudes of a new movement.

By Michael Shank  
Slate

This week, while at Vatican City in Rome to manage press for the first-ever meeting on climate change between Pope Francis and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, my faith in a force more powerful was renewed. I am not religious, despite being descended from a long line of Amish and Mennonite preachers. But at the climate confab, I became a believer again. And I wasn't alone.

It wasn't my faith in God that was renewed at the Vatican but rather a faith in our ability to get something done on climate change. And as an American, whose Congress isn't even close to

acting aggressively or quickly enough on climate change, that's saying something. Even the Pope's and the U.N.'s top policy officials were clearly inspired by the event, which was hosted by the Vatican's [Pontifical Academy of Sciences](#). Throughout the day I witnessed multiple about-faces of previously cynical staff rapidly turning toward optimism.

This Vatican moment was a game-changer. Science and religion were forcefully and unwaveringly aligning. Tuesday's high-level session brought together multiple presidents, CEOs, academics, scientists, and all the major religions, and ended with [this final, forceful statement](#). The event was a prelude to the Pope's summer encyclical on climate change, and it laid a solid foundation.

But more importantly—and this is why it instilled faith in many of us—the meeting featured some of the strongest words yet from the Vatican's [Cardinal Peter Turkson](#), the Pope's right-hand policy man and the [drafter of the first round](#) of what will eventually be the Pope's climate encyclical, and from the U.N.'s [Ban Ki-moon](#).

Beyond the expected shout-outs to the upcoming climate talks in Paris later this year and to the need for a strong Green Climate Fund, which will assist developing countries in climate adaptation, the U.N.'s Ban [noted](#) in no uncertain terms how “morally indefensible” it would be to allow a temperature rise of 4 to 5 degrees Celsius, calling on everyone to reduce their individual carbon footprint and thoughtless consumption. His pitch was more pointed than I had heard before. One of the leading rabbis, [Rabbi David Rosen](#), took it one step further, calling out meat-intensive diets as completely unsustainable given their massive contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

The Vatican's Turkson, meanwhile, [pulled out all the stops](#), saying that “a crime against the natural world is a sin,” and “to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation ... are sins.” Turkson warned about how quickly we are degrading the planet's integrity, stripping its forests, destroying its wetlands, and contaminating its waters, land, and air.

These declarations were not soft, feel-good, and vague speeches by politicians keen to be perceived as leading on the most urgent issue facing humanity. These were unequivocal, unwavering statements: “Decision mitigation is a moral and religious imperative for humanity” and the “summit in Paris may be the last effective opportunity” to keep the planet safe.

The leaders of the conference were undeterred by the hecklers who crept onto the Vatican campus. Marc Morano, for example, who is associated with the climate-skeptical Heartland Institute, snuck into the Vatican and attempted, to no avail, to disrupt the [press briefing](#) with the U.N. secretary-general while Ban was reporting on his meeting with the Pope. Morano's [account](#) of what happened, that he was maliciously shut down after offering a benign question, misrepresents reality. Standing beside him, I can attest to what was instead a hijacking of protocol and the microphone. He said a few words about “global warming skeptics coming to talk” but *coming to disrupt* would be more accurate. He interrupted the secretary-general and the moderator, and was later escorted from the premises by Vatican officials.

What's troubling about moments like this is that they work. The U.S. media reporting from the Vatican meeting felt compelled to give Morano critical space in their stories. It's not just that he was an unexpected and therefore newsworthy interruption—giving his “side” is part of American broadcast media's history of false balance even when there are not two legitimate sides of a story to balance. To be clear, the verdict is not still out on climate change. There's [overwhelming consensus](#) when it comes to the science behind global warming, yet some media outlets (fewer all the time, fortunately) continue to give voice to the small percent that disagrees. Standing beside Morano, surrounded by representatives of the most powerful institutions in the world, it was quite clear to me that the Heartland Institute, though well funded by the Koch brothers, is ineffectually extreme and ultimately a minority player in society's overall push toward climate progress.

In many ways, the Heartland emissaries proved, through their apoplectic protest, how peripheral they were to the whole process. There was no need for anyone to fight them in that moment; the majority opinion, the moral call to act on climate, was already winning the day. The global response to our conversation at the Vatican has been unequivocally positive, with [every major outlet](#) in the Western world covering the talks favorably.

As we left Vatican City this week—which is carbon-neutral thanks to solar power—there was a palpable sense that history was made within the walls of Casina Pio IV where our deliberations took place. This was no typical conference. This was a Sermon on the Mount moment, wherein the beatitudes of a new era were laid down. And we left as disciples, renewed in our faith that we must and will act in time to save humanity from itself—an agenda that would be a worthy legacy of the Pope's Jesus.

*Michael Shank is a professor at George Mason University's [School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution](#) and director of media strategy for [Climate Nexus](#).*

[http://www.slate.com/articles/health\\_and\\_science/science/2015/05/pope\\_francis\\_ban\\_ki\\_moon\\_climate\\_change\\_talks\\_renewed\\_faith\\_from\\_vatican.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2015/05/pope_francis_ban_ki_moon_climate_change_talks_renewed_faith_from_vatican.html)

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**May 1, 2015**

Pope Francis Unlikely to Sway Catholic Republicans on Climate Change

Party doctrine will probably trump church doctrine in Congress, experts say, where more than a quarter of lawmakers are Catholics.

By Katherine Bagley  
InsideClimate News

Pope Francis plans this summer to issue an influential and the first-ever encyclical devoted to global warming and its effects on the world's poor. Credit: Jeffrey Bruno/Aleteia

As Pope Francis steps up his moral campaign for global action on climate change, Republican Roman Catholics in Congress are more likely to listen to fossil fuel interests and party leaders than their pontiff, religious and political researchers say, based on lawmakers' track records.

The pope hosted a global warming summit at the Vatican this week with economists, scientists and religious and government leaders. The global leader of the Catholic Church plans this summer to issue the first-ever encyclical, a high-level Catholic teaching document, devoted to global warming and its effects on the world's poor.

But as much sway as the pope has with a sixth of the world's population, party doctrine will probably trump church doctrine in Congress, experts told InsideClimate News. The position of Pope Francis on climate change—and nearly every mainstream climate scientist—bucks that of American conservatives and fossil fuel interests such as the billionaire Koch brothers, who have spent millions of dollars casting doubt on the reality of human-driven climate change and supporting candidates who oppose action to address it.

"If the science hasn't persuaded Republican politicians, the Pope won't," said R.L. Miller, founder of Climate Hawks Vote, a super PAC that works to elect climate-conscious candidates. "American Catholics have been in the habit of mixing and matching parts of Catholic doctrine when it suits them for decades. I don't see this as an exception."

The pope's doctrinal statement will come as world leaders prepare to meet in December in Paris on global warming. They plan to hash out an international accord to fight climate change and address the needs of billions of poor people who suffer from the worst effects of warming.

It also comes at a time when fossil fuel divestment campaigns are sweeping college campuses across the nation and the world. Like the pope, divestment activists have the goal of turning global warming action into the moral issue of this generation. Campaigns are underway at 500 colleges. [Thirty schools worldwide—along with 41 cities, 72 religious institutions, 30 foundations and hundreds of individuals](#)—have divested or pledged to divest from fossil fuels.

"Morality moves politicians. Politicians can dodge policy questions, it's harder to dodge a question like, 'why are you choosing Exxon over our kids?'" said Jamie Henn, director of strategy and co-founder of 350.org, the environmental group behind the divestment movement. "When climate is about widgets and circuits, you lose people. When it's about our health, our families, and our future, you start seeing people in the streets."

Catholics make up nearly 32 percent of the House of Representatives and 26 percent of the Senate, compared with 22 percent of the U.S. population.

The list of Catholics in Congress includes several of the GOP's most prominent climate denialists, such as presidential contender Marco Rubio, a Florida senator; House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio; and former vice presidential candidate and Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan. Likely presidential contenders Jeb Bush, a former governor of Florida; Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey; and Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana are also Catholic. Those three question the science of human-caused global warming and oppose climate policy.

No Republican politician has yet commented on the pope's climate agenda, but conservatives such as the Heartland Institute, a right-wing tank that has received funding from the Kochs, have lambasted the Catholic leader's efforts.

The Heartland Institute sent a group of climate denialists to Rome earlier this week to, "inform Pope Francis of the truth about climate science: There is no global warming crisis!" according to a press release. Just [nine journalists](#) showed up to its press event.

At the invitation of Boehner, Pope Francis will address Congress in September, shortly after the publication of his climate encyclical.

Rubio, Boehner and Ryan, among others, will probably ignore the pope's calls for action in favor of following the Republican party line on climate change, political researchers said. None responded to InsideClimate News' requests for comment. On the other side of the aisle, Catholics including House minority leader Nancy Pelosi of California, Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois and Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, may use the encyclical to bolster their party's climate agenda, the researchers said.

"If you ask any politician, most say their faith is central to what they do," said Dan Cox, director of research at the Public Religion Research Institute, a nonprofit organization that examines the intersection of religion, values and public life. "But when you look at specific issues, like the death penalty and abortion, you're better off knowing their party than their religion."

### **Invoking Their Faith**

Still, Catholic politicians, particularly Republicans, have a history of invoking their faith to justify policy decisions.

When Ryan, the Republican representative from Wisconsin, proposed in 2012 to slash social welfare programs including Medicaid and food stamps in his overhaul of the federal budget, he cited his Catholic faith.

"The preferential option for the poor, which is one of the primary tenants of Catholic social teaching, means don't keep people poor, don't make people dependent on government so that they stay stuck at their station in life," Ryan [told](#) the Christian Broadcasting Network at the time.

Rubio, the Republican senator from Florida who is running for president, often makes the religious case for immigration reform. In 2012, he [told](#) Christianity Today, "If your faith is real, burning inside of you, it's going to influence the way you view everything. That belief influences your job and the responsibilities you have."

Rubio has also [criticized](#) Pope Francis for helping to negotiate the opening of relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

Virginia Republican Senator Tim Kaine has spoken openly about how his Catholic faith drives his "[moral position](#)" against capital punishment. As an attorney, Kaine defended several death row inmates pro-bono.

Most Catholic politicians invoke their faith more selectively than they did two decades ago, choosing which teachings to follow instead of following the full church doctrine, experts said. It's the same with the majority of the American Catholic public.

"In today's Congress, party matters much more than the faith tradition you come from," said Geoff Layman, a political scientist at the University of Notre Dame, a Roman Catholic institution in South Bend, Indiana. "Catholic Democrats tend to vote like any other Democrat, and Catholic Republicans like any other Republican."

### **Future Impacts**

Following publication of the Pope's climate encyclical this summer, Catholic bishops will spend 12 weeks discussing global warming in sermons, media interviews and letters to editors, the New York Times [reported](#).

This could have an impact on the public and policymakers. Americans who attend a church where the pastor even occasionally preaches about climate change are more likely to accept the scientific evidence for global warming than those who don't, according to a 2014 [poll](#) by the Public Religion Research Institute.

The institute's Cox said the pope currently enjoys widespread popularity among American Catholics, but that his climate campaign and Congressional visit could polarize opinions of him among politicians. But either way, he said, Francis' push for action could "raise the profile of climate change in the U.S."

<http://insideclimatenews.org/news/01052015/pope-francis-unlikely-sway-catholic-republicans-climate-change>

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**May 6, 2015**

Climate Change and the Christian Gospel: Why we need to respond more urgently

By David Atkins

Ekklesia

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/21667>

Abstract:

One of the most notable omissions from the discussions and debates that have taken place in the run-up to the 2015 General Election has been any focus on environmental justice, climate change and global warming. It is as if there is a spirit of denial or apathy in the air. Yet by any measure this is one of the most urgent challenges facing our country, and indeed the world, right now. In



recent years, churches in different parts of the world have started responding practically and theologically to the alarming picture being presented to us by climate science. That is encouraging. But as Bishop David Atkinson points out in this timely paper, there is a need for much more action. Care for the earth, which is God's gift, should be a primary concern for Christians, people of other faiths, and everyone of good faith. Politicians need to be persuaded to act more decisively by the example of people across civil society, not least in the churches. This is not a Christian 'add on', but a core Gospel concern.

Read the full article:

[http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/sites/ekklesia.co.uk/files/climate\\_change\\_and\\_gospel.pdf](http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/sites/ekklesia.co.uk/files/climate_change_and_gospel.pdf)

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**May 6, 2015**

Pope Francis: 'If We Destroy Creation, Creation Will Destroy Us'

By Kieran Cooke  
EcoWatch

A declaration at the end of a meeting in Rome hosted by the Vatican made a [plea to the world's religions](#) to engage and mobilize on the issue of [climate change](#).

"Human-induced climate change is a scientific reality, and its decisive mitigation is a moral and religious imperative for humanity," the declaration said. "In this core moral space, the world's religions play a very vital role."

Vatican watchers and climate experts say the meeting, "The Moral Dimensions of Climate Change and Sustainable Development," shows that Pope Francis is—in marked contrast to his predecessors—keen for the Catholic church to [be more involved in the climate change issue](#), and is also urging other religions to become more actively engaged.

The meeting was organized by various religious and non-religious organizations, including the Vatican's [Pontifical Academy of Sciences](#) and the UN-affiliated body, the [Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#). Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General, also spoke at the one-day conference.

### **Fundamental principles**

In a few weeks' time, the Pope is due to release an [encyclical on climate change](#)—within the Catholic church, a statement of fundamental principles. He has also made several impassioned speeches on the issue.

"If we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us," the Pope told a gathering of thousands in St Peter's Square, Rome, last month. "Never forget this."



Groups that insist that climate change is not a threat, and that seek to oppose the findings of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other scientific bodies, have been quick to criticise the Pope's stand.

Members of the [Heartland Institute](#), a U.S.-based organization funded by billionaire industrialists and others who [deny climate change](#) is caused by human activity, [travelled to Rome](#) to speak against the meeting.

"The Pope has great moral authority, but he's [not an authority on climate science](#)," a Heartland employee told the UK newspaper, the Daily Telegraph.

"The Pope would make a grave mistake if he put his moral authority behind scientists saying that climate change is a threat to the world."

### **Selling investments**

Separately, the Church of England announced that it is selling various investments in fossil fuel industries. The Church said £12 million worth of investments in companies making 10 percent or more of their revenues from the production of coal or oil from tar sands would be sold.

The Church of England is not selling all its investments in fossil fuel operations, but says it wants to influence companies that contribute to global greenhouse gas emissions. The Church recently called on two major oil companies, [BP and Shell](#), to be more transparent about their policies on climate change.

"The Church has a moral responsibility to speak and act on both environmental stewardship and justice for the world's poor, who are most vulnerable to climate change" says Professor Richard Burridge, of the Church's [Ethical Investment Advisory Group](#).

<https://ecowatch.com/2015/05/06/pope-francis-moral-dimensions-climate-change/>

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### **May 8, 2015**

A papal statement on climate change could lead to greener Britain

By Soli Salgado  
National Catholic Reporter

A third of British Catholics say they would consider "greening" their lifestyles should Pope Francis make an official statement on climate change.

The pledge came from a recent poll of 1,000 Catholics in England and Wales conducted by YouGov and [CAFOD](#) [1], the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The 33 percent who said they would opt for greener choices, such as recycling or driving less, would account for more than 1 million Catholics in Britain.

The survey also showed a concern for climate change having adverse effects on social justice:

- 72 percent of those polled said that they are worried about the world's poorest people being negatively affected by global warming.
- More than three quarters (76 percent) said that, as Catholics, they feel a moral obligation to protect the poor.
- Eight out of ten surveyed said they feel it is a moral duty to care for God's creation, and that by Francis emphasizing the need for environmental mindfulness, it will be harder for people to isolate the issue of climate change from faithfully caring for creation.

"While the data shows us that almost two thirds of Catholics have engaged with the climate debate already, what's most telling about these results is how many Catholics link the impact climate change is having on vulnerable people with their faith, which calls us to protect the poorest in society," said Neil Thorns, CAFOD advocacy director, in a statement.

More than half also said that because of Francis' comments, they've given more thought to the issues facing modern society, with 18 percent saying they have already made active changes to their lifestyles as a result of his teachings.

And there's optimism that this coming encyclical, expected in June or July, will have a profound, widespread effect: 70 percent of the Catholics surveyed said they believe the Catholic community will observe Francis' message.

In the United Kingdom, U.S. and elsewhere, efforts at greening parishes have been ongoing for some time.

Fr. Peter Daly, pastor of St. John Vianney parish in Prince Frederick, Md., recently revisited the parish's past [decade of green initiatives](#) [3], such as upgrading its recycling program, performing environmental audits and instituting "green liturgies" on a semiannual basis.

Other faith communities, including several Catholic parishes, have sought to become better environmental stewards by [achieving GreenFaith sanctuary status](#) [4] through the interfaith group GreenFaith. In 2014, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through its Energy Star program [created a workbook](#) [5] addressing ways religious groups could reduce energy usage in their worship and meeting spaces.

Francis -- who hopes to make the environment [a key issue](#) [6] during his papacy -- will address world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September, as they meet to develop new goals regarding climate change and its impact on global poverty.

[Soli Salgado is an NCR Bertelsen intern. Her email address is [ssalgado@ncronline.org](mailto:ssalgado@ncronline.org).]

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.cafod.org.uk/>

[2] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/preaching-choir-ahead-encyclical-global-warming-worries-Catholics-Christians>

[3] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/parish-diary/one-parishes-attempt-go-green>

[4] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/collaborative-effort-transforms-nj-parish-greenfaith-sanctuary>

[5] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/epa-energy-savings-competition-open-churches>

[6] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/encyclical-environment-stimulates-hope-among-academics-and-activists>

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/papal-statement-climate-change-could-lead-greener-britain>

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**May 9, 2015**

Evangelicals become serious about climate change

Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe presents a scientific-spiritual approach to the environment

By Douglas Todd  
Vancouver Sun

Hundreds of millions of environmentalists will think “it’s about time” when they hear more evangelical Christians are becoming serious about tackling climate change.

If any group has been prone to denying that humans are causing global warming, polls show it is conservative Christians, particularly those who predominate in the Republican-dominated U.S. Congress, not to mention in political spheres in Canada.

However, a Canadian evangelical Christian and climate scientist, educated at the University of Toronto, is challenging the way North America’s influential evangelicals think about the phenomenon causing extreme weather, rising oceans, drought and the melting of glaciers.

Prof. Katharine Hayhoe, whom Time magazine named one of its 100 most influential people, spoke at SFU and Vancouver’s Chan Centre this week, including in a dialogue with the Suzuki Foundation’s Peter Robinson and former Reform party leader Preston Manning (a fellow evangelical).

Hayhoe grew up largely in Eastern Canada never knowing a person who didn’t believe climate change was a human-made problem. So she had a shock when she married American professor-pastor Andrew Farley, and discovered he believed climate change was a hoax.

Awkward. But over the years the couple worked it out. And they eventually co-wrote a book, *A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-Based Decisions*.

She now heads the Climate Change Center at Texas Tech University and has become the leading evangelical voice against human-made climate change.

Cheerful and collaborative despite the hate mail she receives from born-again Christians, Hayhoe's scientific-spiritual approach to the environment was exemplified in a public conversation Canadian author Margaret Atwood took part in last year with Leah Kostamo, director of A Rocha Canada, a largely evangelical environmental organization that co-sponsored Hayhoe's visit to Vancouver.

It's mainly because Hayhoe is evangelical that she's gaining a lot of media attention. The ecology movement has, since the 1970s, had no shortage of advocates. There have been big-name secular activists like B.C.'s David Suzuki and Bob Hunter, and a host of liberal Christians, including Vancouver's Sallie McFague, plus Thomas Berry, John Cobb, Matthew Fox, Bill McKibben, Jurgen Moltmann and Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Last month, Pope Francis also pumped up the volume on Roman Catholicism's battle against climate change.

Francis brought scientists to the Vatican to denounce exploitation of the Earth as an evil and urge action on greenhouse gases. Pundits speculate the pope will use his upcoming trip to the U.S. to convince climate-change-skeptic Catholics, like Republican presidential contender Jeb Bush, to wake up and smell the fumes.

Many desperately hope people like the pope and Hayhoe will make a dent in the way North America's large conservative Christian population has generally opposed steps to reduce carbon use and to switch to cleaner energy. A Pew poll found two of three white U.S. evangelicals did not believe humans are causing the warming of the Earth.

And it's not just U.S. evangelicals. Fraser Valley dairy farmer Dick Kleingeltink, former chair of the B.C. Agriculture Council, is an evangelical Christian who doesn't think about global warming. He told me he is convinced God will save all born-again believers from oblivion.

"One day I'm going to be in heaven, so I don't worry about climate change at all."

Hayhoe, despite her friendly nature, is tough enough to take on such evangelicals about their theological and economic beliefs. That includes Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a member of the evangelical Alliance Church of Canada, and his federal caucus of which half are conservative Christians.

In an interview with Canada's Salvation Army magazine, Hayhoe took apart Harper's statement that "no country is going to take actions (against climate change) that are going to deliberately destroy jobs and growth in their country."

Harper, Hayhoe says, “sets up an implicit straw man that doing something about climate change and renewable energy costs jobs. The reality is that the renewable energy sector is already providing way more jobs for the economy than the fossil fuel sector.”

Adding that “the prime minister’s statement completely ignores that climate change costs jobs and incurs enormous amounts of damages,” Hayhoe explained how increasingly extreme weather in the U.S., including Hurricane Katrina, has cost more than \$50 billion.

“And that’s just tax dollars. We’re not even talking human life here,” Hayhoe said. She urges Canada and the U.S. to join European countries that are transitioning off fossil fuels.

Hayhoe has her work cut out in her country of origin, however. Climate Action Network Europe ranked Canada among the worst of 58 countries in the industrialized world for its failure to combat climate change.

Hayhoe sees a big part of her task as confronting people’s skewed understandings of God.

Evangelicals constantly tell her that God has absolute power, including to usher in an apocalypse, which they believe eclipses anything that humanity could do to the planet.

So Hayhoe counters with scriptures stating that while God created the Earth, Christians have to play an active role as its stewards, as protectors of the Earth, not just its exploiters.

By in effect maintaining humans need to work as “co-creators” with God, Hayhoe is hardly being theologically radical. Her views echo long-held convictions of mainstream Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Jews, not to mention a battalion of spiritual-but-not-religious environmentalists.

Sallie McFague, a Vancouver School of Theology eco-theologian, has long taught that, despite what some Christians believe, God is not a dictator. Instead, McFague says God is a divine lure inviting everything in the universe towards creativity and wholeness.

McFague, author of *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming* (Fortress), was invited to India by the Dalai Lama to explain how all things are connected and that the “unlimited desire” that fuels the market system leads to injustice and is environmentally unsustainable.

David Ray Griffin is another strong liberal Christian voice that has emerged to challenge what he calls the “religion of economism,” in which humans serve the idol of financial growth while ignoring how it’s marching us to ecological catastrophe.

In *Unprecedented: Can Civilization Survive the CO2 Crisis?* (Clarity Press), Griffin describes the way alternative energy sources could be combined to achieve 70-per-cent clean energy by 2035 worldwide.

The acclaimed philosopher of religion and author of 30 books calls for a “full-scale mobilization paralleling that of the Second World War.”

The campaigns three goals, Griffin recommends, should be to:

- Eliminate subsidies of the fossil-fuel industry, which add up to \$502 billion a year.
- Impose an escalating tax on carbon.
- Accelerate the transition to a 100-per cent green economy.

Even though Griffin, who has lectured widely in China, has grave worries about the fate of civilization, he had reason for cautious hope in November, 2014, just as his book was going to print.

That’s when the leaders of the two countries that most contribute to climate change, the U.S. and China, announced an agreement to reduce carbon emissions. Griffin believes the deal could be a game-changer.

The few commentators who did not call the U.S.-China agreement “historic,” Griffin notes, were members of the Republican-controlled Congress; the conservative Christians who act as if humans have nothing to do with climate change.

Katharine Hayhoe, clearly, is not the only person who wants to have a little chat with them.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/Douglas+Todd+Evangelicals+become+serious+about+climate+change/11041157/story.html>

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**May 11, 2015**

250 Rabbis Sign Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis

By Rabbi Arthur Waskow  
The Shalom Center

***Encouraged by Pope Francis’ work, They Call for Vigorous Action***

As of the morning of May 11, 2015, 250 rabbis have signed a Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis, calling for vigorous action to prevent worsening climate disruption and to seek eco-social justice.

The letter was initiated by seven leading rabbis from a broad spectrum of American Jewish life: Rabbi Elliot Dorff, rector of the American Jewish University; Rabbi Arthur Green, rector of the Hebrew College rabbinical school; Rabbi Peter Knobel, former president, Central Conference of American Rabbis; Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, director of the Social Justice Organizing Program

at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.; Rabbi Susan Talve, spiritual leader of Central Reform Congregation, St. Louis; Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of The Shalom Center; and Rabbi Deborah Waxman, president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

The seven wrote their colleagues:

**Our decision to do this arose out of our learning that Pope Francis will this summer issue an encyclical to the Church and the World that will address the climate crisis in the context of worsening concentrations of wealth and power and worsening degradations of poverty.**

**We believe it is important for the spiritual leadership of the Jewish people to speak to the Jewish people as a whole and to the world on this deep crisis in the history of the human species and of many other life-forms on our planet.**

The Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis is below, and after that the present (and still growing) list of signers.

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*We will be undertaking a major effort to do outreach for this Rabbinic Letter to the whole Jewish community and to the world. Please help in this effort by clicking on the "**Donate**" button on the left margin of this page. Write "Climate Letter" in the "Honor Of" box, and your (tax-deductible) gift will be used only for that purpose. -- **Shalom, Arthur***

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*To the Jewish People, to all Communities of Spirit,*

*and to the World:*

*A Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis*

We come as Jews and rabbis with great respect for what scientists teach us – for as we understand their teaching, it is about the unfolding mystery of God’s Presence in the unfolding universe, and especially in the history and future of our planet. Although we accept scientific accounts of earth’s history, we continue to see it as God’s creation, and we celebrate the presence of the divine hand in every earthly creature.

Yet in our generation, this wonder and this beauty have been desecrated -- not in one land alone but ‘round all the Earth. So in this crisis, even as we join all Earth in celebrating the Breath of Life that interweaves us all -- --



-- You sea-monsters and all deeps, Hallelu-Yah.

Fire, hail, snow, and steam, Hallelu-Yah.

Stormy wind to do God's word, Hallelu-Yah.

Mountains high and tiny hills, Hallelu-Yah (*Psalms 148*)

We know all Earth needs not only the joyful human voice but also the healing human hand.

We are especially moved when the deepest, most ancient insights of Torah about healing the relationships of Earth and human earthlings, *adamah* and *adam*, are echoed in the findings of modern science.

The texts of Torah that perhaps most directly address our present crisis are Leviticus 25-26 and Deuteronomy 15. They call for one year of every seven to be Shabbat Shabbaton – a Sabbatical Year – and Shmittah – a Year of restful Release for the Earth and its workers from being made to work, and of Release for debtors from their debts.

In Leviticus 26, the Torah warns us that if we refuse to let the Earth rest, it will “rest” anyway, despite us and upon us – through drought and famine and exile that turn an entire people into refugees.

This ancient warning heard by one indigenous people in one slender land has now become a crisis of our planet as a whole and of the entire human species. Human behavior that overworks the Earth – especially the overburning of fossil fuels --- creates in a systemic planetary response that endangers human communities and many other life-forms as well.

Already we see unprecedented floods, droughts, ice-melts, snowstorms, heat waves, typhoons, sea-level rises, and the expansion of disease-bearing insects from “tropical” zones into what used to be “temperate” regions. Leviticus 26 embodied. Scientific projections of the future make clear that even worse will happen if we continue with carbon-burning business as usual.

As Jews, we ask the question whether the sources of traditional Jewish wisdom can offer guidance to our political efforts to prevent disaster and heal our relationship with the Earth. Our first and most basic wisdom is expressed in the Sh'ma and is underlined in the teaching that through Shekhinah the Divine presence dwells within as well as beyond the world. The Unity of all means not only that all life is interwoven, but also that an aspect of God's Self partakes in the interwovenness.

We acknowledge that for centuries, the attention of our people – driven into exile not only from our original land but made refugees from most lands thereafter so that they were bereft of physical or political connection and without any specific land – has turned away from this sense of interconnection of *adam* and *adamah*, toward the repair of social injustice. Because of this history, we were so much pre-occupied with our own survival that we could not turn attention to the deeper crisis of which our tradition had always been aware.

But justice and earthiness cannot be disentangled. This is taught by our ancient texts – teaching that every seventh year be a Year of Release, Shmittah, Shabbat Shabbaton, in which there would be not only one year's release of Earth from overwork, but also one year's sharing by all in society of the Earth's freely growing abundance, and one year's release of debtors from their debts.

Indeed, we are especially aware that this very year is, according to the ancient count, the Shmita Year.

The unity of justice and Earth-healing is also taught by our experience today: The worsening inequality of wealth, income, and political power has two direct impacts on the climate crisis. On the one hand, great Carbon Corporations not only make their enormous profits from wounding the Earth, but then use these profits to purchase elections and to fund fake science to prevent the public from acting to heal the wounds. On the other hand, the poor in America and around the globe are the first and the worst to suffer from the typhoons, floods, droughts, and diseases brought on by climate chaos.

So we call for a new sense of *eco-social justice* – a *tikkun olam* that includes *tikkun tevel*, the healing of our planet. We urge those who have been focusing on social justice to address the climate crisis, and those who have been focusing on the climate crisis to address social justice.

Though as rabbis we are drawing on the specific practices by which our Torah makes eco-social justice possible, we recognize that in all cultures and all spiritual traditions there are teachings about the need for setting time and space aside for celebration, restfulness, reflection.

Yet in modern history, we realize that for about 200 years, the most powerful institutions and cultures of the human species have refused to let the Earth or human earthlings have time or space for rest. By overburning carbon dioxide and methane into our planet's air, we have disturbed the sacred balance in which we breathe in what the trees breathe out, and the trees breathe in what we breathe out. The upshot: global scorching, climate crisis.

The crisis is worsened by the spread of extreme extraction of fossil fuels that not only heats the planet as a whole but damages the regions directly affected.

- Fracking shale rock for oil and “unnatural gas” poisons regional water supplies and induces the shipment of volatile explosive “bomb trains” around the country.
- Coal burning not only imposes asthma on coal-plant neighborhoods – often the poorest and Blackest – but destroys the lovely mountains of West Virginia.
- Extracting and pipe-lining Tar Sands threatens Native First nation communities in Canada and the USA, and endangers farmers and cowboys through whose lands the KXL Pipeline is intended to traverse..
- Drilling for oil deep into the Gulf and the Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound off the Pacific have already brought death to workers and

to sea life and financial disasters upon nearby communities. Proposed oil drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic threaten worse.

All of this is overworking Earth -- precisely what our Torah teaches we must not do. So now we must let our planet rest from overwork. For Biblical Israel, this was a central question in our relationship to the Holy One. And for us and for our children and their children, this is once again the central question of our lives and of our God. **HOW?** -- is the question we must answer.

So here we turn from inherited wisdom to action in our present and our future. One way of addressing our own responsibility would be for households, congregations, denominations, federations, political action --- to Move Our Money from spending that helps these modern pharaohs burn our planet to spending that helps to heal it. For example, these actions might be both practical and effective:

- Purchasing wind-born rather than coal-fired electricity to light our homes and synagogues and community centers;
- Organizing our great Federations to offer grants and loans to every Jewish organization in their regions to solarize their buildings;
- Shifting our bank accounts from banks that invest in deadly carbon-burning to community banks and credit unions that invest in local neighborhoods, especially those of poor, Black, and Hispanic communities;
- Moving our endowment funds from supporting deadly Carbon to supporting stable, profitable, life-giving enterprises;
- Insisting that our tax money go no longer to subsidizing enormously profitable Big Oil but instead to subsidizing the swift deployment of renewable energy -- as quickly in this emergency as our government moved in the emergency of the early 1940s to shift from manufacturing cars to making tanks.
- Convincing our legislators to institute a system of carbon fees and public dividends that rewards our society for moving beyond the Carbon economy.

These examples are simply that, and in the days and years to come, we may think of other approaches to accomplish these ecological ends.

America is one of the most intense contributors to the climate crisis, and must therefore take special responsibility to act. Though we in America are already vulnerable to climate chaos, other countries are even more so --- and Jewish caring must take that truth seriously. Israeli scientists, for example, report that if the world keeps doing carbon business as usual, the Negev desert will come to swallow up half the state of Israel, and sea-level rises will put much of Tel Aviv under water.

Israel itself is too small to calm the wide world's worsening heat. Israel's innovative ingenuity for solar and wind power could help much of the world, but it will take American and other

funding to help poor nations use the new-tech renewable energy created by Israeli and American innovators.

We believe that there is both danger and hope in American society today, a danger and a hope that the American Jewish community, in concert with our sisters and brothers in other communities of Spirit, must address. The danger is that America is the most flagrant contributor to the scorching of our planet. The hope is that over and over in our history, when our country faced the need for profound change, it has been our communities of moral commitment, religious covenant, and spiritual search that have arisen to meet the need. So it was fifty years ago during the Civil Rights movement, and so it must be today.

As we live through this Shmittah Year, we are especially aware that Torah calls for *Hak'heyl* -- assembling the whole community of the People Israel during the Sukkot after the Shmittah year, to hear and recommit ourselves to the Torah's central teachings.

So we encourage Jews in all our communities to gather on the Sunday of Sukkot this year, October 4, 2015, to explore together our responsibilities toward the Earth and all humankind, in this generation.

Our ancient earthy wisdom taught that social justice, sustainable abundance, a healthy Earth, and spiritual fulfillment are inseparable. Today we must hear that teaching in a world-wide context, drawing upon our unaccustomed ability to help shape public policy in a great nation. We call upon the Jewish people to meet God's challenge once again.

<https://theshalomcenter.org/250-rabbis-sign-rabbinic-letter-climate-crisis>

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**May 12, 2015**

Key advisor blasts US criticism to pope's environmental stance

By Inés San Martín, Vatican correspondent  
Crux

ROME — Pope Francis' closest cardinal advisor on Tuesday blasted "movements in the United States" hostile to the pontiff's forthcoming document on the environment, claiming the criticism is fueled by a form of capitalism protecting its own interests.

"The ideology surrounding environmental issues is too tied to a capitalism that doesn't want to stop ruining the environment because they don't want to give up their profits," said Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga.

Rodríguez is the coordinator of a group of nine cardinals that serves as Pope Francis' informal cabinet.

He said both the church and the wider world are awaiting Francis' ecological manifesto, known as an encyclical letter, "with hope," especially in tandem with a U.N.-sponsored agreement on Sustainable Development Goals and a U.N. summit on climate change in Paris later this year.

Rodríguez spoke at a press conference in Rome to mark the beginning of a general assembly of Caritas Internationalis, a global federation of Catholic charitable groups.

"I have already heard criticism over the encyclical," Rodríguez said at a news conference, referring to reaction in the United States. He called it "absurd" to reject a document that hasn't even been published yet.

Francis' encyclical letter, the first such document even devoted by a pope entirely to environmental themes, is expected to be released in early summer.

But already some prominent American skeptics on global warming and climate change have voiced alarm about the document.

When the Vatican recently co-hosted a environmental summit with the U.N., the Chicago-based Heartland Institute hosted a rump event in Rome featuring speakers challenging both the science of climate change and also the Vatican's partnership with the U.N., on the grounds that some agencies of the global body also support population control.

On Monday, veteran American Catholic writer Russell Shaw published a piece for *Our SundayVisitor* cautioning against "kneejerk antipathy" to the encyclical.

"No papal document in years has received so much prejudicial negative comment before it's been read," Shaw wrote.

During the five-day Caritas gathering that opens Tuesday, leaders of Catholic charitable organizations from around the world will focus on growing inequalities as well as the impact of climate change.

Caritas' work, Rodríguez said, is not merely to aid the victims of poverty, war and natural disasters, but to do so in a Christian spirit.

"We have to remember what Francis says: the Church isn't an NGO, we're the faith in action through charity. We have to pay attention to spiritual poverty too," Rodríguez said.

"[Caritas] wants to help every baptized understand that the goods of this earth are not to be accumulated but made available through service."

Famed Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the founding fathers of the liberation theology movement in Latin America in the 1960s and 70s, urged Caritas to address "the need to provide justice for the poor."

Liberation Theology is a movement that sought to place the Catholic Church on the side of the poor in struggles for social justice.

Gutiérrez complained that people today love to speak about living in a moment of “post-socialism”, “post-capitalism”, “post-industrialization”.

“People today love to be post,” said. “But we’re not living a post-poverty era.”

Pope Francis was scheduled to open the Caritas assembly with a Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on Tuesday.

Beyond Rodríguez and Gutiérrez, other keynote speakers during the five-day Caritas Internationalis will be Ghana’s Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, who helped write a draft of Francis’ environment encyclical; South African Prof. Beverley Haddad, an expert in the intersection of religion and the HIV epidemic; and famed American economist Jeffrey Sachs, a United Nations special advisor.

Rodríguez has served as president of Caritas for two four-year terms and will be replaced during this week’s general assembly. The organization’s secretary general, French layman Michel Roy, was appointed in 2011 and will remain in his post.

The candidates to the presidency are Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, and the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus, Joseph Soueiph.

Several members of the organization have told Crux that Tagle, who hosted a record-breaking visit to the Philippines by Pope Francis earlier in the year, is the strongest candidate coming into the general assembly.

Since 2004, Caritas has been recognized by the Vatican as a “public juridical person” under church law. According to its rules, both the secretary general and the president require an approval from the Vatican prior to their election.

Roy said that beyond choosing a new president, confederation will use the general assembly to define the strategy for the next four years to be implemented at national and regional levels.

Roy listed key aspects of the strategy, including building a poor church for the poor; improving the response to unforeseen emergencies; and long-term strategies for emergencies one can anticipate, such as needs in the Philippines, which is hit by an average of 20 typhoons a year.

<http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/12/key-advisor-blasts-us-blowback-to-popes-environmental-stance/>

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**May 12, 2015**

Pope says environmental sinners will face God's judgment for world hunger

AFP in Vatican City  
The Guardian

[Pope Francis](#) has warned “the powerful of the Earth” they will answer to God if they fail to protect the environment to ensure the world can feed its population.

“The planet has enough food for all, but it seems that there is a lack of willingness to share it with everyone,” Francis said at a mass to mark the opening of the general assembly of the Catholic charitable organisation Caritas.

“We must do what we can so that everyone has something to eat, but we must also remind the powerful of the Earth that God will call them to judgment one day and there it will be revealed if they really tried to provide food for Him in every person and if they did what they could to preserve the environment so that it could produce this food.”

The striking comments from the Argentinian pontiff came ahead of the [upcoming publication of a papal encyclical on the ethical aspects of environmental issues](#) that is eagerly awaited by campaigners for action to address global warming.

An encyclical is a statement of fundamental principles designed to guide Catholic teaching on a subject. It is issued in the form of a letter from the pope to bishops around the world.

Campaigners on climate change believe that a signal from Francis that the church considers global warming a grave danger could influence the global discussion on the severity of the problem, what has caused it and what can be done.

The pope is due to address the UN Special Summit on Sustainable Development in September and the international community will seek to reach a universal agreement on climate change at a summit in Paris in December.

[Climate change](#) sceptics have warned Francis not to take sides in the debate but all the signs so far are that he sees the problem as man-made and as one which can be alleviated by political action.

Caritas is a confederation of 165 Catholic charity and aid groups operating in 200 countries worldwide.

It holds a general assembly once every four years. This year’s meeting, the first under Francis’s papacy, runs to Saturday.

The archbishop of Manila, Luis Antonio Tagle, is tipped to take over from the Honduran cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga as the organisation’s president, the latter cleric having served the maximum two terms.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/12/pope-environmental-sinners-will-face-god-judgment>



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**May 14, 2015**

How will the world react to Pope Francis's encyclical on climate change?

By Neil Thorns  
The Guardian

Whatever the Pope says in his highly-anticipated climate message it will present challenges - not just for climate sceptics, but for all Catholics, on how we should act to protect our environment and the world's poorest people

“Do you think people will listen to Pope Francis on this?” a journalist asked me recently. The easiest answer is, who isn't listening to [Pope Francis](#) at the moment?

The subject in question is climate change, as the Holy Father gears up to release a [much-anticipated Papal encyclical](#) – a letter to Catholics everywhere – that will consider care for creation, sustainable development and the impact that climate change is having on the world's poorest people.

The expectations for this document are huge. I attended a meeting this month at the Vatican to prepare for its release, chaired by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, which brought together scientists, faith leaders, businesses, NGOs such as Cafod and politicians. (There was a certain irony in an institution set up to ensure there would not be another Galileo ‘mistake’ holding this conference on climate change while the [modern day naysayers to the science](#) tried to cause a distraction outside.)

The mixture was a good one; the scientists know the facts but can't say what should be done, and faith leaders are not scientists but can bear testament to the effect climate change is having on the poor communities they serve.

Regardless of their faith, every single person who attended the meeting, alongside the general public, is looking to the Pope to drive momentum and create an atmosphere where world leaders will act on climate change, looking beyond national borders and our immediate generation.

As United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-moon – his presence further testament to the influence the encyclical is already wielding – told delegates: “We are the first generation that can end poverty, but the last that can take steps to avoid the worst impact of climate change.”

If Ban is right and climate change is the defining issue of our time, then the Church must reflect and speak on the signs of the times, just as it did during the industrial revolution when it called for workers' rights and freedom of association, or when it spoke on the need for peace in the post-world war two era.

And yet, whatever the Pope says on the subject is likely to present a challenge to us all.

An encyclical is not a scientific document, rather one that explores a particular issue in the light of Catholic social teaching. Yet the Pontifical Academy of Science has thoroughly investigated the research, producing its own documents on topics such as glacier retreat, and it is clear that we must take on board what the science is telling us.

In September, the Pope will travel to the US, where he'll address the United Nations, as world leaders gather to agree a new set of goals that will define development work for the next 15 years. He'll also travel to Washington, where he'll become the first Pope ever to address the US Congress.

Estimates suggest around a third of Congress are Catholic – yet many have been vocal in their climate scepticism. How will they cope when presented with the unassailable truth that their faith calls them to care about creation, and the impact that environmental degradation is having on the world's poorest people?

The question of economics is often used to try and deflect the climate debate – with suggestions that challenging the status quo will impede the economic progress of developing countries - but the Vatican discussions this month left us in no doubt that the pursuit of purely economic growth by richer countries is leading to exploitation of natural resources and contributing to a growing chasm between the world's richest and poorest. How will politicians in one of the world's richest countries react if they are asked to step away from a ruthless pursuit of GDP?

What of the US news stations that report on the impacts of climate change with a healthy degree of cynicism – how will they choose to cover the Holy Father's words? It seems unfathomable that they will openly criticise the stance he takes, and yet his words and actions will undoubtedly present a challenge to their standard editorial line.

And what of ordinary people? The Catholic community everywhere will be called upon to reflect not just on whether our lifestyles are promoting care for creation, but whether our social, political and economic choices truly promote the interests of the poorest among us.

Pope Francis is not the first pontiff to tackle environmental issues, and nor will he be the last. And while countless sceptics may try and use their own scientific interpretations to detract from his message, the fact remains that the Church's role has always been to consider issues such as these from the viewpoint of humanity, to provide a moral compass that motivates people everywhere to do the right thing and think about how their choices are impacting on the poorest and most vulnerable.

Those protesting outside the Vatican climate meeting proclaimed that they weren't obliged to listen to the Pope on this issue. Perhaps not, but as the Chancellor of the Vatican's scientific academy points out – any Catholic choosing to ignore the encyclical's message will need to have a very good reason for doing so.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/may/14/how-will-the-world-react-to-pope-franciss-encyclical-on-climate-change>

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**May 15, 2015**

## Buddhists Go to the White House

By Hozan Alan Senauke  
Lion's Roar

The streets of Washington DC were lined with blossoms and greenery, the prospect of promise. One hundred thirty Buddhist teachers, monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, academics, and organizers met on Thursday May 14 for the first “White House—U.S. Buddhist Leadership Conference,” the subject at hand being “Voices in the Square—Action in the World.”

While I am ambivalent about a designation of Buddhist “leaders” — and can think of many other friends and elders who could have, should have been in the room—in this event the notion of leadership cuts in two directions. A remarkably diverse group of women and men were meeting to shape a common understanding of how to bring our various Buddhist practices into a troubled world. At the same time there was a unique opportunity to be in dialogue with White House and State Department staff interested in finding Buddhist allies to work on issues of climate change, racial justice, and peacebuilding.

Point person for this all-day event was William Aiken, public affairs director for Soka Gakai International, with help from Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi of Buddhist Global Relief, Dr. Sallie King of James Madison University, the International Buddhist Committee of Washington DC, and Dr. Duncan Ryuken Williams of University of Southern California. With all their respective contacts and networks, this was a remarkable gathering, with wide and unique diversity in race, nationality, gender, and Buddhist traditions.

Beginning with welcomes and a short meditation, the morning program at George Washington University featured brief presentations on some broad and pressing concerns. A video from Mary Evelyn Tucker and a strong analysis by Bhikkhu Bodhi laid out the Four Noble Truths of Climate Change. Rev. angel Kyodo williams of the Center for Transformative Change made the compelling connection between climate justice and racial justice, saying, “We have in our hearts the willingness to degrade the planet because we are willing to degrade human beings.”

Even more briefly we heard accounts of social change work taken on by a half dozen communities and organizations among us. These presentations could have continued productively for days.

After a vegetarian box lunch and a brief time to make new acquaintances in four topical breakout groups, we all strolled a few blocks to meet with staff at the “working White House” of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. There was a quick hand-off to White House staffers of

two Buddhist declarations — one on climate change and another on racial justice. Then followed two and a half hours of staff briefings along with sometimes pointed Q & A between Buddhists and staff.

Our discussants were: Melissa Rogers of the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Partnerships; Dr. Shaun Casey, the State Dept.'s Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs; Rev. Susan Hayward, Interim Director, Religion and Peacebuilding, US Institute of Peace; and Angela Barranco from the White House Council for Environmental Quality (CON).

Three things stand out from the day. First, that we gathered in collective concern for compelling issues that threaten the wellbeing of all sentient beings, not the interests of Buddhists alone. Second, the rich opportunity and frustrating brevity of being with so many friends and allies. Third that in the “working White House” of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, we were able, Buddhist practitioners and White House staff together, to chant the four Bodhisattva vows, beginning with: “Beings are numberless; I vow to save them.”

The organizers' intention and participants' hope is that this would be the first in a series of meetings in Washington. For this first step to lead in a productive direction that must be the case. It is good to meet a first time but it is only through relationship—among ourselves as Buddhist practitioners and with the ear of those in government—that we will accomplish anything and turn to the work of bodhisattvas.

In his eloquent closing words, Jack Kornfield drew our attention to a quotation at the foot of one of our White House briefing pages. He likened it to the teachings of our great and ancient Tibetan teacher Shantideva. But the source is rather different:

“Instead of driving us apart, our varied beliefs can bring us together to feed the hungry and comfort the afflicted; to make peace where there is strife and rebuild what has broken; to lift up those who have fallen on hard times.” —President Barack Obama, February 2008

<http://www.lionsroar.com/white-house-buddhist-leadership-conference-hozan-allan-senauke/#>

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**May 15, 2015**

Pope Francis endorses climate action petition

By Brian Roewe  
National Catholic Reporter

A petition calling for world leaders to address climate change and “drastically cut carbon emissions” received a big endorsement last week in Rome from the pope.

Members of the Global Catholic Climate Movement met with Pope Francis May 6 while in Rome for planning meetings around the upcoming papal encyclical on the environment. During his weekly audience in St. Peter's Square, they introduced their petition and asked for his blessing.

"He was very supportive," Tomás Insua, a Buenos Aires, Argentina, native and co-founder of the group, said in an email. "He even joked that we were competing against his encyclical before it was published."

The [petition](#), released [in late March](#) and addressed to world leaders, reads:

"Climate change affects everyone, but especially the poor and most vulnerable people. Impelled by our Catholic faith, we call on you to drastically cut carbon emissions to keep the global temperature rise below the dangerous threshold of 1.5°C, and to aid the world's poorest in coping with climate change impacts."

On May 7, Msgr. Guillermo Karcher, a papal master of ceremonies, signed the petition on behalf of the pope, as protocol prevents popes from signing such documents themselves. Karcher also presented the six representatives of the Global Catholic Climate Movement with the book *The Energy of the Sun in the Vatican*, a gift from the pope to illustrate the Vatican's commitment to renewable energy as a solution to climate change.

"The Pope's endorsement is a huge thing for us, because we are just starting to promote our climate petition in the Catholic community and his support legitimizes our movement," Insua said.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement [formed in January](#) ahead of the pope's trip to the Philippines. It has grown to a network of more than 100 Catholic organizations worldwide. Among its partners are the Manila archdiocese's Ecology Ministry in the Philippines, Acción Católica Argentina, and Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA). U.S. participants include Catholic Climate Covenant, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Rural Life, and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

The network is seeking 1 million signatures to present to world leaders in December at the Paris climate negotiations, where they are expected to finalize and sign a potential agreement for international action to address climate change.

"Climate change hits the poorest first and hardest, and will leave an unnecessarily dire legacy for future generations," Allen Ottaro, director of the Kenya-based CYNESA, said in a statement. "We Catholics need to step up against climate change and raise a strong voice asking political leaders to take action urgently."

The Rome meetings, held May 6-8, brought together 45 Catholic leaders heavily engaged in environmental issues to brainstorm strategic and collaborative actions to promote the encyclical.

In addition to members of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, participants included several Brazilian bishops, along with representatives of Caritas; CAFOD, the official aid agency of the Catholic church in England and Wales; CIDSE, an alliance of Catholic development agencies; the Sisters of Mercy; and the Columbans.

“We want to make sure that the encyclical and this whole issue is not perceived as climate change is the issue -- that climate change is a symptom of a greater issue,” said Patrick Carolan, executive director of Franciscan Action Network, who attended the meetings. “And the greater issue is our lack of connectedness, our viewing ourselves as separate from creation instead of part of creation.”

As far as actions, the meetings largely targeted three events: the release of the pope’s encyclical, currently undergoing translation and expected in June or July; Francis’ U.S. visit in late September, when he will address Congress and the United Nations; and the Paris climate talks in December.

On June 28, the Catholic environmental leaders are asking churches around the world to ring their bells as a way of saying thank you to the pope for the encyclical. In addition, they have planned a rally in Rome that day and for smaller prayer vigils concurrently held around the world.

Other plans include a meatless Friday campaign and climate pilgrimages to Rome and Paris, as well as smaller, local versions. A prayer vigil in Washington will take place Sept. 23, the night before Francis addresses a joint session of Congress, with supportive vigils held elsewhere around the globe.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement hopes events like these help raise awareness not only of the pope’s encyclical, but of a host of ecological issues.

“In Argentina it is starting to generate excitement, although I would say that most Catholics are still unaware that the eco-encyclical is coming,” Insua said.

In the U.S., much discussion has [preceded the encyclical](#), and it has generated interest outside Catholic circles. Carolan said he planned to meet with representatives of the World Wildlife Fund at some point to talk about the papal teaching document, and that other environmental groups have contacted him about possible collaboration.

“They’ve reached out to us and said that they think that Pope Francis’ encyclical is one of those defining moments in history, this encyclical, and they understand it’s important, even as a secular organization,” he said.

Carolan sees the interest from nonfaith groups as a good thing: a potential avenue to expand the public’s view of climate change from simply a science or environmental issue to an issue concerning faith and morality.

“If they can use the pope’s message to really get the message out to their members, some of whom are Catholic but many of whom are not or not even people of faith ... that this is a moral and ethical and spiritual issue, it might be bringing us all closer together,” Carolan said.

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<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/pope-francis-endorses-climate-action-petition>

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**May 20, 2015**

Nuclear weapons: the greatest threat to the environment

By Thomas C. Fox  
National Catholic Reporter

As the Vatican gets [set to roll out](#) its highly anticipated encyclical on the environment, it is wise to recall the greatest signal threat to the global environment is the explosion of a nuclear weapon. Even one such explosion would significantly alter the world's environment, as the radiation cloud would drift around the planet. An exchange of nuclear weapons -- nearly all such weapons in the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon-possessing nations are many times more powerful than those dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan -- could eradicate most human life on the planet.

[The Vatican is aware](#) of this and has spoken to this issue repeatedly. But with the likelihood growing that the ongoing Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, now wrapping up at the U.N., will end in pessimism and failure to move the nuclear disarmament agenda forward, it becomes imperative that global moral voices speak out against the stockpiling of these weapons. [NCR courageously has condemned](#) the possession of these weapons. The U.S. and Russia, meanwhile, have an estimated 2,500 on "launch-on-warning" alert. (This is human madness 25 years after the end of the Cold War.)

Nuclear disarmament has almost stopped. There are no nuclear disarmament talks between Washington and Moscow. Congress is strongly opposed to nuclear disarmament. So is the U.S. arms industry. Instead of making cuts, the nuclear-weapons-possessing nations are now involved in a new arms race to "modernize" their arsenals, meaning that they are upgrading and replacing warheads with more "precise" weaponry. This is lunacy. This is suicide. The U.S. is spending \$350 billion to modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal in the next 10 years, nearly \$1 trillion in the next 30 years.

While the U.S., Russia, England, France and China cling to their nuclear weapons, their cries to non-nuclear nations to maintain their non-nuclear postures ring increasingly hollow.

Many arms critics say the continued possession of nuclear weapons will eventually lead to their use, by intent or accident. It is only a matter of time -- unless stringent efforts are made to outlaw



and remove these weapons from the planet. To say it cannot be done is to give up and passively give in to the idea of their eventual use.

The world community has outlawed chemical and biological weapons. It is time now time to outlaw and ban nuclear weapons.

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/nuclear-weapons-greatest-threat-environment>

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**May 21, 2015**

The Catholic Case for Tackling Climate Change

By Stephen Seufert  
The Huffington Post

*"Protecting our environment is an urgent moral imperative and sacred duty for all people of faith and conscience."* Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Pope Francis's much anticipated [encyclical on the environment](#) and [address to the UN](#) provides Catholics a rare opportunity to take the lead on presenting the moral argument surrounding climate change. While scientific, economic and political arguments regarding climate change have been made for decades, a moral case has yet to fully materialize. Some climate change deniers, in an effort to avoid a discussion on the morality behind the issue, are using their personal religious beliefs to legitimize their views. Luckily, Pope Francis and Catholics around the world aren't buying into such obtuse arguments on climate change.

A study by the [Yale Project on Climate Change Communication](#) found Catholics believe in climate change more than most other Christian denominations. Furthermore, more Catholics than non-Catholic Christians believe humans are mostly causing climate change. Why is this the case?

First and foremost, Catholics who believe in the common good are always thinking about the poor, sick and marginalized. Furthermore, Catholics think about *why* people are poor, sick and marginalized and take steps to end such suffering. Pope Francis once aptly stated, ["What you think, you must feel and put into effect. Your information comes down to your heart and you put it into practice."](#) This is the core of Catholic moral teachings: using the mind, heart, and body in unison to spread love and joy to those around us.

Morality means making a distinction between right and wrong, good or bad. For Catholics, morality has always been framed in the context of promoting and protecting life. Therefore, will life be promoted and protected when [coastlines erode](#) or [lakes dries up](#)? Ask the residents of Florida and California these questions— for many are already experiencing such environmental challenges. Millions of lives are already being affected by climate change. If nothing is done to curtail or prepare for climate change, millions more will needlessly suffer.

In the United States at least, a confrontational divide between religion and state exists. Such a divide touches every aspect of society: from debates over marriage to traditionally non-partisan issues such as science and how it relates to the environment. Such a divide wasn't always the case.

In the 1950s, Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower inserted the phrase "Under God" into the pledge of allegiance and made "In God we trust" the official national motto. With these measures, it's clear Eisenhower was a deeply religious man. Yet Eisenhower's religious beliefs didn't stop him from signing into law the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or NASA as it's commonly known. By and large, religious beliefs and the pursuit of scientific advancements lived in harmony during the Eisenhower administration.

Today however, NASA is [facing budget cuts](#) due to climate denying elected officials who use their personal religious beliefs to shape national policy. Overseeing NASA is Republican Senator Ted Cruz of Texas— a man who believes [studying earth's atmosphere](#) isn't part of NASA's core mission and who announced his bid for the presidency at a college which [denies evolution and believes the Earth is only six thousand years old](#). In contrast, Pope Francis and the Vatican believe the [theories of evolution and the Big Bang](#) are correct.

Senator Cruz, and those who share his views, constitute a small, vocal minority in government who don't accept the science behind climate change— yet still exert tremendous political and economic influence on the issue.

The question then becomes: will Catholics who believe in the dangerous effects of climate change allow a small group to compromise efforts to promote and protect the common good? Furthermore, even if climate change is found to not be largely caused by mankind's actions, are not the health and safety concerns surrounding climate change enough for concrete action?

A marriage between faith based morality, science and economics could be the final nail in the coffin for climate change deniers. Climate change deniers have [already lost the debate](#) within the scientific community and investors are [increasingly pressuring financial institutions](#) to disclose information on firms which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Prior to a U.N. climate summit last September, the CEO of Apple, Tim Cook, called on [corporations to recognize the environmental impact](#) of the products they sell to consumers.

If scientific and economic leaders are already calling for action on climate change, what will happen if Pope Francis actively petitions 1.2 billion Catholics to take up the cause?

Knowing the influence Pope Francis has over Catholics and non-Catholics, attempts to discredit or downplay the importance of the pope's encyclical on the environment and address to the UN is being vigorously pursued by special interest groups and lobbyists. Climate change deniers recently tried to [persuade the pope](#) that "there is no global warming crisis." Such persuasions have fell on deaf ears from within the Vatican. Perhaps special interest groups and lobbyists are worried about a faith based discussion on the morality of climate change because they know social justice Christians have little interest in money or power, but rather the protection and promotion of life.

Catholics can't miss the opportunity to shape the moral discussion on what to do about climate change. It is not in our nature to let others debate and decide issues which affect the common good. Now is the time for Catholics to stand alongside Pope Francis in his crusade to combat the suffering climate change brings with it.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-seufert/the-catholic-case-for-tackling-climate-change-b\\_7363650.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-seufert/the-catholic-case-for-tackling-climate-change-b_7363650.html)

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**May 22, 2015**

Dominican Sisters of Caldwell fight against climate change

Sisters seek sustainable lifestyles

By Nicole Bitette

New Jersey Hills

**CALDWELL** — The Dominican Sisters across five congregations, including Caldwell, are working together to reduce their carbon footprint and lead more sustainable lifestyles.

The Dominican Sisters have been studying ways to make ecologically sound decisions since the 1970s, according to the Promoter of Justice for the Dominican Sisters in Committed Collaboration, Sister Didi Madden.

Madden said the sisters live more sustainable lifestyles through simplicity.

“Education about saving energy, practices that reduce use of water, electricity, plastics is a regular part of our justice work and so the sisters find new ways of reducing their carbon footprint,” she said.

Specifically, the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell have installed solar panels on their Rosary Hill property and their newest building, Sacred Heart Convent, includes many sustainable initiatives, such as rainwater capture, energy efficient heating and cooling, “green” electric, gardens and bee hives, Madden said.

The sisters have also conducted energy audits and participated in recycling efforts in conjunction with Caldwell University and Mount St. Dominic Academy.

The Dominican Sisters learn information on climate change through an NGO delegate at the United Nations through their involvement with the Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investments and educational programs through the Earth Council, Madden explained.

The Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investments comprises of 40 Catholic institutions, mostly congregations of sisters and priests, who assist investors in engaging with companies,

educating their members and connecting investment activity with Catholic social teaching, according to the organization.

Sister Pat Daly of the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell and executive director of the Tri-State Coalition has been working with companies on climate change since 1988.

“The Community of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Caldwell NJ is lead shareholder in the proposal before ExxonMobil, Chevron, and the Southern Company asking for Green House Gas (GHG) emissions reduction goals,” Daly explained. “We also work with companies on a variety of food and water concerns.”

All of the Dominican Sisters are committed to a corporate stance on climate change. This is just one of two corporate stances the sisters have agreed to.

The stance is an attitude and commitment made by the sisters after much study, conversation and prayer, according to Madden.

“The stance calls us individually, communally, and as congregations to take action and make decisions in keeping with the values outlined in the corporate stance,” she said.

The care of creation is an essential element of living and that is why the sisters get involved because they know that the way people live today is destructive to the environment, Madden added.

“The sisters get involved because they know as we pollute the Earth, the poor and marginalized will impacted in a disproportionate manner and will be at risk for even more extreme poverty, violence and forced migration,” she said. “The sisters get involved because we know that increased suffering of some caused by increased consumerism and exaggerated need for comfort needs to be corrected.”

[http://www.newjerseyhills.com/the\\_progress/news/dominican-sisters-of-caldwell-fight-against-climate-change/article\\_5a91c140-59a8-5c2c-a5d8-c6b9614340ab.html](http://www.newjerseyhills.com/the_progress/news/dominican-sisters-of-caldwell-fight-against-climate-change/article_5a91c140-59a8-5c2c-a5d8-c6b9614340ab.html)

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**May 23, 2015**

Catholics prepare for pope's climate stance

Encyclical expected to underscore social justice, human cost

By Rachel Zoll, Associated Press  
The Columbian

NEW YORK — There will be prayer vigils and pilgrimages, policy briefings and seminars, and sermons in parishes from the U.S. to the Philippines.

When Pope Francis releases his much-anticipated teaching document on the environment and climate change in the coming weeks, a network of Roman Catholics will be ready. These environmental advocates — who work with bishops, religious orders, Catholic universities and lay movements — have been preparing for months to help maximize the effect of the statement, hoping for a transformative impact in the fight against global warming.

"This is such a powerful moment," said Patrick Carolan, executive director of Franciscan Action Network, a Washington-based advocacy group formed by Franciscan religious orders. "We're asking ourselves, 'What would be the best way for us to support the faith community in getting this out and using it as a call to action?'"

Francis is issuing the encyclical by the end of June with an eye toward the end-of-year U.N. climate change conference in Paris. While previous popes have made strong moral and theological arguments in favor of environmental protection, Francis will be the first to address global warming in such a high-level teaching document.

The pope, who will address the U.N. General Assembly Sept. 25 when he visits the U.S., has said he wants the encyclical to be released in time to be read and absorbed before the Paris talks. Advocates are pressing for a binding, comprehensive agreement among nations to curb rising global temperatures, which scientists say are largely driven by carbon emissions.

"People are really putting a lot of weight on this," said Nancy Tuchman, director of the Institute of Environmental Sustainability at Loyola University Chicago. "I think the real hope is that he says it like it is and tells us there has to be a call to action and it has to be immediate."

The institute, which has been working to unite 28 U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities as a common voice on climate change, plans to collect papers from students, faculty and staff with their reflections on the document and how they can be "one of its champions," Tuchman said. A school colloquium on the papers is planned for Sept. 9.

Carolan was among about 40 Catholic leaders who gathered in Rome this month for a strategy meeting organized by the Global Catholic Climate Movement, a network he co-founded which includes organizations representing religious orders, church aid agencies, Catholic social justice advocates and others. The movement started a petition that urges political leaders to take action to curb global warming and plans a prayer vigil in Washington the night before Francis' Sept. 24 address to Congress, where he is likely to touch on environmental protection.

### Challenges planned

His audience at the Capitol will include skeptics on climate change, and like-minded groups are preparing a response to the encyclical.

The Heartland Institute, a conservative Chicago-based think tank that sent a team to Rome last month to warn the pope against the U.N.'s climate change agenda, says it is building relationships with Catholic leaders and planning to distribute reports on sustainable development and challenges to climate science to a Catholic audience.

Jim Lakely, a Heartland spokesman, said since the Rome event, the institute has heard from Catholic groups, bloggers and others "who share our concern that the pope is being misadvised by the United Nations on this complicated scientific issue."

At the same time, however, other Catholics worldwide are mobilizing to echo the pope's words among the faithful.

Catholic Earthcare Australia, the ecology agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, plans an event on the encyclical at the Australian Parliament and will publish a book on the encyclical for use in parishes.

In the Philippines, the Archdiocese of Manila's decade-old ecology ministry is asking bishops to encourage all parishes to ring their church bells when the encyclical is released, among other efforts to highlight the pope's statement, ministry director Lou Arsenio said. Each September, the Manila ecology ministry holds a month of liturgies and church activities on environmental protection called a "Season of Creation."

"The big issue here is that environmental issues are not just about science but about ethics and moral values," said Pablo Canziani, an atmospheric physicist who works with the Argentine bishops' conference.

Canziani, who worked with then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires before he became Pope Francis, recently led a two-day environmental seminar organized for Argentine diocesan priests. Canziani said he and others also hope to incorporate prayers related to the encyclical in the many upcoming Argentine pilgrimages to shrines dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

In the U.S., Dan Misleh, director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, an education and advocacy network that works with the U.S. bishops, is preparing model sermons on the expected themes of the encyclical.

Over the last 15 years or so, Catholic and other faith traditions have been increasingly taking up environmental protection, or what they call creation care, as a moral issue, emphasizing the impact not only on nature but also on poor people who struggle for access to clean water and farmable land and are often the most vulnerable in natural disasters.

However, theologians and secular environmental activists say this stunningly popular pope, who has captured the world's attention, can bring into focus the human toll from climate change in a way few other leaders can.

"The social justice aspect, and the way climate change is going to affect the poor and underprivileged and less privileged — that's not the first thing people think about when they think about climate change," said Lou Leonard, a World Wildlife Fund vice president who specializes in climate change issues. "For those who see this primarily as an issue of polar bears or other impact on species — which is all really important — this is an opportunity to say this is as much a human issue as anything else."

The church, given its reach and structure, also provides an unparalleled network for amplifying calls to reduce global warming.

Bishops' conferences in many countries, including in the U.S., have social justice programs that focus on the environment. Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami, head of the U.S. bishops' domestic justice and human development committee, speaks frequently about Catholic teaching on preserving creation and the impact of climate change on the poor.

Global warming has also emerged as an issue for Caritas International, a confederation of Catholic charitable groups who play a major role in development and disaster relief in more than 160 countries. Caritas leaders worldwide said in a survey released this month that climate change was a top contributor to food insecurity.

Major environmental organizations are also abuzz about the encyclical and have been contacting Catholic groups for guidance. In webinars for them, Carolan has been explaining what an encyclical is. Misleh has cautioned the groups that the pope will be making a theological statement and speaking "as a Catholic, not a member of the Sierra Club."

<http://www.columbian.com/news/2015/may/23/catholics-prepare-for-popes-climate-stance/>

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**May 25, 2015**

Catholics organize to promote pope's climate change message

USA Today

NEW YORK (AP) — When Pope Francis releases his much-anticipated teaching document on the environment and climate change in the coming weeks, a network of Roman Catholics will be ready.

There will be prayer vigils and pilgrimages, policy briefings and seminars, and sermons in parishes from the U.S. to the Philippines.

These environmental advocates — who work with bishops, religious orders, Catholic universities and lay movements — have been preparing for months to help maximize the effect of the statement, hoping for a transformative impact in the fight against global warming.

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<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2015/05/24/catholics-sierra-club-pope-francis-climate-change/27896225/>

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**May 26, 2015**

Encyclical on environment sparks hope among academics, activists

By Thomas Reese  
National Catholic Reporter

The encyclical on the environment, which Pope Francis is expected to release in June or July, is stimulating a great deal of discussion and hope in academia and the environmental movement.

The pope wants to make the environment one of the signature issues of his papacy. As he explained to reporters three days after his election, one reason he took the name Francis was that St. Francis of Assisi is "the man who loves and protects creation."

Conservationists are hoping that the encyclical's attitude toward animals, especially wildlife, will reflect the spirit of St. Francis, according to Lonnie Ellis, associate director of Catholic Climate Covenant.

The encyclical is widely expected to give support to those who attribute climate change to human activity since the pope has already said he accepts this scientific conclusion.

Although popes are clearly not infallible when it comes to science, Francis is the first pope to have a modern scientific training: He was educated as a chemist and worked as one in Argentina before he entered the seminary.

Christiana Peppard of Fordham University said she hopes the encyclical will affirm that "contemporary science is a marvelous way of knowing the world and that it represents a collective, collaborative way of discerning important realities about the Earth that we share, and thus that there is zero justification for skepticism of climate change among Catholics."

"The climate crisis is an issue of unparalleled urgency," says Dan DiLeo of the Catholic Climate Covenant. "Scientists generally agree that there is a closing window of opportunity within which to avoid runaway and largely irreversible human-forced climate change."

But the encyclical will, of course, need to be about more than science.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Sr. Nancy Sylvester has worked for a number of years on climate change concerns. One thing she has learned is that "data alone will not convert people. We need to 'feel' differently about Earth. Doing what Pope Francis does so well, I'd like to see him frame the issue in a pastoral way."

This pastoral approach would speak "to a new relationship to Earth that sees all beings as partners and interconnected," she continued. "To stress not stewardship but our responsibility with all of life to work together for not only our survival, but our flourishing as a planetary community. To bring new metaphors and symbols to how we think and feel about who we are on this our Earth home."

But the encyclical also needs a theological foundation.

Walter Grazer said he hopes the pope "will place our concern for the environment within the theological framework of the Trinity, Genesis and the prophetic tradition." Grazer, a consultant on religion and environment, is a former manager of the Environmental Justice Program at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Many Catholics wonder why the church is getting into this issue, and it would be helpful for them to know that our ecological concern flows from our theology. Catholics see "the Trinity as relational and social," Grazer said, and "all of creation and life reflects this relational and social notion -- so all creatures are intimately linked and share kinship."

But, he said, "while Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI strongly called for a respect for the integrity of nature, it was always qualified by references of nature ultimately in service to humans."

"I hope the encyclical will stress that nature and the rest of creation has an integrity of its own as a creation of God," he said. "This does not mean a diminishment of the unique and special place of humans in creation or a hands-off approach, but rather a call for an even greater respect and intimacy with nature and a less instrumental notion."

This is a major concern of Dan Scheid of Duquesne University. "The one thing I would most like to see is for Francis to describe a vision of the common good that is non-anthropocentric and that sees caring for the environment not only as a concern for the poor and for future generations, but also because human flourishing is only possible as part of a flourishing planet and cosmos," he

said. "I would like to see 'human ecology' and 'natural ecology' unified back into what many religious orders describe as a concern for the 'integrity of creation.' "

Scheid would like the encyclical "to move beyond dominion and stewardship models and closer to 'partnership' models of ecological theology that celebrate the commonalities between humans and nonhumans." And "since mercy has been a prominent theme of his, I would love it if he expressed the call to be merciful to the Earth and to nonhumans."

Mercy Sr. Margaret Farley of Yale University agreed that the encyclical needs to offer a new perspective on the relationship between humans and nature.

"From relations primarily of utility, domination, exploitation, nature-human relations may instead be based on the intrinsic value inherent in each, and in all non-living, living, non-human, and human beings," she said. "The relationship is one of interdependence, participation and, for humans, the possibility of conscious gratitude and awe."

What is said about the environment also needs to be connected to Catholic social teaching about the common good, solidarity, and concern for the poor. Farley notes that this teaching has helped people recognize that "ethical claims for justice and care" apply "not only in one's own group but in relation to all peoples, including future generations."

*Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council is a good place to start for the new encyclical, said Dolores Christie of John Carroll University. "There is good stuff in the tradition, but it needs to be applied explicitly to critical contemporary issues. A ravaged Earth is not sustainable." DiLeo argued, "Ecological degradation compromises the Catholic commitment to protect and defend human life and dignity, especially of the poor and vulnerable."

According to Peppard, "an ethical-theological treatment of shared, vital environmental goods, like freshwater," would be helpful. It should articulate "responsibility across geographic space and chronology (including duties to future generations)."

Vince Miller of the University of Dayton said, "Just as Catholic social doctrine teaches that no person exists without society, we need to also learn that our species does not exist without the rest of creation."

According to Tobias Winright of St. Louis University, "how climate change and related environmental issues connect with other important concerns, including war and peace, economics, and health care," needs to be articulated in the encyclical.

Ron Pagnucco of the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University agreed on the importance of discussing the environment, conflict and peace, since environmental degradation is a "threat multiplier."

The relationship between the environment and the economy is especially important, noted Catholic Climate Covenant's Ellis. "Environmentalists are looking to the pope for continued linkages to poverty and impact of degradation on the poor," he said.

Jesuit Fr. James Keenan of Boston College would also "like to see the sustainability issues related to climate change woven into issues related to economic inequality."

Environmental problems are also connected to racism, said Alex Mikulich of Loyola University New Orleans. And M. Shawn Copeland of Boston College notes that "it would be important to consider the connection between the desire to dominate the earth/cosmos and domination of women."

One of the reasons environmentalists are embracing religion is because it is one of the few things that can motivate people to sacrifice their own self-interest for the sake of others.

David Cloutier of Mount St. Mary's University calls for a "forthright confrontation with so-called lifestyle choices."

"It's all the choices we make that cause the per capita carbon footprint of the average American to be roughly twice that of most European countries, and that cause the insanity of California lawns and water-thirsty agriculture," he said. "I'm all for better laws and structures, but until we stop expecting strawberries in February, spacious living quarters, and large SUVs, I'm not sure how those structures change."

Likewise, Scheid said he hopes for Francis to deliver "a critique of consumerism and a 'scrap culture' or 'throwaway culture' that uses and then discards as trash people, especially the poor; created goods; and the Earth as a whole. I hope he ties the preferential option for the poor and solidarity with ecological concerns."

Grazer said he hopes the pope "will call upon the larger and more wealthy nations to lead and make the sacrifices needed to make urgent progress regarding climate change, and in particular, helping the most vulnerable people and nations mitigate and adapt to climate change."

The pope "needs to call for much greater leadership on the part of wealthier nations and also for sufficient changes in personal and corporate lifestyle, moving away from consumerism," Grazer said.

But Miller of Dayton University stressed that structural change, not just individual choices, is essential. "Our moral and Christian obligation is not simply to change our consumption as individuals, but to collectively build a culture/society/civilization that is sustainable," he said.

It requires "a broadening of moral responsibility to care for creation from individual choice to the larger, structural policy responses that are required to address the environmental crises we face," he said. "Yes, greed is a problem, but environmental despoliation is cooked into the system we have built."

Peppard agreed that "market processes are not morally trustworthy guides to long-term flourishing of the physical bases on which all life depends" because the markets are oriented "towards short-term profit and economic growth without a recognition of natural capital as a substrate of those developments."

How people and governments respond to the encyclical will be critical.

"The theology of the encyclical is important," said Marian Diaz of Loyola University Chicago, "but the implementation or the lack thereof matters more."

The encyclical is being prepared in advance of the Paris talks on climate change, to be held Nov. 30-Dec. 11.

"It would be good for Pope Francis to set a higher standard and urge nations to be bolder in adopting a broader and more meaningful agreement," Grazer said. "It would be good if he called for full funding for the Green Climate Fund. That would help send a message that the poor of the world will not be left to handle climate impacts on their own. They did not cause the problem, but they do end up paying the price."

Winwright noted that since few people read encyclicals, the teaching of "our vocation to serve and protect creation" needs to be tied to "the one practice that most of us regularly participate in: the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of Christian life in this world."

Keenan said he hopes the pope will specifically "appeal to institutions, including Catholic ones, to look to their own internal practices and policies and to their investments to see whether they promote economic equity and environmental sustainability."

Lisa Cahill of Boston College and Peppard said they hope the pope encourages ecumenical and interreligious cooperation and learning on the environment.

Jesuit Fr. John Langan of Georgetown University said that since "environmental issues, like politics in general, is intensely local," after the encyclical is issued, "business leaders [should] be positively involved in discussions of the issues."

"This is one way of preventing the dismissal of environmental proposals," Langan said. The lack of such local discussions, he said, "limited the effectiveness of 'Economic Justice for All,' " the 1986 pastoral letter issued by the U.S. bishops' conference.

The encyclical has already triggered "reflection and conversation about our natural world and climate change among Americans of many faiths," said Jeremy Symons, senior director for climate policy at the Environmental Defense Fund. "It's a welcome conversation, because protecting the natural world and caring for our children's future are matters that touch all parts of our lives."

Edwin Chen of the Natural Resources Defense Council said that when the encyclical comes out, it "will elevate the church's powerful voice on the moral imperative of advancing justice, defending human dignity and protecting the poor and the most vulnerable among us."

"It is our duty to do all we can to secure a peaceful and safe planet for this and all future generations," Chen said. "We expect his message will resonate in every corner of the world."

We will have to wait and see if the encyclical fulfills the expectations of academics and activists. They are eagerly waiting for it and will have lots to say about it.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a senior analyst for *NCR*. His email address is [treesesj@ncronline.org](mailto:treesesj@ncronline.org).]

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/encyclical-environment-sparks-hope-among-academics-activists>

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**May 27, 2015**

Awaiting ecology encyclical, Catholic groups prepare for pope's message

By Dennis Sadowski  
Catholic News Service



WASHINGTON (CNS) — Few papal encyclicals have been as eagerly awaited as Pope Francis' upcoming statement on the environment.

While no date other than early summer for its release has been announced, anticipation is building among Catholics as well as non-Catholics and advocates for the environment. Based on the pope's past statements, they expect the document will call people to protect human life and dignity through greater appreciation and preservation of God's creation.

What Pope Francis is expected to say has its roots in God's creation of the world, Dan Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, told the First Friday Forum of Lorain County in Elyria, Ohio, in early April.

"Pope Francis is first a priest and a pastor," Misleh explained. "He is a Catholic Christian who is reflecting on and articulating the best of our tradition.

"Let us remind ourselves that our creation care tradition goes back to Genesis, not Earth Day. Let us remind ourselves that this ancient teaching is the teaching that was familiar, too, and articulated in new ways by Jesus Christ, reinforced by the witness of St. Francis, expounded upon by St. Thomas Aquinas as well as by St. John Paul and especially Pope Benedict, the 'green pope.'

"Let us remember that what Pope Francis is offering here and will offer in the encyclical is not new teaching, but a new application of that old teaching," Misleh said.

That understanding has made it easier for organizations such as the U.S. and Australian Catholic bishops' conferences, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic advocacy groups and local environmental ministry programs to prepare resources for disseminating and implementing the pope's message.

Representatives of Catholic organizations told Catholic News Service they are not only preparing for active study of the encyclical in parishes and schools, but that they are hopeful the document will open doors with leaders of other faiths and religious traditions, secular environmental groups and policymakers in the U.S. and around the world.

The encyclical and follow-up programs also are being seen as a way to build momentum for Pope Francis' first U.S. visit in September and move world leaders to reach a climate change pact during the U.N. Climate Change Conference meeting in Paris Nov. 30-Dec. 11.

"We want to ensure as best we can that this encyclical is not just written and stuck on a shelf in a library and discussed only by theologians and others in schools. We want this to be a call to action," said Patrick Carolan, executive director of the Franciscan Action Network.

Carolan will be in Rome May 6-8 to meet with representatives of the Global Catholic Climate Movement to discuss how they can best develop and share resources based on Pope Francis' message. A handful of GCCM members were to meet with Pope Francis as well during an audience May 6.

Meanwhile, organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Climate Covenant and Catholic Rural Life are working on joint programs as well as complementary resources to share the pope's document.

The bishops will discuss steps to spread the encyclical's message during its spring meeting in June in St. Louis.

"As with any encyclical, I think the conference is going to give an analysis, a read of it, provide some content for people who want to get to know the document," said Mark Rohlena, director of the bishops' Office of Domestic Social Development and its Environmental Justice Program.

CRS planned to highlight its work around the world in communities already affected by climate change, said Joan Rosenhauer, executive vice president for U.S. operations for the agency. "We want to lift up those stories to illustrate what the Holy Father is talking about," she told CNS.

"He's been talking about the intersection of the environment and humanity and the dignity of every person and care for the poor," Rosenhauer explained. "We can illustrate what he has been talking about."

CRS unveiled a new page on its website April 22, Earth Day, offering elementary school programs, a prayer and links to other resources in preparation for the encyclical.

The Catholic Climate Covenant is developing a series of videos outlining the church's long teaching tradition on the environment. Misleh said they will be part of an online and social media effort the organization is planning.

In addition, Misleh and his staff are planning to send homily aids to parishes as a way to encourage priests to discuss the encyclical at Masses.

Around the world, church organizations and Catholic environmental advocates also are preparing educational programs, pamphlets, study guides, classroom aids and special events to introduce and share Pope Francis' message.

"The encyclical just ups the ante in every sense, which is energizing and wonderful. It provides great impetus," said Jacqui Remond, national director of Catholic Earthcare Australia, the ecological program of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Remond told CNS the office is working with Caritas Australia to host an information session on the encyclical in August at Parliament House for all elected officials. She called such sessions crucial to helping policymakers understand the church's teaching and the need to act to protect creation.

The real effect of the encyclical will be felt locally in parishes, schools and neighborhoods.

Father Robert Sanson, senior parochial vicar at St. Peter Parish in North Ridgeville, Ohio, is expecting to use the encyclical as a way to share the church's teaching with parishioners who may not be familiar with it.

"I hope to be able to carefully articulate the difference between the church's moral position and political posturing that creates so much divisiveness," he said. "We have to raise the issues of fracking, of capital punishment, of ethical investing and hope they will create a conversation as Pope Francis has asked us."

Sister Jean Verber, a member of the Dominican sisters in Racine, Wisconsin, said it will be important for parishes to engage their members so they better understand why and how Pope Francis is calling each person to take better care of the world.

"The pope has a very significant role to play here it all goes well," she said. "It's very important that people know this and it's one of the ways to engage them."

<http://cnstopstories.com/2015/05/27/awaiting-encyclical-catholic-groups-prepare-for-popes-message/>

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**May 28, 2015**

Pope Francis' Integral Ecology

By Dave Pruett,  
Former NASA researcher; Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, James Madison University  
Huffington Post

*"The age of nations is past. The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to build the earth."*  
**-- Teilhard de Chardin**

There's a new term being bandied about, and it's high time we paid heed: *integral ecology*.

Whenever the same notion arises synchronously in a number of different contexts -- in this case the Catholic Church, the Occupy movement, the climate movement, and the new-economy movement -- it's an idea whose time has arrived.

Rumor has it that integral ecology is the central theme of Pope Francis' encyclical on ecology and climate, due out at the end of summer. Encyclicals, "the highest and most comprehensive level of teaching in the Catholic Church," are the primary instruments by which the Church advises its 1.2 billion members on pressing moral issues.

The impending encyclical has already generated considerable media buzz, much of which can be followed at the website of the [Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#). Moreover, *Teilhard Perspectives*, the semiannual publication of the [American Teilhard Association](#) (ATA), has dedicated its most recent edition to providing background and commentary on integral ecology.

(For those unfamiliar, Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), whose quotation begins this essay, was a Jesuit paleontologist-priest whose influence on Christian thought, some believe, is second only to that of St. Paul.) The lovely [lead article](#), by ATA president John Grim, deserves to be read in its entirety. Here, I'll summarize and offer a few complementary perspectives and quotations.

Integral ecology begins with the recognition that humanity now faces existential crises on multiple fronts: extreme economic disparity, increased competition for resources including land and water, a severely degraded natural world, failing nation states, and a climate on the verge of spinning out of control.

The "integral" in integral ecology is what's new. It realizes that these crises are not independent, but closely intertwined. Here's how Grim puts it:

... Francis will likely bring together issues of social justice and economic inequity into relationship with our growing understanding of global climate change and environmental trauma. ... While economic analysis is not the central agenda of his encyclical, it appears as if Francis will consider how relentless growth through capital investment both adversely affects the poor and the health of biological life on the planet. While discussions about social justice have been robust in Catholic and Christian contexts for centuries, this encyclical marks the first time social and eco-justice are brought into close relationship.

In her blockbuster environmental manifesto [This Changes Everything](#), Naomi Klein states bluntly: "Climate change isn't an 'issue' to add to the list of things to worry about, next to health care and taxes. It is a civilizational wake-up call."

Like Francis, Klein connects the dots. "[Effectively addressing climate change] means continually drawing connections among seemingly disparate struggles -- asserting, for instance, that the logic that would cut pensions, food stamps, and health care before increasing taxes on the rich is the same logic that would blast the bedrock of the earth to get the last vapors of gas and the last drops of oil before making the shift to renewable energy."

How did we humans allow our planetary home to fall into such a degraded state? In addition to flaws in ourselves -- primarily greed -- we humans have been operating from flawed economics and flawed theology. Regarding the latter, Klein cites journalist Thomas Sancton:

In many pagan societies, the earth was seen as a mother, a fertile giver of life. Nature -- the soil, forest, sea -- was endowed with divinity, and mortals were subordinate to it. The Judeo-Christian tradition introduced a radically different concept. The earth was the creation of a monotheistic God, who, after shaping it, ordered its inhabitants, in the words of Genesis: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." The idea of dominion could be interpreted as an invitation to use nature as a convenience.

Francis' encyclical will attempt to realign both our economics and our theology to catalyze a more viable future. In doing so, Francis is not freelancing. As Grim's article reveals, somewhat surprisingly, Francis is building upon the insights of his predecessors.

In an 1891 encyclical, states Grim, "Pope Leo XIII strongly affirmed 'the condition of the workers' in which their labor had become a mere commodity in an economic milieu that gave primacy to a free market and unregulated exploitation of workers."

Pope John Paul II similarly addressed the "fundamental error of socialism" as its devaluation of the individual. While reaffirming the dignity of work and of workers, he established that individuals have value independent of their contributions in the sphere of economics.

Francis' immediate predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, recognized that nature should be afforded the same intrinsic value that his predecessors had granted to individuals. "The natural environment is more than raw material to be manipulated at our pleasure; it is a wondrous work of the Creator containing a 'grammar' which sets forth ends and criteria for its wise use, not its reckless exploitation. Today much harm is done to development precisely as a result of these distorted notions."

Thus integral ecology revises the relationship between the human being and the natural world. It recognizes the human as integral to nature rather than nature as subject to human domination. In the words of [Father Thomas Berry](#) (1914-2009), Teilhard's heir-apparent: "The change indicated is the change from an exploitive anthropocentrism to a participative biocentrism. The change requires something beyond environmentalism, which remains anthropocentric while trying to limit the deleterious effects of the human presence on the environment."

Integral ecology also reverses the current economic paradigms, whether capitalistic or socialistic. It envisions an economic sphere that serves the *legitimate* needs of individuals and societies rather than exploiting them to serve the *artificial* needs of the economy. And it demands that the economy respect the finite limits of the natural world.

From Vatican insiders, we know already the broad outlines of integral ecology. One such insider is Cardinal Turkson, former Archbishop of Ghana and current president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Cardinal Turkson lays out four principles that undergird integral ecology, summarized by Grim:

1. The call to all peoples to be protectors of the environment is integral and all embracing.
2. Care for creation is a virtue in its own right.
3. It is necessary to care for what we cherish and revere.
4. A new global solidarity is a key value to direct our search for the common good.

In summary, Francis will call for no less than revolution, not of violence but "a revolution of tenderness, a revolution of the heart." That tenderness of solidarity should extend not only to the earth's poor but to the earth herself. Both have been exploited. Both have been debased. "At such a moment," intuited Berry, "a new revolutionary experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of earth process."

The fates of all peoples are linked, and they are linked ultimately to the fate of the earth. What befalls the earth befalls us all.

*(The author is grateful to Doug Hendren, [the earth's troubadour](#).)*

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-pruett/pope-francis-integral-eco\\_b\\_7460058.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-pruett/pope-francis-integral-eco_b_7460058.html)

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**May 30, 2015**

Pope Francis' climate change encyclical expected to make global impact

By [Ed Stannard](#)  
New Haven Register

Pope Francis' much anticipated encyclical about climate change will make a major impact throughout the Roman Catholic Church and beyond, propelled by the severity of the issue and the pope's personal popularity, say religious and environmental leaders in Connecticut.

According to Mary Evelyn Tucker, who teaches in Yale's schools of [Forestry and Environmental Studies](#), [Divinity](#) and [Law](#), "This is the most important thing that will happen in our lifetime on the environment." Tucker, a Catholic, coordinates the [Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale](#) with her husband, John Grim.

"It's important because this is the moment when the moral and ethical issues of the environmental movement will be visible" and taken seriously in a religious sense, Tucker said. "Science and policy are necessary but not sufficient to solve these problems" of climate change and the related issues of sustainable development and environmental justice, she said.

"We need to see these issues as moral," she said; global warming threatens God's creation, which is sacred.

"The pope's encyclical puts this on another level of moral import," Tucker said.

Release of the encyclical is the first of three events anticipated by environmentalists in and outside the churches. Next will be the pope's speech at the United Nations in September. Then, on Nov. 30, the 12-day-long [U.N. Climate Change Conference](#), known as COP-21, will open in Paris, involving almost 200 nations.

The Rev. James Manship, pastor of [St. Rose of Lima Church](#) in New Haven, said his mostly Latino congregation knows well how pollution and climate change affects their families in nations such as Guatemala and Ecuador, where Chinese mineral mining creates poisonous runoff into drinking water.

"I think there's going to be a little bit for everybody in this encyclical," Manship said. "Climate affects everybody and I think it's going to affect a lot of folks and their family members back home."

Manship said Pope Francis, who is from Argentina, is listened to closely by his Hispanic parishioners. “Anything that the pope has been saying, he’s really been getting us in the church to think in a much clearer ... way about living out our faith.”

Teresa Berger, professor of Catholic theology and liturgical studies at Yale Divinity School, said the world is in an “ecological crisis” and that the pope’s message, expected in June or July, will offer “some guideposts and challenges in terms of how to respond to this crisis.”

While no one knows exactly what the encyclical will say, Berger said “there are some informed guesses to be made because some of the people with whom he has been in conversation on the subject have spoken about the overarching themes.” She said Francis’ message is likely to be directed at both developed and developing nations and will address “the tension between legitimate desires for better standards of living and the issue of sustainability.”

She said three things are coming together: “a charismatic pope ... with a huge appeal, an environmental crisis that demands everybody’s attention” and “the fact that he is taking charge ... at a time when other institutions are grappling with this important issue.”

However in a church of 1.2 billion followers, there are those “who are a bit worried about the position the pope will take,” Berger said. “Not everybody ... is enthusiastic about this.”

This month, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the [Vatican](#) secretary of state, called for a development model that combines economic growth with low-carbon, energy-efficient technology, according to The Associated Press.

“When the future of the planet is at stake, there are no political frontiers, barriers or walls behind which we can hide to protect ourselves from the effects of environmental and social degradation,” Parolin said at a conference of business and church leaders. “There is no room for the globalization of indifference, the economy of exclusion or the throwaway culture so often denounced by Pope Francis.”

Parolin continued, “We can foster economic growth and mitigate climate risk at the same time. In fact, this is the only way to achieve long-term, sustained economic growth, and through it to alleviate poverty for the millions of souls that need, demand and deserve it.”

Deacon Art Miller, executive director of the [Office of Black Catholic Ministries in the Archdiocese of Hartford](#), said the poor are most vulnerable because “those who live in impoverished environments more often than not live in places where there is more pollution.”

But he said the issue is “deeper than that. ... There are no walls against polluted air. What happens everywhere affects everywhere.

“I’m worried about the community, both the poor who are underserved but [also] the Earth” and everyone who lives on the planet, Miller said.

UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN CONTRIBUTION

Environmentalists outside the Catholic Church are looking forward to Francis' encyclical, as well.

"There's been quite a bit of buzz about it," said Pam Arifian, a member of the [United Church of Christ](#) and director of the Environmental Justice Center at [Silver Lake Conference Center](#) in Sharon.

"The UCC has taken a stand a long time ago about understanding the human contribution to climate change and understanding our response as people of faith to mitigating and solving the problem," Arifian said.

Reducing carbon emissions, the major cause of global warming, is a matter not only of saving the climate but of justice, Arifian said. Often it is the poor and those in the inner city who live closest to aging, carbon-emitting power plants and are denied access to clean air and water. "Those who suffer the most are the ones who are on the front lines and (in) the lower-income communities, who can't just pick up and move," she said.

At a [conference at Yale](#) in April, Dean Peter Crane of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies made the connection between climate change and environmental justice. "The encyclical will re-emphasize that the world's most vulnerable people shoulder the greatest environmental burdens — and that it is the health and daily lives of the poor that are, and will be, most impacted by environmental degradation," he said. Crane added, "The encyclical will give new prominence to the ethical and moral dimensions of environmental degradation — including climate change."

Terri Eickel, director of the [Inter-Religious Eco-Justice Network](#) in Connecticut, said she believes the encyclical will have a major impact. Francis is "not afraid to speak very boldly and very plainly," she said.

Eickel, a member of [First Baptist Church in West Hartford](#), said the environment is a moral issue that is based in Scripture. She cited John 3:16, which begins, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son," and Psalm 24, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it." She noted that the verses refer to the whole world, not just people.

"They are both holistic and all-encompassing," Eickel said. "They make a point to not just say 'mankind.' We as people have become so accustomed to see ourselves as the pinnacle of everything." On the other hand, we are stewards who are given responsibility to care for the Earth, she said.

Eickel also said she believes the pope's ability to communicate, including in social media, will help bring wide attention to climate change, especially among younger people, for whom the environment is a primary issue. "If we are not addressing an issue like climate change, which is so important to young people today ... they look at us as religious communities and wonder where our moral relevance is," she said.

"The man has credibility at this point, so when he speaks clearly about an issue like this, I think people are going to listen," Eickel said.



This is not the first statement by a pope on the environment, but it's expected to have the largest impact because of the problem has become critical and because of Francis' wide popularity.

Pope Paul VI was the first to address the issue in 1972 in [a statement](#) to the Stockholm Conference on the Environment called "A Hospitable Earth for Future Generations."

<http://www.nhregister.com/general-news/20150530/pope-francis-climate-change-encyclical-expected-to-make-global-impact>

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## June 2015

Earth Keeper Newsletter

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=ad971c16e9&e=a758405790>

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## June 2015

Green Church Newsletter

[http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com\\_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=61&key=d85c0949d324a6a6fcffa5a0ef53788c&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f](http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=61&key=d85c0949d324a6a6fcffa5a0ef53788c&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f)

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## June 2, 2015

"Cultivating and Caring for Creation," 12 new on-line videos and study guides in anticipation of Pope Francis' coming encyclical, "Praised Be," on the environment (unconfirmed publication date: June 16, 2015).

Green Spirit Television

***"Cultivating and caring for creation is God's indication given to each one of us not only at the beginning of history; it is part of His project; it means nurturing the world with responsibility and transforming it into a garden, a habitable place for everyone."** Pope Francis.* World Earth Day, 2013.

Produced by greenspiritv.com (GSTV), a participant in romancatholicv.com (RCTV), **"Cultivating and Caring for Creation"** is narrated by Bishop Donald Bolen, chair of Justice and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) and includes content from several Canadian Catholic eco justice leaders.

See the full press release:

[http://fore.yale.edu/files/Cultivating\\_and\\_Caring\\_for\\_Creation.pdf](http://fore.yale.edu/files/Cultivating_and_Caring_for_Creation.pdf)

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**June 3, 2015**

All children deserve a healthy climate

By Mitchell C. Hescox  
Eco Catholic  
National Catholic Reporter

Pope Francis' increasingly powerful statements on global warming highlight that climate action is becoming a growing moral imperative for all people of faith. Why? Because climate action is about saving people.

The pope's highly anticipated encyclical will come after a long history of the Christian community pushing for climate action. And we do so to care for the most vulnerable people -- the people the Bible commands us to care about most.

Francis' many climate-concerned Christian predecessors include the Lausanne Movement (founded by Billy Graham and John Stott), Cape Town Commitment, and the Evangelical Climate Initiative (signed by more than 300 evangelical leaders, including Rick Warren, Bill Hybels and Joel Hunter). These are just a few of the Christians who recognize climate change as both the greatest moral challenge of our time and a great opportunity for hope.

[The recent Vatican climate summit](#) underscored a broad area of agreement between the Roman Catholic community and the evangelical community: Climate action is a pro-life issue.

NCR made that same point [in an editorial last year](#) after the release of the third National Climate Assessment, which, in exhaustive detail, made the case for the reality of human-caused climate change in the strongest terms to date.

Every child, born and yet-to-be born, deserves the promise and holy covenant of clean air and a healthy climate. What's more, every child deserves to reach the fullness of his or her God-given intellectual abilities. If we continue to rely on toxic mercury-emitting, coal-burning power plants, we risk harming our children's achievements.

Today, nearly one out of every six babies born in the U.S. has harmful mercury levels in his or her blood, which can easily affect developing children's brains, causing brain damage, developmental disabilities, neurological disorders, lower intelligence and learning difficulties.

Action to slow warming will protect future generations' mental development and potential, by assuring that human development is healthy and sustainable as we move from dangerous, polluting and highly subsidized fossil fuels to clean, affordable renewable energy. This transition will turn energy poverty into energy prosperity.

Carbon pollution threatens our children's health in many ways. For example, scientists have shown that air pollution from cars, factories and power plants is a major cause of asthma, which has dramatically increased in inner cities, and disproportionately strikes the poor, who are "at least 50 percent more likely to have the disease than those not living in poverty," according to the American Asthma Association.

The American Lung Association said in February that meeting the targets set by the EPA's newly proposed Clean Power Plan "will prevent up to 4,000 premature deaths and 100,000 asthma attacks during the first year implemented (2020), and prevent up to 6,600 premature deaths and 150,000 asthma attacks in 2030, when fully implemented."

We must ensure that our children grow up in healthy environments -- and clean, affordable renewable energy can replace polluting fossil fuels.

Business giants like JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Bloomberg Energy acknowledge that renewable energy is unstoppable. Sustainable clean energy makes economic sense, which is why it's helping to lift billions of people out of poverty. And along the way, it provides clean air, cleaner water and healthy children.

The developing world is deploying renewables over old-fashioned fossil-fuel power. Solar installations are doubling every two years, with developing countries installing renewable energy projects at nearly double the rate of developed nations. In fact, global emissions of carbon dioxide flatlined in 2014, while the global economy grew that same year. It was the first time in 40 years that we experienced a halt or reduction in carbon dioxide emissions without an economic downturn, according to the International Energy Agency.

The energy transition has begun, but we all have an obligation to ensure that it moves forward, with a commitment to the highest possible purpose. The costs of a changing climate are being felt now by all Americans and will be felt with a much more devastating force by future generations, unless we take responsible and moral action today.

In Brazil in July 2013, Francis reflected on the pastoral work of the church in the Amazon basin among the indigenous people and the "forceful appeal for respect and protection of the entire creation which God has entrusted to man." God's creation should not "be indiscriminately exploited, but rather made into a garden," he said.

It's time for Americans of every faith to demand the respect for creation that will foster smart, ethical and affordable policies for climate change adaptation. These policies and plans are needed to secure the safety and prosperity for every one of God's children.

It's time to stop exploiting God's gift of creation and to start tending the garden. Doing so is pro-life.

[The Rev. Mitchell C. Hescox is president and CEO of the Evangelical Environmental Network.]

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/all-children-deserve-healthy-climate>

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**June 5, 2015**

Sustainable Development Goals: Where is the Common Good?

By Kamran Mofid  
Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI)

*(This article is dedicated to the children of the world, the torch bearers of the next sustainable agenda, who are the unfolding story of the decades ahead. May they rise to the challenge of leading our troubled world, with hope and wisdom in the interest of the common good to a better future)*

### **Abstract**

*"Already a billion of us go to bed hungry every night. Not because there isn't enough, but because of the deep injustice in the way the system works."-OXFAM International*

In the year 2000, the world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration: A commitment to a peaceful, prosperous, and just world. The declaration included a set of targets for development and poverty reduction to be reached by 2015. These came to be known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A cursory look at the world today can easily show that the MDGs journey has been nothing but a big disappointment: Where is "a peaceful, prosperous, and just world"? Hopes were raised and hopes have been dashed.

These goals will expire on December 31, 2015, and will be replaced by yet another set of goals, namely the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I would argue that just as with the MDGs, the new proposed SDGs will not change the world for the better, as long as they are guided and inspired by the neo-liberal values and agenda which shaped the MDGs. These values are not compatible with the socio-economic and environmental goals we so desperately need to achieve and implement.

As well as setting goals every now and again, what people need to hear is an account of why there is so much suffering in this world. Why is there such a sickening level of abject poverty and inequality in and between nations? Why is there such a level of global mistrust and injustice? Why is there so much environmental degradation? Why are we told there is not enough money for education, health, sanitation, drinking water and social services, but there is always plenty for military expenditures and waging wars? If we try to answer these questions first, then there would be a greater possibility of attaining those goals.

To find those answers we need to appreciate that the ethos of neo-liberalism is destructive of the very SDGs we are seeking to establish in our relationships in society and with Mother Nature.

The current neo-liberal capitalist paradigm – economic liberalization, marketisation, privatisation, free trade, endless economic growth, profit-maximisation, cost-minimisation, fierce competition, huge bonuses for short-term gains, and more – provide strong incentives to ignore distributive justice and ecological sustainability, the very aims of the SDGs.

When economics and politics are based on the worst aspects of human nature, then societies become riddled with inequality, violence and mistrust.

To try to solve global crises, without first questioning the reasons for their continuing existence, will be a wasted and costly journey to nowhere. As Einstein put it: “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result”.

If the SDGs are to be reached, it requires a different path with a different set of values. Then an answer to these pertinent questions may be found.

**Full article:**

<http://www.gcgi.info/index.php/news/699-where-is-the-common-good-in-the-sustainable-development-goals>

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**June 5, 2015**

About Pope Francis’ Encyclical, “Laudato sii”

By Terri MacKenzie  
Ecospirituality Resources

**WHEN:** The Pope’s highly anticipated first encyclical is expected to be published June 18th, 2015.

**TITLE:** The title is “Laudato Sii” (Be Praised or Praised Be), from St. Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of Creation praising elements of creation and naming them as kin. (How prescient for one untaught in modern science!) Users of my Advent and Lent resources have found quotes from this prayer on most cover pages. *See the entire prayer below.*

Pope Francis’ encyclical is also expected to be given the Italian subtitle: “Sulla cura della casa comune” (On the care of the common home).

**IMPORTANCE:** “Laudato sii” will set a key ethical framework for discussion and policies surrounding climate change ahead of the Pope’s address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress on September 24 and his address to the United Nations Special Summit on Sustainable Development Sept. 25.

The Pope's words will set the moral standard for everyone concerned about climate change, the issue that affects all living beings. He is sure to link Scripture references, care of the poor, and religious responsibility to act to protect creation. Media coverage has already been extensive, with articles and reports both pro and con.

## **RESOURCES:**

Among the resources for those wishing to explore the Pope's encyclical are these two:

- In keeping with the Lent material I have been writing since 2004, I shall provide a 5-session program – “Praised be: On the care of the common home” — for those who wish to integrate Lent's 2016 Scripture readings and the encyclical. It will be available free by November 1st: <http://ecospiritualityresources.com/lent>.
- RENEW International, GreenFaith, and Catholic Climate Covenant are collaborating to produce an in-depth 12-session resource available in English and Spanish this fall: <http://www.renewintl.org/renew/index.nsf/vPages/>. I highly recommend this resource.

## **Canticle of Creation**

O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God, to you belong praise, glory, honor and all blessing.

Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation and especially for our Brother Sun, who brings us the day and the light; he is strong and shines magnificently. O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon, and for the stars which you have set shining and lovely in the heavens.

Be praised, my Lord, for our Brothers Wind and Air and every kind of weather by which you, Lord, uphold life in all your creatures.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water, who is very useful to us, and humble and precious and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire, through whom you give us light in the darkness: he is bright and lively and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Earth, our Mother, who nourishes us and sustains us, bringing forth fruits and vegetables of many kinds and flowers of many colors.

Be praised, my Lord, for those who forgive for love of you; and for those who bear sickness and weakness in peace and patience — you will grant them a crown.

Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death, whom we must all face.

I praise and bless you, Lord, and I give thanks to you, and I will serve you in all humility.

<http://ecospiritualityresources.com/2015/06/05/popes-encyclical-laudato-sii/>

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**June 7, 2015**

## 5 Reasons Pope Francis' Encyclical on the Environment Matters

The first encyclical on the environment in the history of the Catholic Church has its detractors, but it also has the power to inspire meaningful climate action.

By Reynard Loki  
AlterNet

Pope Francis' forthcoming encyclical on the environment has been described as "long-awaited" and "much-anticipated." Indeed, as Peter Smith, who covers religion for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, recently put it: "Rarely in modern times has a major papal pronouncement received so much attention and debate [before it's even been delivered](#)." And why not? In addition to being Francis' first encyclical, it will be the first encyclical on the environment in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

The landmark document is expected to be issued sometime this summer, and perhaps even later this month, with the title "Laudato Sii" ("Praised Be You"), taken from the pope's namesake St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun, which praises God for creation, and the subtitle "Sulla cura della casa comune" ("On the care of the common home"). Published around the year 1224, St. Francis' prayer reads: "Be praised, my Lord, through all Your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun," and continues to praise God for "Sister Moon," "Brothers Wind and Air," "Sister Water," "Brother Fire, and "Mother Earth."

In a speech he delivered in Ireland in March, Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana, the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, which prepared the first draft of the encyclical, said that Laudato Sii "will explore the relationship between care for creation, integral human development and [concern for the poor](#)."

## The pope means business

A papal letter sent to all the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, an encyclical is the second most important type of document issued by popes, after an Apostolic Constitution. Its content carries significant weight, even beyond the church itself. In 1950, Pope Pius XII wrote about the authority of encyclicals in one of his own, Humani generis: "If the Supreme Pontiffs in their official documents purposely pass judgment on a matter up to that time under dispute, it is obvious that that matter, according to the mind and will of the Pontiffs, cannot be any longer considered a question open to discussion among theologians."

Unsurprisingly, popes have used them to help clarify the church's position on a wide range of controversial issues, from birth control and contraception (Pius X), to the Soviet invasion of Hungary (Pius XII) and the Vietnam War (Paul VI). Even before its release, Francis' encyclical is already stirring controversy in the hotly debated arena of climate change.

### **Amid detractors, reframing the climate debate**

While environmentalists are hopeful about the papal message, resistance has been building. The Heartland Institute, a leading American think tank for climate change skeptics, sent a contingency to Rome last month during a U.N.-Vatican summit as a "prebutter" to the encyclical. "We're here to prevent the pope from making the mistake of having the U.N. as an advisor, because he won't be getting the [whole picture](#)," Heartland spokesman Jim Lakely said. He defined global warming as "the combination of abandoning the scientific method to analyze climate change, stacking the deck in favor of climate alarmism, and frankly, outright corruption."

GOP presidential hopeful Rick Santorum wants the pope to refrain from engaging in the climate change debate, saying the pontiff should "[leave science to the scientists](#)." (Francis actually earned a [secondary diploma in chemistry](#) from a technical college in Argentina and worked as a chemist before entering the seminary.) In addition, pro-lifers are concerned that the encyclical will be a backdoor entry to population control, which some environmentalists see as a potent mechanism to save a planet with dwindling resources and a skyrocketing number of humans. "The road the church is heading down is precisely this: To [quietly approve population control](#) while talking about something else," writes Riccardo Cascioli in La nuova Bussola Quotidiana, a widely read Italian Catholic website.

While detractors are lining up against the pope, many welcome the encyclical as a teaching document that reframes the environmental debate — particularly humanity's response to climate change — within the context of morality, along with a call to global action. Considering the failure over the past two decades of world leaders to come to any international climate change agreement, reframing the debate could help: Intended not just for the church and theologians, but for world leaders and the general public, it hopes to tap into something that goes far deeper than carbon trading and limits on greenhouse gas emissions: a duty to God. While atheists may cringe at the thought, for non-believers that idea can simply translate into a moral duty. Simply replace the word "God" with "Earth," and everyone has a seat at the table.

Here are five reasons Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment matters.

#### **1. It builds on the foundation laid down by his predecessors.**

Francis' encyclical is important because it capitalizes on the environmental discourse established by the previous two pontiffs. Pope Benedict, who immediately preceded Francis, is known as the first environmental pope. In a 2011 address to a group of Italian students, the so-called Green Pope said, "Respect for the human being and respect for nature are [one and the same](#)."

Benedict put his money where his mouth was: Not only did he install solar panels on the Vatican and turn the Popemobile into a hybrid electric car, he authorized the Vatican bank to purchase



carbon credits by funding a Hungarian forest, a move that made the Vatican the world's first carbon-neutral country, and also showed the church's support for the economic-based climate change mitigation mechanism that underlies the [Kyoto Protocol](#).

Pope John Paul II, Benedict's predecessor, may not have been as hands-on in terms of improving the Vatican's energy efficiency, but he was keenly aware of the importance of protecting the environment. In 2002, he issued the "Common Declaration of Environmental Ethics," in which he expressed concern about "the negative consequences for humanity and for all creation resulting from the [degradation of some basic natural resources](#) such as water, air and land, brought about by an economic and technological progress which does not recognize and take into account its limits."

## **2. It shows that Africa has a high-level climate champion.**

By making environmental issues a top line item for the world, Pope Francis is being a good representative for his flock: Not only is Africa the region where the church has seen its most explosive growth, it is the [continent](#) most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. (Since 1980, Europe's Catholic population grew by a mere six percent, while the number of African Catholics grew by [238 percent](#).)

"When it comes to climate change Africa is in the eye of the storm," argues Coleen Vogel, a professor at the School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences at University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, South Africa. And it's not just because of Africa's unusually high exposure to climate risks like droughts and flooding. Vogel, one of the authors of the [Africa Chapter](#) of the 4th Assessment Report of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), points out that the continent "has low adaptive capacity making it [particularly vulnerable and exposed](#) because of high rates of poverty, financial and technological constraints as well as a heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture."

Pope Francis has made clear moves to help support outreach efforts in Africa, such as naming, in January, two Africans — Archbishop Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel of Ethiopia and Bishop Arlindo Gomes Furtado of Cape Verde — to the College of Cardinals. Notably, [nine of the 15 new members](#) are from the developing world, reflecting the worldview of the first pope to hail from the global south. "From a global perspective, this is very important," said Patrick Nicholson, a spokesman for Caritas Internationalis, the Vatican's charity arm. "What the pope is saying [to the church] is, go to the peripheries and try to help the most vulnerable communities."

"Consistent with the Catholic notion of the 'preferential [option for the poor](#),' Pope Francis has repeatedly emphasized the [vulnerability](#) of the poor to environmental crises," notes Rabbi Lawrence Troster, founder of Shomrei Breishit: Rabbis and Cantors for the Earth, a multi-denominational network of rabbis and cantors advocating climate change action and environmental justice. "In line with the teachings of every major religion, [the encyclical] will urge leaders to protect from environment-related devastation those who have been 'excluded' from the world economic system."

## **3. It comes at a critical time for the world.**

In his speech in March, Cardinal Turkson pointed out why the release of the document is timely:

The timing of the encyclical is significant: 2015 is a critical year for humanity. In July, nations will gather for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa. In September, the U.N. General Assembly should agree on a new set of sustainable development goals running until 2030. In December, the Climate Change Conference in Paris will receive the plans and commitments of each government to slow or reduce global warming. The coming 10 months are crucial, then, for decisions about international development, human flourishing and care for the common home we call planet Earth.

Jeff Nesbit, former director of legislative and public affairs at the National Science Foundation under the Bush and Obama administrations, argues that "climate change is rapidly becoming the moral issue of our time." He underscores the social dimension of the debate:

People of all ages, from all demographics and all corners of the planet, are beginning to recognize that significant changes are occurring in our ecosystem, and they'd like to see [someone, anyone, do something about it](#). They're beginning to challenge leaders to act boldly. They're learning how to act as low-carbon consumers. They're demanding an end to the fossil fuel age. They're turning a distant threat into a moral cause that demands a much more immediate response from business and political leaders.

Nesbit believes that, because it armed with the moral authority of a hugely popular pope, the encyclical "has the potential to catalyze a great deal of action across the world when it's issued."

#### **4. It helps reduce the rift between science and religion.**

As part of the "encyclical tour" to help ensure that the document has a strong impact leading up to the Paris climate talks, the Vatican has aligned itself with the scientific and global development communities. In April, an event at the Vatican titled "Protect the Earth, Dignify Humanity: The Moral Dimensions of Climate Change and Sustainable Development" helped to establish the parameters of the dialogue for the coming months.

Organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences; the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences; the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a U.N. initiative; and Religions for Peace, an international multi-religious peace advocacy coalition, the event was opened by a speech from U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who pointed out that the major religions represent the third largest category of investors in the world. "I urge you to invest in the clean energy solutions that will benefit the poor and clear our air," he said. "Sustainable development requires sustainable energy for all. I also urge you to continue to reduce your footprint and educate your followers to [reduce thoughtless consumption](#)."

It makes sense that the pope is contributing to a scientific debate: Francis is a Jesuit, a Roman Catholic order of religious men known for its strong connection to the sciences. From discovering the orbital phases of Mercury and writing on non-Euclidean geometry to participating in the discovery of Peking Man and helping found the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Jesuits boast an [impressive scientific record](#) compared to other Catholic

orders. If any pope can help heal the rift between religion and science, it's this one. It was Francis, after all, who said that the Big Bang theory is not inconsistent with Creation, telling an assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences last fall that believers should not view God as "[a magician, with a magic wand](#)."

By helping to bridge the gap between science and religion, the encyclical can help foster a more inclusive dialogue on a host of other scientific queries that may benefit from a theological dimension. There's a reason, after all, that the elusive Higgs boson, an elementary particle in the Standard Model of particle physics that is believed to be the source of all matter in the universe, is nicknamed the "God particle." The late [John Dobson](#), an astronomer and Vedantic monk in the Ramakrishna Order, argued that physicists and priests were essentially seeking answers to the same questions, just in different ways.

## **5. It has a significant reach, even beyond Catholicism.**

You don't have to be Catholic to get behind the basic idea of protecting the environment. And if you don't respect the office of the pope, you still must respect its reach: Francis is the spiritual leader of some 1.2 billion Roman Catholics across the world. In any case, the main points of the encyclical will likely be non-denominational. One of the main themes will be that "the Earth is a gift from God and reflects a divinely ordained beauty and order," posits Rabbi Troster. "This theme is [integral to Christianity](#), Judaism and Islam, which share an understanding of God as a magnificently generous creator."

Troster also asserts that one of the likely directives in the declaration — that humans must act as the stewards and protectors of the Earth — is a view held by all the major religions. "Judaism, Christianity and Islam offer variations on this theme, rooted in Biblical creation accounts and from passages from the Qur'an," he writes. "Hinduism and Buddhism, with their traditional teachings on ahimsa (non-violence), consistently emphasize that it is our dharma (duty) to treat the natural world with respect. The moral imperative to protect the earth is strong across all faiths."

"An essential document for Roman Catholics, the encyclical will also be influential for other Christians and people of all faiths and good will," says Troster. "When the encyclical makes headlines, diverse faith leaders globally will want to highlight their own traditions' eco-teachings. This is good, because over the past two decades, eco-theologians globally have articulated values deeply consistent with the themes that Pope Francis can be expected to share." It will be interesting to see the response he gets when he shares those themes in September during a papal address to a joint session of Congress, which is rife with climate deniers, several of whom [would be president](#).

## **Spirit, courage and faith**

In 2000, the Acton Institute, a religious-based libertarian/conservative public policy think tank, published an essay titled "A Biblical Perspective on Environmental Stewardship," co-authored by Thomas Sieger Derr, a professor of religion at Smith College, and P.J. Hill, then-professor of economics at Wheaton College, among others. "As history has repeatedly shown," the authors

argue, "it is the creative spirit of the human person that permits wise stewardship, and institutions that encourage this spirit are more likely to also facilitate [environmentally sound ends](#)." Their premise raises a fair question: What institution encourages the most creative spirit? Congress? The U.N.? The church?

There are ways a spiritual leader like the pope can offer a fresh viewpoint on the climate issue, particularly when politicians, legislators and international negotiators have failed so miserably for so long. When a discussion turns to the topic of environment, for example, Francis is fond of saying, "God always forgives, man sometimes forgives, but [nature never forgives](#)." It's a shrewd aphorism that presents the climate issue in a different light.

Perhaps it's the perfect time to give the mantle of climate change leadership to the first truly modern pope. "Francis' upbeat, quotable approach and emphasis on charity over doctrine have quickly made him perhaps the [most talked about](#) and admired person on the planet," observed Shawn Tully, an editor-at-large at Fortune, which named the pope No. 1 on its World's Greatest Leaders list last year. And really, who else do we have? President Obama? Ban Ki-moon? Al Gore? No one has the nearly the global reach and respect that Pope Francis does.

During a recent Q&A, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) said, "Too many of the people in Washington do not represent the folks who [elected them](#)." On certain issues, like protecting the Earth/creation, could society be better served by their spiritual leaders than their political leaders? It's certainly worth a try. In the end, addressing climate change through a combination of the two could be productive.

In his earliest days as pontiff, Francis recognized the centrality of environmental stewardship to the future of humanity. Just after his election, he said he chose the name Francis of Assisi because "for me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation. These days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we?"

No matter if you call it creation, Earth, the environment or the Big Blue Marble, by many measures, humanity hasn't been the best caretaker of a planet shared by 7.2 billion humans and many, many billions of other Earthlings who live and die by our decisions. And while Pope Francis' encyclical won't by itself limit the average global surface temperature increase to 2°C — which a majority of scientists agree will prevent the worst effects of climate change — it may have the power to be a spiritual salve that helps loosen the gridlock that has dogged international climate negotiators for the past 20 years.

Speaking at a January 15 press conference, Pope Francis said the last U.N. climate change conference, held in Lima, Peru, in December, "was nothing great. I was disappointed by the lack of courage; things came to a stop at a certain point. Let's hope that in Paris the delegates will be [more courageous](#)." More courage would certainly be good — and perhaps a little faith.

*Reynard Loki is AlterNet's environment editor.*

<http://www.alternet.org/environment/5-reasons-pope-franciss-encyclical-environment-matters>

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**June 8, 2015**

## **INTERFAITH OCEANS Urges Honoring Divine Gift of Oceans on World Oceans Day**

Interfaith Oceans Press Release

### ***Promotes Faith Advocacy to Protect Oceans through Free On-line Resources***

Washington D.C., June 8, 2015 — In support of World Oceans Day, INTERFAITH OCEANS urges churches, mosques, temples and other faith communities to pray with gratitude and celebrate World Oceans Day today to honor the Divine gift of ocean systems, species, and peoples. Contributing to the scores of events happening around the world today, INTERFAITH OCEANS has developed awareness-building resources, including faith-based posters and a wealth of information to enhance community involvement, all available free of cost via [www.oceanethicscampaign.org](http://www.oceanethicscampaign.org) and [facebook.com/interfaithoceancampaign](https://facebook.com/interfaithoceancampaign).

“We did not create the vastness and power of the oceans, and we take them for granted,” says INTERFAITH OCEANS Director Marybeth Lorbiecki. “We depend upon them for breath, food, rain, weather systems, beauty, and relaxation, yet we are harming them faster than they can recover.” INTERFAITH OCEANS (formerly the Interfaith Ocean Ethics Campaign—IOEC) is an ethics campaign bridging faith and science, restoring oceans and their communities. “The coastal poor suffer the most from the devastation to the fisheries, climate systems, and other ocean destruction.” This multi-faith effort encourages religious people to stand up because of shared faith principles to protect the world’s oceans from overfishing, plastics trash, fossil fuel pollution that leads to ocean acidification and so much more. “We hope to get religious congregations outdoors doing hands-on restoration work wherever they are, be it of a beach, river, forest, or prairie.”

Lorbiecki, who is the author of *Following St. Francis: John Paul II’s Call for Ecological Action* (Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014), observed: “I am especially hopeful that with Pope Francis’s upcoming encyclical on caring for creation, Roman Catholics and other people of faith will look in new ways at the intersections of environmental destruction and poverty, and God’s call to care and act in new ways.”

To learn more about World Oceans Day, please visit [www.worldoceansday.org](http://www.worldoceansday.org). To learn more about INTERFAITH OCEANS and the shared spiritual principles upon which the campaign is based, visit: [www.oceanethicscampaign.org](http://www.oceanethicscampaign.org).

For media queries, please contact INTERFAITH OCEANS Managing Director, Farley Lord Smith at 202-590-0771, [farleylord@gmail.com](mailto:farleylord@gmail.com).

**ABOUT INTERFAITH OCEANS:** INTERFAITH OCEANS, formerly the Interfaith Ocean Ethics Campaign (IOEC), works with partners of varying faith traditions, scientific advisers, and ocean conservation organizations to protect and restore ocean systems, species, peoples and cultures. It is dedicated to making everyone, but especially people of faith, more aware of the wonder and interdependency of the oceans with the lives of human beings, and engaging them in the blessed work of caring for them.

**June 8, 2015**

Climate encyclical expected to send strong moral message to the world

By Barbara Fraser, Catholic News Service  
National Catholic Reporter

Lima, Peru -- Pope Francis' upcoming encyclical on ecology and climate is expected to send a strong moral message -- one message that could make some readers uncomfortable, some observers say.

"The encyclical will address the issue of inequality in the distribution of resources and topics such as the wasting of food and the irresponsible exploitation of nature and the consequences for people's life and health," Archbishop Pedro Barreto Jimeno of Huancayo, Peru, told Catholic News Service.

"Pope Francis has repeatedly stated that the environment is not only an economic or political issue, but is an anthropological and ethical matter," he said. "How can you have wealth if it comes at the expense of the suffering and death of other people and the deterioration of the environment?"

The encyclical, to be published June 18, is titled *Laudato Sii* ("Praised Be"), the first words of St. Francis' "Canticle of the Creatures."

Although Barreto was not involved in the drafting of the encyclical, he worked closely with then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio in 2007 on a document by the Latin American bishops' council that included an unprecedented section on the environment.

The encyclical is not expected to be a theological treatise or a technical document about environmental issues, but a pastoral call to change the way people use the planet's resources so they are sufficient not only for current needs, but for future generations, observers said.

The document "will emphasize that the option for stewardship of the environment goes hand in hand with the option for the poor," said Carmelite Fr. Eduardo Agosta Scarel, a climate scientist who teaches at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina and the National University of La Plata in Buenos Aires.

"I think the pope wants us to become aware of this," said Scarel, who was involved in preparatory consultations about the encyclical. "He is aiming at a change of heart. What will save us is not technology or science. What will save us is the ethical transformation of our society."

The pope probably foreshadowed the encyclical during his first public Mass as pope on March 19, 2013, Agosta said. In his homily, he said, "Let us be 'protectors' of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."

Although the document will be published in the wake of a seminar on climate change in April at the Vatican, it will not be limited to that issue and will probably focus on the relationship between people and their environment, Barreto said.

"What the pope brings to this debate is the moral dimension," said Anthony Annett, climate change and sustainable development adviser to the Earth Institute at Columbia University and to the nonprofit Religions for Peace. "His unique way of looking at the problem, which is deeply rooted in Catholic social teaching, resonates with people all across the world."

Annett called the timing of the encyclical "extremely significant."

A month after it is published, global representatives will meet at a conference on financing for development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In September, the pope will address the United Nations at a session that is likely to see the approval of a new set of global development objectives, the Sustainable Development Goals, which include environmental criteria.

And in December, negotiators and world leaders will converge on Paris to finish hammering out a treaty aimed at reducing the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

Some politicians have already questioned the pope's credentials for wading into the issue of climate change, but that is only one of several environmental problems the pope is likely to address, said David Kane, a Maryknoll lay missionary in Joao Pessoa, Brazil, who works with Maryknoll's Faith-Economics-Ecology Program.

The pope has spoken out in the past on the "throwaway culture, both of material goods that we buy and use for a few months and then throw out, and also throwaway people," he said.

Kane hopes the encyclical will help people understand that overusing resources, from forests to fish to water, results in scarcity that can both increase and be exacerbated by climate change. He expects Pope Francis will remind people of the responsibility of caring for God's creation.

"Whether you think climate change is a problem or not, you cannot deny that running out of fish, oil, water and other resources is a really big problem. The solution is a radical change in our concept of what makes a person happy. We need to move away from the idea that the more things we have, the happier we'll be," Kane said.

Barreto expects some controversy once people read the document, because resisting the "throwaway culture" by being satisfied with less means "putting money at the service of people, instead of people serving money."



The encyclical "will have many critics, because they want to continue setting rules of the game in which money takes first place," he said. "We have to be prepared for those kinds of attacks."

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/climate-encyclical-expected-send-strong-moral-message-world>

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**June 8-16, 2015**

Theology, Ecology, and the Word: Notes from Halki Summit

By George Handley  
Home Waters

**Part 1**

June 8, 2015

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/homewaters/2015/06/theology-ecology-and-the-word-notes-from-halki-summit-i.html>

I have arrived this week for the Halki Summit II, a meeting co-sponsored by the Patriarch Bartholomew and Southern New Hampshire University at the island of Halki off of the coast of Istanbul. The topic of the summit is "Theology, Ecology, and the Word: A Conversation on the Environment, Literature, and the Arts." You can read more about the summit [here](#). I intend to provide some observations about it as I attend.

Much of my writing on this blog has been devoted to the intersection between religion, literature, and the environment, and I am currently working on a book that seeks to understand the ecotheological insights of a variety of authors from the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. I have never thought of religion, science, and the humanities as separate spheres. I think it behooves any religious person to find ways to integrate, rather than to separate, different forms of knowledge. To put it in the simplest of terms, I would say that this work, and this summit, is about assessing the extent of the environmental crisis and then seeking to understand where our greatest sources of wisdom and inspiration might come from to assist us in meeting the demands of the crisis. To ignore religion in this quest or to ignore the ways in which the arts and religion can work together to move and shape us is to lose out on our most valuable sources of inspiration. Facts alone do not move us. The reality of environmental degradation and our relationship to it must be woven into the stories we tell and the arts we create in order to understand ourselves and our role in this world. The fact is, the story of the earth is already deeply woven into all religions and virtually all of the arts, but we have not had the eyes to see nor the ears to hear. As the Patriarch Bartholomew says on the conference website, "We fervently believe that any chance of reversing climate change and the depletion of the earth's resources requires first and foremost a radical change in values and beliefs in order that people can include the ethical and spiritual dimension of environmental sustainability in their lives and practices." It is deeply moving to me that he has the visionary understanding that the arts and religion must be seen as complimentary to one another to help in this transformation. Too much is at stake, so the time is ripe for finding common ground, rather than falling back into separate sectarian, partisan, or disciplinary camps.



Most environmentalists (and even many of environmentalism's detractors) rather incorrectly assume that environmentalism is essentially a secular movement that has nothing to do with religion, or that if it does, it is a new embrace of older pagan and non-Western forms of religious practice. This is because it is believed, again against much evidence, that Christianity and environmental stewardship are somehow at odds with one another. I insist on this being a false perception of Christianity because of the history of environmentalism itself and its profound indebtedness to Christian thought (a relationship which is very well documented in David Stoll's recent and fascinating history of the religious origins of environmentalism, [\*Inherit the Holy Mountain\*](#)—highly recommended reading). I also say this because of the decades-long work of many religious communities today, both within Christianity and in many of the other world religions, to act on behalf of shoring up the health of the planet. Certainly the Patriarch Bartholomew, the leader of over 300 million Orthodox Christians, has been at the forefront of this effort, making it clear that environmental degradation is a form of sin because it is a profound neglect and disregard for God's creations. Such degradation is a symptom of our greed, indifference, and pride. You can read about his considerable efforts to preach a return to greater effort and stewardship of the Creation [here](#). Later this month, Pope Francis will be releasing his encyclical about climate change and the environment. As I have noted earlier, the LDS Church has recently created a page in the online Gospel Library devoted to [conservation and stewardship](#). Unfortunately this important work gets overshadowed in the news by our obsession with polarizing social issues. I wish more of my fellow Mormons understood stewardship as a natural extension of their belief rather than as some political agenda you either like or don't like.

I grow tired of being considered an “environmentalist” or of being seen as someone with a pet theme that I am trying to impose on others. I certainly don't relish such a role. I guess I have a hard time understanding why it is not more obvious to everyone that the environment is not some specialized interest or concern, either academically or religiously. It concerns every single one of us, and it pertains to our most deeply held beliefs, whatever they might be. It's really quite simple: whatever passions, dreams, ambitions or hopes we might have for ourselves and for others cannot be realized in a world that is increasingly degraded, polluted, or otherwise compromised in its basic integrity and health. This would suggest simply that such dreams and ambitions should include, rather than ignore or be indifferent to, the well-being of the planet. Most of the world's greatest artistic minds have certainly understood this, as has every single one of the world's religions.

## **Part II**

June 10, 2015

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/homewaters/2015/06/theology-ecology-and-the-word-notes-from-halki-summit-part-ii.html>

I have a few things to report that deserve commentary from the Halki Summit II co-sponsored by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox Church and Southern New Hampshire University. It is an extraordinary privilege to be a part of these conversations.

What kicked it off were two brief speeches, first by the Patriarch himself and then by his chief environmental advisor, Father John Chrissavgiss. In both cases, what they called for was a happier marriage between religion, science, and the arts. The goal is to find means of raising

awareness and heightening motivation to address the environmental crisis and climate change most specifically. On this point the Patriarch called for assistance from artists and critics: “We feel quite comfortable with art; we are very much at home with color and music. Therefore, we believe that you, prominent speakers and precious participants, can assist the world to discern and relearn this vocabulary of art through poetry and literature, through film and sculpture, and through the culture and cuisine of food. We know this because we look to you as images of divine creativity and godly compassion, as reflections of divine imagination and holy innovation. How unfortunate that theology seldom includes poetry or that politics is often void of art. Our plea and prayer for the world is that people may learn to see with the eyes of the photographer, to hear with the ears of the composer, to touch with the hands of the sculptor, to taste with the palate of the hungry child, and to smell the way a bee is attracted to the flower.”

These are stirring words. I love the idea of “holy innovation,” that God is a motivator of creativity, that he is indeed expressed through imagination. We are more spiritually attuned when we are more responsive to the senses, when we strive, like the novelist that Henry James once described who is someone on whom nothing is lost. Father John connected the ambition of the arts to the ambition of religion, that is to act with what Paul calls charity. Father John said: “both [religion and art] express and both profess the deep-seeded nostalgia and at the same time yearning for ‘whatever is true and honorable, whatever is just and pure, whatever is beautiful and grace-filled’ (Philippians 4.8).” And this love of all that is good and beautiful, of course, makes us more sensitive and responsive to the fate of the physical world.

It is an unusual situation, to be sure, to watch an international religious leader spearhead such a conversation out of a profound moral concern for the reality and root causes of climate change. It may prove less unusual after June 18, when Pope Francis will release his encyclical about climate change. Climate change deserves moral attention, not partisan or ideological posturing. I say this because its root causes are based on greed, overconsumption, and stubbornness to innovate and change, and because its consequences are disproportionately suffered by the poor. So it makes perfect sense that believers of all kinds who care deeply about God’s creation would find inspiration from their respective religions to respond and that leaders such as the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Francis seek to use their authority to wake up their members to this new moral problem. The Patriarch noted, “For, if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that far too little has been achieved in terms of people reviewing and reforming their ways, repenting for their destructive impact on the planet and transforming their lifestyle to tread more lightly on God’s creation.”

There are a great deal of issues of concern in the world today and a lot of energy has been spent in the Mormon community over issues of relevance to us and our families. These are not unimportant issues and people have strong and often different opinions on such issues as gay marriage and gay rights, religious freedom, the role of women, and Mormon history and theology. But I think we are too concerned about getting people to agree with our point of view, with arguing over ideas and not concerned enough about building and sustaining communities where all people and all life can flourish. There are over a billion people in extreme poverty. And species are going extinct at unprecedented rates and the climate is warming and heading to disaster. This is not to mention human trafficking and sex slavery that are happening on extraordinary scales all over the globe. So I hope that in all of the energy we expend on issues

that matter to us, we save some of that energy for trying to solve the problems of our planet. Who knows, we might even find ourselves fighting with one another less often. I say this because this kind of work requires building coalitions and working across cultures. I do not say any of this to disparage my many good friends who have very strong feelings about these issues nor do I mean to suggest that these issues don't matter, but I do wish the Mormon commitment to and passion for global problems was more evident.

Mormon belief, it turns out, was not irrelevant to the very first presentation of the day. Terry Tempest Williams, whose environmentalism both stems from and is a reaction to her contemporary Mormon context, spoke the first morning. I can't quite explain how surreal it was to watch the audience listening to stories of the environmental problems in Utah about which Terry has been such an exceptionally important voice. What was especially interesting to me was that Terry insisted on sharing the stage with one of her students in the Environmental Humanities program at the University of Utah, Alisha Anderson. It said as much about Terry as it did about Alisha that she would have insisted on sharing the stage at such a venue with a student. Terry clearly feels that she has found something special in Alisha and Alisha proved worthy of that trust. Alisha spoke and then showed a film that she had made about her art that mourns the loss of the Oquirrh mountains in Salt Lake Valley. This is the mountain range that has all but disappeared due to Rio Tinto's copper mine. It was deeply moving. You can watch it [here](#). I can't say enough good about this film. It is a literary and visual masterpiece and its tone and approach are also masterful. This is environmental art that can teach and inspire many. Many in the international audience were moved to tears, and what was particularly moving to me was knowing that it stems from the convictions of a devout Mormon woman and graduate of Brigham Young University. Terry, of course, knew that Alisha would inspire, and it signaled the possibility of the next generation coming on board with their energy, genius, and wisdom. I know that Alisha represents many young Mormons I know, many of them women as well, who are unusually capable and ready to rise to the occasion of making important contributions to solving the problems we face. I told Alisha, as I do my own students frequently, especially those who seemed touched by a special passion for the environment, that she should follow her passions, magnify her calling, as it were, by building on and expressing her talents, and that she should refuse to allow self-doubt or the occasional raised eyebrows she might get from her fellow members to discourage her.

This is no time to play small, to hide one's gifts, or to apologize for one's compassion for God's creation.

### **Part III**

June 16, 2015

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/homewaters/2015/06/theology-ecology-and-the-world-notes-from-halki-summit-part-iii.html>

The Halki Summit ended after a provocative and fruitful discussion of the role the arts can play in helping religious cultures to address climate change. I still think the most impassioned and well reasoned explanation about how theology, art, and the environment intersect was offered by Father John Chryssavgis at the outset of the summit. He articulated an understanding of the relationship between science and religion that allowed for their differences and for the

mysterious nature of creation itself: “If they are to be true to themselves, both science and religion must accept that every revelation of reality – whether religious or scientific – can only make sense if the world is respected in its mysterious, holistic integrity. Religion and science alike must disabuse themselves of their exclusive, esoteric parlance, which render it difficult, if not impossible, to develop an ecological grammar or vocabulary that would involve all religions and all disciplines.”

This humility that each way of knowing must have manifests itself in respect for the mystery, complexity, and interdependence of all life. And he advocates, rightly, that art serve as a bridge that can help to astonish, surprise, and awake us from customary ways of apprehending the world. The challenge is to see the divine and the earthly in close relation and to learn to see across cultures. The arts are unique in this sense. Often inspired by earthly beauty or divine light, or both, the arts speak across cultures and across beliefs. They help to expand our understanding of community beyond the known and the familiar. This is essential in our quest to find solidarity with others across the globe in our fight to the worst effects of climate change.

What followed over the course of the next three days was a series of keynote addresses and responses from participants, formal and informal. You can see a summary of the participants [here](#). The keynote speakers were often speaking from their strong points, either as artists, environmentalists, or theologians but rarely from all three perspectives at once. Conversation flowed freely, sometimes with strongly held differences of opinion, either about matters of theology or art. Rarely was there disagreement about the problems of the environment. For example, in addition to hearing from Terry Tempest Williams (who was emotionally powerful, humble, and accessible) and Alisha Anderson, whom I have already described, we heard fascinating presentations by James Balog (of Chasing Ice fame) about disappearing glaciers, Raj Patel about finding sustainable solutions to food crises in the developing world. Terry Eagleton, a well known Marxist literary critic who has recently made a turn to defending religion, spoke on his understanding of the human/nature divide based on his best reading of biblical tradition and good reasoning. Timothy Gorringer described the role the arts can play in transforming our culture to become more sustainable.

There was a pattern to discussion topics that ensued, mainly circling around the following questions: What exactly are the theological grounds for caring for the environment and for needing art? What can the arts do? What are their limits? Why, if they are often in a marginal position, can we expect them to make a difference? Is the special moral function of art still something we can believe in? There was no final consensus on these questions. Indeed, some participants seemed dismayed by the disagreement itself. But as I mentioned, there was little disagreement about the urgency and import of changing our culture to respond to the crisis we face. I took considerable inspiration from this fact. This agreement was clearly what brought the group together and kept the conversations, which were intense and prolonged, from devolving into deep ideological divisions. I think there is a lesson in that.

As I have said a few times on this blog before, I have often thought that the true test of character and perhaps of the sincerity of one’s commitment to high principles is how willing one is to be forbearing toward those who see things differently. If the drive is to convince others of your point of view, even to the point of arguing endlessly and needlessly in the face of unchanging

opposition, you will have endless and needless work ahead of you. If instead you can work, at least some of the time, on finding common ground and making the quest about the quest and not about yourself, something good might come of it. The environmental crisis is, of course, the literal common ground we share with one another and is the ultimate test of how well we will do in the test. We have to ask ourselves: Are we more motivated to make a difference for the earth or are we more motivated to demonstrate to others that we are right? The former requires getting our ego out of the equation as much as we can, and it has proved no easy thing for me and most people I know. Indeed, the higher the stakes and the more we know, sometimes we find ourselves less and less tolerant of others and more content to do all the talking.

Don't get me wrong. I am NOT saying we should leave our passions aside or that we should shy away from argumentation when both are necessary to change opinion, to motivate others, and to condemn evil, apathy, and willful ignorance when they are at play. And they almost always are when great problems emerge. But it is also important to understand, when it comes to "solving" environmental problems that complex problems like climate change are not going to be "solved," least of all through simple one-size-fits-all solutions. We can mitigate its worst consequences, but climate change is here to stay. That isn't to say we should shrug our shoulders and do nothing. There is still a great deal at stake, but perhaps it helps to remember that we are all in this together and that no one is without sin, so to speak. And maybe this gives us some pause to consider the value of letting cultures and communities find their own pathway to greater sustainability, rather than engaging in predictable culture wars over religion and science, or over liberal and conservative values. Such debates are not only nauseatingly boring, but they expend needed energy to forge goodwill across cultures. Among our goals for sustainability, we need to figure out how to sustain this kind of energy, since it is vital to our future. I came away from the Halki Summit immensely inspired by the many examples of good will I witnessed and by the extraordinary lifelong efforts made by so many, in so many different cultural, religious, and political contexts, to make a difference.

I have said it before and I will say it again: working for the common ground of our environment has expanded my community and my circle of friends to include many beautiful places and just as many beautiful people. As a Mormon and a Utahn, I have unique perspectives to bring to the table. This was confirmed for me at such an international occasion as this. But as such I also have many opportunities to learn from others and expand my understanding of what the world offers. This in turn expands my own self-understanding. I recommend this kind of work to one and all.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/homewaters/>

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**June 9, 2015**

Sustainability pledge a natural progression for Santa Clara graduates

By Sharon Abercrombie  
Eco Catholic  
National Catholic Reporter

When graduating seniors at Santa Clara University, in Santa Clara, Calif., bid farewell June 13 to their alma mater, many will have signed onto a pledge to carry their school's social and environmental consciousness into their future careers.

Endorsed by seven campus organizations, the [promise](#) [1] is part of the Graduation Pledge Alliance, a global community effort to remind an employee that their jobs can be more than their paychecks and that living green is a moral act. In 2011, the pledge's first year, 135 students signed in agreement.

"I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work," the pledge reads.

Taking the pledge comes as a natural progression for many of the students from their time at the San Francisco Bay Area Jesuit school. Lindsey Kalkbrenner, director of the school's [Center for Sustainability](#) [2], said that SCU has a Career Center whose mission is to "transform education into application for the common good."

"The world is the stage for our students' learning about social and environmental injustices throughout internships, immersion trips, international fellowships and other experiential learning," she told *NCR*.

In the past three years, 60 students have completed a "Careers for the Common Good" course, where they participate in a weekly community-based learning" placement, listen to guest speakers and visit Silicon Valley companies to explore for social and environmental benefits. Another 30 have participated in a Boot Camps program to help them prepare for work in a specific field, such as the electric car industry.

Since 2004, Santa Clara has placed sustainability at center stage for the Bay Area school. That year, administrators formally adopted a sustainability policy, which committed it to improving environmental stewardship, education and outreach throughout the campus. In 2007, its president at the time, Jesuit Fr. Paul Locatelli, signed the [American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment](#) [3]. The pledge holds schools to work toward climate neutrality and to integrate sustainability into its teaching and research, outreach and stewardship.

The school projects it will become climate neutral -- producing net-zero greenhouse gas emissions -- by the end of 2015.

With these actions, fostering earth-mindfulness -- or as the late eco-theologian Passionist Fr. Thomas Berry would say, becoming a "benign presence in the natural world," instead of a "disruptive force" -- has become commonplace in more than 770 courses at the 9,000-student university. Wherever possible, faculty are also encouraged to add ecological teachable moments to their classes by scheduling guest speakers and organizing field trips to local sites and businesses in Silicon Valley putting sustainability into practice.

So far, Santa Clara's efforts are earning national attention.

In August, the Princeton Review named Santa Clara one of 24 colleges on its 2015 Green Rating Honor Roll, a title given to schools receiving the highest score on its sustainable and environmental practices. Santa Clara has ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the publication's 2014 and 2015 lists of the top-50 green colleges.

If there is a better way to save water, build an energy efficient house, or keep garbage out of landfills, "there is nothing we won't try," Kalkbrenner said.

A graduate of Santa Clara with degrees in biology and business administration, Kalkbrenner began in 2006 as the school's first sustainability coordinator. "I had to learn on the job," she said, as there was no precedent for the kind of work she was to do.

By 2012, Kalkbrenner had two staff members and seven undergraduate interns. Her team currently reaches out to every campus entity: from academics, athletics and recreation, to curriculum development, residence life and student involvement.

With California approaching its fourth year of drought, water conservation remains an ongoing concern on campus.

Santa Clara began addressing the situation in 2003 when it first started recycling water. Since then, it has avoided the use of 487.5 million gallons of freshwater due to numerous conservation measures: among them, low-flow toilets, waterless urinals, sink faucet aerators and low-flow showerheads.

In response to the drought, the Center for Sustainability and the student government launched in April a "60 Seconds Less" campaign encouraging students to reduce their shower time by one minute.

In addition, the university has turned off four of its six decorative fountains. The remaining two will continue working but will be converted to recycled water. Sprinklers now run during the night to cut back on water evaporation, and drought-resistant plants are replacing their thirstier counterparts.

Kalkbrenner's work sometimes takes her to unusual campus sites. Earlier this year, a group of faculty, staff and student volunteers joined her in donning lab coats, gloves and special glasses on a visit to the campus recycling center to find out what was happening in the world of garbage.

Their visit was part of a quarterly "waste characterization" session, sponsored by the center to bring home the reality of what goes into the waste stream and how to reduce it through more conscious recycling or composting. In 2013, the campus diverted 58 percent of its garbage from municipal landfills.



The Center for Sustainability has its lighthearted moments, too, but like everything else connected with acting as a “benign presence” on the earth, the moments come with a serious message.

Each January, it sponsors an eco-fashion and recycled art show. The event showcases the talents of SCU students, faculty, staff and alumni. People are invited to design their own fashions from recyclable materials that would usually end up in landfills.

Now a popular spring semester tradition, the show started in 2011 when a student wanted to contrast eco-fashion, which seeks to respect people and the environment, with high-end fashion, which can often lead to exploitation of garment factory workers and pollute water systems with harmful dyes.

At this year’s show, students transformed blue yarn and bottle caps into earrings, conference brochures and a red and white tablecloth into two long skirts, and an old plastic daisy chain into a nifty necklace.

These efforts and others at Santa Clara would likely leave Passionist Fr. Thomas Berry beaming if he were alive today. In them, he would see there is no limit to what can be accomplished in an academic setting when ecology, as Berry said, “becomes the foundation of all courses, all programs, and all professions.”

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/sustainability-pledge-natural-progression-santa-clara-graduates>

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**June 10, 2015**

On the ethics of energy

Just in time for the Pope's eco-encyclical, moral theologians offer guidance on ethical energy production and use

By Bill Patenaude  
Catholic Ecology

A document to be introduced to the Church and the world on Saturday examines the natural environment and energy use through the lens of Catholic moral theology. No, not *that* document by Pope Francis.

This one is authored by five influential theologians from the United States. It was contributed to and reviewed by many other theologians and experts in the natural and social sciences. And while this work has not gotten (nor will likely receive) the attention of Pope Francis’s encyclical, it is exceptionally important. The easy-to-read article offers important ethical considerations to better answer questions about energy production and use.



“Catholic Moral Traditions and Energy Ethics for the Twenty-First Century” is a unique publication in a number of ways, says its lead author Dr. Erin Lothes of the College of St. Elizabeth.

The text is a collaborative effort, which is something of a rarity within the field of moral theology, with its often single-author preference. In addition to Dr. Lothes, Energy Ethics' primary authors are Dr. David Cloutier (Mount St. Mary's), Elaine Padilla (New York Theological Seminary), Dr. Christiana Z. Peppard (Fordham), and Dr. Jame Schaefer (Marquette).

Providing critical commentaries at the start of the project were Drs. Meghan Clark (St. John's University), Christine Firer Hinze (Fordham), Richard Miller (Creighton), Nancy Rourke (Canisius College), and Matthew Shadle (Marymount University).

In addition to the level of collaboration, the document is being made available online at the [Journal of Moral Theology](#), free to anyone interested. It is hoped that this availability will inspire conversations about where we get our energy, how we use it, and how we can plan ahead for a sustainable, equitable use of resources in the future.

“The moral issues around energy use are extremely complex because of the science and economics of individual choices,” said Dr. Lothes. “And they are global in nature. So we wanted a more global perspective, especially from the global south” than any one author could contribute. Dr. Lothes said that the resulting interdisciplinary approach allowed for “accuracy and credibility” in how the natural sciences speak of the benefits and harms—that is, the ethics—of various uses of energy sources.

The essay concludes with suggestions about global leadership and intergenerational responsibility.

“In the past two hundred years,” the document opens, “the rapid extraction and combustion of fossil fuels have contributed to anthropogenic interference in global climate systems, while also increasing net global wealth and some forms of economic development. In the twenty first century, it is now clear that fossil fuel sources have both positive and negative impacts on economies, livelihoods, and environments worldwide. What might formal Catholic teaching and theological moral reflection offer to this situation?”

The remaining 36 pages unpack the answers.

## **Origins and direction**

Energy Ethics originated in an “interest group” led by Dr. Lothes within [the Catholic Theological Society of America](#) [CTSA]. This group on “Discipleship and Sustainability” looked at a range of ecological issues through the Christian understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. The group filled a need within the CTSA when one on climate change, organized by Dr. Schaefer, came to the scheduled close of its work.

Eventually the new Discipleship and Sustainability group sought to contribute to the Catholic understanding of energy ethics by examining the United States' Bishop's [1981 document on energy use](#)—"but in a different context," Dr. Lothes noted. The 1981 document was written in a world where energy scarcity dominated conversations and global warming was not the driving concern that it is today. Thus Energy Ethics connects the bishops' teachings with 21st-century issues.

The authors of Energy Ethics maintained the original foundational principles used by the bishops in 1981 to address energy choices. Those principles are to

- *Cherish and protect life as a gift from God;*
- *Accept an appropriate share of responsibility for the welfare of creation;*
- *Live in solidarity with others for a common good, namely, the sustainability of an abundant Earth;*
- *Strive for justice in society; give special attention to the needs of the poor and members of minority groups;*
- *Contribute to the widespread participation in decision-making processes.*

The authors added a seventh principal, *to employ technological prudence*.

Work on Energy Ethics began in 2007. "We divided up the bishops' statement on energy, and provided commentary/updates," Dr. Cloutier said. "But we also wanted the article to digest the material and go through a peer-review process. ... For me, the most important part of this project is aligning key moral principles with detailed, well-informed prudential judgment. A model for this is the just war tradition—the tradition is valuable because (a) the principles are enumerated clearly (and debated, of course, but you can't debate something that isn't clearly enumerated), and (b) the judgments about the application of the principles have been engaged in detail by people who are knowledgeable about warfare."

In part, Energy Ethics examines the pros and cons of existing fuels—especially "bridge" fuels like natural gas and nuclear energy. It also calls for action for the common good in the long term, for instance by investing in available renewable energies and offering the poorest three billion people of the world clean, convenient ways to heat their homes, cook their meals, and benefit from electric lighting.

### **Hopes for Energy Ethics**

Dr. Cloutier added that he would like Catholic Social Teaching "to develop a comparable seriousness on the issue of energy use, and environmental ethics more generally, and I see the paper as doing exactly this."

Dr. Richard Miller III, Associate Professor of Theology at Creighton University, agrees.

"This paper is one way to quantify the scale and types of change that is needed" to prevent the projected impacts of climate change, he told Catholic Ecology.

Dr. Miller provided the group with an early commentary paper on the use of coal and oil. Like others involved, the project helped focus in an academic setting his concerns about climate change and sustainability. These concerns began in 2007 with talks he attended while in Belgium, and later from learning of flood-control measures on the Thames River to protect London from increased flooding due to sea-level rise. His resulting research culminated in his book *God, Creation, and Climate Change: A Catholic Response to the Environmental Crisis* (Orbis, 2010).

His hope for the reception of Energy Ethics—and of Pope Francis’s upcoming encyclical (as well as the general involvement of the Church in climate talks)—is to show the average person not just the scale of changes needed, “but importantly that it is possible” for these changes to take place for the good of one and all.

A copy of "Catholic Moral Traditions and Energy Ethics for the Twenty-First Century" can be downloaded [here](#).

Ed. Note: Stay tuned for an upcoming post on [Just Sustainability](#), a new book edited by Dr. Peppard with contributions from many of those who worked on Energy Ethics.

<http://catholicecology.net/blog/ethics-energy>

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**June 10, 2015**

Torah, Pope Francis, & Crisis Inspire 300+ Rabbis to Call for Climate Action

Religion News Service

**PHILADELPHIA** – More than 300 rabbis — inspired by the climate crisis, the Torah’s call for a Sabbatical Year of releasing the Earth from overwork, and the impending Papal Encyclical on the climate crisis — have joined their voices in the ***Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis*** — a call to action to prevent further climate-fuelled disasters and work toward eco-social justice.

The Rabbinic Letter was initiated by seven leading rabbis from a broad swathe of American Jewish life: *Rabbi Elliot Dorff*, rector of the American Jewish University; *Rabbi Arthur Green*, rector of the (Boston) Hebrew College rabbinical school; *Rabbi Peter Nobel*, former president, Central Conference of American Rabbis; *Rabbi Mordechai Liebling*, director of the Social Justice Organizing Program at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.; *Rabbi Susan Talve*, renowned spiritual leader of Central Reform Congregation, St. Louis; *Rabbi Arthur Waskow*, director of The Shalom Center; and *Rabbi Deborah Waxman*, president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Movement. They were joined by *Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg*, a leader of the Orthodox community.

More than 300 rabbis from across the denominational spectrum signed in support of the call in less than two weeks, and their numbers continue to grow.

The seven initiators wrote their colleagues explaining:

“Our decision to do this now arose out of our learning that Pope Francis will be issuing an encyclical to the Church and the World that will address the climate crisis in the context of worsening concentrations of wealth and power and worsening degradations of poverty.

“We believe it is important for the spiritual leadership of the Jewish people to speak to the Jewish people as a whole and to the world on this deep crisis in the history of the human species and of many other life-forms on our planet.”

Although the immediate inspiration for the Rabbinic Letter was news that Pope Francis would be sending out an encyclical on the climate crisis, many of the initiators, other rabbis, and many others in the Jewish community have been working on issues of climate change for at least a decade; and the Rabbinic Letter speaks in the language of Torah and draws on the deepest teachings of Jewish text and tradition.

Pope Francis’ encyclical on the climate crisis will be published to the world on June 18. He has entitled it “*Laudato Sii*” [“May the Creator Be Praised”], a phrase from St. Francis of Assisi’s famous prayer celebrating Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and all the other aspects of God’s Creation.

The 333 rabbis speak out especially against certain extremely destructive ways of extracting fossil fuels, including fracking, off-shore drilling in the Arctic, oil trains, and the disproportionate impacts of these practices upon low-income communities and communities of color.

The call also notes America’s impact upon other more vulnerable nations, stating, “America is one of the most intense contributors to the climate crisis, and must therefore take special responsibility to act. Though we in America are already vulnerable to climate chaos, other countries are even more so — and Jewish caring must take that truth seriously.”

The rabbis point out that among these especially vulnerable countries is the State of Israel, which faces the climate crisis impact of massive desertification and rising seas there.

The call suggests that Jewish households, congregations, and institutions move their money away from purchasing their electric power from coal, and purchase wind power instead; and that they shift investments away from fossil fuel producers, which it calls “Carbon Pharaohs” that endanger human beings and bring plagues upon the Earth. It calls on households, congregations, and denominations to move their money instead into life-giving enterprises, including sources of renewable energy.

And it urges that an ancient Torah teaching that the Jewish people assemble every seventh year during the harvest festival of Sukkot be carried out this fall with public assemblies to explore Jewish and multireligious responses to the climate crisis, pointing toward demanding strong governmental action at the international conference on climate due to take place in Paris this coming December.

See the full text and list of signers of the Rabbinic Letter at <https://theshalomcenter.org/torah-pope-crisis-inspire-300-rabbis-call-vigorous-climate-action>

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<http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/06/10/torah-pope-francis-crisis-inspire-300-rabbis-to-call-for-climate-action/>

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**June 12, 2015**

Episcopal-Anglican-Lutheran leadership of Canada, US write to President Obama, Prime Minister Harper

Episcopal News Service

[Episcopal Church Office of Public Affairs press release] Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori has joined with the Episcopal-Anglican-Lutheran leadership of Canada and the United States in a letter to both United States President Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper concerning the review and future of the Columbia River Treaty, drawing attention to its impact on Indigenous peoples and regional residents as well as the implications of climate change for this sensitive ecosystem, the fisheries it supports, and the environmental services it provides.

In writing the letter, Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori joined with: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the Most Rev. Fred Hiltz, Primate, Anglican Church of Canada; and Bishop Susan Johnson, National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

“We hear in this moment the call of God to work for justice and to deepen our practice of living as treaty people,” the four leaders stated in the letter. “In this time of climate change, the United

States, Canada, tribes and First Nations working together to promote stewardship of shared waters would be a sign of hope for a healthier environment and a fairer world.”

*The following is the letter to the President and Prime Minister.*

To President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper

June 11, 2015

We write to you to add our voices to those who are calling for a review of the Columbia River Treaty in order to respect the rights, dignity and traditions of the Columbia Basin tribes and First Nations by including them in the implementation and management of the Treaty, and to include the healthy functioning of the ecosystem as an equal purpose of the Treaty.

On September 23, 2014, you received the Declaration on Ethics and Modernizing the Columbia River Treaty, and the Columbia River Pastoral Letter upon which the Declaration is based. The Declaration sets forth eight valuable principles to consider in the review of the Columbia River Treaty.

As noted in the Declaration, the original treaty only included flood control and hydroelectric power generation as international management purposes of the Columbia River. We stand at a critical moment in history regarding both the renewal of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and the addressing of climate change. In fact, Indigenous rights and climate justice are deeply interrelated. The right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent is enshrined in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The wisdom of Indigenous peoples is vital to addressing the environmental crisis.

We hear in this moment the call of God to work for justice and to deepen our practice of living as treaty people. In this time of climate change, the United States and Canada working together to promote stewardship of shared waters would be a sign of hope for a healthier environment and a fairer world.

Please move forward with negotiations to review the Columbia River Treaty, and thereby provide a respectful, just and sustainable model for stewardship of these vital waters.

Sincerely,

**The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori**

Presiding Bishop and Primate

[The Episcopal Church](#)

**Bishop Elizabeth Eaton**

Presiding Bishop

[Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

**The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz**  
Primate  
[Anglican Church of Canada](#)

**Bishop Susan Johnson**  
National Bishop  
[Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada](#)

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2015/06/12/episcopal-anglican-lutheran-leadership-of-canada-us-write-to-president-obama-prime-minister-harper/>

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## **June 12, 2015**

Pope Francis' encyclical: PIK-scientists to speak in the Vatican and in Berlin

Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

When the much anticipated environmental encyclical will be launched on 18 June, John Schellnhuber, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) will give a speech in the Vatican. He's the only scientist to join Cardinal Peter Turkson for the presentation. In the run-up of the encyclical, Schellnhuber participated in a number of workshops organised by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The document issued by the leader of more than one billion Catholics around the world is expected to be an important signal on the road to a global agreement on reducing greenhouse-gas emissions which will be negotiated by governments at the world climate summit in Paris later this year.

Also on 18 June Ottmar Edenhofer, chief economist of PIK and director of the [Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change](#), together with Bishop Bernd Uhl will discuss the encyclical at the Catholic Academy Berlin in front of likely 250 guests. The atmosphere as a global common will be a central issue here. Edenhofer, too, had been consulted by the Vatican in the run-up of the encyclical. On 1 July, he will debate the Pope's messages with Cardinal Turkson and author Naomi Klein ("Capitalism versus Climate") in Rome.

[https://www.pik-potsdam.de/news/in-short/pope-francis-encyclical-pik-scientists-to-speak-in-the-vatican-and-in-berlin?set\\_language=en](https://www.pik-potsdam.de/news/in-short/pope-francis-encyclical-pik-scientists-to-speak-in-the-vatican-and-in-berlin?set_language=en)

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## **June 15, 2015**

National Sacred Places Prayer Day Coming Up

Indian Country Today Media Network

On June 19, The Morning Star Institute, a national Native rights organization, will hold a respectful observance to honor sacred places, sacred beings, and all who care for them, and protect them from harm.

The National Sacred Places Prayer Day gathering will be held on the U.S. Capitol Grounds in the west front grassy area at 8:30 a.m., and be in the form of a talking circle. The public is welcome to attend, and all are welcome to share words, songs, or a moment of silence for all sacred places, especially those being desecrated now.

Read below for some information on sacred sites currently in danger, and in the news:

RELATED: [Take Oak Flat to a Higher Court: Why US & Canada Fear Human Rights Courts](#)

RELATED: [Havasupai Tribe and Allies Fight to Stop Uranium Mining Near Grand Canyon](#)

RELATED: [NCAI, Tribal Nations, Pearl Jam and Change.org Help Blackfeet Protect Sacred Badger-Two Medicine Site](#)

RELATED: [4 Ways to Show Your Support for Mauna Kea](#)

RELATED: [Navajo Nation Reaches Out to IACHR in San Francisco Peaks Battle](#)

RELATED: [Sacred Blindness II: The Indigenous Eight](#)

Prayers will be offered for the following sacred places, among others:

Antelope Hills. Apache Leap. Badger Two Medicine. Badlands. Bear Butte. Bear Lake. Bear Medicine Lodge. Black Hills. Black Mesa. Blue Lake. Boboquivari Mountain. Bunchgrass Mountain. Cave Rock. Chief Cliff. Coastal Chumash Sacred Lands in the Gaviota Coast. Cocopah Burial and Ceremonial Grounds. Coldwater Springs. Colorado River. Columbia River. Deer Medicine Rocks. Dzil Nchaa Si An (Mount Graham). Eagle Rock. Everglades.

Fajada Butte. Ganondagan. Great Mound (Mound Bottom). Gulf of Mexico. Haleakala Crater. Hatchet Mountain. Hickory Ground. Holy Mountain. Hualapai Nation landforms in Truxton and Crozier Canyons. Indian Pass. Kaho'olawe. Kasha-Katuwe. Katuktu. Kituwah. Klamath River. Kumeyaay Bands Burial and Ceremonial Grounds. Lake Superior. Luiseno Ancestral Origin Landscape. Mauna Kea. Maze. Medicine Bluff. Medicine Hole. Medicine Lake Highlands. Medicine Wheels. Migi zii wa sin (Eagle Rock). Mokuhinia. Moku'ula. Mount Shasta. Mount Taylor. Mount Tenabo. Nine Mile Canyon.

Ocmulgee Old Fields and National Monument. Onondaga Lake. Palo Duro Canyon. Petroglyphs National Monument. Pipestone National Monument. Puget Sound. Puvungna. Pyramid Lake Stone Mother. Quechan Burial and Ceremonial Grounds. Rainbow Bridge. Rattlesnake Island. Rio Grande River. San Francisco Peaks. Serpent Mound. Snoqualmie Falls. South Mountain. Sweetgrass Hills. Sutter Buttes. Tse Whit Zen Village. Tsi-litch Semiahmah Village. Tus Us.



Valley of Chiefs. Valmont Butte. Wakarusa Wetlands. Walking Woman Place. Woodruff Butte. Wolf River. Yucca Mountain. Zuni Salt Lake. Sacred places of all removed Native Nations. All Massacre Sites. All Waters and Wetlands.

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/06/15/national-sacred-places-prayer-day-coming-160726>

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**June 15, 2015**

Pope Francis warns of destruction of world's ecosystem in leaked encyclical

Vatican condemns early release of document in which pontiff calls on people to change their lifestyles and energy consumption or face grave consequences

By [Stephanie Kirchgaessner](#) and [John Hooper](#) in Rome  
The Guardian

[Pope Francis](#) will this week call for changes in lifestyles and energy consumption to avert the “unprecedented destruction of the ecosystem” before the end of this century, according to a leaked draft of a papal encyclical. In a document released by an Italian magazine on Monday, the pontiff will warn that failure to act would have “grave consequences for all of us”.

Francis also called for a new global political authority tasked with “tackling ... the reduction of pollution and the development of poor countries and regions”. His appeal echoed that of his predecessor, pope Benedict XVI, who in a 2009 encyclical proposed a kind of super-UN to deal with the world’s economic problems and injustices.

According to the lengthy draft, which was [obtained and published by L’Espresso magazine](#), the Argentinean pope will align himself with the environmental movement and its objectives. While accepting that there may be some natural causes of global warming, the pope will also state that climate change is mostly a man-made problem.

“Humanity is called to take note of the need for changes in lifestyle and changes in methods of production and consumption to combat this warming, or at least the human causes that produce and accentuate it,” he wrote in the draft. “Numerous scientific studies indicate that the greater part of the global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases ... given off above all because of human activity.”

The pope will also single out those obstructing solutions. In an apparent reference to climate-change deniers, the draft states: “The attitudes that stand in the way of a solution, even among believers, range from negation of the problem, to indifference, to convenient resignation or blind faith in technical solutions.”

The leak has frustrated the Vatican's elaborate rollout of the encyclical – a papal letter to bishops – on Thursday. Its release had been planned to come before the pope's trip to the US, where he is due to address the United Nations as well as a joint meeting of Congress.

Journalists were told they would be given an early copy on Thursday morning and that it would be released publicly at noon following a press conference. Cardinal Peter Turkson, who wrote an early draft of the encyclical, and Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, a noted climate scientist in Germany, were expected to attend the press conference. On Monday evening, the Vatican asked journalists not to publish details of the draft, emphasising that it was not the final text. A [Vatican](#) official said he believed the leak was an act of "sabotage against the pope".

The draft is not a detailed scientific analysis of the global warming crisis. Instead, it is the pope's reflection of humanity's God-given responsibility as custodians of the Earth.

At the start of the draft essay, the pope wrote, the Earth "is protesting for the wrong that we are doing to her, because of the irresponsible use and abuse of the goods that God has placed on her. We have grown up thinking that we were her owners and dominators, authorised to loot her. The violence that exists in the human heart, wounded by sin, is also manifest in the symptoms of illness that we see in the Earth, the water, the air and in living things."

He immediately makes clear, moreover, that unlike previous encyclicals, this one is directed to everyone, regardless of religion. "Faced with the global deterioration of the environment, I want to address every person who inhabits this planet," the pope wrote. "In this encyclical, I especially propose to enter into discussion with everyone regarding our common home."

According to the leaked document, the pope will praise the global ecological movement, which has "already travelled a long, rich road and has given rise to numerous groups of ordinary people that have inspired reflection".

In a surprisingly specific and unambiguous passage, the draft rejects outright "carbon credits" as a solution to the problem. It says they "could give rise to a new form of speculation and would not help to reduce the overall emission of polluting gases". On the contrary, the pope wrote, it could help "support the super-consumption of certain countries and sectors".

The document is not Francis's first foray into the climate debate. The pontiff, who was elected in 2013, has previously noted his disappointment with the failure to reach a global accord on curbing greenhouse gas emissions, chiding climate negotiators for having a "lack of courage" during the last major talks held in Lima, Peru.

Francis is likely to want to influence Republicans in Washington with his remarks. Most Republicans on Capitol Hill deny climate change is a man-made phenomenon and have staunchly opposed regulatory efforts by the Obama administration.

The encyclical will make for awkward reading among some Catholic Republicans, including John Boehner, the Republican speaker of the House. While many Republicans have praised the pope, it will not be unprecedented for them to make a public break with the pontiff on the issue.

of global warming.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/15/pope-francis-destruction-ecosystem-leaked-encyclical>

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## **June 16, 2015**

Archbishop joins faith leaders calling for action on climate change

Archbishop of Canterbury

Archbishop Justin Welby and other faith leaders pledge to fast and pray for success of UN climate summit in Paris.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has joined faith leaders in Britain pledging to fast and pray for the success of key international negotiations over climate change, in a new declaration warning of the “huge challenge” facing the world over global warming.

Representatives of the major faiths, including Archbishop Justin Welby, said climate change has already hit the poorest of the world hardest and urgent action is needed now to protect future generations.

In the Lambeth Declaration, which will be launched tomorrow, signatories call on faith communities to recognise the pressing need to make the transition to a low carbon economy.

The call comes ahead of the international climate change talks in Paris this December where negotiators from more than 190 nations will gather to discuss a new global agreement on climate change, aimed at limiting greenhouse gas emissions from 2020 when current commitments run out.

The Declaration, signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and other faith leaders in the UK, warns that world leaders must agree to reduce emissions to avoid average temperatures rising beyond 2°C, widely considered to be the threshold above which it is considered that the impacts of climate change will be most severe.

The original Declaration was hosted by former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and signed by faith leaders in 2009 ahead of the Climate Summit in Copenhagen.

The Declaration will be launched tomorrow (Wednesday June 17) by the Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam, the Church of England’s lead bishop on the environment, at ecumenical services in Westminster, London, to mark the national lobby of Parliament over the Paris talks.

Signatories include representatives from the Muslim, Sikh and Jewish communities as well as the Catholic Church in England and Wales, Methodist Conference and other denominations and faiths, with more leaders continuing to sign the Declaration.

Hundreds more people are expected to sign up to the declaration as it travels rounds the country during a summer of pilgrimages.

[Read the Declaration and view the signatories on the Church of England website.](#)

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5569/archbishop-joins-faith-leaders-calling-for-action-on-climate-change>

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**June 16, 2015**

Will Pope's Much-Anticipated Encyclical Be A Clarion Call On Climate Change?

By Sylvia Poggioli  
NPR

In April this year, on Earth Day, Pope Francis urged everyone to see the world through the eyes of God, as a garden to cultivate.

"May the way people treat the Earth not be guided by greed, manipulation, and exploitation, but rather may it preserve the divine harmony between creatures and creation, also in the service of future generations," he said.

On Thursday, the Vatican will release the pontiff's hotly anticipated encyclical on the environment and poverty. The rollout of the teaching document has been timed to have maximum impact ahead of the U.N. climate change conference in December aimed at slowing global warming — and has angered climate change skeptics.

Past popes have also spoken about man's duty to protect the environment. Pope Benedict XVI was known as the "Green Pope" for installing solar panels at the Vatican.

Francis has made it clear that he believes climate change is mostly man-made.

"It's man," he said earlier this year, "who has slapped nature in the face."

Safeguard creation, Francis warned — because if we destroy it, it will destroy us.

Statements like these are generating controversy in some quarters. For example, Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum — who is Catholic — believes the pope should focus on problems that Santorum says are more pressing than climate change.

"The church has gotten it wrong a few times on science, and I think that we probably are better off leaving science to the scientists, and focusing on what we're really good at, which is theology and morality," Santorum said.

As a young man, the future pope studied chemistry and worked as a chemist before entering seminary, so he may have more scientific training than most of his critics.

"It's nice — for once the Catholic Church is on the side of science," says the Rev. Thomas Reese, senior analyst for the *National Catholic Reporter*.

The encyclical won't be just about economics and politics, he says, but will focus on a moral issue that could affect many millions of lives.

"This is a call to respond, to help people, to protect people from the disasters that can come from climate change," Reese says. "The pope sees it as one of the most important challenges that we face as humanity."

As the first Latin American pope, Francis warns against what he calls the myth of trickle-down economics and the "throw-away culture" whose primary victims are the poor. As a result, some conservatives have labeled the leading voice of the global south a "closet Marxist."

But Mary Evelyn Tucker, professor of religion and ecology at Yale University, says the pope focuses on inequities in incomes and distribution of resources in societies across the world. She believes the papal document will stress not just sustainability, but development centered on human beings and on justice.

"Not development that allows the poor to sink and the rich to rise," she says, "so this is a new integration called eco-justice."

The title of the document is *Laudato Sii*, or "Praised Be," a refrain from the "Canticum of the Creatures" written in the 13th century by St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of the environment — and the man from whom the pope took his name.

The pope's encyclical, says Reese of the *National Catholic Reporter*, will help rid environmentalists of their image as tree-huggers and Gaia worshippers and bring the movement into the mainstream.

He's also convinced it will have a far-reaching impact, encouraging Catholics to make major changes in what they consume and how they live their daily lives, and inspiring leaders of other religions to pick up the challenge.

"Religion is one of the few things that can motivate people to self-sacrifice — to give up their own self-interest for something else," Reese says. "This is going to be extremely important because people are not going to change their lifestyles to save the polar bears."

Listen to the story:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/06/16/414666357/popes-missive-on-environment-poverty-could-affect-habits-of-millions>

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**June 17, 2015**

Pope Francis is actually bringing America's environmentalism movement to its religious and moral roots

By Mark Stoll  
Washington Post

Pope Francis is set to publish "*Laudato Si'*: On the Care of Our Common Home" on Thursday, the first encyclical on the environment by any pope. U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and many others have expressed hopes the encyclical will put the moral weight of a popular pope and the world's largest Christian church behind meaningful action on environmental problems, such as global warming.

What most Americans seem to have forgotten is that the link between religion and environment is not recent. The relationship between religion and environment goes back centuries, but the original moral and religious inspiration for conservation and environmentalism was forgotten during environmentalism's heyday in the '70s.

The environment is a natural concern for a pope who took the name of Saint Francis of Assisi, patron saint of the environment. The encyclical's title, Latin for "Praised be," is taken from Saint Francis's most popular prayer.

Pope Francis has said that the saint "teaches us profound respect for the whole of creation and the protection of our environment, which all too often, instead of using for the good, we exploit greedily, to one another's detriment."

*Laudato Si'* will restate what previous popes have said on environmental destruction and its impact on the poor, but as an encyclical, the church's highest teaching document, it will have magnified impact.

The encyclical should remind us of American environmentalism's own intensely religious and moral roots, which have mostly been forgotten since the 1960s.

The very issues that Francis will emphasize — sin, the common good, and the harm that greedy exploitation causes society — inspired conservation and environmentalism from their earliest beginnings. Their roots, however, were in the social and religious teachings, not of the Catholic Church, but of Calvinist churches, such as Congregationalism and Presbyterianism.

In early colonial days, Puritans following Calvinist principles established communities across New England. Calvinism put special emphasis on God's presence in the works of nature, and Puritans often went alone into the fields, woods, and hills to pray and meditate.

So that none would be poor, New England towns granted each family a share of land, which religious duty commanded they pass on to future generations in as good or better condition. Towns regulated land and timber use to ensure resources for the future.

By 1830, colonies became states, Puritans became Congregationalists, and New England towns, with their white steepled Congregational churches on the greens, became the very emblem of democracy, prosperity, and moral order.

Congregationalists held their towns up to the nation as models of morality, equity, and sustainability. They spearheaded the first parks movement to provide green space for recreation for all classes.

Most prominent was Frederick Law Olmsted, the great landscape architect who designed New York's Central Park and many other parks and developments. Others advocated forestry and conservation to sustain fertility and preserve resources. Five of the first six heads of the Forest Division (later reorganized as the Forest Service) had New England ancestry, and one of them was a Congregational minister. At the same time, Transcendentalists and others spread the idea of nature as a church, temple, or cathedral where God drew close.

By the 20th century, people raised Presbyterian took over the cause. Less communal and more political, Presbyterians turned the movements for parks and conservation into a national crusade for nature and against sinful greed.

As President Theodore Roosevelt insisted, "Conservation is a great moral issue. I believe that the natural resources must be used for the benefit of all our people, and not monopolized for the benefit of the few." His friend John Muir, the nature writer and parks advocate, said of those who would exploit National Parks, "These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar."

After World War II, Presbyterian-born writers and activists laid the foundations for environmentalism. Rachel Carson, granddaughter and niece of ministers, is said to have started the environmental movement in 1962 with "Silent Spring," which blamed corporate greed for dangerous overuse and misuse of pesticides.

David Brower crusaded against destruction of nature and transformed the Sierra Club into a national environmental organization. Edward Abbey, son of a church organist, railed in his 1968 bestseller, "Desert Solitaire," "Original sin, the true original sin, is the blind destruction for the sake of greed of this natural paradise which lies all around us."

But by 1970, environmentalists were blaming the ecological crisis on Christianity's theology of conquest of nature and dominion over it as a gift of God to humankind to do with as they

pleased. Recoiling, conservative Protestants called environmentalism pagan and anti-Christian. The divide helped create today's political impasse over global warming and other environmental issues.

By highlighting its moral and religious aspects, Pope Francis brings American environmentalism back to its roots. *Laudato Si'* may help ease the divisions that have blocked any major environmental legislation since 1990.

But encyclicals avoid politics and cannot make up for the political force and righteous urgency that once flowed out of Calvinism. Calvinist denominations have been melting away for decades. Nevertheless, opponents of selfish greed and avarice, the common enemies of nature and mankind, would welcome Francis's powerful words.

*This opinion piece is by Mark Stoll, associate professor of history and director of the Environmental Studies program at Texas Tech. He is author of "[Inherit the Holy Mountain](#)."*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/17/pope-francis-is-actually-bringing-americas-environmentalism-movement-to-its-religious-and-moral-roots/>

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**June 17, 2015**

Pope Calls for Moral Campaign on Climate Crisis

By Kieran Cooke  
Climate News Network

Hard-hitting message from the Vatican warns of the threat global warming poses to the world's ecosystems – and to everyone on the planet.

LONDON – Pope Francis has challenged climate change deniers by declaring that the destruction of the ecosystem is a moral issue that has to be tackled, or there will be grave consequences for us all.

Pointing to human activity as the main cause for the increasing concentrations of climate-warming greenhouse gases, he praises ecological movements – and, in exceptionally strong language, rounds on those who are obstructing progress in the fight against climate change.

“The attitudes that stand in the way of a solution, even among believers, range from negation of the problem to indifference, to convenient resignation or to blind faith in technical solutions,” the Pope says.



## Meant for everyone

His message is contained in an encyclical, a document on Catholic teaching that is traditionally addressed to bishops. But, in this case, he says his words are aimed not only at an estimated 1.2 billion Catholics around the world – they are meant for everyone.

“Faced with the global deterioration of the environment, I want to address every person who inhabits the planet,” the Pope says.

The encyclical – entitled *Laudato Si*, or *Be Praised*, and nearly 200 pages long – is the first such document issued by the Vatican dealing specifically with the environment.

It was due to have been released tomorrow, but parts of a draft appeared early in the Italian magazine, [L'Espresso](#) – much to the annoyance of Vatican officials.

Unlike many of his predecessors, Pope Francis has shown a desire, since he became pontiff in 2013, to enter into debate about economic and environmental matters, as well as spiritual issues.

“If we destroy Creation, [Creation will destroy us](#) – never forget that,” he told a gathering in St. Peter’s Square, Rome, earlier this year.

The Pope says in the draft of the encyclical that the poor are trapped by environmental and financial degradation, and that the world’s resources cannot continue to be looted by humankind.

“Humanity is called to take note of the need for changes in lifestyle and changes in methods of production and consumption to combat this warming, or at least the human causes that produce and accentuate it,” he says.

The impact of the Pope’s message is likely to be considerable. Although the number of church-going Catholics has dropped in Europe and many other parts of the industrialised world, the influence of the church is growing in many areas, [particularly in Africa](#).

The encyclical is also likely to give added momentum to the need for a climate agreement at the [UN Conference on Climate Change](#) in Paris at the end of the year.

John Grim, who lectures in world religions at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at [Yale University](#) in the US, says the Pope’s teachings give a significant moral voice to climate change issues.

He says: “What we have lacked in many settings is the moral voice of religious leadership informing congregations, denominations and different religions of the depth of the science and the impact on human communities of widespread climate change.”

## Repeated warnings

The encyclical is likely to attract [criticism from sceptics](#) seeking to deny that there is any such thing as climate change, and who in the past have accused the Pope of straying into areas he knows little about.

Conservatives in the US have branded the Pope's repeated warnings about growing inequality as [the talk of a communist and a Marxist](#).

In September, Pope Francis is due to go to New York to address the United Nations, and will also speak to the US Congress in Washington.

Vatican officials say the pontiff will continue to speak out on issues linked to poverty and climate change. – *Climate News Network*

<http://www.climatenewsnetwork.net/pope-calls-for-moral-campaign-on-climate-crisis/>

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**June 17, 2015**

How Pope encyclical could affect more than just Catholics

By Kelsey Dallas  
Desert News National

In a highly anticipated encyclical on the environment, Pope Francis this week condemned widespread disengagement with the issue of global warming, using both scientific and theological arguments, and creating an opportunity for leaders from all faiths to address what their religion teaches about caring for creation.

The encyclical, titled "Laudato Si (Praised Be), On the Care of Our Common Home," is directed at Catholics around the world, but its political and religious implications could be felt far beyond Catholic circles.

The encyclical enters a heated political climate, and people who engage with the pope's words should be careful to read it on its own terms, said Susannah Tuttle, director of [North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light](#), an organization that works to put faith into action to improve the environment by reducing the carbon footprint of congregations and lobbying policymakers.

"This is a holistic document," she said. "We have to give it a little room and space to breathe."

Tuttle, along with other leaders of faith-based environmental groups, called the encyclical — the official version of which is expected Thursday after an early version in Italian leaked Monday — an opportunity to ask all people of faith to consider what religion teaches about the environment, expanding a dialogue that has existed for decades.

The Pope's arguments aren't revolutionary, theologically speaking, because "the environmental movement has deep religious roots," Tuttle said. "But there is a certain awesomeness about Pope Francis that can engage folks from all communities of faith."

She added, "It has been challenging to get pastors and state leaders to talk about (environmental) issues. I hope this can change that."

### **The disconnect**

Tuttle said the "call to care for creation" is central to many of the world's religions, citing biblical teachings that instruct humans to be stewards of the earth. Interfaith Power & Light counts Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Muslims, Hindus, Baptists, Quakers, Catholics and a variety of other people of faith among its membership.

And yet surveys have repeatedly shown that believers don't feel particularly called by their religious practice to be active in the environmental movement.

A new study from [Pew Research Center](#), released Tuesday, found that 48 percent of Catholics, 39 percent of Protestants and 56 percent of religiously unaffiliated Americans "say global warming is a very serious problem." Although support has grown since Pew asked the same question in 2013, only among the unaffiliated does a majority see it as a serious problem.

This relatively low engagement with the issue persists in spite of the fact that dozens of faith-based environmental groups have been active for more than a decade, and that people of faith initiated the environmental movement in the U.S., as [Deseret News National reported](#) this week.

Mark Stoll, an associate professor of history and director of environmental studies at Texas Tech University, said in the article that religion is likely divorced from the environmental movement in many people's minds because climate change is a highly politicized issue in the U.S.

In Pew's study, 21 percent of Republicans said global warming is a "very serious problem" compared with 67 percent of Democrats. And religious people, the data show, are much more likely to identify as Republicans.

However, environmental group leaders are optimistic the encyclical will be a turning point in efforts to get everyday believers involved in climate change initiatives, because it emphasizes a faithful response to climate change rather than a political one.

"Pope Francis makes (the issue) more accessible to people," said Lonnie Ellis, associate director of the [Catholic Climate Covenant](#).

"He's bringing it home for people," he added. "It's not about parts per million or charts and graphs. It's about our sisters and brothers around the world."

And because the encyclical is being covered widely by the media, it opens a door for pastors to preach about the environment, which can be difficult to address given the politics that surround it, said the Rev. Mitch Hescox, president and CEO of the [Evangelical Environmental Network](#).

In November, [Public Religion Research Institute reported](#) only 36 percent of Americans who regularly attend religious services hear their clergy leader address climate change "often" or "sometimes," including only 20 percent of white Catholics.

"This brings the dialogue to the surface again, helping people feel free to talk about (the environment) whether they're evangelical or mainline Protestant or Catholic," he said. By focusing on a moral framework to motivate care for creation, the pope takes some of the politics out of the discussion, he said.

### **The people's pope**

Beyond his emphasis on the moral reasons to address climate change, the pope benefits the environmental movement simply by being himself: an incredibly popular public figure who was named Time's [Person of the Year](#) in 2013, the Rev. Hescox said.

"Most people recognize him as a Christian leader," which means his fan base extends far beyond the Catholic Church, he said.

Pew's survey found that 86 percent of Catholics, 69 percent of white mainline Protestants, 51 percent of white evangelical Protestants and 58 percent of religiously unaffiliated Americans have a "favorable view" of Pope Francis.

However, the pope's popularity also complicates the encyclical's release, especially when people fail to acknowledge its grounding in Catholic tradition and misrepresent the pope's work as politically motivated, Tuttle noted.

"We all sort of feel like we own the pope now, but he's (the Catholics') pope," she said. "He didn't write the encyclical so that he could speak in front of the United Nations."

Instead, he drew on the work of previous popes, mining Catholic teachings to motivate people to be more mindful about their relationship to their environment.

"From a Catholic perspective, (the encyclical) is something he's channeling from God," Tuttle said.

Ellis echoed her, noting that the work "is first and foremost a faith document."

"Faith has social consequences and it has political consequences," and those will come with the encyclical, he said. "But we first root (the pope's words) in faith and spirituality."

Interfaith partnerships will be essential when faith-based environmental groups respond to the encyclical, because Catholics can add context to the theological and social claims made by the

pope, said the Rev. Brian Sauder, executive director of [Faith in Place](#), an interfaith environmental group based in Illinois.

"The key (in interfaith work) is to be comfortable with each other and to learn from each other how to be stronger in our own faith traditions," he said.

Catholics can describe how the encyclical affects them spiritually, motivating people of other faiths to look at their religious texts for teachings about caring for creation.

"We can inspire each other to take better care of our common home," he said.

### **Looking toward the future**

The Rev. Sauder and Tuttle said their organizations will encourage Catholic partners to play a leading role in discussions about the pope's message.

"We want to highlight what some parishes have already done and lift those stories up, as well as engage with more parishes," he said, noting that dozens of their Catholic partners have "green teams," or groups dedicated to addressing climate change from within the church by raising money to make community buildings more energy-efficient or recruiting congregants to lobby local and state lawmakers to pass environmentally friendly policies.

Faith in Place will also produce resources to guide people's engagement with the encyclical, which is too long and complex to allow for casual reading.

Ellis said he expected the impact of the pope's message to happen in stages. The encyclical's initial release will inspire hundreds of headlines and commentaries, but it will take longer for Catholic priests to decide how best to engage with the document in their parishes.

"Priests will have to read and reflect for a couple weeks (before they're) able to preach on it," he said.

Although the encyclical is cause for rejoicing for everyone involved in interfaith environmental initiatives, there is still much work to be done before the faith community will be active enough in sustainability efforts to make a real difference in climate change, the Rev. Sauder noted.

As [Deseret News National reported](#) last year, few denominations have shown growth in environmental concern over the last two decades, in spite of high-profile commitments from leaders to "go green."

The pope's encyclical can only make a lasting impact if pastors commit to addressing the environment from the pulpit more frequently, and if faith-based environmental groups capitalize on press coverage to teach more believers about their work, the Rev. Sauder said.

"It's wonderful to look at the groundwork (for a faith-based response) we've laid and see it amplified" through the pope's message, he said. "But at the end of the day, protecting the environment will happen from the pews."

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<http://national.deseretnews.com/article/4871/how-pope-encyclical-could-affect-more-than-just-catholics.html>

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**June 18, 2015**

How to Read Pope Francis on the Environment

Interviewee: Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, co-directors, The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University

Interviewer: [Robert McMahon](#), Editor  
Council on Foreign Relations

The new encyclical from Pope Francis about the environment, *Laudato Si*, sharply criticizes man-made abuses of the environment and lays out the church's most detailed case for urgent moves to mitigate climate change. The encyclical, a long, formal letter [that conveys the pope's teachings](#), is both a call to action on the global stage and new guidance for how Catholics should regard ecology, say Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim of Yale University's Forum on Religion and Ecology, in a written Q&A. "While discussions about social justice have been robust in Catholic and Christian contexts, this encyclical marks the first time social and environmental concerns are brought together," write Tucker and Grim.

**The pope's encyclical faults human behavior for deforestation, overfishing, pollution of the world's water supply, and global warming. Why is his pronouncement on these issues significant?**

In linking human behavior to these environmental issues, the encyclical provides a Catholic statement on environmental ethics. Most importantly, this ethical position will not be simply anthropocentric, namely, that we need to protect the environment for our own welfare and for future human generations.

While human concerns are not neglected, especially regarding the adverse effects of environmental degradation on the poor, this encyclical brings two potent religious criteria to bear on this ethical discussion: namely, the earth as God's creation, and the scientific story of evolution as opening new cosmological understandings of who the human is in relation to creation.

This encyclical is significant in providing new insight into the nature of the human as emerging out of universal processes that are seen theologically as God's creation. That is, the divine presence working in and through creation by means of evolution is a teaching in Catholicism.

## **Is this what he means by the term "integral ecology"?**

In this encyclical, Pope Francis gives expression to that phrase in four points: 1) The call to all peoples to be protectors of the environment is integral and all-embracing; 2) Care for creation is a virtue in its own right; 3) It is necessary to care for what we cherish and revere; 4) A new global solidarity is a key value to direct our search for the common good.

What seems crucial for understanding Francis' usage of this phrase is his effort to integrate ecological thinking into the whole of life and not separate it out as a science, or an ethical teaching, or environmental behavior such as recycling. Rather, and this is where Francis stands in a powerful and insightful lineage, ecology is a living reality in the human that marks our interdependence with all biotic and abiotic reality.

**The pope calls climate change one of the principal challenges facing humanity today and criticizes attempts at solutions like carbon credits, which he said "may simply become a ploy which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors." What practical approaches does he accept for minimizing fossil fuel consumption?**

I see a fundamental resistance in Pope Francis's thinking to unbridled market capitalism that reduces everything to a commodity that is traded for profit. This resistance to carbon credits is an effort to call for moral force in the market itself to search out ways to diminish carbon dioxide and heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere by social and individual will and sacrifice.

## **What have previous popes had to say about the environment?**

Neither John Paul II nor Benedict XVI delivered an encyclical on the environment, but they made statements in related encyclicals that have bearing on human-nature relations. John Paul II's 1991 [encyclical \*Centesimus Annus\*](#) celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII, which focused on labor, property, and the right of workers to form legal protective associations.

John Paul II continued the Enlightenment separation of humans from nature, emphasizing the dignity of cooperative human labor as making something productive of God's gift of nature.

"The pope is saying that the challenge of climate disruption and environmental deterioration will require ethical responses."

In his 2009 encyclical, [\*Caritas in Veritate\*](#), Benedict moved away from domination language and toward a sense of the protection of nature. He described a view of creation as in balance differing from the more dynamic understandings of ecological sciences. There is much in Benedict's sense of a "grammar of nature" or inherent patterning of use and reciprocity within nature itself. Following that inherent "grammar" Benedict recommends responsible human use of, and appropriate ends for, God's gift of nature. Benedict also offered some guidance on alternative energy sources and was known to have installed solar panels at Vatican. He had a sense of both the economics and scientific understanding of climate issues and the broader environmental issues.

**The Vatican says this is a religious rather than a political document but isn't it intended as a call to environmental activism?**

The encyclical is a call to environmental activism as well as a religious statement that reaches across simply Catholic doctrinal boundaries. Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and formerly an Archbishop in Ghana, has spoken of the encyclical as an expression of Pope Francis's long-standing attention to mercy/*miserericordia* and what Francis calls, "a revolution of tenderness, a revolution of the heart," in which the church makes room in its interior life for the poor.

**Some Catholic faithful, including prominent politicians in the United States, disagree sharply with the pope's stance on climate change. Is there a risk of this encyclical intensifying divisions within the church rather than galvanizing action?**

There is always a risk of exacerbating divisions with the church with change that requires moral transformation. But there is also the hope that by highlighting common concerns for the earth and for future generations the pope will bring about a new unity among the faithful.

With all such large changes controversy arises. There were many divisions in the Christian churches regarding segregation in the United States. Eventually with leadership, as with Martin Luther King's, the moral voice emerged clearly. This is a similar moment when the pope is saying that the challenge of climate disruption and environmental deterioration will require ethical responses. He is asking: "How can we not think of the well-being of our children and all future generations?" This appeal to long-term thinking is the contribution of a religious, spiritual, and ethical perspective such as the pope is articulating.

**To what extent have encyclicals been persuasive in guiding the actions of Roman Catholics? Could this one be persuasive to both Catholics and non-Catholics?**

Earlier encyclicals focused on social justice issues have been influential throughout the twentieth century. For example, encyclicals have affirmed special concerns for the poor, as well as the rights of labor for just working conditions, wages, and the capacity to organize. On the other hand, [Pope Paul VI's 1968] encyclical regarding birth control, *Humanae Vitae*, has had mixed reception, especially among the laity.

While discussions about social justice have been robust in Catholic and Christian contexts, this encyclical marks the first time social and environmental concerns are brought together. This perspective of eco-justice has traction with other Christian communities as well as non-Christian religions.

**What happens next in guidance for Catholics? Will there be more consistent appeals for environmental awareness from church pulpits? A greater move toward using alternative energies?**

One option is the introduction of new waves of "retrieval," "reevaluation," and "reconstruction" within religious traditions broadly considered. For example, in Catholic seminaries will the



curriculum for the training of priests actually be affected? Will Catholic priests learn how to think theologically about integral ecology and Catholic doctrines?

If seminaries and Catholic education undertake these curricular considerations it will mean a resurgence of attention to human-earth interactions in scripture, commentaries (theology), and church history. This is what we call "retrieval." The act of reflecting on its implications for the present is "reevaluation"—a dialogue across all the positions, schools, factions within a religion. Finally, if insight emerges that indeed we are connected and interdependent with the abiotic and biotic systems of the planet, religions need to "reconstruct" themselves so that values of flourishing life are apparent in rituals, teachings, trainings, and actions.

### **Have leaders of other religions released any equivalent documents on the environment?**

Many religious leaders from around the world have issued statements on the environment, including Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, leader of the world's Eastern Orthodox Christians, who is mentioned in the pope's encyclical, and the Dalai Lama. There have also been recent discussions in China that have brought Confucianism into ecological civilization. Over the last two decades the world's religions have moved forward with environmental statements, theological reflections, and engaged ecological projects. This process of retrieving, reevaluating, and reconstructing environmental ethics within the religious traditions will be an ongoing process.

On several occasions religious groups have held meetings and issued joint statements on the need for interreligious cooperation regarding environmental protection and care for creation. In September 2014 many religious leaders gathered for the People's Climate March in New York. At the upcoming Paris United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change talks in December, this growing movement of the need for moral response to climate change will be even more visible.

<http://www.cfr.org/holy-see/vatican/read-pope-francis-environment/p36665>

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**June 18, 2015**

What you need to know about Pope Francis's environmental encyclical

By Christiana Z. Peppard  
Washington Post

How does one read an encyclical? Even as an expert on Catholic social teaching, the answer to that question still eludes me.

Anyone who has glimpsed *Laudato Si': On the Care of our Common Home*, released today by Pope Francis, can see that the genre is unique. It's dramatically different from our habitual scans of texts and tweets and the sorts of messages sent with thumbs. Yet even while it requires different dexterities, reading the encyclical — the whole thing, yes — is within our grasp.

Francis himself says, bluntly: “I wish to address every person living on this planet ... I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.”

This bounces us to a second question: what does it *mean*? To enter into a dialogue is not the same thing as to decree from on high a particular course of action. *Laudato Si'* is an ethically nuanced, often gripping analysis of our contemporary moral and environmental predicaments — and an invitation to articulate and embrace an ecological humanism worthy of our best efforts.

### **Fossil fuels are part of the point, but not all of it**

Many commentators in the United States are tempted to equate the meaning of this document with the policy upshot — the pithy sound bite that takes a side in the bizarre partisan debacle of U.S. climate and fossil fuel policy.

Yes, Francis has some upshots regarding fossil fuels: Greenhouse gases have been emitted by industrialized nations (such as ours) at a disproportionate rate. Rates of consumption of non-renewable resources are profoundly imbalanced worldwide. Differentiated responsibilities between developing and super-developed nations (i.e., the United States) in any future climate agreements are both necessary and ethically appropriate.

And — because of his skepticism of technological and economic utopianisms (see below) — Francis is wary of cap-and-trade or carbon-pricing proposals that would merely maintain the underlying systems of environmental exploitation, without the “radical change which present circumstances require” (171). There is, he maintains, an “ecological debt” that industrialized nations owe towards the planet and to nations less developed than our own.

Skeptics and pundits take note: Renewable energy sources are a necessary goal for a morally significant transition away from fossil fuel-based energy sources. This transition should occur with due attention to transparent environmental impact assessments, the precautionary principle, and full-cost accounting that attends to the well-being of future generations. But make no mistake: This is not partisanship of an American electoral sort.

This transition is a preferential option for the poor and for the planet. It is also the pursuit of an “integral ecology,” or an expansive humanism, that realigns human actions within the frame of our ecological contexts, and our distinctive capacities for reason and self-reflection.

### **The goods of the earth: Pollution, climate change, water**

*Laudato Si'* is, in Francis' own words, a “lengthy reflection which has been both joyful and troubling” (246), structured in six movements or chapters.

**Chapter one:** “What is happening to our common home?” admits of several answers that sum up to this: we are degrading it, especially through pollution and climate change, deterioration and overuse of water, loss of biodiversity, and the breakdown of society through global inequality, among other signs.

The problems are both spiritual and structural. The rest of the encyclical unpacks those notions, in a dance of levels of scale between that ranges from the individual to the civic, national, regional, and planetary.

**Chapter two:** “The Gospel of Creation,” turns to Biblical sources to illuminate the mandate to care for creation as a fundamental tenet of faith, attested in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament as stewardship. It is this perspective on our responsibility to God and to creation — that modern human beings have forgotten, says Francis.

Indeed, citing John Paul II as well as the Canadian Bishops and the Bishops Conference of Japan, Francis points out that Creation itself reveals God: Along with Scripture, “there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of sun and the fall of night,” as John Paul II put it at the turn of the millennium (85). Or, in St. Francis’ “Canticle of Creation”—the hymn of praise to which Francis recurs in *Laudato Si’*, “Praised be [You, O Lord],” through Brother Wind and Sister Water, and all the many beings of the earth.

The goods of the earth, continues Francis, are not meant for abuse and exploitation, but rather for sharing and inclusiveness of the least among us. And it points out that Biblical narratives demonstrate the truth that “human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: With God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself .... The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations” (66).

Moreover, “the natural environment is a collective good”—not something to be held privately or exclusively for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many, now or in the future (93-95).

**Chapter three** is the most sustained and accosting indictment of contemporary humanity’s values and practices. Here, in “The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis,” Francis (along with many so-called “secular” environmentalists) — says that it is humanity’s outsized technological and economic domination over the planet’s natural bounty that is at the root of many social and environmental ills.

The rapid rise of human technological and economic prowess outpaces evolution, and “our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values, and conscience” (105).

It may be impossible to overstate the severity and incisiveness of Francis’ call to consider, and then constrain, technological and economic ideologies — or what he calls the “technocratic paradigm” (106 and following), in which technology, efficiency, and profit are seen as ends in themselves.

But, Francis warns, while this kind of framework may be a convenient default, it “ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups.” In this way, decisions that may seem incidental or instrumental “are in reality decisions about the kind of society we want to build” (107). Humanity is lost, says

Francis, between hyperconsumptive and superdeveloped contexts, and regions where people lack the most fundamental of goods and opportunities.

Much blame lies with speculative finance and the contemporary economy, whose values and functions are not inherently able to protect the most vulnerable members of society or to avoid environmental degradation. A new way is needed.

### **To be human is to be in relationship, and all life must be respected**

**Chapter four** describes what is needed “for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution” (95). With typical Francis aplomb, the pope says: “Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age, but we do need to slow down and take a look at reality in a different way, to appropriate the positive and sustainable progress which has been made, but also to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur” (114).

Laying the blame on the “modern anthropocentrism” critiqued in chapters 2 and 3, Francis elaborates that Christian views of the human being have been wrong to see humans as righteous domineers. (This humility — and ability to admit that Christian history has been wrong — is perhaps one of the reasons that Francis feels both trustworthy and relevant to a flock beyond the pews of confessing Catholics.)

“Integral ecology,” for Francis, means an attention to the necessary interaction and wholeness of relationships: with God, with other people, with Creation and with ourselves. His consistent reasoning of respect for vulnerable life finds articulation here: “When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities—to offer just a few examples—it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected.” (117; see also 120).

Everything is connected, but population *per se* is not the main cause of environmental degradation, says Francis. Instead, a more complex metric is necessary, one that looks at the disordered habits of human beings and societies.

In one of the strongest paragraphs in the entire document, Francis identifies the problem as having to do with humans’ misguided and hyper-consumptive habits. These reveal the implicit assumption that we can technologically and economically dominate each other and the natural world. The same logic that “leads to the sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly,” he says, “justifies buying the organs of the poor for resale ... or eliminating children because they are not what their parents wanted. This same use and throw away logic generates so much waste, because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary” (123).

Ecological and social ills are connected. “We are faced not with two separate crises,” he says at the start of chapter four, “but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (139).

For all its distressing details about environmental and social degradation, *Laudato Si'* manages to avoid dousing the reader in despair. This is no small accomplishment.

Any solution, he says—and he does give positive examples throughout the encyclical—“demand[s] an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (139). And he is clear that there is no one-sized-fits-all solution: While there may be a universal mandate to care for the poor and creation, how this looks will vary depending on the particularities of context.

This point is worth emphasizing. Francis, head of the largest organized body of religious observers in the world, consistently in *Laudato Si'* takes recourse to the wisdom of people other than himself.

Sure, he draws on previous popes (especially John Paul II and Benedict XVI); but he also draws heavily on the many insights from regional bishops' conferences — in the Philippines, the United States, Brazil, and many more. In so doing, Francis makes a subtle case for the wisdom of particular places and cultures: “there is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures,” and not to propose uniform solutions to problems that are many-layered and particular to given places (even as there may be universal elements, as in the case of climate change).

“In this case,” he continues, “it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed” (146). The Church with Francis has come a long way from the colonial, hegemonic mentality of a universal truth articulated by European pontiffs.

**Chapter five, “Lines of Approach and Action,”** identifies contemporary mechanisms for attaining the common good — making mention of the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro and successful conventions on hazardous wastes, while also stating rather bluntly that at present “with regard to climate change, the advances have been regrettably few.

Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most” — presumably, one infers, with the recalcitrant U.S. Congress foremost among them (169). (“We believers,” Francis admonishes, “cannot fail to ask God for a positive outcome to the present discussions, so that future generations will not have to suffer the effects of our ill-advised delays.”)

### **The need for both conversion and renewal**

It is in **chapter six, “Ecological Education and Spirituality,”** that the pastoral tone and spiritual content of the encyclical returns. Here, as in chapters two and four, Francis is at his most constructive: identifying the multiple dimensions by which humans can understand “ecology,” and inviting readers to consider our own histories, experiences of beauty, and attachments to particular places in order to envision a better world for ourselves, our children, and distant future generations. He writes:

“Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. ... A great cultural, spiritual, and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.” (202)

This last chapter is Francis’ prognosis, his call to spiritual discernment, and where his distinctive pastoral style shines through most clearly: the need for ecological conversion or rebirth of moral perspective—an “integral ecology” that is also an “authentic humanism.”

Above all, it is an invitation to consider how after the abundant facts of environmental and social degradation, the ultimate question is what values we want to guide our lives. “The rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make,” he claims (216).

Catholic tradition, while distinctive and distinctly evident throughout this encyclical, is neither exhaustive nor exclusionary. With collaborative spirit and humility about the ways in which God manifests in cultures and nature, Francis draws heavily upon the teachings of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, as well as the Muslim mystic ‘Ali al Khawas and the non-religious Earth Charter as he makes a series of points about humility, gratitude, patience, responsibility, and attentiveness. These are among the ecological virtues that are also part of attaining social and environmental justice, now and in the future.

So what does this encyclical mean, given its sweeping scope and 246 paragraphs of scientific citations and spiritual calls to conversion?

The question is open. And that, of course, is precisely the point. While Francis is willing to point the way— through Scripture and tradition, through science and ethical reasoning — he offers precious few concrete answers. The task of making “integral ecology” real is left to all who would consider what he has to say—that is, all of us whose lives depend on earth and on each other.

A quick scan for keywords, or a search for simple answers, will not yield much. The encyclical is not a checklist of how to save the planet and, in so doing, each other. Instead, *Laudato Si’* is a call to renewed, ecological humanism and moral vision in a world beset by technological and economic temptation.

*This opinion piece is by Christiana Z. Peppard, assistant professor of theology, science, and ethics at Fordham University.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/18/what-you-need-to-know-about-pope-franciss-environmental-encyclical/?postshare=1741434636005944>

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**June 18, 2015**

## Papal Encyclical Heartens Proponents of Fossil-Fuel Divestment

By John Schwartz  
New York Times

The word “divestment” is nowhere to be found in the nearly 200 pages of the [papal encyclical](#) released Thursday, but by addressing the threat of [climate change](#) in such a forceful way, [Pope Francis](#) is likely to add momentum to the movement by big institutions to sell holdings tied to fossil-fuel stocks.

“For activists who have been laboring for decades to elicit a courageous response from the world’s governments and leading institutions, the pope’s statement is a godsend,” said Bob Massie, a longtime environmental activist and proponent of divestment who is also an Episcopal priest.

The divestment effort first emerged at universities in 2012. Many religious institutions, including the Church of England and the United Church of Christ, have announced divestment plans, as have a number of religious educational institutions, including Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Others are likely to follow, said Richard W. Miller, an associate professor of theology at Creighton University, a Jesuit school in Omaha. “Regardless of whether he says ‘divestment,’ I think it puts enormous pressure on Catholic universities,” Professor Miller said. “I think it puts pressure on all universities.”

The United Church of Christ announced its resolution to begin divestment of church funds and pension money two years ago, becoming the first major religious body in the United States to vote for divestment. (“It’s not a competition,” said the Rev. Jim Antal, the conference minister of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and an environmental leader in the denomination.)

The encyclical casts [climate change](#) as an issue that not only is scientifically important but also has moral and spiritual implications. It also ties the issue to others, such as caring for the poor, who are expected to bear the brunt of more extreme weather and rising sea levels. Depicting climate change as a moral issue resonates deeply with many climate activists.

Union Theological Seminary officials see divestment of its \$108 million endowment from stocks linked to fossil fuels as a moral act more than a political or economic one, said the Rev. Serene Jones, the seminary’s president. “We don’t think that divesting our little endowment is going to change what the oil companies do,” she said. “We did it because it was the right thing to do.”

Karenna Gore, director of the seminary’s new [Center for Earth Ethics](#), said the moral approach could help people understand that even if actions like divestment do not have a profound effect on the fortunes of fossil-fuel companies, “it makes it a matter of personal integrity and institutional integrity.”

“We don’t say, ‘Don’t recycle a can because it makes no difference,’ ” she said.

Mr. Antal, who said he was inspired by the work of the climate activist Bill McKibben and his group [350.org](http://350.org), said his early efforts had been arduous.

He said he had spent 200 hours negotiating with the director of United Church Funds and the church’s pension board, which initially opposed the resolution calling for divestment. And when it was done, he recalled, he came under attack from the columnist and Yale Law School professor Stephen L. Carter, who accused the church of hypocrisy, [writing](#), “Once we get supply and demand straight, the coal miner is a lot less ‘responsible’ for greenhouse gases than the suburban family that crowds into the S.U.V. to attend Sunday services.”

In an interview, Mr. Antal acknowledged that he and others advocating changes in energy production were still using fossil fuels. “Here I am sitting in an airport,” he noted.

But the goal, he said, was to work for the kinds of changes that will limit global warming and head off its worst effects.

In a written [response](#) to Professor Carter, Mr. Antal said that the denomination’s churches did call for changing personal habits of consumption and had “long known that when engaging in social critique, the first place to look is at our own complicity.”

He and his colleagues, he said, “are doing everything we can to leverage the release of the encyclical.”

Tomás Insua, a graduate student at Harvard who is involved with the Global Catholic Climate Movement, a coalition of nearly 100 Catholic organizations, said he expected a wave of divestment demands. In the future, he said, “it will be very hard for Catholic universities to counter divestment asks quoting the encyclical.”

William Patenaude, who has written the blog [Catholic Ecology](#) since 2004, said that whether or not institutions changed their policies or divested, the encyclical would have an effect by “inspiring people to talk about issues that they may not have felt comfortable talking about.”

The discussion might get “a little hot,” Mr. Patenaude said, and no one knows where that may lead. But, he added, “I’m glad we’re having that conversation.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/science/earth/papal-encyclical-heartens-proponents-of-fossil-fuel-divestment.html>

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**June 18, 2015**

ELCA issues statement on Pope Francis’ encyclical on climate change

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



CHICAGO (ELCA) – The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), released a statement June 18 on behalf of this church in response to Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change and the deteriorating global environment. The full text of the statement follows:

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we share a deep concern with our Catholic brothers and sisters for the well-being of our neighbors and of God's good creation. "Humans, in service to God, have special roles on behalf of the whole of creation. Made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth" (ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice").

Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. At the same time, we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste.

An accounting of climate change that has credibility and integrity must name the neglect and carelessness of private industry and the failure of government leadership that have contributed to these changes. However, it also must include repentance for our own participation as individual consumers and investors in economies that make intensive and insistent demands for energy.

Yet we find our hope in the promise of God's own faithfulness to the creation and humankind. We serve in concert with God's creative and renewing power, understanding that we have the resources and responsibility to act together for the common good, especially for those who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Today we join with Pope Francis in calling on world leaders to embrace our common responsibility as work continues toward a global agreement on climate change. We urge leaders to support an ambitious agreement that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, encourages development of low-carbon technologies, and supports the ability of countries to cope with the effects of a changing climate and build resiliency for a sustainable future.

The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as individuals, citizens, leaders and communities of faith in solidarity with God's good creation and in hope for our shared future.

The ELCA's social statement, "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice" is available at [www.ELCA.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation?\\_ga=1.16591350.1780749877.1352499724](http://www.ELCA.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation?_ga=1.16591350.1780749877.1352499724). The ELCA statement following Pope Francis' encyclical is available at [www.elca.org/Resources/Presiding-Bishop-Messages](http://www.elca.org/Resources/Presiding-Bishop-Messages).

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**About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:**

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with more than 3.8 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of "God's work. Our hands," the ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of

God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA's roots are in the writings of the German church reformer, Martin Luther.

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**June 18, 2015**

Pope Francis, in Sweeping Encyclical, Calls for Swift Action on Climate Change

By [Jim Yardley](#) and [Laurie Goodstein](#)

New York Times

VATICAN CITY — [Pope Francis](#) on Thursday called for a radical transformation of politics, economics and individual lifestyles to confront environmental degradation and [climate change](#), as his much-awaited papal encyclical blended a biting critique of consumerism and irresponsible development with a plea for swift and unified global action.

The vision that Francis outlined in the 184-page encyclical is sweeping in ambition and scope: He described a relentless exploitation and destruction of the environment, for which he blamed apathy, the reckless pursuit of profits, excessive faith in technology and political shortsightedness. The most vulnerable victims are the world's poorest people, he declared, who are being dislocated and disregarded.

The first pope from the developing world, Francis, an Argentine, used the encyclical — titled “*Laudato Si’*,” or “Praise Be to You” — to highlight the crisis posed by climate change. He placed most of the blame on fossil fuels and human activity while warning of an “unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequence for all of us” if swift action is not taken. Developed, industrialized countries were mostly responsible, he said, and were obligated to help poorer nations confront the crisis.

“Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods,” he wrote. “It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.”

The [Vatican](#) released the encyclical at noon on Thursday, following a heavily attended news conference and amid widespread global interest. Vatican officials were infuriated after an Italian magazine on Monday posted a leaked draft of the encyclical online — one that almost exactly

matched the final document. The breach led to speculation that opponents of Francis inside the Vatican wanted to embarrass him by undermining the planned rollout.

But on Thursday, religious figures, environmentalists, scientists, elected officials and corporate executives around the world were awaiting the official release of the encyclical, with many of them scheduling later news conferences or preparing statements to discuss it. Media interest was enormous, partly because of Francis' global popularity, but also because this was the first time that a pope had written an encyclical about environmental damage — and because of the intriguing coalition he is proposing between faith and science.

“Humanity is faced with a crucial challenge that requires the development of adequate policies, which, moreover, are currently being discussed on the global agenda,” Cardinal Peter Turkson said during the morning news conference at the Vatican. “Certainly, *Laudato Si'* can and must have an impact on important and urgent decisions to be made in this area.”

In the news conference, Cardinal Turkson said that Francis had already noted that humanity had played a role in climate change. He said that there was “heated debate” on the topic and that Francis was not trying to intervene in that.

Francis has made clear that he hopes the encyclical will influence energy and economic policy and stir a global movement. He calls on ordinary people to pressure politicians for change. Bishops and priests around the world are expected to lead discussions on the encyclical in services on Sunday. But Francis is also reaching for a wider audience when in the first pages of the document he asks “to address every person living on this planet.”

Even before the release, Francis' unflinching stance against environmental destruction, and his demand for global action, had already thrilled many scientists. In recent weeks, advocates of policies to combat climate change have expressed hope that Francis could lend a “moral dimension” to the debate, because winning scientific arguments was different from moving people to action.

“Within the scientific community, there is almost a code of honor that you will never transgress the red line between pure analysis and moral issues,” said Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, founder and chairman of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and a leading European climate scientist. “But we are now in a situation where we have to think about the consequences of our insight for society.”

Yet Francis has also been sharply criticized by those who question or deny the established science of human-caused climate change and also by some conservative Roman Catholics, who have interpreted the document as an attack on capitalism and as unwanted political meddling at a moment when climate change is high on the global agenda.

Governments are now crafting domestic climate change plans before December's [United Nations](#) summit meeting on climate change in Paris. The goal of the meeting is to achieve the first sweeping global accord in which every nation on earth would commit to enacting new policies to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Many governments have yet to present plans, including major

emitters like Brazil, which also has a large Catholic population. The encyclical is seen as an unsubtle nudge for action, even as it provides support for leaders faced with tough choices in countries with large numbers of Catholics.

“It gives a lot of cover to political and economic leaders in those countries, as they make decisions on climate change policy,” said Timothy Wirth, vice chairman of the United Nations Foundation.

Catholic theologians say the overarching theme of the encyclical is “integral ecology,” which links care for the environment with a notion already well developed in Catholic teaching — that economic development, to be morally good and just, must take into account the need of human beings for things such as freedom, education and meaningful work.

“The basic idea is, in order to love God, you have to love your fellow human beings, and you have to love and care for the rest of creation,” said Vincent Miller, who holds a chair in Catholic theology and culture at the University of Dayton, a Catholic college in Ohio. “It gives Francis a very traditional basis to argue for the inclusion of environmental concern at the center of Christian faith.”

He added: “Critics will say the church can’t teach policy, the church can’t teach politics. And Francis is saying, ‘No, these things are at the core of the church’s teaching.’”

Francis has drawn from a wide variety of sources, partly to buttress his arguments, partly to underscore the universality of his message. He regularly cites passages from his two predecessors, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, even as he also draws prominently from his religious ally, Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, leader of the world’s Eastern Orthodox Christians. He also cites a Sufi Muslim mystic, Ali al-Khawwas.

Francis begins the encyclical with a hymn written by St. Francis of Assisi, the 13th-century friar who is the patron saint of animals and the environment. Francis cites the Bible’s book of Genesis to underpin his theological argument, though in a passage certain to rankle some Christians, he chastises those who cite Genesis as evidence that man has “dominion” over earth and therefore an unlimited right to its resources. Some believers have used this biblical understanding of “dominion” to justify practices such as mountaintop mining or fishing with gill nets.

“This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church,” Francis wrote. The Bible teaches human beings to “till and keep” the garden of the world, he said: “‘Tilling’ refers to cultivating, plowing or working, while ‘keeping’ means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving.”

His most stinging rebuke is a broad economic and political critique of profit-seeking and the undue influence of technology on society. He praised the progress achieved by economic growth and technology, singling out achievements in medicine, science and engineering. But, he added, “Our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience.”

Central to Francis' theme is the linkage between the poor and the fragility of the planet. He rejects the belief that technology and "current economics" will solve environmental problems or "that the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth." He cites finance as having a distorting influence on politics and calls for government action, international regulation and a spiritual and cultural awakening to "recover depth in life."

Amid the broad themes, Francis also touches on a wide range of specific topics, from urban planning (calling for better neighborhoods for the poor) and agricultural economics (warning against the reach of huge agribusinesses that push family farmers off their land) to conservation and biodiversity (with calls to protect the Amazon and Congo basins), and even offers up small passages of media and architecture criticism.

"A huge indictment I see in this encyclical is that people have lost their sense of ultimate and proper goals of technology and economics," said Christiana Z. Peppard, an assistant professor of theology, science and ethics at Fordham University in New York. "We are focused on short-term, consumerist patterns, and have allowed technological and economic paradigms to tell us what our values ought to be."

Encyclicals are letters to clergy members and laity of the church that are considered authoritative papal teaching documents. Catholics are expected to try to sincerely embrace the teaching and moral judgments within. But while broad moral principles are widely considered to be binding, more specific assertions can be categorized as "prudential judgments" — a phrase some critics have invoked to reject Francis' positions on hot-button issues like climate change or economic inequality.

Many conservatives will be pleased, however, because Francis also included a strong criticism of abortion while also belittling the argument that population control represented a solution to limited resources and poverty. However, he sharply criticized carbon credits — the financial instruments now central to the European Union's current climate change policy — as a tool that "may simply become a ploy which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors."

Above all, Francis has framed the encyclical as a call to action, imbuing environmental protection with a theological and spiritual foundation. He praises the younger generations for being ready for change and said "enforceable international agreements are urgently needed." He cited Benedict in saying that advanced societies "must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving its efficiency."

"All is not lost," he wrote. "Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start."

Jim Yardley reported from Vatican City, and Laurie Goodstein from New York. Gaia Pianigiani contributed reporting from Rome, Coral Davenport from Washington, and Justin Gillis from New York.

**June 18, 2015**

Pope Francis: The Cry of the Earth

By Bill McKibben

The New York Review of Books

The old conceit that the president has a “bully pulpit” needs updating; it’s clear that the pulpit at St. Peter’s Basilica is now the bulliest of all. Pope Francis may lack legions, but he has 6.3 million followers on Twitter, and for a week now the world has been following leaks of his new encyclical on climate change and the environment.

*Laudato Si’*, finally released Thursday morning in Rome, is a remarkable 183-page document, incredibly rich—it’s not dense, but it is studded with aphorisms and insights. It will take time to fully digest it, but a few things are immediately evident.

First, simply by writing it, the pope—the single most prominent person on the planet, and of all celebrities and leaders the most skilled at using gesture to communicate—has managed to get across the crucial point: our environmental peril, and in particular, climate change, is the most pressing issue of our time. We face, he says, “desolation,” and we must turn as fast as we can away from coal, oil, and gas. Most thinking people knew this already, but since dealing with global warming would mean standing up to the most powerful forces in the status quo, most world leaders have never fully engaged the question. (President Obama, for instance, the earth’s most powerful politician, made it to the closing days of his 2012 reelection campaign without mentioning climate change—until Hurricane Sandy finally made it impossible not to.) It’s been a side issue, but no more: Francis has made it clear that nothing can be more important.

More, he’s brought the full weight of the spiritual order to bear on the global threat posed by climate change, and in so doing joined its power with the scientific order. Stephen Jay Gould had the idea that these two spheres were “non-overlapping magisteria,” but in this case he appears to have been wrong. Pope Francis draws heavily on science—sections of the encyclical are very nearly wonky, with accurate and sensible discussions of everything from genetic modification to aquifer depletion—but he goes beyond science as well. Science by itself has proven empirically impotent to force action on this greatest of crises; now, at last, someone with authority is explaining precisely *why* it matters that we’re overheating the planet.

It matters in the first place, says Francis, because of its effect on the poorest among us, which is to say on most of the population of the earth. The encyclical is saturated with concern for the most vulnerable—those who, often in underdeveloped countries, are breathing carcinogenic air, or are being forced from their land by spreading deserts and rampant agribusiness. This comes as no surprise, for concern—rhetorical and practical—for those at the bottom of the heap has been the hallmark of his papacy from the start. “A true ecological approach,” he writes, “*always*

becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, *so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*”

Less expected, perhaps—at least for those who haven’t understood why Francis chose his [papal name](#)—is how seriously he takes that cry of the earth. Though he’s no tree-worshipping pagan (it’s clear throughout the encyclical that the world belongs to God), there’s a celebration of nature and the natural world that undergirds the document. He rails at the destruction of the Amazon and the Congo, of aquifers and glaciers. Speaking of coral reefs, he writes: “who turned the wonderworld of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of color and life?”

But the heart of the encyclical is less an account of environmental or social destruction than a remarkable attack on the way our world runs: on the “rapidification” of modern life, on the way that economic growth and technology trump all other concerns, on a culture that can waste billions of people. These are neither liberal nor conservative themes, and they are not new for popes: what is new is that the ecological crisis makes them inescapable. Continual economic and technological development may have long been isolating, deadening, spiritually unfulfilling—but it has swept all before it anyway, despite theological protest, because it has delivered the goods. But now, the rapidly rising temperature (and [new data](#) also released Thursday showed we’ve just lived through the hottest May since record-keeping began) gives the criticism bite. Our way of life literally *doesn’t work*. It’s breaking the planet. Given the severity of the situation, Francis writes, “we can finally leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress. A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing, and limiting our power.”

Neither liberal nor conservative—but definitely radical. Francis calls for nothing less than the demotion of individualism and a renewed concern for what we hold in common as humans (the encyclical is explicitly directed to all of us, Catholic or not, since the environmental crisis is more universal than any challenge before it). “The rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption [is] essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment,” he writes. Get your nose out of your iPhone (“When media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously”) and join in the fight for a livable world.

Because a fight it is. The pope may have combined the orders of science and spirituality, but he knows they must battle a third magisteria: money, which so far has usually won. He’s caustic about the failures of international conclaves and national politicians, rightly isolating the cause as the ongoing triumph of those for whom accumulation is the only god. “Whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market,” he has written, adding knowingly today that, “consequently the most one can expect [from our leaders] is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy, and perfunctory expressions of concern.” Indeed, an hour or two after the release of his encyclical, the House voted to give the president “fast-track” authority to negotiate a free trade agreement with Pacific Rim nations, over the protests of advocates for both environmentalists and workers that it would only worsen the problems the encyclical describes.



It will take a while to see what power the pope's letter ultimately possesses. Usually, as Francis writes, "any genuine attempt by groups within society to introduce change is viewed as a nuisance based on romantic illusions or an obstacle to be circumvented," which certainly describes how many American politicians reacted to the encyclical. But one would perhaps be unwise to bet against Pope Francis, who has a wily sense of how to pressure, expose, and prod. At any rate, the battle is joined, more fully than ever before.

My own sense, after spending the day reading this remarkable document, was of great relief. I've been working on climate change for a quarter century, and for much of that time it felt like enduring one of those nightmarish dreams where no one can hear your warnings. In recent years a broad-based movement has arisen to take up the challenge, but this marks the first time that a person of great authority in our global culture has fully recognized the scale and depth of our crisis, and the consequent necessary rethinking of what it means to be human.

<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2015/jun/18/pope-francis-encyclical-cry-of-earth/>

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**June 18, 2015**

Top Ten Takeaways from 'Laudato Si'

By James Martin, S.J.  
America Magazine

Pope Francis' revolutionary new encyclical calls for a "broad cultural revolution" to confront the environmental crisis. "Laudato Si" is also quite lengthy. Can it be summarized? In other words, what are the main messages, or "takeaways" of this encyclical?

**1) The spiritual perspective is now part of the discussion on the environment.**

The greatest contribution of "Laudato Si" to the environmental dialogue is, to my mind, its systematic overview of the crisis from a religious point of view. Until now, the environmental dialogue has been framed mainly with political, scientific and economic language. With this new encyclical, the language of faith enters the discussion—clearly, decisively and systematically. This does not mean that Pope Francis is imposing his beliefs on those concerned about the environment. "I am well aware," he says, that not all are believers (No. 62). Nonetheless, the encyclical firmly grounds the discussion in a spiritual perspective and invites others to listen to a religious point of view, particularly its understanding of creation as a holy and precious gift from God to be revered by all men and women. But the pope also hopes to offer "ample motivation" to Christians and other believers "to care for nature" (No. 64). This does also not mean that other popes (and other parts of the church) have not spoken about the crisis—Francis highlights the teachings of his predecessors, particularly St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. But in its systematic spiritual approach, this is a groundbreaking document that expands the conversation by inviting believers into the dialogue and providing fresh insights for those already involved.



## **2) The poor are disproportionately affected by climate change.**

The disproportionate effect of environmental change on the poor and on the developing world is highlighted in almost every section of the encyclical. Indeed, near the beginning of “*Laudato Si*,” the pope states that focus on the poor is one of the central themes of the encyclical, and he provides many baneful examples of the effects of climate change, whose “worse impacts” are felt those living in the by developing countries. This is not simply the result of the power of the rich to make decisions that do not take the poor into account, but because the poor themselves have fewer financial resources that enable them to adapt to climate change. Additionally, the natural resources of those poorer countries “fuel” the development of the richer countries “at the cost of their own present and future” (No. 52). Throughout the encyclical, the pope appeals to the Gospels, to Catholic social teaching and to the statements of recent popes to critique the exclusion of anyone from benefits of the goods of creation. Overall, in decisions regarding the environment and the use of the earth’s common resources, he repeatedly calls for an appreciation of the “immense dignity of the poor” (No. 158).

## **3) Less is more.**

Pope Francis takes aim at what he calls the “technocratic” mindset, in which technology is seen as the “principal key” to human existence (No. 110). He critiques an unthinking reliance on market forces, in which every technological, scientific or industrial advancement is embraced before considering how it will affect the environment and “without concern for its potential negative impact on human beings” (No. 109). This is not the view of a Luddite—in fact, Francis goes out of his way to praise technological advances—but of a believer who resists the idea that every increase in technology is good for the earth and for humanity. “*Laudato Si*” also diagnoses a society of “extreme consumerism” in which people are unable to resist what the market places before them, the earth is despoiled and billions are left impoverished (No. 203). That is why it is the time, he says, to accept “decreased growth in some part of the world, in order to provide recourse for other places to experience healthy growth” (No. 193). In contrast with the consumerist mindset, Christian spirituality offers a growth marked by “moderation and the capacity to be happy with little” (No. 222). It is a matter nothing less than a redefinition of our notion of progress.

## **4) Catholic social teaching now includes teaching on the environment.**

Against those who argue that a papal encyclical on the environment has no real authority, Pope Francis explicitly states that “*Laudato Si*” “is now added to the body of the Church’s social teaching” (No. 15). By the way, an encyclical is a type of teaching that enjoys the highest level of authority in the church, second only to the Gospels and church councils like Vatican II. As such, it continues the kind of reflection on modern-day problems that began with Leo XIII’s [“Rerum Novarum,”](#) on capital and labor, in 1891. Pope Francis uses some of the traditional foundations of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly the idea of the “common good,” to frame his discussion. In keeping with the practices of Catholic social teaching, the pope combines the riches of the church’s theology with the findings of experts in a variety of fields, to reflect on modern-day problems. To that end, he explicitly links St. John XXIII’s [“Pacem in Terris,”](#) which addressed the crisis of nuclear war, with “*Laudato Si*,” which addresses this newer crisis.

## **5) Discussions about ecology can be grounded in the Bible and church tradition.**

Wisely, Pope Francis begins the encyclical not with a reflection on Scripture and tradition (the two pillars of Catholic teaching), which might tempt nonbelievers to set aside the letter, but with an overview of the crisis—including issues of water, biodiversity and so on. Only in Chapter Two does he turn towards “The Gospel of Creation,” in which he leads readers, step by step, through the call to care for creation that extends as far back as the Book of Genesis, when humankind was called to “till and keep” the earth. But we have done, to summarize his approach, too much tilling and not enough keeping. In a masterful overview, Pope Francis traces the theme of love for creation through both the Old and New Testaments. He reminds us, for example, that God, in Jesus Christ, became not only human, but part of the natural world. Moreover, Jesus himself appreciated the natural world, as is evident in the Gospel passages in which he praises creation. The insights of the saints are also recalled, most especially St. Francis of Assisi, the spiritual lodestar of the document. In addition to helping nonbelievers understand the Scripture and the church’s traditions, he explicitly tries to inspire believers to care for nature and the environment.

## **6) Everything is connected—including the economy.**

One of the greatest contributions of “Laudato Si” is that it offers what theologians call a “systematic” approach to an issue. First, he links all of us to creation: “We are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it” (No. 139). But our decisions, particularly about production and consumption, have an inevitable effect on the environment. Pope Francis links a “magical conception of the market,” which privileges profit over the impact on the poor, with the abuse of the environment (No. 190). Needless to say, a heedless pursuit of money that sets aside the interests of the marginalized and leads to the ruination of the planet are connected. Early on, he points to St. Francis of Assisi, who shows how “inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace” (No. 10). Far from offering a naïve condemnation of capitalism, Pope Francis provides an intelligent critique of the limits of the market, especially where it fails to provide for the poor. “Profit,” he says, “cannot be the sole criterion” of our decisions (No. 187).

## **7) Scientific research on the environment is to be praised and used.**

Pope Francis does not try to “prove” anything about climate change in this document. He frankly admits that the church does not “presume to settle scientific questions” (No. 188). And while he clearly states that there are disputes over current science, his encyclical accepts the “best scientific research available today” and builds on it, rather than entering into a specialist’s debate (No. 15). Speaking of the great forests of the Amazon and Congo, and of glaciers and aquifers, for example, he simply says, “*We know* how important these are for the earth...” (No. 38: my italics.) As the other great Catholic social encyclicals analyzed such questions as capitalism, unions and fair wages, “Laudato Si” draws upon both church teaching and contemporary findings from other fields—particularly science, in this case—to help modern-day people reflect on these questions.

## **8) Widespread indifference and selfishness worsen environmental problems.**

Pope Francis reserves his strongest criticism for the wealthy who ignore the problem of climate change, and especially its effect on the poor. “Many of those who possess more resources seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symptoms... (No. 26). Why, he asks, are so many of the wealthy turning away from the poor? Not only because “some view themselves as more worthy than others,” but because frequently decisions makers are “far removed from the poor,” physically, with no real contact to their brothers and sisters (No. 90, 49). Selfishness also leads to the evaporation of the notion of the common good. This affects not simply for those in the developing world, but also in the inner cities of our more developed countries, where he calls for what might be termed an “urban ecology.” In the world of “*Laudato Si*” there is no room for selfishness or indifference. One cannot care for the rest of nature “if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings” (No. 91).

## **9) Global dialogue and solidarity are needed.**

Perhaps more than any encyclical, Pope Francis draws from the experiences of people around the world, using the insights of bishops’ conferences from Brazil, New Zealand, Southern Africa, Bolivia, Portugal, Germany, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Australia and the United States, among other places. (In this way, he also embodies the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, which, in part, looks to local experience and local solutions.) Moreover, the “new dialogue” and “honest debate” he calls for is not simply one within the Catholic Church (No. 14, 16). Patriarch Bartholomew, the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church, enters into the encyclical, as does a Sufi poet. In fact, the pope calls into dialogue and debate “all people” about our “common home” (No. 62, 155). A global dialogue is also needed because there are “no uniform recipes.” What works in one region may not in another (No. 180). The encyclical’s worldwide scope (as opposed to a more Eurocentric cast) makes it an easier invitation for a worldwide community.

## **10) A change of heart is required**

At heart, this document, addressed to “every person on the planet” is a call for a new way of looking at things, a “bold cultural revolution” (No. 3, 114). We face an urgent crisis, when, thanks to our actions, the earth has begun to more and more like, in Francis’ vivid language, “an immense pile of filth” (No. 21). Still, the document is hopeful, reminding us that because God is with us, we can strive both individually and corporately to change course. We can awaken our hearts and move towards an “ecological conversion” in which we see the intimate connection between God and all beings, and more readily listen to the “cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (No. 49).

To use religious language, what the pope is calling for is conversion.

*James Martin, S.J., is editor at large of America and author of Jesus: A Pilgrimage. Twitter: @JamesMartinSJ.*

<http://americamagazine.org/issue/top-ten-takeaways-laudato-si>

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**June 18, 2015**

Operation Noah welcomes 'timely' climate encyclical

Independent Catholic News

Operation Noah has welcomed Pope Francis' 'bold stance on climate change ahead of the critical COP21 UN climate negotiations this December'.

"His concerns for people and the planet resonate loud and clear at a time of increasing climate instability affecting the world's poor and vulnerable and threatening the integrity of God's creation. His council urges us to take seriously the complex moral and social issues that climate change poses."

Operation Noah, an ecumenical Christian charity that campaigns on climate change, has long been calling on the Church to see the environment and climate change as an urgent theological priority.

Responding to the encyclical, Nicky Bull, Chair of Operation Noah, said: "The climate crisis offers us a unique opportunity to change the way we do things on a global scale - to create a fairer, safer and more sustainable world for all. We hope that the Pope's moral guidance will catalyse the faith community around the world to speak out and take urgent, radical action on one of the most pressing social justice issues of our time. His call for a "new and universal solidarity" to work together as one human family cannot come at a more important moment for the protection of the Earth, its creatures and future generations to come."

Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign urges the Church to align its investment policies with the duty to care for God's creation and act on climate change. Ellie Roberts, divestment campaigner, said: "We hope the Pope's call for climate justice will inspire Catholic communities around the world to look at how their own investments might be financing climate change, and to commit to disinvesting from fossil fuels as a matter of faith. This is essential for building the political will we need for governments to produce a strong climate deal in Paris at the end of this year."

Operation Noah anticipates that the immense impact of this papal encyclical on broader society and governments during the build-up to the COP21 will help to anchor our hopes for a fair and meaningful outcome. It will add enormous gravitas to faith communities' planned activities including the People's Pilgrimage, the Pilgrimage to Paris and people's mobilisations across the globe.

***For more information on Operation Noah see: <http://www.operationnoah.org>***

***<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=27727>***

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**June 18, 2015**

## Church of England Welcomes Climate Encyclical

### Church of England

The Church of England's lead on the environment, Bishop of Salisbury the Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam, has given a wholehearted welcome to today's Papal Encyclical on climate change.

Bishop Nicholas said:

"I wholeheartedly welcome the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si*, a major contribution to tackling climate change, which is one of the great moral challenges of our times. It has been much anticipated and lives up to our hopes that it would be a very substantial and compelling document not just for Roman Catholics but for the whole Church and all people who live together in our common home.

"Pope Francis highlights the iniquitous way in which the enormous consumption of some wealthy nations has repercussions in the poorest places on the planet. What is bad for our neighbours is also bad for us.

"We are seeing significant ecumenical and interfaith convergence on climate change. The Papal Encyclical is a substantial development of themes very much in line with statements made by the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Churches, the Letter on Climate Change from the Swedish Lutheran bishops as well as by the Church of England and the Anglican Communion's Environmental Network and others. As we saw yesterday with the launch of the Lambeth Declaration, the moral gravity of the challenge of climate change is also recognised by all the world faiths present in the UK.

"The transition to a low carbon economy is urgent. Churches and other faith communities have a unique power to mobilise people for the common good and change attitudes and behaviours. We also need to strengthen our politicians to achieve ambitious, accountable and binding climate change agreements, nationally and internationally.

"The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted how important this is when he spoke at the Vatican Summit on climate change in April. If people of faith and all people of goodwill work together, there is hope that we can meet the challenges posed by climate change."

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/06/church-of-england-welcomes-climate-encyclical.aspx>

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**June 18, 2015**

Anglican environmental network chair welcomes Papal climate encyclical

## Anglican Communion News Service

[Office of the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town] People of faith need to focus on the moral and spiritual elements of the crisis brought about by rapid climate change, Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba, chair of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, said today in response to [Pope Francis's encyclical](#) on the issue.

In a statement issued from Cape Town, the Archbishop said:

“I would like to thank Pope Francis for this historic, ground-breaking letter. I look forward to studying it in more detail.

“Across Africa and in other developing countries, we are already suffering the impacts of climate change, and the people hit hardest by severe droughts or storms are in our most vulnerable communities.

“In our own church province in Southern Africa, the people of Mozambique have recently been hit by floods. In Namibia, drought has forced the livestock industry – upon which seven in 10 Namibians depend for their livelihoods – to declare a state of emergency, and the government is pressing farmers to sell their cattle.

“Our sister churches in the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa have similar stories they can tell. And at a recent consultation of bishops from the most vulnerable parts of the world, we heard of changes to seasons, rising sea levels, the acidification of seawater, depleted fishing grounds and of 'climate refugees' – people displaced by the changes.

“While not discounting the political, economic, social and scientific considerations, as people of faith we need to focus on the moral and spiritual elements of the crisis. The secular and the religious concerns are not mutually exclusive.

“The values of dignity and fairness are at the heart of how we respond to the crisis. How we look after the environment is at its core about how we value our fellow human beings.

“Not only that, it is about how we value the rest of God's creation and treat the resources God has entrusted to us. Pope Francis evokes this beautifully when he cites how St Francis of Assisi communed with all creation, preaching to even the flowers, and in addressing the Lord, how he referred to our planet as 'our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us...'

“I welcome especially the way in which Pope Francis has underlined the attention that has been drawn to what he calls 'the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems' by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, requiring 'that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms.'

“In drawing attention to the high levels of consumption, greed and wastefulness in our world – which we see both in developed countries and among the wealthy in developing countries – the

encyclical makes clear that we need to adopt simpler, more wholesome lifestyles.

“If, in response to the current crisis, we take action commensurate with the problem, it could improve not only our spiritual lives – whether we are materially poor or wealthy – but deliver huge practical benefits for the poorest in developing countries.

“I join Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, when he challenges leaders at the climate talks in Paris in December to show the same inspired moral and ethical leadership.”

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2015/06/anglican-environmental-network-chair-welcomes-papal-climate-encyclical.aspx>

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**June 18, 2015**

Pope Francis sounds the alarm on the environment and he wants everyone to listen

By Matthew Bell  
PRI's The World

The head of the Roman Catholic Church released an official document in Rome on Thursday that has been creating buzz for months. It's called an encyclical, the highest form of teaching issued by a pope, and it is addressed to everyone — literally — in the whole world.

“I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home,” Francis writes.

## **1. What is Pope Francis saying about the environment?**

[The encyclical runs nearly 200 pages](#) and it contains some pretty blunt language about the state of affairs in the natural world. “The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth,” the Pope writes. Much of the blame goes to wealthy nations. Francis names “unfettered greed” and “a selfish lack of concern” as root problems and he argues that “radical action” is needed to “escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us.”

On climate change, Pope Francis embraces the scientific consensus that says the Earth is warming mostly because of human activity, that the effects of global warming are wreaking environmental havoc on communities, especially the global poor, and that developed nations must take the lead to phase out use of carbon emitting fossil fuels. “Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods,” Francis writes. “It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.”



## 2. What kind of action does the papal encyclical call for?

Francis mentions specific things he thinks need to be done to avert environmental catastrophe. He wants average citizens to pressure their elected leaders to implement new policies. Fossil fuels, he says, “especially coal, but also oil,” need to be phased out in favor of renewable sources of energy. The pope wants to see more environmental education and honest dialogue about these issues. He says this is a global problem, but that the international response has been too weak. “The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance,” the encyclical reads.

The Pope’s teaching links the human and natural worlds, indeed the words ‘human’ and ‘humanity’ appear throughout the document. As he has talked about in relation to other contemporary issues, Francis points to what he calls “throwaway culture” that fails to recognize the importance of humans as one of the causes of environmental degradation. This needs to change, he urges.

## 3. Who is Pope Francis speaking to with this encyclical?

Well, everybody, in a word. On page one of this encyclical, Francis explains: “[F]aced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet.” But there are some distinct audiences the pope would clearly like to win over with his message on the environment.

Fellow Catholics is one of them. This is the first-ever papal encyclical written solely on environmental issues. Francis builds his case, however, on Christian tradition, scripture and the teachings of popes that came before him.

Observers say this Pope is a savvy political figure with his eye on the international climate talks taking place in Paris in December. “There’s no doubt that Francis wants to influence the global debate,” says Mark Hersgaard, author of "[Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth.](#)”

In September, Francis is coming to the United States and will speak to a joint session of Congress, where many Republicans these days have their doubts about climate change. Indeed, several of the top GOP presidential hopefuls are both Catholic and non-believers when it comes to global warming. One of them is Jeb Bush, who was asked about the forthcoming encyclical and seemed decidedly unimpressed.

“I don’t get economic policy from my bishops or my cardinals or my pope. I’d like to see what he says about climate change,” Bush said. “But I think religion ought to be about making us better as people and less about things that end up getting into the political realm. So, I’m a little skeptical about this.”

Francis is also hoping his message on the environment resonate with Catholic bishops, including those in the US who help teachings from the Vatican filter down to parish priests, Sunday sermons and people in the pews. US bishops recently held a national meeting in St. Louis and discussed the Pope’s ideas in the eco-encyclical. “Unanimously, we were all behind the serious



issues that he raises regarding the environment and God's creation," says Bishop Christopher Coyne of Burlington, Vermont. There were some concerns, however, Coyne says, "especially in some of the more conservative states."

"The topic of global warming was kind of a third-rail topic for a lot of people in their states," Coyne says.

#### **4. What have previous popes said about the environment?**

In 1971, Pope Paul VI warned of a looming, "ecological catastrophe under the effective explosion of industrial civilization." In his eco-encyclical, Francis quotes from the first encyclical issued by Pope John Paul II, who warned that human beings seem "to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption." The current pontiff also mentions his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, who called for "eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment."

#### **5. How have other religious leaders weighed in on environmental issues?**

The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople has been talking about "green" issues since the 1990s. Since the release of the encyclical, Bartholomew [is praising Pope Francis](#) for his leadership, "[t]he truth is that, above any doctrinal differences that may characterize the various Christian confessions and beyond any religious disagreements that may separate the various faith communities, the Earth unites us in a unique and extraordinary manner."

Clergy from the other mainstream Western faith traditions have all started to talk more about the relationship between people and the environment as God's creation, says John Grim of Yale University's Forum on Religion and Ecology. "In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, you find these powerful statements about these relationships and the responsibility of the human," Grim says.

"With Francis as pope, he brings the discussion to a whole new level," Grim says.

Listen to the interview with John Grim on the encyclical at <http://www.pri.org/programs/pris-world/pris-world-06182015> (Note: Hit the play button at the top of the page for the audio. The whole segment, including the piece on Francis, starts at 13:23. The interview with John Grim is at 17:50 – 21:17.)

<http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-06-18/pope-francis-sounds-alarm-environment-and-he-wants-everyone-listen>

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**June 2015**

World View of Global Warming: The Photographic Documentation of Climate Change

By Gary Braasch  
World View of Global Warming

*"The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth," warns Pope Francis. "Bring the whole human family together," he urges, "redefine our notion of progress, move forward in a bold cultural revolution."*

With words that read in many places as a textbook of ecology and economics, using phrases that often ring with spiritual power, Pope Francis calls on all people to cease despoiling the Earth, stop human-made climate change, care much more for poor and indigenous cultures, and begin "redefining our notion of progress."

In detailed exposition as well as direct statements in an [Encyclical issued](#) June 18, the Pope urges us to change our ways now:

- "We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now."
- "It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress."
- "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone....This calls into serious question the unjust habits of a part of humanity."
- "What is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis."
- "Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility."

Far more than what some thought would be only a direct statement about fighting climate change, the 182-page Encyclical Letter ranges across ecology, economics, science, sociology, history, urbanization, technology, world politics, ethics and theology and, of course, the beliefs of Catholicism. The Pope warns of damage not only to the climate systems, but also to [ecosystems](#), [water](#), and human social networks. He urges not only deeper personal responsibility but also "one world with a common plan," writing that "a global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries."

In the Encyclical, entitled "Praise Be ... On Care for Our Common Home," Francis criticizes "wasteful and consumerist" industrial development, and quotes from the Rio Declaration of 1992 that the protection of the environment is "an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it." "We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics," he writes, "in the service of a more integral and integrating vision."

This papal letter sent to all bishops of the Roman Catholic Church but expected to be widely read and influential because of its subject, comes during a year of increased expectation of international action to limit global warming emissions. Francis details the science and technologies involved in understanding, causing and reducing climate change: "The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all," is one of his first statements. "We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay," he writes. "The emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of [renewable energy](#). Worldwide there is minimal access to clean and renewable energy."

Pope Francis, the former Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina, chose his papal name in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, and is the first Pope named after the saint. In his early life the Pope was a chemical technician, running tests in a food laboratory. Before becoming a Jesuit priest in 1960, he also worked as a bouncer and janitor. "I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically," writes Francis. "He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast..."

The Pope's call for environmental, economic and social action will be heralded by many world leaders and used as encouragement to action for governments, including in the United States where some [conservative leaders](#) who oppose climate change action and defend freer business economics are Roman Catholics. Also likely to be controversial is Francis's sidestepping of [population](#) limitation as a cause of some environmental problems: "To blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues. It is an attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized, since the planet could not even contain the waste products of such consumption."

Rich information and interpretation of the Encyclical may be found at the [Yale Forum](#) on Religion and Ecology. Additional coverage and analysis is in the NY Times, [here](#) and [here](#).

For photos, see:

<http://worldviewofglobalwarming.org/>

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**June 18, 2015**

Wisconsin Islamic Group Ties Green Initiatives to Spirituality

By Susan Bence  
Milwaukee Public Radio

Among faith groups, a ground swell of environmental concern has been building. This includes within the Muslim community, which begins Ramadan – their sacred month of fasting – today.

In Milwaukee, a group called the [Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin](#) has been at work for a decade. It will be honored next week by a national interfaith environmental group, GreenFaith, for its programs.

WUWM Environmental Reporter Susan Bence visited with two people instrumental in the Islamic group's green initiatives.

Nabil Salous says the Qur'an stresses the importance of caring for the earth. He serves on the board of directors for the [Islamic Society of Milwaukee](#), or ISM.

And, Huda Alkaff created the Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin. She says its efforts boil down to tying awareness and action to spirituality.

Alkaff works with mosques in Madison and the Fox Valley, but most of her energy is spent in Milwaukee. Every month, she promotes a different environmental theme - from energy consumption to urban farming.

ISM's South 13th Street location holds classrooms for middle and high school students as well as a mosque. A number of green projects have been spearheaded there, including a green roof and special faucets to help cut water consumption.

Nabil Salous is especially proud of the green roof; he says, "the students will be able to see what it's all about, so it's a good educational experience for them."

Five blocks east, a large stormwater control system has been installed in the building that serves as ISM's community center and elementary school.

"We have a large parking lot, so we built bioswales," Salous says. "...When rainwater comes, it will naturally flows to those swales and that will do filtration and get cleaned up. It has been very successful."

Inside the women's bathroom, Huda Alkaff says faucets have been installed especially designed for ritual washing before prayer. "It's called ablution station. So, we have to wash, make ourselves pure before praying," she says.

Alkaff says the sensor-activated faucet serves as a reminder that conservation folds into faith. "There is a saying by the Prophet Mohammed (to) conserve water even if you are on the banks of a flowing river. Only use what you need," she says.

Alkaff says that this dedication to conservation of all kinds, water and energy, is built into the foundation of the Islamic faith. "There are more than 500 verses in the Qur'an that have environmental aspects," she says. "...That's our mission really is to bring out what's already there and tie it with things we can do."

A green space and playground equipment outside of the elementary school replaced a huge parking lot.

"If there is a hard surface we don't need, we just get rid of it," Nabil Salous says. Alkaff adds that projects that benefit children and their health are of utmost importance to the community.

Alkaff says consensus building and education have led to the Islamic Society of Milwaukee's buildings greener and more sustainable, but much work remains.

"We need to do a lot more, we have a long way to go...but we celebrate everything that we have done...we know that we have to do more," she says. Salous chimes in, "Our water bills substantially went down...so it's also good for business as well. It's not only doing the right thing to do morally, but financially I've seen a difference."

Today as fasting begins, the Islamic Society of Milwaukee joins more than two dozen mosques around the country embracing "Greening Ramadan."

<http://wuwmm.com/post/wisconsin-islamic-group-ties-green-initiatives-spirituality>

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**June 18, 2015**

Pope Francis and Integral Ecology

By Sam Mickey  
Becoming Integral

The new encyclical by Pope Francis, [\*Laudato Si': On the Care of our Common Home\*](#), contains many references to "integral ecology," including an entire chapter by that title.

It's relatively clear that Francis is working with the integral ecology proposed by the Brazilian liberation theologian [Leonardo Boff](#), who draws on the general ecology of Félix Guattari and the integral ecology proposed by the cultural historian Thomas Berry. Regarding Boff's influence, consider the Pope's allusion to Boff's *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. "Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" (# 49). The Pope's sense of integral ecology is also clearly influenced by the ecological sensibility of St. Francis of Assisi, whose phrase "Laudato Si'" (from his Canticle of the Creatures) provides the title and opening line for the encyclical.

The following are the selections from the encyclical that explicitly mention integral ecology. There are also many other references to integral and integrative approaches, including integral development, progress, and education. Moreover, the Pope does not intend integral ecology to be an exclusively or primarily Catholic endeavor. The encyclical is addressed to "every person living on this planet" (#3).

“I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. [...] Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human.” (#10-11)

“We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision. Today, the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment.” (#141)

Any approach to an integral ecology, which by definition does not exclude human beings, needs to take account of the value of labour. (#124)

“An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us...” (#225)

“An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness.” (#230)

“Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. The Portuguese bishops have called upon us to acknowledge this obligation of justice: “The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next”. An integral ecology is marked by this broader vision.” (#159)

<http://becomingintegral.com/2015/06/18/pope-francis-and-integral-ecology/>

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**June 18, 2015**

Pope Francis' Encyclical: Clean Energy and the Moral Case for Climate Solutions

By Gabe Elsner, Executive Director, Energy and Policy Institute  
Huffington Post

Today, Pope Francis officially released his encyclical, "[Laudato Si](#) (“Be Praised”), [On the Care of Our Common Home](#)”, calling on “every person living on this planet” to urgently address climate change, reduce the use of fossil fuels, and transition to clean energy.

An encyclical is a message sent to all the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church to help inform Catholic teachings. But, Pope Francis made clear that this message is for “all men and women of good will” to “cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” The Pope cited climate change as a

moral crisis we must address to protect the world's poor from the impacts of climate change such as rising seas, drought, and floods.

The Pope acknowledged that the “bulk of global warming” is caused by human activity and issued a call for our global society to rapidly address this crisis by reducing and ultimately eliminating the use of fossil fuels.

In order to answer Pope Francis' call for sustainable development, we need solutions that can compete in the economic system and rapidly transform our relationship how we use natural resources. Fortunately, the economics of energy sector continue to move towards sustainable economic development and away from dirty energy sources.

The transformation away from dirty energy has already started in the electricity sector and will accelerate as more investors and politicians assess the real costs of fossil fuels. Here are just a few recent developments demonstrating that an economy powered by clean electricity is possible, and in society's best interest.

Coal is one of the poorest performing sectors of the global economy, and clean technology is one of the most productive, fastest growing sectors. In April, at the Bloomberg New Energy Finance Conference, Michael Liebreich described how additions of renewable energy have overtaken the additions of coal, natural gas and oil combined and the growth of clean energy will continue to accelerate in the future.

Bloomberg [reported](#), “Solar, the newest major source of energy in the mix, makes up less than 1 percent of the electricity market today but could be the world's biggest single source by 2050, according to the International Energy Agency.”

In addition, coal companies, Peabody Energy, Arch Coal, and Alpha Natural Resources, are all struggling to compete due to cheap clean energy and natural gas. Since last year, Peabody Energy's stock price is down 86%, Arch Coal is down 88%, and Alpha Natural Resources stock price is down 89%. The trends all point to the end of coal and the rapid deployment of clean energy sources.

On the microeconomic level, the Southern Mississippi Electric Power Association, an electric cooperative in Mississippi had originally planned to buy 15% of the Kemper Project, a coal fired power plant attempting to implement advanced coal technology. Instead, the co-op recently announced it's decision to purchase up to 250 MW of wind power, amidst missed deadlines and cost overruns plaguing the Kemper project - making it one of the most expensive power plants per kilowatt in the United States. In response, the State Director of Sierra Club Mississippi, Louie Miller, said, "The record low price of wind energy makes it a good investment that will save customers money and protect the environment at the same time."

## **How to Continue the Clean Energy Transition**



However, in order to hasten the transition to a sustainable economy, we must urgently tackle two priorities: **actively confront the economics of fossil fuels** (by challenging the political power of the fossil fuel industry worldwide), and **take bold action to scale solutions to climate change**.

First, regarding the economic reality, the fossil fuel industry continues to benefit from trillions of dollars in subsidies every year. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently [reported](#) that fossil fuel companies are receiving subsidies worth \$14.5 billion every day, or \$5.3 trillion (\$5,300,000,000,000.00) in 2015. The cost estimate from the IMF includes the health impacts of pollution, and the costs of floods, droughts, and other disasters caused by climate change pollution.

The Guardian [reported](#) that Nicholas Stern, an eminent climate economist at the London School of Economics, said: “This very important analysis shatters the myth that fossil fuels are cheap by showing just how huge their real costs are. There is no justification for these enormous subsidies for fossil fuels, which distort markets and damages economies, particularly in poorer countries.”

That said, politicians and governments will still need to change the legal system to account for these hidden costs of fossil fuels, and once these costs are factored in, fossil fuel energy sources will have a very difficult time competing with clean energy technology. This won't be easy because of the entrenched political power of fossil fuel special interests. During the debate over the climate bill in the United States in 2009 and 2010, the fossil fuel lobby was estimated to have spent over [\\$500 million](#) on lobbying members of Congress.

Yet, even with all these subsidies for fossil fuels, the clean energy industry is becoming cost competitive in more places around the world. Last year, [one-third of all of the European Union's electricity](#) came from renewable energy sources. Deutsche Bank recently [estimated that solar electricity may be cost competitive](#) with natural gas, coal, and other forms of electricity in 47 U.S. states by 2016 and many countries have regions already at grid parity, when solar is cost competitive with traditional energy sources.

Second, the world must take bold action and move quickly to meet mitigation goals to avoid the worst impacts of global climate change. The Pope's message to address this moral crisis adds additional weight to solve the problem, and given the economics of clean energy, we can see a path towards stopping climate change.

However, Michael Liebreich also noted at the Bloomberg New Energy Finance that even though investments in clean energy technology are booming, they still fall short of what's needed to solve the climate change crisis.

Liebreich stated that cleantech investment must double from the approximately \$300 billion invested in 2014 to over \$600 billion by 2020 in order to stave off run-away climate change.

We can answer the call to action on climate change, but will take a monumental effort by our social, economic, and political systems to “protect our common home.” The Pope's message is a call to action for all people on the planet to make haste and implement solutions to solve the climate crisis.



**June 18, 2015**

The Magna Carta of integral ecology: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the poor

By Leonardo Boff, theologian and ecologist  
Earth Charter International

Before making any comment it is worth highlighting some peculiarities of the Laudato Si' encyclical of Pope Francis.

It is the first time a Pope has addressed the issue of ecology in the sense of an integral ecology (as it goes beyond the environment) in such a complete way. Big surprise: he elaborates the subject on the new ecological paradigm, which no official document of the UN has done so far.

He bases his writing on the safest data from the life sciences and Earth. He reads the data affectionately (with a sensitive or cordial intelligence), as he discerns that behind them hides human tragedy and suffering, and for Mother Earth as. The current situation is serious, but Pope Francis always finds reasons for hope and trust that human beings can find viable solutions. He links to the Popes who preceded him, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, quoting them frequently.

And something absolutely new: the text is part of collegiality, as it values the contributions of dozens of bishops' conferences around the world, from the US to Germany, Brazil, Patagonia-Comahue, and Paraguay. He gathers the contributions of other thinkers, such as Catholics Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Romano Guardini, Dante Alighieri, the Argentinian maestro Juan Carlos Scannone, Protestant Paul Ricoeur and the Sufi Muslim Ali Al-Khawwas. The recipients are all of us human beings, we are all inhabitants of the same common home (commonly used term by the Pope) and suffer the same threats.

Pope Francis does not write as a Master or Doctor of faith, but as a zealous pastor who cares for the common home of all beings, not just humans, that inhabit it.

One element deserves to be highlighted, as it reveals the "forma mentis" (the way he organizes his thinking) of Pope Francis. This is a contribution of the pastoral and theological experience of Latin American churches in the light of the documents of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in Medellin (1968), Puebla (1979) and Aparecida (2007), that were an option for the poor against poverty and in favor of liberation.

The wording and tone of the encyclical are typical of Pope Francis, and the ecological culture that he has accumulated, but I also realize that many expressions and ways of speaking refer to what is being thought and written mainly in Latin America. The themes of the "common home", of "Mother Earth", the "cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor", the "care" of the "interdependence of all beings", of the "poor and vulnerable", the "paradigm shift," the "human being as Earth" that feels, thinks, loves and reveres, the "integral ecology" among others, are

recurrent among us.

The structure of the encyclical follows the methodological ritual used by our churches and theological reflection linked to the practice of liberation, now taken over and consecrated by the Pope: see, judge, act and celebrate.

First, he begins revealing his main source of inspiration: St. Francis of Assisi, whom he calls "the quintessential example of comprehensive care and ecology, who showed special concern for the poor and the abandoned" (n.10, n.66).

Then he moves on to see "What is happening in our home" (nn.17-61). The Pope says, "just by looking at the reality with sincerity we can see that there is a deterioration of our common home" (n.61). This part incorporates the most consistent data on climate change (nn.20-22), the issue of water (n.27-31), erosion of biodiversity (nn.32-42), the deterioration of the quality of human life and the degradation of social life (nn.43-47), he denounces the high rate of planetary inequality, which affects all areas of life (nn.48-52), with the poor as its main victims (n. 48).

In this part there is a phrase which refers to the reflection made in Latin America: "Today we cannot ignore that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach and should integrate justice in discussions on the environment to hear both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor" (n.49). Then he adds: "the cries of the Earth join the cries of the abandoned of this world" (n.53). This is quite consistent since the beginning he has said that "we are Earth" (No. 2; cf. Gen 2.7.). Very much in line with the great singer and poet Argentine indigenous Atahualpa Yupanqui: "humans beings are the Earth walking, feeling, thinking and loving."

He condemns the proposed internationalization of the Amazon that "only serves the interests of multinationals" (n.38). There is a great statement of ethical force, "it is severely grave to obtain significant benefits making the rest of humanity, present and future, pay for the high costs of environmental degradation" (n.36).

He acknowledges with sadness: "We had never mistreated and offended our common home as much as in the last two centuries" (n.53). Faced with this human offensive against Mother Earth that many scientists have denounced as the beginning of a new geological era -the anthropocene- he regrets the weakness of the powers of this world, that deceived, "believed that everything can continue as it is, as an alibi to "maintain its self-destructive habits" (n.59) with "a behavior that seems suicidal" (n.55).

Prudently, he recognizes the diversity of opinions (nn.60-61) and that "there is no single way to solve the problem" (n.60). However, "it is true that the global system is unsustainable from many points of view because we have stopped thinking about the purpose of human action (n.61) and we get lost in the construction of means for unlimited accumulation at the expense of ecological injustice (degradation of ecosystems) and social injustice (impoverishment of populations). Mankind simply disappointed the divine hope"(n.61).

The urgent challenge, then, is "to protect our common home" (n.13); and for that we need, quoting Pope John Paul II, "a global ecological conversion" (n.5); "A culture of caring that

permeates all of society" (n.231). Once the seeing dimension is realized, the dimension of judgment prevails. This judging is done in two aspects, the scientific and the theological.

Let's see the scientific. The encyclical devoted the entire third chapter to the analysis "of the human root of the ecological crisis" (nn.101-136). Here the Pope proposes to analyze techno-science, without prejudice, recognizing what it has brought such as "precious things to improve the quality of human life" (n. 103). But this is not the problem, it is independence submitted to the economy, politics and nature in view of the accumulation of material goods (cf.n.109). Techno-science nourishes a mistaken assumption that there is an "infinite availability of goods in the world" (n.106), when we know that we have surpassed the physical limits of the Earth and that much of the goods and services are not renewable. Techno-science has turned into technocracy, which has become a real dictatorship with a firm logic of domination over everything and everyone (n.108).

The great illusion, dominant today, lies in believing that techno-science can solve all environmental problems. This is a misleading idea because it "involves isolating the things that are always connected" (n.111). In fact, "everything is connected" (n.117), "everything is related" (n.120), a claim that appears throughout the encyclical text as a refrain, as it is a key concept of the contemporary paradigm. The great limitation of technocracy is "knowledge fragmentation and losing the sense of wholeness" (n.110). The worst thing is "not to recognize the intrinsic value of every being and even denying a peculiar value to the human being" (n.118).

The intrinsic value of each being, even if it is minuscule, is permanently highlighted in the encyclical (N.69), as it is in the Earth Charter. By denying the intrinsic value we are preventing "each being to communicate its message and to give glory to God" (n.33).

The largest deviation of technocracy is anthropocentrism. This means an illusion that things have value only insofar as they are ordered to human use, forgetting that its existence is valuable by itself (n.33). If it is true that everything is related, then "we humans are united as brothers and sisters and join with tender affection to Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother river and Mother Earth" (n.92). How can we expect to dominate them and view them within the narrow perspective of domination by humans?

All these "ecological virtues" (n.88) are lost by the will of power and domination of others to nature. We live a distressing "loss of meaning of life and the desire to live together" (n.110). He sometimes quotes the Italian-German theologian Romano Guardini (1885-1968), one of the most read in the middle of last century, who wrote a critical book against the claims of the modernity (n.105 note 83: *Das Ende der Neuzeit, The decline of the Modern Age*, 1958).

The other side of judgment is the theological. The encyclical reserves an important space for the "Gospel of Creation" (nos. 62-100). It begins justifying the contribution of religions and Christianity, as it is global crisis, each instance must, with its religious capital contribute to the care of the Earth (n.62). He does not insist in doctrines but on the wisdom in various spiritual paths. Christianity prefers to speak of creation rather than nature, because "creation is related to a project of love of God" (n.76). He quotes, more than once, a beautiful text of the Book of Wisdom (21.24) where it is clear that "the creation of the order of love" (n.77) and God emerges

as "the Lord lover of life "(Wis 11:26).

The text opens for an evolutionary view of the universe without using the word, but through a circumlocution referring to the universe "consisting of open systems that come into communion with each other" (n.79). It uses the main texts that link Christ incarnated and risen with the world and with the whole universe, making all matters of the Earth sacred (n.83). In this context he quotes Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955, n.83 note 53) as a precursor of this cosmic vision. The fact that Trinity-God is divine and it related with people means that all things are related resonances of the divine Trinity (n.240).

The Encyclical quotes the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox Church who "recognizes that sins against creation are sins against God" (n.7). Hence the urgency of a collective ecological conversion to repair the lost harmony.

The encyclical concludes well with this part "The analysis showed the need for a change of course ... we must escape the spiral of self-destruction in which we are sinking" (n.163). It is not a reform, but, citing the Earth Charter, to seek "a new beginning" (n.207). The interdependence of all with all leads us to believe "in one world with a common project" (n.164).

Since reality has many aspects, all closely related, Pope Francis proposes an "integral ecology" that goes beyond the environmental ecology to which we are accustomed (n.137). It covers all areas, the environmental, economic, social, cultural and everyday life (n.147-148). Never forget the poor who also testify to the living human and social ecology ties of belonging and solidarity with each other (n.149).

The third methodological step is to act. In this part, the Encyclical observes the major issues of the international, national and local politics (nn.164-181). It stresses the interdependence of social and educational aspects with the ecological and sadly states the difficulties that bring the prevalence of technocracy, creating difficulties for the changes needed to restrain the greed of accumulation and consumption, that can be re-opened (n.141). He mentions again the theme of economics and politics that should serve the common good and create conditions for a possible human fulfillment (n.189-198). He re-emphasizes the dialogue between science and religion, as it has been suggested by the great biologist Edward O.Wilson (cf. the book *Creation: How to save life on Earth*, 2008). All religions "should seek the care of nature and the defense of the poor" (n.201).

Still in the aspect of acting, he challenges education in the sense of creating "ecological citizenship" (n.211) and a new lifestyle, based on caring, compassion, shared sobriety, the alliance between humanity and the environment, since both are umbilically linked, and the co-responsibility for everything that exists and lives and our common destiny (nn.203-208).

Finally, the time to celebrate. The celebration takes place in a context of "ecological conversion" (n.216), it involves an "ecological spirituality" (n.216). This stems not so much from theological doctrines but the motivations that faith arises to take care of the common home and "nurture a passion for caring for the world" (216). Such a mystical experience is what mobilizes people to live in ecological balance, "to those who are solidary inside themselves, with others, with nature

and with all living and spiritual beings and God" (n.210). It appears to be the truth that "less is more" and that we can be happy with little. In the sense of celebrating "the world is more than something to be solved, it is a joyous mystery to be contemplated in joy and with love" (n.12).

The tender and fraternal spirit of St. Francis of Assisi is present through the entire text of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The current situation does not mean an announced tragedy, but a challenge for us to care for the common home and for each other. The text highlights poetry and joy in the Spirit and indestructible hope that if the threat is big, greater is the opportunity for solving our environmental problems.

The text poetically ends with the words "Beyond the Sun", saying: "let's walk singing. That our struggles and our concerns about this planet do not take away our joy of hope" (n.244).

I would like to end with the final words of the Earth Charter which the Pope quotes himself (n.207): "Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life."

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/1149/1/Article-by-Leonardo-Boff-on-the-Popes-Encyclical/Page1.html>

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**June 18, 2015**

**Laudato Si' and Water: The Vatican's Encyclical Letter and Global Water Challenges**

By Peter H. Gleick, President, Pacific Institute  
Huffington Post

The [official text](#) of the much-anticipated Vatican's Encyclical Letter, "Laudato Si'" ("On Care for our Common Home") was released today. While considerable attention is being devoted to the sections of Pope Francis's new Encyclical related to the threats of climate change, the letter also tackles many other environmental challenges, including biodiversity, food, and especially the critical issue of freshwater. Woven throughout is attention to the social and equity dimensions of these challenges and a deep concern for the poor.

The water sections of the Encyclical Letter focus on the disparities in access, quality, and use of water between the wealthier, industrialized parts of the world and poorer populations. It notes that in many parts of the world, exploitation of water is exceeding natural resource limits - the problem of ["peak water"](#) - while still failing to satisfy the needs of the poorest.

"The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty." (Section 27)

The Encyclical identifies several key water problems including the lack of access to clean drinking water "indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic

ecosystems" (section 28), the challenges for food production due to droughts and disparities in water availability and "water poverty" (section 28), the continued prevalence of water-related diseases afflicting the poor (section 29), contamination of groundwater (section 29), and the trend toward privatization and commodification of a resource the Vatican describes as an "basic and universal human right" (section 30).

The Letter also expresses concern for the inefficient and wasteful use of water in both rich and poor regions:

"But water continues to be wasted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance"

and it decries the risk that the

"control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century" (section 31).

In the context of climate change, the Letter notes the clear links between a warming planet and threats to water resources and other environmental conditions:

"It [warming] creates a vicious circle which aggravates the situation even more, affecting the availability of essential resources like drinking water, energy and agricultural production in warmer regions, and leading to the extinction of part of the planet's biodiversity." (section 24)

Consistent with the overall theme of the Encyclical is the observation that the poorest suffer the most from water problems:

"One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by microorganisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are a significant cause of suffering and of infant mortality." (Section 29)

The Encyclical goes further and notes:

"Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, *because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity*. (Section 30, *italics in original*)."

This framing is consistent with the formal human right to water [declared by the United Nations](#) in 2010, linking the right to water with the right to life and well-being. Today, [the UN estimates](#) that around 2.5 billion people on the planet still lack access to safe sanitation and 750 million do not have safe drinking water. Worldwide, [more people die from unsafe water annually](#) than from all forms of violence, including war.

While progress has been made in cleaning up some water pollution, especially in richer industrialized nations, [many water-quality indicators are worsening, not improving](#), and as

populations grow, exposure to some forms of water pollution affects larger and larger numbers of people and watersheds. [Even in places like California](#), hundreds of thousands of people - mostly in low-income communities - are at risk of exposure to water with high concentrations of nitrates because of the failure to protect and clean up groundwater systems contaminated by agricultural chemicals, animal feeding operations, and poor sewage systems.

In order to tackle these challenges, the Encyclical Letter identifies several priorities, but especially for water:

"some questions must have higher priority. For example, we know that water is a scarce and indispensable resource and a fundamental right which conditions the exercise of other human rights. This indisputable fact overrides any other assessment of environmental impact on a region." (section 185)

It also calls for reducing waste and inappropriate consumption, increasing funding to ensure universal access to basic water and sanitation, and increased education and awareness, especially in the "context of great inequity."

The world's water challenges are technical, economic, political, and social issues, but the Vatican Encyclical reminds us that ultimately they are ethical and moral issues as well. This is a valuable and timely reminder.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-h-gleick/laudato-si-and-water-the\\_b\\_7611994.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-h-gleick/laudato-si-and-water-the_b_7611994.html)

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**June 18, 2015**

Why Pope Francis' encyclical matters

By Thomas Reese  
National Catholic Reporter

Some of the most frequently asked questions I have gotten from journalists this week: Why does the encyclical matter? What impact will it have? Why is it getting all this attention?

Let's start with the last question: Why is it getting all this attention?

The encyclical, "[Laudato Si', On Care for our Common Home](#) [1]," is getting lots of attention for two reasons.

First, there is a growing consensus around the world that we need to take better care of the environment. Scientific consensus exists that climate change is happening, and human activity is causing it. People are growing in their awareness of environmental problems, but they also see that so far, the world has done little to respond to the crisis.

The second reason the encyclical is getting so much attention is because it is from Pope Francis. The pope is admired, respected, and even loved all over the world by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Everyone is fascinated by this pope, and he has an ability to communicate in simple language that average people can understand.

It is true that previous popes spoke or wrote about the environment and global warming, but their message rarely got through to the public for two reasons.

First, the media were much more interested in writing stories about popes and condoms than stories about popes and the environment.

Second, in the last two papacies, papal statements tended to read like academic dissertations. The church has never been very good at communicating Catholic social teaching, whether it has been on justice, peace or the environment.

Francis, on the other hand, writes more like a journalist than an academic. Anyone who can read a newspaper can read this encyclical and get something out of it.

In other words, the encyclical is getting so much media attention because it is on the right topic, at the right time, by the right person.

### **Why does the encyclical matter?**

The encyclical matters because it is an authoritative message by one of the world's great religious leaders. The encyclical will stimulate homilies and discussions in parishes around the world. It will become a source of inspiration and ideas for activists, preachers, teachers, theologians and authors who will echo and develop the pope's message.

In his encyclical, the pope begins with looking at the facts: What have we been doing to the earth? He then argues that how we treat the earth, how we respond to climate change, are moral questions -- in fact, some of the most important moral issues of our time.

Those who argue that the pope should stick to faith and morals and not political issues don't seem to think there are any Catholic moral issues outside the bedroom. What can be a more important moral issue than one that could cause the death and displacement of millions of people?

The encyclical is also an invitation to dialogue. The pope does not claim to have all the answers. The more specific his policy recommendations, the less authoritative he becomes. He is inviting economists, business people, public officials, environmentalists, inventors and religious leaders to all come together for a conversation on how to protect the environment. Anyone with a good idea is welcome.

The encyclical also matters because it puts the Catholic church firmly behind the environmental movement. With the pope's embrace, the environmental movement goes mainstream. They can no longer be denigrated as tree-huggers and Gaia worshippers.



Despite its efforts, the environmental movement has had only limited success. Frankly, people are not going to change their lifestyles to protect polar bears. But if history shows us anything, it is that religion can motivate people to do extraordinary things. Religious motives can move people to self-sacrifice, to give up their own self-interest for a greater good. The environmental movement needs believers of every faith who are motivated by their religious convictions to protect God's creation.

### **What impact will the encyclical have?**

The pope is calling the world to a conversion that will have a huge impact on how we live, how our economy works, and how governments operate. "Revolutionary" is almost too weak a word. It will require an extraordinary change in human vision and behavior to accomplish this peaceful revolution. It will require sacrifice from everyone, especially those who are rich and powerful, who are enjoying the fruits of the status quo.

Doing what the pope asks will not be easy, but the pope encourages us to trust in a loving God and a powerful Spirit that can renew the face of the earth. His encyclical is remarkable in that it does not depend primarily on fear to motivate people to care for the earth. Rather, he emphasizes love as the motivating force.

We cannot expect the encyclical to miraculously change human attitudes and behavior overnight. Rather, the encyclical is the beginning of a process that will go on for years. It requires that each of us get involved for the long haul. This is a marathon, not a sprint.

As a social scientist, I am very pessimistic that we can avoid an environmental catastrophe, but as a Christian, I have to have hope. Francis' encyclical strengthens that hope.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a senior analyst for *NCR* and author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*. His email address is [treesesj@ncronline.org](mailto:treesesj@ncronline.org) [2]. Follow him on Twitter: [@ThomasReeseSJ](https://twitter.com/ThomasReeseSJ) [3].]

**Editor's note:** We can send you an email alert every time Thomas Reese's column, [Faith and Justice](#) [4], is posted. Go to this page and follow directions: [Email alert sign-up](#) [5].

### **Links:**

[1] <http://ncronline.org/node/104496>

[2] <mailto:treesesj@ncronline.org>

[3] <http://www.twitter.com/thomasreesesj>

[4] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice>

[5] <http://ncronline.org/email-alert-signup>

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/why-pope-francis-encyclical-matters>

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**June 18, 2015**

The Guardian view on Laudato Si': Pope Francis calls for a cultural revolution

Editorial  
The Guardian

*The pope links the destruction of the environment with the exploitation of the poor. The world should pay attention*

Pope Francis's [encyclical on climate change, \*Laudato Si'\*](#), is the most astonishing and perhaps the most ambitious papal document of the past 100 years, since it is addressed not just to Catholics, or Christians, but to everyone on earth. It sets out a programme for change that is rooted in human needs but it makes the radical claim that these needs are not primarily greedy and selfish ones.

We need nature, he says, and we need each other. Our need for mutuality, and for giving, is just as real as the selfish aspects of our characters; the need for awe and stillness in front of nature is just as profound as any other human need. The care of nature and the care of the poor are aspects of the same ethical commandment, and if we neglect either one we cannot find peace. The environment, in the pope's use of the word, is not something out there: nature as opposed to the human world. The term describes the relationship between nature and humans, who are inextricably linked and part of each other. It is that relationship that must be set right.

Starting from that premise, he launches a ferocious attack on what he sees as the false and treacherous appetites of capitalism and on the consumerist view of human nature. For Francis, there is a vital distinction between human needs, which are limited but non-negotiable, and appetites, which are potentially unlimited, and which can always be traded for other satisfactions without ever quite giving us what we most deeply want. The poor, he says, have their needs denied, while the rich have their appetites indulged. The environmental crisis links these two aspects of the problem.

This criticism attacks both kinds of defenders of the present world order: the deniers and the optimists. The document is absolutely unequivocal in backing the overwhelming scientific consensus that anthropogenic global warming is a clear and present danger. It blasts the use of fossil fuels and demands that these be phased out in favour of renewable energy. But it is also explicitly opposed to the idea that we can rely on purely technological solutions to ecological problems. This may be the most explicit break with the liberal and [broadly optimistic consensus](#) of the consuming world. There will never be a technological fix for the problem of unrestrained appetite, the pope claims, because this is a moral problem, which demands a moral solution, a turn towards sobriety and self-restraint and away from the intoxications of consumerism.

In this he is drawing partly on the tradition of Catholic social teaching, and partly on moral thinking popular in the 1960s, when [moral philosophers](#) were first grappling with the implications of nuclear weapons and the sense that humankind had not grown up but reached its toddler stage, where the capacity for destruction far outweighed our capacity for judgment.

Once again we find that we possess the power to destroy the planet and most of the multicellular life on it, but this time there is no argument from enlightened self-interest that is as clear as the argument against nuclear warfare was in the days of the cold war. The balance of terror no longer exists in the same form as it did when the use of nuclear weapons would be punished by nuclear retaliation: the poor world will now pay for the crimes of the rich, and our children and grandchildren must pay for their parents' self-indulgence. This is what he means by an "ecological debt". The sometimes apocalyptic tone, with the threats of resource wars as well as the more obvious forms of ecological catastrophe, arises from the sense that this debt must at some time be terribly repaid.

Will anyone listen? The pope is scathing, and rightly so, about the lack of action that has followed high-minded declarations in the past. Why should this time be different? The answer, not entirely reassuring, is that we cannot go on as we are. Self-interest alone will not avert the catastrophe. Without a moral and imaginative structure that links our wellbeing to that of others, so that their suffering feels as urgent as ours, or is at least measured on the same scales, we will render our planet uninhabitable. The pope is trying to change our understanding of human nature. Many people will disagree with his understanding. But he is right that no smaller change will do.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/18/guardian-view-on-laudato-si-pope-francis-cultural-revolution>

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**June 18, 2015**

Metropolitan John Zizioulas: Laudato Si' give Orthodox "great joy"

Vatican Radio

(Vatican Radio) The presentation of the [Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis Laudato Si'](#) included a presentation by Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

"The issuing of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is, therefore, an occasion of great joy and satisfaction for the Orthodox," said Metropolitan John. "On behalf of them I should like to express our deep gratitude to His Holiness for raising his authoritative voice to draw the attention of the world to the urgent need to protect God's creation from the damage we humans inflict on it with our behavior towards nature."

He said the Encyclical comes at a "critical moment in human history" and will "undoubtedly have a worldwide effect on people's consciousness."

***The full text of Metropolitan John's intervention is below***

# POPE FRANCIS' ENCYCLICAL LAUDATO SI'

## A COMMENT

By Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon

### Introduction

I should like to begin by expressing my deep gratitude for the honour to be invited to take part in this event of launching the new Encyclical of His Holiness Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*. I am also honoured by the fact that His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has asked me to convey to you his personal joy and satisfaction for the issuing of the Encyclical. As some of you may already know, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been the first one in the Christian world to draw the attention of the world community to the seriousness of the ecological problem and the duty of the Church to voice its concern and try to contribute with all the spiritual means at its disposal towards the protection of our natural environment. Thus, back already in the year 1989, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios issued an Encyclical to the faithful Christians and to all people of good will, in which he underlined the seriousness of the ecological problem and its theological and spiritual dimensions. This was followed by a series of activities, such as international conferences of religious leaders and scientific experts, as well as seminars for young people, Church ministers etc. under the auspices of the present Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, aiming at the promotion of an ecological consciousness among the Christians in particular and more widely in the community of men and women.

The issuing of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is, therefore, an occasion of great joy and satisfaction for the Orthodox. On behalf of them I should like to express our deep gratitude to His Holiness for raising his authoritative voice to draw the attention of the world to the urgent need to protect God's creation from the damage we humans inflict on it with our behavior towards nature. This Encyclical comes at a critical moment in human history and will undoubtedly have a worldwide effect on people's consciousness.

Those who read the Encyclical will be impressed by the depth and the thoroughness with which the ecological problem is treated and its seriousness is brought out, together with concrete suggestions and proposals on how to act in order to face its consequences. There is in its pages food for thought for all: the scientist, the economist, the sociologist and above all the faithful of the Church. My own comments will be limited to the richness of theological thought and spirituality of the Encyclical. Time and space prevent me from doing full justice to the treatment of these aspects. I shall limit myself to the following points:

The theological significance of ecology;  
The spiritual dimension of the ecological problem; and  
The ecumenical significance of the Encyclical.

### 1. Theology and Ecology

What does ecology have to do with theology? In the traditional manuals of theology, there is hardly any place for ecology and the same is true for the academic curricula of the theological schools, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. The Encyclical devotes a whole chapter (ch. 2) to show the profound ecological implications of the Christian doctrine of creation. It points out that according to the Bible “human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships with God, with our neighbor and **with the earth itself**” (par. 66). This third relationship, i.e. with the earth, has been very often ignored by Christian theology to such an extent that the American historian Lynn White, in a now famous article in the periodical *Scientist* (1967), would accuse Christian theology for being responsible for the modern ecological crisis. For it is true that in Christian theology the human being has been so exalted above material creation as to allow humans to treat it as material for the satisfaction of their needs and desires. The human being has been de-naturalized and in its abuse and misuse of the biblical command to the first human couple – “increase and multiply and subdue the earth” (Gen. 1.28) – humanity was encouraged to exploit the material creation unrestrictedly with no respect for its integrity and even sacredness.

This attitude to creation did not only lead to a misuse of the biblical doctrine but at the same time contradicted fundamental principles of Christian faith. One of them is the faith in **the Incarnation of Christ**. In assuming human nature, the Son of God took over material creation in its entirety. Christ came to save **the whole** creation through the Incarnation, not only humanity; for according to St. Paul (Rom. 8.23) “the whole creation groans in travail and is suffering” awaiting its salvation through humanity.

The other fundamental principle of Christian faith that has important ecological implications relates to the very heart of the Church, which is **the Holy Eucharist**. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church offers to God the material world in the form of the bread and the wine. In this Sacrament space, time and matter are sanctified; they are lifted up to the Creator with thankfulness as His gifts to us; creation is solemnly declared as God’s gift, and human beings instead of proprietors of creation act as its **priests**, who lift it up to the holiness of the divine life. This brings to mind the moving words of St. Francis of Assisi with which the Encyclical opens: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth.” As St. Gregory Palamas and other Greek Fathers would put it, the whole of creation is permeated by God’s presence through His divine energies; everything declares God’s glory, as the Psalmist says, and the human being leads this cosmic chorus of glorification to the Creator as the priest of creation. This way of understanding the place and mission of humanity in creation is common to both Eastern and Western Christian tradition, and is of particular importance for the cultivation of an ecological ethos.

## 2. The Spiritual Dimension

As it emerges clearly from the Encyclical, the ecological crisis is essentially a **spiritual problem**. The proper relationship between humanity and the earth or its natural environment has been broken with the Fall both outwardly and within us, and this rupture is **sin**. The Church must now introduce in its teaching about sin the sin against the environment, the **ecological sin**. Repentance must be extended to cover also the damage we do to nature both as individuals and

as societies. This must be brought to the conscience of every Christian who cares for his or her salvation.

The rupture of the proper relationship between humanity and nature is due to the rise of **individualism** in our culture. The pursuit of individual happiness has been made into an ideal in our time. Ecological sin is due to human greed which blinds men and women to the point of ignoring and disregarding the basic truth that the happiness of the individual depends on its relationship with the rest of human beings. There is a **social** dimension in ecology which the Encyclical brings out with clarity. The ecological crisis goes hand in hand with the spread of social injustice. We cannot face successfully the one without dealing with the other.

Ecological sin is a sin not only against God but also against our neighbor. And it is a sin not only against the other of our own time but also – and this is serious – against the **future generations**. By destroying our planet in order to satisfy our greed for happiness, we bequeath to the future generations a world damaged beyond repair with all the negative consequences that this will have for their lives. We must act, therefore, responsibly towards our children and those who will succeed us in this life.

All this calls for what we may describe as an **ecological asceticism**. It is noteworthy that the great figures of the Christian ascetical tradition were all sensitive towards the suffering of all creatures. The equivalent of a St. Francis of Assisi is abundantly present in the monastic tradition of the East. There are accounts of the lives of the desert saints which present the ascetic as weeping for the suffering or death of every creature and as leading a peaceful and friendly co-existence even with the beasts. This is not romanticism. It springs from a loving heart and the conviction that between the natural world and ourselves there is an organic unity and interdependence that makes us share a common fate just as we have the same Creator.

Asceticism is an unpleasant idea in our present culture, which measures happiness and progress with the increase of capital and consumption. It would be unrealistic to expect our societies to adopt asceticism in the way St. Francis and the Desert Fathers of the East experienced it. But the spirit and the ethos of asceticism can and must be adopted if our planet is to survive. Restraint in the consumption of natural resources is a realistic attitude and ways must be found to put a limit to the immense waste of natural materials. Technology and science must devote their efforts to such a task. There is a great deal of inspiration and help that can be drawn from the Encyclical itself in this respect.

Finally, spirituality must penetrate our ecological ethos through **prayer**. The Encyclical offers some beautiful examples of how to pray for the protection of God's creation. From the prayers cited at the end of the Encyclical, I find the following extract moving:

O God, bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world and not prey on it

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts  
of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor of the earth.  
  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.

At this point I should like to mention that the Ecumenical Patriarchate decided as early as 1989 to devote the 1st of September of each year to praying for the environment. This date is according to the Orthodox liturgical calendar, going back to the Byzantine times, the first day of the ecclesiastical year. The liturgical service of the day includes prayers for creation and the Ecumenical Patriarchate commissioned a contemporary hymnographer from Mount Athos to compose special hymns for that day. The 1st of September each year is now devoted by the Orthodox to the environment. Might this not become a date for such prayer for all Christians? This would mark a step towards further closeness among them.

This brings me to my last comment on the Papal Encyclical, namely its ecumenical significance.

### **3. The Ecumenical Significance of the Encyclical**

There are in my view three dimensions to ecumenism. The first we may call ecumenism in time, an expression frequently used by one of the greatest Orthodox theologians of the last century, the late Fr. Georges Florovsky. By this we mean the effort of the divided Christians to unite on the basis of their common Tradition, the teaching of the Bible and the Church Fathers. This is the object of the theological dialogues which are taking place in the Ecumenical Movement of our time and it seems to be the predominant form of ecumenism.

At the same time an **ecumenism in space** is also practiced through various international institutions, such as the World Council of Churches and similar ecumenical bodies which bring together the divided Christians so that the different cultural contexts in which they live may be taken into consideration in the search for unity. This has brought together Christians from Asia, America, Europe, Latin America etc – an expression of the universality of the Christian Church.

To these two dimensions which have dominated the ecumenical scene for the last hundred years we must add, I think, a third one which is usually neglected, namely what I would

call an **existential ecumenism**. By that I mean the effort to face together the most profound existential problems that preoccupy humanity **in its entirety** – not simply in particular places or classes of people. Ecology is without doubt the most obvious candidate in this case.

I believe that the significance of the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is not limited to the subject of ecology as such. I see in it an important ecumenical dimension in that it brings the divided Christians before a common task which they must face together. We live at a time when fundamental existential problems overwhelm our traditional divisions and relativize them almost to the point of extinction. Look, for example, at what is happening today in the Middle East: do those who persecute the Christians ask them to which Church or Confession they belong? Christian unity in such cases is *de facto* realized by persecution and blood – an ecumenism of martyrdom.

The threat posed to us by the ecological crisis similarly bypasses or transcends our traditional divisions. The danger facing our common home, the planet in which we live, is described in the Encyclical in a way leaving no doubt about the existential risk we are confronted with. This risk is common to all of us regardless of our ecclesiastical or confessional identities. Equally common must be our effort to prevent the catastrophic consequences of the present situation. Pope Francis' Encyclical is a call to unity – unity in prayer for the environment, in the same Gospel of creation, in the conversion of our hearts and our lifestyles to respect and love everyone and everything given to us by God. We are thankful for that.

[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/06/18/metropolitan\\_john\\_zizioulas\\_laudo\\_si\\_give\\_orthodox\\_grea/1152356](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/06/18/metropolitan_john_zizioulas_laudo_si_give_orthodox_grea/1152356)

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**June 19, 2015**

Climate Change and Moral Responsibility

By Bartholomew and Justin Welby  
New York Times

On Tuesday, the British medical journal The Lancet will publish a landmark report highlighting the inalienable and undeniable link between climate change and human health. We warmly welcome the report's message of hope, which confirms the fact that climate change is more than just a technical or financial challenge (as Pope Francis did in his [encyclical letter](#) on June 18) and confirms the voice of health in the discussion on climate change. Indeed, the central premise of the Lancet commission's work is that tackling climate change could be the single greatest health opportunity of the 21st century.

It is no surprise that climate change has the potential to set back global health. The greenhouse gas emissions that are warming our planet come from industrial activity that pollutes our air and water, and the temperature changes may lead to drought that brings malnutrition. Those with little or no access to health care — children and the elderly in particular — are more vulnerable to such predicaments.



However, health is symptomatic of a larger problem, which undermines and fragments our broader worldview. In addition to highlighting the effects of climate change, we must address the root of the problem. In so doing, we will discover how the benefits of assuming moral responsibility and taking immediate action — not just on matters related to health, but also world economy and global policy — far outweigh the cost of remaining indifferent and passive.

It is this vital link that The Lancet's report conclusively and authoritatively demonstrates. In short, it proves that our response to climate change — both in terms of mitigation and adaptation — will reduce human suffering, while preserving the diversity and beauty of God's creation for our children. God's generous and plentiful creation, which we so often take for granted, is a gift to all living creatures and all living things. We must, therefore, ensure that the resources of our planet are — and continue to be — enough for all to live abundant lives.

The report could not appear at a more significant and sensitive time in history. This year, as all eyes look ahead to the Paris climate negotiations and as governments prepare to sign a universal commitment to limit global temperature rises, we have reached a critical turning point. We are — as never before — in a position to choose charity over greed and frugality over wastefulness in order to affirm our moral commitment to our neighbor and our respect for the Earth. Basic human rights — such as access to safe water, clean air and sufficient food — should be available to everyone without distinction or discrimination.

Because of our faith in God as creator, redeemer and sustainer, we have a mission to protect nature as well as human beings. The obligation of all human beings is to work together for a better world, one in which all human beings can flourish; our Christian vocation is to proclaim the Gospel inclusively and comprehensively.

To this purpose, as early as the mid-1980s, when the faith-based environmental movement that has come to be known as creation care was neither political nor fashionable, [the Ecumenical Patriarchate](#) initiated pioneering environmental initiatives. In 1989, it established a day of prayer for the protection of the natural environment and, from 1991 to this day, instigated a series of symposia and summits on an international, interfaith and interdisciplinary basis. Its ecumenical and ecological vision has been embraced in parishes and communities throughout the world.

In 1984, the Anglican Consultative Council adopted the Five Marks of Mission, the fifth of which is: "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth." In 2006, the Church of England started a national environmental campaign, [Shrinking the Footprint](#), to enable the whole church to address — in faith, practice and mission — the issue of climate change. In 2015, a clear direction has been set for the Church of England's national investing bodies in support of the transition to a low-carbon economy that brings its investments into line with the church's witness.

As representatives of two major Christian communions, we appeal to the world's governments to act decisively and conscientiously by signing an ambitious and hopeful agreement in Paris during the United Nations' climate conference, COP 21, at the end of this year. We hope and pray that this covenant will contain a clear and convincing long-term goal that will chart the

course of decarbonization in the coming years. Only in this way can we reduce the inequality that flows directly from climate injustice within and between countries.

The Lancet report is further proof that all of us must act with generosity and compassion toward our fellow human beings by acting on climate change now. This is a shared moral responsibility and urgent requirement. Civil society, governmental authorities and religious leaders have an opportunity to make a difference in a way that bridges our diverse opinions and nationalities.

*Bartholomew, the archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and ecumenical patriarch, is the spiritual leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Justin Welby, archbishop of Canterbury and primate of the Church of England, is the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/20/opinion/climate-change-and-moral-responsibility.html>

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**June 19, 2015**

Falling in Love With the Earth: Francis' Faithful Ecology

By Jacob J. Erickson  
Religion Dispatches

In [a brief article](#) in an unassuming 1967 edition of *Science*, a medieval historian from the University of California argued a now infamous thesis in my own field of religion and ecology.

“Christianity,” Lynn White wrote, “is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.” The notion of “dominion,” he argued, allowed human beings to exploit the ecological world in unprecedented ways.

White’s argument set off a decades-long firestorm, engaging activists, environmental ethicists, and Christian theologians alike.

But what most people generally forget about that now-canonical article is in the final eight paragraphs. After charging the cultural influence of Western Christian thought, White then argues for an equally *religious* response. “Possibly,” he offers, “we should ponder the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ: Saint Francis of Assisi.” The 13<sup>th</sup> century saint, who preached to birds and wolves, who referred to cosmic and elemental entities like fire as “Sister” might serve as a model, White argued, for a different kind of Christianity, a kind that can care for the earth seriously, in humility.

Like many scholars in my own field of religion and ecology, I woke up yesterday morning with another Francis—this one a Pope—on my mind. The Vatican had just officially released [Laudato si](#), *Praise Be to You*—the first official papal encyclical to address the reality of climate change.

Pope Francis’ letter, of course, appears in the midst of a great cloud of witnesses on religiously-motivated ecological justice. The Patriarch of Constantinople, spiritual head of the Orthodox

Church, known by many as the “Green Patriarch,” appears several times in the encyclical. Catholic liberation theologians like Ivone Gebara and Leonardo Boff’s work is unparalleled. Many leaders from other Christian denominations and world religions are discussing global warming and now the encyclical in earnest. Lutheran theologians like myself are using this letter in acts of ecclesial and planetary solidarity to prepare for the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

Scholars and environmental activists speculated for months (and not wildly) about the contents of the letter: its portrayal of climate change, its reflection on the human causes of climate change, its reflection on planetary science, its depiction of human life and sexuality, its understanding of everything from fossil fuels to water to biodiversity. (Yale’s Forum for Religion and Ecology assembles some of the best of that content [here](#).)

As I read through *Laudato si* I saw much of the speculation confirmed. Pope Francis reflects on our various ecological ills. He reflects on anthropogenic/human-caused global warming, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, the dangers of unlimited consumerism, the dangers of unlimited and overused technology, “a misguided anthropocentrism,” economic growth, and the list goes on. (For an excellent summary of the chapters, check out Christiana Z. Peppard’s piece at [The Washington Post](#).)

We hear those litanies of devastation often these days and simple reflection on global warming can send anyone into a spiral of ethical helplessness and moral ambiguity. But there’s something in the rhetorical feel, the affective language of this letter that might help pull a reader through.

The letter’s laments are couched in the language of praise. Francis the pope lures the reader in with the poetry of Francis the saint. The encyclical reads,

Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us... This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.

The gendering of language in this letter deserves its own extended reflection. But as I woke yesterday and read these opening words, Lynn White’s article came tumbling back into my imaginative world. And White’s argument for Saint Francis appears oddly, historically prescient (or at least influential) when a Pope takes the name of that ecological saint and creates one of the most influential texts on religious environmentalism to date. Even if, we might say, the encyclical isn’t perhaps as environmentally radical as White (or even I) might have wanted.

Still, what I’m haunted by most in reading this letter is its poetic genius in connecting seemingly disparate realms of life. Not a few have remarked to me about the encyclical’s balance of tragedy and human sin alongside love, hopefulness, joy, and possibility. It seems that the letter is nothing less than a love letter, an invitation to love God and the creation in which human beings live out their lives in ecological interaction. The rhetoric and prose itself lends Pope Francis’ vision to that very human context of learning appropriate loving communion, joy, and beauty.

Beauty carries a lot of ethical weight in this encyclical. Despite the vast ecological devastations, the letter evokes the beauty of our ecological contexts in its descriptions and its logic argues that seeing that beauty urges respect of other creatures. Learning to see beauty in the everyday is an intrinsic part of an ecological conversion to the earth. (Think of it this way: By my count the word “ecology” occurs thirty-three times in the encyclical. The word “beauty” occurs twenty-seven times).

Another point of connection is the theme of integral ecology. In a nod to liberation theology and Leonardo Boff in particular it seems, *Laudato si* refuses to make the choice between human and ecological life a zero sum game. Pope Francis writes,

Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*.

The letter is concerned throughout with poverty. The Pope goes so far as to say that the earth *is* one of those marginalized and demanding moral attention: “the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor.”

Many popular dialogues about social justice and ecological justice pit these concerns against each other, this letter argues them to be of mutual, related concern.

Finally, as a constructive practice of hope, the encyclical argues time and time again for earth as a kind of “commons”—the encyclical itself is subtitled “On Care for Our Common Home.” The letter urges disparate communities—geographical, intellectual, and religious—to dialogue together for the sake of planetary action. The common home theme incorporates all of creaturely life—animal, plant, human, elemental. And such a perspective urges intergenerational ethical reflection on all who will compose the planet before and after us—how do we work together, planetarily, for the sake of our commons?

I’m bringing out these themes quickly because of a kind of moral and desire these connections tease out. When folks in the United States aren’t mired in distracting debates on climate change denial and politically-motivated refusals of science, we tend to talk about ecological crisis in terms that are hard to assimilate. We talk about the vast structural powers of atmosphere and anthropogenic change. We talk about the complicate ocean acidification that dissolves away at livable ecologies. We talk about the swirls of energy from fossilized fuels and various structural oppressions that energize climatological change.

The problems overwhelm our imaginative creativity to respond. Nothing can be done, the earth is doomed. Or, even, “the earth will go on without us, so what?”

I think what an message like Pope Francis’ does is remind us of the deeply *ordinary* human and moral dimensions of ecology and climate change.

The words remind us of our *responsibility*. By connecting the affective themes of love or beauty, the integrally human and ecological, and passion for our common home, powerful ecological

treatises like this one remind us that global warming is just as much about the *abstract* oppressive and climatological power as it is about the *intimate* oppressive and climatological powers that shape our everyday lives. And that working within everyday structures can help in creating justice and navigating the future.

I've come to believe that our climate crises are crises of planetary intimacy. I don't mean that we've lost a romantic relationship with nature that we need to recover. (That kind of imagination is just another anthropocentric misconstrual of creaturely life.) What I do mean is that everything of our contemporary crises also occurs in the intimate, and risky relations of everyday life. Learning to address that intimate enfolding of life and creatureliness is one of our best hopes. Learning how to love the earth, how to build homes together in precarious climates, how to reconsider daily lives, how to daily protest structural economic systems, how to consider our animal interactions—all that is what creating a planetary resilience is about. This encyclical, as I read it, is simultaneously an act of love, an act of protest, and a hope for resilience.

Perhaps in bringing our crises of climate down to earth, to the very intimacies, desires, and relations of our bodies, Pope Francis' encyclical offers a way forward. Perhaps when we feel earth, affectively, lovingly in the everyday—in all of its vibrancy and tragic beauty—we'll be better able to do the work we so desperately need to do.

<http://religiondispatches.org/falling-in-love-with-the-earth-francis-faithful-ecology/>

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**June 19, 2015**

“Ridiculous” to tell pope to butt out of climate change debate

By Douglas Todd  
The Vancouver Sun

Those who claim Pope Francis should keep quiet about the disastrous consequences of climate change are, in effect, trying to silence almost half the Canadian population, says a Jesuit scientist.

“The Pope feels the volume needs to be turned up on the climate change discussion. And it's a ridiculous anti-democratic statement to say he should butt out,” says Father Rob Allore, a [Jesuit](#) priest who works for a University of B.C. science laboratory and teaches at adjacent St. Mark's College.

Noting that roughly 14 million Canadians profess loyalty to the Catholic Church, Allore said the Pope's historic letter on the environment on Thursday reflects how Catholics and others “should be allowed to participate in civil society. To say they should have no voice in the public conversation doesn't make sense.”

The Jesuit priest was responding to conservatives' criticism of Francis' groundbreaking public letter on the environment, which lamented humanity's “unrestrained delusions of grandeur,”

while calling for the [phasing out of fossil fuels](#) and their replacement with sustainable energy sources.

Acknowledging that churches should be “cautious” about making specific policy recommendations, the Jesuit priest nevertheless opposed fossil-fuel industry lobbyists and U.S. Republican presidential contender Jeb Bush, a Catholic anti-abortion activist, for saying the pope and other religious leaders should keep away from economic and political issues.

In a clear sign that the Pope was trying to spread his message about the devastating consequences of human-made climate change beyond the world’s 1.2 billion Catholics, Francis released his letter Thursday in the presence of a top cleric of the Eastern Orthodox church and a leading non-religious climate scientist.

Ian Bruce, who speaks on science policy for Canada’s [David Suzuki](#) Foundation, said the pope’s 192-page letter, titled Praise Be: On Care for Our Common House, will have a “huge impact” on the rapidly evolving climate-change debate.

“It’s a scientific and morally valid call for action. This will reach beyond the church to a wide audience. I think we’re going to see this conversation pop up at a lot more dinner tables and a lot more water coolers across the country.”

The pope’s statement on the environment will give encouragement to once-recalcitrant Canadian politicians and oil-industry officials, Bruce said, many of whom in the past year have started to acknowledge the future requires a sharp turn to renewable energy.

Bruce appreciated that the Argentine pontiff, who studied chemistry and has long expressed concern for the vulnerable, spelled out how climate change is leading to catastrophic droughts in the developing world, which not only cause starvation, but create refugees and even armed conflict.

John Bennett, Ottawa-based director of the Sierra Club Foundation of Canada, said he’s pleased to see “the Pope talk about climate change and environmental degradation as the result of an exploitive economic system that punishes the poor for the sins of wealthy. It is a pretty sweeping indictment.”

The Pope’s letter adopts an urgent tone as it calls for “a cultural revolution” in thinking.

It is making international headlines at the same time as Francis’s popularity is soaring — as he plays down controversies over sexual morality and instead emphasizes matters of the common good.

More than [two out of three Canadians now approve of Pope Francis](#), according to a recent [Angus Reid Institute](#) poll. The pope’s approval ratings are even higher, according to Pew Research, in other strongly Catholic countries such as the U.S., Poland, Italy, France and the Philippines.

In condemning a global “culture of waste,” the pontiff stressed that abortion is not the answer to population growth or climate change, while urging “an open and honest debate” on what exactly is leading the planet to the precipice.

“Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age,” Francis writes in his letter.

“But we do need to slow down and look at reality in a different way, to appropriate the positive and sustainable progress which has been made, but also to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur.”

The pope particularly called upon climate-change doubters to wake up. “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.”

The pontiff’s letter, published in seven languages, criticizes “a structurally perverse” economic system in which rich countries are guilty of a “disproportionate use of natural resources” — while the worst impact of climate change is on fragile developing countries.

Allore, who belongs to the same Jesuit order in which Pope Francis was once a leader, said the pontiff is making clear in his letter that God is interested in providing more than “individual salvation” for people of faith in some sort of afterlife.

“God came into the world (in Jesus) for the benefit of the whole of Creation, not just individual human beings,” Allore said.

“The world is filled with the grandeur of God. I don’t understand anyone who would say, ‘The Earth doesn’t matter.’”

<http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2015/06/19/ridiculous-to-tell-pope-to-butt-out-of-climate-change-debate/>

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**June 19, 2015**

Pope Francis' Encyclical: Hearing the Cry of the Earth

By Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee  
Huffington Post

The Earth "now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her." So begins Pope Francis in his powerful and long-awaited [encyclical on ecology](#). "The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor."

Pope Francis chose to be called after a saint for whom love for all of God's creation was central to his life, and all creatures were his brothers and sisters. Speaking in the voice of this saint "who

loved and protects creation," he calls for a moral response to prevent the "unprecedented destruction of the ecosystem,"--that we urgently need to recognize the consequences of, and changes required in our way of life. He reflects on our abuse, the violence creating "the symptoms of illness that we see in the Earth, the water, the air and in living things." And describing how climate change most adversely affects the poor, he combines ecological and social justice, that we "hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

The state of the Earth is our most pressing concern. Our present ecological crisis is the greatest man-made disaster this planet has ever faced: the signs of global imbalance, climate change, and species depletion are all around us. The monster of materialism is ravaging the Earth, its rapacious greed destroying the ecosystem, the fragile web of life that supports and nourishes all of life's myriad creatures. We are part of a world of wonder and beauty which we are systematically sacrificing to feed our ever-increasing desires. We need to remember the simple wonder of the natural world around us, which St. Francis celebrated in his beautiful Canticum of Brother Sun:

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,  
who sustains us and governs us and who produces  
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Yesterday, when I went to my small vegetable patch to pick a few zucchinis for supper, I was once again amazed at the Earth's generosity, how one plant could give so many vegetables. I had to look carefully under the spreading leaves to discover a zucchini unexpectedly growing almost too large. This is the sacred life that sustains us, part of the creation we desperately need to "love and protect," just as it loves and protects us.

A central but rarely addressed aspect of this crisis is our forgetfulness of the sacred nature of creation, and how this affects our relationship to the environment. Pope Francis speaks of the pressing need to articulate a spiritual response to this ecological crisis and to "feel intimately united with all that exists." Today's world is dominated by a divisiveness that encourages exploitation and greed, and we need to return to a sense of wholeness, reflecting the living unity of all of creation and its myriad inhabitants.

The Earth needs both physical and spiritual attention and awareness, our acts and prayers, our hands and hearts. Life is a self-sustaining organic whole of which we are a part, and once we reconnect with this whole we can find a different way to live--one that is not based upon a need for continual distraction and the illusions of material fulfillment, but rather a way to live that is sustaining for the whole.

Each in our own way we can turn away from the patterns of consumerism that drain our money and our life energy. We can aspire to live a simpler life, learning how to live in a more sustainable way, and not be drawn into unnecessary materialism--filling our life with love and care rather than "stuff." A simple meal of vegetables and grains cooked with love and attention can nourish our body and soul.



But, to speak more with the voice of St. Francis, the Earth also needs our prayers, our spiritual attention. Many of us know the effectiveness of prayers for others, how healing and help is given, even in the most unexpected ways. It can be helpful first to acknowledge that the Earth is not "unfeeling matter," but a living being that has given us life. And then we can "hear its cry," sense its suffering: the physical suffering we see in the dying species and polluted waters--the deeper suffering of our collective disregard for its sacred nature.

Pope Francis ends his encyclical with two prayers for our Earth. There is also the simple prayer of placing the world as a living being within our hearts when we inwardly offer our self to the Divine. In this prayer we remember the sorrow and suffering of the Earth in our hearts, and ask that that the world be remembered, that divine love and mercy flow where it is needed; that even though we continue to treat the world so badly, divine grace will help us and help the world--help to bring the Earth back into balance. We need to remember that the power of the Divine is more than that of all the global corporations that continue to make the world a wasteland, even more than the global forces of consumerism that demand the life-blood of the planet. We pray that the Divine of which we are all a part can redeem and heal this beautiful and suffering world.

Sometimes it is easier to pray when we feel the earth in our hands, when we work in the garden tending our flowers or vegetables. Or when we cook, preparing the vegetables that the Earth has given us, mixing in the herbs and spices that give us pleasure. There are many ways to pray, and we will each find our own way of tending the Earth within our own hearts. Just as the song of St. Francis calls us to praise the Earth, and to praise God "through all your creatures."

As Pope Francis's message reminds us, we each need to be the person who "loves and protects creation," who remembers its sacred nature. We need to bring this song of love into our hearts and hands. Through our love for the Earth we can honor the call to climate action that comes from all faiths and from the single voice that is within all of humanity. We are all part of one living being we call the Earth and it desperately needs our love and attention.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/llewellyn-vaughanlee/pope-francis-encyclical-hearing-the-cry-of-the-earth\\_b\\_7619794.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/llewellyn-vaughanlee/pope-francis-encyclical-hearing-the-cry-of-the-earth_b_7619794.html)

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**June 19, 2015**

Francis' Momentous Encyclical: On Care for Our Common Home

By Dave Pruett  
Huffington Post

*"We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are between stories."* --  
Father Thomas Berry

I'm not Catholic. Nevertheless, fond of this pope, I've eagerly awaited the release of *Laudato Si'*, Francis' encyclical on ecology and climate. Immediately after its June 18 release, I paged wildly

through it and was blown away. *Laudato Si'* is absolutely stunning in sweep, depth, and wisdom. It is exactly the right document, at the right moment, by the right person.

Humanity now faces existential crises on multiple fronts: extremes of economic disparity, a severely degraded global ecosystem, competition for dwindling natural resources including land and water, constant warfare, failed states, and a climate on the verge of spinning out of control. Worse, many of us -- especially those with young children or grandchildren -- teeter on the edge of hopelessness, fearing the planet and the future may not be salvageable.

It seems then almost folly to suggest, as does [Thomas Berry](#) in the quotation above, that our collective ills somehow stem from a flawed or incomplete "story." And yet, read between the lines of *Laudato Si'* and this is exactly the conclusion you'll reach.

When Berry uses the word "story," he means "mythology" -- the overarching story that guides us individually and collectively in our relationships to the Creator, the creation (including fellow creatures), and one another.

For millennia, our mythology derived primarily from religious traditions, many if not most of which taught that we humans were created by divine fiat, that we occupy the center of the cosmos, that we are superior to the rest of creation, that the earth was created expressly for our needs, and that we are free to use the earth pretty much as we damn well please.

In 1543, with the publication of Copernicus' *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, a new story began to unfold: the scientific story. The scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, the industrial age, the space age, and the information age followed in rapid succession. But, more to the point, the scientific story largely supplanted the religious one.

As commonly interpreted, the scientific story goes like this: we humans are not the center of the cosmos. Moreover, we're here by random accident rather than divine act. Furthermore, in the view of the late evolutionary biologist Stephen J. Gould, "Evolution is purposeless, nonprogressive, and materialistic."

These competing mythologies have created a modern dilemma. According to Ilya Prigogine, Nobel laureate in chemistry: "We are faced with a tragic choice between an alienating science and an antiscientific philosophy." Seemingly diametrically opposed, science and religion have been at loggerheads virtually since science's inception. As a result, most humans choose to align with one camp or the other. No issue has revealed the tragedy of this dichotomous choice more clearly than the climate. In the U.S., for example, meaningful climate action has been blocked largely by evangelical Christians whose distrust of the scientific *story* blinds them to the poignance of the scientific *data*.

In one aspect, however, science and religion have acted in cahoots: both stories have contributed to the degradation of the earth that now threatens our undoing. Some, misconstruing *Genesis'* exhortation "to have dominion over the earth," take license to abuse the earth. Similarly, scientific materialism reinforces an attitude that the earth is merely an inanimate rock to be exploited.

The offspring of this unholy union is a valueless economic system -- based on mindless consumption, "a seedbed for collective selfishness" -- that runs roughshod over the earth and exploits those who labor, all in idolatry to the golden calf. Moreover, we've created a technological Frankenstein: the prowess to bring nature to her knees by clear-cutting forests, damming rivers, monoculture agribusiness, and extreme methods of resource extraction such as mountain top removal, tar sands mining, and hydraulic fracturing.

The stunning -- and immensely hopeful -- aspect of Francis' encyclical is that, like Berry, he calls for a new "integral" story. He begins by correcting the fallacies in the religious and scientific stories. First, in Chapter Two, he takes religion to the woodshed:

... we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination ... . The biblical texts ... tell us to "till and keep" the garden of the world (Gen 2:15). "Tilling" refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while "keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature.

Then, in Chapter Three, it's science's turn for a whupping:

Still stuck in the discredited scientific materialism of the past, "the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order." The materialistic paradigm fosters an "I-It" relationship to nature rather than an "I-Thou" relationship, to appropriate the theology of Martin Buber. This author has at least twice argued in *Huffington Post* ([3/29/2013](#) and [10/1/2014](#)) that the materialistic paradigm is neither necessary nor helpful for science. Neither is it helpful for humanity according to the pope, because that paradigm "tends to dominate economic and political life."

Having carefully laid out the problems in Chapters One to Three, Francis begins to address solutions in Chapter Four: Integral Ecology. Integral ecology recognizes that one cannot compartmentalize the problems of the world into environmental, economic, and social. The spheres are closely interlinked, and the problems in each sphere stem from the same flawed mythology. Time and again, he reiterates that "everything is connected," "everything is interrelated," sounding more like a Native American wisdomkeeper or an Eastern mystic than a dualistic Westerner.

In Chapter Five, he advocates transparent problem solving and open dialogue: international dialogue, dialogue between national and local constituencies, dialogue between politics and economics, and especially dialogue between religions and science. By such dialogue we collectively shape a new myth of meaning that sees the world as a "communion of subjects, not a collection of objects," again to quote Thomas Berry. By dialogue we think outside the boxes of growth-obsessed capitalism or soul-crushing communism to create new -- sustainable and just -- economic models, [sacred economies](#) that reflect our values and distinguish "quality of life" from "standard of living."

Francis, a boxer in his youth, pulls no punches: "Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth."

"Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning."

Love will save us. Ultimately, Francis calls for a revolution in love, by which we humans push the boundaries of love outward -- beyond our family, beyond our clan, beyond our nation, beyond our species -- to embrace the earth as "a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us."

[Teilhard de Chardin](#) (1881-1955), the Jesuit priest-paleontologist who spent his life crafting and articulating the new story, envisioned a time in which science and faith would join forces in this very labor of love: "Some day, after mastering the winds the waves, the tides, and gravity," he wrote, "we shall harness for God the energies of love. And then, for the second time in the history of the world, [humans] will have discovered fire."

(With gratitude to brothers-in-arms [Doug Hendren](#) and [Charles Finn](#).)

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-pruett/francis-momentous-encycli\\_b\\_7620554.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-pruett/francis-momentous-encycli_b_7620554.html)

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**June 20, 2015**

For Faithful, Social Justice Goals Demand Action on Environment

By Justin Gillis  
New York Times

For an earnest young Christian named Ben Lowe, revelation came on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, in Africa. A relentless warming of the lake was reducing the catch of fish, the people were going hungry — and he had learned of scientific evidence that [climate change](#) was to blame.

For the Rev. Brian Sauder, who grew up attending a small Anabaptist church in rural Illinois, the moment came in a college classroom. Studying the fallout from environmental degradation, he learned of poor people who had to walk hours longer each day to gather firewood from depleted forests.

For both men, Christian duties that their upbringing had led them to regard as separate — taking care of the earth and taking care of the poor — merged into a morally urgent problem. "Why haven't I ever made this connection before?" Mr. Sauder recalled asking himself.

It is a connection that many people of faith all over the world are starting to make.

The sweeping pastoral letter [issued by Pope Francis](#) on Thursday may prove to be a watershed, highlighting the issues of social justice at the heart of the environmental crisis. But the pope's

encyclical is, in a sense, simply an exclamation mark on a broad shift in thinking that has been underway for decades and extends far beyond the Roman Catholic Church.

Many faith traditions are awakening to the burden that [climate change](#) is placing on poor people, and finding justification for caring for the environment in their scripture. The pope's urgent call is likely to intensify this discussion, provoking what could be one of the most important dialogues between science and religion since the days of Charles Darwin.

Environmental scientists who are themselves people of faith are in rising demand, valued as translators between two camps that have often seen the world in radically different ways. These scientists have known for a long time that the facts and data produced by their research colleagues would not be sufficient to rouse the public to act. For that to happen, the science had to be reframed in moral terms, they said.

"The science is critical, but it's not enough," said [Nathaniel P. Hitt](#), a fisheries biologist who is active in a [Presbyterian church](#) in Shepherdstown, W.Va. "Science is like a compass. It can tell us where north is, but it can't tell us if we want to go north. That's where our morality comes in."

Dr. Hitt and the congregation to which he belongs are, to borrow his phrase, heading north. They recently [put solar panels on the roof](#) of their church and linked their home water heaters into a network that can help balance the grid fluctuations from renewable power, and they are avidly studying other ways to tackle the emissions causing global warming.

Hundreds of other churches, mosques and synagogues across the country have put up solar panels in recent years or retrofitted their buildings to cut energy use, or both. With the cost of renewable energy falling, that number could soon be in the thousands.

Politicians who try to reduce incentives for renewable power can find themselves contending with a new force: upset preachers packing the front row of the hearing room. A pastor in Fort Wayne, Ind., Brian Flory, recently helped stall such a bill in his state, [citing](#) the right of churches to "generate electricity from God's free sunshine."

For a long time, people of faith who felt a sense of urgency about the environment were outnumbered in their congregations by parishioners who disagreed with them on the issue or simply saw more immediate concerns. That is still true in many churches, perhaps in most of them, but the evidence suggests that the priorities are starting to change.

Polls [show](#) that a majority of American Christians view climate change as real, but fewer than a third of them understand the point, thoroughly documented in scientific studies, that poor people are already being harmed by it.

Men like Mr. Lowe and Mr. Sauder have dedicated their lives to helping other people of faith grasp the connection.

Mr. Sauder, ordained in the Mennonite denomination, is the executive director of [Faith in Place](#), an interfaith group in Illinois that helps houses of worship with energy retrofits, solar panel

installations and other steps that cut planet-warming emissions. Similar groups have sprouted across the country under the banner of a national organization called [Interfaith Power and Light](#).

Mr. Lowe traveled as a college student, nearly a decade ago, to Lake Tanganyika, where he studied with an environmental scientist named Catherine O'Reilly. Dr. O'Reilly had [documented](#) that rising temperatures in the lake were depleting the surface waters of nutrients. That, in turn, was damaging fish populations that historically helped feed millions of people.

"I realized that climate change was already having impacts, and not just on God's creation, but on many of my brothers and sisters around the world," Mr. Lowe said.

The situation has grown only worse since, with overfishing being a possible factor, said Dr. O'Reilly, now an assistant professor at Illinois State University. She visited the lake again last year, and "the price of a small pile of fish has gone up 10 times, which is huge for people who are living day to day," she said.

After college, Mr. Lowe helped found, and is now the spokesman for, [Young Evangelicals for Climate Action](#), a national organization that has allied with other faith and environmental groups to push for change.

Despite shifting public opinion, Mr. Lowe and others who employ the slogan "[creation care](#)" are still viewed with suspicion by many fellow evangelicals.

Polls suggest that evangelicals are the American religious group least likely to believe that global warming is real or caused by humans. Many of them are politically conservative and are influenced by groups that question established climate science and defend the rising use of fossil fuels.

Among Christians and Jews, theological discussion sometimes centers on exactly what God meant in the first chapter of Genesis when he granted human beings "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

Does this passage — in Christian theology, it is called the dominion mandate — mean that people can do no ecological wrong? Some conservative politicians do seem to interpret the verse, and related ones, as a promise that God would not let humans wreck their only home.

"My point is, God's still up there," Senator James M. Inhofe, an Oklahoma Republican who is one of the leading climate-science doubters in Congress, said on a Christian radio program in 2012. "The arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what he is doing in the climate is, to me, outrageous."

In [his encyclical](#), Francis disputed this view, declaring not only that humans are altering the climate but that the dominion mandate encompasses a duty to care for creation. Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist at Texas Tech University who is an evangelical Christian, lines up with the pope on the issue.

If God granted humanity free will, she sometimes asks audiences, why would that not include the capacity to harm the planet?

Religious conservatives who oppose environmentalism profess a deep concern for the plight of the poor. But they point out that economic success has historically been closely linked to the use of fossil fuels.

“The policies meant to mitigate global warming would oppress the poor by depriving them of the energy without which they cannot rise out of poverty,” E. Calvin Beisner, a leader of an American group called the [Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation](#), declared this year in Rome at a [symposium](#) held to pre-emptively counter Francis’ message.

Liberal groups often dismiss that view as tendentious, yet it is precisely the fear that preoccupies countries like India that have refused to commit to serious emissions limits.

The stated goal of the environmental movement is to break the link between fossil fuels and economic success.

Perhaps the biggest question now is whether rising concern about the environment among religious groups will translate into stronger political demands that governments find ways to reduce the cost of low-carbon energy supplies, improve their reliability and speed their deployment.

This month, more than 350 American rabbis issued a [letter](#) of their own, declaring that the time for action was at hand.

“The hope is that over and over in our history, when our country faced the need for profound change, it has been our communities of moral commitment, religious covenant and spiritual search that have arisen to meet the need,” the rabbis declared. “So it was 50 years ago during the civil rights movement, and so it must be today.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/science/earth/for-faithful-social-justice-goals-demand-action-on-environment.html>

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## June 21, 2015

The pope’s effect on politics

By Barrie Dunsmore  
Rutland Herald

This past week Pope Francis inserted himself directly into the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. Whether or not that was the intent, it is a clear consequence of the pope’s new encyclical on the environment — because this document puts him on a collision course with the Republican Party.



The New York Times best summed up the pope's broad global concerns and objectives. "Pope Francis on Thursday called for a radical transformation of politics, economics and individual lifestyles to confront environmental degradation and climate change.

"The vision that Francis outlined in the 184-page encyclical is sweeping in ambition and scope: He described a relentless exploitation and destruction of the environment, for which he blamed apathy, the reckless pursuit of profits, excessive faith in technology and political shortsightedness. The most vulnerable victims are the world's poorest people, he declared, who are being dislocated and disregarded."

With that latter point, the pope is making climate change a moral issue. A papal encyclical is meant to be a teaching document for Roman Catholics worldwide — and it ranks among the most authoritative statements a pope can make.

This encyclical is a major step in Pope Francis' personal campaign to lead his church in the battle against global warming. As a prelude to the next major international environmental conference scheduled for Paris in December, the pope plans to address the subject during the United Nations General Assembly in September. And also on that trip he will speak to a joint meeting of the United States Congress.

House Speaker John Boehner insulted the White House when he invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to speak to Congress in opposition to the Iran nuclear talks. But the way things are shaping up, the speaker's invitation to have the pope speak to Congress will be even more controversial.

That's because most Republican members of Congress claim not to believe that global warming is largely man-made. And of the historic number of Republicans running, or thinking about running for the 2016 presidential nomination, none is so far willing to admit that climate change has been scientifically proven.

However, before the pope enters that lion's den of climate change deniers called the American Congress, the Vatican also plans to have prominent bishops around the country deliver sermons, homilies and hold press conferences in support of the pope's warnings and pleas.

Miami Roman Catholic Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski is one of those actively involved in that effort. The archbishop reportedly hopes the pope's message will resonate with two members of his flock in particular: Florida's junior senator, Marco Rubio, and former governor Jeb Bush, both Catholics and both Republican presidential candidates.

Like all of the Republican candidates, Mr. Bush and Mr. Rubio have refused to concede that humans are the main culprits responsible for global warming, and they oppose policies designed to tax or limit the burning of fossil fuels. In this they are in lockstep with the billionaire Koch brothers, who will be spreading their enormous campaign fund largess to Republican presidential wannabes according to those who completely toe their line.

When a leaked draft of the papal encyclical surfaced early this past week, candidate Jeb Bush



was quick to try to inoculate himself against any notion that the pope might be able to sway his view.

At a campaign event in New Hampshire, Mr. Bush said, “I don’t get economic policy from my bishops or my cardinals or my pope ... I think religion ought to be about making us better as people and less about things that end up getting in the political realm.”

Senator Rubio takes the position that the climate is constantly changing, but insists that “humans are not responsible for climate change in the way some of these people out there are trying to make us believe.”

Governor Bush and Senator Rubio are immediately susceptible to pressure from billionaire campaign donors for whom protecting their investments in oil, coal and gas are paramount. But especially for Florida politicians, the politics of global warming could change. Thirteen federal agencies issued a 2014 National Climate Assessment, in which Miami was named as one of America’s cities most vulnerable to physical and economic damage due to human caused climate change.

This past week the PBS “News Hour” devoted a long segment to how rising sea levels caused by global warming threatened the Florida Everglades. As Judy Woodruff put it in her introduction, “The consequences aren’t just to hundreds of species of animals and plants that for centuries have called the Everglades home. It’s to the economy and way of life for millions in South Florida who depend on the vast and teeming water once dubbed ‘the river of grass’” Among the most troubling of the details in the report is that the Everglades, “a wild habitat once the size of Connecticut, has shrunk by more than a half.”

On a visit to Florida to mark Earth Day in April, President Barack Obama visited the Everglades and noted its vulnerability. “In terms of economic impact, all of this poses risks to Florida’s \$82 billion tourist industry, on which so many good jobs and livelihoods depend.”

Republican energy lobbyist Michael McKenna, who says he’s a conservative Catholic, dismisses the pope’s message. “This pope is selling a line of Latin American-style socialism,” said McKenna. “This guy is not in sync with the American Catholics.”

Actually, according to a new poll by the Pew Research Center, 86 percent of American Catholics view Pope Francis positively, and 71 percent believe the planet is getting warmer. However only a quarter of Catholic Republicans believe climate change is man-made. As for the Congress, 30 percent of the members are Catholics, including Speaker Boehner. And they promise to be Pope Francis’ most skeptical audience.

Yet as the American people watch the network news, which virtually every night leads with historic and disastrous weather conditions in various parts of the country, they might finally begin to ask why? Pope Francis is providing credible answers.

*Barrie Dunsmore is a former foreign correspondent for ABC News. He lives in Charlotte.*

**June 21, 2015**

Tell Us How Your Church Addressed the Pope's Encyclical

New York Times

[The encyclical by Pope Francis](#) released on Thursday did not merely present a papal view on the environment and climate change. It was also an urgent call to action. The document appeared [intended to persuade followers](#) around the world to change their behavior, in hopes of protecting a fragile planet.

The Times wants to know how places of worship in the United States and around the world are responding to Francis' message. Tell us how yours addressed the encyclical this weekend. We hope to hear from both congregation members and leaders. We may publish a selection of the responses.

Submit your response here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/world/europe/tell-us-how-your-church-addressed-the-popes-encyclical.html>

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**June 21, 2015**

Pope Francis's important ecology lesson

Could the Pope's climate change encyclical change the world?

**By** Stephen Bede Scharper  
Toronto Star

Twenty years ago, I taught a course on religion and the environment at the University of Notre Dame.

When people heard this, they would often scrunch up their faces and ask, "What does faith have to do with ecology?"

In the past few years, teaching a similar course at the University of Toronto, this question is posed far less often, and the faces are far less scrunched.

And now, thanks to Pope Francis, I may not have to answer this question again for some time.

Last Thursday, Francis planted what Greenpeace founder Robert Hunter might have called a “mind bomb.” Promulgating the first [papal encyclical on the environment](#), Francis sent shock waves across the speaking notes of climate change deniers worldwide and Republican presidential hopefuls in the U.S.

“The pope ought to stay with his job, and we'll stay with ours,” declared James Inhofe, the dean of climate change deniers in the U.S. Congress and chairman of the Senate environment and public works committee.

Roman Catholic Republican presidential aspirant Rick Santorum, perhaps forgetting Pope Francis’s graduate degree in chemistry, declared the church would be better off “leaving science to the scientists” and focusing on what the church is “good at, which is theology and morality.” And fellow Catholic Jeb Bush, also seeking to take up residence in the White House, told news reporters that he doesn’t take economic policy from “my cardinals or my pope.” He didn’t say where he does get it from.

These, sadly, are representative, rather than rogue, voices.

According to The Guardian, most Republicans in Congress deny the existence of climate change and actively resist legislation limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Among the uber-conservative Tea Party members, climate change skepticism runs near the 80-per-cent level, according to the Pew Research Center.

And of the nearly 20 Republicans in the presidential primary chorus, there is only one voice, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, who dares to sing of the perils of climate change.

When Pope Francis addresses the U.S. Congress this fall, the first pope in history to do so, he might well confirm that the emperors of climate change denial have no clothes. (Half of the legislators in attendance may indeed experience wardrobe malfunctions during the pope’s address.) But beyond the maelstrom of U.S. political discourse, Francis’s encyclical, as an authoritative teaching document to be used in Catholic schools and parishes throughout the world, will likely have a powerful impact for generations to come.

Affirming that climate change is both real and human-engendered, Francis takes aim at a “throwaway culture” of unbridled consumerism, challenging not only Catholics, but the entire human family, to fashion a new, integrated and sustaining relationship with the planet.

Beyond the fact that the detailed encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si* (Praise Be), echoing a canticle of the pope’s namesake, St. Francis of Assisi (c. 1181-1226), is an authoritative teaching document that will be shared among the 1.2 billion Catholic faithful, it will, for several additional reasons, have special resonance beyond the Catholic world.

First, addressing not just Catholics, but “every living person on this planet,” the pope declares “nothing in the world is indifferent to us.” Echoing his sermon on the plight of thousands of desperate North African refugees when he spoke of the “globalization of indifference,” Francis here declares that not only human suffering, but the suffering of the earth, with rapid species

extinction, coral reef destruction, and alarming climate change, must be embraced by Christian compassion.

Second, Francis directly links Catholic social teaching on poverty with an emerging concern for creation. The Pope invokes a book title by Leonardo Boff, the twice-Vatican-silenced Brazilian liberation theologian, who spoke of the Christian duty to respond to both “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” This brings together the two most important moral crises we now face.

Third, Francis advocates not just for a pastoral reorientation toward the planet, but a seismic shift away from “rapidification” and “irrational confidence in progress and human abilities” toward a culture of social and ecological inclusion, to protect, in the words of St. Francis, “Mother Earth.”

What does faith have to do with the fate of the earth?

Ask the pope.

He knows.

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<http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/06/21/pope-franciss-important-ecology-lesson.html>

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**June 22, 2015**

Laudato Si' — The Ecological Ethics and Systemic Thought of Pope Francis

By Fritjof Capra  
Earth Charter International

The title of the Pope's new encyclical, [Laudato Si'](#) (“Praise Be to You”), dated May 24, 2015, and published in eight languages on June 18, is an Umbrian phrase from the famous religious song “Canticle of the Sun” by Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology. The encyclical's subtitle, “On Care for our Common Home,” refers to the Earth as oikos (“home”), the Greek root of the word “ecology,” while caring (curando in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese) is a practice characteristic of the liberation theology of Latin America.

The text of the Papal encyclical, one year in the making and written with the help of a large team of theologians, philosophers, and scientists, reveals not only the great moral authority of Pope Francis, but also his complete familiarity with many concepts and ideas in contemporary science.

During the last thirty years, a new conception of life has emerged at the forefront of science — a unifying view that integrates life's biological, cognitive, social, and ecological dimensions. At

the very core of this new understanding of life we find a profound change of metaphors: from seeing the world as a machine to understanding it as a network. This new science of life is now being developed by outstanding researchers and their teams around the world. Their concepts and ideas are integrated into a grand synthesis in *The Systems View of Life*, a textbook I coauthored with Pier Luigi Luisi and which was published in 2014 by Cambridge University Press.

We call the new conception of life a “systems view” because it involves a new kind of thinking — thinking in terms of connectedness, relationships, patterns, and context. In science, this way of thinking is known as “systems thinking,” or “systemic thinking,” because it is crucial to understanding living systems of any kind — living organisms, social systems, or ecosystems.

The systems view of life will be the conceptual basis of my analysis of the Pope’s encyclical in this essay. I will show that the radical ethics championed by Pope Francis, expressed sometimes, but not always, in theological language, is essentially the ethics of deep ecology, the philosophical school founded by Arne Naess in the 1970s. I will also show with many examples that Pope Francis reveals himself in *Laudato Si’* as a truly systemic thinker.

### **Ethics and the common good**

From a systems perspective, ethical behavior is always related to community; it is behavior for the common good. In today’s world, there are two relevant communities to which we all belong. We are all members of humanity, and we all belong to the Earth Household, the global biosphere. As members of the human community, our behavior should reflect a respect of human dignity and basic human rights. As members of the Earth Household, our “common home,” we should not interfere with nature’s inherent ability to sustain life. This is the essential meaning of ecological sustainability.

The defining characteristic of deep ecology is a shift from anthropocentric (human-centered) values to ecocentric (earth-centered) values. It is a worldview that acknowledges the inherent value of non-human life, recognizing that all living beings are members of ecological communities, bound together in networks of interdependencies. All these considerations, and the radically new system of ethics they imply, are clearly expressed in the Papal encyclical, as shown in the following passages.

156. Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics.

95. The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all.

157. Society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good.

5. Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and “take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system.”

33. It is not enough...to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves... Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.

42. Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another.

159. The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us... We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity... Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.

162. Our difficulty in taking up this challenge seriously has much to do with an ethical and cultural decline which has accompanied the deterioration of the environment.

The values of deep ecology and their implications for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful world are elaborated in terms of sixteen ethical principles in the Earth Charter, a unique document mentioned by Pope Francis explicitly as a source of inspiration:

207. The Earth Charter asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge: “As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning... Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.”

## Science and religion

It is impressive that throughout the document, Pope Francis uses contemporary scientific language with complete ease. Technical terms like “paradigm,” “reductionism,” “microorganisms,” “subatomic particles,” “quantum leap,” etc. appear again and again. To cite just one example, in paragraph 18 the Pope notes the contrast between the hectic pace of modern life and the much slower pace of evolution:

18. Although change is part of the working of complex systems, the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution.

In view of the wide-spread questioning of evolution by Christian fundamentalists, especially in the United States, the Pope’s matter-of-fact reference to biological evolution, without any need

for further comments, is truly remarkable. In fact, Pope Francis states at the outset of his analysis of the state of the world that it is based on solid science:

15. I will begin by briefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis, with the aim of drawing on the results of the best scientific research available today, letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows.

In the history of Christianity, theological statements about the nature of the world, or about human nature, were often considered as literal truths, and any attempt to question or modify them was deemed heretical. This rigid position of the Church led to the well-known conflicts between science and fundamentalist Christianity, which have continued to the present day. In these conflicts, antagonistic positions are often taken on by fundamentalists on both sides who fail to keep in mind the limited and approximate nature of all scientific theories, on the one hand, and the metaphorical and symbolic nature of the language in religious scriptures, on the other. Pope Francis seems to be well aware of this problem, and explicitly emphasizes the symbolic nature of religious language:

66. The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality.

In fact, Francis uses religious language mainly in connection with ethics, arguing that caring for the common good is valuable whether or not it is motivated by religious faith:

199. It would be quite simplistic to think that ethical principles present themselves purely in the abstract, detached from any context. Nor does the fact that they may be couched in religious language detract from their value in public debate. The ethical principles capable of being apprehended by reason can always reappear in different guise and find expression in a variety of languages, including religious language.

### **“Integral ecology”**

The systems view of life, integrating life’s biological, cognitive, social, and ecological dimensions, is implicit in the conceptual framework of *Laudato Si’*. The Pope states explicitly that solving our global problems requires a new way of thinking, and he makes clear that what he has in mind is thinking in terms of connectedness and relationships — in other words, systemic thinking:

215. Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature.

79. In this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation.

138. It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation.

Pope Francis uses the term “integral ecology” to refer to the systemic approach, and he emphasizes especially the interdependence of ecological and social issues, as well as the need to respect and honor local, indigenous cultures:

137. Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.

49. Today...we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

143. Together with the patrimony of nature, there is also an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony which is likewise under threat... Ecology, then, also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense. More specifically, it calls for greater attention to local cultures.

146. In this sense, it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed.

In his encyclical, the Pope not only emphasizes the values and ethics of deep ecology but also shows his “ecological literacy” — his understanding of the principles of organization of nature’s ecosystems — as, for example, in the following passages.

34. It may well disturb us to learn of the extinction of mammals or birds, since they are more visible. But the good functioning of ecosystems also requires fungi, algae, worms, insects, reptiles and an innumerable variety of microorganisms.

22. It is hard for us to accept that the way natural ecosystems work is exemplary: plants synthesize nutrients which feed herbivores; these in turn become food for carnivores, which produce significant quantities of organic waste which give rise to new generations of plants.

140. Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these [ecosystems] for our own existence. We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about... So, when we speak of “sustainable use,” consideration must always be given to each ecosystem’s regenerative ability in its different areas and aspects.

## **The state of the world**

The encyclical is composed of six chapters. In the first chapter, Pope Francis presents his assessment of the state of the world — “what is happening to our common home,” as he puts it. Today, there is a broad consensus among scholars, community leaders, and activists that the major problems of our time — energy, environment, climate change, inequity, violence and war



— cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems, which means that they are all interconnected and interdependent. Pope Francis fully agrees with this fundamental insight:

61. The world's problems cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation.

139. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.

175. The same mindset which stands in the way of making radical decisions to reverse the trend of global warming also stands in the way of achieving the goal of eliminating poverty.

The fact that the major problems of our time are systemic problems implies that they require corresponding systemic solutions — solutions that do not solve any problem in isolation but deal with it within the context of other related problems. Unfortunately, this is not understood by our political and corporate leaders, most of whom are unable to “connect the dots,” to use a popular phrase.

Instead of taking into account the interconnectedness of our major problems, their so-called “solutions” tend to focus on a single issue, thereby simply shifting the problem to another part of the system — for example, by producing more energy at the expense of biodiversity, public health, or climate stability. Pope Francis is very critical of this serious shortcoming:

20. Technology, which, linked to business interests, is presented as the only way of solving these problems, in fact proves incapable of seeing the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others.

111. To seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem which comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system.

The Pope also recognizes clearly that systems thinking — or “integral ecology,” in his words — is inherently multidisciplinary. Hence he strongly advocates a multidisciplinary approach for solving our major global problems:

110. The fragmentation of knowledge proves helpful for concrete applications, and yet it often leads to a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationships between things, and for the broader horizon, which then becomes irrelevant. This very fact makes it hard to find adequate ways of solving the more complex problems of today's world, particularly those regarding the environment and the poor; these problems cannot be dealt with from a single perspective or from a single set of interests.

197. What is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis.

63. Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect

must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality.

### **The illusion of perpetual growth**

At the very heart of our global crisis lies the illusion that unlimited growth is possible on a finite planet. Economic and corporate growth are the driving forces of global capitalism, the dominant economic system today. In this economic system, the irrational belief in perpetual growth is carried on relentlessly by promoting excessive consumption and a throw-away economy that is energy and resource intensive, generating waste and pollution, and depleting the Earth's natural resources.

Moreover, these environmental problems are exacerbated by global climate change, caused by our energy-intensive and fossil-fuel-based technologies.

Pope Francis clearly recognizes the fatal flaw of the idea of perpetual growth, and he uses strong words to condemn it, calling it a lie rather than an illusion:

106. We are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us... This has made it easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology. It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit.

The Pope also associates the illusion of unlimited growth with the linear, one-dimensional notion of progress:

194. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress.

It seems, then, that our key challenge is how to shift from an economic system based on the notion of unlimited growth to one that is both ecologically sustainable and socially just. Growth is a central characteristic of all life, but growth in nature is not linear and unlimited. While certain parts of organisms, or ecosystems, grow, others decline, releasing and recycling their components which become resources for new growth.

This kind of balanced, multi-faceted, or "qualitative" growth is well known to biologists and ecologists, and this is exactly what the Pope advocates:

193. We need also to think of containing growth by setting some reasonable limits and even retracing our steps before it is too late... That is why the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth.

More generally, Pope Francis pleads for an economics grounded in ecology and designed to mimic the ecological cycles we observe in nature:

141. Economic growth, for its part, tends to produce predictable reactions and a certain standardization with the aim of simplifying procedures and reducing costs. This suggests the need for an “economic ecology” capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality.

22. Our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximizing their efficient use, reusing and recycling them.

Among the symptoms of our global crisis, climate change and economic inequality are perhaps the most urgent ones. Pope Francis addresses both of them in some detail in his encyclical. In addition, he discusses the dramatic rise in resource depletion and species extinction. He pays particular attention to the scarcity of fresh drinking water and unequivocally condemns the privatization of water:

30. Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.

## Climate change

Climate change is discussed in paragraphs 23–26 and in paragraphs 165 and 169 of the text in a way that accurately reflects the broad scientific consensus existing today. This should not be surprising because one of our leading climate scientists, Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, was a key scientific adviser to the Pope for many months during the drafting of *Laudato Si'*.

The section on climate change begins (in paragraph 23) with the moral exhortation that “the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.” This is followed by brief discussions of global warming, “due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity.” The intensive use of fossil fuels and deforestation for agricultural purposes are mentioned as two key sources of greenhouse gases.

The many consequences of climate change discussed include the constant rise in sea levels and the increase of extreme weather conditions (23); the decrease of the planet’s biodiversity and the acidification of the oceans, compromising the marine food chain (24); and the tragic rise in the number of climate refugees (25).

This analysis is followed by the Pope’s urgent appeal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, eventually, to phase out fossil fuels:

26. There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy. Worldwide there is minimal access to clean and renewable energy.

165. We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay.

Finally, Pope Francis bemoans the slow progress in developing effective climate policies and clearly denounces the situation as a moral failure:

169. With regard to climate change, the advances have been regrettably few. Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most... International negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility.

### **Economic inequality**

Throughout the encyclical, Pope Francis emphasizes the interdependence of environmental and social degradation. He lists numerous signs of the devastating social impact of economic globalization, paying special attention to economic inequality:

48. The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet.

46. The social dimensions of global change include the effects of technological innovations on employment, social exclusion, an inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services, social breakdown, increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, and the loss of identity. These are signs that the growth of the past two centuries has not always led to an integral development and an improvement in the quality of life. Some of these signs are also symptomatic of real social decline, the silent rupture of the bonds of integration and social cohesion.

51. Inequity affects not only individuals but entire countries; it compels us to consider an ethics of international relations. A true “ecological debt” exists, particularly between the global north and south, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time... “We note that often the businesses which operate this way are multinationals.”

Perhaps the only unconvincing section of the encyclical is paragraph 50 where Pope Francis tries to downplay the importance of stabilizing population. This is perhaps not surprising, given the Church’s staunch opposition to birth control. It is especially unfortunate, however, in view of the

fact that demographers have documented again and again the strong correlation between declining birth rates and women's rights, in particular access to education. This would have given the Pope another opportunity to emphasize the interdependence of ecological balance and social justice, which is one of the main themes of his encyclical.

### Need for a global consensus

At the end of his wide-ranging systemic and ethical analysis of the state of the world, Pope Francis concludes that we need a global consensus for effective action:

164. A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries. Such a consensus could lead, for example, to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water.

The Pope decries the lack of political leadership to achieve the urgently needed global consensus, and he does not hesitate to name wide-spread political corruption, often institutionalized, as the main culprit:

54. It is remarkable how weak international political responses have been. The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected.

178. A politics concerned with immediate results, supported by consumerist sectors of the population, is driven to produce short-term growth. In response to electoral interests, governments are reluctant to upset the public with measures which could affect the level of consumption or create risks for foreign investment. The myopia of power politics delays the inclusion of a far-sighted environmental agenda within the overall agenda of governments.

182. The forms of corruption which conceal the actual environmental impact of a given project, in exchange for favours, usually produce specious agreements which fail to inform adequately and to allow for full debate.

Throughout his encyclical, Pope Francis praises the actions of the global network of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), known as the global civil society, to raise public awareness and develop systemic solutions in a variety of areas:

13. Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest. Young people demand change.

14. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges.

38. We cannot fail to praise the commitment of international agencies and civil society organizations which draw public attention to these issues and offer critical cooperation, employing legitimate means of pressure, to ensure that each government carries out its proper and inalienable responsibility to preserve its country's environment and natural resources, without capitulating to spurious local or international interests.

166. Worldwide, the ecological movement has made significant advances, thanks also to the efforts of many organizations of civil society. It is impossible here to mention them all, or to review the history of their contributions. But thanks to their efforts, environmental questions have increasingly found a place on public agendas and encouraged more far-sighted approaches.

In the end, the Pope asserts unequivocally that the only effective way to develop appropriate environmental and social policies will be through political pressure of grassroots movements on governments at all levels:

179. Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment.

With this encyclical Pope Francis has single-handedly brought the Catholic Church to the forefront of the ecology movement and has established himself as a true world leader in the mold of Václav Havel, Jimmy Carter, or the Dalai Lama. We can only hope that the wisdom and passion of *Laudato Si'* will resonate strongly around the world.

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/1153/1/Fritjof-Capra-Laudato-Si--The-Ecological-Ethics-and-Systemic-Thought-of-Pope-Francis-/Page1.html>

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**June 22, 2015**

Ruud Lubbers comment on *Laudato Si'*

By Ruud Lubbers  
Earth Charter International

In 2015, the U.N. will agree on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Conference of Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change will offer nations the opportunity to make a choice for Our Common Future. Pope Francis has just gone on record with *Laudato Si'*; the Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home.

This gives me an immense joy. As a Roman Catholic, born in 1939, I have lived my life according to the teachings of Christ, my beliefs based on Love as His most important lesson. Also, I have been greatly influenced by Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit cited by the Pope in *Laudato Si'*, whose *Le Phénomène Humain* taught me in terms of science what our history and future is about.

During my life I have had the fortune to raise my children to become aware of our misbehavior in relation to nature. In that time, Europe - in particular the Rhine area with Rotterdam as its main port - was recovering from the Second World War and industrializing thanks to the generous American Marshall Plan. While recovery was impressive, it came at the cost of the environment and nature. It was an important lesson for me to respect nature, Our Common Home.

Almost 50 years ago, the Club of Rome published Limits to Growth and I entered politics to contribute to sustainable growth, prioritizing the quality of life above simply growth as an end in itself. It was what I thought my children, then teenagers, deserved.

Shortly after, I met Gro Harlem Brundtland, then the Environment Minister (in Norway), while I was at the time the Minister for the Economy (in the Netherlands).

Later, the two of us became Prime Ministers of our respective countries and were together in Rio de Janeiro at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit in 1992, trying to give shape and substance to Our Common Future. It was there where NGOs and indigenous people convinced us to try and create the Earth Charter.

In the following years, people like Leonardo Boff, invited to go into silence by the Roman Catholic Church because of his Liberation theology, joined the effort, and now in 2015, the Pope, who chose to be named after Francis of Assisi, has written history with his Encyclical Letter Laudato Si'.

Only two generations after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Pope has made history by inviting mankind to the joyful celebration of life, contributing to the awareness needed to make a new start to achieve Our Common Future and to leave behind a period of self-destruction due to unsustainable growth and the lack of care for Our Common Home.

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/1156/1/Ruud-Lubbers-comment-on-Laudato-Si/Page1.html>

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**June 23, 2015**

Millennial Faith Leaders Offer A Vision For The Future Of The Environmental Movement

By Antonia Blumberg  
Huffington Post

To many religious climate activists, caring for the environment isn't just a good idea -- it's a moral responsibility.

Pope Francis released [an encyclical](#), or papal letter, on the environment last Thursday -- a move that has called attention to the role many faith leaders are playing in the battle against climate



change. The pontiff has [stood firm on ecological issues](#), calling the environment's decline "one of the greatest challenges of our time."

He is in good company among people of faith. On Sept. 21, 2014, some [10,000 people](#) joined the interfaith contingent of the People's Climate March in New York City to demand that world leaders [take action to protect the environment](#).

The Huffington Post spoke with six millennials who are helping to usher in a generation of faith leaders deeply involved in environmental activism. In their emailed responses, these six young people offered their stories, prayers and visions of the movement's future.

### **Nana Firman, Islam**

*Firman initiated the [Eco Fab Living campaign](#) and runs Green Mosque Green Globe, a California-based program that provides environmental education to Muslim youth and the general public. She completed a fellowship in 2014 with GreenFaith, an environmental organization that trains religious communities to work on sustainability projects. Firman was also trained as a "climate leader" by former Vice President Al Gore through [the Climate Reality Project](#).*

In early 2005, I was called upon by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature to aid a relief effort in Aceh, the northern tip of Sumatra Island [Indonesia], immediately after the earthquake and tsunami had struck in late December 2004. The initial mission lasted for about three months, but I ended up staying for four years, leading the development and implementation of [the] Green Reconstruction program during the post-tsunami recovery period from 2005 to 2008. Such challenges enhanced my awareness and increased my passion in the field of nature balance and ecological sustainability.

My passion in sustainability through ecological activism made me realize that I was practicing all along my own faith of Islam, which teaches that all human beings are the guardians of our planet and we should live with it in harmony. The very first verse that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), "I Q R A" (Qur'an 96:1), literally means to read, in the context of observation and exploration, the signs of the Creator not only written in the Qur'an but also painted in nature. Hence, there are qualitative principles within the Islamic tradition that outline environmental responsibility for the human family.

The current ecological degradation and climate crisis are moral issues. Thus, the faith-based environmental movement is about how we behave as human beings in regards not only to our relationship with each other but also with nature at large. So, let us be smart and active in our faith communities, as caring for the Earth, according to Islamic teaching, is an expression of worship!

### **Sunil Kumar Yadav, Hinduism-Buddhism**

*Born and raised in a Hindu-Buddhist family in Nepal, Yadav is a master of divinity at the University of Chicago Divinity School. He holds a B.A. in environmental biology from Albion*



*College and is currently investigating applications of interreligious engagements in conflict resolution and the reconciliation process within religiously plural societies.*

My Hindu-Buddhist faith and interfaith spiritual makeup highly inspire my ecological activism and passion. While my understanding of [the] science behind ecology is informed by my academic studies of environmental biology in college, I have realized that my passion for the environment originates from my Hindu-Buddhist upbringing. It comes from a very basic idea of dharma that translates to “a way of life.” As a being in this world, it is our dharma to peacefully coexist with other beings such that we can care, share and grow among each other. However, as humans, we are not coexisting. We are living at the expense of other creatures’ lives and habitats.

For me, a proper way to respond is with compassion. My notion of compassion is cultivated within Buddhist tradition. Compassion equips us with a perspective that allows us to appreciate other beings and to develop [a] deeper understanding of their existence in this world, which consequently can encourage us to stop corrupting and exploiting them.

There is need for regular and active efforts from all members of our society, not just scientists or activists, to learn, educate, practice and embrace environmental practices. Whether it may be a simple task like picking up a can and putting it in a recycling bin, or an arduous challenge of encouraging your state senator to vote for a bill that supports carbon reduction, we all need to act as one.

### **David Fisher, Judaism**

*Fisher is the founder of [Interfaith Appalachia](#), a community development organization in eastern Kentucky. He is a 2011 alumnus of the Arava Institute, an environmental nonprofit organization, and a 2012 graduate of Oberlin College, where he pursued dual majors in environmental studies and Jewish studies.*

One day each week, I follow the practice of Shabbat. The story of creation states that the world is incomplete without rest. Creation is not whole at the end of six days, when the physical world is complete. The only way to mend our environmental crisis, in a paradox, is to cease from affecting it. Climate change, the mass extinction of species, and other aspects of environmental destruction are at the hands of humanity. In all of the work that I do to help solve these problems, Shabbat is a holy reminder that the true response is in the limitation of human agency.

In the United States, where religious polarization runs parallel to political polarization, I think we need a language that transcends not only religion but also politics. Environmental values are certainly held across the aisle, but I think that the value of community development is significantly more universal.

I believe that the most important way for faith-based environmentalism to succeed is to translate our work into the language of community development, which I firmly believe is the strongest language for cooperation. I envision a robust movement where people work together across

religion and politics to bring great change. I hope for a world defined by equality, sustainability, and opportunity.

### **Stacey Kennealy, Spiritual Humanism-Buddhism**

*Kennealy directs the GreenFaith Certification and Shield programs, two innovative "greening" programs for congregations. She also writes "green guides" for faith-based communities, and provides consultation to sites that have environmental questions or need assistance. In 2013, she was named one of the year's ["Top Ten Spiritual Heroes"](#) by Spirituality and Health Magazine. Kennealy also owns a [sustainable jewelry business](#).*

I have had a deep connection to animals and vulnerable communities from the time I was very young, and a desire to protect them. GreenFaith started as a short-term project after college -- it was to be a one-year grant working with religious schools -- and has evolved into a calling that has spanned nearly nine years. At a time when so many faith communities are struggling to keep their doors open, we are helping congregations grow in numbers, stay relevant, and care for the environment all at once.

One of the three jewels of Buddhism is the sangha, or the community, and that is where I draw inspiration. I view my sangha not just as those I meditate with, but as the entire world: inanimate, animate, humans, other animals and plants. There is such beauty, such grace, and such perfection all around, and I feel compelled to protect it. The natural world and all its inhabitants are teachers, if we only listen.

When I look to the future, I see faith-based environmentalism as the key force in solving the ecological crisis. Touching people's hearts and values will shift the focus from unbridled consumption to sustainable living -- technology and science alone are not enough. The longer we wait for the science to save us, the closer we get to ecological collapse. We need to bolster the science with values, ethics, and in some cases, faith.

### **Gopal Patel, Hinduism**

*Patel has worked with the Bhumi Project, a Hindu environmental organization, for the past five years. He currently serves as the organization's director and lives in Oxford, England.*

I took a sabbatical a few years ago to India, where I lived in ashrams studying sacred Hindu texts. When I returned to England, I was looking for a way to align my professional and personal lives. When an opportunity came up to work at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies on their newly emerging Bhumi Project, it was something I couldn't refuse. I'm excited about developing an informed and authentic Hindu voice on the global stage about environmental concerns.

My religious and spiritual beliefs inspire much of my life and work. "Trnad api sunicena" -- "be more humble than a blade of grass" -- is a teaching by the medieval Bengali spiritual leader Caitanya Mahaprabhu. By viewing the natural world with humility, one cannot avoid being ever-grateful to all Mother Earth provides us. With gratitude comes a desire to reciprocate with love and respect, which is how I feel we all need to treat the environment.

Faith-based movements have much to offer, and are increasingly becoming vocal about environmental concerns. Where governments, big business, and international organizations like the U.N. have struggled, religions could succeed. With their combination of philosophy, spirituality and moral direction, meaningful engagement with the world's faiths could yield significant positive changes in the world.

### **Tricia Bruckbauer, Lutheran Church**

*Bruckbauer is the program director at [Creation Justice Ministries](#) and served as a fellow with CJM through the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. She is a graduate of Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, where she studied communications, sociology and religious studies. Bruckbauer is a self-proclaimed national park junkie, having grown up with [Mount Rainier National Park](#) as her backyard playground.*

I believe that God has called us to be stewards of the Earth, and this means to be responsible caretakers in order to leave the next generations a hospitable planet on which to live. There are many passages in the Bible that inspire creation care, but the two that Christian communities generally use are the Genesis story and Matthew 25:40. We know that God created the Earth and all that is in it, and that it was good. God also placed man in the garden to "till it and keep it," which is where our stewardship call comes from.

In Matthew, Jesus says, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Here we understand that God calls us to care for our neighbors and poor and vulnerable communities. Many environmental problems like climate change, polluted air and water, and severe weather disproportionately impact marginalized communities, and these are the very people that we are called to serve.

One non-biblical quote that particularly influences my passion for this work comes from Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who wrote, "The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children." This can be applied to so many issues facing our world, but I think it creates a clear call for action on issues of creation care.

I think the faith-based environmental movement will continue to grow and become more diverse. Churches have been doing this work for decades, but I think that young people of faith will become more active in the movement. For most young people, caring for the Earth is a no-brainer since we will be living with the consequences of environmental actions (or lack of action) for a long time. The projected impacts on our Earth from climate change are really very frightening, but I think what the faith community can offer this discussion is hope. Christians are hopeful people, and if we start seriously caring for creation, there is hope for a bright future.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/22/religious-activists-climate-change\\_n\\_7454094.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/22/religious-activists-climate-change_n_7454094.html)

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**June 23, 2015**

Laudato Si' – Becoming Painfully Aware

By Chris Crews  
State of Formation

*This is the first in a multi-part series exploring the Laudato Si' Encyclical Letter on the environment by Pope Francis.*

*“Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.” - Pope Francis*

On Thursday June 18<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis released his much-anticipated Encyclical Letter on the environment, [\*Laudato Si'\*](#). The Encyclical began making headlines months ago as the deadline for its release approached, with commentators on all sides of the political and religious aisle eagerly awaiting its release. The encyclical's six chapters each deal with different themes, but all lead to the same conclusion—mankind is sinking deeper into sin and ecological destruction, we need to change our ways drastically, and the climate clock is running out of time.

There are a number of big themes that Francis is trying to tackle in this Encyclical, among them:

- 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 serious responsibility of international and local policy

One of the things that immediately stood out for me fairly early in the letter was the way Francis frames the age-old science vs religion question. Although he is clear that ultimately climate change is a theological issue for the Church, it struck me as noteworthy how much weight he gives to the science as theological justification.

“I will begin by briefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis, with the aim of drawing on the results of the best scientific research available today, letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows.” (15)

Francis sees scientific, ethical and spiritual concerns as equally important, but I suspect some of his audience was surprised by his suggestion that the ethics and spirituality of climate change should be built on the “concrete foundation” of science. Francis, unlike some of his predecessors, seems to be more inclined to view science and religion as co-equals. This is encouraging for the success of ecotheology, and for Catholics hoping Rome will provide moral leadership on environmental issues.

As someone coming from an animist worldview, it was hard not to feel at times that the Pope had been drinking from the chalice of nature religion, especially when he talks about hearing the

cry of our sister, Mother Earth. Even accounting for the St. Francis of Assisi influences on the language, I think this is more than flowery Franciscan poetics.

This view of the Earth as alive, or something close to it, can be traced to the growing influence of Earth System science and integral ecology. It's clear in the first chapter that Francis, or his scientific advisers, have integrated the view of the Earth as an interconnected and dynamic system derived from this synthesis.

“Still, we can see signs that things are now reaching a breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation; these are evident in large-scale natural disasters as well as social and even financial crises, for the world’s problems cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation. There are regions now at high risk and, aside from all doomsday predictions, the present world system is certainly unsustainable from a number of points of view, for we have stopped thinking about the goals of human activity.” (61)

This more holistic approach makes this Encyclical extremely powerful, setting it apart from most environmental statements released by mainstream religious organizations. Instead of appeals for a greener economy and sustainable development, which often amount to little more than utopian calls for “green capitalism,” Francis questions the logic of neoliberal globalization and high-tech development, which he calls the “techno-economic paradigm.” It is precisely this paradigm that we need to be concerned with, Francis warns, because it is a root cause of our modern ecological crisis and the rise of “throwaway culture.”

Many religious critiques stop there, suggesting a mix of sustainability and renewables as the fix. Francis goes one step deeper. Throwaway culture, he suggests, has a darker shadow: Our ability to care for the world, both human and more-than-human, is vanishing. This lack of compassion manifests in a world that calls destruction progress, one that has become indifferent to life. One inevitable outcome is a human-driven [unprecedented Sixth Extinction](#) occurring on this planet.

Another outcome is the growing number of environmental refugees. Impoverished migrants fleeing the effects of climate change is a worrying new trend, as [noted in recent reports](#). As Francis argues:

“They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever. Sadly, there is widespread indifference to such suffering, which is even now taking place throughout our world. Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.” (25)

That last sentence is the crux. In order to be able to respond, that is, to be “responsible,” we need a framework to assign value or meaning. Those meanings in turn produce obligations, which we translate in ethical arguments about responsibility. But as Francis notes, we have lost this “sense of responsibility” for our fellow humans and the more-than-human world.

“It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know... Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.” (33)

Theologically speaking, humans have given up the responsibility of stewardship but not the right of dominion. Francis suggests it is this willful turning away from our responsibilities that is the true evil we must face.

“As often occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear. Superficially, apart from a few obvious signs of pollution and deterioration, things do not look that serious, and the planet could continue as it is for some time. Such evasiveness serves as a license to carrying on with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption. This is the way human beings contrive to feed their self-destructive vices: trying not to see them, trying not to acknowledge them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen.” (59)

Francis is challenging us to rethink individual and social responsibility, ultimately all the way to the highest level of international climate politics. We need a global revolution in our relationship with the Earth. As the Encyclical subtitle suggests, we must care for our common home. Hopefully the message of *Laudato Si'* will play some small role in achieving that outcome.

*\*All quote references in ( ) are to the paragraph numbers in the the Encyclical.*

<http://www.stateofformation.org/2015/06/laudato-si-becoming-painfully-aware/>

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**June 23, 2015**

Don't go back to sleep

By Joan Brown

Global Sisters Report -- Capital E: Earth

I was leading the ninth annual Women's Wilderness Camping Retreat in the Santa Fe National Forest when the papal encyclical, "[\*Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home\*](#)," was released. It has been three years since we have retreated in this amazing place of forest, meadows and streams. After a fire in 2013 the forest was closed because of threats of flash floods.

Scars from the fire and vast erosion from monsoon rains are evident everywhere. In this place, the encyclical is enfolded. The land and communities surrounding them speak of the realities of fire and extreme weather exacerbated by climate change in New Mexico. Creation and people's livelihoods are affected.



I traveled to the small town of Pecos, about 30 minutes down a road that is almost washed out as the result of fires and rains. One small restaurant boasts of an intermittent Internet connection that allows me to download the encyclical and do some work for New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light around the encyclical.

While my hopes were for a document that could both inspire and call us to deeper action, my initial reading fills my poetic heart and activist soul with great gratitude. I am moved and pray a prayer of thanks for a call that encompasses “every person on the planet.”

As a Franciscan, I see the imperative to approach nature and the environment with an “openness to awe and wonder,” which are essential to living “intimately united with all that exists,” that forms a foundation of the document. Between the words is the witness of St. Francis and St. Clare to live simply and rooted in joy and wonder.

The opening paragraphs are essential foundations of the document: that it is necessary to hear and answer the call to address current political and economic systems in need of reform. Reform on a personal, societal and countrywide scale is required in order to live in a stance that is “a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.”

Prepared to be given a bird’s eye view of the concerns of environmental devastation, climate change, poverty and structures that create our ongoing dilemma, I am surprised to be given an eagle’s eye view of our reality that is sharp and in places so specific it causes discomfort. There are many invitations to conversion, a very Franciscan virtue.

*Laudato Si’* begins to sing through me like the ancient [Canticle of Creation by St. Francis of Assisi](#). My organizer’s mind imagines how this document can be of service. *Laudato Si’* can add a moral perspective to a number of issues including: the [Clean Power Plan](#) the EPA will give to states in August; the Congressional appropriation of money for the [Green Climate Fund](#) to assist our brothers and sisters who are economically challenged and affected most by climate change; the mobilization of people of faith and conscience to raise a moral and ethical imperative for world leaders to agree upon a binding global treaty on climate change in Paris at the end of the year. (See [IPL Paris Pledge](#) to lend your voice.)

My head reels as I drive the windy road back to the retreat. Over dinner, after a day of solitude in the forest, the women are anxious to hear about the encyclical. When I report that it is a beautiful and commanding document in which the pope says, “I wish to address every person living on this planet,” they are all overjoyed to be included in the call of the encyclical.

These women are Mennonites, Catholics, “former Catholics,” Buddhists, some espousing no religion and one young woman who says she has come to know her religion as Love and being a loving person. They, as many of the interfaith people I work with, are in love with creation and their brothers and sisters and the future generations. They are very concerned about climate change, devastation of the planet, an economic system that creates more poverty and disparity and a human path leading to the brink of destruction and soulless lives of consumerism.

A line from a Rumi poem set to music has been sung during the retreat, and it could be a clarion call after reading the encyclical. “The voices at dawn have secrets to tell you. Don’t go back to sleep. Step across the threshold and don’t go back to sleep.”

“*Laudato Si’*: on Care for Our Common Home” will take time to read in depth and digest, but just as good cooks taste as they work on the sacred meal for guests and even share morsels with early guests, the tasting and sharing of morsels has begun.

This week I help lead a Wild GRACE youth and adult leader retreat at Ghost Ranch Retreat and Conference Center in Abiqui, New Mexico. The 90 participants (who are mostly Presbyterian) will be offered some tidbits to encourage, inspire and challenge them, such as: “Young people have a new ecological sensitivity and generous spirit, and some of them are making admirable efforts to protect the environment. At the same time they have grown up in a milieu of extreme consumerism and affluence which makes it difficult to develop other habits.”

I sing in gratitude for *Laudato Si’* and pray with humility the lines of one of the prayers at the conclusion of the document.

God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love,  
for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.  
Enlighten those who possess power and money  
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,  
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,  
and care for this world in which we live.  
The poor and the earth are crying out.  
O Lord, seize us with your power and light . . .

[Sr. Joan Brown, OSF, is a Franciscan sister from the Franciscan Sisters of Rochester, Minnesota, and executive director of [New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light](http://newmexicointerfaith.org/).]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/column/capital-e-earth/environment/don%E2%80%99t-go-back-sleep-27196>

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**June 24, 2015**

Laudato Si’: An encyclical of re-membering

By Margaret Galiardi  
Global Sisters Report -- Capital E: Earth

Molloy College in Rockville Centre, Long Island, offered a new course this past spring semester that I designed and co-taught. It was entitled, “The Rights of Nature.” The course description explained that students would examine various paradigms for understanding the Earth / Human



relationship from “biblically inspired” dominion, through conservation and protection, and ending with kinship paradigms which promote the rights of mother Earth.

After viewing the outstanding new video entitled “[Green Fire](#)” chronicling the life of the founding father of Land Ethic, [Aldo Leopold](#) (1887-1948), the students were asked about their relationship with their homeland of Long Island. One student spoke out boldly, “We have an abusive relationship with all land, not only Long Island. All we do is take from the land.” I didn’t expect that response and with a sigh of relief thought to myself, “Well, something is getting through.”

School is out for the summer, so I have no way of bringing the class back to explore the [Pope’s new encyclical](#), but I wonder, if the tables were turned, what grade my students would give Francis for his encyclical. I have a strong hunch they would be pleased with the pope’s “whole-making” or “re-membering,” otherwise known in the encyclical as “integral ecology.”

It’s a clever extrapolation of Paul VI’s phrase “integral development,” which appeared in the 1967 encyclical, “[On the Progress of Peoples](#).” The concept was the brain child of the French Dominican economist, prophet and missionary to fishermen of Northwestern France, [Louis-Joseph Lebreton](#) (1897-1966). Paul VI, citing Lebreton’s work in a footnote, explains it this way: “In order to be authentic, development must be complete; integral that is, it has to promote the good of every person and the whole person” (14). This is an important back-drop for an understanding of the Pope Francis’s “integral ecology.”

Francis references Paul VI’s work in the early pages of his encyclical, pointing to his prescient warning about a potential ecological catastrophe (4). This pope’s contribution is to enshrine forever in Catholic social thought the connection between “the good of every person and the whole person,” and Earth and an articulation of our identity as “Earthlings” with all its subsequent implications. As he writes, “. . . how inseparable the bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace”(10).

In a kind of lament, he tells us in the opening paragraphs, “We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the Earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters” (2). In the fourth chapter devoted in its entirety to “Integral Ecology,” he reminds us once again: “Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it” (139). I would hope my students give the pontiff credit for his elaboration of one of [Thomas Berry](#)’s “Principles of a Functional Cosmology,” namely, “Earth is primary, and the human is derivative.”

So, whole-making number one for the pope: Earth and human are re-membered.

Another example of Francis’s whole-making is to be found in his statements in Chapter One about not only climate change, which has received the lion’s share of attention and rightly so, but also water, loss of biodiversity, decline in the quality of human life, breakdown of society and global inequality. It is an impressive “body scan” of the planet and most timely in its utterance. Not only does the world await the [U.N. conference in Paris](#) in December with hopes of a binding

global treaty to reduce carbon emissions, (the pope does make several veiled references to this fact without directly mentioning the coming meeting), but the evening before the official release of the encyclical, the news carried reports about the [dire state of the world's aquifers](#). Twenty-one of the world's 37 largest aquifers – in locations from India and China to the United States and France – have passed their sustainability tipping points, a NASA report tell us. The report goes on to elaborate that this means more water was removed than replaced during a decade-long study period. Later on in the encyclical, in a comment sure to raise the ire of some, the pope in speaking about the governance of the oceans, calls for “agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of the so called global commons”(174). The inclusion of the full range of issues indicates that the Pope recognizes that again as Thomas Berry would say: the Earth is a whole and cannot be saved in fragments.

More points from my students for sure and whole-making number two for the pope: Earth, her one water system, diversity of species, flora and fauna, and human life are re-membered.

Whole-making number three: more than once in the encyclical the pope reminds us, “that it is not enough to think of different species merely as potential resources to be exploited while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves” (33). “In our time,” the pontiff boldly states,” the Church does not simply state that other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of human beings, as if they have no worth in themselves and can be treated as we wish;” rather, “. . . other living beings have a value of their own in God’s eyes: by their mere existence they bless God and give him glory” (69).

The “biblically inspired” dominion model of relating to creation has been permanently retired with the words: “. . . we must forcefully reject the notion that our being made in the image of God justifies absolute domination over other creatures” (67). The “other-than-human” has been re-membered in the affirmation of its worth in God’s eyes.

Yes, more points for the pontiff from my students, for as they would know from studying Berry, “The Earth is a communion of subjects not a collection of objects.”

The pope turns to the bishops of Bolivia for yet another area for whole-making, which is a lynchpin of the entire document: “Everyday experience and scientific research shows that the greatest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest”(48). It is a “no-brainer” for some, but in a global society like our own where the poor are institutionally and systematically marginalized and kept out of sight and thus out of mind, more points go to the pope for making the invisible visible. He tells us, “. . . a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of poor” (49). He reinforces this point in ways too numerous to list. Two stand out for their far reaching implications: Profit cannot be the sole criterion (187), and “. . . we need to think of containing growth . . . the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth”(193).

Whole-making number five: The poor are re-membered into the one community of life. They are not other, they are us.

Integral development and now integral ecology are all about making wholes where artificial and fallacious divisions have grown up over centuries. I recall vividly an experience I had years ago. I began to feel as if I was bringing more of myself to prayer than ever before. It felt strange at first but then really right. It was an experience of alignment and integration, a re-membering of myself even. I came to understand it as born of my growing embrace of the Universe Story. I knew then that as I came to prayer in the morning, and as I moved throughout day, I carried the 13.8-billion-year story with all its unfolding – other-than human and human life – in my very body. I walked with a new integrity and joy. I carried the pain of centuries as well. This is what happens as we approach wholeness. This is how I feel after reading the encyclical.

In the first chapter Francis articulates the goal of the encyclical. He says, “Our goal is not to amass information or satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus discover what each of us can do about it” (19). It certainly had that impact on me. I am not sure about how my students would grade the encyclical, but I would give it an “A.”

[Margaret Galiardi, is a Dominican Sister from Amityville, New York, whose passion is the contemplative integration of justice and peace for people and planet. She is a “lover of the wild,” a spiritual director and workshop and retreat leader who has lectured nationally on the New Cosmology and the Christian Story. She spent a year living with the Trappistine monks in their monastery on the Lost Coast of Northern California in the Redwood Forest.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/column/capital-e-earth/environment/laudato-si%E2%80%99-encyclical-re-membering-27271>

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## **June 24, 2015**

Religions for Peace New Faiths for Earth Campaign

Religions for Peace International June 24, 2015

Watch the video here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E\\_3EuybS9Mk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_3EuybS9Mk)

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## **June 24, 2015**

Elizabeth May: Why Pope Francis’s statement is important

Earth Charter International

WireService.ca Media Release (06/20/2015) Ottawa, ON - "It is increasingly odd to realize that the voices of the established order, sources of top-down control and out-dated structures, are suddenly allies. My experience for decades was to deride the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for perverse "structural adjustment," the World Bank for bad development, the

International Energy Agency for focussing on expanding fossil fuel reserves, and the Vatican for policies so opposed to contraception as to ignore the threat of HIV-AIDs. I now find myself in the oddest of positions as a Canadian. They are all more progressive than my own government.

"The IMF and the World Bank are powerful allies in the fight to move off fossil fuels - calling for all governments to end fossil fuel subsidies and to place a price on carbon. The International Energy Agency is calling for two-thirds of all known reserves of fossil fuels to stay in the ground until at least 2050, to avoid a 2 degree C rise in global average temperatures. And now the Vatican is more aware of the science of climate change than is Stephen Harper. Galileo would be amazed.

"A Papal Encyclical is a rare event. And this one may be the most important ever. I urge all Canadians to read it, whether Catholic or atheist; Protestant, Jew, Muslim or pagan. It has something to say to us all.

"Its political intention is clear. We are six months from the opening of the deadline talks for the acceptance of a new, comprehensive international climate treaty. As the only Member of Parliament (other than Leona Aglukkaq) to have attended the negotiations in recent years, I have to admit that the prospects for an effective treaty are dim.

"Politicians make great speeches about increased ambition and the need for urgent action, but once behind closed doors their diplomats put on the brakes. The exception is Canada where politicians do not make great speeches and their negotiators put on the brakes. No question some nations and groups of nations are far more helpful than others. The EU has the most ambitious climate target, but ever since the economic disaster of 2008, in the talks its strength as a leader has been reduced. The US under Barak Obama is taking executive action to cut GHGs, but the State Department negotiators seem to be getting instructions from George Bush.

"In Warsaw at COP19, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, realizing the rate of progress was too slow, announced he would host a major UN climate summit in September 2014 to create more momentum for the COP 20 talks in Lima. The global citizens movement seized on his lead and mobilized the largest ever Peoples Climate Marches - all around the world, with 400,000 on the streets of New York the day before the U.N. climate summit. World leaders came to pledge action (not Stephen Harper, of course). But still, Lima sputtered.

"German Chancellor Angela Merkel understands the problem. She capitalized on her role as host of the G7 to make climate a focus. For the first time ever, the world's largest industrialized countries have declared that our only way forward is to stop burning fossil fuels altogether. Sadly, and shamefully for Canadians, to get Stephen Harper to sign a communiqué using the word "decarbonisation" required shifting the deadline in the draft communiqué from "substantially by 2050" to "by 2100."

"Any close observer of the talks will know that we need a miracle. Enter Pope Francis.

"His 74 page open letter to the world is vast in its ambition. It is largely focused on the need for climate action. He places the climate crisis in both scientific and moral terms. The over one

billion Roman Catholics in the world will have to take heed - but so too should those of no faith. For in his science he is repeating what the IPCC, IMF, World Bank, IEA, OECD and others have said.

"In his appeal to a moral response to the crisis, he also has something important to say to those of no faith. Any observers of our current crisis know that consumerism and greed are at the heart of it. We face a deeply moral challenge at many levels. The industrialized and wealthy world is in no position to say "treat all countries the same." We have created a crisis and those most at risk are the least responsible and most vulnerable. As his Holiness writes "the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor are the same."

"Another dimension of the moral challenge is inter-generational. How can we in our generation condemn our own children and their children to an increasingly unlivable world?

"But the Pontiff takes the issue more directly to our current culture. The encyclical takes aim at consumer culture where throwing something away is done without a thought. "Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity." (211)

"I was deeply moved to find words I had helped draft from the Earth Charter:

"As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning...Let ours be remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life." (207)

"The six Global Green Values were distilled from the Earth Charter. I was honoured to be an Earth Charter Commissioner, working with an extraordinary group from around the world. The Green Party at our roots is tied to the Earth Charter.

"So now we have a voice, one with whom we will never agree on everything. Not surprisingly, the encyclical inserts an argument against abortion. Still there is far more to be embraced than rejected in a call for a greater recognition that we must embrace each other as a human family with a shared destiny and a common home. The call for inter-religious dialogue and respect across cultures and beliefs is powerful. Let us all take it to heart."

For additional information or to arrange an interview, contact:

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<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/1152/1/Elizabeth-May-Why-Pope-Franciss-statement-is-important/Page1.html>

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**June 25, 2015**

*Yale Environment 360*

### A Note From the Editor

At *Yale Environment 360* this week, journalist Daniel Grossman travels to the Himalayan region of India to report on new research indicating that the [catastrophic flood that swept through the state of Uttarakhand](#) two years ago was linked to global warming. In an *e360* special report and an accompanying video, Grossman goes to the remote town of Kedarnath, an historic destination for Hindu pilgrims, which was heavily damaged by the flood. He talks with local residents who survived the disaster and treks up mountains with Indian geographer Vaibhav Kaul to explore the flood's source. As Grossman explains, Kaul and other scientists now believe the flood, which killed thousands, was in part caused by melting glaciers and shifting storm tracks caused by climate change. [Read his compelling account](#) and [watch his video report](#) that takes you to a part of the world that few outsiders have seen.

In an *e360* photo gallery, we show you some intriguing projects that are using [state-of-the-art tracking and tagging devices](#) to learn more about the lives of animals and the ecosystems in which they live. [View the gallery](#).

View all our content at *Yale Environment 360* and add your comments to the discussion. And keep track of the latest environmental news at our [e360 Digest](#) and on your mobile device at [e360.yale.edu/mobile](http://e360.yale.edu/mobile).

Roger Cohn  
*Editor*  
*Yale Environment 360*

<http://wuum.com/post/wisconsin-islamic-group-ties-green-initiatives-spirituality>

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**June 25, 2015**

Next Steps: After Pope Francis

Catholic Climate Covenant

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### WHAT A WEEK: For Our Common Home

It's been a tremendously exciting week here at the Covenant. Our staff read Pope Francis's encyclical at home in the wee hours of the morning, and we were texting each other all the way through with exclamations of joy and surprise. I've got to tell you that there has never been a document read at 5:00 in the morning that moved me like this one did.

As I read *Laudato Si'*, I was deeply touched by the clear and compelling case Pope Francis made that our relationships with God, with one another, and with the planet are not as they should be—not by a long shot. The result is that *We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental*. The encyclical is a call to recovery. When we think about our place in this created world, Pope Francis says, we must hear "*both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*."

In the weeks and months ahead, you can count on the Covenant to help explore the deeper meanings of this encyclical. In the meantime, let's just simply say...

THANK YOU, POPE FRANCIS!

Next week, I will travel to the Vatican to discuss *Laudato Si'*. We're asking for your help. Sign a letter of support to Pope Francis and [share the link with friends](#). **I will give your message to His Holiness. Please share far and wide--because there is a myth in the media that Catholics don't support Pope Francis or climate action, a strong show of unity matters.**

[Put your name in Pope Francis's hands](#). Thanks for spreading the word.

## YOUR STORIES

Many of you are taking action in your parishes and in your communities. We recently asked you to share stories of your successes. Here is just a sampling:

- From St. Pius X Parish in Omaha, **Rosie** told us about her group's work to make power companies more sustainable. As part of a broad coalition, Rosie and her team got the Omaha Public Power District to **close three of its coal-burning power plants**.
- From the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, American Province, **Sister Terri** wrote to say that **more than 93%** of the sisters use renewable energy. The sisters also made a video about climate change and fracking, available [here](#).
- From the Church of the Resurrection in Dubuque, **Judith** wrote to tell us about her parish's "Green Team." The Green Team inserts sustainability tips into the parish bulletin every week and has even made its annual parish festival "green" through composting and recycling. The compost pile from this year's festival was **the size of two Holstein cows!**

We are enormously proud and grateful to be part of a community like this one. Keep up the good work, everyone.

## WELCOME

We'd like to extend a special welcome to the supporters who have joined us over the past week. It's wonderful to have you as part of our community.

Over the coming months, you'll receive updates on Catholics leading the charge for climate solutions and resources to put your faith into action. If you have any questions or would like to chat, please feel free to contact us [here](#).

## ENCYCLICAL MEDIA ROUND-UP

In the past few weeks, the Catholic Climate Covenant has been mentioned in more than 50 news stories, in outlets that include the New York Times, the Washington Post, USA Today, ABC News, Fox News, Bloomberg, Al Jazeera America, and National Catholic Reporter. Among them:

- Executive Director Dan Misleh in the New York Times [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), and in the Washington Post [here](#).
- Associate Director Lonnie Ellis on [PBS](#).



- Project Manager Dan DiLeo in the [National Catholic Reporter](#).

Additionally, several Catholic experts have provided extended encyclical coverage:

- Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, on [Fox News Sunday](#)
- St. Elizabeth College theologian Erin Lothes on [Yahoo! News](#) with Katie Couric
- Fordham University theologian Christiana Peppard on [WNYC](#)
- Marquette University theologian Jame Schaefer in [National Geographic](#), [Huffington Post](#), and [WDJT](#)

## ENCYCLICAL RESOURCES

The Catholic Climate Covenant has produced several FREE resources to help your parish implement and act on *Laudato Si'*:

- Homily helps and other implementation tools are available [here](#). The tools provided are:
  - Homily Helps for June 28, July 5 and August 30
  - Prayers of the faithful
  - Sample bulletin insert
  - Suggested entrance hymns
- A video with Cardinal Rodriguez and encyclical quotes arranged by topic are available [here](#).

These resources are provided free of charge as part of our service to the Catholic community.

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### June 25, 2015

The Encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the Earth Charter

Earth Charter International

Earth Charter International joins the millions of people and organizations that have congratulated Pope Francis and are hopeful about the release of the highly anticipated *Laudato Si'* Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home, which significantly echoes the ethical vision proposed in the Earth Charter.

This encyclical has generated great expectations and commentary around the world. World leaders are expressing their satisfaction with this document and the social doctrine of the

Catholic Church, which will have great influence at the COP 21 climate change negotiations in Paris later this year, but also in the transition to a new paradigm of human coexistence with the environment. The document calls for the cultivation of responsible care for creation, with special attention to the poorest who suffer most from environmental damage.

For the global Earth Charter network this document is paramount, as Pope Francis makes an explicit reference to the Earth Charter reference in paragraph 207 of Chapter Six on Ecological Education and Spirituality:

P. 207. The Earth Charter asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge: "As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning... Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life".

### **Central messages**

The encyclical highlights the ethics of care that is central to the Earth Charter, as well as emphasizes several important Earth Charter principles including universal responsibility, interdependence, the common good, economic and social justice, and the precautionary principle, among others. These are principles that should underlie a new global consciousness, as stated in the Sixth Chapter Ecological Education and Spirituality: "Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal." (P. 202)

According to the press release of Radio Vaticana, a central question in *Laudato Si'* is, "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" The Pope addresses these in P.160, "This question does not have to do with the environment alone and in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal". This leads us to ask ourselves about the meaning of existence and its values at the basis of social life: "What is the purpose of our life in this world? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us? ... Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results."

### **What are Encyclical Letters and what is their significance?**

Encyclicals are public and formal letters of the Pope expressing his teachings on matters of great importance (ref. Catholic.net). According to Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, the Encyclical letters are the most important documents of Catholic Church teaching. As such, *Laudato Si'* will have great influence not only for the 1.2 billion Catholics in the world, but also for billions of Christians of other denominations. Encyclicals, when dealing with social, economic or political issues, are

commonly addressed not exclusively to Catholics but to all men and women of the world, especially world leaders, regardless of religion. This is the first time that an Encyclical addresses the issues of environment and sustainability, and for this reason and the great popularity of Pope Francisco, the document has generated great expectations.

In various statements, several published in the New York Times, Pope Francis has made clear that he expects that this Encyclical will influence energy and economic policies, as well as encourage a global movement for sustainability, calling on people to put pressure on politicians for change.

At Earth Charter International, we will continue to analyze the background of this Encyclical, and how we can join forces to raise awareness of the ethical and moral dimensions of environmental challenges and sustainability issues humanity faces, and how we can find solutions to change the global paradigm towards a more just, sustainable, and peaceful society.

Find the full text of the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' here: <http://bit.ly/1Gi1BTu>

Links to other articles on the Encyclical:

[Article by Leonardo Boff on the Pope's Encyclical](#)

[Laudato Si' — The Ecological Ethics and Systemic Thought of Pope Francis](#) by Fritjof Capra

[Ruud Lubbers comment on Laudato Si'](#)

[Media Release: Why Pope Francis's statement is important](#) by Elizabeth May

[Laudato Si and the Earth Charter](#) by Steven Rockefeller

[Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp comments on the Pope's Encyclical](#)

[Climate Change Brings Moral Change](#) by Mary Evelyn Tucker

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/1148/1/The-Encyclical-Laudato-Si-and-the-Earth-Charter/Page1.html>

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**June 25, 2015**

Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp comments on the Pope's Encyclical

Earth Charter International

Taking in the extraordinary message of the Pope word by word I am reminded of two seemingly contradictory commentaries on how the Jewish People received the Ten Commandments. In the

first, the wandering tribe of Jews expressed their willingness to receive and implement them out of free choice. In the other commentary, the Jewish people refused to accept them, as had all other peoples, because they were too demanding. G-d brought the Jewish people to Mount Sinai. He then lifted the mountain above their heads and declared, "When you choose to accept the commandments you will live. If you don't accept them I will drop the mountain on you and this will be your grave." Pope Francis points to the overwhelming scientific evidence, coupled with our own local and global experiences, that we, by our own wrong and egocentric choices, have lifted the mountain of waste and neglect above our own heads.

Yes, this can become our grave. But, thank G-d, we still have the choice of preserving our Mother Earth, our home with all its sublime beauty. All we have to do is to recognize our inner knowledge that, as the Earth Charter states in the first paragraph of the Preamble, "...we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny."

However, according to Pope Francis, destiny is not only a lofty ideal but a concrete plan of action. In it we should put the poor, the neglected into the center of our concern, the ones who would suffer most when their more affluent brothers and sisters persist in pursuing their isolated self-interests. Part of the solution suggested is that we must value being more over having more.

Everyone and everything is interconnected. This principle of interconnectedness forms the core of the Earth Charter. The Encyclical urges us to heed the wisdom and the warnings of indigenous peoples. I remember well the cri de coeur of our beloved mother of the Maoris, Pauline Tangiora, who stood up during the last session of the Earth Charter consultations in Paris in the year 2,000. She related that all our efforts would be useless if we did not understand the meaning of the tribe, the natural feeling of belonging and responsibility. When we do not relate in peace and compassionate harmony to nature we will not relate in love and responsibility towards each other as humans. And when we don't relate in love and responsibility towards each other as humans we will not be able to relate with peace and compassionate harmony towards nature.

In a paradoxical way climate change appears to me as a blessing in disguise. The imminent threat to our common existence will bring us together by necessity, and cooperation is the key. My father Jacob, of blessed memory, wrote from his hiding place during the Second World War to a boy hidden in a chicken farm, "Be always aware G-d created the human to perfect creation in the way he wanted it to be, a world filled with cooperation, love, and righteousness." To me the words of the pope reflect this meaning and point to the hopeful quiet revolution that is taking place. More and more leaders, from different spiritual traditions and including humanism, realize that we desperately need each other to fulfil our common goal.

Thus, Pope Francis is our common brother and teacher. His call to love our Mother Earth and all living beings resonates with all of us. It gives the urgent appeals from other spiritual traditions and interfaith manifestos of recent years higher visibility. Out of the margin into the center. He takes us on a hazardous road full of obstacles from negation and paralyzing fear towards the indomitable energy of hope.

Fifteen years ago we gave expression to our existential notion that we stood at a critical time in Earth history, a time when humanity must choose its future. These were not wasted years. On the

contrary an ever stronger alliance of prophetic pioneering global citizens and the growing political will of governments brought about the never-expected success of the Millennium Development Goals. The record shows that humanity has averted moral bankruptcy. Yes, it is only a beginning, and we have to harness much more will and readiness to put ourselves in the position of the other. The Encyclical letter opens our eyes and our hearts to the overwhelming tasks ahead.

The Sustainable Development Goals, which the world community is asked to reach, are aimed at eradicating shameful poverty within fifteen years. This will only be possible when a responsible climate agreement is signed in Paris and implemented in the same fifteen years. The failure of negotiations in Johannesburg and Copenhagen is not the full story. Under the surface the soft powers gained momentum. The hundreds of thousands who marched in unison to achieve change in the streets of New York in September last year were the impressive avant garde of a growing massive protest. And the decision of the court in the Netherlands in favor of Urgenda, opens a new legal avenue to force governments to truly protect their citizens regardless of borders.

The Encyclical letter will have a crucial influence on the negotiations in Paris provided we all, and in particular spiritual traditions, support it fully and massively. It is my personal opinion, corroborated by many spiritual leaders in recent years, that an extra effort is required from each and every one of us. All our spiritual traditions require us to donate a part of our wealth to care for those less fortunate. In this spirit, an extra share of at least 0.1 percent to help alleviate abject poverty and sustain the earth would be in order.

It is moving for us who are part of the Earth Charter community that Pope Francis chose to quote the last paragraph of the Charter. We are each only a small instrument, each offering dedication and purpose beyond self-interest, so we repeat our collective hope and promise to the next generations. "Let ours be remembered a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life."

And together with Pope Francis our mentor, I pray to G-d:

...Pour out upon us the power of your love  
That we may protect life and beauty  
Fill us with peace that we may live  
As brothers and sisters harming no one.

Awraham Soetendorp

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/1159/1/Rabbi-Awraham-Soetendorp-comments-on-the-Popes-Encyclical/Page1.html>

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**June 25, 2015**

Mary Evelyn Tucker: Climate Change Brings Moral Change

## Earth Charter International

Pope Francis is clearly one of the most popular people on the planet at present. With his love for the poor, his willingness to embrace the outcaste, and his genuine humility he has captured the hearts of millions - Christian and non-Christian alike. He has inspired minds as well by his willingness to take on difficult issues such as ecology, economy, and equity, which he sees as inextricably linked. Indeed, these three interwoven issues are at the heart of his Papal encyclical released this week. An encyclical is a letter to the Bishops and all Church members. It is the highest level of teaching in the Catholic Church and this is the first encyclical on the environment in the history of the Church.

First, he addresses ecology. Pope Francis, following in the tradition of Francis of Assisi, celebrates the natural world as a sacred gift. He does this with his reference to St Francis' "Canticle of Brother Sun, Sister Moon" in the title of the encyclical "Praised Be". The kinship with all creation that St Francis intuited we now understand as complex ecological relationships that have evolved over billions of years. For Pope Francis these relationships have a natural order or "grammar" that need to be understood, respected, and valued.

Second, he speaks about the economy. Within this valuing of nature, the Pope encourages us to see the human economy as a subsystem of nature's economy, namely the dynamic interaction of life in ecosystems. Without a healthy natural ecology there is not a sustainable economy and vice versa. They are inevitably interdependent. Moreover, we cannot ignore pollution or greenhouse gases as externalities that are not factored into full cost accounting. This is because, for Pope Francis, profit over people or at the expense of the planet is not genuine profit. This is what has happened with fossil fuels causing climate disruption.

Third, he highlights equity. From this perspective, working within the limits of nature's economy can lead to thriving human societies. In contrast, exploiting the Earth and using oil and gas without limits has led to increased human inequities. Ecosystems are being undermined by climate change and the wealthy most often benefit. The Pope recognizes that such an impoverished economic system results in impoverished and unjust social systems. Thus, for him, the poor must be cared for as they are the most adversely affected by climate change.

In all of this the encyclical is not anti-modernity, but hopes to reconfigure the idea of progress. "Not blind opposition to progress but opposition to blind progress" as John Muir said. The Pope refers to this perspective when he speaks of a throwaway economy where humans are saturated in materialism. He sees the need for genuine progress where the health of both people and the planet can be fostered. Thus as the head of the Pontifical Academy of Justice and Peace, Cardinal Peter Turkson, has said, "We need to learn to work together in a framework that links economic prosperity with both social inclusion and protection of the natural world." This linkage of ecology, economy, and equity is what is being called an "integral ecology" and is central to the encyclical.

Such an integral ecology clearly requires interdisciplinary cooperation as we find our path forward on a planet of more than 7 billion people. We need to understand more fully the

challenges the world is facing in terms of economic development and environmental protection. These are not easy to reconcile. Indeed, the international community has been seeking answers since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 set forth a framework for sustainable development. The world is ever more in need of an integral ecology that brings together a fresh understanding that people and the planet are part of one interdependent life community. Such an integral ecology affirms the cooperation of science and ethics, knowing that our problems will not be solved without both. It is clear that climate change is requiring moral change.

The Papal encyclical, then, represents a new period of potential cooperation. In the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology we have been working for two decades with hundreds of scholars to identify the cultural and religious grounds in the world's religions for a more diverse environmental ethics to complement environmental sciences. Between 1995-2004 we organized ten conferences at Harvard and published ten volumes to examine how the world's religions can contribute their varied ethical perspectives for a sustainable future. At Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies we have been broadening this dialogue and building on the work of environmentalists, policy makers, and economists. The Papal encyclical will be a fresh inspiration for these and numerous other efforts that are bringing together ecology and ethics for the flourishing of the Earth community. To this end we look forward to working together with the Center for Process Studies which, in addition to numerous publications, has convened conferences in both the US and China to advance the goals of ecological civilization.

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/1157/1/Mary-Evelyn-Tucker-Climate-Change-Brings-Moral-Change/Page1.html>

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**June 25, 2015**

Steven Rockefeller on Laudato Si' and the Earth Charter

Earth Charter International

Laudato Si, the new encyclical issued by Pope Francis, is to a large extent a carefully crafted Christian theological discourse in support of ethical and spiritual values that are also fundamental to the Earth Charter. Pope Francis, therefore, chose to include a quotation from the Earth Charter in the encyclical, the first and last sentences of "The Way Forward":

As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning....Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

Even though some Earth Charter supporters will question the position of Laudato Si on certain issues, Pope Francis' strong endorsement of ideals and values that are central to the Earth Charter vision is something to celebrate.

Both Laudato Si and the Earth Charter recognize that there is an ethical and spiritual dimension

to the world's social and environmental crises that must be addressed, if the human family is to find its way to a just and sustainable future. In this regard, the Earth Charter stresses the urgent need for a relational spirituality that involves an ethic of respect and care for the community of life as a whole. The major theme of Pope Francis' encyclical is "care for our common home." He laments the increasing degradation of Earth's ecosystems and the loss of natural beauty. Like the Earth Charter, the encyclical rejects the widespread and problematical view in industrial-technological civilization that the natural world apart from humanity has utilitarian value only and is just a collection of resources that exist for human exploitation. The imperative to care for creation in the Pope's theological vision is inspired by a deep sense of the intrinsic value and interdependence of all beings—of plants, animals, forests, mountains, rivers and oceans.

Pope Francis emphasizes throughout *Laudato Si* the unique and equal dignity of each and every human being, but the encyclical also makes clear that people are an interdependent part of nature. With this interdependence and humanity's special abilities and powers goes the responsibility to protect Earth's biosphere. Pope Francis understands the great risks for present and future generations that are created by climate change, and he endorses the view of the vast majority of scientists that climate change is being caused by the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities. He gives special attention to the interconnections between ecological degradation and the suffering of the poor.

Caring for our common home according to Pope Francis requires a radical cultural transformation. It means ending poverty and advancing social and economic justice together with ecological restoration and protection. He urges us to develop a new appreciation of the interrelationship between the world's spiritual, ethical, social, economic and environmental challenges and to adopt holistic thinking and integrated planning. He calls for a new global partnership of all nations and peoples infused with a spirit of cooperation and a readiness to share equitably the benefits of development. To all of this the Earth Charter movement can only say Amen. *Laudato Si* is a courageous and prophetic statement that will hopefully have a far-reaching impact as governments gather to make critical decisions regarding the human future in the months ahead.

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/1161/1/Steven-Rockefeller-on-Laudato-Si-and-the-Earth-Charter/Page1.html>

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**June 27, 2015**

Love Conquers Hate, Amazing Grace

By Dana Beach  
Coastal Conservation League

Folks,

The events of these last two weeks will undoubtedly be counted among the most important in



decades. I suspect we will not fully understand their implications for years.

President Obama visited Charleston on Friday to deliver a eulogy for Senator Clementa Pinckney. Senator Pinckney and eight of his parishioners were murdered last week in the sanctuary of his church, the historic Mother Emanuel AME on Calhoun Street.

The president's theme was grace. There could be no more powerful lesson about grace and love than the reactions of the victims' family members. At the accused shooter's bond hearing last Friday, they spoke directly to the young man and one after another expressed their sorrow, and their forgiveness, for what seemed an unforgivable crime. In Senator Pinckney's own words from April 26 of this year, "We know that only love can conquer hate."

These graceful people have surely taught Charleston, our state and the nation more about love than has been conveyed in recent memory. And they have taught us about the power of religious belief to cope with and gain strength from tragedy. Senator Pinckney and his parishioners are true martyrs for the cause of love and kindness. And South Carolina seems, finally, to be paying attention. We will know more about this next week, when the Legislature votes on removing the Confederate flag from the statehouse grounds.

Across the Atlantic, another towering religious leader, Pope Francis, has released his much anticipated, and revolutionary, encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si*, (Praise Be).

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

Like the Emanuel AME community, Francis emphasizes the central role love must play in our world, in this case, to stop catastrophic environmental degradation. From his extensive declaration, "A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings."

*Laudato Si* coincides with the publication of a new EPA report on the staggering costs of failing to address climate change, as the *Washington Post* reports, and with NOAA's most recent status report (below) revealing that May 2015 was the warmest May on record, based on global temperatures. *Bloomberg News* provides an exceptionally clear illustration of rising global temperatures and its irrefutable attribution to human activities, in this article and series of graphs.

What's Really Warming the World? Climate deniers blame natural factors;  
NASA data proves otherwise

<http://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2015-whats-warming-the-world/>

Finally, among this dizzying array of historic events is one of particular note. President Obama ended his eulogy in the TD Arena by singing "Amazing Grace." You can watch, and hear, it on this CNN video.

<http://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2015/06/26/obama-sings-amazing-grace-during-pinckney-eulogy-sot-nr.cnn>

And from the *Post and Courier*, you can read about the 33 year old church West Ashley organist, who felt called to "assist" the president deliver this part of the eulogy.

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20150626/PC16/150629405>

This strikes me as remarkable. I'm not aware of another example in modern Western history in which a world leader sang, not for entertainment, but to make a profoundly serious point. Could there ever be greater testimony of the power of music to convey the fundamental truths of the human heart?

Dana

### **Inaction on climate change would cost billions, major EPA study finds**

By [Joby Warrick](#) June 22

A global agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions would prevent nearly 70,000 premature American deaths annually by the end of the century while sparing the country hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of economic losses, according to [a major government study on the cost of climate change](#).

Slowing the carbon build-up in the atmosphere would also prevent severe damage to a wide range of critical ecosystems, from Hawaiian coral reefs that support tourism to shellfish beds off the East Coast, said the report released by the White House on Monday.

The report, a five-year, peer-reviewed analysis that assesses the benefits of alternative strategies for dealing with climate change, concludes that every region of the country could be spared severe economic disruptions that would result if greenhouse gas concentrations continue to soar.

"The results are quite startling and very clear," said Environmental Protection Agency administrator Gina McCarthy, whose agency was the chief sponsor of the report. "Left unchecked, climate change affects our health, infrastructure and the outdoors we love. But more importantly the report shows that global action on climate change will save lives."

The report, "Climate Change in the United States: Benefits of Global Action," seeks to measure the potential gains for Americans under an international accord to keep global temperatures from rising by more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over historical averages. The study incorporates research from earlier peer-reviewed studies as well as modeling by scientists from the Energy Department's Laboratory complex and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other centers.

Researchers compared what would likely happen in a business-as-usual world, in which carbon-

dioxide levels in the atmosphere soar to more than 800 parts per million by the year 2100, compared to levels of about 462 parts per million expected if aggressive action is taken over the coming decades to limit greenhouse-gas pollution.

The report concludes that the effort expended in combating climate change would yield a substantial dividend for Americans, with the benefits accumulating over time.

For example, improvements in air quality from reduced fossil-fuel emissions would lead to about 57,000 fewer premature deaths per year by 2100, the study said. Few extreme heat waves would result in 12,000 fewer deaths each year from heat-related illness, it said.

Local governments would avoid tens of billions of dollars in damage from floods and other severe-weather events, while farmers would save up to \$11 billion a year in damage to crops from a combination of drought, flooding and destructive storms. Tens of millions of acres of forests would be preserved because of fewer wildfires, the report said.

“We not only have a moral obligation to act, but we also have an economic opportunity if we take smart but aggressive action to reduce gas emissions,” said Brian Deese, a special adviser to President Obama on environmental issues.

The report’s authors acknowledged that they did not attempt to factor in all of the costs related to cutting greenhouses gases, or consider potential impacts overseas. Moreover, the study does not specify a strategy for keeping global temperatures from rising by more than 2 degrees Celsius. Diplomats from 197 countries will meet in Paris in December to try to negotiate a treaty on reducing carbon emissions, but many climate experts say the pact will likely fall short of that goal.

But McCarthy pointed to the far greater costs of inaction, saying it was important start attacking the problem now.

“It is really not too late to avoid the worst impacts of climate change,” she said.

**NOAA: May 2015 was warmest May on record for globe**

*March-May and year-to-date also record warm*

**Contact**

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**June 18, 2015**

The globally averaged temperature over land and ocean surfaces for May 2015 was the highest for the month of May since record keeping began in 1880. March-May and the year-to-date (January-May) globally averaged temperature were also record warm.

With this report and data release, NOAA's [National Centers for Environmental Information](#) is transitioning to improved versions of its global land (GHCN-M version 3.3.0) and ocean (ERSST version 4.0.0) datasets. Please note that anomalies and ranks reflect the historical record according to these updated versions. Historical months and years may differ from what was reported in previous versions. For more information about these improvements, please see <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/2015/5/supplemental/page-1/>.

This [monthly summary](#), developed by scientists at NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information is part of the suite of climate services [NOAA](#) provides to government, the business sector, academia and the public to support informed decision-making.

**Selected significant climate anomalies and events: May 2015 (Credit: NOAA)**

**May 2015**

- The May average temperature across global land and ocean surfaces was 1.57°F (0.87°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This was the highest for May in the 1880-2015 record, surpassing the previous record set last year in 2014 by 0.14°F (0.08°C).
- The May globally-averaged land surface temperature was 2.30°F (1.28°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This tied with 2012 as the highest for May in the 1880-2015 record.
- The May globally-averaged sea surface temperature was 1.30°F (0.72°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This was also the highest for May in the 1880-2015 record, surpassing the previous record set last year in 2014 by 0.13°F (0.07°C).
- The average Arctic sea ice extent for May was 730,000 square miles (5.5 percent) below the 1981-2010 average and 27,000 square miles larger than the smallest sea ice extent on record that occurred in May 2004. This was the third smallest May extent since records began in 1979 according to analysis by the [National Snow and Ice Data Center](#) using data from NOAA and NASA. .
- Antarctic sea ice during May was 500,000 square miles (12.1 percent) above the 1981-2010 average. This was the largest May Antarctic sea ice extent on record, surpassing the previous record-large May extent of 2014

by 20,000 square miles.

- According to data from NOAA analyzed by the [Rutgers Global Snow Lab](#), the Northern Hemisphere snow cover extent during May was 780,000 square miles below the 1981-2010 average. This was the sixth smallest May Northern Hemisphere snow cover extent in the 49-year period of record. Six of the seven lowest May Northern Hemisphere snow cover extents have occurred in the past six years. North America had its third smallest May snow cover extent, while the Eurasian snow cover extent was the 12th smallest.

**May 2015 land & ocean temperature percentiles (Credit: NOAA)**

**Year-to-Date (Jan. - May, 2015) land & ocean temperature percentiles (Credit NOAA)**

**March - May 2015**

- The March-May average temperature across global land and ocean surfaces was 1.53°F (0.85°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This was the highest for March-May in the 1880-2015 record, surpassing the previous record of 2010 by 0.07°F (0.04°C).
- The March-May globally-averaged land surface temperature was 2.39°F (1.33°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This was the highest for March-May in the 1880-2015 record, surpassing the previous record of 2010 by 0.04°F (0.02°C).
- The March-May globally-averaged sea surface temperature was 1.19°F (0.66°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This was also the highest for March-May in the 1880-2015 record, surpassing the previous record of 2010 by 0.07°F (0.04°C).
- According to data from the Rutgers Global Snow Lab, the Northern Hemisphere snow cover extent during March-May (spring) was 50,000 square miles below the 1981-2010 average. This was the 22nd smallest March-May Northern Hemisphere snow cover extent in the 49-year period of record. Eurasia had a slightly larger-than-average March-May snow cover extent, while North America had its 15th smallest.

**Year-to-date (January - May 2015)**

- The year-to-date temperature across global land and ocean surfaces was 1.53°F (0.85°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This was the highest for January-May in the 1880-2015 record, surpassing the previous record set in 2010 by 0.16°F (0.09°C).
- The year-to-date globally-averaged land surface temperature was 2.56°F (1.42°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This was the highest for January-May in the 1880-2015 record, surpassing the previous record of 2007 by 0.09°F (0.05°C).

- The year-to-date globally-averaged sea surface temperature was 1.13°F (0.63°C) above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. This was also the highest for January-May in the 1880-2015 record, surpassing the previous record of 2010 by 0.02°F (0.01°C).

A more complete summary of climate conditions and events can be found at: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/2015/5>

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and our other [social media channels](#). Visit our [news release archive](#).

<http://fore.yale.edu/news/item/love-conquers-hate-amazing-grace/>

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**June 28, 2015**

Pope Francis's environmental message brings thousands on to streets in Rome

Vatican officials to discuss climate change and environment with scientists and activists including Naomi Klein

By Rosie Scammell  
The Guardian

Thousands of campaigners and religious leaders have marched through Rome, backing Pope Francis's uncompromising environmental message ahead of a Vatican conference on climate change, and urging world leaders to take action.

Holy See officials will this week discuss the environment with activists and scientists at a meeting at which [Naomi Klein](#), a prominent social activist, will take centre stage alongside Cardinal Peter Turkson, one of the pontiff's most senior aides.

Soon after the release of [Pope Francis's encyclical](#) on the environment, regarded as a landmark intervention in the global climate change debate, campaigners on Sunday travelled to Rome from across the globe to thank the Argentinian pontiff for his papal letter.

In the encyclical, Francis directed sharp criticism at global leaders for their failure to combat climate change. It was greeted with a hugely positive response from environmentalists, who have seized on the pope's message ahead of a [United Nations climate change conference](#) to be held in Paris in December.

The UN summit is aimed at reaching a global deal on climate change, but as the pontiff noted, previous meetings have ended in disappointment, with decision-making paralysed by disagreements.

Alongside Klein and Turkson, the conservation group WWF has been invited to this week's Vatican conference and had a strong presence at the rally on Sunday, described as a "historic event" by Samantha Smith, leader of the organisation's global climate and energy initiative.

"We have seen that climate change is such a big and important issue that you can't solve it in a corner with environmental groups," Smith said. "That's why the mobilisation of people of faith, including the Catholic church, is so important."

Activists at the One Earth, One Family event broke through the silence enveloping early-morning Rome with singing and chanting, waving paper birds high over the central Piazza Farnese before marching to the Vatican.

"The reason we are here is to thank [Pope Francis](#), but above all it is to bring a message to the people and politicians on the Paris climate change conference – to make strong, ambitious and binding commitments," said Andrea Stocchiero, from the voluntary group Focsiv, co-organiser of the event.

While a few hundred people began the multifaith march, holding banners and sheltering from the sun under giant paper leaves, organisers said about 5,000 were present at the end of the march in St Peter's Square. There, Francis exhorted a multifaith effort to help protect the environment. "I encourage the collaboration between persons and associations of different religions on behalf of an integral ecology," he said.

Among them was [Yeb Saño](#), the Philippines' former chief climate change negotiator at the UN, who is now a spiritual ambassador for the march co-organisers, OurVoices, a multifaith environmental group.

Saño praised the pontiff for his "courage and leadership" and said the march represented "a particularly amazing day to celebrate".

"We know that the adverse impacts of climate change are hitting the Philippines and it's unfair, because we have very little contribution to the causes of climate change and we are at the receiving end of it," he said. Pope Francis visited the predominantly Catholic country in January, little over a year after a devastating typhoon killed thousands of people in the Philippines. The November 2013 storm was the strongest recorded to hit land and was seen as an example of the archipelago's vulnerability to the elements.

The pope's encyclical was released five months after his Asia trip. While Pope Francis has ensured Catholic voices reach the centre of the climate change debate, organisers of the Rome march were keen to fulfil his wish of going beyond the Christian faith.



Kiran Bali, who travelled from Yorkshire in the UK on behalf of the Hindu community, said it was imperative that religious leaders such as herself get involved. “It’s so clear that the world is at a crucial tipping point due to climate change and it’s so important that faith leaders take action on this important issue,” she said. “Now is the time to unite, to come together and to really make a difference to protect the earth from further destruction.”

Representing the global Anglican community, David Moxon said a global response was necessary as ultimately all would be affected by climate change. “The challenge facing Europe and all of the industrialised and industrialising world is very important – we’re going to choke or cook unless we do something about it,” he said.

Massimiliano Pasqui, from the Institute of Biometeorology at Italy’s National Research Council, said the *bel paese* has even greater reason than its neighbours to act on climate change.

“For us in Italy – in the middle of the Mediterranean – we’re in one of the most vulnerable places. It’s necessary for us to build strategies because in respect to other countries in northern Europe, what we are up against has a bigger impact on our society.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/28/pope-francis-environment-rome-naomi-klein-climate-change>

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## June 28, 2015

Dalai Lama tells Glastonbury of the need to speak out on climate change

By Hannah Ellis-Petersen and Josh Halliday  
The Guardian

*Tibetan spiritual leader endorses pope’s radical message on environment and calls for more pressure to be put on international governments*

The [Dalai Lama](#) has endorsed the pope’s radical message on climate change and called on fellow religious leaders to “speak out about current affairs which affect the future of mankind”.

The spiritual Buddhist leader was speaking at [Glastonbury festival](#) on a panel discussing issues of global warming alongside Katharine Viner, the Guardian’s editor, and the Guardian columnist George Monbiot.

He praised the pope’s recent encyclical on climate change, which warned of the unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, adding that it was the duty of people to “say more – we have to make more of an effort, including demonstrations”.

The Dalai Lama, who will turn 80 next Monday, called for more pressure to be put on international governments to stop the burning of fossil fuels and mass deforestation and invest more in green energy sources.



He said: “The concept of war is outdated, but we do need to fight. Countries think about their own national interest rather than global interests and that needs to change because the environment is a global issue.

“It is not sufficient to just express views, we must set a timetable for change in the next two to four years.”

The Dalai Lama said individuals also had their own responsibility towards the planet. Speaking about his own efforts, he said he always turned the lights off when leaving rooms and took showers instead of baths – though he admitted taking two showers a day.

The Tibetan leader went on to call for countries including Russia and the US to scrap their nuclear weapons and criticised Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, for his recent threat to increase the country’s nuclear arsenal.

Monbiot took the opportunity to appeal to Glastonbury to go further with its efforts to be ecologically friendly. He asked: “Why aren’t we calling for Glastonbury to be meat-free and fish-free?”

The Dalai Lama also embraced his historic visit to Glastonbury on Sunday with several other appearances, including an early gathering at the hallowed ground of the Stone Circle.

Speaking from a modest wooden stage emblazoned with the Tibetan flag, he made a rare comment on the escalating conflict in the Middle East, describing [Islamic State](#) violence in Syria and Iraq as “unthinkable”.

In a speech before hundreds of rain-soaked campers, the Dalai Lama said: “In this very moment, in some parts of the world, like Syria, Iraq, Nigeria and some other places – they’re killing, human to human being. Unthinkable. And the worst thing [is that] conflict, killing each other, in the name of their faith.”

He said the real meaning of jihad was not harming others, but using constructive emotion to combat destructive emotions. He said: “I daily use it in my five hours of meditation, this kind of jihad.

“There is nothing wrong with religious beliefs, but the people who are supposed to be following the religion have a lack of moral principle, lack of conviction.”

Asked later whether music made him happy, the Dalai Lama said “not much”. He said he challenged the view that music could bring inner peace: “If music really brings inner peace, then this Syria and Iraq – killing each other – there through some strong music can they reduce their anger? I don’t think so.”

The Tibetan leader made his final appearance at the festival during Patti Smith’s afternoon set on the Pyramid Stage, where he was presented with a birthday cake while Smith led the crowd in a rousing chorus of Happy Birthday. She then read a little birthday poem in his honour.

Speaking to Smith and her fellow musicians on stage, the Dalai Lama said: “Most of you have white hair – but the voice and the physical action looks very youthful. So that gives me encouragement myself. I’m now 80, but I should be more active like you.”

Indeed, his numerous appearances proved to be some of the most talked-about events over the weekend. During the his first Stone Circle speech, a Tibetan man, clutching a giant flag of his home country, said he had bought a Glastonbury ticket just to see the Dalai Lama and travelled through the night to get to Worthy Farm in time for his appearance.

“I’m very, very excited. It means a lot to hear him speak. We drove from 2 o’clock last night, it took a long time. The whole night I couldn’t sleep. It is very exciting to be here,” he said, declining to be named because he feared repercussions from the Chinese authorities.

Merle Hansen, who was also in the crowd, said the Dalai Lama’s appearance was one of the highlights in more than 30 years of coming to Glastonbury.

She said: “I thought it was great, absolutely wonderful and perfect timing. It’s so nice to see so many people here – I find it very touching and moving.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jun/28/dalai-lama-glastonbury-verdict-isis-unthinkable>

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**June 28, 2015**

Climate Marchers Gather to Show Rousing Support for Pope

By Elisabetta Povoledo  
New York Times

VATICAN CITY — When [Pope Francis](#) appeared on the balcony of the Apostolic Palace, where he delivers an address each Sunday, he was met by the usual cheers and by an unusual forest of bright green oversized paper leaves.

Had he been able to read what was written on the leaves — which he could not because he was too far away — the pope would have found quotes from “Laudato Si’,” or “Praise Be to You,” his encyclical on the environment published this month.

The leaves were among the colorful props carried by a hodgepodge of organizations — mostly religious or environmental — that marched to the [Vatican](#) on Sunday to thank the pope for his forceful message on [climate change](#), and to demand that world leaders heed his call for environmental justice and climate action.

“We want the pope to know we’re behind him 100 percent,” said Tafara Dandadzi, a student in environmental law and governance at North-West University in South Africa, who came to Rome for the march and to take part in a seminar convened in part to bring together emerging leaders from various religious and geographic backgrounds to coordinate on climate action.

“There are people here from different backgrounds with a common purpose,” Mr. Dandadzi added. “I hope the pope knows that, and I hope that the political leaders meeting in Paris later this year know that too.”

World leaders will meet in Paris in December for a United Nations summit meeting on [climate change](#) that aims to arrive at a comprehensive global accord binding nations to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The pope’s encyclical, which links the environmental crisis to economics and poverty, has been widely read as a call for political action in support of an accord.

The encyclical is hardly the first foray of a religious leader in the realm of the environment, but it comes at a time when there is greater consciousness — as well as division and debate — on what to do about climate change.

“Around the world the spirit of humanity is rising to recognize that we have to care for the earth, that there is a deep moral obligation,” said the Rev. Fletcher Harper, an American Episcopal priest and the coordinator of Our Voices, an interreligious campaign for climate action, which organized the march with an Italian Catholic development nonprofit organization, [Focsiv](#).

Dozens of Italian and international organizations also took part in the demonstration, which brought hundreds of people to St. Peter’s Square.

“This pope is giving voice to a sentiment that is growing in all faiths around the world,” Father Harper said. “We need all people in leadership positions to go decisively on the record about the need for deep change.”

The encyclical is by far the most forceful contribution on the topic by a pope, who has the ear of more than one billion Roman Catholics. Francis’ personal warmth has endeared him to many outside his faith.

“It’s an amazing document that brings together environmental science, social justice and religious teaching and asks us to think about economic policies,” said Samantha Smith, the leader of the Global Climate and Energy Initiative at World Wildlife Fund International. At the heart of the encyclical is a powerful message “that the way we are living on the planet is not sustainable or equitable,” she said. “But it is also hopeful because it urges global mobilization.”

Sunday’s march reprised the spirit, albeit on a much smaller scale, of the People’s Climate March that brought 300,000 people to the streets of New York in September. And indeed, though Sunday’s march was staged at St. Peter’s Square, its message seemed to resonate beyond the Roman Catholic Church. Alongside nuns and priests and other Catholics were Buddhists and Hindus. Only Rome’s residents were conspicuously absent.

“I encourage the collaboration between people and associations of different religions for the promotion of an integral ecology,” Francis said, acknowledging the marchers and reprising some of his considerations in the paper.

Rabbi Lawrence Troster, from Teaneck, N.J., one of the organizers of the march, also underscored the universality of the pope's message. " 'Laudato Si' ' is addressed to everyone," he said. "It is trying to create a consensus among all people, and not leave such an important issues to a small group of policy makers, leaders or diplomats."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/29/world/europe/climate-marchers-gather-to-show-rousing-support-for-pope.html>

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**June 28, 2015**

The Pope's Ecological Vow

By Paul Vallely  
New York Times

In the days just before its publication, those involved in drafting the pope's controversial eco-encyclical *Laudato Si'* were much exercised about how it would be received by conservative critics. But [Pope Francis](#), [Vatican](#) insiders tell me, was unfazed. He remains so in the face of the onslaught of criticism that has indeed ensued.

The pope's acceptance that [global warming](#) is almost certainly man-made has irked the vocal minority with more skeptical views. They say Francis has overlooked the ability of technology to provide solutions to climate change. They've upbraided him for ignoring the role of free markets in lifting millions out of poverty. They've criticized his dismissal of birth control as the answer to an overcrowded planet.

The truth is that Francis saw all that coming. As the dust settles, after the whirlwind that accompanied its publication, closer examination of the encyclical reveals that the pope implanted within it strategies to rebut these attacks. *Laudato Si'* turns out to be one of the shrewdest documents issued by the Vatican during the past century. It has revealed Francis as a wily and sophisticated politician of the first order.

Francis learned a lesson from the American conservatives who branded his previous papal manifesto, *Evangelii Gaudium*, as Marxist. His eco-encyclical contains a raft of defenses against critics who dismiss it as the work of some kind of left-wing maverick.

The document takes its inspiration, like its name, from the writings of Francis of Assisi. The 13th-century saint, like his 21st-century namesake, combined a love for the poor, for peace and for nature. But if the saint's theology was new, the pope's is traditional. Moreover, he has taken care to locate his text firmly in the substantial body of teaching set out by previous popes, including two beloved by American conservatives, John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Francis also made a point — highly unusually — of referencing the pioneering eco-theology of the Orthodox Church, as well as citing no fewer than 18 teaching documents from Catholic bishops' conferences around the world. All this demonstrated his acute awareness of the

importance of alliance-building on such a major issue. You are not, he was telling critics, dealing with just one man here.

He took similar care over the science. The pope should stick to religion and leave science to the scientists, said one conservative, the Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum, in one of a wave of “prebuttal” remarks as the encyclical was being finalized. That is exactly what Francis did in accepting the view of the 97 percent of actively-publishing climate scientists who say human activity is a major contributor to global warming. The pope’s political acumen was also clear from the way he timed the encyclical to target the three United Nations summits on financial aid, sustainable development and climate change later this year.

But there is something more profoundly subversive about *Laudato Si’* than what it says on climate change. On the day it was published, the pope privately told his closest advisers in Rome that the encyclical was not really an environmental document at all. Global warming is merely a symptom of a deeper malaise.

The real problem, he insists, is the myopic mentality that has failed to address climate change to date. The rich world’s indifference to the despoliation of the environment in pursuit of short-term economic gain is rooted in a wider problem. Market economics has taught us that the world is a resource to be manipulated for our gain.

This has led us into unjust and exploitative economic systems that support what Francis calls “a throwaway culture,” one that treats not just unwanted things but also unwanted people — the poor, the elderly and the unborn — as waste.

Capitalism may maximize our choices, he observes, but it offers no guidance on how we should choose. Insatiable consumerism has blinkered our vision and left us unable to distinguish between what we need and what we merely want.

It is in this analysis that the pope’s replies to his conservative critics lie. Capitalism may have lifted millions out of poverty, but it has done so at a huge cost. That is shown by the catastrophic air pollution in China, which has replaced the United States as the world’s biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. Worse than that, poorly regulated capitalism in the global south has left behind millions more — the weakest and poorest.

Technological solutions often just change the problem without truly solving it, the pope says. His critics have countered that gas from fracking is less polluting than burning coal. But that is like advocating dieting by eating reduced-fat cookies. Carbon-trading, Francis says, may just encourage speculation — and continued overconsumption.

Population is likewise a red herring, he insists. Poor people make hardly any contribution to global warming, according to one of the pope’s chief science advisers, Hans Joachim Schellnhuber of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. A 10 percent cut in emissions by rich nations, he says, would be far more effective in combatting global warming than any birth control program.

In all this, the market has tricked us into confusing technological advance with progress. It has reduced our politics to a maximization of our individual freedom and choice. We have forgotten the common good as we have our common home, the earth.

Francis is saying that the environmental crisis is really a crisis in laissez-faire capitalism. And he is saying that the answer is a profound change at all levels — political, economic, social, communal, familial and personal. This is not Marxist, for it lacks a materialist view of history. But it is revolutionary — and deeply disturbing to those with a vested interest in the status quo.

Previous popes have spoken out boldly on environmental degradation. but it was mainly a side issue. For Francis it is central. He is the first pope from the global south, and from the outset he called for “a poor Church for the poor.” He is unafraid to rebuke the world’s politicians for “weak” leadership. But he also gets into the nitty-gritty detail to tell ordinary Catholics to use less heating and air conditioning, sort and recycle garbage, use buses or car-shares, and turn off unnecessary lights.

Ecologists have been saying all that for decades, but Francis is delving to a deeper level in the human psyche. Such “simple daily gestures,” he says, will “break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness.” He asks “every person living on this planet” to stand before God, or our own consciences, and be honest with ourselves about the consumerist lifestyle to which so many of us are in thrall.

Francis knows that if the consciences of ordinary Catholics can be pricked, they may begin to adjust their life choices — and that could create pressure for political action. Climate change skeptics may well find that in Francis they have met their most formidable opponent.

*Paul Vallely is visiting professor of public ethics at the University of Chester and the author of the forthcoming book “Pope Francis — The Struggle for the Soul of Catholicism.”*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/29/opinion/the-popes-ecological-vow.html>

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**June 29, 2015**

What ‘Laudato Si’ Means for Malawi

By Alex Muyebe, S.J., and Peter Henriot, S.J.  
Irish Missionary Union

It was a very tall and very full tree, branches thick and thin. Ideal for cutting down to cook many meals and to warm many huts. But over the years, no one touched it, despite trees all around it having been cut down and the landscape left quite barren.

When asked why this tree had been preserved, one of the local Malawian villagers answered very directly and simply: “The spirits protect the tree, to help us draw water locally.” And yes, a closer look at the roots of the tree revealed a small spring that provided good fresh water. A

further probe revealed that people of this local village and other villages in the area have a very strong cultural tradition of belief in a spirit-filled world. For instance, the people in the area believe that this particular tree shelters spirits which provide water for the communities around, offering good environmental protection for the people.

That recognition of a spirit-filled environment that is for the delight and the good of humans is central in *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis's dramatic encyclical on the environment. Indeed, this is another way of expressing the message with which the Pope begins his encyclical. "In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us." [#1)

We hope that *Laudato Si* can reinforce that good tradition in Malawi, a developing country that so very much needs environmental protection today. It is lack of protection from the impact of climate change that daily and substantially contributes to making Malawi one of the poorest countries in the world. (We personally know this as one of us assists village women to produce and promote use of energy efficient stoves that reduce use of wood fuel, and the other of us is working with a secondary school with a "green" commitment in both construction and instruction.)

Indeed, Malawi is a poor country, ranking 174 out of 187 on the UN Human Development Index. But it is a peaceful country with a fairly lively democratic tradition and is very appropriately called "The Warm Heart of Africa." Its future, however, is threatened by the major global phenomenon addressed in *Laudato Si*: environmental damages due to increasing climate change.

Pope Francis's message should be well received in Malawi for two reasons: 1) it firmly acknowledges the reality of climate change and its close connection with human activities; and 2) it highlights in particular the need to respect and protect the dignity and lives of the poor, those most vulnerable to climate change, who are the majority of Malawians.

### ***Climate change is real***

The message of *Laudato Si* could not be clearer: "A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system.... Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it." (#23)

What does that mean in Malawi? A serious problem facing this southern African country and contributing to its environmental difficulties is its over-dependence on one export crop: tobacco. British colonialists oriented the economy in that direction and we still live with its consequences today. Tobacco now brings in over 60% to 70% of foreign earnings. But projections for future earnings will be seriously affected by increased controls on tobacco trade, e.g., WHO's proposed international regulations.

But to talk about tobacco in Malawi is not simply to talk about the commercial side of its production or the health consequences of smoking cigarettes. Even more central has become attention to the environmental consequences of producing tobacco.

Deforestation – with consequent climate change effects — in this once very green country increases every day and tobacco production is one major cause. Serious ecological damage is due to increased clearing of land to plant tobacco and heavy use of trees for fires to cure the tobacco. Studies have estimated that a hectare of wooded land may be needed to cure one hectare of tobacco. And that adds up fast to deforestation.

However, even if Malawi did not face environmental damage because of its heavy dependence on tobacco production, it still would face the environmental consequences of heavy use of biomass to produce energy for cooking and heating for the majority of Malawians. About 83% of Malawi's population live in rural areas and rely on wood-fuel for basic energy supply. With less than 9% of households having access to electricity (one of the lowest rates in Africa), both large trees and scrubby bushes are eagerly cut for firewood and to make charcoal, for Malawians to cook and to warm. And this significantly contributes to the widespread phenomenon of deforestation with its disastrous impact on climate change.

Forests in Malawi were once strongly protected during the 30 year iron rule of the country's founder, Hastings Kamuzu Banda (1964-1994). Banda forbade the indiscriminate cutting of the country's beautiful and resourceful forest cover. But with his passing, such protection also passed and deforestation has become widespread, with the sad consequences of promotion of global warming and climate change. Trees and forestsoils absorb and store carbon. Diminishing forests result in this carbon being released as carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Malawians do not need scientific investigations to show them that climate change in their beautiful country is indeed very real. They have unfortunately been undergoing that change in very dramatic ways in recent years.

A summary of the consequences of that change is sad to read. but sadder still to experience: increased water scarcity, unpredictable weather patterns, recurring flooding and droughts, unpredictable start of rainfall with short rainy seasons, prolonged dry spells during rainy seasons, drying up of rivers and lakes with lowering fish supplies, heat waves, frequent bush fires, increased prevalence of water borne diseases, low and unstable hydro-electric production, declining flora and fauna, and declining natural specie.

A Malawian woman farmer ably describes the effects of climate change: "In years past, I used to plant my maize field at the end of October or beginning of November, when rains are just beginning. Then with rains stopping in late March I would have been assured of a good harvest. But in recent years, the rains don't start until late November, then stop in mid-December, trickle in a bit in January, and dry up completely by February. No good harvest, and plenty of hunger in my family!"



The woman's story is verified in the announcement that in 2015 the UN World Food Programme will provide over 700,000 Malawian families with food assistance because of crops destroyed by both flooding and drought in the past year.

### ***Global contributions to local climate change***

Of course it isn't only the deforestation in the country itself that is causing climate change in Malawi. This point is made strongly by Pope Francis, a point ringing so true and so sad for Malawians. "...a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity.... The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system."

This fossil fuel use on a global scale – firing the global energy system – has been strongly disordering the climate of our fragile earth. For example, global emissions of carbon dioxide have increased over 50% from 1990 levels. Very little of these global emissions come from a poor and non-industrialised country like Malawi, but from the mighty fossil fueled economies of Europe, North America and China.

Thus it is understandable why Pope Francis turns his discussion of environment so strongly into a powerful call to respect and protect the dignity and lives of the poor, those most vulnerable to climate change. He emphasises that "...we have to realise that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*" (#49)

Again and again, the Pope returns to lift up the suffering of the poor as a consequence of the deterioration of the environment. "The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet." (#48)

This emphasis will be heard clearly in Malawi, where it is estimated that 66.7% of the 16 million Malawians experience "*multidimensional poverty*" – a newly-designed measurement of several factors that constitute poor people's experience of deprivation. This includes things such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standard, lack of income, disempowerment, poor quality of work and threat from violence.

### ***Responses in Malawi***

It is a difficult fact to face, but face it we must: Malawians alone can't alter the climate change catastrophe the country faces. Major global actors must be honest in looking at the situation, creative in designing effective responses and courageous in taking some hard and unpopular actions. Pope Francis repeatedly calls upon more effective international cooperation for protection of our common home.

That is the importance of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in Paris this coming December. Pope Francis sadly notes that previous such conferences have not been effective in addressing this issue: “International negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility.” (#165)

But there are some steps that can indeed be taken at the local level in Malawi to move in a direction that offers more hope than despair.

It is significant, for example, that the major development offices of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi recently issued a strong challenge to the members of the Malawi Parliament to design national budget priorities that would realistically take into account the need for recovery from the climate change floods experienced by thousands of Malawians earlier this year.

At a local level, efforts are being made to substitute the traditional three-stone open fire cooking which uses much firewood with energy efficient stoves (*mbaula*) which reduce the use of firewood by 70-80%. The Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development (JCED) in Lilongwe is working with local women groups to construct simple stoves, disseminate them to rural communities, and promote their adoption and use. Apart from reducing the use of wood-fuel, the energy-efficient *mbaula* also reduces emission of carbon into the atmosphere. Use of these simple energy-efficient stoves is an example of the personal steps that Pope Francis calls for that can make a difference in the protection of the environment.

Early on in *Laudato Si*, the Pope notes his conviction that “change is impossible without motivation and a process of education....” (#15). In Malawi a new secondary school is aiming to make that education for ecological change possible in its construction as well as in its instruction. Loyola Jesuit Secondary School (LJSS) in Kasungu has used soil based bricks to build its many new buildings, rather than relying on the traditional kiln burnt bricks that consume many trees in preparation of the final brick. The joinery preparing furniture for desks and chairs, bunk beds, etc., uses trees from its lot where new trees are planted regularly to prevent local level deforestation. Solar water heaters have been installed around campus, cutting electrical usage. Small steps, but good steps.

It is certainly true when *Laudato Si* speaks of “our common home,” it is the whole globe of Mother Earth that is referred to. But for we who live in Malawi, the message of Pope Francis is particularly meaningful and challenging. Our response will determine our future.

29 June 2015

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[An abridged version of this article appears in the British Catholic magazine, THE TABLET, 28 August 2015]

**June 29, 2015**

ESA commends Pope Francis for encyclical on the environment

By Monica G. Turner, David W. Inouye, and Jill S. Baron  
Ecological Society of America

*The following statement is attributable to the Ecological Society of America (ESA), President-elect Monica G. Turner, PhD, President David W. Inouye, PhD and Immediate Past-president Jill S. Baron, PhD. ESA represents nearly 10,000 professional ecologists in the US.*

“The Ecological Society of America commends Pope Francis for his insightful [encyclical on the environment](#). Addressed to everyone on this planet, the letter issued on 18 June 2015 is an eloquent plea for responsible Earth stewardship. The pope is clearly informed by the science underpinning today’s environmental challenges. The encyclical deals directly with climate change, its potential effects on humanity and disproportionate consequences for the poor, and the need for intergenerational equity. The document is remarkable for its breadth, as it also addresses pollution, overuse of natural resources, landscape change, sense of place, and the loss of biodiversity. The pope recognizes that slow rates of change can mask the seriousness of environmental problems and the urgency to act. Pope Francis also acknowledges the importance of all taxa and all levels of biodiversity in sustaining our global commons.

“In addition to drawing attention to global change, we are very pleased to see a world leader of his stature advocate strongly for ecological research and education. Pope Francis writes, ‘Greater investment needs to be made in research aimed at understanding more fully the functioning of ecosystems and adequately analyzing the different variables associated with any significant modification of the environment.’ At a time when science is woefully politicized, the pope stresses the importance of unfettered research, stating that ‘... it is essential to give researchers their due role, to facilitate their interactions, and to ensure broad academic freedom.’ Noting that education is fundamental to change, the pope – an experienced teacher himself – advocates passionately for ecological education at all levels. We firmly agree with these sentiments, which align well with the mission of the Ecological Society of America.

“Today’s environmental dilemmas require bold responses, and the pope suggests actions to sustain ecosystems at local to global scales. He sees the need for comprehensive solutions solidly grounded in understanding of nature and society. Because there is no single path to sustainability, he sees generating viable future scenarios as necessary to stimulate dialogue toward finding solutions. We concur.

“Science and religion offer different but complementary ways of engaging the world around us. Ecologists produce fundamental understanding that helps to meet the challenges outlined so well by Pope Francis, such as planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, promoting better management of marine and forest resources, and providing universal access to drinking water.

Support for these goals by religion will facilitate their achievement. We thank Pope Francis for entering into this discussion. We hope his leadership will lead to serious dialogue among – and action by – the world’s religious, political and scientific leaders on the environmental challenges facing this and future generations of humanity.”

<http://www.esa.org/esablog/ecology-in-the-news/esa-commends-pope-francis-for-encyclical-on-the-environment/>

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## **June 29, 2015**

The Earth Charter in 2015

Address by Steven C. Rockefeller

Earth Charter+15

It is a privilege to be here with you for this celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the Earth Charter, which took place at the Peace Palace in The Hague. Much has been accomplished in recent years and the Earth Charter’s ethical principles remain profoundly relevant to efforts to find long-term solutions to the major challenges facing humanity.

Read the full address:

<http://www.earthchartervrienden.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/The-Earth-Charter-in-2015-7-6-2015-2.pdf>

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## **June 30, 2015**

Clergy and People of Faith Arrested in Civil Disobedience Blockade at Crestwood Midstream

By Sandra Steingraber  
We Are Seneca Lake

Media Contact: Sandra Steingraber | 607.351.0719

photos: <http://www.wearesenecalake.com/photos-faith/>

video: <http://www.wearesenecalake.com/video/>

Clergy and People of Faith Arrested in Civil Disobedience Blockade at Crestwood Midstream

Protesters Read from Pope Francis Encyclical on Climate Change; Rev. Jane Winters, Former Reading Resident, Among 17 Arrested

Watkins Glen, NY – In an act of civil disobedience, 17 gas storage protesters led by former Reading Center resident Reverend Jane Winters, formed a human blockade shortly after sunrise this morning at the north entrance of Crestwood Midstream on Route 14. The participants, from ten counties across New York State, included members of Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and Islamic faiths.

All 17 were arrested shortly before 8 a.m. by Schuyler County deputies, taken into custody, charged with trespassing, and released.

The blockaders held banners that said “People of Faith Against Crestwood: Because Creation,” and “The Climate is a Common Good,” which references Pope Francis’ [recent encyclical letter](#) on climate change

Protesters were reading aloud from the Pope’s encyclical at the time of their arrest. When the arresting officer ordered them to drop the document, they sang and prayed.

None of the protesters this morning had been previously arrested as part of the We Are Seneca Lake movement, which opposes Crestwood’s plans for methane storage expansion in lakeside salt caverns and which has been ongoing since October 2014.

The total number of arrests now stands at 296 in the eight-month-old civil disobedience campaign.

Crestwood’s methane gas storage expansion project was approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission last October in the face of broad public opposition and unresolved questions about geological instabilities, fault lines, and possible salinization of Seneca Lake, which serves as a source of drinking water for 100,000 people.

Presbyterian minister Reverend Jane Winters said, “From the first book of the Bible, *Genesis*, and continuing through the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian scriptures, God calls God’s children to take care of the earth that has been entrusted to them. We frequently refer to this as being good stewards of creation. The project that Crestwood plans to expand through its Arlington subsidiary and then doubling-down with putting propane and butane in adjacent caverns does not represent good stewardship of creation. The highest calling of a Christian is to love God and love neighbor. I am out here today because I love God, especially through God’s creation, and I love my neighbors, especially the ones who live here in Reading Center where I lived for 13 years.”

Areil Gold, 40, of Ithaca said, “The Torah, the Holy Scripture of the Jewish people, instructs us to make decisions that will allow the communities of the future generations to continue to live. I consider actions that threaten life on this earth, such as the storage of explosive gasses in the fragile salt caverns of Seneca Lake, a violation of this commandment. The potential short-term profits for Crestwood are not worth the risk of the degradation and destruction of our environment and life itself. In our prophetic tradition, it is not enough to speak out against this threat to our communities and ecosystem—we must pray with our feet, as Rabbi Joshua Heschel demonstrated during the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

Kevin Kunster, 60, Copake Falls, Columbia County, said, “With the scientific information we now have at hand, to do nothing is to be guilty of indifference and perhaps complicity.”

Those arrested today were:

Mike Bucci, 67, Walton, Delaware County

Tricia Campbell, 72, Wolcott, Wayne County

Hannah Dickinson, 33, Geneva, Ontario County

Andrew Feron, 51, Cottekill, Ulster County

Martha Fischer, 58, Enfield, Tompkins County

Arthur Godin, 66, Enfield, Tompkins County

Ariel Gold, 40, Ithaca, Tompkins County

Ben Guthrie, 63, Interlaken, Seneca County

Larry Hirschberger, 60, Ithaca, Tompkins County

Kevin Kuenster, 60, Copake Falls, Columbia County

Steve Marcus, 60, Arkport, Steuben County

Janet McCue, 65, Hector, Schuyler County

Victoria Rasmussen, 43, Valois, Schuyler County

Dianne Roe, 72, Corning, Steuben County

Ryan Solomons, 23, New Paltz, Ulster County

Camille Tischler, 67, Ithaca, Tompkins County

Reverend Jane Winters, 62, Elmira, Chemung County

Read more about the protesters at: <http://www.wearesenecalake.com/seneca-lake-defendes/>.

Read more about widespread objections to Crestwood’s gas storage plans: [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/26/nyregion/new-york-winemakers-fight-gas-storage-plan-near-seneca-lake.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/26/nyregion/new-york-winemakers-fight-gas-storage-plan-near-seneca-lake.html?_r=0).

Read Gannett's investigative report about the risks and dangers of LPG gas storage: <http://www.pressconnects.com/longform/news/local/watchdog/2015/06/26/seneca-gas-storage-debated/29272421/>

### **Background on the protests:**

Protesters have been blocking the Crestwood gas storage facility gates since Thursday, October 23rd, including a rally with more than 200 people on Friday, October 24th. On Wednesday, October 29, Crestwood called the police and the first 10 protesters were arrested. More information and [pictures](#) of the actions are available at [www.WeAreSenecaLake.com](http://www.WeAreSenecaLake.com).

The unified We Are Seneca Lake protests started on October 23rd because Friday, October 24th marked the day that major new construction on the gas storage facility was [authorized](#) to begin. The ongoing acts of civil disobedience come after the community pursued every possible avenue to stop the project and after being thwarted by an unacceptable process and denial of science. The protests are taking place at the gates of the Crestwood compressor station site on the shore of Seneca Lake, the largest of New York's Finger Lakes.

The methane gas storage expansion project is advancing in the face of broad public opposition and unresolved questions about geological instabilities, fault lines, and possible salinization of the lake, which serves as a source of drinking water for 100,000 people. Crestwood has indicated that it intends to make Seneca Lake the gas storage and transportation hub for the northeast, as part of the gas industry's planned expansion of infrastructure across the region.

\*Note that the WE ARE SENECA LAKE protest is to stop the expansion of methane gas storage, a separate project from Crestwood's proposed Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) storage project, which is on hold pending a Department of Environmental Conservation Issues Conference on February 12th.

As they have for a long time, the protesters are continuing to call on President Obama, U.S. Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, Governor Cuomo, and Congressman Reed to intervene on behalf of the community and halt the dangerous project. In spite of overwhelming opposition, grave geological and public health concerns, Crestwood has federal approval to move forward with plans to store highly pressurized, explosive gas in abandoned salt caverns on the west side of Seneca Lake. While the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has temporarily halted plans to stockpile propane and butane (LPG) in nearby caverns—out of ongoing concerns for safety, health, and the environment—Crestwood is actively constructing infrastructure for the storage of two billion cubic feet of methane (natural gas), with the blessing of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

More background, including about the broad extent of the opposition from hundreds of wineries and more than a dozen local municipalities, is available on the We Are Seneca Lake website at <http://www.wearesenecalake.com/press-kit/>.

<http://www.wearesenecalake.com/faith-arrests/>

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## **Summer 2015**

### **Among Republicans, Catholics More Likely to Believe that Global Warming is Happening and Support Policies to Reduce It**

By Yale Project on Climate Change Communication  
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

On June 18th, Pope Francis released a much-anticipated encyclical—one of the most significant forms of communication within the Catholic Church—on climate change. In September, the Pope will visit the United States, where one in four Americans are Catholic, and address the Republican-controlled U.S. Congress at the invitation of House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH).

Our [research](#) has shown that, in general, Republicans are less convinced that human-caused global warming is happening and less supportive of climate and clean energy policies than are Democrats. We have [also found](#) that American Catholics are more likely than other American Christians to believe global warming is happening and to be worried about it.

In this Climate Note we investigate whether or not there are differences in global warming beliefs, attitudes, and policy preferences between Catholic and non-Catholic Republicans.

Overall, we find that Catholic Republicans are more convinced that global warming is happening and human-caused, and are more worried and supportive of climate policies, than are non-Catholic Republicans. These differences between Catholics and non-Catholics are unique to Republicans; that is, we see far fewer differences between Catholic and non-Catholic Democrats and Independents on these issues.

### **A Majority of Catholic Republicans Think Global Warming Is Happening and Is Caused Mostly by Human Activities**

A majority of Catholic Republicans in the U.S. thinks that global warming is happening (51%), compared to a minority of non-Catholic Republicans (42%).

Further, 36% of Catholic Republicans say global warming is caused mostly by human activities, compared to only 30% of non-Catholic Republicans.

### **Catholic Republicans Are More Worried About Global Warming**

Catholic Republicans are also more worried about global warming than other Republicans—36% say they are somewhat or very worried about global warming, while fewer non-Catholic Republicans are worried (30%).

### **Catholic Republicans Are More Likely Than Non-Catholic Republicans to Understand Most Scientists Think Global Warming Is Happening**



Though nearly all climate scientists (97%) are convinced that human-caused global warming is happening (1), we find that among Republicans, Catholics (30%) are more likely than non-Catholics (25%) to know that most scientists agree global warming is happening.

### **Catholic Republicans Are More Supportive of Policies to Reduce Global Warming**

Among Republicans, Catholics also express greater support for a variety of policies that would help reduce global warming than do non-Catholics, such as providing tax rebates to people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels (71% versus 64% of non-Catholic Republicans) and for funding more research into renewable energy sources (68% versus 63% of non-Catholic Republicans).

### **Catholic Conservative Republicans Are More Likely Than Non-Catholic Conservative Republicans to Think Global Warming Is Happening and to be Worried About It**

Are Catholic Republicans more concerned than non-Catholic Republicans about global warming simply because Catholic Republicans are more politically moderate? It is true that Catholic Republicans are less conservative—a smaller percentage of Catholic Republicans self-identify as “conservative” (59%) than do non-Catholic Republicans (69%). Still, even among conservative Republicans, more Catholics than non-Catholics express concern about global warming. For example, Catholic conservative Republicans are more likely than non-Catholic conservative Republicans to think that global warming is happening (42% versus 35%, respectively).

Moreover, Catholic conservative Republicans are also more likely than non-Catholic conservative Republicans to say they are somewhat or very worried about global warming (28% vs. 21%, respectively). Interestingly, Catholic moderate/liberal Republicans are no more worried about global warming than non-Catholic moderate/liberal Republicans (48% vs. 47% respectively).

*This Climate Note is by Zena Grecni*

### **Survey Method**

These findings combine data from six nationally representative surveys of American adults conducted between Fall, 2012, and Spring, 2015. All surveys were directed by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. Results from each of the six surveys were weighted equally to adjust for differences in sample size among the surveys.

The samples were drawn from GfK’s KnowledgePanel®, an online panel of members drawn using probability sampling methods. Prospective members are recruited using a combination of random digit dial and address-based sampling techniques that cover virtually all (non-institutional) resident phone numbers and addresses in the United States. Those contacted who would choose to join the panel but do not have access to the Internet are loaned computers and given Internet access so they may participate.

The sample therefore includes a representative cross-section of American adults irrespective of whether they have Internet access, use only a cell phone, etc. Key demographic variables were weighted, post survey, to match US Census Bureau norms.

The survey instruments were designed by Anthony Leiserowitz, Geoff Feinberg, and Seth Rosenthal of Yale University, and Edward Maibach and Connie Roser-Renouf of George Mason University.

### **Survey Field Dates and Number of Respondents**

- February 27 – March 10, 2015; 1,263 American adults
- October 17 – 28, 2014; 1,275 American adults
- April 15 – 23, 2014; 1,384 American adults
- November 23 – December 9, 2013; 830 American adults
- April 8 – 15, 2013; 1,045 American adults
- August 31 – September 12, 2012; 1,061 American adults

### **Sample Sizes and Margins of error**

All samples are subject to some degree of sampling error—that is, statistical results obtained from a sample can be expected to differ somewhat from results that would be obtained if every member of the target population was interviewed. Average margins of error, at the 95% confidence level, are as follows:

- Total Republicans = 2,624, +/- 2 percentage points
- Catholic Republicans = 620, +/- 4 percentage points
- Non-Catholic Republicans = 2,004, +/- 2 percentage points
- Conservative Republicans = 1,807, +/- 2 percentage points
- Catholic conservative Republicans = 392, +/- 5 percentage points
- Non-Catholic conservative Republicans = 1,415, +/- 3 percentage points

### **Rounding error**

For tabulation purposes, percentage points are rounded off to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given chart may total slightly higher or lower than 100%.

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1. Cook, J., Nuccitelli, D., Green, S.A., Richardson, M., Windler, B., Painting, R., Way, R., Jacobs, P., & Skuce, A. (2013). Quantifying the consensus on anthropogenic global warming in the scientific literature. *Environmental Research Letters*, 8.

<http://environment.yale.edu/climate-communication/article/republican-catholics-more-likely-to-be-concerned-about-global-warming>

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