

Laudato Si': ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME
December, 2020 – St. Teresa of Avila Parish, Auburn CA

Summary of Chapter One of Laudato Si: ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

“What is Happening to Our Common Home”

The first chapter of the encyclical is a frank look at the facts of our world so that the reader might “become painfully aware” of the ways we have not been providing protection and care of the very place we call “home.” This chapter is not meant to be abstract analysis but 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” (19).

The bulk of this chapter paints in detail a somewhat dire diagnostic picture of what’s happening:

- a variety of forms of pollution (water, soil, atmospheric, waste)
- increasing deforestation
- a disturbing warming of the climate
- depletion of natural resources (especially quality drinking water)
- loss of biodiversity
- the decline of quality of human life and relationships
- global inequality gap between the poor and the rich (20-52).

There is consensus among scientists that this picture is not fabricated but a real glimpse into the unsustainable state of our world. For most of us, as we live our daily lives, we are far removed from these stark realities of our world.

Other chapters will elaborate on root causes that the Pope sees linked to these symptoms but this first chapter begins to name them. First and foremost is a “throwaway culture” that ruthlessly consumes, exploits, and discards human life and our natural resources. He also indicts the all-pervasive “techno-economic paradigm” of the last two hundred years. This pattern within our society focuses on technological change and emphasizes above all things efficiency, speed, technology, commodification of goods and services and quick and easy profit. While it seems that we lack a culture and leadership to confront this cultural crisis, this chapter ends with the Pope asking us to cast off the distractions that dull our consciousness, listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, and begin to talk about solutions.

Questions

1. Where and how do we hear the “cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”?
 - Does this awareness affect our habits?
 - What do we do with our feeling of powerlessness and indifference?
2. Why has leadership been weak to the world’s environmental crisis?
3. What can we do in the next few weeks to participate less in the throwaway culture and techno-economic paradigm?