

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

Laudato Si': ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME consists of an introduction and six chapters in which Pope Francis lays out his vision of global environmental deterioration and a spirituality of care. The introduction begins with the words that become the title: Laudato si', mi Signore" – Praise be to you, my Lord." These are the words of a beautiful poetic song written by St. Francis of Assisi that reminds us that being in relationship with God and all Creation is to live a life of praise to our God for our common home. It is "like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us"(1). The Pope then makes an earnest appeal, "This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her..."(2). Because St. Francis was able to approach the world around him as a "brother" with affection, wonder and praise, Pope Francis sees him as the "example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically"(10). If we feel united to nature in a similar way that honors and cares for the interconnectedness of all things, the Pope has hope that our attitude can shift from being consumers, masters and exploiters to one that exhibits sobriety, care and joy.

The introduction also shows how care of creation is not a new subject that began with Pope Francis but is in union and harmony with his predecessors, including Benedict XVI, and with many other scientists, philosophers and theologians. After this encyclical though, concern for the environment will no longer be seen as an "optional" aspect of discipleship but rather an integral and urgent part of the Church teaching. The introduction strongly puts forward a challenge to the people of the world that we can no longer be in denial, indifferent or blindly confident in technical solutions. Instead, Pope Francis calls "for a new" dialogue" and "a new and universal solidarity" so that every person living on this planet might come together and consider how we are shaping the future of our common home (14).

Questions for reflection:

1. Where have you seen harm inflicted on Sister Earth?
2. St. Francis of Assisi has been called the patron saint of the environment. What is attractive about him?
3. What is your response to this urgent appeal for dialogue and a new universal solidarity with others who share this common earth with you?