



OFFICE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (OHD)

Climate Change Desk (CCD)

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences: FABC

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EDITOR'S COLUMN

The last newsletter of OHD was published in December 2012 and due to unforeseen circumstances thereafter OHD has not published any newsletters till date. Hence we are launching this E Bulletin once again to stay connect with each other. Therefore I begin with recalling the origins of OHD as given in the FABC website:

"In 1965, 150 Catholic priests met in Hong Kong for the Priests' Institute of Social Action (PISA). The aim of this seminar was to bring new dimensions into the social action apostolate for the Church in Asia. This was the result of the growing consciousness within the Church that we have a message for the world of Asia undergoing drastic changes. Four years later, June 1969, forty bishops, priests and laymen from Asia gathered at the Jesuit House in Baguio, Philippines. It was an important meeting for here the concept of an Asian wide social action office was first discussed.

While PISA in Hong Kong was a training seminar, the Baguio meeting was a gathering of social action veterans coming together to exchange experiences and to find better ways of working and cooperating with one another.

During the meeting, the nine bishops present met informally and expressed the need for keeping open lines of communications among themselves with and the various national Episcopal commissions. They felt a secretariat with a chairman and a full-time secretary would be useful. They discussed this with the larger body and eventually decided to have the office in Manila under Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen and Father Horacio Dela Costa as chairman and secretary respectively.

The year was 1970 - the beginning of a decade for the emerging Asian Church. It was an historic occasion, in November 1970, when for a first time a pontiff

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would set foot in the Philippines, the only Catholic country in Asia.

Plans were made already in the air to organize a Bishops' conference of Asia similar to the Bishops' Conference of Latin America. But it has to be something much more humble - a federation of bishops' conferences, a forum to exchange experiences and be enriched by the exchange - it was to be a structure to enable bishops of Asia to know each other.

What drew them together to gather around the visiting pontiff, Pope John Paul VI, is the earnest desire to become a genuine Asian Church. The Church that must become the Church of the poor because the majority of the people of Asia are poor.

In establishing the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the bishops provided for a central committee consisting of the president or each national conference, and a standing committee which would take charge of the day-to-day work. These two committees were given assignment of coordinating and assisting in almost all matters of Church interest, although the concerns of Justice and Development were given a special priority.

On November 28, 1970, Cardinal Darnosurmono of Indonesia, Bishop Hsu of Hongkong, Bishop Labayen and Fr. De La Costa met with representative of Misereor to determine how the Asian office they had planned at Baguio the year before could be integrated into the new plan of the Asian Bishops. They decided to leave it to the Central Committee, which was scheduled to meet in Hongkong in March 1971.

The Bishops decided to accept the office described in Baguio, in December 1971, as their own Office for Human Development (OHD), with one important change: it would be at the service of all Asia, where the original concept had in mind only east and south East Asia.

During its years of existence, the Office of Human Development continued the process of dialogue among themselves and with the poor. The following programmes will best describe the office's contribution to the Church in Asia.

1. Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA) Series (I - VII)
2. Asian Institute for Social Action (AISA) Series (I - VII)
3. Faith Encounters in Social Action (FEISA) Series (I)

I give below the Vision and Mission of OHD:

“VISION AND MISSION”

The Office for Human Development needs to concretize the meaning of A New Way of Being Church. It is the need to find a vital link between our call to Renewal and the Revitalization of our Mission that will be the common thrust and direction as we move towards the Third Millennium.

We therefore take as our starting point the following:

- Mission of love and service calls for a total dialogue within the context of a multi-religious situation, cultural diversity and phenomenon of dehumanizing affluence and poverty.
- Mission of love and service with the making of welfare and charity, the promotion of integral human development and advocacy for justice and peace.
- Mission of love and service calls for inclusion of gender, interfaith collaboration and care for the integrity of creation.
- Mission of love and service takes into consideration the following communities that need our special care and attention: the youth, women, children, family, indigenous people and migrants.”

From 2011, FABC began to reflect on Climate Change and the need of the Church in Asia to respond to this crisis. After two seminars in 2011 and 2013 the FABC planned certain workshops realizing the grave situation. Later on a Climate Change Desk was established in 2015. In December 2016 the Climate Change Desk was merged with the Office for Human Development.

This issue has the aims and objectives of the New Dicastery, a letter from Vatican, the Migrants & Refugees Section regarding the “20 Action Points” for the advocacy exercise, the article on Unabated Climate Change Would Reverse the Hard-Earned Development Gains in Asia — New Report by ADB, September 1, “world day of prayer for the care for creation”. Suggested Points for Reflection and Action,

Season of Creation: September 1 to October 4 (OPTIONAL), Some quotes, Deep Theological Vision behind the Pope's Encyclical”, The Theological Heart of Laudato Si”.

May God shower his blessings on you,

Bishop Allwyn D'Silva

Executive Secretary

OFFICE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (OHD) / Climate Change Desk (CCD)



Article | Name

1. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development expresses the Holy See's concern for issues of justice and peace, including those related to migration, health, charitable works and the care of creation.
2. The Dicastery promotes integral human development in the light of the Gospel and in the tradition of the Church's social teachings. To this end, it maintains relations with the Conferences of Bishops, offering them its cooperation so that values related to justice and peace as well as the care of creation may be promoted.
3. The Dicastery also expresses the Holy Father's care for suffering humanity, including the needy, the sick and the excluded, and pays special attention to the needs and issues of those who are forced to flee their homeland, the stateless, the marginalized, victims of armed conflicts and natural disasters, the imprisoned, the unemployed, victims of contemporary forms of slavery and torture, and others whose dignity is endangered.
4. §4. A Section of the Dicastery deals specifically with matters regarding refugees and migrants. This section is temporarily placed (ad tempus) under the direction of the Supreme Pontiff, who will oversee it in the manner he deems appropriate.

Article 2 | Structure

1. The Dicastery is headed by a Prefect, assisted by a Secretary and at least one Undersecretary; these may be members of lay faithful.
2. The Dicastery has its own Members, among whom are lay faithful engaged in the various fields of expertise of the Dicastery. They are selected from the different regions of the world, so that the universal character of the Church may be expressed.
3. The Dicastery has its own Consultors and Officials, also from different parts of the world.
4. The Dicastery follows all the norms established for the Roman Curia.

Article 3 | Task, Mission, Activities

1. The Dicastery studies the social teaching of the Church and works to make it widely known and implemented, and so that social, economic and political relations are increasingly imbued with the spirit of the Gospel.



2. The Dicastery collects information and research in the areas of justice and peace, the development of peoples, the promotion and defence of human dignity and human rights, such as rights pertaining to work, including that of minors; the phenomenon of migration and the exploitation of migrants; human trafficking and enslavement; imprisonment, torture and capital punishment; disarmament and arms control as well as armed conflicts and their effects on the civilian population and the natural environment (humanitarian law). It evaluates these data and informs the Episcopal agencies of the conclusions drawn, so that they may intervene directly where appropriate.
3. The Dicastery strives to ensure that local Churches provide effective and appropriate assistance both material and spiritual – if necessary also by means of suitable pastoral structures – to the sick, refugees, exiles, migrants, the stateless, circus workers, nomads and other itinerant populations.
4. The Dicastery encourages and coordinates initiatives of Catholic institutions committed to respecting the dignity of every person and affirming the values of justice and peace, and to helping people in need, especially those institutions that help respond to the most pressing needs including disaster relief.
5. In fulfilling its mission, the Dicastery may establish relationships with associations, institutes and non-governmental organizations, including those outside the Catholic Church, who are committed to promoting justice and peace. It may also enter into discussion with representatives of civil governments and other international public institutions, in order to promote study, deepen knowledge, and public awareness regarding matters within its competence, while respecting the competencies of other offices of the Roman Curia.



6. The Dicastery is committed to fostering among peoples: sensitivity for peace, commitment to justice and solidarity with those who are most vulnerable such as migrants and refugees, particularly through the celebrations of the World Day of Peace, the World Day of Migrants, and the World Day of the Sick.

Article 4 | Relationship to Members of the Curia and related Offices

1. The Dicastery works in close collaboration with the Secretariat of State, mutually respecting the other's competence. The Secretariat of State has exclusive competence over matters affecting relations with States and with other international public institutions.
2. The Dicastery maintains a close relationship with the Secretariat of State especially with regard to its public statements, through documents or declarations, on matters relating to relations with civil governments and other international public institutions.
3. The Dicastery collaborates with the Secretariat of State also by participating in the Delegations of the Holy See in intergovernmental meetings concerning matters within the Dicastery's competence.
4. The Dicastery maintains a close relationship with the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, with due regard for its Statutes.

5. Within the Dicastery, the Commission for Charity, the Commission for Ecology and the Commission for Health Care Workers are established, each operating according to its norms. They are headed by the Prefect of the same Dicastery, who convenes them whenever it is deemed fitting or necessary.

6. The Dicastery is competent with regard to Caritas Internationalis, in accord with its Statutes.

Article 5 | Other Organizations

The Dicastery also represents the Holy See with regard to the creation and supervision of international charitable organizations and funds established for the same purpose, as set forth in their respective Statutes and within the overall context of the legislation in force.

The present Statutes are approved ad experimentum. I hereby decree that they be promulgated by publication in L'Osservatore Romano and subsequently in the Acta Apostolicae Sedis, taking effect on 1 January 2017. From that date on, the respective functions of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People and the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Health Care Workers will cease and those Councils will be considered suppressed, and articles 142-153 of the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus will likewise be abrogated. Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 17 August 2016

20 ACTION POINTS FOR THE GLOBAL COMPACTS

Following letter has been received from Vatican to introduce the documents, "20 Action Points for the Global Compacts". The Migrants & Refugees Section

To,
Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, Executive Secretary
FABC Office of Human Development

Your Excellency,

With warm greetings, this letter is to introduce two documents (in attachment) that the Migrants & Refugees Section, guided by the Holy Father, has prepared in the last months. They present 20 Action Points which are offered as pastoral priorities regarding migrants and refugees as well as elements that the Section would like to see included in the Global Compacts which the United Nations will agree in 2018.

invites everyone to join in this advocacy exercise Guided by the Holy Father,

Vatican City, 30 July 2017

The Section has prepared a pastoral version of the 20 Points, entitled "20 Pastoral Action Points" in a language accessible for clergy, religious and pastoralists to use. For dialogue with governments and international organizations, please refer to the more technical "20 Action Points for the Global Compacts". The Migrants & Refugees Section invites everyone to join in this advocacy exercise, each according to their possibilities, and suggests the following actions:

1. To use the 20 Action Points, focusing on those you deem more relevant, in order to develop information and awareness campaigns about the Compacts so as better to welcome, protect, promote and integrate all migrants and refugees.

2. To share the 20 Action Points with Catholic NGOs and other civil society groups in your country -- especially those concerned with migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking -- inviting them to join this common advocacy effort.
3. To identify your country's government officials who are responsible for the negotiations towards the Global Compacts, and to enter into dialogue with them on the basis of the "20 Action Points for the Global Compacts". Feel free to focus on one or more points and add others based on the Social Teaching of the Church.

The Migrants & Refugees Section is ready to help you, as best we can, and whoever else would like to join in this shared effort. At the same time, we would be very glad to receive news about how the Points are taken up, pastorally, ecumenically and inter-religiously, by civil society and indeed how the government reacts to them. For any clarification you might need, do not hesitate to get back in touch.

With prayerful best wishes, in our Lord,

Fr. Michael Czerny S.J.
Under-Secretary

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RESPONDING TO REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS: TWENTY ACTION POINTS

Global migration is a major challenge for much of today's world and a priority for the Catholic Church. In words and deeds, Pope Francis repeatedly shows his deep compassion for all who are displaced. Witness his encounters with migrants and refugees on the Islands of Lampedusa and Lesbos. Witness his call for their full embrace: to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking.¹ In addition, the Holy Father is guiding the Church to assist the world community in systematically improving its responses to the displaced. For the international political community has launched a multilateral process of consultations and negotiations with the goal of adopting two Global Compacts by the end of 2018, one on international migrants and the other on refugees.

The Church has already taken a stand on many of the issues which will be included in the Global Compacts and, drawing on its varied and longstanding pastoral experience, would like to contribute actively to this process. To support this contribution, the Vatican's Section on Migrants & Refugees (Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development), consulting with various Bishops' Conferences and Catholic NGOs, has prepared the following Twenty Action Points on migrants and refugees. They do not exhaust the Church's teaching on migrants and refugees, but provide useful considerations which Catholic advocates can use, add to and develop in their dialogue with governments towards the Global Compacts.

The 20 Points are grounded on migrants' and refugees' needs identified at the grassroots level and on the Church's best practices. The Points have been approved by the Holy Father. The Migrants & Refugees Section, guided by the Holy Father, urges the Bishops' Conferences to explain the Compacts and the Points to their parishes and Church organizations, with the hope of fostering more effective solidarity with migrants and refugees. Given the great range of issues covered in the Points, each Bishops' Conference should select the most relevant points for their national situation and bring them to their Government's attention, specifically the Ministers responsible for the country's negotiations on the Global Compacts. Each country has already begun to prepare its position, and the negotiations will take place during the first six or eight months of 2018.

The same Points in more formal language, for use in advocacy, may be found in the document Global Compacts 20 Points political version. Though grounded in the Church's experience and reflection, the 20 Points are offered as valuable considerations to all people of good will who might be willing to implement them and advocate their inclusion in their country's negotiations. Leaders and members of all faiths, and organizations of civil society, are welcome to join in this effort. Let us unite to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate people obliged to leave their home and seeking a new one among us.

1. Address to participants in the International Forum on "Migration and Peace", 21 February 2017.
2. Welcoming: Increasing Safe and Legal Routes for Migrants and Refugees. The decision to emigrate should be made freely and voluntarily. Migration should be an orderly process which respects the laws of each country involved.

To this end, the following points are to be considered:

1. The collective or arbitrary expulsion of migrants and refugees should be avoided. The principle of non-refoulement should always be respected: migrants



and refugees must never be returned to a country which has been deemed unsafe. The application of this principle should be based on the level of safety effectively afforded to each individual, rather than on a summary evaluation of a country's general state of security. The routine application of a list of "safe countries" often fails to consider the real security needs of particular refugees; they must be treated on an individual basis.

2. Legal routes for safe and voluntary migration or relocation should be multiplied. This can be achieved by granting more humanitarian visas, visas for students and apprentices, family reunification visas (including siblings, grandparents and grandchildren), and temporary visas for people fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries; by creating humanitarian corridors for the most vulnerable; and by launching private and community sponsorship programmes, programmes for relocating refugees in communities rather than concentrating them in holding facilities.
3. The value of each person's safety – rooted in a profound respect for the inalienable rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees – should be correctly balanced with national security concerns. This can be achieved through appropriate training for border agents; by ensuring that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have access to basic services, including legal services; by ensuring protection for anyone fleeing war and violence; and by seeking alternative solutions to detention for those who enter a country without authorisation. Protecting: Defending the Rights and Dignity of Migrants and Refugees

The Church has repeatedly underlined the need for an integral approach to the issue of migration, in profound respect for each person's dignity and rights and in consideration of the multiple dimensions of each individual. The right to life is the most fundamental of all rights, and cannot depend on a person's legal status. To this end, the following points are suggested:

5. Emigrants must be protected by their countries of origin. Authorities in these countries should offer reliable information before departure; should ensure that all channels of emigration are legalised and certified; should create a government department for the diaspora; and should offer consular assistance and protection abroad.
6. Immigrants must be protected by their countries of arrival, in order to prevent exploitation, forced labour and human trafficking.

This can be achieved by prohibiting employers

from withholding employees' documents; by ensuring access to justice for all migrants, independently of their legal status and without negative repercussions on their right to remain; by ensuring that all immigrants can open a personal bank account; by establishing a minimum wage applicable to all workers; and by ensuring that wages are paid at least once a month.

8. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees must be empowered to leverage their skills and competencies in order to improve their own wellbeing and the prosperity of their communities. This can be achieved by guaranteeing in-country freedom of movement and permission to return after work abroad; by providing ample access to the means of communication; by involving local communities in the integration of asylum seekers; and by developing programmes of professional and social reintegration for anyone who chooses to return to their home country.
9. The vulnerability of unaccompanied minors and minors separated from their families must be tackled in accordance with the international Convention on the Rights of the Child.
10. This can be achieved by seeking alternative solutions to detention for legally underage migrants who enter a country without authorisation; by offering temporary custody or foster homes for unaccompanied or separated minors; and by setting up separate centres for the identification and processing of minors, adults and families.
11. All underage migrants must be protected in accordance with the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. This can be achieved through the compulsory registration of all births and by ensuring that underage migrants do not become illegal when they reach adulthood and that they can continue their education.
12. Access to education should be assured to all underage migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, so that they have access to primary and secondary schooling at the same standard as citizens and independently of their legal status.
13. Access to welfare should be assured to all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, respecting their right to health and basic healthcare independently of legal status, and ensuring access to national pension schemes and the transferability of benefits in case of moving to another country.
14. Migrants should never become a-national or stateless, in accordance to the right to nationality stated by international conventions, and citizenship should be recognized at birth (jus soli). Promoting:



- Fostering the Integral Human Development of Migrants and Refugees. The Church has repeatedly emphasised the need to promote integral human development for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees alongside local residents. Countries should include migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in their plan for national development. To this end, the following points are to be considered:
15. The competencies of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be valued and developed in countries of arrival by guaranteeing equal access to higher education, specialization courses, apprenticeships and internships, and by validating qualifications obtained elsewhere.
 16. The social and professional inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees within local communities should be supported by recognising their freedom of movement and their right to choose where to live; by making information available in their languages of origin; by offering language classes and courses on local customs and culture; and by granting asylum seekers and refugees the right to work.
 17. The integrity and well-being of the family should always be protected and promoted, independently of legal status. This can be achieved by embracing broader family reunification (grandparents, grandchildren and siblings) independently of financial requirements; by allowing reunified family members to work; by undertaking the search for lost family members; by combating the exploitation of minors; and by ensuring that, if employed, their work does not adversely affect their health or their right to education.
 18. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees with special needs are to be treated just like citizens with the same conditions, guaranteeing access to disability benefits independently of legal status, and enrolling unaccompanied or separated minors with disabilities in special education programmes.
 19. The funds for international development and humanitarian support, sent to countries which receive a significant influx of refugees and migrants fleeing from armed conflict, should be increased, ensuring that the needs of both newcomer and resident populations can be met. This can be achieved by funding the establishment and development of institutions for medical, educational and social care in countries of arrival, and by extending financial help and assistance programmes to local families in situations of vulnerability.
 20. The right to religious freedom – in terms of both belief and practice – should be assured to all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, independently of legal status. Integrating: Greater Participation of Migrants and Refugees to Enrich Local Communities The arrival of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees represents an opportunity for growth as much for local communities as for the newcomers. The encounter of different cultures is a source of mutual enrichment, since inclusion and participation contribute to the development of societies. To this end the following points are to be implemented:
 21. Integration, as a two-directional process which acknowledges and values the riches of both cultures, should be promoted. This can be achieved by recognising citizenship at birth (*jus soli*); by rapidly extending nationality to all refugees, independently of financial requirements or linguistic knowledge (at least for over-50s); by promoting family reunification; and by declaring a one-off period of amnesty and legalisation for migrants who have lived in a country for a considerable amount of time.
 22. A positive narrative of solidarity towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be promoted. This can be achieved by funding intercultural exchange projects; by supporting integration programmes in local communities; by documenting and disseminating good practices in integration; and by ensuring that public announcements are translated into the languages spoken by larger numbers of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.
 23. Those who are forced to flee humanitarian crises and are subsequently evacuated or enrolled in assisted repatriation programmes must be ensured appropriate conditions for reintegration in their countries of origin. This can be achieved by increasing the funds assigned to temporary assistance for those affected by humanitarian crises and by developing infrastructure in countries of return, by validating educational and professional qualifications obtained abroad, and by encouraging the rapid reintegration of workers in their countries of origin.

Below given two news release “A region at risk: the human dimensions of climate change in Asia and the Pacific” and “Unabated climate change would reverse the hard-earned development gains in Asia – new report” are taken from the news released by Asian development Bank on 14 July 2017 in Philippines-Manila.



A REGION AT RISK:

THE HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Recent regional climate change projections have consequences for human systems particularly for developing countries in Asia and the Pacific. Asia and the Pacific continue to be exposed to climate change impacts. Home to the majority of the world's poor, the population of the region is particularly vulnerable to those impacts. Unabated warming could largely

diminish previous achievements of economic development and improvements, putting the future of the region at risk.

For more details kindly visit

<https://www.adb.org/news/infographics/climate-change-impacts-human-systems-asia-and-pacific>

UNABATED CLIMATE CHANGE

WOULD REVERSE THE HARD-EARNED DEVELOPMENT GAINS IN ASIA - NEW REPORT

Unabated climate change would bring devastating consequences to countries in Asia and the Pacific, which could severely affect their future growth, reverse current development gains, and degrade quality of life. Under a business-as-usual scenario, a 6 degree Celsius temperature increase is projected over the Asian landmass by the end of the century. Some countries in the region could experience significantly hotter climates, with temperature increases in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the northwest part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) projected to reach 8 degree Celsius. These increases in temperature would lead to drastic changes in the region's weather system, agriculture and fisheries sectors, land and marine biodiversity, domestic and regional security, trade, urban development, migration, and health. Such a scenario may even pose an existential threat to some countries in the region and crush any hope of achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

"The global climate crisis is arguably the biggest challenge human civilization faces in the 21st century, with the Asia and Pacific region at the heart of it all," (Bambang Susantono, ADB Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development). "Home to two-thirds of the world's poor and regarded as one of the most vulnerable region to climate change, countries in Asia and the Pacific are at the highest risk of plummeting into deeper poverty — and disaster — if mitigation and adaptation efforts are not quickly and strongly implemented."

"The Asian countries hold Earth's future in their hands. If they choose to protect themselves against dangerous climate change, they will help to save the entire planet," said Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, PIK Director. "The challenge is twofold. On the one hand, Asian greenhouse-gas emissions have to be reduced in a way that the global community can limit planetary warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, as agreed in Paris 2015. Yet even adapting to 1.5 degrees Celsius

temperature rise is a major task. So, on the other hand, Asian countries have to find strategies for ensuring prosperity and security under unavoidable climate change within a healthy global development. But note that leading the clean industrial revolution will provide Asia with unprecedented economic opportunities. And exploring the best strategies to absorb the shocks of environmental change will make Asia a crucial actor in 21st-century multilateralism."

More intense typhoons and tropical cyclones are expected to hit Asia and the Pacific with rising global mean temperatures. Under a business-as-usual scenario, annual precipitation is expected to increase by up to 50% over most land areas in the region, although countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan may experience a decline in rainfall by 20-50%.

Coastal and low-lying areas in the region will be at an increased risk of flooding. Nineteen of the 25 cities most exposed to a one-meter sea-level rise are located in the region, 7 of which are in the Philippines alone. Indonesia, however, will be the most affected country in the region by coastal flooding with approximately 5.9 million people expected to be affected every year until 2100.

Increased vulnerability to flooding and other disasters will significantly impact the region — and the world — economically. Global flood losses are expected to increase to \$52 billion per year by 2050 from \$6 billion in 2005. Moreover, 13 of the top 20 cities with the largest growth of annual flood losses from 2005-2050 are in Asia and the Pacific: Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Zhanjiang, and Xiamen (PRC); Mumbai, Chennai-Madras, Surat, and Kolkata (India); Ho Chi Minh City (Viet Nam); Jakarta (Indonesia); Bangkok (Thailand); and Nagoya (Japan).

Climate change will also make food production in the region more difficult and production costs higher. In some countries of Southeast Asia, rice yields could



decline by up to 50% by 2100 if no adaptation efforts are made. Almost all crops in Uzbekistan, meanwhile, are projected to decrease by 20-50% by 2050 even in a 2 degree Celsius temperature increase (Paris Agreement scenario). Food shortages could increase the number of malnourished children in South Asia by 7 million, as import costs will likely increase in the sub region to \$15 billion per year compared to \$2 billion by 2050.

Marine ecosystems, particularly in the Western Pacific, will be in serious danger by 2100. All coral reef systems in the sub region will collapse due to mass coral bleaching if global warming increases by 4 degree Celsius (global business-as-usual scenario). Even with a 1.5 degree Celsius temperature increase, 89% of coral reefs are expected to suffer from serious bleaching, severely affecting reef-related fisheries and tourism in Southeast Asia.

Climate change also poses a significant risk to health in Asia and the Pacific. Already, 3.3 million people die every year due to the harmful effects of outdoor air pollution, with the PRC, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh being the top four countries experiencing such deaths. In addition, heat-related deaths in the region among the elderly are expected to increase by about 52,000 cases by 2050 due to climate change, according to data from the World Health Organization. Deaths related to vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue may also increase.

A business-as-usual approach to climate change could also disrupt functioning ecosystem services, prompting mass migration — mostly to urban areas — that could

make cities more crowded and overwhelm available social services.

Moreover, a warmer climate for the region could endanger energy supply. Climate change can exacerbate energy insecurity through continued reliance on unsustainable fossil fuels, reduced capacities of thermal power plants due to a scarcity of cooling water, and intermittent performance of hydropower plants as a result of uncertain water discharges, among other factors. Energy insecurity could lead to conflicts as countries compete for limited energy supply.

To mitigate the impact of climate change, the report highlights the importance of implementing the commitments laid out in the Paris Agreement. These include public and private investments focused on the rapid decarbonization of the Asian economy as well as the implementation of adaptation measures to protect the region's most vulnerable populations. Climate mitigation and adaptation efforts should also be mainstreamed into macro-level regional development strategies and micro-level project planning in all sectors, in addition to the ongoing renewable energy and technology innovation efforts in urban infrastructure and transport. The region has both the capacity and weight of influence to move towards sustainable development pathways, curb global emissions, and promote adaptation.

*Source: <https://www.adb.org/publications/region-at-risk-climate-change>
News release 14th July 2017, a report produced by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), Germany.*

SEPTEMBER 1 to be celebrated as the “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation” in the Catholic Church



“CARE FOR OUR
COMMON HOME...”

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE “WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION”

To my Venerable Brothers

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah TURKSON,

President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Cardinal Kurt KOCH, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Sharing the concern of my beloved brother, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, for the future of creation (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 7-9), and at the suggestion of his representative, Metropolitan Ioannis of Pergamum, who took part in the presentation of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on care for our common home, I wish to inform you that I have decided to institute in the Catholic Church the “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation” which, beginning this year, is to be celebrated on 1 September, as has been the custom in the Orthodox Church for some time.

As Christians we wish to contribute to resolving the ecological crisis which humanity is presently experiencing. In doing so, we must first rediscover in our own rich spiritual patrimony the deepest motivations for our concern for the care of creation. We need always to keep in mind that, for believers in Jesus Christ, the Word of God who became man for our sake, “the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body To my Venerable Brothers

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah TURKSON,

President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Cardinal Kurt KOCH, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity

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“the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us” (*Laudato Si'*, 216). The ecological crisis thus summons us to a profound spiritual conversion: Christians are called to “an ecological conversion whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (*ibid.*, 217). For “living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (*ibid.*).

The annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation will offer individual believers and communities a fitting opportunity to reaffirm their personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which he has entrusted to our care, and to implore his help for the protection of creation as well as his pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live. The celebration of this Day, on the same date as the Orthodox Church, will be a valuable opportunity to bear witness to our growing communion with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. We live at a time when all Christians are faced with the same decisive challenges, to which we must respond together, in order to be more credible and effective. It is my hope that this Day will in some way also involve other Churches and ecclesial Communities, and be celebrated in union with similar initiatives of the World Council of Churches.

I ask you, Cardinal Turkson, as President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, to inform the Justice and Peace Commissions of the Bishops’ Conferences, as well as the national and international organizations involved in environmental issues, of the establishment of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, so that, with due regard for local needs and situations, it can be properly celebrated with the participation of the entire People of God: priests, men and women religious and the lay faithful. For this reason, it will be the task of your Council, in cooperation with the various Episcopal Conferences, to arrange suitable ways of publicizing and celebrating the Day, so that this annual event will become a significant occasion for prayer, reflection, conversion and the adoption of appropriate lifestyles.

I ask you, Cardinal Koch, as President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, to make the necessary contacts with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and with other ecumenical organizations so that this World Day can serve as a sign of a common journey in which all believers in Christ take part. It will



also be your Council's responsibility to ensure that it is coordinated with similar initiatives undertaken by the World Council of Churches.

In expressing my hope that, as a result of wide cooperation, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation will be inaugurated and develop in the best way possible, I invoke upon this initiative the intercession of Mary, Mother of God, and of Saint Francis of Assisi,

whose Canticle of the Creatures inspires so many men and women of goodwill to live in praise of the Creator and with respect for creation. As a pledge of spiritual fruitfulness, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, Eminent Brothers, and to all those who share in your ministry.

*From the Vatican, 6 August 2015
Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord.*

OHD LAUNCHES "ASIAN CLIMATE CARE INITIATIVES (ACCI)" THE ASIAN CHAPTER TO CELEBRATE THE SEPTEMBER 1, "WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE FOR CREATION".

September 1: to be launched as a day for "pray and care for creation"

Possible way to celebrate the day:

1. Connecting with nature
 - a) Harvest festival can be celebrated with more meaning and festivity with focus as a day for pray and care for creation
 - b) Connecting with nature, should mean in literal sense, eg. People are encouraged to go outdoors, appreciate beauty and importance of nature for our existence, and take part in the call to protect Mother Earth. Suggested activities: i) Eco tourism, mountain treks, forest hiking, picnicking at natural sites with focus on appreciating nature, thanking and praising God for the same and praying for healing the planet. ii) Conducting bio- diversity assessment treks, nature walks
2. Connecting to nature in worship: Praying for and with creation, thanking and praising, confessing our guilt for not sufficiently caring for the planet, payer for healing and committing to be better stewards could be integrated in the prayer for creation in the Holy Eucharist/ holy hour or other liturgical services.
3. Concrete action / education/ advocacy:
 - a) Concrete action, Some suggestions:
 - Take up Carbon foot print calculation
 - Have a waste audit
 - Take up an energy audit
 - Conduct green audit of the apartments/ education institutes/parish etc.
 - Undertake food transport mileage
 - b) Concrete action Some suggestions
 - Segregate your waste
 - Have solid waste management unit at home/education institutes/parish
 - Say "no" completely to use of plastic

- Go meatless once a week
 - undertake carbon fast at least once a week
 - Conserve nature, water, energy,
 - Greening: individual life style/ home/ parish
- c) Education: conduct seminars, workshops, training sessions for catechism/confirmation students/ youth, women, parish leaders
 - d) Advocacy
 - Identify issues local, national and international issues needing public attention
 - Join/ support the existing campaigns
 - Support in educating youth/women/ families/ education institutes/ parish/public in general

This world day of pray and care for creation and all our celebrations and programs should help reflect on the goodness of creation, we must ensure some fun time with nature, eco tour, treks, and picnics with children, youth and all ages must give us a real live-in- experience with mother earth, like being together in the field, in the play ground, some clay work, beach walk, children making messy experiments, enjoying a Silly Safari animal show, and much more. As faithful people we need to bring our scientific understanding of the universe together with our understanding of God and of creation. Creation is not something that we use for our selfish gain all the time. Not only our existence dependence creation but we also give shape to the creation. So, we will continue to pray, reflect and empower ourselves and our communities to be the better stewards of the environment, lending healing to the "this fragile Earth, our island home.

Note: Please feel free to share your experiences and initiatives on the celebrating of 1 September, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Email us at ccdfabc@gmail.com, some of these would be circulated in our next bulletin.



SEASON OF CREATION:

September 1 to October 4 (OPTIONAL)

Globally Christians are celebrating Season For Creation SEPTEMBER 1, 2017 to OCTOBER 4, 2017. The timing of the Season for Creation means that it falls during Harvest-tide in the northern hemisphere and in the spring season of rebirth in the southern hemisphere. It runs from September 1, the World Day of Prayer for Creation, through Oct. 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi (author of the Canticle of the Creatures in the 13th century).

What and how to celebrate the season of creation: The Anglicans in the past celebrated the Season of Creation – also known as Creation Time – to pray and celebrate with creation, focus on the story of Earth, and commit to a ministry of healing Earth. Now Christians across the globe on September 1 joins in celebrating the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation observing it as the beginning of a time period for contemplation and planned acts of compassion to heal the planet. A month-long prayerful observation of the state of the world, its beauty and the ecological crises that threaten it and all its inhabitants.

Why a season for creation?

In our liturgical cycles we celebrate the life of Jesus: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter. The remainder of the church year encompasses Pentecost Season, which celebrates life in the Holy Spirit. Of course, there are many special days and occasional services throughout the calendar of the church year, such as Christ the King Sunday and Rogation Day. God is celebrated throughout the entire church year. And God the creator, Christ the redeemer of creation, and the Holy Spirit as sustainer of life are integral to worship throughout the church year

Given the importance of creation in the life of Christians and the current ecological threats to all that exists on earth globally, Christians have come together in hope to create a time, a season for celebrating God, the creator and responding to the biblical call to worship with all creation, and living the biblical mandate to care for creation by making creation as a vital dimension of every worship service.

A Special Focus in the Church Year

There is no focus in the church year on God the creator, no opportunity to reflect in a concentrated way on the foundations of redemption and sanctification, namely, the very creation itself that is redeemed and sanctified. For centuries, our theology, our ethics, and our worship have been oriented in two dimensions: our relationship

with God and our human relationships with one another. Now it is time to turn our attention to God's relationship with all creation and with our relationship with creation (and with God through creation). The experience of a Season of Creation through four Sundays in the church year alone will not bring the transformation in consciousness we need to address the ecological problems we face today in God's creation. Yet unless we can see what worship can be like in a season devoted fully to Creator and creation, we will probably not adequately incorporate care for creation into worship throughout the rest of the year. A Season of Creation has proven to be valuable in its own right. Yet we also need the Season of Creation to wake us up and show us another way to do worship all the time

The Season of Creation is an optional season for the church year and opportunity for the congregation and disciples who so choose to focus their celebration on God the creator, Christ as the redeemer of creation, and the Spirit as sustainer of creation—to worship God along with all creation and to express gratitude, love, and a commitment to care for all living things on earth

The Season of Creation Story

When do we celebrate the season of Creation? And where did this season begin? This new season of the church year is celebrated during the four Sundays of September that precede St Francis of Assisi Day (4 October). Around the world, churches are becoming acutely aware of the environmental crisis. Our precious planet is at risk. In response, many congregations in the Western world have celebrated Earth Day, World Environment Day or St Francis of Assisi Day.

The history of the season of Creation can be defined as “a journey” of many who heard their biblical call to care for creation starting from the first time ever when the September 1 was proclaimed as a day of prayer for creation (World Day of Prayer for Creation, or Creation Day) by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I for the Orthodox in 1989, and was embraced by the other major Christian European churches.

In 2000, the St Stephen's Lutheran Church, Adelaide, South Australia celebrated the creation season, for four weeks they relived the great creation stories in the Bible. The children loved it. They confessed what harm they had done to creation and how God is working to renew creation. In recent years many Christian churches have started celebrating the “Season of Creation” (also



known as Creation Time). Several statements from the past few years have called to observe this month-long Season of Creation, such as those of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines in 2003. In 2005 the season of Creation was an option for congregations across Australia but not only Australia! Lutheran churches and the National Council of Churches in USA introduced the season of Creation but also the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu in 2007 and the World Council of Churches in 2008. It is meant to give flexibility to celebrate prayer services for creation in alternative dates throughout the month, while engaging in different actions to care for creation throughout the season the season of Creation offers an opportunity for churches to introduce new visual elements into their worship and to be ecumenical and connected with creation in a particular context.

World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

In 2015 Pope Francis instituted September 1 as “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation” and asked all Catholics to join with the Orthodox Church to celebrate the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. It is celebrated on 1 September. Other Christian churches have joined them in it for a number of years. The day is now an annual event in the Catholic Church. As Pope Francis explains, it is a “significant occasion for prayer, reflection, conversion and the adoption of appropriate lifestyles.”

A Catholic Season of Creation 2016

Pope Francis is building on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation by inviting Catholics to join in celebrating the Season of Creation. The idea of celebrating a Season of Creation as given above began in the Lutheran Church in Adelaide, Australia in 2000. Now it is celebrated by many different churches all over the world. The season embraces the four Sundays of September before the Feast of St Francis of Assisi – 4 October.

Season of Creation 2017:

A Global Collaboration, following organizations have come together to celebrate the season for creation 2017. To raise awareness in the global Christian family about the Season of Creation and the urgency to care for creation as a response to the ecological crisis.

- ACT Alliance (Act alliance) is a coalition of 144 churches and faith-based organizations working together in over 100 countries.
- Global Catholic Movement: Community of hundreds of thousands of Catholics responding to Pope

Francis’s call to action in Laudato Si’ encyclical. Lay people, priests, religious, bishops and global network of member organizations working together to tackle the climate change crisis.

- Green Faith: interfaith partners for the environment: inspiring, educating and mobilizing people of diverse religious backgrounds for environmental leadership.
- World Council of Churches: The WCC is a fellowship of 348 member churches who together represent more than half a billion Christians around the world. WCC member churches can be found in all regions of the world and include most of the world’s Orthodox churches (Eastern and Oriental), as well as African Instituted, Anglican, Assyrian, Baptist, Evangelical, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Moravian, Old-Catholic, Pentecostal, Reformed, Independent churches, Disciples of Christ and Friends (Quakers).
- Pope’s worldwide Prayer Network: Each month the Pope entrusts prayer intentions to his Worldwide Prayer Network, the Apostleship of Prayer. These intentions express his great concern for humanity and the mission of the Church. It is a monthly action plan mobilizing us to work together to build a more human and caring world.
- Anglican Communion Environment Network: The Anglican Episcopal family consists of an estimated 85 million Christians who are members of 44 different Churches. These make up 38 Member Churches (also called Provinces) and six other national or local churches known as Extra Provincials, spread across the globe.
- Possible Ways to Celebrate the Season of Creation
- Launching a 6 week “season of creation” comprising of 6 Sunday, possible action can be taken as community:
- Identifying 6 themes for 6 Sundays, Inviting experts to speak on theological, scientific, spiritual perspectives of creation thus providing an opportunity to community to reflect theologically and spiritually on creation, the environment and our role and responsibility as responsible stewards.
- We must engage as a community, youth groups, parish community or particular commissions
- Organise retreats/reflections incorporating aspects like calculating carbon / ecological foot prints, life style- use of ecology/nature
- Reflection could include understanding threats to the environment sustainability, the challenges, threats and our role as stewards in caring of for the earth our common home



- Initiatives like visits to different sites, eco treks-praise and worship in the open,
- Identifying eco- challenged site/ community/ – visit – campaign for the same.
- Smaller group actions, common gardening, celebrating with local produces
- Pope Francis expresses his concern over the unmanaged waste (the mother earth looks more like the pile of filth) how about initiating solid waste management unit.
- Climate change education sessions and practical activities like conducting “carbon calculation”, exercises, auditing our life style as a family, parish community and enlisting and planning greening initiatives.
- My care for creation, can this season help me make a “life style statement”? Like I say “NO” to use of plastic completely, I take carbon fast, take a concert stand for care for creation?

ACEN, the Global Catholic Climate Movement, and their partners have created a website with resources to help churches take part in the World Day of Prayer for Creation and the Season of Creation. A panning tool kit by the “Season for creation” to help you in celebrating the season for creation can be found at: seasonofcreation.org, <http://seasonofcreation.org/steps-to-organize-a-prayer-vigil-for-creation>.

As faithful people we need to bring our scientific understanding of the universe together with our understanding of God and of creation. As we continue in this season we will reflect on our role as stewards of the environment; how can we care for our planet and nurture our common home. In addition to the theological and ethical exploration of creation, we must also ensure some fun time with nature.

Sources:

<http://www.webofcreation.org/SeasonofCreation/about.html>

<https://social-spirituality.net/season-of-creation-2016/>

<http://www.letallcreationpraise.org/season-of-creation>

<http://seasonofcreation.org/steps-to-organize-a-prayer-vigil-for-creation/> <http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/resources/season-of-creation-2016.aspx>

Overview and history of the “Season of Creation” by Dr. Louk Andrianos / PowerPoint on Season of Creation Advocacy Initiatives by Rev. Rachel Mash,

The Encyclical anniversary (June 18, 2015) and the launch of the Laudato Si Pledge was celebrated around the world on June 18 with much enthusiasm to globally continue our commitment to address the challenge of climate crisis.

To continue the momentum and the zeal of the encyclical here included are some of the quotes/ endorsement of some of the Global Leaders on the message of the encyclical and articles namely “The Deep Theological Vision behind the Pope’s Encyclical” by Stephen Beale and “The Theological Heart of Laudato Si” by David Cloutier

THE QUOTES

“Now more than ever, the world needs to heed the moral imperative of Laudato Si’, and step up to the bold and urgent action that is necessary.”

- Christiana Figueres, former UN climate chief

“Laudato Si’ has brought clarity and urgency to the Church’s message on care for creation. As we already see the devastating effects of climate change taking place, it is important for each and every one of us to hear Pope Francis’ call for an “ecological conversion” and a response that includes individual change, peaceful political action, community solidarity, prayer.”

- Yeb Saño, former lead climate negotiator for the Philippines

The message of Laudato Si still rings out as clear as a church bell and as loud as a trumpet: the time for climate action is now! It’s a call that has been taken up around the world, especially at the grassroots level, with Catholics and non-Catholics everywhere rising to this great challenge of our time. Now, with the forces of denial pushing back against our hard won climate progress, we must redouble our efforts to care for our common home. Laudato Si remains an inspiration for so many of us in this struggle.”

- May Boeve, Executive Director, 350.org



THE DEEP THEOLOGICAL VISION BEHIND THE POPE'S ENCYCLICAL

By Stephen Beale

Ever since Adam and Eve, mankind has been entrusted by its Creator with the care and stewardship of the created world. That simple command from Genesis 2:15—to 'till and keep' what is fittingly called a garden—is the obvious starting point for Pope Francis' new encyclical on the environment (climate change being just one topic among many). But *Laudato Si*—taken from St. Francis' creation-inspired hymn of praise to God—invites us to go deeper than this.

The pope begins with the dignity of the human person, recalling that man and woman were made in the image and likeness of God as stated in Genesis 1:26. This fact is the foundation of the Christian teaching on the inviolable dignity of each person, which Francis repeats in *Laudato Si*.

But there is a sense in which all of creation—not just man—reflects the goodness of God, Francis writes. He invokes St. Thomas Aquinas who makes this point in seeking to explain why there are so many different created things:

Hence we must say that the distinction and multitude of things come from the intention of the first agent, who is God. For He brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them; and because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided and hence the whole universe together participates the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatever (*Summa Theologica*, Part 1, Question 47, Article 1).

Francis is quick to clarify that this is not to put other creatures on the 'same level' as human beings (paragraph 90). But it also means that we cannot treat the rest of the earth and its creatures as mere objects for our dominion (82).

Every created thing, he says, has worth and value: nothing is disposable (84). This is an ecological truth in the sense that smaller creatures like bacteria and algae are important to the health of a habitat. ("But the good functioning of ecosystems also requires fungi, algae, worms, insects, reptiles and an innumerable variety of microorganisms. Some less numerous species, although generally unseen, nonetheless play a critical role in maintaining the equilibrium of a particular place," 34). It is also a theological truth. Here Francis is again building on a Thomistic principle (see Part 1, Question

92, Article 3, Objection 2).

As persons created in the image and likeness of the God who is love, we have the capacity to love our fellow man and woman, who are also themselves worthy of our love being themselves image-bearers of God (65). As Francis puts it: "For all our limitations, gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us, since we were made for love" (58).

Such love should extend to creation, Francis says:

Fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us. That is why it is possible to love our enemies. This same gratuitousness inspires us to love and accept the wind, the sun and the clouds, even though we cannot control them. In this sense, we can speak of a 'universal fraternity' (228).

Here Francis is firmly rooted in the spirituality of his papal namesake and that namesake's famous hymn, from which the title of his encyclical is taken. In that hymn, St. Francis addresses created realities in fraternal terms: 'Sir Brother Sun,' 'Sister Moon and the stars,' 'Brother Wind,' 'Sister Water,' and 'Brother Fire.' Such language may strike us today as overly-sentimental or naïve—much like Francis' preaching to the birds. Francis the pope counters that it is the only theologically (and ecologically) appropriate way to understand our relationship with nature:

Such a conviction cannot be written off as naive romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behavior. If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously (11).

There is thus a certain communion we enjoy with nature—what Francis variously terms a 'sublime communion' and 'a splendid universal communion.' This communion, Francis writes, is oriented towards God. Just as we are not lords over nature, so also nature is something we worship as an end in of itself. Both instead have their purpose and being in God. Both man and the bodies and elements of nature are, after all, worshipping God together in St. Francis' hymn.

This leads to one of the more intriguing takeaways of the whole encyclical. If the created world reflects the goodness of God then it can also become a context



for our mystical encounter with the Creator God who is beyond nature yet present within it, Francis concludes, citing one of the great disciples of St. Francis, St. Bonaventure: The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face (223). This doesn't mean, of course that the 'finite things of this world are really divine,' Francis says. Instead, as St. John of the Cross explained, we sense God in creation because of the 'intimate connection between God and all beings' (234). Such intimacy was at its greatest in the Garden

of Eden, where no clothing nor manmade homes were necessary for the well-being of man, who was in full communion with nature. It was in such a state that man was originally in communion with God as well.

In showing respect for nature today, then, we take one more step towards the full restoration of that state of original happiness. This is the ultimate message of *Laudato Si*.

Source: <http://catholicexchange.com/the-deep-theological-vision-behind-the-popes-encyclical>

THE THEOLOGICAL HEART OF LAUDATO SI'

By David Cloutier

The overwhelming immediate importance of *Laudato Si'* is to call both church and world to respond to the "urgent challenge to protect our common home" (13). As Tony Annett has already ably pointed out, Francis is not mincing words here, even if he is careful. Above all, the encyclical suggests we are home-wreckers, yet we also have a chance for a deeper conversion from our "internal deserts," (217; one of the many quotes from Benedict XVI) to a more joyful and more challenging way of life: "Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning.

We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom" (205). Such a response, the pope makes clear in chapters 1 & 5, requires international cooperation because of the nature of the problems. That Francis chose to highlight the atmosphere, water, and the diversity of species is telling – these are all problems where global cooperation is absolutely necessary. Your car, lawn, and hardwood flooring may very well be implicated, but "nevertheless, self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation facing our world today" (219).

Chapters 1 & 5 contain a lot of the material that will grab attention in the larger media. But the heart of the encyclical theologically and spiritually is chapters 2-4. It is important to highlight that this document is firmly and clearly theological. If we contemplate the broad structure of these chapters, we can see an elegant scheme of creation, fall, and redemption. This fundamental pattern of the Christian narrative is so easy to forget – to sing "Canticle of the Sun" while forgetting the cross, or to offer the cross as an escape hatch from creation, rather than a tree of life that makes way for the Spirit's renewal of creation. To read the

encyclical as a whole – not always easy given its length and its incredible detail! – is to be reminded of this basic pattern: God's gift, our human sinfulness, and the everlasting covenant sealed by the Spirit, promising a vision of renewal to the ends of the earth.

Chapter 2 offers a theology of creation, in which "each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous" (84). The image of all creation oriented to the praise of God may be one of the most spiritually revelatory for many readers; while it pours out of the psalmody, it isn't always a functioning part of the Catholic spiritual repertoire. Francis is careful to point out how Christianity properly demythologizes nature (78), but at the same time, can be seen as elevating its importance, especially by reminding us that "we are not God" (67). Certainly the chapter is a jarring contrast with any kind of a social Darwinist picture of nature as "red in tooth and claw," and its robust conviction that creatures bear inherent purposes is a challenge to ideologies of science that see nature as blind.

Chapter 3 then goes on to diagnose the sinfulness of the current situation. It is no surprise that Francis has harsh words for the current world order; what is a bit more innovative is the weaving together of a set of diseases that combine to create this problem. The order here is important: the pope starts with technology. While he recognizes all the good that has happened over the last two centuries, Francis here starts his critique by borrowing quotes from Romano Guardini's ominously-titled *The End of the Modern World*: "There is a tendency to believe that every increase in power means "an increase of 'progress' itself", an advance in "security, usefulness, welfare and vigour; ...an assimilation of new values into the stream of culture", as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such" (105). Papal biographer Austin Ivereigh has already noted that Francis's encyclical is particularly a challenge to



the mindset of inevitable progress; in this way, it forms a remarkable pairing with Benedict's overlooked *Spe Salvi*, whose extended treatment of communitarian Christian hope is juxtaposed with false ideologies of progress, particularly those of libertarian individualism and fascist totalitarianism. Francis moves to lengthy criticisms of consumerism and globalization, and most strikingly, then roots the entire edifice in a "practical relativism" which, even more dangerous than "doctrinal relativism," involves "the rise of a relativism which sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one's own immediate interests" (122).

Here, as in a number of other places, the pope makes the same connection Benedict made in *Caritas in Veritate*, paragraph 51, in which distortions of human sexuality and human life itself are manifestations of the same mindset as exploitation of the planet. Overall, this chapter's litany of the sins of our age should generate a lot of discussion in the church. Most important, I think, is the final extensive discussion of John Paul II's theology of work in *Laborem Exercens*. In that overlooked document, John Paul II offers an interpretation of Genesis 1 at least as important as his "theology of the body." Francis affirms that "if we reflect on the proper relationship between human beings and the world around us, we see the need for a correct understanding of work; Underlying every form of work is a concept of the relationship which we can and must have with what is other than ourselves" (125).

Francis echoes Wendell Berry's classic essay "Conservation is Good Work," which argues that "work" is simply what names our relationship to the environment, and work can be either good or bad – for the planet, for our relations with others, and for ourselves.

Finally, chapter 4 lays out "integral ecology" in more detail than any prior papal document. This is a vision of a redeemed society, in which individual consumption is replaced by well-planned urban environments in which actions are directed toward the common good. The pope has provided the first extensive papal teaching on urban planning, noting for example the need to "protect those common areas, visual landmarks and urban landscapes which increase our sense of belonging, of rootedness, of "feeling at home" within a city which includes us and brings us together. It is important that the different parts of a city be well integrated and that those who live there have a sense of the whole, rather than being confined to one neighbourhood and failing to see the larger city as space which they share with others" (151).

In essence, the pope is asking us to share space, not simply redistribute resources. He is asking us to consider the real importance of a town square or classic city parks. It is also striking that he puts a great emphasis on what we pass on to future generations. In describing the importance of the common good, Francis emphasizes "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" (159).

Perhaps the single most appalling feature of those who ignore environmental problems is how sentimental the same people sometimes can get about "protecting our children." The idea that the form of life we currently have is barely two generations old for the majority of Americans (and non-existent for the majority of the globe), and is clearly unsustainable for 2-3 more generations, and yet we act as if it can simply go on forever. It is incredible. And, as with his title image of the Earth as our common home, the pope is wisely appealing to the importance of a sense of family in bringing about real conversion. The pope's final appeal to the importance of the sacraments in showing us this renewal, key to his final chapter, is a manifestation of how seriously he takes environmental commitment as essential to Catholic identity.

Due to the encyclical's length, it will be easy for people to cherry-pick quotations. After all, Francis has been quite careful throughout in recognizing the limitations of his claims. This is very appropriate in a document whose final chapter lauds the spiritual importance of sobriety and humility (which the pope notes wryly "were not favourably regarded in the last century" (224)!).

Yet the overall effect of the encyclical is undeniable: this is a sweeping call for change, deeply rooted in a Catholic worldview, one that burrows into every facet of our lives and deeply into the human heart, as well. Francis is here confirming what many have said: the environmental crisis is really the key to economic questions, sexual questions, spiritual questions. It is the key to everything, because the message of environmentalism is, as Francis repeats many times in the document, "everything is connected." It is extremely telling that the "official" date of the document is Pentecost. This "birthday of the Church" is importantly about what the Church is for: not itself, but for the redemptions and renewal of all of God's creation.

Sources: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/>



ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOV 6-17: COP23: The 23rd session of the U.N. climate negotiations (Conference of the Parties, or COP23) will be presided by Fiji and hosted at the headquarters of the UNFCCC secretariat in Bonn, Germany from 6-17 November 2017.

NOV. 6-7: A conference on “**Business Sector’s Response To Laudato Si’**,” will be held at **FABC Documentation Center, Bangkok, Thailand from November 6 – 7, 2017**. Just a brief note on FABC & OHD-CCD: As all of us are aware, FABC - the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences is a voluntary association of Episcopal Conferences in Asia, established with the approval of the Holy See. The President of FABC is Oswald Cardinal Gracias and the Secretary General is Fr. Raymond L. O’Toole, SFM. Bishop Yvon Ambrose is the Bishop Chairman of FABC OHD and Bishop Allwyn D’Silva is the Executive Secretary of the OHD-CCD. This is an announcement regarding the conference on “**BUSINESS SECTOR’S RESPONSE TO LAUDATO Si’**,” to be held at FABC Documentation Center, Bangkok, Thailand. This conference will be organized by the FABC OHD Climate Change Desk (CCD) in collaboration with the FABC Central Secretariat, Hong Kong and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Thailand (CBCT).

The date of the conference is November 6 – 7, 2017 with arrival November 5 evening or morning by 9.30 am and departure 7 November 2017 after 5:00 pm or after breakfast November 8. The aim is to bring together approximately 25 to 35 delegates from the corporate sector from South East Asia, specifically from Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Myanmar Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos & East Timor to reflect on Climate Change, its impacts on Asia and the corporate sector’s response to Laudato Si’.

This invitation is extended to: i) Bishops interested in working on climate justice in Asia, ii) EXPERTS: Business persons/corporate heads/ corporate experts with experience on developing eco efficient business modules, iii) Company heads/ individuals business practitioners / who are conscious and are engaged or want to engage in taking initiatives to combat climate change, iv) Individuals/grassroots activists/ community leaders/climate change activists who are involved in climate change / environmental programs/projects or who can be the vanguard for climate justice in the Church today.

We look forward to 5 “Business Persons” delegated by each Episcopal conference and the Commission for Justice, Peace and development. Participant participate in this conference are to forward their names to us on ccdfabc@gmail.com for further communication and update on other details regarding the conference. The accommodation expenses for the conference will be covered by FABC Climate Change Desk. The participants are requested to bear the cost of their own travel. In case they are not able to meet the travel expenses they can kindly contact FABC CCD for a partial grant.

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The care of creation is a top priority for every Christian disciple in our day. It’s clear in Scripture that God wants us to steward this beautiful Earth we’ve been given. We need to take care of it at a time when global warming and climate change are creating enormous pressures.

”

- The Bishop of Salisbury (Church of England)



EDITOR

Bishop Allwyn D'Silva

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