

Laudato Si' - Seventh Anniversary

"All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care for Creation."

2022 marks the seventh Anniversary of the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*- *on the care of our common home*.

Unlike earlier encyclicals, *Laudato Si'* is addressed, not just to Christians, but to "every person living on the planet". It is a wake-up call that appeals for a response to "the urgent challenge to protect our common home which includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development. LS13

Since its publication in 2015, the urgency of this challenge to protect our common home has become even greater - a fact made clear both by world events and advances in climate science.

Laudato Si' - its influence

Since its publication, *Laudato Si'* has influenced and contributed to the growing dialogue and action around climate change and climate justice.

Within the Church it has reawakened awareness of the proper place that care for creation has in living faith. *Laudato Si'* has led to a renewed focus on eco-spirituality and increased activism reflected in liturgies

LAUDATO SI'

ON THE CARE OF
OUR COMMON HOME



and church based initiatives and in local and international efforts to address the social and environmental impacts of climate change. In parishes and dioceses around the world, people are actively involved in implementing and promoting the teaching of the encyclical.

In May 2021, to support, guide and promote this activity, the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development introduced the **Laudato Si' Action Platform**. This is an ambitious church-wide initiative focusing on seven goals towards which all Catholics are invited to journey in order "to create the future we want: a more inclusive, fraternal, peaceful and sustainable world." (Pope Francis)

The LS Action Platform goals include: degradation and social social injustice cannot be separated.

- Adopting renewable energy;
- Achieving carbon neutrality;
- Defending all life;
- Solidarity with Indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups;
- Adopting simpler lifestyles;
- Fostering ecological education and spirituality;
- Advocating for sustainable development;
- Following ethical investment guidelines, including divestment from fossil fuels and other industries that harm the planet.

The platform includes goals for families, parishes and dioceses, schools and universities, businesses and farms, religious congregations, and hospitals and other health care facilities - a comprehensive guidance for practical and wide-ranging change.

In the Wider World, Laudato Si' has also been influential. It has had considerable impact on the debate around climate change by firmly putting a spotlight on its injustice and through its teaching that environmental

Laudato Si's rejection of the current dominant economic world view has also appealed to many both within and outside the Church. This view treats the earth as a resource to be plundered at will and erroneously presents technology and economic growth as the answers to the world's environmental and social problems. (LS 101).

Rejecting this view, the text insists that *"everything is connected"* and proposes instead what it calls **integral ecology** - a view that respects the intrinsic dignity of nature **and** humanity - a way that hears both *"the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."*

"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. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." LS 139



Changes since Laudato Si' was published.

There is now a general acceptance of the reality of climate change and its human causes. This was not the case in 2015.

There has been a very noticeable increase in extreme weather events and climate-related natural disasters all around the world in the last seven



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years. The fact that many of these events, e.g. floods and wildfires, have been in the “developed world” (places hitherto protected by their wealth) has made it impossible for Europe and the USA to ignore or deny climate change. They have also dramatically illustrated the urgency and need for real and effective change and action to reduce carbon emissions.

Since 2015 there has been a massive growth in protests and activism calling for governments to introduce policies and mitigation measures for climate justice. These are led most noticeably by young people and students.

New terminology has also come into being. For example the terms “climate breakdown” which reflects its urgency and “eco-anxiety” which is a term used mostly in connection with young people to describe the very real fears they have about their future and the future of their children.

Over the last seven years, but to varying degrees, Governments have begun to respond to climate science and public pressure. Individually, more and more people are beginning to make efforts to live sustainably especially in areas such as energy

use, recycling, transport etc. However, while the strategies and targets being adopted to reduce carbon emissions are good, the scale and the speed with which they are being implemented are not enough and are far too slow. This is largely the fault of Governments and large Corporations who have been happy to divert attention from their own failures by promoting community, NGO and individual action.

Too Little Too Late.

Governments, while talking-up their commitment to reducing carbon emissions have, in reality, not done enough and have not shown the political will to introduce the big changes needed. Multinational corporations have largely continued business as usual, doing little more than engaging in *green-washing* campaigns that point to future commitments that remain to be seen rather than making actual substantive improvements.

The failure of the COP26 meeting in Edinburgh to achieve a significant outcome and the stark warnings of the recently published third Report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are clear testaments to the insufficient responses to date.



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Speaking about the 3rd Report, Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General, said that it is “a code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk.” One of the Report’s co-chairs, Professor Jim Skea said “It’s now or never, if we want to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, it will be impossible.” While the report paints a bleak picture of the current reality it also offers hope and states clearly what needs to be done to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. The time for big changes is now.

Laudato Si’, Climate Justice and Faith

In essence this encyclical is a worldwide wake-up call to help humanity to understand and respond to the destruction that human beings are rendering to the environment and to each other. This destruction of our world is, at its core, about the future of God’s creation and the future of the one human family that depends on it. Climate Justice is about protecting

both the human environment and the natural environment. “*Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s creation is essential It is not an option or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.*” (LS 217). **For Christians therefore, care for the creation is a requirement of faith.**

The Integral ecology espoused by Laudato Si’ is a way of living faith and achieving climate justice. It offers us a Christian and an effective way of dealing with the current crisis in which “*everything is connected*” - an approach linking human development and the environment and in which restoring human dignity (by combating poverty) and protecting nature are seen as mutually dependent.

In the past seven years attention has been diverted away from climate breakdown and its human causes. We have experienced Brexit, the Covid-19 Pandemic and conflicts, especially the war in Ukraine which is likely to have significant negative social and economic impacts on a global scale.

Laudato Si’ is a wake-up call addressed to all of us. It’s central focus on respect for the intrinsic dignity of nature and humanity is now more relevant than ever.

The change it calls for, in personal lives, in communities and in countries across the world, i.e. change that serves the common good and protects people and the environment rather than personal, political or national interests, is needed for “*a more inclusive, fraternal, peaceful and sustainable world.*”