Pope Francis writes *Laudato Si’* for the planet and the poor

**Historic Encyclical on Eco-Conversion**

Pope Francis’ historic social encyclical on eco-sustainability, *Laudato Si: Sulla cura della casa comune*, (‘Praised be you: On the care of the common home’) was released on 18 June amid considerable and continued international excitement.

With acknowledgements to the vision of St Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis has called for a great action in response to the song of creation. Like St Francis he will call the church and the world to a spirituality that is attuned to creatures, to the poor and to God’s voice in all creation.

In Pope Francis’ own words from the document:

“I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (from paragraph #14); and

“The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God” (paragraph #84).

**RE teachers welcome *Laudato Si’***

Praise be Pope Francis! His encyclical letter of the same name (*Laudato Si’* in Italian dialect) has just made the work of Religious Education teachers in Catholic schools a whole world easier.

Young people want plausible answers to their questions of how the world is and they want teachers who will respect their search for meaning. They admire passionate action for a just peace, with the planet and for the poor. They cannot understand why some would ignore the science of biology, evolution and climate change.

Archbishop Mark Coleridge has referred to it as a “breakthrough document” (on Q&A, ABC 28 July, 2015). The breakthrough is to make unequivocal and with full magisterial authority the critical and timely stance of ecological conversion that Catholics and all people are challenged to engage in today.

Tony Brennan

**Some *Laudato Si’* web resources to help teachers**

- Video: Fr James Martin SJ: ‘Top 10 Things You Need to Know about Pope Francis’ Laudato Si’ *(4:23).*
- “Laudato Si’ Digital Resource kit”. Prepared by Fr Bruce Duncan CSSR. Google it or go the Redemptorist website.
- Commentary: Fr Frank Brennan SJ has an excellent commentary article in Eureka Street.com.au (5 August 2015) *ATrinity of Questions about Laudato Si’*. 
**Laudato Si’ at a Glance**

**Quick Facts**
- 246 numbered paragraphs on 88 pages
- The six sections follow a ‘see, judge, act’ methodology
- An Encyclical is an authoritative document or long letter by the Pope
- The title *Laudato Si’* comes from St Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of Creatures (13th century)
- Its focus is on ‘integral ecology’ which emphasises the connectedness of interests of people and the planet
- It accepts the consensus of science on climate change and the need to replace polluting fossil fuels.

**Key quotes from *Laudato Si’***

“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” (#21)

“We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves.” (#34)

“Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” (#49)

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental’, and we need to combat poverty, restore dignity to the excluded and protect nature (#139).

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**Interesting Observations on the encyclical *Laudato Si’***

- It is addressed to all people of good will and is written in the first person;
- It takes up Pope John Paul II’s call for “ecological conversion” (#217)
- It applauds other religious leaders who have taken a stance on environmental concerns—especially Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians;
- It references 17 different Catholic Bishop Conferences from all corners of the globe;
- For the first time in a papal encyclical there is a reference to the paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin SJ (1881-1955);
- He challenges technocratic ideologies, anthropocentrism and over-consumption that degrade the poor and the planet;
- Climate sceptics in politics and the church have reacted negatively to the Pope engaging in the science of climate change.