

Actualizing the Vision of *Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home

Roundtable at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences
November 2, 2016



Laudato Si' is a powerful text, political and poetic, and deeply inspiring. It addresses the most critical issues of our time in vision and substance. It elucidates the necessity and means of “individual ecological conversion”, to see the “world as a sacrament of communion.”

Two of its guiding tenets are “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together”, and that we have mutually reinforcing obligations to the earth and to each other. The Beatitudes provide the philosophy to shape our work of transforming and healing society and our planet. The Encyclical provides the blueprint.

The following means and principles to actualize the vision of *Laudato Si'* were put forward at the 2 November 2016 Roundtable at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences:

Action Recommendations:

1. Expand the dialogue with those with influence and power (noting specifically those who drive investment decisions) on the dovetailing of environmental and social issues - “the book of nature is one and indivisible” - and its relevance and implications; toward that end establish a sustainable investment advisory committee for the Vatican’s own investment activities.
2. Continued personal engagement and presence of the Pope in delivering and keeping current the message of *Laudato Si'*. The more Pope Francis speaks about climate change and *Laudato Si'*, the more he will influence public opinion around the world.

3. A detailed and well resourced communication and messaging strategy for *Laudato Si'*, targeted to diverse audiences, which stresses the urgency of the challenge. A plan, differentiated in style, tone, pace and suggested terms of engagement for the four different generations that are active at this moment in history. The different generations should be addressed on their own terms, and with their input. Engage leaders in social media to spread and evolve the message of *Laudato Si'*.

4. That the institution of the Catholic Church, serving as spiritual guide and moral messenger, also serve as physical and behavioral example, modeling in microcosm, the planetary vision of *Laudato Si'* by accelerating the conversion to sustainable stewardship of its own land and assets, the Church's training programs for priests being a powerful, integral aspect.

5. Promote an interdisciplinary interfaith forest, land and climate initiative - which acknowledges the "mysterious relations between things" - convened and directed by an inclusive public private partnership.

6. Be aware of and address the emotional and spiritual implications and sorrow deriving from our "disfigurement" of our common home, which we have "burdened and laid waste," and from distressing commercialism, which "baffle[s] the heart." *Laudato Si'* needs to be widely discussed, shared and acted upon in public and mental health circles, for which it has profound relevance.

Principles to incorporate in the various work of our communities, and additional points of discussion:

7. Understand the relationship between "velocity" of current culture and the loss of internal, spiritual time and time for reflection, which is necessary for building a just and compassionate society.

"The faster they were carried, the less time they had to spare!" (Booth Tarkington, 1918)

8. Recognize that energy poverty is a major impediment to equity and harmony both within and between communities and nations, and greatly impedes our progress in sustaining the Earth as our common home.

9. Support grass roots activist movements and individuals, as powerful countervailing as well as spiritually enriching forces that make the need for global stewardship vibrant and accessible.

10. Assure that indigenous forest inhabitants have meaningful work that arises from their values, and their relationship to the land. Assure that there are specific avenues for the wisdom of these communities to permeate our atomized civil societies.

11. Encourage down to earth dialogue among faith communities and civil society on the subject of environmental market mechanisms which, like any other tool, can be used either for good or ill, remaining mindful that the Economy is a subset of Nature, and not the other way around.

12. Support governments in crafting policies and laws which reflect our moral and spiritual obligations to each other and to Nature, as they translate into physical and material obligations.

13. Work to establish local and national commitments to use-inspired basic research, required for sustainable energy and water systems and valuing forests. Research and innovation is a vital tool in implementing the Encyclical, will foster beneficent new technologies, narrow the gap between Nature and technology, and allow people and Nature again to “extend a friendly hand to one another.”

14. We need a change of heart; we need to increase tenderness towards each other and the environment, and the way we will get there is not built solely on greater analytical insights and new policy, but also moving aesthetic experiences that raise our minds, hearts, and souls towards the good the transcendental, and the holy.

15. Diets of those consuming industrially produced meat, notably cattle, require a disproportionate amount of arable land, and water. This extravagant inequity highlights that, as with what we purchase, what we eat is a moral choice. Nature’s bounty can be sufficient for all needs, but not all greed.

16. Engage the spiritual infrastructure of our world geographically, and include georeligious dynamics in dialogues about environmental programs and policy. Keep the spirit of *Laudato Si’* alive, repeated, and deeply ingrained in communities of faith through communications media, actionable geography-relevant materials (like maps with guided land-use and land/facility maintenance suggestions for various dioceses), and through scientific, and NGO partnerships.

17. Disseminate a central lesson of *Laudato Si’*: that we bear moral responsibility for the full lifecycle of activity resulting from our individual economic actions. We each have personal responsibility for the environmental harm caused by the energy we use or the food we eat, any inequity or injustice in the product supply chains that provide us goods and services, and the byproducts and waste we create.

18. Operationally capitalize on and expand the commonalities between religions, communities, and beliefs around the planet, a shared language that can build understanding and cooperation to support sustainability.

19. *Laudato Si’*, explicitly and implicitly, grounds our material reality in a cosmological view of interrelatedness - in the tradition of St. Francis, Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, among others - proclaiming the Universe a “communion of subjects,” and not “a collection of objects.” (Thomas Berry, 1999)

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