

JUSTICE AND PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION



In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. *Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.* This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her and by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.

(*"Laudato si"* by Pope Francis)

James Martin S.J. of *America* and Anthony Annett of *Commonweal* have shared the following four summaries.

Climate change is one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.

The encyclical strongly affirms the climate science and the gravity of the environmental challenge. The Pope is not on the side of deniers of climate change. Nor is he on the side of any politician who refuses to do something about climate change because of selfish political interests.

There is a profound interconnectedness of all of creation.

We see this in the Pope's meditation on Saint Francis of Assisi's *Sister and Mother Earth*. He develops the "Gospel of Creation" through his reflection on God's love for all of creation seen in the Old and New Testaments. From this Pope Francis calls for us to care for our common home. Fundamental themes of Catholic Social Teaching are developed throughout the encyclical: the common good; the preferential option for the poor; the reverence for life and for the human person; and solidarity, especially the solidarity that is owed to those who will come after us...what we owe and must leave for future generations.

Pope Francis blames human behavior, especially the individualistic mindset for much of the environmental crisis.

He attacks the ideology of power and profit and the theology of dominion. He rails against rampant individualism and a self-centered culture of instant gratification. He criticizes the throwaway culture and the tendency to treat people as things. He laments that today freedom seems only to freedom to consume.

A change of heart is required.

Here Pope Francis speaks to the heart of every person. We are all very capable of selfishness and the individualism that excludes. Ecological conversion is necessary at every level – among the movers and the shakers who control and shape the global economy and among every living person. God's creation is meant to be enjoyed by everyone. This planet is our common home. We have to take care of it and maintain it and heal it where it is hurting.

Let us put the Pope's concerns into our daily lives.