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Laudato Si' 101

Decoding and learning from the encyclical

Webinar hosted by Stefany Dupont and Rebecca Rathbone (Animators, Development and Peace)
A few technicalities...

• It is normal for you to not be able to turn on your camera or microphone! :)

• During the webinar, if you’re experiencing technical difficulties (trouble hearing, for example), please use the chat function at the bottom of the screen to write a message. **Any messages written in the chat box** (unless otherwise specified) will **only** be seen by Rebecca, Emily and Stefany.

• If you have a question or comment you’d like to make during the presentation, please write it in the Q&A function, which you can also find at the bottom of the screen. **We will discuss your question or comment at the end of the presentation!**

• The webinar will be recorded and you will have access to the presentation and webinar afterwards (some time next week!)

• Grab your nearest notebook and open up a blank page – **you will be asked some reflection questions during the webinar**. You can jot your answers (which can take any form!) in there.
What we will go over together today

The "see, judge, act" methodology

SEE
THE GLOBAL CRISIS

JUDGE
AS GLOBAL CITIZENS
AS CATHOLICS

ACT
AT DIFFERENT LEVELS/SCALES
Before we start our analysis...

What is *Laudato Si'*?
Laudato Si' is an encyclical

**WHAT IS AN ENCYCLICAL?**

- A letter written by a pope
- Usually addressed to all bishops, sometimes to all Catholics, and occasionally to the entire international community
- Defines the official position of the Catholic Church on a particular theme

- *Laudato Si'* is the second encyclical that Pope Francis has written since his election to the papacy in 2013
- Published on May 24, 2015 (the year of COP21 and the Paris Agreement)
WHY DOES THE ENCYCLICAL BEAR THE TITLE LAUDATO SI'? 

WHAT DOES LAUDATO SI' MEAN? 

WHY DOES THE ENCYCLICAL BEAR THE TITLE LAUDATO SI'? 

WHAT IS THE ENCYCLICAL'S SUBTITLE? 

QUIZ TIME! 

ANSWER THE SURVEY USE THE "RAISE MY HAND" FUNCTION
SEE

Notice, become aware of the problem (Chapter 1)
The Pope notices the contemporary environmental issues affecting "our common home"

Rising pollution
"Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable (...) the earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." (LS, 21)

Increasing water scarcity
"Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right." (LS, 30)

Biodiversity at greater risk
"Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity." (LS, 33)
The Pope notices the contemporary environmental issues affecting "our common home"

What about you? Have you noticed any damages done to the environment in your community? Think of an example. Write it down, make a sketch of it, write a song verse about it... be as creative as you’d like!
The Pope also notes the links between ecological issues and worsening social crises and conflicts.

"The human environment and the natural environment **deteriorate together**; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, **the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet.**" (LS, 48)
It is remarkable how weak international political responses have been. The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected.

(“LS, 54”)

The Pope also denounces the absence or insufficiency of states' and the international community's responses.
JUDGE

Use our critical thinking abilities... as global citizens
(Chapters III and IV)
The Pope's diagnosis

**The Technocratic Paradigm**

Looking at the current situation...

- The Pope recognizes the developmental benefits of technology and progress (e.g., improved life expectancy).
- But he also notes that the currently dominant model of technology and economic growth, which he calls the technocratic paradigm, "has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience." *(LS, 105)*.
- Yet, we often think that the current economic model and/or technology will, by themselves, solve environmental or social issues on a global scale. However, as the Pope notes, citing his predecessor, "the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion." *(LS, 109)*.

**Practical Relativism**

Looking at the current situation...

- The Pope notes that people in positions of power tend to see themselves at the center of everything and to prioritize to their own interests.
- As such, everything that does not further their immediate interest is ignored, minimized and even scorned.

Individuals... as well as natural elements
"Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age, but we do need to slow down (...) to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral." (LS, 114, 112)

Can you think of a way we can redirect technology to serve social or environmental purposes?
Finally, the Pope infers that we need to transform our technocratic paradigm into one based on an integral ecology.
Draw your own three-legged stool on your notepad. What do you notice? Write your thoughts next to each leg.
AN ECOLOGY THAT IS... 

Not just environmental but also socioeconomic

• A better relationship with nature means a better relationship with one's fellow human beings.
• Protecting the environment and our social ties is integral to economic development and should not be seen as a peripheral concern.

Cultural

• Economic and infrastructure-related decisions must be made in consultation with and fully respecting local cultures and Indigenous peoples, who are best able to care for their lands and from whom we should seek consent to move forward.
• Without this, important cultural elements will be lost.

Intergenerational

"Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us." (LS, 159)
Use one's critical faculties as a Catholic (Chapter II)

"Solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality." (LS, 63)
In the beginning...

God created the heavens and the earth, and “saw that it was good.” (Genesis 1:10)

“Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love” (LS, 77)

“Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself.” (LS, 66)
How stable is our "three-legged stool" today?

Throughout history, we have struggled to steady the "three-legged stool" of our existence. Now more than ever, the instability and its consequences are becoming apparent.

The original harmony of the three relationships that form the legs of the stool is broken.

Here's how the Pope explains the broken harmony:

• "The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God." (LS, 66)
• "When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society." (LS, 82). A rupture in any one relationship necessarily impacts upon the others.
The good news

In this, as in any difficult situation, there is good news for Catholics. It is that God, through His son, Jesus, loves us deeply and forgives our sins. This means that the original harmony can be restored and that reconciliation is possible.

"The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. (LS, 13)"

But there are certain conditions. The Pope teaches us that we can work towards reconciliation by realizing:

- Our human fragility and dependence on nature
- Our role as humans within God's creation

...as had been embodied by St. Francis!
Exercise: Let’s be like St Francis!
In one word, can you describe how the exercise made you feel?
ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

**Personal**
Watching the video, we all felt different emotions. We all have our own paths to follow.

**Communal**
"Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds (...) The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion." (LS, 219)

**Perpetual**
We can always learn more and keep improving. It is an ongoing process and not a single, one-time change.
ACT

Individually and collectively

(Chapters V and VI)
**What the Pope proposes**

**ON A SMALLER SCALE: ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION**

**Living simply, wanting less, making do**

"Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by **moderation** and the capacity to be **happy with little**. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack." *(LS, 222)*

**Getting closer to nature**

"We must regain the conviction that **we need one another**, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it." *(LS, 229)*

**Developing healthier relationships**

"Our common home is being pillaged, laid waste and harmed with impunity. Cowardice in defending it is a grave sin (...) People and their movements are called to cry out, to **mobilize and to demand – peacefully, but firmly** – that appropriate and urgently-needed measures be taken. I ask you, in the name of God, to defend Mother Earth." *(Pope Francis, July 9, 2015)*

**Living and sharing Loudato Si' values communally**

**Conducting advocacy**
What the Pope proposes

ON A SMALLER SCALE: ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

... and you? On your personal or communal path to ecological conversion, what steps are you taking or have you taken?
What the Pope proposes

ON A LARGER SCALE: INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

Long-term policies

"The myopia of power politics delays the inclusion of a far-sighted environmental agenda" (LS, 178)

"Here, continuity is essential, because policies related to climate change and environmental protection cannot be altered with every change of government." (LS, 181)

"To take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results [...] But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility." (LS, 181)

Authentic engagement

It is not enough to balance [...] the protection of nature with financial gain [...] it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. (LS, 194)

Social and environmental considerations and criteria should be integral to infrastructure and project planning from the outset and not mere peripheral concerns.

This does not amount to blanket opposition to technological innovation. It only means that profitability cannot be our sole yardstick.

Eco-sensitive education

"Our efforts at education will be inadequate [...] unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature." (LS, 215)

Financial reform

"The financial crisis of 2007-08 provided an opportunity to develop a new economy, more attentive to ethical principles, and new ways of regulating speculative financial practices [...] Instead, most governments focused on “Saving banks at any cost, making the public pay the price, foregoing a firm commitment to reviewing and reforming the entire system." (LS, 189)

Any other ideas you can think of? Write them down!
"A global consensus is essential" (LS, 164)

A unique world, a common project.

Country-specific energy transitions based on common core principles to achieve climate justice

“Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most.” (LS, 169)

Have you visited or lived in a country that could justifiably have different energy transition targets than Canada? Write it down or draw its flag on your notepad.
An apparent paradox

Slowing down...

and speeding up!
SLOWING DOWN

To be; to contemplate; to redefine one's relationship with others, with nature and with God

- The contemplation of nature
- The deceleration of consumption
- The forging and cherishing of deeper, gentler human relationships

SPEEDING UP

To recognize the urgency of being creative, mobilizing and acting

- Using our voices (as privileged Western citizens) to speak for an integral ecology
- Sharing our knowledge, ideas and strategies to accelerate change-making
What we need to slow down pertains to our own personal ecological conversion. It is like inhaling to absorb the power of Creation and seeking communion with others, with nature and with God.

What we need to speed up pertains to a global integral ecology. It is like exhaling to send forth our powers, to offer ourselves up to join community efforts to stop the abuse of the planet.
Conclusion

Key messages to take away
In Laudato Si’, the Pope takes note of a desolate situation

- The destruction of our common home
- The choice of domination over reciprocity
- The oppression of the most vulnerable people and species
But he also speaks to us with firm belief in humankind’s potential for ecological conversion.

A return to an integral ecology through ecological conversion... is achievable by slowing down and speeding up at once!
Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope. (LS, 244)
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Opening up the floor to you!

Completing our reflection together