

Laudato Si' – a letter from Pope Francis on care for our common home.

Pope Francis has written a letter addressed to every person on this planet, urging us all to protect the Earth, our common home. In the letter, he says:

The Earth is God's gift to us, full of beauty and wonder, where the fruits of the Earth belong to everyone. But what we see today is that our common home has never been so hurt and mistreated as it has been in the last 200 years.

We have developed at a greater speed than we could have ever imagined. We have treated the Earth like it has an unlimited supply of resources, taking more than our fair share from most people on the planet, as well as future generations to come. We have stripped the Earth of its natural forests, contaminated the Earth's waters, its land and its air. Plants and species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate. The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.

Our increasing use of polluting fossil fuels, especially coal, oil and gas, is helping to drive climate change which is one of the biggest challenges we face today. Climate change affects us all, but it is the poorest communities who suffer the most.

We are now at crisis point, where the future of our common home is under threat and, despite this crisis, there seems to be no slowdown in the lifestyles of the rich nations. Enormous gaps between the rich and the poor continue to rise; between those who are trapped in poverty with few or no resources and those who are consuming and wasting at an ever-increasing rate, leaving a trail of waste and destruction.

Our digital world is also polluting us with noise and distractions, stopping us from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. Real relationships are replaced with virtual friendships, which we can choose to accept or reject, making us dissatisfied with true deep relationships, or can give rise to a new sense of isolation.

Yet, despite all of this, all is not lost. Young people demand change. Young people want to build a better future, which takes seriously the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the poor.

So, we *can* change, we *can* make a new start.

To protect our common home, we need a common plan. The whole human family needs to work together, so that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Our use of polluting fossil fuels also needs to be replaced without delay. And we need to stop treating the world's resources as an object for profit, with no thought on how our actions might affect the environment or future generations.

So, let's put love for the world and love for our neighbour into action, by living together in harmony, listening to one another, caring for nature and getting involved with society and politics.

Let's undergo an 'eco-conversion'; in which we listen to the cry of the earth, and the cry of the poor. This means taking seriously things like avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water waste, separating rubbish and using public transport as a part of our calling to protect creation.

But more urgently we can slow down on how much we consume and throw away. We can find great joy and freedom in living simply, rather than being always on the look-out for what we do not have.

We are capable of these changes and making a new start.

So, let us make that start today!

Signed,

Pope Francis