

Newsletter of Ballarat Diocesan Ecological Sustainability Group



Laudato si' – Pope Francis' encyclical

Pope Francis released his highly anticipated encyclical letter **Laudato si' – Praise be to you** on June 18, in Rome. This Encyclical calls on every person living on this planet to care for creation, our common home, and take collective action as we face global environmental degradation. It offers a unique opportunity for the Catholic community to enter into dialogue on important social and environmental issues, such as fossil fuel consumption and climate change.

Jacqui Remond, Director of Catholic Earthcare Australia, joyfully received the Pope's Encyclical. She said, "Laudato si' is an inspiration and a game-changer. It offers us in Australia a powerful moral and spiritual imperative for environmental and social action. This encyclical calls on us all to embrace a new lifestyle that respects all of creation, and asks our leaders to commit to effective global agreements."

What are the key messages in Laudato si'?

The question at the heart of Laudato si' is "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (paragraph 160). This question is explored in numerous ways through the key themes in Pope Francis' Encyclical.

These themes include:

- The intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet
- The conviction that everything in the world is connected
- The critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology
- The call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress

- The value proper to each creature
- The human meaning of ecology
- The need for forthright and honest debate
- The serious responsibility of international and local policy
- The throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle (paragraph 16)

How can you respond to Laudato si'

We want to support the Australian community in responding to Pope Francis' call to protect "Our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us..."(2)

Some key actions you can take today

- Read Laudato si', reflect deeply on the key messages and share them with others.
- Watch our video Laudato si' – An urgent appeal for action and reflect on the discussion points.
- Fast for the Climate and celebrate Meatless Friday to reduce your carbon footprint.
- Sign the global Catholic Climate Petition, which is endorsed by Pope Francis.
- Read our new book The Francis Effect II and attend a follow up colloquium in your diocese.
- Join our National Energy Efficiency Network and cut your energy consumption.
- Start a garden, in your home, school, parish or office and connect with our common home.
- Write to your local Member of Parliament demanding Australian action on climate change.
- Move to renewable sources of energy.
- Consider where your investments are placed.

Reference: Information taken from the Catholic Earthcare website

Ecotheology Conference

"Rediscovering the Spiritual in God's Creation" Conference.

The "Rediscovering the Spiritual in God's Creation" Conference in March 2015 in South Australia, was based on our relationship with creation and explored both the theology and how that is experienced spiritually and personally. The impressive list of guest speakers from Australia and overseas gave a rare opportunity to hear from people who had written extensively, Paul Santmire, Denis Edwards, Bob White, Heather Eaton, Ernst Conradie, Vicki Babalanski, Norman Habel and Celia Deane Drummond.

The keynote speakers addressed the relationship of God and the world from many perspectives including understanding the Spirit of creation through theological anthropology, and encounters between humans and other species, the tensions between contemporary science and theological integrity, re-discovering the wisdom in God's creation, how we view ourselves as a community in the context of our connectedness with creation and notions of spirituality that arise from the natural world. The opportunity to hear these and many other diverse talks was a precious and enriching experience.

One of the goals of the conference was to increase awareness of environmental sustainability issues in faith communities. As such



it was a very enriching experience to speak with participants from other faith communities and share stories and experiences of work in this area.

This was extremely valuable preparation for us as we continue to explore Pope Francis Encyclical “Laudate Si”, giving us the opportunity to network with others, offer support and sharing of resources.

Earth Day Forum in Ballarat, 2015

On April 22, over a billion people across some 190 countries celebrated World Earth Day. They were linking into a movement that began with a small group in 1970 and continues to gain momentum. The Ballarat Diocesan Ecological Sustainability group invited parishioners in the Ballarat Region to join them for a two hour Earth Day event at the Mercy Centre.

Across the back of the Gathering Room were the twelve Victorian Volcanic Plains Banners, reminding us all that we inhabit a beautiful but critically endangered part of the globe. See the following site:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/grasslands-victoria>

On the tables were the fruits of the earth, the work of soil and sun and water and of human hands. The opening prayer focused on food sustainability for all the creatures of Earth, human and other-than-human. The gospel story of the feeding of the 5000 was presented as an invitation to sit down in circles of compassion, to share the goods of the Earth and to be attentive to how much is left over.

Dr Stephen Carey of Federation University guided us through a geological history of the Victorian Volcanic Plains, from the time before volcanic activity, through the period of volcanism that was most intense some 3-2 million years ago. He explained the different types of volcanism: magmatic and ground-water influenced activity. We were mesmerised by the diagrams of how our familiar landscape took shape across the millennia, of how fissure eruptions formed the lava plains and point eruptions gave birth to scoria cones, lava discs and stony rises. We came away with some sense of how familiar places like Tower Hill, Lake Corangamite and Lake Coragulac were formed, of how the lake basins provided water for animal and plant life when they were full and how plant and animal diversity was affected by the drying out of the lakes. Most fascinating of all was the evidence presented of the extinct megafauna of the Victorian Volcanic Plains, the Diprotodon tracks, kangaroo and wombat tracks and bones, and even marsupial lion traces and bones in the fossil record. Stephen’s talk brought us in touch with the wonders of the Earth and in particular of our own habitat, of the dynamism of Earth processes that result in changes to landscape over time. We were fired to do all we can to protect the beautiful world that we inhabit.

There was time for questions and discussion. Each participant received a copy of Elizabeth Johnson’s “For God So Loved the Cosmos” for further reflection leading to action on behalf of the Earth.

(see <http://www.uscatholic.org/culture/environment/2010/07/god-so-loved-world-jesus-and-environment>).

Ballarat Colloquium

“Laudate Si” On Care for Our Common Home”

On Tuesday August 25th, the first Colloquium discussing Pope Francis Encyclical “Laudate Si” hosted by Catholic Education Office, Mission Australia, and Catholic Earthcare was held in Ballarat at the Mercy Centre, Our Lady Help of Christians school, Wendouree. Fr Denis Edwards emphasised that this is a dialogue, addressing “every person living on this planet”. The Encyclical refers to Bishops conferences all over the world, emphasising this grassroots listening and dialogue. The biblical accounts in Genesis “suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbours and with the earth itself” (LS 66).





Francis speaks of Integral Ecology as ecological commitment and commitment to the whole of humanity, but especially the poor, as interconnected responsibilities of all to the crisis threatening all the ecosystems of the world. He speaks of Indigenous communities needing to be principals in the dialogue when large projects affect their land. The last two chapters give very clear guides for practical actions that can be undertaken. There were three local presentations, St Francis Xavier School, Ballarat students, the Diocesan perspective and a personal story of living sustainability.

Sincere thanks to Sue Searls (Mission Australia – Ballarat) and Susan Crowe (CEO) for all their work organising the Ballarat Colloquium.

Laudato Si' Formation Program - Animators for Sustainability

The Laudato Si' Formation Program, developed from Catholic Earthcare's ASSISI (A Strategic, Systems-based, Integrated Sustainability Initiative) formation program, was a 4-day experience held at the Longview Vineyard in the beautiful Adelaide Hills from 14-17 July 2015. Participants came from NSW, Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria, including Anna Schloo and Jo Rix from the Ballarat Diocese.

During the course of this formation experience, participants were exposed to contemporary ecological theology, scientific understandings of sustainability and transformative social processes that aimed to inspire and support them and their Diocese on the journey of ecological sustainability. Participants have become part of Catholic Earthcare's Diocesan Leadership Network, and as such, by being fully immersed in this transformative journey to ecological sustainability, are invited to assist in an ongoing comprehensive and holistic approach for Dioceses to achieve ecological sustainability into the future.



REC Resource Centre:

Care For Our Common Home: an Australian group reading guide to Pope Francis Laudato Si / Bill Huebsch with Trish Hindmarsh (2015) Vic: Garrett Publishing – 20 copies available

Francis Effect II: Praised Be You – on care for our common ground / edited by Danielle Achikian, Peter Gates, Jacqui Rémond and Lana Turner (2015) Catholic Earthcare Australia, Catholic Religious Australia and Catholic Mission

Youtube:

[The environmental cost of food waste UNEP - YouTube](#)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkgCr3GHaJs

Jan 23, 2015 - Uploaded by UN Expo

An informative short film on the relationship between **food waste** and resource waste. With every bit of food that lands in the trash we're not only wasting valuable nourishment. We're also wasting manifold resources that were necessary to produce the food, such as water, farmland and energy, labour and investments.

*highly recommended (valuable for teachers - upper primary & secondary)

Prayer

At the conclusion of Laudato Si, Pope Francis offers two prayers. Below is the prayer which Pope Francis invites us to share with all who believe in a God who is the all-powerful Creator.

A prayer for our earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.



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