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Caring for our Common Home

An Integral Approach



In response to 'Laudato Sí' and the Jesuit Universal Apostolic Preference 'Caring for our Common Home,' the Jesuit Secretariat for Education in 2020 initiated a project to create an ecological framework for Jesuit schools to give meaning, direction, and guidance to our work as we care for our common home, individually and collectively, both locally and globally.



“A *true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”*
(*Laudato Sí*, 49)

‘Laudato Sí’, also referred to as ‘Care for Our Common Home’, is a letter to Catholics worldwide. It outlines a clear message on how to apply Gospel teachings and Catholic Social Teaching to the specific issue of caring for the earth.

In it, Pope Francis highlights the impact human behaviour has and continues to have on the destruction of Mother Earth. For the Pope, and for us Christians, this is a justice issue.

Wealthier countries generate the most significant impact on the environment while people in poorer countries suffer the environmental and social consequences. It is well recognised that the planet cannot sustain our current practices. In the introduction (LS, 25), Pope Francis writes, ‘many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources that can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited.

‘For example, changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this, in turn, affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.’

‘Laudato Sí’ has put Catholic teaching in the context of today’s ecological crisis and climate emergency and in a world where all is connected, offers a vision for building a more just and sustainable future. Hence, an integral ecology is a key concept, which flows from Pope Francis’ understanding that everything is closely interrelated.

In response to ‘Laudato Sí’ and the Jesuit Universal Apostolic Preference ‘Caring for our Common Home,’ the Jesuit Secretariat for Education in 2020 convened to create an ecological framework for Jesuit schools to give meaning, direction, and guidance to our work as we care for our common home, individually and collectively, both locally and globally.

Jesuit schools across the globe have been discussing and reflecting on the importance of forming students **who understand that being persons for and with others today also means embracing the care of our common home as a fundamental dimension of our humanity.**



Uniting the diverse voices and realities of the six regions of the Global Jesuit Network along with Fe y Alegría, this taskforce has created an Ignatian vision of caring for our common home together with a framework for the various stakeholders within the school communities as we journey together as an Ignatian community.

This framework serves as a reminder that each of us is a significant part of God's Creation and each of us has our own personal role to play in animating God's vision for the care of our common home. "To hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" should become central to any Jesuit educational work that wishes to align itself to the mission of the Society of Jesus.

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Aligned with our Jesuit mission of reconciliation and justice in Christ's command to love one another, this framework encourages us to examine our individual and collective actions and habits through key reflection questions and suggests practical actions we can take to heal our earth. For more, please visit <https://www.educatemagis.org/caring-for-our-common-home/>

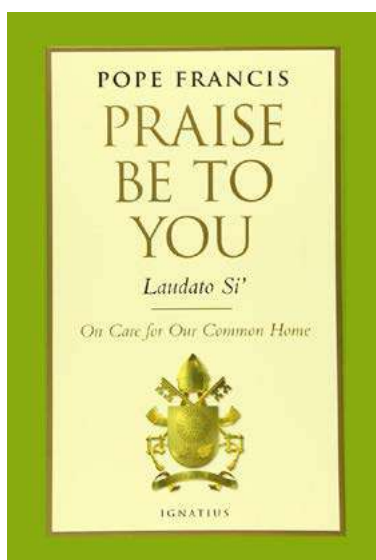
Structural injustice – how am I connected?

"To be drugged by the comforts of privilege is to become contributors to injustice as silent beneficiaries of the fruits of injustice."
Pedro Arrupe

Although an ecological understanding is necessary and action is required, a need to reflect constantly on how our lifestyle decisions, small or large, affect the earth and the poorest peoples of the Earth is equally important. More so, "an awareness of the gravity of today's cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits. Many people know that our current progress and the mere amassing of things and pleasures are not enough to give meaning and joy to the human heart, yet they feel unable to give up what the market sets before them."

While we have always purchased goods, material and other, our culture of purchasing has shifted. Today, we live in a consumerist society where much of what we buy is not driven by need but desire. This has changed from a time when we used to purchase goods based on their value and benefit. Our culture of consumerism has consequences. Scientists can now measure the impact the household consumption of goods has on the environment. These goods include the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and other items we use daily.

For example, over 15,000 litres of water are used to produce 1kg of beef and 17,000 litres of water to produce 1 kg of chocolate.



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The reality is that the richest 10% accounted for 52% of the emissions added to the atmosphere between 1990 and 2015. The richest 1% was responsible for 15% of emissions during this time – more than all the citizens of the EU and more than twice that of the poorest half of humanity (7%). In ‘Laudato Si’ (no 50), Pope Francis warns us that blaming “population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues.” The Pope sees it as an attempt to “legitimise the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalised.”

Pope Francis’s words are clear and profound, asking us to go back to the basics: back to the Gospel and back to our solidarity with one another. He calls us to believe that change is possible and that we have the capacity as human beings to do better than we have done so far, and most importantly, take action. Through ‘Laudato Si’, he calls us to a profound conversion and to change our destructive habits that are at the heart of political, social, and economic choices that hurt our sisters and brothers around the world and Mother Earth.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

<https://www.educatemagis.org/caring-for-our-common-home/an-ignatian-vision/>

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

<https://www.educatemagis.org/caring-for-our-common-home/introduction/Ibid.>

<https://www.iji.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Responding-to-Injustice-an-Ignatian-approach.pdf>

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