

Further Considerations from Laudato Si'

Laudato Si' emphasizes the necessity to treat social and ecological problems together. They cannot be considered in isolation. "When we speak of the 'environment,' what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and, thus, in constant interaction with it." (139) There is growing interest in an important public policy that could decrease damage to the environment while also providing security for workers. In terms of our relationship with the Earth, Francis points out the following connections. "The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now." (161)

Love Cannot Wait reminds all SSNDs that we are "affected and challenged by the divisions in our world . . . and by the social, economic and ecological crises of our times." *Laudato Si'* is a call for all people to transform their hearts and actions. It means a shift in our relationships as individuals and for society. Do we consider the well-being of all people as we make purchasing decisions? In other situations are we being inclusive rather than exclusive? Are we considering reverence for all life? Francis says, "An awareness of the gravity of today's cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits." (209) Small lifestyle changes, recycling, using public transportation, and planting trees reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in each of us. Yet, a deep ecological conversion is a key message.

In the 1900s, a bestselling book, *When Corporations Rule the World*, highlighted the consequences of globalization on global markets and the power of large corporations. *Laudato Si'* also points out inordinate power and influence wielded by corporations and makes suggestions for reining in their power. Corporations place decision-making power regarding land use in the hands of small, distant boards of directors. Members of the board can easily decide to cut corners on environmental and social protections in order to give larger dividends to investors because their individual lives may not be directly affected by such decisions. Yet communities whose lives and livelihoods are directly affected rarely participate in these important decisions. Then Francis says, ". . . To stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society." (128)

