

Dan Leahy's Outline & Editorial:

LAUDATO SI By Pope Francis

[Notes on the Encyclical](#) [Dan's Editorial](#)

INTRODUCTION

50 years ago the Nuclear crisis led to *Pacem in Terris* (John 23). Current “global environmental deterioration” led to Francis to address “every person living on this planet.”

1971. Paul VI - “ecological catastrophe under the effective explosion of industrial civilization.”

John Paul II – called for an “ecological conversion” from seeing the natural environment for only serving “immediate use and consumption.”

Benedict XVI – called for “correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment.” – the evil he pointed to: absence of the notion that there are indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless.”

Patriarch Bartholomew – Requires us to look for “solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity.” He asks us: “to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which entails learning to give, and not simply to give up.”

Saint Francis: shows us “how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.”

Pope Francis appeals for a “new dialogue” – about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Concrete solutions have proved ineffective due to opposition and a “more general lack of interest.”

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME. (Chapter One)

Rapidification – The speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the slow pace of biological evolution. Change is desirable, but has become a source of anxiety that causes harm.

Irrational confidence in “progress and human abilities” --- we must “dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.”

Pollution. “Technology, which, linked to business interests, is presented as the only way of solving these problems, in fact proves incapable of seeing the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others.”

Waste. “The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.”

Throwaway Culture. “Our industrial system ... has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production...”

Warming. Rise in sea level, extreme weather, linked to “great concentration of greenhouse gases” that don't allow the sun's warmth reflected by the earth to be dispersed into space. This situation is aggravated “by a model of development based on intensive use of fossil fuels” and also by

“deforestation for agricultural uses.”

Poor and Migrants. Adversely effected by this change in climate. Migrants fleeing “from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation.”

Current models of production and consumption. Need policies to decrease the emission of carbon dioxide, substitute fossil fuels, develop renewable energy, get adequate storage technologies.

Water Depletion and Privatization. Drinking water. “Water Poverty.” Quality of water available to poor determines health. Access to water is access to life. “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right...” “The control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century.”

Loss of Biodiversity. “We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something we have created ourselves.” – human intervention often in the service of business interests and consumerism is “actually making our earth less rich and beautiful...” Places in need of special protection... Amazon, Congo basins, aquifers and glaciers, but proposals to internationalize the Amazon will only serve the economic interests of transnational corporations.

Decline in Quality of Human Life and Societal Breakdown. Privatization of space along side of hidden areas “where the disposable of society live.”

Media. “... when media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. In this context, the great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distractions of information overload.” “True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons...” Today's media --- at times they also “shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences.”

Global Inequality. No clear awareness of the problems of the excluded. The majority of the planet, billions of persons. “Today, however, we have to realize that 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.” “To blame population growth... (is an) attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution.”

Ecological debt exists. The export of raw materials, the warming caused by huge consumption, the export of solid waste and toxic liquids, what multinationals leave behind, etc. “We must continue to be aware that, regarding climate change, there are differentiated responsibilities.”

Weak Responses. We lack the culture and leadership to respond. A legal system with clear boundaries and protection of ecosystems is indispensable.... “otherwise, the new power structures based on the techno-economic paradigm may overwhelm not only our politics, but also freedom and justice.”

Summits. The failure of global summits make it clear that “our politics are subject to technology and finance.” “Consequently the most one can expect is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment, whereas any genuine attempt by groups within society to introduce change is viewed as a nuisance based on romantic illusions or an obstacle to be circumvented.”

Opinions. Our common home is falling into serious disrepair. We can see signs of a breaking point.

THE GOSPEL OF CREATION (Chapter Two)

Pope Francis wants to show “how faith convictions can offer Christians... ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters.”

Wisdom of Biblical accounts.

Human life grounded in three fundamental relationships: God, neighbor and the earth. This was disrupted “by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations.”

Dominion. The idea that this grant by God to man “has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature” is not a correct interpretation. Given “dominion over the earth” does not justify absolute dominion over other creatures. The reference to “tilling” implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Clearly, the Bible has no place for a “tyrannical anthropocentrism” unconcerned for other creatures.

Nature. Judaeo-Christian thought demythologized nature and no longer saw it as divine, but still emphasized our human responsibility for nature. Acknowledging the value and fragility of nature and, at the same time, our God-given abilities, “we can finally leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress.”

“When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. This vision of ‘might is right’ has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity.....”

Common Destination of Goods. “The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and ‘the first principle of the whole ethical and social order.’”

THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS (Chapter Three)

Technology: Creativity and Power.

We are beneficiaries of two centuries of technological advances, but these advances has also given tremendous power to those who have the knowledge and economic resources to use them. “Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely...” “It is extremely risky for a small part of humanity to have it.”

Every increase in power does not mean an increase in “progress or an advance in security, usefulness, welfare and vigour... and we cannot claim to have a sound ethics and a spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits...”

Globalization of the Technocratic Paradigm.

Humanity has taken up technology “according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm.” It is about gaining control over an external object. The relationship between human beings

and material objects becomes confrontational. This leads to the idea of infinite or unlimited growth.

Technology 'moves forward in the final analysis neither for profit nor for the well being of the human race' that, 'in the most radical sense of the term power is its motive – a lordship over all' (Romano Guadini).

Ecological Culture – needs to be a “distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm. “

Modern Anthropocentrism.

This prizes “technical thought over reality.” The technological mind “ sees nature as insensate order... an object of utility... it views the cosmos as “space” into which objects can be thrown. “The intrinsic dignity of the world is compromised.”

“An inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world..... Instead our 'dominion' over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship.”

INTEGRAL ECOLOGY (Chapter four)

Environmental, Economic and Social Ecology.

“Environment is the relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it.” “We are a part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. “ “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with a complex crisis which is both social and environmental.”

Cultural Ecology.

Cultural patrimony is also under threat. “Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment.”

Merely technical solutions run the risk of addressing symptoms and not the more serious underlying problems.

Need to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. “For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values.”

Ecology of Daily Life.

“Given the interrelationship between living space and human behavior, those who design buildings, neighborhoods, public spaces and cities, out to draw upon various disciplines which help us to understand people’s thought processes, symbolic language and ways of acting. “ He goes on to talk about common areas, need for housing, public transportation and rural areas.

Principle of the Common Good.

“In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.”

Justice between the Generations.

“Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. 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.”

“Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generation debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, water and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes.... The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences.”

LINES OF APPROACH AND ACTION (Chapter Five)

Dialogue on the Environment in the International Community.

We must think of “one world with a common plan.” Fossil fuels need to be replaced without delay. There needs to be agreements about paying the costs of transition.

The ecological movements have made advances.... the 1991 Earth Summit (Rio), the Basel convention of hazardous wastes and, the Vienna convention (ozone layer). There has been less success on biodiversity and regrettably few advances on climate change. “Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most.”

Carbon credits “can lead to a new form of speculation.... seems to provide a quick and easy solution... but in no way does it allow for the radical change which present circumstances require.”

For poor countries the priority must be to eliminate extreme poverty. Enforceable agreements are needed, a system of ocean governance; as nation states weaken, it is essential to have “more efficiently organized international institutions”, a “true world political authority.”

Dialogue for new National and Local Policies.

Laws to promote best practices within nation states. “True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good.” He points to cooperatives as a means to “make a real difference.” He also points to the values “deeply rooted in indigenous peoples.”

Unless citizens control political power, it will not be possible to control damage to the environment. It should be noted, however, that “even the best mechanisms can break down when there are no worthy goals and values or genuine and profound humanism to serve as the basis of a noble and generous society.”

Dialogue and Transparency in Decision-Making.

EISs “should not come after the drawing up of a business proposition.... It should be part of the process from the beginning, and be carried out in a way which is interdisciplinary, transparent and free of all economic or political pressure.”

“The culture of consumerism, which prioritizes short-term gain and private interest, can make it easy to rubber-stamp authorizations or to conceal information.”

He calls for the use of the precautionary principle which “a makes it possible to protect those who are most vulnerable and whose ability to defend their interests and to assemble incontrovertible evidence is limited.”

Politics and Economic in Dialogue with Human Fulfillment.

“The financial crisis of 2007-2008 provided an opportunity to develop a new economy, more attentive to ethical principles, and new ways of regulating speculative financial practices and virtual wealth. But the response to the crisis did not include rethinking the outdated criteria which continue to rule the world.”

“It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress.”

Religions in Dialogue with Science.

“The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity.” – We need to always keep in mind that 'realities are greater than ideas.'

ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY (Chapter Six)

Towards a New Lifestyle.

“... we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and a future to be shared with everyone.”

He talks about compulsive consumerism. “This paradigm leads people to believe that they are free as long as they have the supposed freedom to consume. But those really free are the minority who wield economic and financial power.”

Covenant between Humanity and the Environment.

We need to develop “new habits.” Environmental education needs to include a “critique of the 'myths' of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualist, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market.). Ecological citizenship must go beyond information to “instill good habits.” Daily actions that care for creation.

Ecological Conversion.

Christian spirituality can make a contribution to the renewal of humanity. A spirituality that can motivate us “to a more compassionate concern for the protection of our world.” But, “social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds.”

Joy and Peace. – He discusses “humility” here. (There are a few more pages, but I didn't take notes on the remainder of the encyclical).

NOTE: Pope Francis quotes Romano Guardini several times. I read Guardini's *The End of the Modern World*, written in 1948/1949. Here something he wrote at the end of this book:

"Before all else, then, man's depth must be reawakened. His life must again include times, his day moments of silence in which he collects himself, spreads out before his heart the problems which have stirred him during the day. In a word, man must learn again to meditate and to pray. How, we cannot say."

"But in any case, he must step aside from the general hustle and bustle; must become tranquil and really "there," opening his mind and heart wide to some word of piety or wisdom or ethical honor..."

Romano Guardini
Possibilities of Action (Chapter Eight)
The End of the Modern World

Jorge Mario Bergoglio focused his doctoral research on Romano Guardini as a doctoral student in Germany.

DAN'S EDITORIAL

Any Pope in A Storm: Does Francis Offer a Safe Harbor?

The last time I read an encyclical I was a teenager attending St. Edward's Seminary in Kenmore, Washington. The encyclical was called *Rerum Novarum*, written by Pope Leo the XIII in 1891.

The priests told us about Leo since we were going to be priests in parishes made up of the Catholic working class. Leo said workers should get to have unions, but need to give up any ideas of class conflict or socialism. He wanted to reduce poverty **and** maintain class harmony. I was never sure about that.

I left the seminary after four years, returned to my Irish-Catholic family, completed my degree at Seattle University, thanks to wages I obtained due to one of those unions, and left for two years to live in a Turkish village.

When I came back to the US in 1967, Archbishops from New York to Seattle were blessing Catholic soldiers being sent overseas to kill Vietnamese. I never went to Mass again, declined their Induction Order and didn't read any more encyclicals, that is, until now.

I'm not too sure why I read it. This summer Eastern Washington, a place I love, burned. A spiritual place I grew up with, Mt. Rainier, exposed its ribs. I was starting to get pissed off. Maybe like most people, I'm looking for any signs of leadership faced with Capital's drive to extinguish the Earth.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio and Romano Guardini

Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the future Pope Francis, focused his doctoral studies on the work of a

philosopher and theologian, Romano Guardini. Pope Francis cites Guardini's book, *The End of the Modern World*, in his encyclical. I picked his book up and read it. Here's something that Guardini wrote in his closing chapter:

"Before all else, then, man's depth must be reawakened. His life must again include times, his day moments of silence in which he collects himself, spreads out before his heart the problems which have stirred him during the day. In a word, man must learn again to meditate and to pray. How, we cannot say."

He continues, "But in any case, he must step aside from the general hustle and bustle; must become tranquil and really "there," opening his mind and heart wide to some word of piety or wisdom or ethical honor..."

On Care for our Common Home

I thought I'd give this a try with *Laudato Si, On Care for our Common Home*.

Francis lists all the problems we're experiencing in his opening chapter: pollution, waste, warming, water depletion, loss of biodiversity, privatization, migration, global inequality, speed up and poverty caused by an irrational confidence in "progress and human abilities," a "throwaway culture," current models of production and consumption, the lack of a leadership and culture capable of responding, global summits that produce "superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern" and an omnipresent digital world that "can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously."

Francis concludes there are signs of a breaking point and that "our common home is falling into serious disrepair."

Dominion

One of the things Francis wants to repair is the idea of Dominion. The idea that God's grant of dominion to man "has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature" is not a correct interpretation, he says. The biblical reference to "tilling" implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between humans and nature. He concludes that the Bible has no place for "tyrannical anthropocentrism."

He also wants to assure us that while the Judaeo-Christian tradition demythologized nature and denied its divinity, this tradition still emphasizes human responsibility for nature. Given this he says, "we can leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress" and realize there are serious consequences for society "when nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain."

I'm glad he made this argument. He's the theological Naomi Klein and that's fine. However, his analysis of the cause of the "ecological crisis" is what got my attention; and, in this, he owes a debt to his intellectual mentor Romano Guardini.

Technical Prowess and Power

Pope Francis focuses on our "technical prowess" that has given a very few people more power over humanity than ever before. This "one dimensional paradigm" lays its hands on things "attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us."

He then relies on Romano to show the intent of this paradigm. "... it moves forward in the final analysis neither for profit nor for the well-being of the human race" but "in the most radical sense of the term, power is its motive...".

In his book, Romano focuses on the new dangers that “arises from the factor of power;” the power that the modern world mobilized to conquer nature which now with its logic and force is ending that modern world. Those dangers include the danger of violent destruction by “people who set their hopes on war” and on greater power bringing “the temptation to take the short cut of force.” Yet, neither the Pope nor Romano see power itself as the problem. The question is, says Romano, “is man still a match for his our works?”

Decisive Action and Dialogues

The Pope's encyclical shifts into his elements of “Integral Ecology,” followed by his suggestions for “Lines of Approach and Action.” Integral Ecology argues we face one complex crisis “which is both social and environmental.” This requires a culture that is “a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, ” that can focus on the daily relationship between living spaces and human behavior and invoke the “principle of common good” so that it acts as a call “to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.”

The Pope's integral ecology also emphasizes intergenerational solidarity. “Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to the coming generation debris, desolation and filth.” He continues, “The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by decisive action, here and now.”

The decisive action the Pope calls for is a series of “dialogues.” Dialogues with the international community to pay for the costs of transition from fossil fuels. Dialogues on politics so that citizens control political power, otherwise it will not be possible to control damage to the environment. Dialogues on transparency so that decision making is “free of all economic and political pressure” and the precautionary principle can be used to protect the most vulnerable with a limited ability to assemble incontrovertible evidence.

Redefining Progress and Redirecting Power

The Pope also calls for a re-definition of our notion of progress. The financial crisis of 2007-2008 provided such an opportunity, but it didn't happen. “It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster.”

Finally, the Pope says the majority of the planet profess to be believers. “This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor and building networks of respect and fraternity.” He concludes by saying we need to keep in mind that ‘realities are greater than ideas.’

One of those realities, however, is the question of power and whether humans, in a new relationship with nature, can curb it or shape it toward a new notion of progress that recognizes limitations as well as the poor. Power, says Romano, is “the ability to move reality” and the challenge is for man “to employ power without forfeiting his humanity.”

Romano doesn't think contemporary man can do it, but sees a new “human structure” where man will not have power over nature, but over his own power and the Pope seems to agree. The Pope says we human beings are above all the ones that have to change. We must gain an “awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and a future to be shared with everyone.” It's the basic questions of an organizer... who are we, where are we and what's our vision.

The Power of 1.2 Billion Catholics

I don't know if those questions are a "safe harbor", but let's say Pope Francis can get the 1.2 billion Catholics, half of the Christian world, to exercise their power and "move reality" to confront "the very few" who are responsible for the social and environment crisis he has outlined. That would be something to see.

But, as one of my old friends, another Irish-Catholic said, " I understand that he is a spiritual leader, but for me to have even a sense of engagement the Papa and all the rest of the hierarchy need to get rid of the robes, slippers, pope mobiles and all other accouterments of wealth and privilege and "take to the streets." Less preaching, more doing."