

JPIC 43 – JULY 2015Health in the Lord and the blessing of the Holy Spirit [Rule of St. Albert]

'LAUDATO SI' CALLS FOR A BROAD CULTURAL and SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION!

More than simply an ecological encyclical, Pope Francis has given the Church and the world a document that addresses the full range of Catholic social teaching on economics, politics, culture, employment, technology, migration, poverty, peace, architecture, urban planning, education, human rights and the environment.

The release of the encyclical was also an historic event. Pope Francis sent a powerful message to the world of the urgency of the environmental crisis and the need to transform our relationship with all beings, all creation.

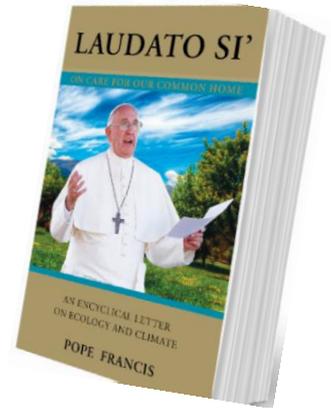
Three days after the Pope's Letter, Australia's leading newspaper [arguably!] the SYDNEY MORNING HERALD devoted four pages [*and a special front page*] to the topic – with more to come!

We knew it was coming – this encyclical! To those who for so long have worried about, prayed about, lobbied and written about Climate Change, Pope Francis seems to have “moved the mountain” [Mk 11.23]!

Speaking of mountains, how can a Carmelite not think about the prophet Elijah and his titanic struggle with the Nay-Sayers of Baal! He almost gave up! His struggle seems to have ended in failure. 'I have failed to convince anyone', he protests! 'It seems like I am the only one who can see the disaster ahead!' The sentiments of many people who have been lobbying for action on Climate Change in the face of Australian Leaders of Government and Shock-Jocks who, like the god Baal have refused to listen to the cries of those who plead with them.

A simple, humble man from Buenos Aires, now Pope Francis, became that still small voice in the Elijah Story that changes perceptions for us. He has drawn together the energy of all peoples of different faiths and of none regarding Climate Change and the mood of nations is shifting.

As God said to Elijah: “You are not alone! There are 700 other prophets just like you!” So has Pope Francis' Encyclical been to those who have been so despondent and almost ready to give up in the face of such political intransigence in Australia. Instead of mountains destroyed by mining, now we can begin to talk of mountains of HOPE; instead of destructive weather conditions resulting from atmospheric degradation we can now rightly begin to talk of 'winds of change' and 'rivers of hope' and a 'new direction' Too optimistic perhaps? Maybe, but to those who live in allegiance to Jesus



Christ and live with a pure heart and a stout conscience [Albert's Rule], that's what we are called to be! Agents of hope and joy and agents of change!

Michael Brundell O.Carm, writes: *I received the encyclical through Eduardo Agosta Scarel, O.Carm, a Carmelite, and a professor of environmental science and climate change at the Pontifical Catholic University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the National University of La Plata, Argentina. He is an expert on ecology and ecological issues for the Episcopal Conference of Latin America, and also for the Bishop's Conference of Argentina. He's a friend of Pope Francis and we presume that he may have been one of the experts consulted by the Pope for his encyclical. He is a member of the International Commission of the Carmelite Order for Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation, for the Carmelite NGO to the United Nations. He was in Australia for the "Carmelites Together" Symposium in March 2013 and he is a most humble man as well as being highly educated and intelligent [these don't necessarily go together, especially the last two].*

Concern about Climate Change is an issue that Carmelites can truly own! Our ancestors chose the beauty of Mount Carmel to live; Albert spoke to them of the need to live according to their means; to share their goods with one another and not be possessive – the cause of so much destruction of the earth. John of the Cross says that material greed can never and will never satisfy the desire of the human heart.

Pope Francis' encyclical has a chapter [5] called LINES OF APPROACH and ACTION. Rejoice, we might in this great shift, and in the encouragement from the Pope, **but the action is ours.** It doesn't end here! How the Spirit of God has moved to change the world! Like Elijah, we must get up, eat and drink of God's Spirit, otherwise the journey will be too much for us!

'Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start.' *Pope Francis, Laudato Si*

'Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last 200 years.'
Laudato Si

A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN MESSAGES:

1) The Spiritual perspective is now part of the discussion on the environment

Previous dialogue has been framed mainly with political, scientific and economic language. The discussion is now firmly grounded in a spiritual perspective and invites others to listen to this point of view.

2) The poor are disproportionately affected by climate change

This is one of the central themes of the encyclical and the Pope provides many examples of the "worse impacts" felt by those living in the developing countries, appealing for an appreciation of the "immense dignity of the poor".

3) Less is more

Pope Francis takes aim at what he calls the "technocratic" mindset where technology is seen as the 'principal key' to human existence. He critiques an unthinking reliance on market forces in which technological, scientific or industrial advancement is embraced before considering how it will affect the environment and negative impact on human beings. It also diagnoses a society of "extreme consumerism" in which people are unable to resist what the market places before them.

4) Catholic Social Teaching now includes teaching on the environment

"*Laudato Si*" is now added to the body of the Church's social teaching. Pope Francis uses some of the traditional foundations of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly the idea of the "common good" to frame his discussion.

5) Discussions about ecology can be grounded in the Bible and church tradition

In a masterful overview Pope Francis traces the theme of love for creation through both the Old and New Testaments. Insights of the saints are also recalled, most especially St Francis of Assisi.

6) Everything is connected - including the economy

"We are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it". Our decisions, particularly about production and consumption, have an inevitable effect on the environment. A heedless pursuit of money that sets aside the interests of the marginalised and leads to the ruination of the planet are connected.

7) Scientific research on the environment is to be praised and used

Pope Francis does not try to "prove" anything about climate change in this document. He admits that the church does not "presume to settle scientific questions" and clearly states that there are disputes over current science. His encyclical accepts the "best scientific research available today" and builds on it.

8) Widespread indifference and selfishness worsen environmental problems

Pope Francis reserves his strongest criticism for the wealthy who ignore the problem of climate change, and especially its effect on the poor. Frequently decision makers are "far removed from the poor," physically with no real contact to their brothers and sisters. In the world of "*Laudato Si*" there is no room for selfishness or indifference.

9) Global dialog and solidarity are needed

More than any encyclical, Pope Francis draws from the experience of people around the world, using the insights of bishops' conferences from many places, embodying the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, which looks to local experience and local solutions. The "new dialogue" and "honest debate" he calls for is not simply one within the Catholic Church, but includes "all people" about our "common home".

10) A change of heart is required

The document is hopeful, reminding us that because God is with us, we can strive both individually and corporately to change course. We can awaken our hearts and move towards an "ecological conversion".

A SELECTION OF WEBSITES TO ACCESS RESOURCES ON THE ENCYCLICAL :

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference:

<https://www.catholic.org.au/acbc-media/media-centre/media-releases-new>

Catholic Earthcare - <http://catholicearthcare.org.au/>

Australian Religious Response to Climate Change:

<http://www.arcc.org.au/resources-relating-to-pope-francis-encyclical>

If you haven't already done so, we hope you will **read** the Encyclical, **contemplate** Pope Francis' words, and **pray** to the Holy Spirit to guide you and all of us in cultivating a global ecological conversion of heart.

A FEW WORDS FROM THE PRAYER FOUND AT THE END OF THE ENCYCLICAL:

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.