

*Laudato Si*  
*On Care for our Common Home*

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of Pentecost, Pope Francis issued an encyclical on the care of the environment. It is entitled *Laudato Si*, which are the first words of the encyclical taken from the opening line of a prayer of St. Francis entitled *The Canticle of the Creatures* (see below).

After a brief introduction, this encyclical has six chapters:

- (1) What is Happening to Our Common Home?
- (2) The Gospel of Creation
- (3) The Roots of the Ecological Crisis
- (4) Integral Ecology
- (5) Lines of Approach and Action
- (6) Ecological Education and Spirituality.

I will discuss each of these chapters in my columns through October. But today, I wish to introduce the encyclical by summarizing its introduction.

In the introduction Pope Francis writes that he would like “to enter into a dialogue with all people about our common home.” Thus this encyclical is addressed not only to Catholics but to all people who are concerned about the environment. The Pope then notes what his predecessors (Paul IV, John Paul II, Benedict XVI) have already said about the environment. In addition to them he also quotes extensively from the writings of Patriarch Bartholomew, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church, who “has spoken in particular of the need for each of us to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet.” Finally, the Pope presents St. Francis as “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology.”

Pope Francis concludes this introduction by announcing the themes he will develop:

- (1) The intimate connection between the poor and the fragility of the planet
- (2) The conviction that everything in the world is connected
- (3) A critique of the current way of looking at power and technology and the need for a new model;
- (4) New ways of understanding the economy and progress
- (5) The value proper to each creature
- (6) The need for forthright and honest debate,
- (7) The need for a new lifestyle to replace our “throwaway culture.”

Such a change of lifestyle will require a profound conversion on our part.

*Father Matera*

***Canticle of the Creatures***  
***St. Francis of Assisi***

*Praise be you (Laudato Si), my Lord, with all your creatures  
especially Sir Brother Sun,  
who is the day and through whom you give us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;  
and bears a likeness of you Most High.  
Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon  
and the stars,  
in heaven you formed them clear and precious  
and beautiful  
Praise be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind,  
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every  
kind of weather  
through whom you give sustenance to your creatures.  
Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water,  
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.  
Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom you light the night, and he is beautiful and  
playful and robust and strong*