



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Kevin Eckery
916-443-2528
keckery@eckery.com

Bishop Jaime Soto Releases Statement on Pope's Environmental Encyclical

SACRAMENTO – The Most Rev. Jaime Soto, Roman Catholic Bishop of Sacramento, issued the following statement today after the Vatican Press Office released "Laudato Si," the new encyclical by Pope Francis concerning climate change and the environment. He read the statement at a news availability at St. Francis High School in Sacramento:

Pope John Paul II introduced the vision of a culture of life during his long pontificate. Pope Francis, standing on the moral legacy of his most recent predecessors, wraps the whole planet into a consistent culture of life with the promulgation of a new encyclical, *Laudato Si*, 'Praise be to you, O Lord.'

Human Solidarity embraces the concern for future generations as we consider how the resources of "sister earth" are harnessed for the betterment of humanity's common home. A culture of life must cultivate a climate of life and hope for people around the globe.

The throw-away society is indicted by the Holy Father as a foolish culture of death that has made the markets the ultimate arbiters of the worth of people as well as creation. The problem is not too many people. There is too much waste as well as too much human potential wasted.

The Human Ecology proposed by Pope Francis places the poor and the marginalized at the center of renewing the face of the earth. He also reminds us of our moral responsibility to be stewards of the common good of creation, as well as brothers and sisters of one human family with room at the table for everyone.

Here in California, we have faced many challenges to create the harmony of resources, ingenuity, and solidarity that can cradle all of God's children and quench their thirsting hopes and aspirations.

In the best of the Catholic tradition, humanity is part of creation while also called to share in the work of the Creator. Jesus used all of creation as a parable for God's mercy: the mustard seeds of the kingdom, the lilies of the field, the vine and the branches, the spring of life-giving water, the weeds and wheat, the sheep and goats, and the final harvest to come.

Catholic ritual shows reverence for the gifts of creation as part of God's saving plan: the water of baptism, the bread and wine of the Eucharist, the precious oils for ordination, and even the procreative union of man and woman. All of these sacramental signs unite humanity with all of creation in singing, *Laudato Si*, 'Praise be to you, O Lord.'"

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- POPE FRANCIS ASKS: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" His answer? It's "up to us" (160).
- OFFERS A WIDE-RANGING VISION: Pope Francis is offering a hopeful vision of renewal. He's inviting everyone to a wide-ranging conversation about how we can best care for "our common home" (3).
 - *Laudato Si* challenges everyone, whether on the right or on the left.
 - It challenges us to resist an economy of exclusion (46).
 - it challenges us to remember that people are not the problem, it's the throwaway culture that's the problem.
 - This is a rich document to be absorbed over time through a process of dialogue and discernment.
 - It is a call to action in a spirit of hope. "Injustice is not invincible" (74). Each of us is called to take concrete steps to better care for the gift of God's creation. "An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness" (230).
 - "The Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics", but wants to "encourage an honest and open debate" (188). "Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home." (13)
- SPEAKS AS A SPIRITUAL & MORAL LEADER: Pope Francis is calling each of us to more fully respond to this urgent spiritual and moral issue. "[T]he ecological crisis is a summons to profound interior conversion" (217). He's inviting each of us to renew our relationships with the created world, with one another, and with God (66).
 - He's calling us to grow closer to God by growing in humility in the face of the results of human activity unmoored from God's design (224).
 - This is a joyful, hopeful call. He's proposing "a way of living life to the full" (223).
 - *Laudato Si* is rooted in Scripture and longstanding Catholic teaching. Pope Francis repeatedly points to the work of St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. He looks to St. Francis "for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness." (10) The title is taken from St. Francis' "Canticle of the Creatures."
- EMPHASIZES OUR CONNECTEDNESS: Pope Francis emphasizes our interconnectedness and interdependence.
 - We're connected with each other, with the created world, and with those who will come after us (70, 159-62).
 - "We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it" (229). This is what the Catholic understanding of solidarity is all about (14).
 - "We live in a common home which God has entrusted to us" (232). We're called to stand together with the poor and vulnerable (10, 49).

UPDATED USCCB LEAD MESSAGES

- **A SPIRITUAL AND MORAL ISSUE** : Pope Francis is speaking as a pastor offering moral guidance rooted in central Catholic teachings about care for others and care for God's creation. (2,6,8, 9, 62-64) "Authentic human development has a moral character" (5).
- **CARE FOR OTHERS: The poor suffer most when we don't responsibly care for God's creation. It's up to us to help them.** (48-52; cite to USCCB Global Climate Change document) (17,48-52)
 - Pope Francis knows that more fully caring for God's creation will help real people right now, especially the poor and vulnerable. (17,48-52)
 - There is an "intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet." (16)
 - The worst impacts of climate change "will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades." (25)
 - Pope Francis reminds us that "we are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other." (208) He calls us to live out solidarity with others in concrete ways.
 - This is about helping our kids and grandkids. Responsibly caring for the natural world will help families just like yours and mine. (160) Every day, environmental impacts affect the lives of countless people right here at home and around the world. (25)
- **CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION: God gave us this world, and He asks us to take care of it. The natural world is a gift. Let's stop and think about what kind of world we want to leave our kids and grandkids.** (2,64,159)
- **CATHOLIC DISTINCTIVENESS: Catholics bring a distinctive and important voice to this conversation.** (62-64)
 - **INTEGRAL ECOLOGY** is the heart of the encyclical. It links care for others and care for God's creation. It is a call for integrity in how we live our lives, and a recognition of our interconnectedness. (5,6,10,137ff.; Ch 4, titled "An Integral Ecology")
 - "We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental." (139)
 - Human ecology begins with protecting human life from its beginning to its natural end. Natural ecology recognizes that our faith calls us to protect and care for God's creation. We recognize the strong link between respecting human dignity and care for the natural world. (§120 – abortion; 70, 136)
 - "When the exercise of social and personal virtues is weakened in a pervasive way, it results in general imbalance, even environmental imbalance. That is why it is not enough to speak only of the integrity of our ecosystem. **We**

- The encyclical is an exercise of Pope Francis' teaching authority. It affirms core Catholic moral teachings on care for others and for God's creation.
 - It offers **prudential judgments**, "intelligence applied to our actions" (US bishops, 2001), on particular issues in light of those core moral teachings.
 - Catholics are called to **consider such prudential judgments prayerfully, humbly, and with open hearts and minds.**
 - **Invoking the role of prudential judgment doesn't allow us to dismiss the encyclical out of hand.** (188)
 - Our **unique perspective means we need to be a part of this conversation.**
- **TIME TO ACT:** Pope Francis is offering hope, encouraging us all to care for others and for the gift of God's creation. It's time to work together to **better protect the created world.** Let's build a **culture of stewardship.** (3, 55)
 - Faith and reason go hand in hand. **The Church respects the role of science.** Scientific knowledge should be used to promote human flourishing and to protect the poor. (62, 199-201)
 - **The scientific consensus on the link between human activity and recent climate change is strong (23) – as strong as the scientific consensus on the link between cigarettes and cancer.** It would be imprudent not to act on this knowledge.
 - **On climate change:**
 - Climate change is "a global problem with serious implications, environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day." (25; see 23-26)
 - "The Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But I want to encourage an honest and open debate, so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good." (188)
 - **Even if you disagree, the moral case for acting to protect the created world remains.** Let's not let disagreement over this distract from the moral case that Pope Francis is making regarding care for God's creation.
 - Pope Francis knows he doesn't have all the answers, but he recognizes it's time to **reinvigorate this important conversation.**
 - **This is a call to action.** Each of us are called to take concrete steps – from reducing consumption to working for political change – to better care for creation.

- **The US military and the business community agree that climate change is happening, and they're preparing for it.**
- **What can we do? This is a teaching document, not a set of policy proposals. First, let's prayerfully respond to Pope Francis' call for a change of hearts. Let's try our best to live rightly within the world we've been given, and with each other.**
 - **Pope Francis calls for public action, as well as personal spiritual conversion and a change of heart. He calls for an examination of conscience. (Ch 6)**
 - **Our "throwaway culture" drives many of our environmental problems. (20-22) We can resist this by taking small steps toward simpler, fuller lives. This will help us grow closer to God and each other (212, 223).**
 - **Small everyday actions matter. We can all take action at home and in our communities. (10,22, 202-203)**
 - **We can live out the Sabbath. (237)**
- **Our businesses and communities can work together to find sustainable energy solutions. This will foster innovation and create tens of thousands of jobs. (191,192, 128, 229)**
- **We must advance responsible international and local policy.**
 - **Sustainable development means that economic prosperity, protection of the created world, and inclusion of the poor and vulnerable should be pursued together. "Protecting the environment need not compromise legitimate economic progress." (Cardinal Wuerl) (13,191-192)**
 - **128, 129**
 - **Responsibly caring for the natural world is a global challenge and it needs a global response. These conversations are already happening, and they'll be improved if we're part of them. (164)**
- **This is a chance to witness to our faith.**

