

HOMILY on Laudato Si

I want to begin today THANKING Fr. Kiley for the opportunity to be here and celebrate all the masses at Sacred Heart. Today is the **last Sunday** of the liturgical year and the Feast of CHRIST THE KING. We celebrate the crucified King of the Jews who through his crucifixion becomes our Lord, our Savior, and head of the Church. St Paul says in the 2nd Reading: *“Christ is the first born of all creation. In Him were created all things in heaven and on earth.”* In the creation account in the Gen. 2, 15 the Creator gave all of creation as a GIFT **“to till and protect”**.

I want to speak today about how well we are protecting the gift of creation using Pope Francis’ letter on the environment and climate change- **“LAUDATO Si (Praise be to you Lord)- The Care of Our Common Home”**.

Climate change is **in the news** these past months and cannot escape our attention. **We see** the hottest temperatures on record in our air and water, flooding in some areas, severe droughts and forest fires in others, melting of the Polar Ice Cap, rising sea levels and acidification of the oceans, affecting whole ecosystems.

The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** and the **Pontifical Academy of Science** both give us a window of 10/12 yrs. to lower emissions of carbon dioxide or face more chaotic weather conditions. Around **97% of scientists** affirmed for Pope Francis that climate change is real and that the principal cause is “human activity”, especially the burning of fossil fuels like gas, petroleum and coal.

We have never seen a problem of the **magnitude** of that posed by climate change, which so adversely affect all life on our planet and all of God’s creation. **Patriarch Bartolomew** is quoted as saying: *“For human beings to contaminate our air, water and soil these are SINS; for an offense against a fellow human being or against nature is an offense against the Creator”*. I firmly believe that it is an **urgent moral responsibility** for all of us to become informed and animated to act in solidarity for the good of all life, future generations and resources on our planet. For these reasons Pope Francis addressed his letter to **“all and every living being on the planet”**.

Climate change is **NOT a partisan** political issue, nor is it only a Catholic issue. All religious traditions have made moral declarations for a faith response to climate change. We are facing a human and global challenge. **Desmond Tutu**, an Anglican Bishop of South Africa stated: *“We are all part of the problem, and we are all part of the solution”*. Gilbert Keith **Chesterton** was asked: “What is the problem with the world?” He responded: *“I, am”*.

The encyclical states that there is a **growing consensus** that ‘we are 1 family, living in 1 house’, our “common home”, part of the sub-title of the encyclical letter. All life and all creation is inter-connected. (The reaction of one grade school class to one house.)

As Christians, we believe that the Creator God gave us this world as a **gift**, not to be trashed. In Genesis 2, 15 we are told to **“till and protect”** the earth. We have done a great job of tilling but not such a good job of protecting. Human activity has developed overwhelming dominance of the earth, stressing jobs and profits but has largely forgotten about the environment and future generations. We seem to have **ignored God’s plan** for protection of the earth. God is disappointed with our **stewardship** of his gifts.

Rapid **global warming** of our atmosphere and waters is drastically **affecting all** plant and animal species. They are not able to adapt so much, so quickly. The encyclical states: *“We are losing thousands of species of plants and animals every year. The problem or challenge is a real and present danger. We are morally obliged* to respond and to change.

The problem is essentially **SPIRITUAL**. Why? Because it has to do with our values, our attitudes, our culture and way of thinking. The pope challenges us to simplify our lifestyles. He suggests that we should be “**indignant**” toward the enormous inequalities that cause so much hunger, massive migrations and violence especially for the less fortunate among us. There are close to 65 million internal and external refugees in or world today. Francis is referring to statistics like of an **OXFAM** study that shows that “*eight individuals own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world’s population*”.

Francis goes on to say that there “*will be no ecological reform without there being an anthropological reform”- unless we change our way of thinking we will not change our way of acting. He says: “*Christians must realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of our faith*”.*

So, what must **we DO**? How should we act? In short, seeing that fossil fuel emissions are causing global warming, we must reduce our use of fossil fuels. We can do an audit of our energy and water use, then develop more efficient ways to conserve energy and water. We can “green” our diets, waste nothing, recycle everything recyclable. We can **practice the 5 R’s** Reduce, Reuse, Remodel, Recycle and Refuse.

Positive things are happening, such as global accords to reduce fossil fuel emissions, the development of solar and wind energy, and electric transportation. In short, efforts toward cleaner and more sustainable energy sources and use of resources. The bottom line in the encyclical is the need to simplify our lifestyles. One person said: “*Live simply, that others might simply live*”.

Francis has put the **Catholic Church at the center** of the world stage with Laudato Si BUT the message is NOT reaching and animating PARISHIONERS or most people to ACT. Parishioners say our PRIESTS don’t talk about it or as one pastor told me “*It is just another program*” and BISHOPS aren’t mandating work on it. Pope Francis calls this the “**globalization of indifference**”. For this reason, I am here today to ASK each end every one of you to take the message of L. S. to heart, to become informed and to ACT. Pope Francis calls us to a **conversion, to simplify our lifestyles** and to lower our dependence on fossil fuels, as our NEW SPIRITUALITY.

Climate change is **URGENT** because it affects ALL life, human, plant and animal on the planet. It is eminently a PRO LIFE matter. Climate change is essentially **SPIRITUAL** because it has to do with our STEWARDSHIP of the gifts of creation. I direct the Creation Care Ministry for the Diocese of San Diego. I offer on a voluntary basis to help parishes study and ACT on L. S.

Most important of all we must **NOT remain indifferent**. When we do, we make ourselves accomplices of the injustices of human activity. Edmund Burke stated: “*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing*”. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said: “*Silence in the face of evil is itself evil*”.

We can **ALL** do something. We can all do a better job of “*tilling and protecting the gifts of creation*” that God gave to us in Genesis 2, 15. Each one of us can make a **positive contribution**. So, as one of our hymns puts it: “*Go make a difference, you can make a difference; Go make a difference, we can make a difference in the world.*”

Here at Sacred Heart you already have a Creation Care Team and good leadership. I believe they may be at a table outside- Why not consider joining them? I also will be outside in case anyone has a question or comment. Have a joyful Thanksgiving, we have much to be thankful for!