

Dear Parishioners:

I would like to continue exploring the Pope's recent encyclical, *Laudato Si*.

**What is in the encyclical?**

The encyclical consists of six (6) chapters with two closing prayers, one for believers and one for non-believers. The Chapter titles are: *What is happening to Our Common Home, The Gospel of Creation, The Human Root of the Ecological Crisis, Integral Ecology, Lines of Approach and Action, and Ecological Education and Spirituality*.

**What does the Pope mean by "integral ecology?"**

One could substitute the word "complete" for integral. A true ecology also needs to look at humankind and the needs of humankind, not simply and only focus on nature. Human ecology and natural ecology are both needed in any analysis.

**What is the heart of what the Pope says about global warming?**

While global warming is a theme in the document, it would be a mistake to think of this as a "global warming encyclical." Pope Francis writes: "*A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climate system. In recent decades, this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes in lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it.*" (Paragraph 23).

While the Holy Father acknowledges that there are other causes for global warming (volcanic activity, changes in the earth's axis, etc.), Pope Francis notes that it is the activities of people (greenhouse gases, deforestation, etc.) that play a key role in climate change. The Pope challenges each one of us to do what we can to improve the environmental situation.

**What if I don't believe in man-made global warming? Can I simply dismiss the encyclical?**

If you are a Catholic, this encyclical is very important. It is not simply a letter regarding scientific matters; it involves matters of faith and morals. Even if Catholics hold different views on the science of the encyclical, Catholics should be challenged by the moral needs addressed in the encyclical.

In the scientific section of the encyclical, Pope Francis relies on scientific studies, not religious sources. I am certainly aware of various opposing studies regarding man-made global warming. People on both sides of the question should be open to revising their views based on new information.

The secular media will spin the encyclical and try to stir up liberals against conservatives, etc. Don't fall into that trap and politicize the issue of global warming. I think any and all of us, liberal, conservative or anywhere in-between, realize that we should not be wasting our natural resources and that we ought to be good stewards of the earth's resources. As individuals, we have to ask ourselves the question: "What can I do concretely to combat global warming?"

Remember: Together, we can do something beautiful for God.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian