**A STEWARDSHIP JOURNEY OF REFLECTION FOR PARISH GROUPS**

**‘Go you are sent ….. to be Stewards of Creation**

Below are passages from ‘*Laudato Si,* the encyclical of Pope Francis on the environment. The encyclical is focused on the idea of ‘integral ecology,’ connecting care of the natural world with justice for the poorest and most vulnerable people. ‘Only by profoundly reshaping our relationships with God, with our neighbours and with the natural world,’ he says, ‘can we hope to tackle the threats facing the planet today’. At the heart of the Pope’s reflections is the question; “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children now growing up?” The answers, he suggests, call for radical changes to political, economic, cultural and social systems, as well as our individual lifestyles. The encyclical, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (September 1) and this year’s Stewardship theme, Go, you are sent to be Stewards of Creation offer us all ‘a precious opportunity to renew our personal participation in this vocation as custodians of creation, raising to God our thanks for the marvellous works entrusted to our care, invoking God’s help for the protection of creation and God’s mercy for the sins committed against the world in which we live’. (Pope Francis, August 2017)

* Read the following passages, internalising their meaning for your own life, for your community and your vocation as a disciple of Christ, for as Pope Francis says, ‘living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience’.
* ‘The ecological crisis summons us to a profound spiritual conversion’, wrote Pope Francis. ‘Christians are called to an ecological conversion whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.’ (*Laudato Si*, 217)

Choose two or three quotes and spend time with members of your group each talking about why the quotes spoke to you and what might change in your life as a result of them, and what action for the community might result from the group’s discernment. ‘There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions…… We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world.’ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* 211-212.

* Pray ‘A Prayer for our Earth’ from *Laudato Si*

***Laudato Si* quotes for reflection**

1. This sister [our common home] now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air, in all forms of life. (2)
2. 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. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combat poverty, restoring dignity to the underprivileged, and at the same time, protecting nature. (139)
3. If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us. (24)
4. We can see signs that things are now reaching a breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation; these are evident in large-scale natural disasters as well as social and even financial crises, for the world’s problems cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation. (61)
5. Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. He asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism “which entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God’s world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed, and compulsion.” (9)
6. The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. (13)
7. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. (14)
8. The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is the golden rule of social conduct and “the first principle of the whole ethical social order.” The Christian tradition has never recognized the right of private property as absolute and inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property. (93)
9. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also “macro relationships, social, economic and political ones.” That is why the Church has set before the world the ideal of a “civilization of love”. Social love is the key to authentic development. (231)
10. Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us, as living creatures, are dependent on one another. (42)
11. Our difficulty in taking this challenge seriously has much to do with an ethical and cultural decline which has accompanied the deterioration of the environment. Men and women of our postmodern world run the risk of rampant individualism, and many problems of society are connected with today’s self-centred culture of instant gratification. (162)
12. 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. We have had enough of immorality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty. It is time to acknowledge that lighthearted superficiality has done us no good. (229)
13. When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples- it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself. (117)
14. The same mindset which stands in the way of making radical decisions to reverse the trend of global warming also stands in the way of achieving the goal of eliminating poverty. (175)
15. Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythm of nature, its phases of decay and generation, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention. (190)
16. I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically – He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace. (10)
17. One particular serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by microorganisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are a significant cause of suffering and of infant mortality. (29)
18. Clearly the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures. (68)
19. Nature is usually seen as a system that can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by a love which calls us together into universal communion. (76)
20. The biblical accounts of creation invite us to see each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object. (81)
21. The culture of relativism is the same disorder which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects, imposing forced labor on them or enslaving them to pay their debts. The same kind of thinking leads to sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests. It is also the mindset of those who say: Let us allow the invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy, and consider their impact on society and nature as collateral damage. In the absence of objective truths or sound principles other than the satisfaction of our own desires and immediate needs, what limits can be place on human trafficking, organized crime, the drug trade, commerce in blood diamonds and the fur of endangered species? (123)
22. Let us not only keep the poor of the future in mind, but also consider today’s poor, whose life on this earthy is brief and who cannot keep waiting. (162)

Source: <https://millennialjournal.com/2015/06/18/must-read-quotes-from-pope-francis-laudato-si-praised-be/>

**A Prayer for our Earth**

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.

O God of the poor,

help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,

so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world, not prey on it,

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts

of those who look only for gain

at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,

to be filled with awe and contemplation,

to recognise that we are profoundly united

with every creature

as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle

for justice, love and peace.

Amen.