

# **Laudato Si' Presentation Talking Points**

## **On Care for Our Common Home**

### **by Paul Canavese**

Thank you for your willingness to learn more about Pope Francis' encyclical and to share his vision with others. These talking points are provided as a companion to our Powerpoint presentation, although they can also be used separately.

### **Our Approach**

It is challenging to summarize a 40,000 word document, and it requires prioritization. It isn't possible to include every point Pope Francis makes in the document. We have done our best to represent the main concepts Pope Francis offers, prioritizing what is most relevant to a general parish audience.

### **Structure of the Presentation**

We have chosen not to strictly follow the structure of the document. We have organized the presentation and talking points into an overview and five main sections, with discussion questions at the end of each section. You can present this in a single session or break it up into multiple sessions.

### **Preparation**

We strongly encourage you read the encyclical for yourself before presenting on it. While it will take some time, Pope Francis' writings are much easier

to read than other Church documents of which you may be familiar. We have referenced related sections of the document in parentheses after each point.

### **Make it Your Own**

This resource has been created with the intention of being flexible. You are encouraged to modify the presentation and these notes to best suit your needs.

### **Presentation Recommendations**

Following the approach used by many strong presenters, we have designed the slides to support you, rather than compete with you. They include a minimal number of words, so your audience will listen to you, rather than be reading.

You are welcome to make copies of these talking point pages to give to your audience as reference, but we strongly recommend distributing them at the *end* of your talk. Otherwise, their noses will be in the handout while you are talking.

### **Next Steps**

Consider what your hopes are for what happens after your presentation. How can you help your people take next steps? Could they gather in small groups? Could you have a service event? Put some thought into this before you present.

## A. Overview

### 1. Name of the Document

- Laudato Si' means “**praise be to you**” in medieval Italian.
- It comes from St. Francis' famous canticle (sung prayer) *The Canticle of the Creatures* (a.k.a. *The Canticle of the Sun*), written in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.
- The **subtitle** is “On Care for Our Common Home”

### 2. Overview

- **Not just “nature.”** This is a wide-ranging document, that does not just address “nature.” Pope Francis asks us to look at all creation, including people, and address a crisis of mistreatment and poverty. It critiques out-of-control consumerism and consumption, destruction of the environment, and neglect of the poor and powerless.

### 3. Presentation Roadmap

- After an overview, we will explore the document in five sections:
- **Our common home is in crisis.** Nature and our society is showing very troubling symptoms.
- **God and creation.** Our faith has a lot to say about creation and the crisis we are experiencing,
- **Causes of the crisis.** Pope Francis urges us to look below the surface, at what is causing the problems.
- **A new vision.** We need a new, alternative perspective to address the crisis.
- **What can I do?** Pope Francis suggests a number of concrete steps we can take.

### 4. Pope Francis' Papal Documents

- *The Light of Faith (Lumen Fidei)*: June 2013, encyclical based on a draft by Pope Benedict XVI.
- *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*: November 2013, apostolic exhortation.
- *The Face of Mercy (Misericordiae Vultus)*: April 2015, papal bull.
- *Praise Be to You (Laudato Si')*: June 2015, encyclical.

## 5. Previous Papal Statements

- **Previous popes** have made significant statements on similar topics and are quoted extensively in the document.
- **Pope Benedict XVI** was called the “Green Pope” by some because he spoke about the environment so frequently and backed it up with action. He also spoke on other themes in the document, ranging from economic to other social issues. (§6)
- **Saint John Paul II** also spoke extensively about these topics, calling for global ecological conversion and an authentic human ecology. (§5)
- **Blessed Pope Paul VI** spoke of ecological concerns as early as 1970. (§4)

## 6. Local Church Statements

- Many **regional documents** have been written on these same issues.
- Pope Francis quoted from a wide selection of **regional bishops' conferences** (unprecedented for a papal document), from: Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Japan, Latin America & Caribbean, Mexico, New Zealand, Paraguay, the Philippines, Portugal, Southern Africa, United States; Episcopal commission in Argentina.

## 7. Document Structure

- About **40,000 words**, 25% longer than *Hamlet*. (The word cloud diagram shows words found in the document, with font size based on frequency.)
- 246 paragraphs.
- Divided into an Introduction and six chapters.
- 172 footnoted citations.

## 8. Papal Encyclical

- **A letter.** This document is a papal encyclical, a letter usually addressed to the Church (although this one addresses the whole world).
- **A form of papal teaching.** Encyclicals are a form of papal teaching, often on topics of faith and morals.

## 9. The Audience

- This document is not written to the Catholic Church, all Christians, or even all people of faith.
- **Everyone.** Pope Francis says he wishes to address “every person on the planet.” (§3)
- **Non-religious.** He knows some don't believe in God or consider religion irrelevant to the topic, but says science and politics need to grounding in meaning and purpose that come from philosophy, ethics, and religion. (§62-63, §199-200)

## B. Our Common Home is in Crisis

### 10. Our Common Home is in Crisis

#### 11. Our Common Home

- **A common home.** The earth is a home we share with other people and the rest of creation. (§13)
- **A shared inheritance.** The fruits of the earth are meant to benefit everyone, rich and poor. God gave it to all of us. (§71, 93-95)
- **Future generations.** Our common home was also given for future generations. What kind of world do we want to leave for our children and grandchildren? What will be left? (§159-162)

#### 12. Nature is in Crisis

- **An unprecedented crisis.** We cannot ignore what is happening any longer. (§2, 161)
- **Pollution & waste.** We're poisoning our planet, turning it into “a pile of filth.” This causes sickness and death, especially impacts the poor, hurts other creatures, and deprives us of the earth's beauty. (§20-22)
- **Climate change.** According to “very solid” scientific consensus, we are seeing changes in the planet's climate causing grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political, and for the distribution of goods. The poor will be hurt the most. (§23-26)
- **Water.** We are wasting and running out of natural resources. Scarcity of clean water is a particular problem, especially impacting the poor. (§27-31)
- **Loss of biodiversity.** Thousands of species die each year, as habitats are destroyed. These species provide food for us and could contain cures for diseases, but also have value in themselves. (§32-42)

#### 13. Climate Change

- **Controversy.** Much of the controversy about this document has focused on climate change.
- **Not a “climate change document.”** Pope Francis is focusing on a much bigger picture here. Only four out of 246 paragraphs focus on climate change. (§23-26)
- **Pope Francis sees climate change as an important issue.** He says according to “very solid scientific consensus” (a recent study by James L. Powell put it at 99.99% of scientists), we are seeing climate change that is causing grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political, and for the distribution of goods. The poor will be hurt the most. (§23-26)
- **Skeptical?** If you are a person skeptical about climate change, we encourage you to read what Pope Francis actually wrote about it. However, the rest of the document is not contingent on this topic.

## 14. Society is in Crisis

- **The poor are suffering.** Poor people and countries are disproportionately affected by the nature crisis, but also the direction our global society has been heading. (§48-52)
- **Decline in the quality of human life.** Despite technological and economic progress, quality of life has declined in many ways: ugly, chaotic cities, limited access to beauty and nature, and hectic lifestyles. (§43-45)
- **Breakdown of society.** Global change has resulted in many social ills: unemployment, social exclusion, inequitable distribution of resources, social breakdown, violence, drugs, and loss of identity. (§46)
- **Media and technology** can cause “mental pollution” and keep us from learning to live wisely, think deeply, and love generously. (§47)

## 15. Reflection

- What concerns you most about the direction the world is headed (both for nature and people)?
- What changes of concern have you seen happen in your lifetime?
- How has technology changed you and how you interact with others?
- Pope Francis quotes the Portuguese bishops, who say the environment is “on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next.” (§159) How do you see your responsibilities to future generations?

## C. God and Creation

### 16. God and Creation

- **What does our faith have to say** about creation and the crisis of our common home?

### 17. The Environment is a Spiritual Issue

- **Comprehensive, faith-based perspective.** Pope Francis lays out a case for caring for the environment, including a survey of Scripture and Church teaching.
- **St. Francis** was a key leader who made this connection. (§1, 10-12)
- **Pope Francis is not the first** pope to say this, although it surprises some people.

### 18. All Creation Belongs to God

- **“Creation” is God’s loving plan.** God has a purpose for creation. (§76-77, 83-85)
- **Creation is holy.** When we experience God through creation, we are moved to give praise. Creation has a message to us from God, and can help us understand God. (§85-88)
- **God alone owns the world.** We are not owners of creation. (§67, 75, 89)
- **We are not God.** When we claim an unlimited right to hurt creation, we are trying to take God’s place. (§67, 75)

### 19. We Are Caretakers

- **Caretakers, not dominators.** The Genesis account does not justify us having absolute dominion over other creatures. We are to “till and keep” (Gen. 2:15): cultivating, caring, and protecting creation. We are stewards. (§67, 79, 82)
- **We can take what we need,** but we need to ensure it is fruitful for future generations. We need to respect the laws and balance of nature. (§67-68)
- **Faith motivation.** As believers, our faith should motivate us to care for creation. (§64)

### 20. Humans and Other Creatures

- **People are unique creatures,** with an immense dignity and personal identity. Other creatures aren’t at the same level as humans. (§65, 69, 81, 90)
- **But other creatures also have value.** As part of that creation, each creature has its own inherent value, purpose, and dignity. Creatures are not divine, but we can see within creation. (§64, 69, 78, 84-88, 90, 118)
- **We are in the same universal communion** and family as other creatures. We are interdependent with the rest of nature and children of a common Creator. Likewise, everything in nature is interconnected. It was created as a reflection of the Trinity: a God who is relationship. (§42, 89-92, 138, 238-240)

## 21. Relationships and Sin

- **God—the Trinity—is relational.** (§238)
- **God made creation (including us) relational.** Everything is interconnected. (§239-240)
- **Sin is when these right relationships are broken:** relationship to God, our neighbor, ourselves, and the rest of creation. This is played out in the Bible, starting in the book of Genesis. (§66, 237)

## 22. Broken Relationships

- **These broken relationships are the root cause of our crisis:**
- **God:** we think we don't need God, try to take the place of God, and hurt God's creation.
- **Ourselves:** we lose sight of our purpose, what is fulfilling, and how to live a truly joyful life.
- **Others:** we don't ensure that everyone has dignity and has enough of our common inheritance.
- **The rest of creation:** we don't treat other creatures with the respect they deserve, and allow them to be hurt.

## 23. Christian Hope

- **Our faith offers a way out of this mess.** There is an alternative, more fulfilling way to live. (§222-227)
- **We can do this.** We are capable of beating this crisis. (§205)
- **God will help us.** God can even bring good out of our evil actions. (§80)

## 24. Reflection

- What does it mean to be caretakers or stewards of the earth?
- What connections do you see between your faith and creation? Did anything surprise you about the case Pope Francis makes for this connection? If so, what?
- How have you experienced sin as broken relationships with God, ourselves, others, and creation?

## D. Causes of the Crisis

### 25. Causes of the Crisis

- **Beyond the symptoms.** Pope Francis urges us to look below the surface, at what is causing the problems. (§101)

### 26. Unprecedented Change

- **A different world.** We live in a completely different world than we did 200 years ago, from technology to the economy to globalization. These are huge changes, and they're happening faster and faster. “Our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads.” (§102)
- **Assumptions and attitudes.** With these changes, we look at the world in a fundamentally different way. We carry assumptions and attitudes that we don't even question. But these assumptions have huge impacts on people and the planet.
  - “A certain way of understanding human life and activity has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us. Should we not pause and consider this?” (§101)

### 27. Changes in Technology

- **Technology is a gift** we should rejoice, which improved our quality of life in many ways. (§102-103)
- **But it can be dangerous.** Technology can be very dangerous (nuclear power, biotechnology, information technology, weapons), and cause unintended consequences. Those who control it have a lot of power, which is very risky. (§104)
- **Out of control.** Society does not have a way of controlling it. What ensures that technology will be used wisely? (§104-105)
- **Because we can.** We often apply technology because we *can*, not necessarily because we *should*. We assume more power is good, but is it? We don't consider the consequences, and this has caused harm to nature and our society. (§105-107)
- **Control and domination.** We try to possess, master, transform, and exploit people and things. We treat everything as an object, with no value or respect. (§106)

### 28. Technology Changes Us

- **Limiting technology is inconceivable.** Choosing a lifestyle that limits the role of technology at all is countercultural. (§108)
- **Daily life implications.** Technology has come to control our daily lives, diminishing our time, freedom, creativity, and ability to make decisions. Technology *changes us*. (§108)

### 29. “Progress”

- **Is more always better?** We are told that economic growth, more technology, more consumption, and greater control of nature is “progress.” Is this making us better, more fulfilled people? Is it helping the



poor? What is the right balance? (§109, 191)

- **Technology and economy are not saviors.** We assume technology and a larger economy will solve ecological problems, poverty, and other social problems. Pope Francis calls this the “myth of progress.” (§60, 109)
- **What are we here for?** What is the purpose and meaning of everything? (§113)

### 30. We Have Become Self-Centered

- **Excessive anthropocentrism.** Pope Francis uses this term to describe how we as a society have put the self-centered needs of (certain) people at the center of everything. (§68)
- **Living without limits.** We act without responsibility or constraint. We act as if we have God's power. (§116, 208)
- **Ignoring consequences.** We want immediate results, so we set short-term priorities and ignore the consequences and future costs. So we cut down rain forests, hunt species to extinction, buy and sell subprime mortgages. (§117)
- **Extreme, compulsive consumerism.** We need to buy things, but buying and spending without good reasons is a big problem. Pope Francis says we have been hoodwinked into believing this gives us freedom. (§203-204)
  - “When people become self-centered and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own, and consume. It is almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality.” (§204)
- **Driven by convenience.** Everything that does not serve our immediate interests becomes irrelevant. We become greedy consumers. (§122, 204)
- **Throwaway culture.** A “throwaway” attitude toward people and things quickly turns everything into trash. This includes resources we use and throw away (e.g. paper), pollution, and poor and vulnerable people. (§20-22, 43-52)

### 31. Who and What Suffers?

- **The poor and the vulnerable.** They do not have influence, and what they have is treated like another resource to exploit. (§136)
- **Workers,** who are exploited or replaced with technology. (§124-129)
- **Nature.** It's long-term health is not a high enough priority. (§69)
- **Future generations.** What will be leave to our children and grandchildren? (§22, 67, 95, 109, 159-162)

### 32. Reflection

- What do you think is true progress for our world? Do you think we're going in that direction?
- Have you experienced our culture as self-centered? In what ways?

## E. A New Vision

### 33. A New Vision

- **Integral ecology.** We need a new alternative perspective from what society tells us. (§137)

### 34. Everything is Connected

- **Ecological and social.** The current crisis on our planet is not just one for other life on the planet, but for humans. And it is not just *ecological*, but also *social*. Many social problems have the same causes as environmental problems. (§139)
- **Solutions can't be isolated.** Therefore, we need a new, big picture perspective that appreciates the whole, and the relationships between things. That perspective needs to include lifestyle, spirituality, education, and science. We need one common plan for the world. (§110-111, 140-142, 164)

### 35. New Models of Progress

- **Redefining progress.** Development that does not result in a better world and quality of life (and often makes it worse) is not progress. Humanity needs to be clear about what direction we're heading and what our priorities are. (§139, 194, 200)
- **The common good.** We need to seek out what is the best for everyone. (§156-158)
- **Real change.** We need more than superficial approaches, before it's too late. (§194, 197)

### 36. Politics and the Economy

- **We can't trust businesses.** Profit motive does not prioritize hidden costs on people and the environment, especially into the future. We need a way to put limits on their actions. (§143-146, 187, 190, 195)
- **We can't trust the economy.** The goals of the economy are not quality of life or what is best for humanity. Some economic sectors are more powerful than countries. (§189-190, 196)
- **We can't trust politics.** Politicians tend to be focused on short-term goals, and are often strongly influenced by powerful economic interests and corruption. (§176-181, 189-196)
- **Moral grounding.** All of the above need ethical and moral grounding, as well as a new vision for an integral, human ecology. All of the above could really serve humanity well! (§192)

### 37. Global Priorities

- **Phase out fossil fuels.** There is no consensus yet on how to pay for the transition, however. (§165)
- **Protect biodiversity.** Progress on this has been very limited. (§169, 174)
- **Address social issues.** These include poverty, the need for healthy cities, lack of housing, good systems of transport. (§147-155)
- **Enforceable international agreements.** We urgently need a true world political authority to enforce worldwide priorities. (§166-175)
- **Common and differentiated responsibilities.** We need to respect where poor countries are at and factor in how they have been exploited. Rich countries have a great responsibility to help poorer countries. (§170-173)

### 38. We Need Healthy Dialogue

- **Honest debate.** We need discussions that are open, honest, and free from economic and political pressure. (§182-188)
- **Transparency.** People need to be able to see and understand how decisions are being made. (§182-188)
- **Wide-ranging dialogue.** We need dialogue across countries, disciplines, politics and economy, science and religions, and more. Part of the problem is that we do not have a wide enough perspective on how to solve our crisis. (§164-201)
- **Seek consensus, asking key questions.** All stakeholders should be involved in important decisions, and ask key questions about purposes and impacts. (§152, 183-188)

### 39. Reflection

- In what ways do you see ecological and social questions as connected?
- How could contribute to a healthy dialogue on these kinds of issues?

## F. What Can I Do?

### 40. What Can I Do?

- **Starting with ourselves.** So what is Pope Francis asking each of us to do? (§202)

### 41. Pray for Conversion

- **Ecological conversion.** St. John Paul II called for a global ecological conversion in 2001. Pope Francis argues forcefully that living our vocation as caretakers of creation (including all people) is “essential” and “not an optional or secondary” part of being Christian. (§5, 216-221)
- **Change in our hearts.** Pope Francis says the crisis calls us to a “profound interior conversion,” to consider how we must change. It means being repentant about when we have failed and moving toward reconciliation. (§217-218)
- **Commitment to action.** True conversion moves us to both change our attitudes and act differently, prioritizing what is best for all people and the rest of creation. (§219)

### 42. Practice Appreciation and Gratitude

- **See and appreciate beauty.** Discovering beauty in nature, art, other people, and more helps us move beyond ourselves and act with more respect. (§11-12, 45, 97, 112, 215)
- **Pray in thanksgiving.** We need to remember that all creation and our lives themselves are gifts from God. Pope Francis especially encourages us to give thanks before or after meals. (§213, 220, 227)

### 43. Move toward a New Lifestyle

- **Less is more.** A lifestyle based on moderation, discovering happiness in little, and prioritizing relationships is good for ourselves, others, and the rest of creation. When we live without limits, we become out of balance. (§208, 222)
- **New habits.** Don't just think about it, but also change your routine. We need to cultivate good virtues to motivate us, which instill new habits. (§209-211, 230)
- **Little actions make a difference.** They have effects beyond what we see, and they change *us*! (§212)
- **Consider the impact.** We need to start assessing the impact that our actions make on other people and the world. (§208)
- **A better way to live.** Living simply is much more fulfilling: a better quality of life with greater freedom, happiness, peacefulness, and attentiveness to what matters. (§222-226)

#### 44. Live within Healthy Limits

- **Limit what you want.** Pope Francis compares the constant desire for *more* to intoxication or addiction. He says those who are the happiest are those who are not constantly looking for what they don't have (e.g. the next phone, toy, computer game, house, clothing, etc.). (§222-224)
- **Limit what you consume.** Use less, so there is enough for everyone. Also be smart about what you do use, based on social responsibility. (§193, 206, 222)
  - “Purchasing is always a moral—and not simply economic—act.” (§206)
- **Limit what you do.** Rediscover Sabbath. Setting healthy limits on our work and activity allows us to prioritize our relationships, relax, and let others rest. (§225, 237)

#### 45. Little Daily Actions

- Pope Francis offers a number of examples, but these are just a start! (§211)
- **Use less resources:** plastic, paper, water, electricity.
- **Not wasting food.**
- **Recycling and re-using.**
- **Caring for other living beings.**
- **Using public transit and carpools.**
- **Spending and consuming less** than we can afford to.

#### 46. Influence the Powerful

- **Influence businesses.** Campaigns and consumer boycotts can be powerful. (§226)
- **Influence politicians.** Politics favors short-sighted action, especially benefiting the powerful. We need to use our influence to be more far-sighted, because they will not do it on their own. We need them to prioritize those with less power, the environment, and a more integrated approach. (§176-181, 196-198)

#### 47. Work with Others

- **Community support.** It is difficult to stay committed when we are isolated. Find ways to get support from others. (§226)
- **Community action.** We can also work together to influence greater changes. (§179, 226)
- **The Church.** How can you work within your parish or diocese to make a difference? (§213-214)

## 48. Reflection

- What steps do you feel motivated to take?
- What does “living within healthy limits” mean to you?
- How can you get support from friends or family members to help you follow through?
- How can your parish help in moving Pope Francis' vision forward?

## 49. Next Steps

- **Read the Encyclical.** You don't need a theology degree to read it. Find it on <http://vatican.va> (or at CatholicCreationCare.com)
- **Do a group study.** Use our group reading guide to go deeper.
- **Follow the conversations on Twitter.** The hashtags #LaudatoSi and #LaudatoWay are being used by many to share their perspectives and commitments.
- **Visit CatholicCreationCare.com** for links to all of the above, more resources, and more ideas.
- **What is your personal commitment?** What do you want to commit to doing?

*(Add slides here for any specific next steps they can take in your parish.)*

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  - 43. Tea, by [Dominik Martin](#) (Unsplash): [https://download.unsplash.com/34/rcaNUh3pQ9GD8w7Iy8qE\\_\\_DSC0940.jpg](https://download.unsplash.com/34/rcaNUh3pQ9GD8w7Iy8qE__DSC0940.jpg)
  - 44. Bicycle, by [Diogo Tavares](#) (Unsplash): <https://download.unsplash.com/22/bike-and-guy.JPG>
  - 45. Eco art (DesignTNT)
  - 46. Financial district, Toronto, by Chris Tyler (Creative Commons Attribution): [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Financial\\_District\\_Toronto\\_May\\_2012.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Financial_District_Toronto_May_2012.jpg)
  - 47. Eco map (Vectorious)