

'Evangelii Gaudium' and 'Laudato Si'

All creation "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22)

*How are we called to a deeper
conversion?*



What is an apostolic exhortation?

A papal document that encourages the faithful to implement a particular aspect of the Church's life and teaching.



What is an encyclical?

A part of the ordinary magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church



Evangelii Gaudium (English: The Joy of the Gospel) is a 2013 apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis on "the church's primary mission of evangelization in the modern world."



Evangelii Gaudium

What is Pope Francis' main message in *Evangelii Gaudium*?

The principal theme involves the need for a **joyful** proclamation of the Gospel to the entire world.

“...an Apostolic Exhortation written around the theme of Christian joy in order that the Church may rediscover the original source of evangelisation in the contemporary world”

***In Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis' expresses:**

Concern that the Church is becoming more judgmental than merciful.

He wants a Church that has the *outgoing* spirit of the pilgrim, as opposed to a Church closed in on itself, languishing in 'institutional inertia'

He worries that some Catholics have become too attached to the external forms of the faith, while their hearts have grown cold.



6 insights provided by Pope Francis, in EG:

- 1 God's inexhaustible mercy.
- 2 The way of beauty.
- 3 The 'revolution of tenderness.'
- 4 Humility before Scripture.
- 5 The wounds of Christ.
- 6 'Faith is always a cross.'



God's inexhaustible mercy.

We are called to renew our commitment to mercy **as**
an external work

“The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.”



The way of beauty.

...the importance of “beauty in evangelisation”

PF: *“Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful...”*

...”Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus.”



The 'revolution of tenderness'

PF: *“True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving... The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness.”*



Humility before Scripture

Practical advice for homilists includes exhortations against sermons that are ‘too long or too boring’. Most of us are not ‘homilists’, so we can practice “reverence for the truth”

Homilies should “*communicate the beauty of the images to encourage the practice of good*” so the faithful “*sense that each word of Scripture is a gift before it is a demand.*”



The wounds of Christ

PF offers the following for we can live out devotion to the Five Sacred Wounds in our works of mercy:

“Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. He hopes that we will stop looking for those personal or communal niches which shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune and instead enter into the reality of other people’s lives and know the power of tenderness”.



'Faith is always a cross'

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

"Christian triumph is always a cross, yet a cross which is at the same time a victorious banner borne with aggressive tenderness against the assaults of evil. The evil spirit of defeatism is brother to the temptation to separate, before its time, the wheat from the weeds; it is the fruit of an anxious and self-centred lack of trust" (paragraph 85).

What limits our Christian growth? Are we too comfortable? Do we avoid taking risks? Why?



Laudato Si: “Praise to you”

The central concept of LS is that of ‘integral ecology’, or “Everything is interconnected” (p.91).

*“Therefore, we face not two crises, the ecological crisis and a human crisis of the poor and the excluded, but **one** inter-related crisis that involves both”.*



What is the root cause of the integrated crisis?

The cause is extreme anthropocentrism

Man has put himself at the centre of creation; his **needs** have been placed above all else to the detriment of creation. In 'advanced' economies these needs have become **wants** finding expression through excessive consumption, 'wealth creation' and gross disregard for 'caring and tilling' and stewardship over creation.



Or, as **PF** puts it in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

'The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience.'

(paragraph 2)



PF offers an analysis of pollution and global warming, the looming crisis of fresh water, the loss of biodiversity, along with the decline in the quality of human life, breakdown of society, and global inequality.

Why is the tone of Laudato Si so urgent?

Some data...

If Earth's history is compared to a calendar year, modern human life has existed for 23 minutes and we have used one third of Earth's natural resources in the last 0.2 seconds.

Every year we extract 55 billion tonnes of resources including fossil energy, metal and minerals from the earth.

This is almost 10 tonnes for every person in the world. And for people in the 'western world' this number is much higher. |



If everyone on earth lived like the average American we would need 4.6 planets to support us. 2.4 for Japanese and about 2.3 for Europeans.

Humanity produces more than 400 million tons of hazardous waste each year (a **substantial** portion of this can actually be avoided- the 'market' pays a high premium for some of these substances).

Estimates vary; about 2 billion tonnes of waste is dumped in our oceans each year. If all this waste was put on trucks they would go around the world 24 times.

If this waste was dumped in the state of Victoria, it would cover the entire surface area.

If humanity continues to create waste at the current rate...

Rates of serious disease will continue to increase due to pollution and the ecological burden of waste.

60% of Beijing's surface water is 'unfit for human contact' (let alone drinking).

“In just a few decades, POPs have spread throughout the global environment to threaten human health and damage land and water ecosystems. *All living organisms* on Earth now carry measurable levels of POPs in their tissues. POPs have been found in sea mammals at levels high enough to qualify their bodies as hazardous waste under US law, and evidence of POPs contamination in human blood and breast milk has been documented worldwide”.

J Epidemiol Community Health 2002;56:813-817 doi:10.1136/jech.56.11.813

Based on this data it is not an exaggeration when **PF** says:

“Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain.

*We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and
filth” (LS, p.119)*



Integral ecology

All aspects of creation are interdependent.

“Exposure to atmospheric pollutants produces a broad spectrum of health hazards, especially for the poor, and causes millions of premature deaths” *(through excessive consumption globally)*

“...take the poor for example, become sick from breathing high levels of smoke from fuels used in cooking or heating” *(poverty and lack of access to ‘clean fuels’- distributive justice)*

...”changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes” *(loss of biodiversity- impacts on agriculture)*

Integral ecology...

“Economies of scale, especially in the agricultural sector, end up forcing smallholders (that is, the poor) to sell their land or to abandon their traditional crops. Their attempts to move to other, more diversified, means of production prove fruitless because of the difficulty of linkage with regional and global markets”.

In other words, ‘small holders’ do what they are told. Our purchasing choices have a bearing on what is cultivated and other agricultural practices.

Integral ecology...

“Political activity on the local level could also be directed to modifying consumption, developing an economy of waste disposal and recycling, protecting certain species and planning a diversified agriculture and the rotation of crops”

PF mentions the scandalous hold of big business over agricultural practices frequently. This is an excellent case study for ‘Integral Ecology:



Integral ecology...

- Certain grains are perennially selected due to convenience and consumer conditioning
- The market is accustomed to continuity
- This impacts crop diversity, which in turn impacts biodiversity

What can we do?

Political and personal action.

“It is remarkable how weak international political responses have been. The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests” (article 54).

Ecological conversion

We **all** need an “ecological conversion”, ‘whereby the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ becomes evident in our relationship with the world around us’. (article 217).

This involves a change in our behaviour and ‘consumption patterns’.

PF provides some **minimum** specific actions that can be taken as part of our ecological conversion.

For example:

Practical steps – suggested by PF

- avoiding the use of plastic and paper
- reducing water consumptions
- separating refuse
- cooking only what can reasonably be consumed (how much is wasted?)
- showing care for other living beings
- using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees
- turning off unnecessary lights” (par. 211).

He calls us all to an ongoing *ecological conversion*, to a spirituality of love and respect for other animals, and their habitats, for the land, the seas, the rivers, in the one community of life on Earth.

All creation “groans in travail” (*Rom 8:22*).

“At the conclusion of this lengthy reflection which has been both joyful and troubling, I propose that we offer two prayers...”

Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father’s love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you! (p.189-190).