



Preparing for Pope Francis's Encyclical:
Caring for Creation
and the Poorest Among Us

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As we remember our theme, **PROTECTING ALL OF GOD'S CREATION**, on our day of fasting and prayer on Monday, April 11, 2016, we celebrate Pope Francis's Ecological Encyclical through a reflection that invites us to action as we care for creation and the poorest among us.

Caring for Creation

Pope Francis does not mince words when he talks about the effects of humanity's actions on the created world: *"The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth . . . These problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish. To cite one example, most of the paper we produce is thrown away and not recycled. It is hard for us to accept that the way natural*

ecosystems work is exemplary; but our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products." (LS §§21, 22)

We continue to use creation for our own end. We turn valleys into landfills—homes for our refuse and rubbish—and level mountains through mountain-top removal, skimming and mining them to fuel the convenient "throwaway culture" we have created. Though he paints what may seem like a bleak picture of the future of creation, Pope Francis offers great hope in his encyclical. The Pope suggests concrete habits (LS §211) for us to begin to cultivate a new respect for our creation, currently groaning in travail. Here are some of his suggestions and a few others to consider adopting in the weeks to come.

- ✿ Pray specifically for the earth and all of creation, especially those who are exploited;
- ✿ Separate refuse you create (recycle, compost, and trash/landfill) and decrease trash production;
- ✿ Save energy: turn off lights when you are not in the room;
- ✿ Use less heat (even if you can afford more) and wear warmer clothes;
- ✿ Reduce water consumption (e.g. when showering, brushing teeth, washing dishes, etc.)
- ✿ Compost kitchen produce scraps to fertilize the soil; plant something (even if indoors)
- ✿ Cook/order only what can be reasonably consumed and learn where your food comes from (eat local!)
- ✿ Educate yourself in environmental issues and responsibilities
- ✿ Stay current on what Pope Francis is doing, saying, and writing.

By reflecting on our relationship with God, others, and creation in light of *Laudato Si'*, we continue to learn what a life of perfect praise in union with all creatures will look like. And we pray for this ultimate union with the words Pope Francis intended for us to share "with all who believe in a God who is the all-powerful Creator" ("A Prayer for Our Earth," LS §246):

*Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
Amen.*