

THE PLACE OF BUSINESS IN OUR COMMON HOME -

A REFLECTION ON LAUDATO SI'

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Prelude.

The encyclical *Laudato Si’* appears to be taking on the quality of a charter for the ecological movement. In its attempt to address all facets of the challenge facing us - from policy, to lifestyle to personal motivation – it answers a need for a common language among people coming from many different perspectives. The document itself is the product of a very distinct background – the social teaching of the Catholic Church – but its analysis of the situation, in which we find ourselves, is conscientiously based on scientific research and it speaks emphatically of the need for dialogue with other religious traditions, as well as with the worlds of public life and business. The encyclical does, nevertheless, have an underlying framework which can be summed up in the two words ‘rapidification’ and ‘praise.’ The first of these words sits more easily into our predominantly secular culture, but both these words are easily misunderstood.

The word ‘rapidification’ is not to be found in any dictionary and it is unusual for a pope to use a neologism. When Pope Francis uses this word ‘rapidification’ to describe our times we can all recognise what he is talking about. His challenge to the hectic pace of contemporary life, however, is not just a general exhortation to slow down. It has wider and older context. The words ‘pride,’ ‘lust,’ ‘avarice,’ ‘envy,’ ‘hatred’ and ‘gluttony’ all have a familiar place in every-day conversation. When any of these words are used we all know something of the realities which they refer to. They also make up six of the seven forms of behaviour which are better known as the seven deadly sins.

The deadly sin of ‘sloth’ is not quite as familiar as the other six. We typically associate sloth with the animal of the same name – a slow-moving listless creature – which reflects the traditional image of laziness. The book of Proverbs has a saying – ‘as a door on its hinge so the laggard on his bed.’ This image needs no elaboration but there is another side to sloth. When we see someone given over to frenetic activity with no time to stop and acknowledge others or to think about what they are doing, this too is the deadly sin of sloth. Pope Francis could have said that the contemporary world is ‘slothful,’ but that particular use of language would not have got the message home.

What matters is that these two extreme forms of behaviour – inactive and hyperactive - have something in common. They both are ways of disengaging from reality. In using the term ‘rapidification’ Francis is not just saying that we are going too fast and that we will tire ourselves out, though that may well be the case. He is criticising contemporary culture for precisely the kind of disengagement which, in earlier times was condemned, as a moral failure.

The antidote to ‘rapidification’ for Pope Francis is contemplation. Without contemplation we remain at a distance from what is happening all around us. We cannot even see reality,

let alone engage with it. Without contemplation we cannot attend to what is happening to our common home, because we are not in touch with ourselves, never mind the world in which we live.

Everyone here will be in some manner familiar with the idea of contemplation as a practise but, while he is certainly not excluding this dimension, Francis is talking more about contemplation as an attitude. Here we come to the heart of his message which is conveyed in the title of his encyclical – ‘Laudato Si’ or ‘Praise You.’ He is borrowing the opening words of the great hymn to creation of St. Francis of Assisi.

The language of praise can be debased when used to flatter or kowtow and, when used in a religious context, words of praise can often appear to strike an obsequious tone. Praise is about acknowledging greatness, but it is not about acknowledging superiority. Praise comes naturally in moments of intimacy and in any expression of love. It is easy to praise children and their delight in being praised is attractive. This kind of attractiveness awakens a powerful human bond. Words of praise bring us over a line from individuality to shared happiness.

The core of Pope Francis message can be described as follows:

- *Lets slow down.*
- *Lets look at our world*
- *Lets praise what we see.*
- *Lets care for our common home.*

The reflection which follows is in part a summary of Laudato Si’ and in part a commentary on the text. It owes a lot to conversations I have had over the years with a number of people with a business background. These include Willem Vriesendorp of FIPRA, who is the initiator and inspiration of this event, and my brother Patrick, with whom I have had many conversations down the years about the trials, triumphs and political complexities involved in producing ecological friendly cement.

Edmond Grace SJ,

DIALOGUE ON OUR COMMON HOME:

[An ode to Change](#)

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INTRODUCTION - THE NOTE OF PRAISE.

1. The word 'praise' is not quite at home in the boardroom, unless perhaps a company employee is praised for some achievement, but the ultimate purpose will always be utilitarian. This functional kind of praise is too calculated when compared to the real thing. It lacks that note of spontaneity which comes when people say that something is 'great,' simply for the joy of saying it.
2. The capacity to say 'that's great' and to mean it in all sincerity is the basis of all ethical behaviour. To value something – really value it – is to be happy to praise it. Without this capacity for praise we have no reason to speak of anything as 'good' or 'great' except in the context of our own self-interest. Those who cannot bring themselves to say that the planet on which we live – our common home – is 'great,' will find it hard to make much sense of what is about to follow.
3. Another form of speech which has no real place in the boardroom, is anything which strikes the note of pathos. Pope Francis begins his encyclical by speaking of the earth as our sister who is crying out because of the harm we have inflicted on her. Pathos appeals to a shared human vulnerability in a manner which draw us beyond self-interest to a sense of solidarity and fraternity. 'My' interest is distinct from 'me,' but the vulnerability, which pathos seeks to address, concerns the very self, not as an isolated monad, but as part of a story in which others have a part to play.
4. While it may be out of place in the boardroom, pathos is very much a part of political leadership. Politics, unlike the joint stock company, is not an invention of lawyers. It is, and always will be a dimension of human life and, like anything pertaining to humanity, it politics and pathos cannot be taken for granted. In our time the absence of pathos in the in the realm of politics is a sign that this sense of care is absent from political discourse. Certainly, there is talk of 'the marginalised' and of society's responsibility to them, but they remain 'they.'
5. The solidarity of western society is being undermined by undue reverence for the joint-stock company. In ancient Rome, those who conquered distant lands returned with untold wealth and used it to subvert the political process and the longstanding liberties of the republic. In our time those who have brought the fruits of modern science to society have reaped unprecedented financial reward and those who now enjoy the consequent wealth are like the generals of ancient Rome. Their wealth has outgrown the political structures, which made its acquisition possible. The generals of ancient Rome destroyed the democratic process because they had enough money both to hire thugs and to bribe every single voter. The financial leverage of multinational companies today gives them a comparable form of power, but there is an additional factor at play.
6. Money is a sign of achievement. Its origins may lie with earlier generations and its source might be dubious and even brutal, but where there is money someone, at some time, has been effective in what they set out to do. Money, therefore, is a sign of success - achieved or inherited – and this is the source of its glamour.

The Canadian economist Keith Galbraith speaks of *'the oft noted public impression that intelligence... marches in close step with the possession of mondy.'* (*Financial Euphoria*, Penguin, p. 106.) Money has its own hypnotic power. Those who don't have it are easily overawed by those who do and they in turn too easily take the deference of others as a measure of their own ability.

7. Wealth can never be taken for granted. It is bound up with networks of relationships and credit and those networks will always impinge on the political process which, in the last analysis, determines how wealth is managed. Just as the managers of wealth cannot ignore public life and political leadership, no government can afford to ignore that astute observation of human nature on which the business and wealth is based. The challenge facing political leaders in dealing with the world of business and finance is to distinguish between those insights which reflect a genuine wisdom and those which are motivated by self-interest. The management of wealth requires good judgement, but it is no guarantee of virtue.
8. Unlike in ancient Rome, wealth in our world was not accumulated by marching armies – though colonial exploitation has played its part – but through the initiative and creativity of business. Yet the success of that achievement, as with all success, can breed complacency and a resistance to change. The recently emerged globalised wealth is in danger of undermining initiative and creativity in one area of critical importance to all our futures. A powerful lobby is determined to resist an effective response from the business world to the ecological crisis.
9. The bottom line is that we are all vulnerable. Phrases such as *'an ecological catastrophe'* or *'the urgent need for radical change in the conduct of humanity'* (*Laudato Si'/LS 4.*) or *'our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation'* (*LS 8.*) may come to mind but, without some kind of human contact and human story, they will have no effect on us. Conversion does not happen through words on a page.
10. When we see someone lying and groaning on the street, something is wrong if we simply walk by without a second glance. If we see a child crying in public and obviously lost, there is something wrong if we don't at least stop and wonder what should be done. Empathy comes naturally to us and, when it is missing, a word comes readily to hand to describe those who ignore the pain of others. Their behaviour is inhuman and they are dehumanised. Humanity is more than a zoological label. It is something worthy of praise. The truly human person is *'good.'* They are admirable because they are turned towards others. They are generous. They are open to the future in a way which is ready to imagine and make plans and ready to overcome disappointment.
11. The words *'vulnerability'* and *'humanity'* remain abstractions if they do not move us into the realm where hope and despair do battle. There can be no hope without the element of risk and without the possibility of disappointment. Without being open to a future, which we cannot be sure of controlling, and,

without imagining what we might contribute, we can do nothing of worth. Yet, side by side in any struggle for things of worth, is the possibility of failure.

12. The fragility of hope makes us seek out solidarity, because we cannot hope to shape the future without a common vision and the more that vision is shaped by generosity, the more likely it is to provide worthwhile guidance.
13. A passage in the encyclical of Pope Francis is headed 'My appeal' and reads as follows:

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. (LS 13.)

14. This kind of talk is in contrast to the pessimistic language to which those in the world of business and finance – and public administration - are often drawn. This 'tough talk' has a role to play; it makes us alert to the problems which lie ahead and there are always problems, but language of Pope Francis is not the language of business. It is certainly the language of a religious leader, but it is also the language of good politics.
15. The world of business and finance has demonstrated a capacity to transform society over and over again, but one feature of all social transformation is that it brings about a new situation where past achievements are frequently rendered redundant. The same is true of public life and government; when it is successful it often brings about a new situation, with which it cannot deal effectively.
16. It does not really matter who said these words which follow. They have a weight of their own:

I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. (LS 14.)

17. This conversation will have to look beyond the symptoms of the problem to its deepest causes both in the individual person and in international policy. It will have to look to the link between human inequality and the fragility of the planet, to the way in which technology shapes the way we think and to the responsibility of policy makers at every level. These issues will not be dealt with once and for all. They will have to be reframed and enriched again and again. The chapters which follow reflect the chapters of Pope Francis encyclical, but the starting point of his call is our common home. It is not an abstraction. It can only be our home if we can see it, hear it, taste it, touch it, love it and praise it.

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME?

18. The above question can be asked with different tones of voice. It can be a request for information or an expression of curiosity or it can be an opening up to a truly painful reality. This opening up is impeded by what Pope Francis refers to as a process of 'rapidification.' Rapid and constant change is a feature of modern life and it reflects an attitude which avoids focusing on our world in a way which leaves us open to being changed by what we see. The situation is urgent, but if we are to be really open to what is happening we need to slow down. The compassion on which openness to any human situation depends, cannot develop in a 'fast' world.
19. The scientific evidence is clear - about pollution, public health, global warming and rising sea levels - but the painfulness of the reality can only be appreciated if we attend to animal life in general and, in particular, to the shockingly diverse effects on the human race in different parts of the world. Other species are part of the story but if we '*blame*' our own species, the pain of those with least resources and greatest vulnerability gets overlooked. Ignoring our fellow human beings in this manner would be shameful. Subsistence economies, dependent on agriculture fishing and forestry, are unable to adapt. When animals migrate, it is the poor who are forced to leave and they are not recognised as refugees. They may not be fleeing from warfare, but they are fleeing from the violent effects of human activity. Furthermore, those with most resources are often masking the problem and concealing the symptoms. We need to look at what is being done to water, forests and entire ecosystems, animal populations, the Amazon and Congo basins, glaciers and coral reefs. Huge global economic interests are trying to block attempts to address these issues and they have the capacity to undermine the sovereignty of entire nations.
20. The unruly growth of many cities with urban chaos, poor transportation, visual pollution and noise is affecting human lives. '*We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal and deprived of physical contact with nature.*' (LS 44.) There has been a '*silent rupture in the bonds of integration and social cohesion.*' (LS 46.) There may be talk of justice and compassion and human fellowship but it goes hand in hand with '*a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature.*' (LS 47.) Emotion is a function of relationship and, where there are no networks of human encounter, the very possibility of compassion is absent.
21. Again, these words carry their own weight:
 - a. *Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded. (LS 25.)*

- b. *The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. (LS 48.)*
22. The reality is painful but this pain does not communicate itself in a mechanical way. Listening to stories of suffering humanity can result in complex reactions, some of which are defensive and rooted in denial. These rationalisations need to be named and overcome.
23. When international political and economic discussions refer to the most vulnerable people on the planet, the majority, it often seems to be done *'as an afterthought... almost out of duty.'* (LS 49.) Opinion makers and centres of power are too often removed from the poor and this lack of physical contact can lead to a numbing of conscience. This remoteness is compounded by a kind of *'green'* rhetoric which thinks of the planet and of plants and animals, but is oblivious to the suffering of our fellow human beings.
24. The issue of population growth can be a way of avoiding any reference to the extreme and selective nature consumerism. It can easily serve to justify the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized. An ecological debt has been accumulated by the wealthier countries in their lavish exploitation and use of resources. The foreign debt of some countries is used to control them, but there is no equivalent use of the ecological debt.
25. Wealth and technological ingenuity have struck up a mutually reinforcing alliance which centres all on its own interests. Its response to the ecological crisis is to legitimise itself with superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern, while regarding any real attempt at change as a nuisance. In spite of this people have a growing sense of ecological sensitivity, but they have not succeeded in changing their harmful habits of consumption, in part because of the powerful commercial influence on everyday life.
26. The blinkered pursuit of financial gain is easily understood as a manifestation of greed, but it is also an expression of the vice of sloth in both its. The slothful person, inactive or frenetic, is in denial of their adult responsibilities: *'trying not to see them, trying not to acknowledge them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen.'* (LS 59.)
27. The merry-go-round of the worship of money wields much power in our world, but it is also in full flight from reality and holding out against it. We need to come up with an effective response and two extreme alternatives are being proposed. The first is based on the idea that technology, without need for ethical considerations or deep change, can solve the problem; our common home is a human responsibility and not a technological challenge.

28. The second idea is that the presence of human beings on the planet should be reduced; this assumes that 'some' have a right to do the 'reducing' of others. Both these solutions see human beings as objects to be managed rather than as intelligent beings open to persuasion and capable of heroic generosity. Honest debate is needed. Hope would have us recognise that we can work for something better, but there are signs that we are near breaking point.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GOSPEL OF CREATION.

29. Words will not put us in touch with the pain of our fellow human beings and with the degradation of our common home, but they can produce a certain unease. To live a conscientious life is to welcome this unease as a sign that we are facing in the right direction, both externally in the sense of attending to others and internally in the sense of a willingness to face challenging questions. Conscience faces the 'awkward' question, is ready to meet 'awkward' people and is willing to explore 'awkward' situations. Conscience seeks what is right in the knowledge that it has no guaranteed claim to know what is right. The sign that this seeking is genuine is that the conscientious person is resigned, with good humour, to living in perpetual discomfort.

30. In dealing with the complexity and multiple causes of the ecological crisis the healthy conscience has a vital role to play. It will open us to that dialogue, without which we will walk, blind and divided, towards catastrophe. At the height of the German invasion of Russia during the Second World War, Stalin permitted the churches to open and people were allowed to enter and pray for victory against the enemy. Faith convictions can be a powerful source of motivation at time of crisis and Stalin, in his cynical way, was able to see this. The nature of the crisis, which we face, is such that no branch of science and no form of wisdom, including religion, can be overlooked. Interaction between people of diverse faith options and none, who share a passion for the earth and its people, can only be a source of enrichment for all.

31. When Pope Francis presents the biblical story of our relationship with the earth, he is speaking in this context of dialogue. (*LS 65-75.*) He poses certain questions. Why did God say in the book of Genesis that creation was 'very good?' How could the Creator have a special love for each human being? In particular he asks how God can know us before he even formed each of us in the womb. These questions are addressed to his fellow believers, but he does not mind being overheard by those who do not share his beliefs. He is bringing the spiritual heritage of the Catholic Church to bear on a challenge, which believers share with all humanity. The nature of the challenge we face is that we must pledge our deepest motivations to a cause to which we all have something to contribute.

32. Moments of deep crisis open up a sense of the transcendent. The English First World War veteran and avowed pacifist, Vera Brittain, spoke of the '*glamour*' and '*magic*' of warfare as something fundamentally dishonest and yet she wrote that the challenge facing pacifism was to impart to rational thought '*that element of sanctified loveliness which, like suburb sunshine breaking through the clouds from time to time, glorifies war.*' (*Testament of Youth*, Virago Press, p.292.)
33. The bible is written from the perspective of praise and wonder, which the young Vera Brittan and her contemporaries might have recognised in their youthful eagerness, but even those who do not share the faith perspective of scripture have much to gain by treating it – and the great writings of other religions – as something of immense value. For many centuries these writings have been looked to as sources of wisdom. They all speak from this universal human experience of worship which, one way or another, we all share. We all value – give worth(ship) to – certain fundamental realities which shape the way we live. Worship can be deeply destructive when it is focused on destructive realities, but worship often goes hand in hand with gentleness, generosity and service.
34. The book of Genesis has often been translated to read that God gave us '*dominion*' over the earth. A truer reading is that God told Adam to '*till and keep*' the garden of paradise. We can draw from the bounty of this garden, but we must also protect it for future generations. '*The earth is the Lord's*' and so the Law of Moses does not permit land to be sold in perpetuity. The Sabbath is a day of rest, not just for us but for '*your ox and your donkey.*' All creatures and the earth itself are valued by God; they are not just '*useful.*'
35. The bible links the very lives we live to the earth itself. God tells Cain that the voice of Abel '*is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground.*' In Noah's day the earth '*was filled with violence,*' but it took only one good man to restore hope. After the flood renewal went hand in hand with respect for the rhythms of nature. Those rhythms are partly bound up with the Sabbath at the end of each week and, every seven years, this was to be extended to the land itself which was to be left fallow. Every seven '*weeks of years*' – fifty years - was the Jubilee, in which the land with its fruits could be availed of by everyone.
36. The psalms, Israel's great anthology of poems, are full of praise for creation. When the people of Israel were deported to Babylon, their whole world was uprooted and they overcame this uprootedness by speaking of God as the creator of the universe. God till then was seen as the God of a people, Israel, but now he was seen as Lord of the world and praised wholeheartedly.
37. The bible speaks of nature as something to be studied and understood in terms of the seasons and the different forms of life. Creation, by contrast, is a gift - the result of a decision in which God's love is the moving force. Gratitude for creation goes hand in hand with a responsibility for nature and, in this responsibility, we leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress. Our intellect, like creation is a gift, and we are free to use it by helping the world evolve positively

or by being unhelpful and adding new ills. Yet God can also bring good out of evil. The Holy Spirit can loosen the knots in human affairs.

38. Nature is God's art and we are part of it. *'It is as if a shipbuilder were able to give timbers the wherewithal to move themselves to take the form of a ship.'* (LS 80.) Each of us can enter into dialogue with others and with God but, when we turn nature into a source of profit and gain, the underlying message is one of might-is-right and the unavoidable result is inequality injustice and violence. Francis sees this message of might as being in contrast with the harmony, fraternity and peace proposed by Jesus.
39. Everything on earth is *'as it were, a caress of God.'* The most memorable moments of the life of Jesus have invested particular places with a rich and deep meaning for his followers ever since, but the same is true of each one of us when we look back at our own memorable moments. All the different forms of life play their part in our own relationship with the earth. We do not live or relate to others or to God in a sterile vacuum. Thomas Aquinas speaks of how God's goodness *'could not be represented fittingly by any one creature.'* (LS 86.) It is not as if nature has turned against us. We are part of it and, in a fundamental way, it is on our side.
40. According to Francis God wills the interdependence of creatures in a way which speaks of something more than function or use. This is why he quotes the hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi – *Laudato Si'* – which inspires the name of his encyclical. This is not just the reflection of a great mystic; the language of the written word in those days was Latin but he made a conscious choice to write in Italian, the language of the uneducated.

Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
who is the day
and through whom you give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant
with great splendour;
and bears a likeness of you, Most High.

Praised be you, my Lord,
through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven you formed them clear
and precious and beautiful.

Praised be you, my Lord,
through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather
through whom you give sustenance

to your creatures.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble
and precious and chaste.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful
and robust and strong.

41. For Pope Francis, when we are aware of being joined to the earth by God, we can feel the desertification of the soil *'almost as a physical ailment,'* and the extinction of a species *'as a painful disfigurement.'* (LS 89.) We can personify the soil and the differing animal species, but our communion with nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. We have only one heart, he says, *'and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people.'* (LS 92.)
42. When private property takes no account of this universal fraternity, it has no meaning other than as an act of defiance against a hostile world. Ownership can never be secure for those who deny that the earth is a shared inheritance for everyone. It is not in accordance with God's plan that the earth be used in a way that it benefits only the few. As Pope Francis makes this point he gets quite specific and quotes the Bishops of Paraguay: *"Every campesino has a natural right to possess a reasonable allotment of land where he can establish his home, work for subsistence of his family and a secure life."* (LS 94.)
43. The natural environment is a patrimony of all humanity. It is the responsibility of everyone, but Pope Francis gives this sense of responsibility a twist. Quoting the bishops of New Zealand, he asks what does the commandment *'thou shalt not kill'* mean when 20% consume resources at a rate which robs future generations in poor nations of survival? (LS 95.)
44. He speaks of Jesus, at the heart of Christian faith, for whom God was Father. His Father's love was reflected in the earth and nature. *'Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.'* He worked with his hands and he was also God's Word made flesh. His admirers spoke of how even the winds obeyed him and, in his risen and glorious body, he is present throughout creation. At the end of time *'The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence.'* (LS 100.) It is not necessary to share Pope Francis' beliefs to share some sense of his praise for nature. We are all guided by deep longings, which make us stop and wonder, and there is

something about our relationship with the earth which puts us in touch with that depth. When that depth is missing much evil results.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS.

45. Two centuries of enormous waves of change have transformed so much for the good and it is only right to be excited by the possibilities which continue to open up. Technology and science have improved the quality of human life. It has also brought a new form of beauty. Who can fail to admire the arresting form of the aircraft or the skyscraper? We have always intervened in nature but, side by side with the benefits brought by technology, our relationship with nature has become increasingly confrontational. The idea that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods is a lie and nature is protesting at our failure to see this.
46. Technology brings undoubted benefits, but those who control its development have the power to control our lives. They have the power to alter social possibilities to their own convenience. Technology tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic with no concern for its impact on humanity and, in particular, on those who are excluded by the way in which it is used. Furthermore, to argue that the market can resolve this issue is to overlook the fact that, by itself, the market cannot guarantee human development and social inclusion. The market often functions in a way which ensures that the poor cannot gain regular access to basic resources.
47. By catering to different 'tastes' the market can bring about a segmentation of experience and a narrowing of horizons. This in turn leads to a fragmentation of knowledge and a loss of that appreciation of the whole. It undermines our ability to solve those more complex problems, which require a willingness to dialogue between differing perspectives and interests.
48. We need a new way of looking at things, a way of thinking, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality to generate resistance to manipulation of our thoughts and emotions by technology. Yet that resistance is already beginning to emerge. A new synthesis is emerging, almost unnoticed, like a mist seeping gently beneath a closed door. There is a growing awareness that scientific progress is not to be equated with human progress, as megastructures and drab apartment blocks reflect a world of a tedious monotony.

49. We do need to slow down and look at the world in a different way and recover the values and great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of ingenuity.
50. The technological mind sees nature as a cold body of facts and its vision of mastery over the world has given the impression that the protection of nature is of concern only to the faint-hearted. If we feel nothing in common with a poor person, a human embryo or a person with disability, how can we value other forms of life on earth? When we set ourselves in the place of God we provoke a rebellion in nature.
51. The renewal has to begin with humanity itself. We have unique capacities of knowledge, will and freedom, but what makes us fully human is our openness to others. Our relationship with the environment cannot be separated from that openness and the same is true of our relationship with the Creator. When human beings place themselves at the centre of reality they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and, once this happens, there is nothing to prevent the most inhumane and callous behaviour.
52. Spirituality may seem 'soft' and 'nebulous' but, without it, no law will ever prevent the destruction of the environment. When the culture is corrupt and devoid of any sense of spirituality or vision, the legal system is seen as an arbitrary imposition or obstacle to be avoided and there is no sense the dignity and rights of the person. In these circumstances the exploitation of labour is inevitable. Exploitation may be motivated by greed, but it also feeds the vice of pride as the exploited are treated with contempt. That same pride leads to a further degradation of human solidarity. Avoidance of the law in relation to the environment and the exploitation of humanity often go together.
53. Our interaction with the earth is only real if it takes concrete shape in a culture of work and credit, where initiative is rewarded and all costs are accounted for. This is particularly true in relation to costs pertaining to the environment, because these costs render us all vulnerable. Underlying all work is a concept of our relationship to what is other than ourselves. Monasticism, started off as a flight from urban decay and it began with prayer, but labour soon became part of it. Without this capacity for contemplation it becomes easy for the meaning of work to be misunderstood. Work should be a setting for personal growth with creativity, planning for the future, relating to others and giving glory to God.

54. That relating to other than ourselves calls not just for work, but for a system of credit which reflects the values of those who avail of it. Without respect for these values, the trust on which credit is based is unattainable and the projects which credit makes possible will fail. The projects which will free humanity from pollution and greenhouse gases will need this kind of credit, but at present they face the resistance of those, who are eager to see their own investments in destructive industries flourish. A battle is being fought, a kind of poker game, between two views of the world and two views of what is worthy of credit – the continuing influence of greenhouse gas industries, on the one hand, and, on the other, the emerging alternatives. These two visions are mutually incompatible.
55. The greenhouse gas industries are in the business of short-term profit which has its own logic. Part of that logic is its willingness to pose as the champion of those who depend on those industries for employment. The loss of a job leads to an erosion of social capital and of that sense of trust and responsibility on which public order depends. The greatest political challenge to ecological policy making lies in this dependency of so many people on green-house gas industry for employment. This dependency leaves them open to manipulation by people with no concern either for the environment or for the welfare of their employees.
56. Another mechanism of short-term profit at the expense of vulnerable people is industrialised farming. Small scale food production systems feed the greater part of the world's population using a modest amount of land and producing less waste. In spite of this, the self-serving power of big business prevails in regional and global markets. The talk is of free trade but to speak of freedom, while real conditions bar many from access to it, is an exercise in doublespeak which brings both business and politics into disrepute.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTEGRAL ECOLOGY.

57. We need a full and rounded picture of this crisis in which everything is interconnected, in a way we can never fully explore or understand. Neither the environment nor society can be studied in isolation because, in this one complex crisis, not only is the earth polluted, but people are excluded and impoverished. Research is needed and researchers need academic freedom. They also need to find a common language.

58. Our traditional ecosystems functioned well - dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, breaking down waste and renewing soil – whereas the modern economy tends towards predictable reactions, standardisation and cost reduction, while ignoring the wider damage being done. We need a broader vision of business management in which protecting the environment has to be seen as *'an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.'* (LS 141.)
Depreciation cannot just be a measure of an asset's re-sale value but of its effect on the environment, which would inevitably happen in a society properly alert to these realities. We need to find ways of bringing different fields of knowledge together in human, family, work-related and urban contexts, so that the whole is seen as greater than the parts.
59. Ultimately it is a question of human respect and solidarity. When it is undermined in our interdependent world the whole environment is affected. In this atmosphere – of pollution and cynicism – family relations are soured, government at local and national level is eroded and international rivalries gain a new lease of life. Opportunities for profiteering multiply and with them the likelihood of ecological degradation. The economy and the cost of credit is one crucial and practical measure of solidarity and human thriving, though to rely on it exclusively is to leave out of account the situation of those who thrive least.
60. There will always be a need for legal structures to protect the rights of the most vulnerable, but they are only effective when the wider background is properly understood. For instance, drug dealing in rich countries corrupts poorer ones, resulting in an undermining of the rule of law and indifference to fundamental values including the environment. It is not enough to ensure that people have an income. They also have a right to participate in the economy and that right is undermined when political leaders fail to counter the tendency of well-established commercial enterprises to discourage new ideas and competition. The issue of market dominance is not just about competition between the big players. When any person or group is excluded from the market the underlying structures need to be examined and, insofar as anyone is excluded from exercising their own initiative, changed.
61. Well-designed legal and political structures need to take into account the varied geography of this earth, which is not just a backdrop to human life. The differing identities of places shape the way we live. They are part of the cultural treasure of humanity. That treasure is a living reality which must have its place in a rethinking of our relationship with the

environment. Consumerism, by contrast, has a levelling effect and the same is true of uniform regulation which so easily overlooks complexities of local problems and the participation of communities in their solution. If we are to look beyond symptoms, the involvement of local people from within their own culture is critical. To be effective, and respectful of human dignity, this involvement must respect personal and communal initiative both in relation to political participation and to business enterprise. Without this involvement they will be the objects of forced change at the whim of distant powers.

62. Great harm is done by the failure of those in power to respect the initiative of those at ground level. This failure can cause real harm both to the environment and to social structures, whose disappearance can be as serious as the extinction of any plant or animal species. In like manner the forced imposition of a lifestyle can be harmful to an ecosystem. When indigenous communities speak of the land as a gift from God and ancestors, they are speaking of something they hold to *'till and keep'* like Adam and Eve in the garden. This attitude deserves deep respect.
63. A dignified human life relates us to our everyday environment. Attention to one's own home and kindness to others *'can light up a seemingly undesirable environment.'* This sense of dignity can give people a network of solidarity and belonging and *'In this way any place can turn from being a hell on earth into the setting for a dignified life.'* (LS 148.) Extreme poverty can and does lead to violence and to brutal exploitation by organised crime and yet many are able *'to weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome.'* (LS 149.) Throughout the world the locally based business is a humanising influence in which every-day courtesy is rewarded by returning customers. Everyone benefits in a way which goes beyond any goods or services for sale.
64. The built environment must place people's quality of life before abstract beauty of design which might impress outsiders. Respect for landmarks and urban landscapes gives a sense of feeling at home. People also need a sense of the whole city rather than just one neighbourhood, so that others will not be seen as strangers. Some places should be protected from constant change in order to give people a sense of home, because having a home of one's own has much to do with personal dignity. At times it is necessary to relocate people living in unsanitary conditions, but they should have a part to play in the process.

65. Wherever people live it is good to have spaces in which to connect, relate and favour the recognition of others. Any lack of space, including traffic jams and crowded public transport, is degrading. Cities need public transport to cut down on car pollution, but we cannot forget the needs of rural populations, for whom public transport is not feasible. In the shaping and development of any urban environment, in particular, a willingness to undertake ambitious projects combined with a readiness to take responsibility for them, is a source of initiative and enterprise which government can harness.
66. The common good is often equated with the collective good of society, but this is not how the term is understood in Catholic social teaching. It is a framework within which human beings can thrive and the basic presupposition is that no one can thrive in isolation. The Second Vatican Council offers the following definition: *'the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups, and their individual members, relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment.'* (LS 156.) The common good is bound up with respect for the human person and, if the above definition refers to groups before individuals it is because issues relating to the common good are dealt with first in the context of groups. Human dignity has no reality outside the context of solidarity and there can be no solidarity without mutual respect.
67. Nationhood is an expression of solidarity. It is also the receptacle of democratic government, but the nature of the problems facing our common home means that we are summoned to a solidarity beyond nationhood. Nations, like citizens, have responsibilities and they fail to live up to those responsibilities - both in relation to human rights and in caring for our common home. From both perspectives – rights and ecology – this includes a preferential option for the poor. This option can be based, in theory, on a sense of enlightened self-interest, but it will only be effective in practise, if it is motivated by a sense of fairness and human solidarity.
68. The common good includes future generations, because they too will be impoverished if we treat this world a purely utilitarian manner. What kind of a world do we want to hand on? What purpose do we serve in our lives? Why are we here? What need does the earth have of us? These questions cannot be ignored and, if we do so, we will end up living in squalor and *'leaving to coming generations debris desolation and filth.'* (LS 161.) The rampant individualism of a self-centred culture has taken its toll and the inability to take future generations seriously is linked to indifference to those who are excluded today.

CHAPTER FIVE: LINES OF APPROACH AND ACTION.

69. In spite of all the crass contempt for humanity and the earth, there is a growing conviction that our planet is our home and that humanity is one people living in this common home. There is a growing awareness that something has gone wrong in this home of ours. Pope Francis speaks of '*the cracks in the planet*' and of how those cracks have '*profoundly human causes.*' (LS 163.) A common home makes us interdependent, so we cannot share this home and act like strangers. We have shared responsibilities and we need a common plan. The ingenuity which brought us technical progress has not provided us with a way forward. Those who want to know, and who have not been duped by vested interests, already know that fossil fuels need to be replaced and public debate has elicited a variety of committed and generous responses. Many civil society organisations have found a place on the public agenda and within the world of business and finance there is a growing awareness that the balance sheet as we currently know it is an inadequate reflection of the reality in which every business must function.
70. The obligation of polluters to pay costs is accepted in theory, but poorly implemented in practise. There have been real achievements. The ozone layer issue was dealt with effectively through the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, but the same cannot be said of the protection of bio diversity. Certain countries place their national interest and the short term profits of influential investors above the global common good.
71. The internationalisation of environment costs, between those who have benefited from industrialisation and those who have had to pay such a high proportion of the costs, remains to be achieved. The priority for poor countries has to be to eliminate poverty but, often amidst the direst poverty, there are some who enjoy a spectacular income based on granting political favours to incorporated companies, who exploit both the people and the local environment.
72. The only effective way to ensure that powerful companies, who dump contaminated waste or set up offshore polluting industries, is with a set of global regulatory norms backed up by powerful enforcement agencies. The ocean, in particular, needs a system of governance, not just to care for the ocean itself, but to supervise ocean going traffic. Exploitative conditions of work, and the persisting reality of slavery on ocean going ships, are a matter of human rights, but those who are happy to exploit their fellow human beings are also happy to seek out opportunities to dump toxic waste for profit. The mind-set which resists any talk of global warming and pollution also stands in the way of eliminating poverty and inequality.
73. The power of the nation state is weakening, because the economic and financial sectors have outgrown the capacity of national governments to control them. We need stronger and efficiently organised international institutions. Individual states have a responsibility for planning, coordination, oversight and

enforcement. Along with their citizens, they also have a responsibility, to alert the international community to instances of abuse and exploitation and to share their sovereignty in the interest of the common good of humanity.

74. The rule of law has a vital role to play. Without it there are no norms no enforcement and corruption thrives. Without the rule of law there are no structures in place to promote best practise and to provide that sense of liberty which is needed for creativity. The rule of law, with its respect for due process, is a standing challenge to the myopia of power politics, which seeks to belittle any farsighted agenda as foolishly idealistic. In one of his earlier encyclicals Pope Francis introduced a maxim - 'Time is greater than space' – by which he meant that well designed enduring process was of greater value than the raw use of power even if it is effective in the short term.
75. Meanwhile the world order is largely powerless, but individuals and groups can instil a greater sense of responsibility, community and a love for the earth. One very significant way in which they can do this is through the world of business and trade and, in particular, by playing a part in moving the centre of gravity of global wealth away from industries which foster pollution and towards investment based on a future worthy of the name.
76. This process of replacement is vital, but at every step we are dealing with people's livelihoods and their future and that of their families. If it was just about the replacement of fossil fuels by renewables it would be simple enough. We need to keep in ongoing touch with human vulnerability and, in this, indigenous peoples provide a test case. Their respect for place, for the earth and for tradition is more than an exotic curiosity. It is a measure of their respect for the planet. Where that respect is lacking, short cuts in the service of self-interest will multiply. Corruption undermines human solidarity and a public awareness of the rights of indigenous people will give people a voice to challenge corruption everywhere.
77. Respect for indigenous peoples also has something to say to those who present the future exclusively in terms of a clean environment vs polluting industries, with no concern for the future of those who work in them. The high-mindedness of this position is hypocritical. It pays in attention to means and, by implication, is ready to tolerate oppression in the name of the environment. By placing the planet above humanity they give themselves the right to act in the name of the planet and to determine the fate of their fellow human beings. They don't tell us who must suffer for the sake of the future of our common home and who will decide, but the answer it is clear. Judging from how they see the future, it is clear to them that they know best and who must be sacrificed.
78. Humanity is unpredictable, which is why politics is part of our lives no matter where we live and what age we live in. In the transition from fossil fuels to renewables and reduced consumption political realism is vital if injustice and conflict are to be avoided. The challenge needs to be faced at every level. In

particular it requires the removal of wasteful subsidies on polluting industries and of obstacles to investment in the commercial ventures, which will replace them through economic worth and not political indulgence.

79. If new forms of cooperation and energy consumption are to be developed, public planning must facilitate investment in enterprises, which respect the environment and are capable of thriving precisely because of that respect. Pressure from public and civic institutions is vital to challenge the mind-set of short-term gain which dominates present day politics and economics. *'A healthy politics is sorely needed, capable of reforming and coordinating institutions, promoting best practises and overcoming undue pressure and bureaucratic inertia.'* (LS 181.)
80. We need environmental impact assessment as part of the planning process from the beginning and the local population should have a special place at the table. It is not enough to speak of 'interventions;' we need policies worked out by all parties and we need to develop a sustainable economy in which all are free to participate. Some projects can profoundly affect the quality of life due to unforeseen factors, because of failure to study the local situation.
81. In dealing with environmental issues, it is not enough to demand full scientific certainty of disaster. Too much is at stake. The burden of proof should not favour those who insist on the priority of their own self-interest. Where it is not easy to reach consensus, honest and open debate will ensure that particular interests or ideologies won't prejudice the common good.
82. Political supervision is necessary for the proper functioning of the market but, if supervision is too intrusive, it undermines credit. The ultimate beneficiaries of a well supervised market is the public and they are also the ultimate victims of its failure, as in the 2007 when banks were saved at their expense. The response to that crisis was a missed opportunity in developing a new economy attentive to ethical principle in which irresponsible behaviour is held to account.
83. It is unrealistic to expect people obsessed with maximising profits to stop and reflect on the environmental damage which they will inflict on future generations. Profits are determined as much by established legal structures as by market forces and neither of these realities can claim to override the wider human realities within which they exist. The joint stock company is a product of the legal system and it is not designed to attend to the rhythms of nature or the complexity of ecosystems or the real value of things for persons and cultures or the concerns and needs of the poor. Political leaders, by contrast, are failing humanity if they allow their need for finance and their relationship with business to push aside these wider concerns.
84. The cost of sustainability needs to be seen as an investment in medium term economic benefits and the costs of pollution need to be measured and charged to those responsible. Far from stifling human creativity or the ideal of progress, a

sustainable economy directs energy along new channels - reusing and recycling, improving energy efficiency, offering possibilities to create and innovate, protecting the environment, while creating more sources of employment. This creativity would be a *'worthy expression of our most noble human qualities within a broader concept of quality of life.'* (LS 192.) Part of this creativity is the initiative of those who are ready to risk the taking out of a loan to finance a project which they believe will be recognised by others and fairly rewarded by them.

85. The behaviour of those who consume and destroy is unsustainable, which is why we need to encourage more sober lifestyles. Nor is it enough to balance the protection of nature with financial gain, because there will be no gain of any kind in a world laid waste. Measures based on deference to money simply delay the inevitable disaster. Talk of sustainable growth is timid. It simply *'absorbs the language and values of ecology into the values and categories of finance and technology and the social and environmental responsibility of business gets reduced to a series of marketing and image-enhancing measures.'* (LS 194.) If there is no valuing of the environment as a good on which humanity depends, those responsible for pollution will seize on this language as an excuse for paying only a fraction of the costs involved.
86. If the political process is to be effective, it must respect the principle of subsidiarity, which grants the freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society. It also and demands a greater sense of responsibility from those with greater power. This principle applies to the economy as well as political structures. The current model does not favour efforts to help the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life. Nor does it favour investment in smaller projects which, despite their ecological benefits, are no match for the favoured giants of greenhouse gas producing industries.
87. When business is too dominant there are no restraints and corruption and organised crime become nothing more than another way of making money. A strategy for real change needs to be able to face this problem of corruption. It will have to be based on a dialogue which includes civil society and, in particular, the many groups campaigning for change. Real change, however, will not come about without a reshaping of the relationship between government and the world of business and finance in a manner which develops reliable ways of determining which ventures benefit society and which will not.
88. Ecologically friendly investment has to be based on empirical science, while recognising that it does not provide a complete explanation of life and reality. No science can explain aesthetic sensibility or reason. Nor can we dismiss certain writings simply because they arise in the context of religious belief. Our relation with our common home is not pragmatic. Words such as 'love,' 'compassion' and 'mercy' may be universal in their use, but for religious believers – i.e. most of the human race – these words have deep roots in their particular tradition. Many scientists are people of faith, who see their beliefs as a calling to openness

towards the inexhaustible richness of reality, but their faith has no bearing on their scientific findings. Scientists are called on to make scientific arguments but this is not true in the realm of political struggle.

89. The signatories of the American Declaration of Independence pledged to each other *'our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.'* They wanted the world to know that they saw the document, which they had signed, as something of the utmost value. In our time all the great religions are committing themselves to care for the earth and they have declared that commitment in terms of their most dearly held beliefs.
90. Listening to others, as they speak of their deepest and most cherished beliefs, is not encouraged by contemporary culture. In the public sphere reference to personal faith is particularly discouraged and yet, if we want to value the passion which someone brings to a particular cause and to value the possibilities of shared vision, what better way is there of doing so than by inviting others to express that vision in the context of their most deeply held beliefs. To regard the expression of religious faith in this context as something unseemly, instead of being a genuinely human pledge of sincerity, is perverse.
91. Any religion can be turned into a vehicle of fanaticism, and the resulting violence has left deep scars on human history. It is also true that the great religions have shaped human civilisation in a much more benign manner than the atheistic regimes of the twentieth century. Religious leaders in our time are increasingly aware of the need to dialogue on a shared concern for nature, for the poor and for the building of networks of respect and fraternity. The sciences also need to dialogue, as do the various ecological movements in relation to their ideological conflicts. The world of business and finance cannot afford to absent itself from this process. To do so would damage not only the credit on which the world economy is based but, more alarmingly, it would be a betrayal of humanity. We must look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which requires patience, self-discipline and generosity. We need to bear in mind that the realities among which we live are greater than the ideas which we cherish in our own minds.

CHAPTER SIX – ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY.

92. We are the ones who must change, but we suffer from a kind of amnesia. We forget our common origin and mutual dependence and we have no sense of a future shared by everyone. People are trapped in a compulsive consumerism in which the only freedom is the freedom to consume. *'When people become self-centred and self-enclosed, their greed increases.'* (LS 204.) When a sense of the common good disappears the inevitable outcome is violence and mutual destruction, but *'no system can completely suppress our openness to what is*

good true and beautiful, or our God given ability to respond to his grace at work in our hearts.’(LS 205.)

93. *“As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life”. (LS 208.)*208. *Earth Charter, The Hague, 29 June 2000.*
94. An appropriate response to this statement is to stop and let both the hope and the challenge, which it proclaims, sink in. Pope Francis’ encyclical takes up the note of hope, but he situates the challenge not in the measure of the task to be done, but in the moral failure of humanity. *“When there is a general breakdown in the exercise of a certain virtue in personal and social life, it ends up causing a number of imbalances, including environmental ones. That is why it is no longer enough to speak only of the integrity of ecosystems. We have to dare to speak of the integrity of human life, of the need to promote and unify all the great values. Once we lose our humility, and become enthralled with the possibility of limitless mastery over everything, we inevitably end up harming society and the environment.”(LS 224.)*
95. *“Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy, in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride rough-shod over everything around them.”(LS 225.)* An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals. We are speaking of an attitude of the heart. One expression, by no means unique to Christianity, is grace before and after meals.
96. Awareness of the challenge we face can be translated into new habits and new forms of trade in which people can gain a dignified livelihood. Changes of lifestyle can bring healthy pressure on decision makers and can affect the profits of businesses, positively as well as negatively. One real sign of hope, in countries which need to make the greatest changes, is that young people have a new ecological sensitivity, having known extreme consumerism and affluence. Effective environmental education includes a critique of the myths of individualism, unlimited progress and the unregulated market. It also promotes a new vision of the good life, including work and trade, both of which are intrinsic to every human society. This vision will include ecological balance and inner harmony and the need to make the leap to the transcendent.
97. The good habits underlying this vision will not come about simply by providing information. Children who are reared on a solid grounding in virtue will have no difficulty living selfless ecological commitment which is being called for. For this family life is vital. *‘In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life.’(LS 213.)* Family life teaches us to control our aggression and greed and to pay attention to everyday details of life with others. *‘There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle.’(LS 211.)*

The habits which result from this process have no glamour, but they reflect a *'generous and worthy creativity.'* They call forth a goodness which inevitably tends to spread. Christian communities have a role to play in this process through thankful contemplation of God's world and in their concern for the needs of the poor and their care for the environment.

98. This emerging culture of care for the earth will not be sufficient of itself to bring about change. Institutions with power to penalise will be needed because, without the force of law, the goodwill on which this culture depends has no defence against unscrupulous opportunism. Yet the personal qualities of self-control and the willingness to learn from one another, along with the need to stop and appreciate beauty, are all essential if we are to rethink our relationship with nature. Pope Benedict XVI once remarked that the external deserts of the world have grown because the internal deserts have become so vast. There is no escaping the need for a profound inner conversion which, when based on our most deeply rooted beliefs, becomes evident in our relationship with the world around us. Conscience calls us to examine our lives and to acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation. It opens up a healthy spirituality, which does not lose itself in narcissism, and is able to motivate a more passionate concern which is focused on body and worldly realities.
99. In the second beatitude Jesus says that the gentle will inherit the earth. To be gentle is to have a loving awareness that we are connected to other creatures. Gentleness is not weak, but it does not lash out and for that very reason it is attractive. It inspires solidarity. An ecological conversion is gentle because it inspires greater creativity and enthusiasm and solidarity as we engage with the world around us and with our differing talents. *'Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds.'* (LS 219.) For Christians each creature reflects something of God and it calls us to live in that fraternity with creation which St Francis so radiantly embodied. We are called to enjoy and appreciate small things, free from obsession with consumption. Sobriety is liberating. Conceited individualism is an impoverishment. We are enriched by fraternal encounters, by service and by contact with nature in prayer.
100. In the concluding passages of *Laudato Si'* it becomes very clear how aware Pope Francis is of his responsibility to encourage people in the Christian faith. What follows is based on Pope Francis' closing words of signature – his *'Life, Fortune and Honour.'*
101. The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely, and so there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf. The sacraments connect us to the earth and to each other – the pouring of water, the anointing with oil, the laying on of hands. In the Eucharist the Lord reaches our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. It is our source of light – motivating our concerns for the environment, inspiring us to be stewards of creation.

102. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is a day which heals our relationship with God ourselves and the world. We tend to demean contemplative rest as something unproductive and unnecessary, but this is to do away with the very thing which is most important about work - its meaning. Contemplation protects human action from becoming machinelike; it also prevents that unfettered greed and sense of isolation which make us seek personal gain to the detriment of all else. Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others.
103. The Trinity created the world with each of the three persons playing a part. As the relational aspect of the world reflects the three-fold nature of God, in like manner a human person matures to the extent that they enter into relationships. This interconnectedness flows from the mystery of the Trinity. Mary, in grieving for her son enters into his love for the crucified of this world. Yet she is also *'clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet.'*(LS 241.) She is the Queen of Creation, of which she is a part, through giving birth to her son and standing in solidarity with him.
104. *'At the end we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God.'* Eternal life will be a shared experience of *'awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all.'*(LS 243,)
105. In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God, for *'if the world has a beginning and if it has been created, we must enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was its Creator.'* (LS 244.) Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.

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.
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 and 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 recognize 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.