

June 20-21, 2015  
12<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

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On “Laudato Sí”

Today’s Gospel of Jesus calming the waters leads us into a reflection on the encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, which Pope Francis released this past Thursday. It is a reflection on the ecology, on care for our common home. As all encyclicals, its name comes from its first words “Laudato Sí, mi Signore – Praise be to you, my Lord.” These are the words of St. Francis, but they also echo the urging of Jesuits to find God in all things.

When I read this encyclical (all 99 pages of it!), three things repeatedly came to mind: our connection with everything that exists – or has existed; conversion; and the human obligation to be the consciousness of creation – to shepherd the gift of creation to its fulfillment.

In the past few months, we have reflected together on the truth of deep incarnation, the fact that we are truly connected to every living thing and that Jesus himself is incarnate and alive in every bit of creation. In this regard, I think I’m beginning to sound like a broken record, always repeating: ‘everything is connected,’ ‘everything is connected,’ everything is connected,’ (as I say this it occurs to me that only some of us here may know what it means to sound like a broken record!) When these connections are strained, humankind suffers the poor more than the rich because the poor do not have the means to manipulate their environment. They cannot, for example, import food or water, irrigate their crops or buy grain for their cattle. The poor are at the mercy of the environment in which they live. But we are all connected, and what we do, ecologically, affects the lives of those who live very far away from us and whose lives are unknown to us. We do not join them in their daily search for clean water, for arable land to farm or for suitable grazing lands for their cattle. We do not hear the hungry cry of their children because we go about our lives forgetful of our connection with all others. If this connection is more than theoretical, it must have practical consequence. Pope Francis reminds us that our desires for consumer goods and the world economy that fosters consumerism leads to the destruction of natural habitats for many different species of life, species that are valuable in themselves, but which may also be the key to the control of various diseases. In our need for things, we are destroying ecosystems.

We are called to personal conversion regarding the ecology. We need to learn where our material goods come from and at what costs. We all love a good sale, but we need to ask ourselves: ‘At what price to the Third World worker does our good fortune come? Are we willing to pay more so that others will have a living wage; so that their children are not taken out of school to work?’

I ask myself, 'What would it mean to live simpler, to live a life that has less negative impact on the environment? As I age, I get lazier. I used to cook nourishing meals for myself; one Lent, I even ate only those foods grown locally. During the Lenten season that meant lots of root vegetables and no bananas! That may have helped me, but a Jamaican bishop reprimanded me because bananas are his country's main export. We all are interconnected. But back to my point. As I begin to rely on fast foods, I impact the environment negatively because that beef is grown at the expense of small farms in foreign lands. Multinationals buy up the grazing land of local farmers to graze their herds of beef for our quick fix hamburgers.

We often admire those who "die with their boots on," who work until they take their very last breath. For some that is a necessity; for others, a way to keep busy. Do we really need the extra income? In the Hindu culture, the old people go out into the forest to meditate. Since I am retired now, so I have some extra time – although it doesn't seem like it. Perhaps I could live a more reflective life, a simpler life.

Pope Francis says not one word that would instill guilt in us. Guilt is non-productive and a little self-indulgent. Instead of feeling guilty, he urges us to find little ways in which we could live in greater harmony with the environment. Perhaps we could brainstorm as a parish.

We need to make wise choices now; if we don't, soon, there will be no choices to make. If we don't conserve now, that will be nothing left to conserve.

Pope Francis reminds us that our sacramental rituals are built upon very material, very natural symbols of grace: bread, wine, oil, water. If we begin to think of the earth as a sacrament of God's love for us, perhaps we will tread upon it with greater care.

On the seventh day, God rested and saw that everything was wonderful. Let us embrace leisure and see that our earth has wonderful gifts for us and is so worthy of our care. Truly we are the consciousness of creation. We can nudge it to thrive, fruitfully.

Amen!