

## 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – Homily by Fr. Dan Donovan (July 5, 2015)

*(Few words about the Pope's recent Encyclical on the Environment)*

A little over two weeks ago, Pope Francis published his long awaited encyclical on the environment, "**Laudato Si**," "Praise be," a phrase from Francis of Assisi's Canticle to brother Sun. The document's subtitle is "***On Care for our Common Home.***"

Given the length of the document and the wide range of issues it touches on, it is impossible to do it justice in a few moments. I would like, however, to give you **some sense of its message** by looking at the ***titles of the 6 chapters*** into which it is divided. The first is "***What is Happening to our Common Home.***" The pope accepts as true the judgment of the vast majority of scientists, namely that **climate change** is taking place and that it is largely the result of human activity, including our widespread use of fossil fuels. Pollution too is rampant and continues to grow as a result of what he calls our "**throw-away culture.**" "The earth, our home," he adds, "is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth."

The second chapter, entitled "***The Gospel of Creation,***" evokes the biblical vision of the goodness of the world as God's creation and the place and role of humanity in it. We too, the pope insists, are part of nature, part of the earth. At the same time we have been given the responsibility to care for and protect it.

Here as throughout the encyclical, the pope insists that our care for nature is inseparable from our care for the poor. “Everything,” he says, “is interconnected.” “Every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged.”

Chapter 3 is entitled “*The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis.*” While recognizing the enormous positive strides made by science and technology over the last two hundred years, especially in regard to medicine, engineering and communications, the pope calls attention to negative side effects of an exclusively technological approach to the world and to human life. Scientific and technological developments, he says, have “not been accompanied by a corresponding development in human responsibility, values and conscience.” What he calls the “**technocratic paradigm**” needs to be integrated into a “healthier, more human, more social, more integral” vision of progress.

It is this vision that is developed in chapter 4 which is entitled “*Integral Ecology.*” The current crisis is both social and environmental. The integral ecology for which the pope pleads embraces the world and human life in all its various aspects. A fundamental principle here is that of the **common good**. We are all part of a single humanity. Our solidarity with others includes future generations. If

we don't change our lifestyle, the pope says, we will end up leaving to those not yet born "debris, desolation and filth."

**Chapter 5**, entitled "***Lines of Approach and Action***," reflects one of the more striking aspects of "Laudato Si," namely the bringing together in it of scientific facts and language with a passionate plea for action. The pope is convinced that the present situation demands **action at all levels** of government and life - international, national and local.

The final chapter, entitled "***Ecological Education and Spirituality***," challenges us to undergo a "profound interior conversion," a conversion which, Francis believes, can only be successful if it involves both individuals and communities. We need, he says, "to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature," a new way of thinking that will lead to new ways of acting and caring.

The pope ends with **two ecological prayers**, part of one of which I would like to cite:

*Triune God, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe.*

*Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being you have made.*

*Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.*

*Seize us, Lord, with your power and light; help us to protect all life and to prepare for a better future, to prepare for the coming of your kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty.*

*Praise be to you. Amen.*