



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Justice, Ecology and Development

Papal encyclical appeals for a new dialogue about shaping the future of our planet

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Media Release

His Holiness Pope Francis has challenged 'every person living on this planet' to enter into a new dialogue toward building a better future in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* – 'Praise be to you', released today in Rome.

In dialogue with all people about our common home, the encyclical challenges us to ask 'how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded' (13).

Pope Francis also drew attention to pressing environmental concerns such as pollution and climate change, and the use of fossil fuels. "Climate change is a global problem with serious implications, environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day" (25). The Australian Catholic Bishops have strongly supported this statement.

President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Denis Hart, welcomed the Holy Father's encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Archbishop Hart said he was pleased to see that the letter critiques our weak response to ecological and social issues. 'Pope Francis calls on people to seek new ways to understand the economy, condemns our throwaway culture and dependence on technology, and is calling on people to reassess the dignity of humanity and the integrity of creation in finding solutions to the ecological crisis.'

The Pope draws upon bishops' statements from around the world, including the Australian bishops.

Director of Catholic Earthcare Australia, Jacqui Remond, said *Laudato Si'* is a game-changer for the Catholic community and it offers us in Australia a powerful moral and spiritual imperative for environmental and social action. This encyclical calls on us all to embrace a new lifestyle that respects all of creation, and asks our leaders to commit to effective global agreements.

The Pope refers to a broad range of topics including pollution and its effect on the poor, urban chaos, drug trafficking, refugees and human trafficking.

Pope Francis points to the 'intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, and the conviction that everything in the world is connected' (16). He highlights the fact that local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instil 'a strong sense of community', 'a readiness to protect others' and 'a deep love for the land'. He calls us to listen to the voices of our Indigenous peoples because for them, land is not a commodity but a sacred space and a gift from God.

At this crucial time, the Australian Bishops and Catholic Earthcare Australia invite the Catholic community and the wider Australian community to address the challenges and opportunities in *Laudato Si'*. We must move past this throwaway culture and embrace a

new lifestyle, thereby “bringing healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power” (206).

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