Caring for Our Common Home (Pope Francis)

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Caring for Our Common Home

“LAUDATO SI’, MI’ SIGNORE” — “Praise be to you, my Lord”

Pope Francis

In the words of his beautiful canticle, St. Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us:

“Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.”

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.

We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will.

We have forgotten that our very bodies are made up of her elements.

We breathe her air and we receive life and refreshments from her waters.
I believe that St. Francis of Assisi, whose name I took as my guide and inspiration when I was elected Bishop of Rome, is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast.

He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his open-heartedness. He lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself.

Just as it happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever St. Francis would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise.

He commuted with all creatures, even preaching to the flowers. He would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of brother or sister.

St. Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. He asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the creator of such beauty.
We see increasing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet ...

People take sick, for example, from breathing high levels of smoke from fuels used in cooking or heating ...

Each year, hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated. The earth, our home, is beginning to look like an immense pile of filth. Once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish. These problems are closely linked to a throwaway society.

Human beings are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature ...

Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim.

In some countries there are positive examples of environmental improvement: rivers have been cleaned up, native woodlands have been restored, landscapes have been beautified, beautiful buildings have been erected. These achievements do not solve global problems, but they do show that men and women are still capable of intervening positively, for all our limitations, gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us, since we were made for love.
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.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of the 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 toward your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Amen.