



God Calls Us All to Care for Our Common Home

**Summary of the Pastoral
Statement by the California
Conference of Catholic
Bishops On the Fourth
Anniversary of *Laudato Si': On
Care for our Common Home***



GETTY.COM/00y00

California has been blessed with great beauty. Through all creation, God is revealed. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* calls us to rediscover in awe and wonder the beauty of creation. At the same time, we must respond to the cry of the earth in its suffering of our mistreatment of the natural world.

On the fourth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, we, the bishops of California, are publishing this pastoral statement with a two-fold vision: to animate and energize the implementation of what we are called to do as we face the current crises in California and to offer a dynamic teaching tool that evangelizes our Catholic faith community and beyond to respond. In the context of our Catholic teaching on the theology of creation, we invite the people of California to reflect on ways we can more faithfully and effectively care for creation in thanksgiving to God for this great gift.

The title of the encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, comes from St. Francis' 13th century hymn, "The Canticle of the Creatures," which uses the traditional Catholic vision of a harmonious relationship among God's family, embodying our Creator and all of God's creatures. Pope Francis weaves two themes throughout the encyclical:

- **integral ecology** — conveying how we are to live in this harmonious relationship with our fellow human beings and with creation, recognizing the interrelationships of our existence with all its environmental, economic, social, and cultural dimensions; and
- **the common good** — which is "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment." (LS 156)

The encyclical points out that our faith allows us to see the astonishing beauty of the universe as open to God's transcendence (LS 79). St. Junípero Serra, among the first to catalogue the wild beauty of California, captured well the sentiment of our statement when he wrote: "Blessed be He who created them," referring to the natural beauties of the environment of California.

We can see God's gifts in the various aspects of life here in California: the biodiversity of plants and animals; the state's rich history, which includes its indigenous peoples and their reverence for the earth; the discovery of gold in our hills; the wonders of beauty in our national parks; the productivity of our farmlands; and the advancements in technology that have had positive effects on our lives.

However, California has also encountered tremendous challenges due to the destructive effects of fires, floods, climate change and rapid urbanization.

We bishops are committed to helping fulfill Pope Francis' teachings in *Laudato Si'*—calling the faithful to a commitment to solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care of all humanity. Working together with our pastoral leaders and Catholic institutions, in communion with Christ and with one another in the Eucharist, we are pledged to bring the pope's message to people throughout California. To inspire care for our common home, we invite Californians to contemplate what we each can do through our various 'ecological vocations':

□ **Pastoral leaders and Catholic institutions.** Encourage the faithful to take the St. Francis Pledge to pray, act and advocate for solutions to climate disruption. Integrate the messages of *Laudato Si'* in our worship and share practical tools of teaching that proclaim the encyclical's themes. Examine opportunities to adopt practices that promote renewable energy, divestment from fossil fuels, water conservation, and environmental health and social initiatives with special attention to the needs of the poor and excluded.

□ **Youth and young adults.** Seek opportunities to pray in natural surroundings; initiate conversations with older adults about environmental protection and a more inclusive society. Consider how one's career can be balanced with the call to care for our common home and to engage others in ways to help heal the earth.

□ **Parents, teachers, and catechists.** Help create an environmental consciousness and environmental literacy that promotes the principles of *Laudato Si'* in every

family's lifestyle—including protecting nature, combatting poverty and restoring dignity to the excluded. Ensure that environmental education in our learning institutions is based on both authentic scientific and ethical principles (LS 209–215). Expand opportunities for outdoor environmental education. Integrate themes from *Laudato Si'* throughout all Catholic educational ministries and programs.

□ **Public officials.** Address environmental issues with an integral approach that cares for all of creation's ecological, social, cultural and economic dimensions. Enact policies that improve air quality, reduce polluting gases, strengthen water systems, protect precious ecosystems and support the health of our citizens. Ensure that transition from a fossil-based economy does not burden the poor.

□ **Leaders in business.** Reflect thoughtfully on your vocation in the light of *Laudato Si'*'s message regarding economics, finance and business practices. Evaluate your business' support of a transition toward sustainability, authentic human development, as well as the impact of commerce on the poor. Consider to what extent your business enterprise, its products and its marketing meet genuine human needs and promotes the common good.

□ **Those who work the land and care for it.** Reflect on how your work can best balance economic production and environmental protection with attention to greater sustainability. With others, foster agricultural economies that are socially inclusive and address the needs of the hungry. Protect and educate the public about the value of ecosystems and how we can best live in a harmonious relationship with nature in the light of climate disruption, fires and droughts.

□ **Artists and innovators.** Discover new ways to highlight the beauty of creation and inspire a culture of ecological and human care in the light of the moral applications of the pope's encyclical. Evaluate how your art, design and innovation shape human culture. Invite entrepreneurship in technological development that renews human culture and the common good.

The bishops hope this consideration of the ways *Laudato Si'* relates to our personal lives will inspire the faithful and all people of good will to pursue creative responses to Pope Francis' call for a spiritual renewal and that we will respond with life-giving measures as we move into the challenges we are facing in the 21st century.

[Download a copy of the complete statement at www.cacatholic.org](http://www.cacatholic.org)